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Postal Customer Local

### From Classroom to Coastline

By Heather Bennett Eye

Emerald & Forgotten Coast Adventures (E&FCA) is an educational 501© (3) whose mission is to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. They utilize our unique coastal ecosystem as a living classroom to engage kids in hands-on interactive programs. Through exploring the wonders of marine science education, they also teach kids how to appreciate the world around them.

Founder Jon Schmidt, Ph.D. and Director of Education Brittany Pace, bring a wealth of experience and passion to E&FCA. Along with their crucial contributions, invaluable donations, partners and essential volunteers, they provide students with hands-on learning along the Panhandle and its coast at no cost to the schools. "In this post-COVID era, providing schools with no cost options to augment classroom education is paramount to helping students excel and ignite a passion for their interests," said Jon.

Jon's love for marine science



began on the beaches of Cape Cod and grew as he became SCUBA certified at 13, eventually earning a doctorate in marine ecology from Florida State University. After decades of conducting marine studies worldwide, he's now dedicated to inspiring the next generation in Bay and Walton Counties. "I feel that our generation needs to invest back into the younger generation. We're not going to teach them anything by telling them, we need to teach them by showing them," stated Jon. "I'm trying to spend the years I'm able to invest in the next generation, help them understand they're going to be the next stewards, and providing them the right information

to steward the environment."

Brittany, a Florida native, developed her passion for marine science early on and pursued it through degrees in Marine Biology and Environmental Studies at the University of North Carolina. She taught thousands of students,

**EFCA**continued on page 2



# South Walton County Tax-Aide Program

### Free Federal Income Tax Preparation Available in South Walton County

Free federal income tax preparation is currently offered in South Walton County for low- to middle-income families and individuals, with special

**TAX-AIDE** continued on page 3



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#### **EFCA**

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running a similar program in North Carolina before returning to her home state. She is committed to creating immersive experiences that spark curiosity and inspire young minds. "She brings a lot of good experience, and also a lot of good connections with teachers and administrators," said Jon.

Emerald Forgotten Coast Adventures offers field experience to students in grades 1-12 in Bay and Walton County, focusing on the unique coastal ecosystems of the Panhandle and Gulf

Coast. By working closely with teachers, they tailor lessons to complement classroom studies, providing memorable experiences that bring science to life. "The whole goal is to give students the hands-on experience," stated Jon. "We make sure we keep them engaged and make sure they all have a chance to do the activities and ask questions."

Depending on the trip, students will explore Gulf ecology,



estuaries, seagrass habitats and coastal dune lakes at locations such as Grayton Beach State Park, Camp Helen State Park, St Andrews State Park, and Tyndall Air Force Base. "I pick locations that are relatively undisturbed," explained Jon. "Tyndall has some of the most amazing habitat there, all protected and maintained."

Students are broken up into 4 or 5 stations with 10-12 students where they will have opportuni-

ties to study ghost crabs & fiddler crabs, sea turtles, see specimens up close in a touch tank, learn how to fish, test for water quality and see life beyond the human eye through high quality microscopes equipped with LCD screens and cameras for capturing pictures of specimens, allowing for continued study back in the classroom. All programs are aligned with Florida education standards, ensuring a meaningful and educational experience. "We try to make sure the teachers can carry that on in the classroom," said Jon.

Volunteers play a vital role in making E&FCA a success. They help set up learning stations, assist with hands-on education, and answer students' questions, enhancing the overall learning experience. All volunteers undergo background checks and fingerprinting to ensure safety compliance with school district requirements. Additionally, every adventure has at least someone present who is certified in life-

guarding, CPR, and first aid, providing a safe and supportive environment for students to explore and learn.

Although their primary focus is offering programs through local schools, E&FCA also provides educational trips for local residents and vacationing families in exchange for a donation. These sessions are customized to match the children's ages and interests, ensuring an engaging experience for all participants. Since grants are designated solely for school field programs, the donations help support these unique learning adventures. Over 1,100 students participated in the fall semester and currently over 900 students have signed up for the spring semester, with schools even booking into the next school year.

Jon has big plans for the future, aiming to expand the E&FCA educational reach to seven counties around St. Joe Bay and St. Andrews Bay. They hope to benchmark their programs with local schools, particularly for 5th and 7th graders, to enhance science education in the region. "We're trying to make sure as many schools that want to participate, can," stated Jon.

In addition, he has a vision to build and operate an aquarium similar to the Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium in Sarasota, serving as both an educational resource and a tourist attraction. The foundation is actively working to secure funding to bring these exciting expansion plans to life.

With teachers already booking their trips for the 2025-2026 school season, volunteers are always appreciated. If you have a love for the outdoors and teaching, please reach out to Emerald & Forgotten Coast Adventures at (850) 508-7306 or jon@emerald-forgottencoastadventures.org. If you'd like to support Emerald and Forgotten Coast Adventures, donations can be made at by scanning the QR code provided.







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#### **TAX-AIDE**

continued from page 1

attention paid to senior citizens. Tax Preparation service will be available from Feb. 3 to April 15, 2025 at A Simple Faith Church in Santa Rosa Beach. The church is at 360 WRM Circle Blvd in the Blue Mountain Beach Industrial Park, north of Hwy 98.

Taxpayers must make appointments on-line at tinyurl. com/yryzb5mt or by calling (850) 275-9104.

The site will be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., with last appointments at 4 p.m..

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

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

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

Taxpayers need to bring their 2023 tax return, Social Security cards for taxpayer(s) and all dependents, picture IDs, and all tax documents received. Bring checking or savings account information if direct deposit of refunds or direct debit of amounts due is desired. If applicable, bring Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) for each individual. Taxpayers who wish to itemize deductions must bring appropriate information. Note that complicated tax returns involving rental properties, inventories, depreciation, etc. cannot be prepared.

## VISIT **SOUTHWALTON.LIFE**

## **Embrace Florida Kids Tees Up for Second Golf Soiree**

By Christopher Manson

Embrace Florida Kids is an offshoot of Embrace Alabama Kids, a faith-based organization that has been helping children and families since 1890. Director of Development and Community Relations Ramsey Lawrence has been speaking to churches and civic organizations and spreading the word about the nonprofit's Florida arm since 2020.

Embrace Florida Kids has four programs. "First, we teach people how to parent," says Lawrence. "People who are dealing with addiction and communication problems. It's one-on-one intense parenting intervention. We have a 96 percent success rate."

The nonprofit also licenses adults that wish to become foster parents. They offer residential homes, including one located in Milton for girls ages 12 to 18 "who have been in

the foster care program, but have had too much trauma in their lives," says Lawrence. And there is a higher education program for any child that has been in foster care or alternative living situations (with grandparents or other relatives, for example) and wishes to attend college. "We'll coach and tutor them and assist with tuition."

Lawrence says these programs benefit local children throughout Bay, Okaloosa, Walton, Santa Rosa and Escambia counties.



On Monday, April 7, join Embrace Florida Kids for its Second Annual A Walk Down Magnolia Lane at the WaterColor Lakehouse in Santa Rosa Beach. The golf-themed soiree will feature a tournament-themed menu, signature cocktails, live music from local favorite Jacob Mohr and a live Calcutta, during which

**EMBRACE** 

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### Community

#### **EMBRACE**

continued from page 3

tournament participants are "auctioned off" and money is collected in a prize fund. Dress is golf attire and smart casual; attendees are encouraged to don golf's royal colors of green and

yellow. Purchase tickets at walk-downmagnolialane.org.

Doors open for cocktails at 5 p.m., followed by golf activities at 6 and the live Calcutta at 7:15. This year's event sponsors include Good News Church, Shoreline Title, Peaceful Family Oklahoma, Hill Coleman

LLC, Liufau McCall, Hancock Whitney and Review Harvest. Sponsorship opportunities are still available, and participants will receive badges to attend the event, recognition on promotional materials, and a number of additional benefits. If interested, email Lawrence at ramsey.



lawrence@embraceflkids.org or call 850.533.9968.

According to Vie Magazine, 2024's inaugural event, held at Regatta Bay Golf & Yacht Club in Destin, raised over \$78,000. Musician Mohr, who returns following a successful appearance at last year's soiree, says, "I'm excited and proud to be a part of another Embrace Florida Kids event. This organization literally stands in the gap for children and families in crisis. It's easy for us to go about our lives with relatively few problems and forget there are young people bravely dealing with all sorts of trauma. I love that they focus on keeping families together. More and more, we see the disintegration of a family unit being the harbinger for multitudes of trouble."

He adds that last year's A



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EMBRACE FLORIDA KIDS

Walk Down Magnolia Lane was "a veritable Who's Who of Destin and South Walton business people and philanthropists. The entertainment is decent, and the opportunity to help a great organization that does such important work will just make you feel good. I hope to see some old friends and make some new ones."

Embrace Florida Kids' Program Center is located at 5414 U.S. 90 in Pace, Florida. The nonprofit provides comfort and safety to abused, neglected and traumatized children, young mothers and struggling families through group homes, foster care programs and family preservation services throughout Northwest Florida and Alabama. Call 800.239.3575 or visit embracekids.org to learn more.





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### **Coastal Seniors Update for March**

Chair Yoga Classes at the Blake in Miramar Beach - Tuesdays, March 4, 18 and April 1, 15 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, March 21 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. at 70 Logan Lane, Santa Rosa Beach. A light lunch will be served. Charles Kuebler, P.A. will be guest speaker. Topic: "Bone Health" R.S.V.P. by calling (850) 280-5342 or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@ gmail.com.

Exercise Classes - Angela Gibson will lead classes on Tuesdays, March 4, 11, 18, 25 and April 1, 8 at 10 a.m. and on Thursdays, March 6, 13, 20, 27 and April 3, 10 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 - Last Line Dancing classes at this time are set for Wednesdays at 3 p.m. 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, March 7, 14, 28 and April 4, 11 from 8:45 am - Noon. Classes held at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Cost is \$15 for CSSW members and \$30 for non-members. Space is limited so call 850-280-5342 to reserve your spot, or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com. All supplies are included.

OF SOUTH WALTON

**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 sowalpickleball@gmail.com for more info and with questions. Also join us at the Boys and Girls Club on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. through April 24. THERE WILL BE NO PICK-LEBALL ON MARCH 12, 13 OR MARCH 17-21 DUE TO MANDATORY MEETINGS AND SPRING BREAK. Thank you for understanding - BGCEC. 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.

Water Aerobics- Watersound Fountains, 65 Origins Pkwy, Inlet Beach. Mondays March 17, 24, 31 and April 7, 14 and on Wednesdays March 19, 26 and April 2, 9 at 10 a.m. The cost for members is \$5/ nonmembers \$10. A pool noodle and water dumbbells are used for class. Please bring a towel, sunglasses, and sunscreen. Registration is required as space is limited. R.S.V.P. by calling (850) 280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

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: Melinda Finney, Director, Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. T: 615-477-3417 Email: mkfinney24@gmail.com

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## SSUS Begins Journey to Our Area to Become the World's Largest Artificial Reef!

America's Flagship, the SS United States (SSUS), has now begun her journey from Philadelphia, Pa., to our own Emerald Coast!

After Okaloosa County's Tourist Development Department, Destin-Fort Walton Beach completed the necessary safety requirements by local, state and federal agencies, the journey began to move the SSUS from her current docking area in south Philadelphia to a docking area in Mobile, Ala., where preparations to ready the ship to become the World's Largest Artificial Reef will continue.

The SSUS departed Philadelphia after 30 years, and, at the time of this printing, she was almost to Mobile Bay after being chaperoned by multiple tug boats while making her way down the Delaware River and into the Atlantic Ocean. As with any project of this magnitude, the schedule is tentative with dates, times and other logistics subject to change, due to many factors.

The SSUS' amazing journey

to Mobile took about two weeks. In Mobile, the vessel will continue its rebirth into an artificial reef as contractors remove hazardous material, including non-metal parts and fuel to ensure this deployment is clean and not harmful to the environment it aims to benefit. Modifications will also be made to ensure that when the vessel is deployed, it will land upright underwater. The preparation process will take about 12 months.

The exact location along the Gulf Coast for the vessel's deployment has not been set, but it is expected to be about 20 nautical miles south of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach area.

As the World's Largest Artificial Reef, the story of the SSUS will be told to thousands of divers from around the world as they explore her unique design and features. She will also benefit her surrounding ecosystem and become home to countless marine species that will thrive from the presence of her structure. Due to the size and the depth, she will be home to a wide variety of marine



life from iconic reef fish such as red snapper to pelagic species of fish like wahoo. This new artificial reef will provide bountiful fishing and diving opportunities for the local, visiting and charter industries.

Okaloosa County will continue to partner with the SSUS Conservancy as it pivots to develop a land-based museum in Destin-Fort Walton Beach that will celebrate and commemorate the nation's flagship. The County will provide the Conservancy with regular project updates and will support the museum planning process which will incorporate iconic fea-

tures from the ship, including the funnels, radar mast, and other signature components, as well as the Conservancy's extensive curatorial and archival collection. This will preserve the ship's storied history and the memories that she has created for so many people over the years.

To follow the SSUS' journey via GPS tracking, visit //www.destinfwb.com/explore/eco-tour-ism/ssus.

Fun Facts About the SSUS:

• The design of the SSUS was so innovative that the details of her construction were kept topsecret. She was the first passenger liner to be built almost entirely in a graving dock – safely out of the public eye.

- The SSUS was designed to be just wide enough (101 feet) so it could pass through the locks of the Panama Canal with two feet of clearance on either side.
- Five days before her maiden voyage in July 1952, the SSUS was opened to the public at her berth in New York. Some 70,000 people turned out to see the dazzling new ship that day more than a sellout crowd at Yankee Stadium! The line to go aboard stretched for 14 blocks.
- How fast was the SSUS? During her speed trials, she sliced through the waves at an astonishing 38.32 knots 44 miles per hour!
- Four U.S. presidents sailed aboard the SSUS: Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy and Bill Clinton. (The youthful Clinton, fresh out of Georgetown, was on his way to study at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar.)
  - For her maiden voyage, the



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SSUS stocked 7,935 quarts of ice cream and a whopping 500 pounds of caviar.

- The SSUS carried an impressive roster of luminaries on nearly every voyage. Famous passengers included Marlon Brando, Coco Chanel, Sean Connery, Gary Cooper, Walter Cronkite, Salvador Dali, Walt Disney, Duke Ellington, Judy Garland, Cary Grant, Charlton Heston, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, John Wayne, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.
- A famous passenger of a different sort sailed aboard the SSUS in 1963: the Mona Lisa. Leonardo Da Vinci 's masterpiece was traveling to the U.S. for special exhibitions in Washington and New York. (She made it back to the Louvre in remarkably good shape for a 460-year-old woman.)
- The SSUS is 990 feet long about five city blocks! If you stood her on end, she'd rise nearly as high as New York's Chrysler Building or Philadelphia's Comcast Center.
- You think the Titanic was huge? The SSUS is over 100 feet longer.
- The SS United States' designer, William Francis Gibbs, wanted his ship to be fireproof, so he insisted that no wood be used in her construction or fittings. One exception: the ship's grand pianos



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were made from fire-resistant mahogany. A Steinway piano was tested in advance by dousing it with gasoline and lighting a match. (It didn't burn.)

- More aluminum was used in the SSUS than for any previous construction project in history. Why? To reduce her weight and make her the fastest ocean liner of all time.
- Thanks to her reduced weight and powerful engines, the SSUS could go almost as fast in reverse as the Titanic could go forward.
- On her maiden voyage, the SSUS shattered the trans-Atlantic speed record in both directions. She was the first American ship in 100 years to capture the coveted Blue Riband (awarded to the fastest trans-Atlantic ocean liner). Amazingly, she still holds the record more than 60 years later.
- Built to be converted from luxury liner to troop transport in the event of war, the SSUS was able to carry 14,000 troops 10,000 miles without refueling.
- The galleys aboard the SSUS could turn out up to 9,000 individual meals a day!
- The SSUS was retired from active service in 1969. The age of the great ocean liners had come to a close, doomed by increasingly fast and affordable trans-Atlantic airline flights.
- From 1996 to 2025, the SSUS was docked on the Delaware River in Philadelphia.

Source: ssusc.org

Learn more about Okaloosa County's artificial reef program at https://www.destinfwb.com/ explore/eco-tourism/artificialreefs/.

## Stinky's Fish Camp Announces The 15th Annual Pompano Tournament Kickoff & 18th Anniversary Party

Get ready to cast your lines and raise a glass—Stinky's Fish Camp is bringing back the biggest fishing showdown in Walton County! The 15th Annual Stinky's Pompano Tournament kicks off with an epic celebration on March 29, 2025, at Stinky's Bait Shack, setting the stage for five weeks of friendly competition from March 30 to May 4, 2025.

As Walton County's longestrunning fishing tournament, this premier surf fishing event attracts over 150 anglers from weekend warriors to seasoned pros—competing for a \$4,500 purse in cash and prizes. Whether you're a local or just visiting, it only takes one perfect Pompano to take home the win.



The tournament kickoff also doubles as an 18th-anniversary celebration for Stinky's Fish Camp, and trust us, you don't want to miss it. The outdoor party at Stinky's Bait Shack will feature:

- Live music by Dread Clampitt
- A legendary crawfish boil
- A whole pig roast for the picking
- A massive birthday cake to top it all off

#### Join The Competition

Tournament registration, rules and regulations can be found at stinkysbaitshop.com.



Follow along for updates, leaderboards, and the best fish tales on Instagram @stinkysbaitshop and Facebook @stinkysbaitshack.

**Community/Pets** 

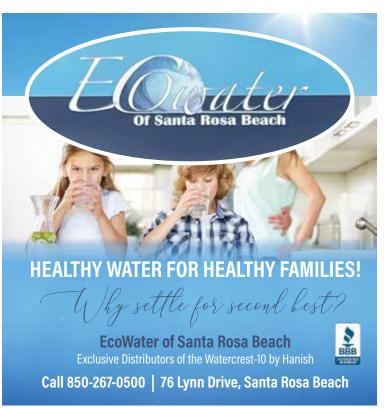
A portion of proceeds from the tournament benefits the South Walton Artificial Reef Association, helping to preserve and enhance our local marine ecosystems.

### **Sponsorship Opportunities**

Businesses looking to get in on the action can explore sponsorship opportunities by contacting Lori Schmitz at Lori@ dawsongroupseasidefl.com or calling (850) 622-2248.









### **Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County Awarded** \$20,000 National Endowment for the Arts Grant to **Expand the Underwater Museum of Art**

(CAA) of Walton County is pleased to announce it has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Grants for Arts Projects award of \$20,000. This grant will support the 2025 installation of sculptures to expand the

The Cultural Arts Alliance nation's first Underwater Museum of Art (UMA). The NEA awarded 1,127 Grants for Arts Projects awards nationwide totaling more than \$31.8 million as part of the recent announcement of fiscal year 2025 grants.

"The CAA's very first NEA grant was received in 2018, making it possible for us to collaborate with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association to create the nation's first Underwater Museum of Art. So it is incredibly rewarding to be recognized again by the NEA now that the UMA is approaching its seventh anniversary," said CAA President & CEO Jennifer Steele. "The NEA is a necessary and valued American institution, and we are honored to be included alongside an impressive list of grant recipients who provide Arts programming and services across the country."

In addition to this exciting news, the CAA is thrilled to share that J & The Causeways

will return to South Walton to headline Dine + Dive, a fundraising event benefiting the Underwater Museum of Art. Taking place on Wednesday, April 30, from 6-9 p.m. at Grand Boulevard's Town Center, Dine + Dive serves as the official kick-off for Art Month Walton County, a month-long celebration of the arts featuring a diverse lineup of cultural events throughout May.

The CAA and South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) are delighted to elevate the former Under the Sea event into an immersive celebration of fine art, exquisite cuisine, exceptional wines, and marine

conservation. This multi-sensory experience will feature an extensive selection of incredible wines to sample, more than a dozen tasting stations showcasing exclusive dishes from the area's most renowned restaurants and celebrated chefs, and a cash bar serving signature cocktails and craft beer. Attendees can indulge their senses while supporting marine conservation in an evening of artistry, flavor, and purpose.

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

The event is produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County with support from Visit South Walton, Grand Boulevard Town Center, and SWARA. A few event and sculpture sponsorships are still available, and those interested can contact Gabby Callaway at Gabby@culturalartsalliance. com for more details.



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### South Walton Fire District and Alys Beach Announce Partnership for Professional Lifeguard Services

The South Walton Fire District (SWFD) and Alys Beach are proud to announce their partnership to provide professional beach lifeguard services for the town's homeowners and vacation guests beginning March 1, 2025.

The Alys Beach Neighborhood Association (ANBA) and SWFD finalized the agreement for services in February 2025. It's a multi-year initiative, funded by the ABNA, that underscores the

town's commitment to a safe and enhanced beach experience.

"By creating this relationship with Alys Beach, we are increasing our footprint and improving our ability to provide coverage within a stretch of beach that was previously unguarded," said SWFD Beach Safety Director David Vaughan. "A dedicated, staffed lifeguard tower means enhanced water supervision and public education for Alys Beach,

as well as faster medical care and emergency response capabilities."

The tower will be staffed daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., during the 2025 Beach Safety Season, which begins in South Walton on March 1 and runs through October 31. The location of this tower is a historic addition for SWFD, as it will be stationed within a seven-mile stretch of beach where towers have not been located in the past.

"That lifeguard's primary re-

sponsibility will be to take care of Alys Beach's residents and visitors through prevention and education," Vaughan said. "They provide a high level of medical training, customer service, and are a steward of our community, as well as public safety."

As the 2025 Beach Safety

Season begins, SWFD and Alys Beach encourage those visiting the beach to swim near a staffed lifeguard tower and follow the beach flag warning system.

For more beach safety information, follow SWFD on social media or visit www.swfd.org.

### Dog-Harmony's 10th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza Returns to Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Dog lovers, mark your calendars! Dog-Harmony presents the 10th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza, a fun-filled, canine-only Easter egg hunt and social event happening on Friday, April 18, 2025, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin.

This one-of-a-kind event invites leashed pups and their human companions to sniff out 800 colorful eggs filled with delicious dog treats. With two designated hunting areas for dogs over and under 35 pounds, every furry friend gets

a chance to join in on the fun.

For a \$20 donation in advance (\$25 on the day of the event), attendees will receive a souvenir bag to collect treats while enjoying an evening of live music, pet photos, family-friendly games, and exciting prizes. Guests can also indulge in delicious appetizers from JC's Gourmet while sipping on beer and wine.

This event is a great way for dog lovers to celebrate the season while supporting a meaningful cause. The funds raised help DogHarmony continue its mission of keeping dogs out of shelters through humane education, training, and community outreach.

Doggie EGGstravaganza is part of the Coastal Culture Series, made possible by the Grand Boulevard Arts & Entertainment Program. Tickets are available for advance purchase at https://events.humanitix.com/doggie-eggstravaganza-2025. For more information about sponsorship opportunities or event details, contact hello@dog-harmony.org.



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### Celebrate Spring With Nature and History at Camp Helen

Camp Helen State Park remains the coolest place to explore and learn about the unique biodiversity of Lake Powell, the largest coastal dune lake in the Northern Hemisphere, while also offering a chance to take a step back in time touring the historical buildings.

Coastal dune lakes are extremely rare and only exist in Oregon, New Zealand, Madagascar, Australia, and Walton/Bay Co., Florida. Camp Helen is home to Lake Powell, the largest.

Dating back to the Pleistocene Era, Lake Powell retains evidence of historical and cultural significance including Civil War saltworks, Indigenous People, shipwrecks, and retreats. Classified as Outstanding Florida Water, the lake offers a safe passage for animals in the Florida wildlife corridor.

Everyone should experience paddling through Phillips Inlet to the white sandy beach. Kayak, paddleboard, pedal boat, and fishing pole rentals on the lake fund many projects and equipment purchases needed for park maintenance for the Friends of Camp Helen. The rentals oper-

ate year-round seven days a week from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., weather permitting.

Due to an outfall that is open intermittently to the Gulf of Mexico, the lake is a brackish mix of fresh and saltwater with a dynamic and ever-changing



landscape. This creates a healthy environment for a wide range of fish.

Fishing is another excellent way to enjoy Lake Powell or the surf at Camp Helen State Park.





Fishermen have caught record redfish in the lake and on the beach, as well as mangrove snapper, flounder, sheepshead, black drum, and pompano. There have even been barracuda sightings and rumors of snook caught.

The Friends of Camp Helen

and BayBreeze Bait and Tackle offer surf fishing lessons as well as fishing clinics for kids at the park. The surf fishing lessons are on Friday mornings on the beach west of the outfall inside the boundary of Camp Helen and are bookable online at www. friendsofcamphelen.org. One les-



son can accommodate up to four participants. Fishing clinics for kids are every Saturday morning and are also bookable online. Children of all ages are welcome.

Children of all ages are welcome. Bait, tackle, equipment and instruction are provided by Bay-Breeze Bait and Tackle and the Friends of Camp Helen.

For guests who prefer to stay out of the water, the North Trail is an easy 1.8 miles and has panoramic views of Lake Powell while the Oak Canopy Trail is a short, soothing, shaded trail through the Spanish moss-filled Oaks.

Camp Helen State Park boasts natural beauty and a diverse ecosystem but is also extremely rich in history with buildings and structures on the National Register of Historic Places including the historic Lodge, the water tower, stables, and rainbow cottages.

The rangers love speaking to visitors about the historical details and history brochures are available inside the Visitor's Center. Whether looking to explore the lake on a kayak, catch dinner, or just take in the views from a rocking chair in the pavilion, Camp Helen State Park continues to be a treasure on the far West End of Panama City Beach.





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- Social Security and Medicare official websites links.



### The Watersound Club® Team Announces the Opening of Its Newest Course, The Third, Designed by Golf Legend Davis Love III

Masterfully sculpted by Love Golf Design, the new course blends the Club's renowned amenities with an exhilarating new playing experience

The Watersound Club® team proudly announces the official opening of The Third, a premier 18-hole championship course designed by golf legend Davis Love III and his team at Love Golf Design for the prestigious Watersound Club private membership club. Spanning acres of green in Panama City Beach, FL, The Third enhances the exclusive club's world-class offerings, bringing its total to 54 holes of championship-level golf. Named in homage to its designer and as a nod to its place as the club's third course, it delivers a dynamic new playing experience to the region.

Starting March 20, The Third will be available for play, not only to members, but also to guests of Camp Creek® Inn. The luxurious 30A hotel boasts a Member for a Stay program,

which treats guests to Northwest Florida's most sought-after, otherwise private, amenities and championship-caliber courses during their stay. The Third is the latest of several recent demand driven expansion projects, including Watersound Camp Creek® amenities, featuring a state-of-the-art wellness center, tennis and pickleball courts, a sprawling pool complex and three dining venues, as well as Watersound Club Sporting Preserve, a 15-station sporting clays course.

"The opening of The Third represents a monumental milestone in the ongoing Watersound Club evolution and an intentional response to growing demand for more golf options," said Patrick Murphy, Senior Vice President of Hospitality with St. Joe. "We're thrilled to

elevate the experience on the green for our members, while also offering an exclusive opportunity for Camp Creek Inn guests to enjoy premier golf."

Just north of Shark's Tooth Golf Course, the newly designed grounds boast a meticulously crafted layout that caters to golfers of all skill levels. Expansive greens with subtle undulations, strategically positioned bunkers, and six tee options create a course that is both inviting and rewarding—delivering a challenge even for the most seasoned players.

Describing the course, Founder and President of Love Golf Design, Mark Love, noted, "Players should be able to find a set of tees that matches their game. The greens are large and have a good deal of movement in them. We can set the course



up to challenge highly skilled players in a major event, but on a daily basis, we can provide a nice mix of easy, medium and difficult pins to keep things interesting, but not too difficult for the average golfer."

Alongside the existing Watersound Club golf offerings—Shark's Tooth and Camp Creek courses—The Third continues to establish Northwest Florida as a premier destination for golf enthusiasts. Golfers looking to

treat themself to an unforgettable golf retreat should explore one of Camp Creek Inn's exclusive Golf Packages, which are perfectly tailored to offer avid golfers exceptional accommodations, tournament-caliber golf, and luxurious amenities.

For more information on The Third and accommodations at Camp Creek Inn, visit camp-creekinn.com/golf/the-third-golf-course.



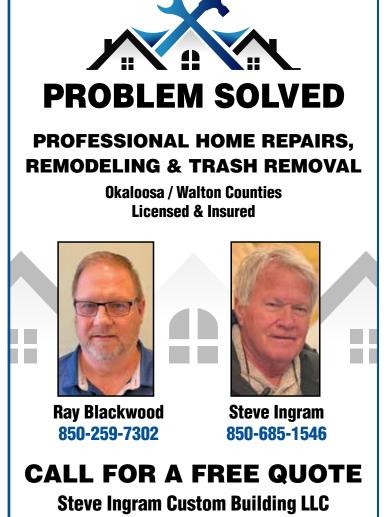
### 100 Years of Golf!

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.

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

www.eaglespringsgolf.com





## 23rd Annual SEASIDE SCHOOL™ Half Marathon & 5K Race Weekend

Presented by Frankie's Bike Shop Breaks Records with \$650K Raised for Education

The 23rd Annual SEASIDE SCHOOLTM Half Marathon & 5K Race Weekend, presented by Frankie's Bike Shop, made history by raising a record-breaking \$650,000 in net proceeds to support the educational initiatives of SEASIDE SCHOOLTM. Held over Presidents' Day weekend, February 13-16, 2025, in Seaside, FL, the event welcomed participants from across the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Sweden, while garnering enthusiastic support from the local community.

The funds raised from Race Weekend directly benefit the academic and operational programming of both SEASIDE SCHOOLTM campuses—SEA-SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLTM and Seacoast Collegiate High School-in partnership with the SEASIDE SCHOOL FOUNDATIONTM. Notably, this year's proceeds will contribute to the Seacoast Collegiate High School Expansion Project at Northwest Florida State College. This transformative project aims to establish a dual enrollment center that will allow high school students in Walton County and surrounding communities to earn a tuition-free college degree. The expansion project represents a significant investment in the future of education, providing local students with enhanced access to higher education opportunities and supporting the broader Walton County community by fostering academic achievement and economic



orowth

As one of Florida's pioneer public charter schools, SEA-SIDE SCHOOL<sup>TM</sup> stands as a beacon of educational excellence, consistently ranking as the top combination public charter school in the state. With over 20 consecutive years of achieving an "A" rating and boasting top 1% rankings in math and science, SEASIDE SCHOOL<sup>TM</sup> continues to redefine academic achievement.

Race Weekend witnessed a record turnout, with more than 4,000 participants and over 12,000 guests converging on beautiful Seaside, FL-the highest number of participants in the event's history. The success of the weekend would not have been possible without the dedication of more than 500 volunteers, including students and staff from all SEASIDE  $SCHOOL^{TM}$ grade levels, who together contributed over 10,000 volunteer hours. Their unwavering commitment, combined with the support of numerous sponsors, ensured a seamless experience and reinforced the community's steadfast support.

Inclement weather and road

closure restrictions tested the community's resilience, prompting organizers to make a swift and strategic pivot from a half marathon to a 10K on race morning. Prioritizing the safety of participants and spectators, the quick decision was met with understanding and support. Local officials, including key community and media partners, played a vital role in keeping everyone informed, further demonstrating the strength and value of community partnerships in ensuring the event's success.

The race results highlighted remarkable achievements as Race Weekend concluded with the 10K and 5K races. Trey Hurt, 21, of Auburn, AL, was the Overall 10K Finisher and Male Winner with a time of 32:24. Katie Sherron, 43, of Tallahassee, FL, secured the Overall 10K Female title with a time of 36:15. In the 5K race, Francisco Palacios, 18, of Alpharetta, GA, claimed the

title of Overall Finisher with a time of 16:17. Gray Peterson, also 18 and from Alpharetta, GA, matched the winning time in the male category, while Scarlett Griffin, a 15-year-old sophomore at Seacoast Collegiate High School from Santa Rosa Beach, FL, emerged as the Overall 5K Female winner for the second consecutive year and the third time overall.

The Race Weekend festivities concluded with a lively finish line after-party featuring live music by the SEASIDE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL<sup>TM</sup> Performance Band, complimentary beer provided by Grayton Beer Company, and delectable post-race fare catered by Great Southern Cafe.

For more information about the SEASIDE SCHOOL<sup>TM</sup> Race Weekend, please visit RunSeasideFL.com. For more information about SEASIDE SCHOOL<sup>TM</sup>, please visit SeasideSchools.net.



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### Walton County Snowbirds Give Back to Community They Love!

By Cindy Armstrong, Public Relations, Walton County Snowbirds

The Walton County Snowbirds (WCS) held their annual business meeting on February 20, 2025, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Destin. Co-Presidents Bob and Peggy Breetz announced we have 642 members, 159 of which are new, and 84 Canadians. The numbers are down from last year, but tourism appeared to be down also. Maybe it was because of the record-breaking snowstorm we had in January?

At the meeting, South Walton High School students Emma Szucs and Bryan Delavara were each awarded a \$1,000.00 educational scholarship. The mon-

ies for the scholarships are raised from 50/50 raffle drawings held at the bi-weekly gatherings and are organized by the energetic WCS Volunteer team of Mike and JoAnne Krueger.

In addition, Kevin Maloney, President & CEO of Children in Crisis, was presented with a check for \$2,866.00. Children in Crisis, Inc., is a 501c3 non-profit



organization comprised of caring people working together to provide homes and keep brothers and sisters together. They give a home to the abused, neglected, and abandoned children of the community. The monies raised were from the sale of FundRays coupon books, as well as donations. The sale of these very popular books was spearheaded by WCS Volunteer Pat Whitledge, and she even sold out this year!

This snowbird season, the WCS also sponsored another successful blood drive with One-Blood which was held on February 12 at Silver Sands Premium Outlets. We had 32 donors and 38 units of blood (some were double reds). Thank you all for saving lives! Thank you also to WCS Volunteer Sandra Wallis

for organizing and Denise Zimmerman, our amazing representative from OneBlood.

As we wrap up this season, the WCS would like to thank the community for their continued support and warm welcome to the area this year. Everywhere we go we find excellent customer service and friendly faces ... restaurants, shopping centers, entertainment venues, schools, etc. It really is our home away from home, and we look forward to coming back next snowbird season!

For more information on registration and the numerous activities and events the club offers, go to our website at www.waltoncountysnowbirds.com or join our Facebook page "Walton County Snowbirds."







### A Special Invitation to a Very Special Event

From the French Coast to the Emerald Coast:

### FLORAL DESIGNING WITH LAURA

Renowned floral designer, Laura Dowling, will travel to the beautiful Emerald Coast on May 15, 2025 to demonstrate the art of creating stunning floral arrangements. Laura was the Chief White House floral designer for six years. She studied floral art in Paris and Germany and is the author of five books. She

recently transformed the Cheekwood Estates & Gardens in Nashville, TN into a holiday wonderland, "Gifts from the Garden".

Space is limited. For details about this special event and how to register, please visit www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org or email greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com.



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### The National League of Junior Cotillions Names **Directors for South Walton Chapter**

The National League of Junior Cotillions (NLJC) has announced the appointment of Dana Hahn and Jessica Proffitt Bracken as the new NLJC Directors for Walton County in

The National League of Junior Cotillions program, which features character education, etiquette, and social dance training for students in South Walton, includes six classes over a sixmonth period, two of which are Grand Balls.

The purpose of the National League of Junior Cotillions program is to give students instruction in ballroom dancing and practice in the social courtesies needed for better relationships with their family and friends. Students actively learn life skills through a creative method employing role-playing, skits and

The social behavior component ranges from rules of conversation to formal and informal table manners. In addition to the usual courtesies connected with dancing, etiquette instruction is also provided with regards to the following: acknowledgment of gifts, behavior at cultural and civic events, correspondence, interaction in groups, introductions, paying and receiving compliments, receiving lines, sportsmanship and sports etiquette, instructional dinners, telephone courtesy, and many other areas of social conduct.

The National League of Junior Cotillions' setting will encourage children to be comfriends, and to enjoy themselves. Communication skills learned by young ladies and gentlemen in a peer group setting provide graduating students with increased confidence and poise in social situations.

Director Dana Hahn is the Executive Vice President of Real Estate for Howard Group, a commercial mixeduse developer in South Walton, Florida. Dana's professional passion is creating bestin-class retail and restaurant experiences for her South Walton community to enjoy. Since joining Howard Group

in 2006, Dana has served in key board positions for Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, The Seaside School, Walton Area Chamber of Commerce, The Tree House Episcopal Montessori School and Pensacola Little Theatre.

Dana is a native of Pensacola, FL and attended Florida State University where she earned degrees in Real Estate and Finance. Dana and her husband, Robert, reside in beautiful South Walton with their lovely daughter Char-

Having grown up in Pen-



pleasure of taking NLJC Cotillion classes herself in middle school, Dana has long dreamed of bringing NLJC Cotillion to South Walton.

Jessica Proffitt Bracken of Seacrest, FL, founded Proffitt PR in 2011, nurturing the company

atop tables at local coffee shops and bookstores. Since then, her hard work and powerful team has helped the company to blossom as the leading public relations, event planning, advertising, branding, and social media firm on the Emerald Coast, with a host of accolades and loyal clients to prove it.

Jessica is on the board of the Ascension Sacred Heart Foundation and is the past president of the Young Professionals of Walton County and the Northwest Florida Coast Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA). She has been named a Pinnacle Award Winner by 850 Business Magazine, Walton County's

Young Professional of the Year, FPRA's For-Profit Communicator of the Year, and earned the distinction of being highlighted in 850 Business Magazine as one of the 40 professionals under 40 years old.

Jessica moved to Santa Rosa

Beach in 1997 and proceeded to join NLJC classes during high school which were an hour away. Since having her daughter three years ago, it has been on her heart to grow the chapter into South Walton where she and her family now reside. Jessica married husband Levin Bracken of Memphis, Tennessee in Telluride, Colorado in June of 2014. They have a three-yearold daughter named Stella James and a goldendoodle named Champ.

The National League of Junior Cotillions is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the program was established in 1979. There are now over 400 chapters in 27 states across the country, involving thousands of students. President Charles Anthony Winters said, "We are delighted to see this training in Walton County, Florida. It has had a great impact on the self-esteem and social development of young people across the country."

If you would like to know more about the program, please email Dana Hahn or Jessica Proffitt Bracken at hahn.bracken@ nlic.com or visit the local chapter's website at https://bit.ly/ NLJCSW.







### Our Hometown Hero: Shirley Simpson

A REFLECTION BY NATHANAEL FISHER

Shirley Simpson was a great friend and generous supporter of Emerald Coast Theatre Company. It is my joy to honor her with a small tribute to the incredible life she lived. I shared this reflection at her Celebration of Life recently, and wanted to share it again here for her loyal Emerald Coast Theatre Company fans and readers.

I have no doubt that on the night of February 8th, there was thunderous applause and a standing ovation from the angels and elders in heaven when the Angel Gabriel called Shirley Simpson to "places" in heaven and the curtain came down on earth, in peace, on a life well lived.

When Shirley's daughters honored me by asking me to present Act One, Scene One of her celebration of life, my heart and mind was flooded with scene by scene of wonderful memories. You see, Shirley and I had lunch together on Tuesdays, practically every Tuesday since 2018. I always found it a little amusing that there is a book that was adapted into a play called "Tuesdays with Morrie." I had my Tuesdays with Shirley, and even my wife and staff knew that on Tuesdays I had a very important appointment with a very special person.

During our lunches, three themes rose to the surface as the most important to Shirley, and we connected on all of them. She loved and adored her husband and her girls, her faith was important to her, and, of course, we connect on our love for the life changing art, wonder and magic of theatre and the stage.

Our first lunches back in 2018 were filled with stories of her life with Chuck who had passed earlier that year. I walked with her through the pain and immense grief of losing a friend and partner of 65 years. That grief was conquered through the sharing of beautiful stories of Chuck. She



shared how he would patiently wait for her to greet her fans after productions at New Stage Theatre in Jackson, Mississippi or her one woman shows. Chuck's support of her theatrical adventures was clearly one of the ways he loved her and she reveled in that love.

Shirley's faith and family were topics at lunch quite often. She shared some stories of working with the Billy Graham Organization. I would hear about the preparation for a sermon and the evaluation of how that sermon was presented and received. I was honored to hear stories of how proud she was of her girls: Taylor, Cathy, Christine and Caren – she was so proud of each of them and knew how much they loved her.

Shirley told me stories of her dear sister Bonnie. As children, Shirley would say, "Let's Pike"... that's "play like" - (pretend play). "Pike," where she was clearly the director in the performances Bonnie and Shirley would do as children. I heard so many stories of

stage, radio and TV during our lunches. Stories of being an Actress, Director, Product Spokesperson, Radio Host and more. We connected so well because she personally knew every challenge I faced in theatre. Often, I would remind her that, outside of my wife, she was the only other person in my life that could truly understand the joys and challenges I faced at the theatre. She understood the world of an actor, she had sat in the seat of a director, she and Chuck had been supporters of theatre. She knew this world so well.

Some of her favorite roles included Queen Eleanor in The Lion in Winter, Shirley in Shirley Valentine and Daisy in Driving Miss Daisy. I would hear amazing stories of the process of the actress preparing for these roles and some of the victories and challenges of performances.

Shirley mesmerized audiences with performances of her one woman shows: Katherine Hepburn, Shirley Valentine, Minnie Pearl and so many more. Her final public performance was on the ECTC stage as Minnie Pearl. After Chuck's passing she regained her footing on stage here with Katherine Hepburn. She was concerned about a staged reading as she was very proud of the memory she had and we convinced her that it would be fine, her audience would embrace the tool of the script... and that they did. As she took the chair to read you could literally see the consummate professional transforming into character, every voice inflection, every look, every

SHIRLEY SIMPSON continued to page 31





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### Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation Announce Underwater Museum of Art Sculpture Collaboration

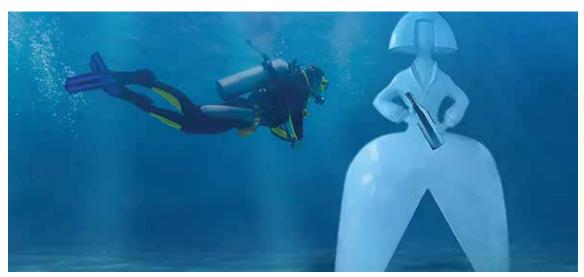
The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) is excited to announce a groundbreaking collaboration between the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA) and the Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation (FCSF) that will introduce a unique addition to the UMA's seventh annual installation. The Menina of the Reef: An Infinite Message (La Menina del Arrecife: Un Mensaje Infinito) sculpture by Spanish artist Antonio Azzato will be fabricated and deployed in the Summer of 2025 to raise awareness of FCSF's mission to provide support and peace of mind to cancer patients in Florida.

Since 2018, Azzato has reimagined Diego Velázquez's iconic 17th-century painting, Las Meninas or Ladies in Waiting, as a larger-than-life public art exhibition depicting a stylized version of the painting's subject, the Infanta Margaret Theresa. These sculptures, adorned with designs from international artists and celebrities, have graced the streets of Madrid, Spain each fall, and Caracas, Venezuela, with their sales supporting charitable causes. Now, for the first time, one of Azzato's sculptures will be submerged underwater, creating a living reef that fosters marine life and symbolizes the transformation and resilience of cancer patients and survivors. UMA deployment partner Walter Marine / The Reefmaker will work with Azzato to bring the Menina artwork to life

Azzato reflects on the significance of his latest work, stating,

"The Menina of the Reef is more than just a sculpture—it is a symbol of strength, transformation, and resilience. Just as the ocean nurtures new life around these underwater sculptures, I hope this artwork serves as a source of inspiration and renewal for those facing the challenges of cancer. It is an honor to see my work become part of this meaningful project, merging art, nature, and hope beneath the waves. More than 350 sculptures of my Meninas have traveled through the streets of different cities, conveying messages, and I am very happy because this will be the first Menina to deliver a very special message—only this time, from the depths of the sea."

Named in 2018 by TIME Magazine as one of 100 "World's Greatest Places" and recipient of the 2023 CODAAward for Collaboration of the Year, the UMA is the cornerstone of the CAA's Art In Public Spaces Program. It is produced in partnership with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association to create marine habitat and expand fishery populations while providing enhanced creative, cultural, economic and educational opportunities for the benefit, education and enjoyment of residents, students and visitors in Walton County. The UMA is located in a one-acre permit patch of seabed off Grayton Beach State Park, and the 2025 installation will expand the artwork count to 53. UMA sculptures are deployed with SWARA's existing USACOA and FDEPpermitted artificial reef projects,



including nine nearshore reefs located within one nautical mile of the shore in approximately 58 feet of water.

"This meaningful collaboration with the Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation reinforces the power of the Arts to uplift and inspire," said CAA President & CEO Jennifer Steele. "It is an honor to be associated with an international artist of Antonio Azzato's caliber to bring attention to Art as an artificial reef supporting marine health and as a form of support for our fellow

Thank you Destin!

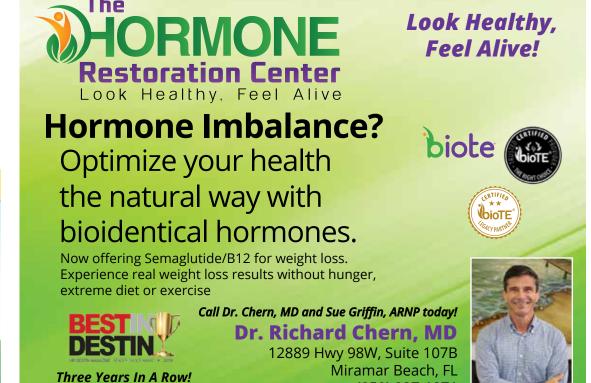


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Floridians facing life-changing challenges."

"The Menina of the Reef is a beacon of hope, connecting art, science, and philanthropy in a unique and profound way," shares Lynn Rasys, Executive

**CAA** continued to page 18



thehormonerestorationcenter.com



### Arts

### **CAA**

continued from page 17

Director, Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation. "A particularly meaningful part of this project is the opportunity for patients, survivors, and supporters to send their own 'message in a bottle'words of encouragement and strength that will be sealed in a time capsule within the sculpture. These messages will become part of the underwater reef, a lasting testament to the resilience of those facing cancer. "Through their participation, donors not only contribute to this symbolic



journey but also provide real assistance to patients in need. We are grateful for the vision of Dr. Raul Storey, the artistic brilliance of Antonio Azzato, and the international collaboration that has

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brought this project to life."

Raul Storey, MD, Co-Chair of the Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation, emphasizes the project's impact, stating, "This project is a testament to the power of collaboration, creativity, and compassion. Cancer patients face immense challenges, but like the ocean, they are constantly evolving, adapting, and finding new ways to thrive. The Menina of the Reef symbolizes this journey, and I hope it serves as a reminder that, even in the depths, beauty and strength can flourish."

Deployment of the 2025 UMA sculptures, which include Concretion by William Braithwaite (United Kingdom), Seahorse by Jessica Bradsher (Greenville, NC), The Neptunian Oak by Nathan Hoffman (High-

landville, MO), Happy Hour by Sarah Wilkinson (United Kingdom), and Hometown by Mandy Yourick (Panama City, FL), and The Menina of the Reef: An Infinite Message by Antonio Azzato (Spain) is slated for Summer 2025.

Select sculptures will be on display at the Dine + Dive UMA fundraiser, which will take place on Wednesday, April 30, from 6 to 9 p.m. Tickets for the event will be available for purchase at CulturalArtsAlliance.com beginning March 3. The artwork will also be on display during the 37th Annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival, which will take place on Saturday, May 3, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 4, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Both events will take place at Grand Boulevard Town Center.

2025 UMA Sponsors include Visit South Walton, the National Endowment for the Arts, Walter Marine / The Reefmaker, the St. Joe Community Foundation, the Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation, Beachy Blooms 30A, The Ellis Family, and Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa.

Project and sculpture sponsorships are still available. Please contact Gabby Callaway at gabby@culturalartsalliance.com for details. For more information on the timeline and events surrounding the installation, visit UMAFL.org.



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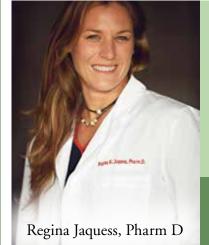
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### Understanding Acne: Insights from a Board-Certified Dermatologist

By Dr. Jessica Clark, Beach Dermatology Skin Wellness Clinic

Acne is one of the most common skin conditions affecting individuals worldwide, particularly during the teenage years. However, it can persist into adulthood, causing both physical and emotional distress. As a board-certified dermatologist, I have seen firsthand the impact acne can have on people's confidence and mental wellbeing. In this article, I'll explain what acne is, its causes, treatment options, and how you can manage it effectively.

#### **Causes of Acne**

The underlying cause of acne is multifactorial, meaning that a combination of factors can contribute to its development:

- **1. Excess Oil Production:** Sebaceous glands in the skin produce oil (sebum), which helps to protect the skin. However, excess sebum can clog pores, leading to acne formation.
- 2. Hormonal Changes: Hormones, particularly androgens, play a significant role in acne. These hormones can increase the size and activity of sebaceous glands. This is why acne often flares up during puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, or when using hormonal birth control.
- **3. Bacterial Growth:** The bacterium Propionibacterium acnes (P. acnes) naturally lives on the skin. However, when hair follicles are clogged, it can multiply rapidly, causing inflammation and infection.
- **4. Genetics:** A family history of acne can increase the likelihood of developing the condition.
- **5. Diet:** Some studies suggest that high-glycemic foods (like refined sugars and dairy) may exacerbate acne in some individuals.
- **6. Stress:** While stress doesn't directly cause acne, it can trigger flare-ups by increasing hormone levels and oil production.
- **7. Medications:** Certain medications, such as steroids or some birth control pills, can also contribute to acne.

### **Treatment Options for Acne**

While acne can be frustrating, the good news is that it is treatable. The key to managing acne effectively is understanding the severity of your condition and seeking the right treatment plan. Treatments vary from over-the-counter prod-

ucts to prescription medications, and in some cases, professional procedures.

#### **Topical Treatments:**

**Benzoyl Peroxide:** A popular over-the-counter treatment that kills bacteria and helps reduce inflammation.

**Salicylic Acid:** A beta hydroxy acid (BHA) that helps exfoliate the skin and unclog pores.

**Retinoids:** Derived from Vitamin A, retinoids help prevent clogged pores and reduce inflammation. They are available in both over-the-counter and prescriptionstrength formulas. Prescription strength is much stronger and more effective.

**Antibiotics:** Topical antibiotics, like clindamycin, reduce bacterial growth and inflammation.

#### **Oral Medications:**

**Oral Antibiotics:** In moderate to severe cases, antibiotics like tetracycline, doxycycline, and minocycline can help reduce bacteria and inflammation.

**Oral Contraceptives:** For women, birth control pills containing estrogen can help regulate hormonal fluctuations that trigger acne.

**Oral Spironolactone:** For women, if topicals alone are not providing clearance, this is an alternative to antibiotics that is safe and effective especially for cystic acne, or those suffering with adult female acne. We are using this more as we are trying to get away from using oral antibiotics.

**Isotretinoin** (Accutane): This medication is often used for severe, cystic acne. It reduces sebum production, prevents clogged pores, and decreases bacterial growth.

### **Professional Treatments:**

**Chemical Peels:** A dermatologist can apply a chemical solution to exfoliate the skin, helping to reduce acne and improve skin

**Laser Therapy:** Certain types of laser treatments target the oil glands, reduce bacteria, and improve the appearance of scars.

### Drainage and Extraction:

A dermatologist may use a sterile instrument to remove large cysts or comedones to reduce inflammation and prevent scarring.

### Prevention and Lifestyle Modifications

While it's not always possible to prevent acne entirely, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk and manage flare-ups:

- **1. Gentle Skin Care:** Wash your face twice a day with a gentle cleanser, but avoid scrubbing too hard or using harsh products that can irritate the skin and worsen acne.
- **2. Non-Comedogenic Products:** Use makeup, sunscreens, and moisturizers labeled "non-

comedogenic," which means they are formulated not to clog pores.

- **3. Avoid Picking or Squeezing:** Picking at acne can introduce bacteria into the skin and lead to scarring and more breakouts.
- **4. Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to keep your skin hy-

drated and flush out toxins.

**5. Manage Stress:** Practice stress-reducing activities such as yoga, meditation, or exercise.

To schedule an appointment or for more information, call Beach Dermatology Skin Wellness Clinic at (850) 238-8511.

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### **SOUTH WALTON EVENTS**

### The REP Rumpelstiltskin in Seaside Mondays

The Seaside REP Theatre presents Rumpelstiltskin Mondays at 6 p.m. through April 21, at the Seaside Amphitheater. Step into the magical storybook world of Rumpelstiltskin where young Biddy, a humble peasant girl, must spin straw into gold. There is only one problem. Biddy has no magical powers! Presented by the Seaside Merchants, this complimentary event will entertain the entire family.

#### Baytowne Wharf Boomin' Tuesday & DJ Dance Party

The Village of Baytowne Wharf is hosting a Boomin' Tuesday extravaganza every week March 18-April 1. Enjoy singing and dancing with DJ Mike Whitty in the Events Plaza from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Then watch as they light up the night sky with a breathtaking fireworks show over the lagoon at 8:30 p.m.

### The REP Snow White in Rosemary Beach

#### Wednesdays

The Seaside REP Theatre presents Snow White, kids theatre every Wednesday at St. Augustine Green in Rosemary Beach at 6 p.m. March 12 - April 16. Presented by The Merchants of Rosemary Beach, this complimentary event will entertain the entire family. Join Snow White on her thrilling adventure through the enchanted forest as she escapes the clutches of the Evil Queen. Along the way, she befriends seven lovable dwarfs and discovers the true meaning of friendship and kindness.

### SeaLight Festival Thursdays to Sundays

Kaleido Entertainment presents a dazzling wonderland of light and Chinese culture, running through April 13, 5:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., with last entrance at 8:30 p.m. at Seascape Golf, Beach & Tennis Resort in Miramar Beach. Tickets start at \$24.99 for adults and \$17.99 for children ages 12 and under. Purchase at sealightfestival.com. For more information, visit www. sealightfestival.com/destin.

Grand Boulevard Lawn Games Fridays & Saturdays

Bring the entire family out to Grand Boulevard to enjoy some fun! Spring Lawn Games will take over Grand Park from 5-8:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday through April 25. Grab some food and drinks from one of the many restaurants in Grand Boulevard before you settle in to a fun round of corn hole, giant lawn chess, checkers and more.

### Scallywag Sundays at Baytowne Wharf

Join Sandestin's Village of Baytowne Wharf for magic, music, and mayhem! Watch as featured pirate Captain Davy takes you on an adventure with two magic shows on stage at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sundays, March 16 - 30. Admission is free and open to the public.

### **Grayton Beach Wine Walk Every Third Thursday**

The Grayton Beach Wine Walk is held every third Thursday from 5-7 p.m. beginning at Shacks Art. Stroll around to 6

unique merchants and indulge in a variety of wines and horderves. Then head back to Shacks deck for dessert, more wine and Live Music. The Dancing Raffle starts at 7 p.m. Win great gifts from artists, merchants, and awesome local spots around 30A.

### Soiree On The Bay: Act IV March 14-15

Soiree On The Bay: Act IV, benefiting Children's Volunteer Health Network, will take place Friday, March 14th from 5-9 p.m. and Saturday, March 15th from 2-7 p.m. Enjoy a lavish gathering with fine wine, food and spirits. This weekend is presented by the Dugas family and will take place on their stunning family estate overlooking the Choctawhatchee Bay in Santa Rosa Beach.TICK-ETS: e.givesmart.com/events/pW4/

Friday night will feature an exciting auction, exclusive wine tastings, a live DJ and incredible cuisine provided by Cafe Thirty-A, while Saturday brings a spirited daytime affair starting at 2:00 pm, complete with bocce ball, bubbly, wine samples, and

delectable bites. The Tip Tops, returning for the fourth year, will keep the energy high with their crowd-pleasing Motown hits. Guests will capture memories in the event's photo booth and leave with a VIP bag.

The mission of CVHN is to eliminate the barriers to accessible and affordable healthcare for children in need through mobile solutions and community partnerships, cyhnkids.org.

### Emerald Coast Theatre Company: Go, Dog. GO! March 15-16

The show will run March 15 & 16 at 2 p.m. at ECTC's space in Grand Boulevard Town Center, P.D. Eastman's classic children's book comes to life on stage! These dogs delve into life with gusto as they snorkel, howl at the moon, and ride a ferris wheel. They even sing, dance, and climb trees! Like a pop-up book that comes to life, it's a big and little musical world of doggy fun that never stops. Tickets and information can be found at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.





### **SOUTH WALTON EVENTS**

### Mac & Cheese Festival at Destin Commons March 16

Join us at the Mac & Cheese Festival on Sunday, March 16 from 12-3 p.m. benefiting the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast. This family-friendly event will feature gourmet, chefinspired twists on the South's favorite comfort food. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit 7th Annual Mac & Cheese Festival. All proceeds from this event will go to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast.

### Caring and Sharing Spring Fashion Show March 23

Join Caring and Sharing of South Walton at the Annual Spring Fashion Show and Luncheon at Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Boutique shopping, silent auction, and photo booth will begin at Noon. Doors open to the fashion show at 12:30 p.m. During the event, guests will enjoy a fashion show, lunch, a complimentary welcome drink, a silent auction, music, a photo booth, and more!

Tickets are now on sale online. Purchase individual tickets (open seating) or tables of 8 guests with reserved seating this year. Tickets: https://springfashionshow2025.eventbrite.com

All funds raised at the Annual Fashion Show will allow Caring and Sharing of South Walton to continue providing food, utility, prescription, and basic need assistance to residents of South Walton County.

#### Alys Beach Spring Fling March 27

Join family and friends in

Alys Beach for the Spring Fling in the Amphitheatre on Thursday, March 27, from 4-6 p.m. This free, family-friendly event features music from DJ Shawn Frady, lawn games like cornhole, Kan-Jam, and Connect Four, as well as limbo, and a freeze dance contest. Get creative with kite making or sign up in advance to make your own tie-dye t-shirt. Bring your friends, family, and festive spirit for an afternoon of springtime fun! More info and t-shirt sign up link at alysbeach. com/event/spring-fling-in-theamphitheatre.

### Emerald Coast Theatre Company: The Tortoise and the Hare: Fast Friends, Slow Foes March 29-30

**Emerald Coast Theatre Com**pany presents The Tortoise and the Hare: Fast Friends, Slow Foes at ECTC's space in Grand Boulevard Town Center. The show will run March 29th at 9 a.m. and 30th at 2 p.m. In this madcap re-telling of The Tortoise and the Hare, the tortoise and hare just can't get along. They're constantly at odds and their feud becomes legendary among the woodland creatures. Can these two ever find common ground? Tickets and information can be found at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

#### **UNwineD March 28-29**

UNwineD is an incredible two-day celebration of craft beer, spirits, and wine set to take place on March 28 & 29 at Aaron Bessant Park in Panama City Beach. Savor the flavors of fine craft beer, award-winning wine, and delicious local cuisine pair-

ings

For more info and to purchase tickets, visit visitpanamacity-beach.com/unwined/. A portion of all ticket sales will benefit the Make-A-Wish, Heartland Animal Rescue and Beach Care Services charities.

### Sandestin Wine Festival April 10-13

The 38th Annual Sandestin Wine Festival at the Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort will take place April 10-13. Topping area polls as a must-experience event, this beloved festival offers four full days of unique events including wine dinners with celebrity chefs, yoga, live music, interactive experiences, culinary tents, and of course wine tastings. Tickets, schedule and lodging info: www.sandestinwinefestival.com.

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

### **Destin Charity Wine Auction April 25-26**

The Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) marks 20 years of fundraising with the 2025 Destin Charity Wine Auction, presented by the Jumonville Family, on April 25-26. Proceeds benefit 17 children's charities in Northwest Florida.

Patron packages are on sale now at dcwaf.org/tickets. Sponsorships available—contact info@dcwaf.org.

### **Event Highlights:**

April 25 – Patron Dinners: Exclusive vintner and chef pairings at private homes, supporting DCWAF charities.

April 26 – Charity Wine Auction: A Reserve Tasting & Live Auction at Grand Boulevard Sandestin Town Center featur-

ing world-class wines, gourmet cuisine, and high-energy bidding on rare wines, trips, and more.

The auction coincides with the South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival, offering hundreds of premium wines and culinary delights. Auction attendees receive access to the festival's Grand Tasting on April 27 at 1 p.m. Learn more at dcwaf.org/ auction.



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### Aging Gracefully: A Guide to Longevity and Vitality



#### By Dr. Karen DeVore

Aging is a privilege, but how we age is largely within our control. While genetics play a role, lifestyle choices and proactive health management significantly impact our vitality, mobility and overall well-being. The good news? You don't have to accept aches, fatigue and chronic diseases as inevitable. You can age on your own terms by implementing a few key strategies.

#### 1. Annual Check-Ins & Lab Work: Stay Ahead of the Game

Prevention is the cornerstone

of longevity. Annual health check-ups allow you to track changes, address concerns and monitor key health markers before minor issues become major problems. Many conditions—such as metabolic disorders, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis—develop silently over time, making regular lab work essential for early detection and intervention.

Too many people avoid these appointments due to frustration with dismissive healthcare providers. If your practitioner isn't listening to you or supporting your health goals, find a team that will. Healthcare should be a partnership, not a battle.

### **Key Lab Markers to Monitor:**

- Inflammation & Metabolic Health: CRP, fasting insulin, A1C
- Hormonal Balance: Thyroid panel, testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, DHEA
- Nutrient Status: Vitamin D, B12, ferritin, magnesium
- Cardiovascular Health: Lipid panel, homocysteine, ApoB

### 2.Listen to Your Body: Symptoms Matter

Your body is always communicating with you. Fatigue, brain fog, unexplained weight changes and joint pain aren't just random annoyances—they're signals. Ignoring them doesn't make them disappear; it only allows problems to worsen over time.

Being proactive about your health doesn't mean dismissing symptoms in the name of "natural" healing. It means staying in tune with your body, recognizing patterns and addressing imbalances early. You know your body better than any textbook or algorithm—if something feels off, advocate for yourself.

### 3. Know Your Family's Aging Patterns

While lifestyle choices have the greatest impact on longevity, understanding your genetic predispositions can help you make informed decisions. Look at how your parents and siblings are aging. Are they dealing with cognitive decline, cardiovascular issues or bone loss? Genetics don't determine your fate, but they do provide insight into potential vulnerabilities. By identifying patterns, you can take proactive steps to mitigate risks through targeted lifestyle and medical interventions.

### 4. The Fundamentals Never Get Old

Some health advice remains timeless because it works. If you want to age gracefully, these fundamentals are non-negotiable:

- Movement is medicine. If you don't use it, you lose it. Regular exercise supports mobility, cardiovascular health and cognitive function.
- Hydration matters. Dehydration contributes to fatigue, joint pain and poor circulation.
- Sleep is the ultimate reset. Quality sleep is essential for hormone balance, brain function and immune resilience.
- Laughter truly is the best medicine. Joy and social connection improve mental and emotional health while reducing stress and inflammation.
- You are what you eat. A nutrient-dense, whole-food diet

fuels longevity and vitality.

### 5. Muscle Mass: The Fountain of Youth

One of the most powerful predictors of longevity? Muscle mass. Research consistently links muscle maintenance with reduced mortality risk, improved metabolic health and greater resilience against age-related diseases such as osteoporosis, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

#### Why Muscle Matters:

- Improves metabolism and helps regulate blood sugar
- Reduces fall risk by supporting balance and coordination
- Strengthens bones through mechanical stress, helping prevent osteoporosis
- Supports cognitive health by enhancing blood flow and reducing inflammation

The takeaway? It's never too late to build muscle. Resistance training—even starting in your 70s or 80s—can lead to significant improvements in strength, mobility and longevity.

continued on page 23



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### Wellness

### Medicare's Alphabet



By Christian Regalado

If you have looked into getting a Medicare plan for yourself or someone else, you may have been confused by all the letters used in Medicare. What are Parts A, B, C and D? Are they different from Plans G and N? Do I enroll during the AEP or OEP period or do I have a SEP?

Fortunately, you really don't need to know all of this. To simplify, when you first qualify for Medicare, which for most people is when they turn 65, Medicare will enroll you in Part A, which covers some costs incurred in the hospital and normally, if you have worked over 10 quarters, doesn't cost you anything.

But wait! You can't stop there.

You will need Part B, which covers medical costs outside of the hospital at about 80%. If you are collecting social security, you will automatically be enrolled about three months before your 65th birth month. If not, you need to apply at ssa.gov/medicaid.

What about Parts C and D? Well, Part C represents Medicare Advantage plans and Part D is for prescription drug coverage. These are private insurance plans outside of Medicare, which you will have to apply for.

Medicare options are many and can be confusing. That is why the free services of a certified broker can help you sort through all your options and based on your particular needs, help you select the best plans for you.

If you decide to go on an Advantage plan, you technically have come off Original Medicare and are now on Part C which in most cases includes your prescription drug coverage or Part

Should you decide to stay on original Medicare, most people select a Supplement plan which pays most of the 20% that Medicare doesn't cover. This is where you can select either a Supplement Plan G or Plan N. There are many other Supplement Plans but the majority of people select a plan G or N.

So what is AEP, OEP and SEP? These are enrollment periods which allow you to enroll in a Medicare plan. AEP is the annual period from October 15 to December 7 that allows those on an Advantage plan to make a change for the following year. The OEP or open enrollment period runs January through March and allows those on an Advantage plan to make one Advantage plan change should they need it.

SEP is simply a "Special Enrollment Period" which allows someone to sign up for an Advantage plan and is normally triggered by a move or another loss of coverage

So there. Please don't try to remember this because you probably won't. What you do need to remember is to call a Medicare

broker that is trained to know all of this and more. Their job is to learn about what type of services you will need and to help you match it to the right kind of cov-

Should you have any questions or need help, please contact me. 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)

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### AGING GRACEFULLY

 $continued \ from \ page \ 22$ 

#### **Aging on Your Own Terms**

Aging gracefully isn't about avoiding every wrinkle or pretending time isn't passing. It's

about maintaining independence, vitality and quality of life for as long as possible. It's about making informed choices, staying proactive with your health and surrounding yourself with a supportive healthcare team.

Longevity isn't just about

adding years to your life—it's about adding life to your years. Take care of your body now, and it will take care of you in the decades to come.

I'd be honored to support you on your wellness journey. Let's create a personalized plan that nurtures your unique body, helping you feel vibrant, strong and at ease as you age gracefully. Schedule a consultation with me at the Tortoise Clinic (850.267.5611)—because you deserve to feel your best, every step of the way.

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Wellness



REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MCMANUS, LCSW

### Book Review: Secure Love by Julie Menanno

**Blood Sugar:** How's Yours?

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 relationship, 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



By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, HealthyDay HealthyLife

I don't know of anyone who doesn't know someone who is either pre-diabetic or diagnosed with type II diabetes. I decided to write about it in hopes of equipping people to take charge of their health and be equipped to support those they know.

We have insulin receptors throughout the body. Insulin, which is released by the pancreas, stimulates these cell receptors which allows glucose to leave the bloodstream and enter the cell. The receptors can be damaged by free radicals. These free radicals steel electrons from molecules of cells and tissues and this includes the receptors. When this happens, it causes oxidative stress which results in inflammation.

Oxidative stress and inflammation are the underlying pathologies to nearly every chronic degenerative disease.

The lifestyle choices that can contribute to this cycle are smoking, lack of vitamin and mineral intake, environmental toxins, excessive sugar consumption and sedentary lifestyles.

Glucose is used as fuel by the mitochondria of the cells to give us energy. When we eat and/or drink, insulin is released in response to rising sugar levels. Think of insulin as the key and the receptors as the lock. Once this process happens the glucose is metabolized in the mitochondria and converted to ATP (adenosine triphosphate-energy currency molecule).

As inflammation grows and persists due to an overabundance of sugar intake the lock becomes deformed and can no longer hold its molecular shape. This prevents the key from being able to open the lock (receptor).

And it's not only the receptors which are damaged but the arterial walls and the LDL cholesterol. This cycle leads not only to type II diabetes but loss of kidney function, loss of circulation

to extremities, stroke or heart attack are also of concern.

Type I diabetes happens when the beta cells are not producing enough insulin; the keys are missing. Type II diabetes occurs when the receptors become 'rusty'; they no longer have the correct molecular shape to receive insulin. This is insulin resistance.

To overcome this cycle, drugs are used to reduce blood sugar levels or insulin is given to overwhelm the receptors and force the glucose into the cells. However, any rapid rise of insulin, either artificially or naturally, occurring from eating high glycemic foods causes even more oxidative damage!

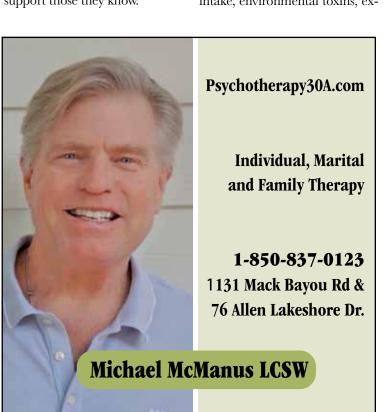
The cell continually makes new insulin receptors and IF the new ones are correctly shaped, they can be protected by a constant source of antioxidants so insulin sensitivity can prevail. Here are the lifestyle choices to get and keep this important cycle in shape:

- Exercise 30-60 minutes daily
- Consume 30-40 grams of soluble and insoluble fiber daily
- Avoid trans fats
- Eat low glycemic foods
- Reduce stress
- Quality sleep -7-9 hours
- Supplementation

If you have compromised kidney function, you must be careful regarding mineral intake. It should be decreased, but can still offer benefits.

If you would like to view the supplemental protocol prescribed by a doctor you can reach out to me via email. Please put DIABETES in the subject line.

Here's to Heath! succeed.hdhl@gmail.com









By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

Do you ever find yourself exhausted, irritated and resentful when a person in your life won't start or stop certain behavior? Maybe they don't take care of themselves as you think they should or they won't stop a habit you think is negative. Maybe you want them to study more, drink less, exercise more, be happier, be more punctual, focus better, work less, be less angry, be less critical, parent differently or relax more. Behavior of others that is not aligned with your life approach can create significant discomfort and can feel annoying or even infuriating.

How do you respond to difficult behavior? Common approaches include passive aggressive remarks, nagging, withdrawing or saying mean things. While these strategies give a momentary sense of "taking action," none produce meaningful change. Often, your desire for change comes from a positive desire for the person to

### The Only Person You Can Change Is You

have a good life. Other times, the desire for change is motivated by you believing your way is the right way and everyone else should just get on board. Regardless of the motivation, you can't change other people. Period. Science and years of experience reveal humans change when the discomfort of their current behavior outweighs the inherent discomfort of change.

Change is an internal job. People change when they decide they are willing to do the uncomfortable and unfamiliar work of trying something new even when it is difficult. No amount of external pressure from you has the power to motivate change in another. While hard to accept, it is incredibly freeing to realize it has never been and will never be your job to get someone else to change. You can invest the energy you've been putting into changing others into your internal work of change and growth. So, how do you shift from trying to change others to engaging personal growth?

### 12 Ways to Engage Personal Growth and Stop Trying to Change Others

**Notice.** Notice frustrated, irritated, annoyed, angry, resentful energy you are feeling toward someone. Notice where you feel it in your body. Try being curious about the origin of the feelings. Notice patterns of irritated

feelings and how they relate to a pattern of behavior in the other person.

**Admit.** Ask yourself if you are trying to control or change someone else's behavior. Am I trying to get someone to start or stop a behavior? If the answer is yes, admit to yourself you are trying to control something you can't control.

**Remind.** Remind yourself

despite your best desires and efforts, you have never and will never have the power to change another person.

**Rest.** Rest into the reality and freedom of not being responsible for changing others.

**Decide.** Decide how you will respond to difficult behavior. You are in charge of your response despite the behavior of someone else.

**Discover.** Look inside yourself to discover the deeper reasons the behavior is bothering you. Do you have historical wounds around the behavior? Is the behavior a barrier to connection in your relationship? Does the behavior scare you? Does feeling out of control

Continued on page 27





141 Mack Bayou Loop, Suite 102, Santa Rosa Beach 12909 Panama City Beach pkwy, Panama City Beach, FL 32407



## **Road to Redemption:** Hannah Rodriguez – Electronics and Anxiety in Children

By Victoria Ostrosky

For a multitude of Americans, life seems plagued with stress and uncertainty. Anxiety cripples not only adults, but children and teens in an increasing number. While some adults have learned, to an extent, to deal with and overcome anxiety and fear, young children don't as yet possess those skills.

We know stress and anxiety aren't new, of course. The Bible is filled with life stories of despair turning to hope and peace. It's easy to read the stories, but absorbing their lessons and making them our own takes practice and steadfastness of purpose. As the Psalmist David prayed – "thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path."

Hannah Rodriguez, one of the counselors at Lunday Counseling Center in Destin, comes alongside and works primarily with children and adolescents. She knows the extent to which many are dealing with fear and uncertainty and insecurity. Hannah has found that

access to electronics is a huge contributing factor in creating anxiety, particularly in young people. "The more time they spend on electronics, the more anxious they become. They aren't developing tools and skills to find ways to deal with their emotions."

In the eons before electronics, children played outside, used their imaginations to build things and play games with other friends or just by themselves. Friend groups were small and face-to-face. Now, we deal with anyone anywhere in



the world. As Hannah says about children, "they need to do things with their hands to be creative, that they can go to when they're feeling anxious to calm themselves down." Art has always been a wonderful way to express ourselves and release emotion, rather than keeping it pent up inside.

Because children model what they see, it's incumbent upon parents and other adults to be positive role models. "Parents need to make sure they're setting an example that aligns with the Word of God. Words have such power. Avoid negative and critical words." As parents exemplify self-control, children will feel safe. "Have clear boundaries and discipline. Follow through or they won't trust you."

Young children, as parents learn early on, love to push against the fence, as it were. They want to know if the rules mom and dad have set are real or not. Those boundaries, when they're enforced, make children feel safe. It's a safety net, as it were. It tells them they are loved. Nowadays,

the thinking appears to be that losing is always bad. But any successful person will tell you that's not true. "Allow children to lose. It's important to fail. It is important to their development as they learn to solve their own problems. Guide them but allow them to work to solve the problem."

Hannah understands the threats our children face daily online, and she stresses the importance of the family spending time together in the Word. "We must get our priorities straight. He is what holds everything together." A great rule to follow as a family is to find ways to do things together. Laughing together creates a bond. The stronger and more unified the marriage, the more the children will feel secure.

God placed us in families for a reason. He also surrounded us with community that is essential to our maturity. As believers, we are reminded that Jesus has given us His peace. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." Getting in the Word and memorizing scripture works like medicine to the soul. The more you know and the more you experience the presence of God, the less stress and anxiety you will have, and that isn't age dependent. There is no fast fix. As Jesus said - "abide in Me and I will abide in you."

You can listen to Hannah Rodriguez' 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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### The Phenomenon of Snow and Getting Unstuck



By Kirk McCarley

Folks are attracted to Florida for a variety of reasons. Beaches, amusement parks, a positive business and living environment, and favorable year-round weather head the list.

Though our weather is for the most part tropical in nature, those of us in the northern tier of the state occasionally incur a taste of winter: chilly, bracing nights delivering freezing temperatures in which we break out the winter jackets, toss a few logs into the fireplace, and prepare a hearty chili or soup.

Snow and other freezing precipitation are a rarity. In fact,

the last measurable snowfall in these parts has arguably been 30 or more years in the past.

The morning of Tuesday, January 21 started off raw. By mid-afternoon, I witnessed a phenomenon I had not seen during my eight years in the panhandle: snow! Snow, and lots of it. Throughout the afternoon and into the early evening 3-4" had accumulated in our Walton County neighborhood. Milton, to the north of Pensacola and not far from us, had been the prior record holder for most snow in one event in Florida at 4". At the end of the day, that community still held the record, but now at 10"!

Those 10" in one day represented the most snow in a 24-hour period to date this winter compared to any other weather reporting station...in Canada!

Further, we possess no snow removal equipment other than the patience of waiting for the next day to bring sunshine and a thaw. Some who were so bold as to venture out on that Tuesday got stuck. Stuck.

I hear that often from clients. Mostly it pertains to work and career. "I'm no longer challenged in what I do. Yet I've invested a lot of time with this organization. The work is predictable. And I am eligible for retirement in only 8...10...12 more years." Some of us call that the "golden handcuff syn-

drome"—the spoils of labor so

close, yet so far away.

So, we become stuck and imprisoned by our need for security, predictability, and living up to expectations that are often not ours. We settle. And far too often through settling we fall into victimhood. The unexpected snowfalls of our lives become company mergers leading to downsizings, closures, and subsequent job losses. So much for predictability. "I never thought it was going to happen to me."

I get that we have responsibilities to provide for our families and ourselves. Yet we also have a responsibility, I believe, to seek to be our very best version for our families and ourselves. What is your unique talent or gift and how are you applying it? How can it bring about joy for others and fulfillment for you?

Coaches help clients discover their nirvana and then develop plans to act upon their dreams and ambitions. If that's you, reach out today to an International Coaching Federation (ICF) accredited coach. We can help.

I was working with a client who has experienced success in many areas of his life including career and family. He had also done well financially and admittedly enjoyed making money. I asked him about the driver to pursue monetary reward. Was it that wealth allowed him to pursue possessions? Was it a competitive "game" that provided a measurement of how he was doing?

He paused to collect himself for a moment. He shared about having experienced and seen a lot. In particular, he has witnessed distress and suffering in his community. He has felt compelled to do what he could to help. His reason for pursuing wealth was to be a solution for some of those in need. That's his driver. Again, he realizes he can't assist everyone; instead, his fulfillment comes from helping

My job as a coach is now to help him discover how to most effectively do that.

My friend has already escaped the snowdrift, is unstuck, and ready to plow ahead. What do you similarly need to do next to make your difference?

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

### THE ONLY PERSON

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create feelings of insecurity for you? Do you hold a belief that bad things will happen if others don't do things the way you do?

**Sort.** Sort whether the difficult behavior is something you can let go. Every behavior does not need to change. Sometimes making space for the other person to be different than you without judgment is most helpful. If you determine the behavior is truly causing problems, reach for directness rather than nagging.

**Communicate**. If you've identified the behavior as a true

problem, calmly and directly communicate your concerns. Try going light on judgment and asking curious questions to understand the other person's perspective about the behavior.

**Boundaries.** Decide what you will do or not do if the behavior continues long-term. Follow through on boundaries over time.

**Model.** Model healthy behavior in your interactions with the other person. If you are asking them to relax more, prioritize relaxing. Try modeling with a joyful attitude rather than one of judgment.

**Encourage.** Verbally acknowledge positive change the

other person makes regarding the difficult behavior.

**Accept.** If the other person chooses not to change the behavior, accept their choice. You can't make them choose differently. In-

stead, focus on how you will interact in the relationship.

Accepting you can't change anyone but yourself is uncomfortable, but freeing. Lean into the freedom and be gracious with yourself and others as you navigate letting go of trying to change others. Connect with us for counseling and coaching along your journey at Journeybravely.com.





### Musings



### Sean of the South: Scouts

By Sean Dietrich

"I started choking," said Jennifer Yakubesan.

It was a typical evening, some years ago. The family was eating supper before church, somewhere in the wilds of Michigan. It was spaghetti. The flagship food of happy families.

"I looked at my husband and my son, and I started to make this kind of patting on my chest."

Enter her son, Andrew. He was 13. A Scout.

Jennifer was about to lose consciousness when she felt her son's arms wrap around her. He wedged his fist below her sternum. He squeezed.

The Heimlich maneuver is not simple. It requires strength. The Heimlich didn't work. So Andrew slapped his mother's back. Someone taught him to do that.

Andrew was given the National Merit Award by the Scouts.

Which leads me to my next story, approximately six states away. Scout Troop 1299, of Allen, Texas, was on a bus trip to Wyoming.

They had a few days to kill in Yellowstone National Park.

"We were on our way to lunch," said Brian, an adult volunteer. "We were passing by these falls, and we were like, 'Let's just stop real quick and let the adults take some pictures,"

They parked. Deboarded. Everyone's dad stretched his respective lumbar region. A stranger ran up to the group and frantically asked if there was a doctor on the bus.

A doctor, no. Scouts, yes.

In moments, scouters found a woman having an emergency on the trail. She was lying in the dirt. It was cardiac arrest. An off-duty nurse was already performing chest compressions.

The Scouts fetched the automated external defibrillator (AED) from the bus.

Why did a bunch of average kids from Texas have a piece of expensive portable medical equipment on their bus? The answer is: Because they were Scouts.

Today, the woman is alive and well.

Here's another. In Claiborne County, Tennessee, Crystal Thacker took meds and had an allergic reaction. One minute she was fine; the next, she was on the floor, dying.



"It almost felt like when your foot's asleep," she remembers, "...it was very hard to breathe."

Crystal's 16-year-old son, Stewart, knew his mother was in anaphylactic shock. He also knew what to do while first responders were en route. This is because Stewart was a Scout and had over 200 hours of medical training.

"I took an old blanket," said Stewart, "...and made sort of a sunroof shelter, and reapplied ice packs. And then the ambulance showed up."

Stewart was presented with the National Certificate of Merit.

When I was a kid, there were roughly 5 million Boy Scouts on the planet. I was one. Twenty U.S. presidents were Scouts. John Wayne was a Scout. Neil Armstrong. Sam Walton. Hank Aaron. Martin Luther King Jr.

Today, however, there are approximately 1 millions Scouts left in the U.S. The reason for this sharp decline isn't important. I'm not here to raise issues.

I do, however, want to deliver a message to any kids who are thinking about joining the Scouts but are unsure about it since their friends think Scouting is nerdy. Scouting is a lot more than building birdhouses and making wallets.

The Boy Scouts of America save lives.

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### A Pastor's Ponderings: Sleeping Out



By Rev. Pete Hyde

The small tent was set up in the backyard next to the pasture that bordered the northeast Kansas base housing subdivision. Two junior high boys were going to "sleep out" on a warm, breezy summer night. Meadowlarks quieted their familiar songs as the sun went down. The boys gathered with other neighborhood kids for a game of backyard touch football. The sun dipped below the horizon without any of them noticing until they couldn't see the football any longer and they all drifted off home for the evening.

The boys cooked a couple of hot dogs over a coffee can filled with a few pieces of charcoal and washed them down with a cold bottle of strawberry pop. Marshmallows were roasted (burned) for dessert and they settled into the tent when the mosquitoes began buzzing around. They spent the evening talking about whatever seventh grade boys talk about when there are no adults around. To be sure, it was not an altogether wholesome conversation that accompanied the giggles of junior high boys.

Lights in the houses began to flicker out. The noise of the neighborhood slowly diminished. Crickets and katydids began their nightly chorus. As the night got quiet, the boys drifted off to sleep. Sometime in the night, the lonely wail of the train whistle in the distance woke one of them up. The train track was at least a mile away. The quiet of the dark night carried the cry of the train whistle as the train approached a crossing.

The awoken lad got up and exited the tent and looked toward the sound across the open Kansas countryside. There, in the direction of the lonesome whistle, was a passenger train - a Santa Fe Super Chief - making its way toward Topeka in the middle of the night. In the daylight, the red and silver engine and cars were a sight to behold for children of all ages. Lights shone in the individual windows of the cars. The lighted dome of the observation car glowed like a beacon in the dark Kansas night. The whistle cried out once again. The boy wondered who was on the train. Where were they going in the middle of the night? Where was their journey taking them?

Every time I hear a lonesome train whistle, I remember that night and I reflect on my journey. From those seemingly carefree days of childhood and youth (Only carefree when you look back on them as an adult with adult problems and issues) to the step into retirement, I wonder in the night about the journey. Many times, it too was a lonely

journey in the night led by the wailing, lonesome train whistle. But most of the time it was a wonderful journey filled with joy, anticipation, love, grace and the presence of God.

As I head to my granddaughter's house this morning to spend the day with her, I thank God for the journey, as rough and lonely as it was at times. "God if this is where the lonely nights of the journey have ended up, I am glad you were in control, even when I wanted so badly to be in control."

journey God has set before you. No matter where you are on that journey – in the darkest of night or the glorious light of presence of Almighty God, He is with you.

S. Marlin Hedges writes in "Finishing Well" by Bob Buford (good read):

When I walk to the edge Of all the light I have And take that step into The darkness of the unknown I believe one of two things will happen.

There will be something Solid for me to stand on Or I will be taught to fly."

Jeremiah 29: 11-14a says: "For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord.

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



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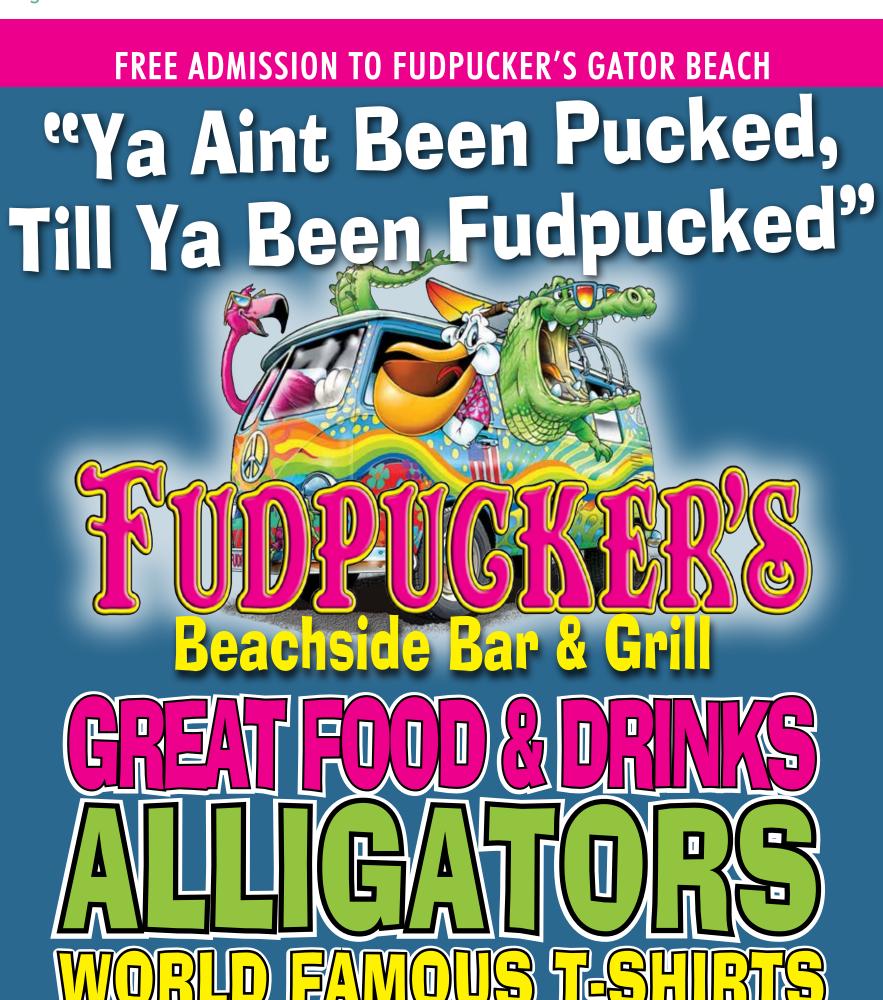
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Dining



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### Dining

### **Scratch Biscuit Kitchen Reopens** With New Menu and **Expanded Hours**

Exciting news for food lovers in South Walton - Scratch Biscuit Kitchen is expanding its hours and launching a brandnew dinner menu! After a brief pause, the beloved biscuit spot reopened on February 15, and is now open with expanded hours from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, serving a new all-day menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

New menu items include:

- Made-from-scratch with our secret 24-hour brine, never frozen, lightly dusted, and fried to a crispy Southern golden brown: Buttermilk Chicken Tenders, Crispy Wings and Honey Ale-Basted Chicken Thighs
- Blackened Bayou Bird Sandwich (Spicy Blackened Chicken Breast, White Cheddar, Jalapeno, Lettuce, Tomato, Avocado on Brioche Bun)
- New Sides including Mac N' Cheese, Coleslaw and Boston Beans
- Beers, Wines, Bloody Marys, Screwdrivers and Popsicle Mimosas

Stop by for the \$12 Lunchbox Special (available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.), which includes the special of the day, as well as your choice of side, dessert and beverage.



#### SHIRLEY SIMPSON

continued from page 16

gesture told the story...you could not take your eyes off her. Shirley and I talked about it and she decided to tackle Shirley Valentine next. Again, a captivating performance, but this time the artist in Shirley was able to breathe into the confidence that was gained with the Katherine Hepburn performance. She came off stage with such joy and life. At the next lunch she told me that someone had stopped her in Publix and reprimanded her for not coming back out. The audience had been giving her a standing ovation and this person was disappointed that she did not return to the stage for another bow. What they didn't know is that Shirley and I were too busy celebrating her performance backstage! It's like new life had been given to her, and she had such joy in performing again.

One lunch Shirley chuckled as I sat down and let me know that the night before, a waiter at Vintj Food and Wine had asked her if her son was joining her today. She said, "I don't have a son." The waiter replied, "What about that bald guy you always have lunch with?!"

I could go on and on about Shirley's wit, creativity, passion for life and more. How our lunches were a welcome break that we both looked forward to. How theatre brought two people together and set the stage for a beautiful friendship. How her passion for life and theatre encouraged and inspired me every time I had the pleasure of being around her. But...I know she would also say, "Nathanael, a good play has great edits!" So, I'll end by sharing this. At the last few lunches we had together, Shirley would recognize that our time together might be limited and I would tell her I didn't want to talk about it. She would respond, "Nathanael, I've had a good run. Look at my life, I've had a great run of it."

Yes, Shirley, you have had a great run. I and those that got to be a part in your narrative, that had the honor of being a character in the play of your life, are better for it. You were a gift; an elegant, charming, quick witted gift, that we will always treasure. So, without the expectation of another bow Shirley, I give you an eternal standing ovation in my





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### The Health Benefits of Playing a Musical Instrument

Playing a musical instrument offers more than just an avenue for creativity or entertainment, it can also contribute significantly to mental, emotional, and physical health. Whether you're strumming a guitar, playing the piano, drumming or writing a song, the act of making music can have profound positive effects on the body and mind.

Mental Health Benefits

One of the most well-known benefits of playing an instrument is its positive impact on mental health. Music has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety levels. When you focus on playing an instrument, your mind is often occupied with the intricate details of rhythm, melody, and technique, which can serve as a form of mindfulness. This focus helps to calm one's nerves, reducing cortisol levels, a stress hormone. Playing music activates areas of the brain linked to emotions, enhancing mood, and a sense of accomplishment.

Playing an instrument also improves thinking abilities. Re-

search suggests that musicians have better memory, attention, and problem-solving skills than non-musicians. The process of learning and playing music exercises the brain in ways that improve concentration and mental agility. For example, reading music requires deciphering symbols, which improves your ability to interpret complex information. Additionally, playing in time with a rhythm improves coordination between the mind and body, a skill transferable to other activities.

### **Emotional Well-being** and Social Benefits

Music has a profound ability to express and regulate emotions. Many musicians find that playing an instrument serves as an emotional outlet, to release pent-up feelings or to process complex emotions. This emotional expression can increase feelings of happiness.

The rewards of playing music with others help develop longterm friendships and a sense of belonging. Group performances,



such as orchestras, bands or song writing, encourage collaboration and teamwork. Those who attend music concerts or a live local band performance can foster a similar sense of group support.

### **Physical Health Benefits**

Playing a musical instrument can also provide physical health benefits, especially for those who regularly practice. Instruments such as the piano or guitar require dexterity and hand-eye coordination, which strengthens fine motor skills. The repetitive nature of practicing a piece of music also promotes muscle memory and improves hand and finger strength. For wind and

brass instrument players, blowing into instruments strengthens the lungs and diaphragm, improving respiratory function.

Playing an instrument can improve posture and balance. Musicians, especially those who perform standing or playing larger instruments like the guitar, bass, violin, or trumpet need to maintain an upright position for extended periods. This helps to strengthen core muscles and improve overall body posture. Playing an instrument can even burn calories, though not in the same way as exercise, performing actively on an instrument engages the body and uses energy, promoting better physical health.

Playing a percussion instrument like a drum set, as young as 6 and up to 60, provides count ability, muscle coordination, communication from head to hands and feet, tempo management, beat creation and a balanced consistent movement of music rhythms.

### **Cognitive Development** in Children

For children, learning to play an instrument provides a wide range of cognitive and developmental advantages. Studies show that young musicians tend to perform better academically, particularly in areas such as mathematics, language, and reading comprehension. The skills developed through music such as pattern recognition, critical thinking, and memorization help children in other subjects. Learning an instrument at a young age helps children develop discipline, patience, and time management skills.

#### Conclusion

The health benefits of playing a musical instrument are vast and varied, offering advantages for mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Whether it's reducing stress, improving cognitive function, or fostering social connections, playing an instrument contributes to a healthier, more balanced life. If you haven't yet picked up an instrument, now is the perfect time to start. Your mind, body, and soul will thank you.

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### **Live Music Scene**

#### **Stars & Guitars Benefit Concert April 3**

The Stars & Guitars benefit concert is set for Thursday, April 3rd at 7 p.m. in Aaron Bessant Park. Raising funds for Gulf Coast Children's Advocacy Center and featuring headliner, Clint Black. Clint Black is a celebrated country music artist with an impressive career. He has released over 30 singles on the US Billboard country charts, with 22 of them reaching number one. Visit www.gulfcoastcac.org to purchase tickets.

#### **Sinfonia Classical Connections April 4**

Sinfonia Gulf Coast presents Classical Connections: Howard Levy, Harmonica + Piano at the Destin High School on Friday, April 4 at 7:30am. To view seating options and purchase tickets, visit sinfoniagulfcoast.org.

Prepare to be awed by the talents of Howard Levy, twotime Grammy award-winning pianist, diatonic harmonica player, and composer.

### **Record Store Day at Central Square Records April 12**

Central Square Records will be celebrating Record Store Day Saturday, April 12! Doors open at 8 a.m. with this year's exclusive 'RSD Drops' releases at the ready along with Jittery Joe's coffee. Central Square will have exclusive vinyl releases, unique to this day, from a vast array of artists, from the likes of Charli xcx, David Bowie, the Cure, Fleet-



wood Mac, Laufey, the Grateful Dead, and many more!

You can expect a boatload of exclusive items, rare and limited pressed vinyl, great freebies, as we celebrate everything vinyl. Come celebrate the independent record store with the coolest one on the Gulf Coast! Visit www.recordstoreday.com.

#### **Old Florida Fish House** Weekdays

For over a decade, Old Flor-

ida 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.

#### **FOOW Live Music Fridays** and Sunday Brunch

Enjoy live music on Fridays and for Sunday Brunch at FOOW - Fish Out of Water. The Gulf front restaurant invites you to delicious dining paired with live music. Visit foow30a.com.

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

AJ's is the place to be to celebrate all things Sunday Funday in Grayton Beach! Come for brunch, stay for the music and dancing. Every Sunday from 11 a.m. til 3 p.m., AJ's brunch is not to be missed. Complete your meal with a mimosa or go all in with their famous Build Your Own Bloody Mary bar. Sunday afternoon essentials include crawfish and cold beers

-- starting at noon. Indulge in fresh, flavorful crawfish served with traditional sides of corn, new potatoes & mushrooms. Enjoy live music 12-4 p.m. with the Christon Birge Duo and again at 5 p.m. with the Pickled Pickers. Check ajsgrayton.com for other live music throughout the week.

#### 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

LIVE MUSIC continued on page 34











### Music / Community

#### **LIVE MUSIC**

continued from page 33

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.

#### Baytowne Wednesday Night Concert Series

Live music concerts take place in the Baytowne Events Plaza every Wednesday night from 7-9 p.m. Various local and regional artists perform throughout the year. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets. Free and open to the public.

March 12th: Modern Eldorados March 19th: Almost Famous March 26th: Clinch 46

#### **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:

March 12: Sugarcane Jane March 19: Sand Ole Opry: Mike Whitty, Jared Reynolds March 26: Sundown Strays

### 30Avenue Concert Series March 13-April 19

Come out to 30Avenue for the Spring Break Concert Series from 6-9 p.m. on the green, March 13 through April 19. Gather your people for dinner, sips, shopping and LIVE MUSIC under the stars in Inlet Beach, Florida. Guests are encouraged to bring a blanket or low-back lawn chairs. Visit www.thirtyavenue.com/calendar for the lineup.



## WCDWC Gathers to Celebrate Black History Month

The Walton County Democratic Women's Club participated in the celebration of Black History Month. President Karen McGee recited the poem "Knoxville Tennessee" by Nikki Giovanni as the crowd gathered at the historic Tivoli Gym in Defuniak. Keynote Speaker Drexel Harris appealed to the young people

to get out and vote. He reminded them of the struggle to achieve this right. He also spoke about Elijah McCoy, who invented lubricated systems for steam engines that are still in place today. The phrase "the real McCoy" was born from him, and is still used today anytime people want the real deal.

## Construction Industry Networking Event Draws Professionals in Santa Rosa Beach

Contractors Connect, held on Thursday, February 6, 2025, at AJ's Grayton Beach, brought together over 100 industry professionals, including notable attendees Sarah White of BeSpoke Consultants, and ensemble members Erin Bakker, Lindsay Lord, and Margaret Short.

The event provided networking opportunities for contractors, subcontractors, designers,

realtors, bankers, and insurance agents.

Builders FirstSource highlighted two key announcements: A new truss plant grand open-

ing on May 8, 2025 Celebration of Sales Manager

Gelebration of Sales Manager John Pugh's 40th birthday

### 2025 Thursdays Contractors Connect Schedule:

April 3: Harrison Kitchen Bar, Panama City May 1: AJ's Grayton Beach June 5: Escambia County August 14: AJ's Grayton Beach September 4: Escambia County October 2: Harrison Kitchen

Bar, Panama City November 6:

AJ's Grayton Beach December 4: Escambia County





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### Small Ways to Make Your Insurance Work for You



By Julie A. Martin Dear Gentle Readers,

The mere mention of insurance is liable to put red spots in your cheeks and in your eyes, but have no fear, I am about to share some insider secrets on what you can do to your policies that make them more cost effective for you.

Are you ready?

Property Damage Liability in auto insurance is typically chosen with bodily injury liability in split limit increments such as 10/20//10 with the second 10K being the property damage liability limit. Most carriers offer other choices, such as 20K, 25K, or even 50K property damage liability with the 10/20 split limits. With 25/50 BI you may have options of 25K, 50K or even 100K liability.

The price difference between limits in Property Damage Liability can be less than a case of soda, on a six month or annual basis. It is generally best to opt for the highest property damage limit you can get with your chosen liability limits, as it creates an extra buffer for you, and it is

only slightly more expensive than you would have paid for your insurance anyway.

Comprehensive coverage is another area where you may opt to save yourself some money in case of a flood, hurricane, fire, vandalism or other event where your car might be damaged by an incident not involving collision.

Most folks have \$500 deductibles on Comprehensive and Collision coverage, and that is what many would consider standard. But, I will share a secret with you.

Most of the time, you can decrease your Comprehensive deductible from \$500 to \$250, that's right, cut it right in half, for less than a double-blended Venti Frappuccino at Starbucks with extra drizzle.

Insurance is for you, so that you can be made whole again in the event something happens. To make it easier for you to be indemnified, making small adjustments to your existing coverage will help you feel better about the coverage you have.

Now let's talk about Uninsured Motorist Coverage. First, let me say that we do not have a requirement to carry Bodily Injury Liability in the State of Florida. The minimum required

↑ ↑ ↑ →

coverage in order to be "street legal" for most people, is 10K Property Damage Liability and 10K Personal Injury Protection.

Now, you're going to ask me, what if they hit someone?

THAT'S why we have uninsured motorist coverage, in case you get hurt in an accident that is not your fault.

Here's how this works in Florida. First, you go through your 10K in Personal Injury Protection (PIP), which pays 80/20 medical expenses minus your deductible—say you have a \$500 deductible on PIP.

10K in medical expenses minus \$500 deductible (80/20) would equal \$7,500 in medical expenses.

What if you have \$30,000 in medical bills?

You have several choices when it comes to Uninsured Motorist (UM) coverage. Stacked and Unstacked equal to

your current Bodily Injury Liability, or Stacked or Unstacked lower than your Bodily Injury Coverage.

Stacked UM means that you multiply the number of vehicles on the policy by the limits. Stacked 100/300 X three vehicles would be 300K per person/900K per accident.

So, in the accident shown above, your Personal Injury Protection goes first, and then if you have medical payments coverage, that comes next, and then the at fault party's Bodily Injury Liability, and only then would it



go to your Uninsured Motorist coverage, which is excess over all these other coverages.

If you do not have UM on your auto policy now, you might want to have your friendly licensed insurance agent offer a quote to find out how much it would cost to add to your policy.

It's important to know the different ways to make your insurance work for you, and help you gain peace of mind knowing you have the right coverage in the event something happens.











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### **Beach Time – ECES Style**



BY CHRIS BALZER

When planning your next beach day, take some extra time and enjoy the beach ECES style (Emerald Coast Energy Solutions). Of course, we like the traditional beach things; sitting by the water, watching the waves curl ever so slightly, looking for that pod of dolphin fins, listening for and watching low fly-bys or watching a sea turtle grab breakfast. You know, the ordinary beach stuff. Going to the beach here is anything but ordinary; we are blessed to have regular air and sea shows almost every time we go to the beach. Here are a few more things to think about on your next beach day.

Check the Heat Index. One of the first things you should know is what the heat index is. The heat index is the

### **ENERGY TIPS**

### by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

"feels like" temperature to the body when relative humidity is combined with the air temperature. It could be 93° with a "feels like" 102°. Heat indexes of 103° or higher are considered dangerous, so use caution when planning beach days or outings with a high heat index.

Check the UV Forecast. While checking the weather forecast and heat index, be sure to check the UV forecast. Checking UV (ultraviolet radiation) should become as much of a habit as checking the weather. UV forecasts include many factors, so don't assume cloud cover or lower temperatures mean low UV, as anyone who has gotten a sunburn on a cloudy day understands. Checking UV is particularly important if you plan to spend several hours outside, and even more so at the beach where UV radiation can be increased by reflecting off our white sands and water.

Wear reef-safe sunscreen. The best way to protect yourself from UV radiation is by staying in the shade or wearing protective clothing. Another way is to slather on reef-safe sunscreen. Be sure to check the back of the sunscreen bottle, some sunscreens contain chemicals that can harm marine life, including corals, fish and even dolphins.

Get to know the sand between your toes. We have some of the whitest beaches in the world and all thanks to the Appalachian Mountains and the Apalachicola River. 20,000 years ago, when the world temperatures began warming after the last Ice Age, large volumes of water were carried by rivers to the world's oceans. The Apalachicola River carried small quartz particles to the Gulf of Mexico and continues today. These unique quartz particles created our shorelines and beautiful white beaches.

**Share the shore.** Our beaches are great, but they aren't ours, we're all just visi-

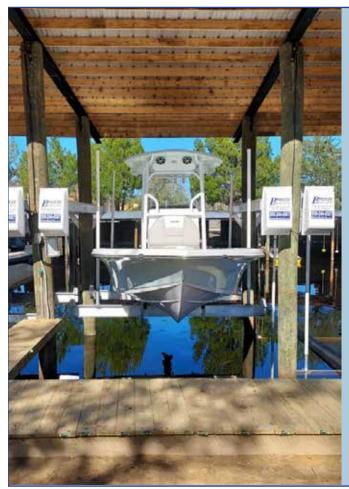
tors. Snorkeling, diving and even sitting, one can experience a whole world coexisting at the beach. Share the shore and take the pledge that you will find out how to keep yourself and the marine animals around you safe. As tempting as it is, keep your distance from marine life and leave that shell souvenir behind. Some shells play a vital role in our beach ecosystem and taking some washed up items can actually be illegal. If you are looking for that perfect souvenir, try an airbrushed t-shirt reading "My friends visited the beach and all I got was this lousy t-shirt".

The next time you plan to go to the beach, do it ECES style; check the heat index and UV forecast, use reef-safe sunscreen, enjoy the sand, share the shore and beat the heat!

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







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