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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,"

Jon's love for marine sci-



ence 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, 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

CLASSROOM continued on page 2

Feeling sick?
Jellyfish Sting?
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Sowal Health Urgent Care

Embrace Florida Kids Tees Up for Second Golf Soiree

By Christopher Manson

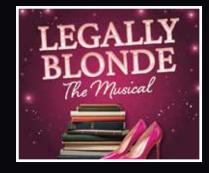
Embrace Florida Kids is an offshoot of Embrace Alabama Kids, a faith-based organization that has been helping children and families since 1890. Director of Development and Community Relations Ramsey Lawrence has been speaking to churches and civic organizations and spreading the word about the nonprofit's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

Embrace Florida Kids has four programs. "First, we teach people how to parent," says Lawrence.

EMBRACE continued on page 2



The Tortoise and The Hare: Fast Friends, Slow Foes MARCH 27 - 30



Legally Blonde The Musical MAY 2 - 18



More Info and Tickets: www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org



© Community

EMBRACE

continued from page 1

"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

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 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.

CLASSROOM

continued from page 1

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 opportunities 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 qual-

ity 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, ev-

ery adventure has at least someone present who is certified in lifeguarding, 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&F-CA 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@em-



eraldforgottencoastadventures. org. If you'd like to support Emerald and Forgotten Coast Adventures, donations can be made by scanning the QR code provided.



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Upcoming 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.

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 fash-

Continued on next page



13390 Highway 98 West Destin, FL 32550

(850) 650-2262



Upcoming Events

ion 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.

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.

Westonwood Ranch Pro Rodeo & Charity Fundraiser March 28 & 29

Calling all bulls, broncs, cowboys and cowgirls! The Professional Cowboy Association's biggest superstars will perform feats of athleticism during the

2025 Westonwood Professional Rodeo on March 28 & 29, 2025 at the Freeport Regional Sports Complex. Gates open at 6 p.m. with 7:30 p.m.performances nightly. Enjoy food vendors, children's bounce house and so much more. proceeds All

from this event benefit Westonwood Ranch. To

purchase tickets and learn more, visit www.westonwood.org.

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

Emerald Coast Theatre Company 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-

For more info and to purchase tickets, visit visitpanamacitybeach.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.

12th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest May 8-11

So. Many. Tacos! Chicken, Pork, Beef, Steak, Shrimp, Barbacoa - you name it; we have it at the wildly popular Tequila & Taco Festival – the 2nd longest-running Tequila and Taco Fest in the U.S.! Sample many types of Tequilas and Margaritas from Blancos, Reposados, Anejos and even Mezcals. So, get ready for Tacos, Tequila and fun and find your favorite at the 12th Annual Tequila & Taco Festival, happening May 8-11, 2025, at The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin! Local restaurants and food trucks will compete for the Best Taco on the Emerald Coast with a \$2,500 grand prize.

Enjoy Tequila and Margarita tastings, live music, DJ and face painting.







South Walton County Tax-Aide Program

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

wide service, with information available at other nearby locations at https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations.html.

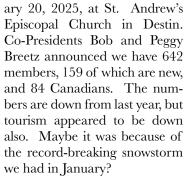
This service is sponsored by the AARP Foundation and the IRS. There are no age restrictions and AARP membership is not required. Taxpayers need to bring their 2023 tax return, Social Security cards for taxpayer(s) and all dependents, picture IDs, and all tax documents received. Bring checking or savings 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.

Walton County Snowbirds Give Back to Community They Love!

By CINDY ARM-STRONG, PUBLIC RE-LATIONS, WALTON COUNTY SNOWBIRDS

The Walton
County Snowbirds
(WCS) held their
annual business
meeting on Febru-



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



lar 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 snow-bird 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."



© Community

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 operate 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 lesson can accommodate up to four participants. Fishing clinics for kids are every Saturday morning and are also book-

able online. 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.



Area Construction Industry Networking Event Draws Professionals

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 con-

Contractors Connect, held tractors, subcontractors, de-Thursday, February 6, signers, realtors, bankers and 25, at AJ's Grayton Beach, insurance agents.

2025 Thursdays Contractors Connect Upcoming Schedule:

April 3: Harrison Kitchen Bar, PC

May 1: AJ's Grayton Beach June 5: Escambia County August 14: AJ's Grayton Beach September 4: Escambia Coun-

October 2: Harrison Kitchen Bar, PC

November 6: AJ's Grayton Beach

December 4: Escambia County

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Community

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



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 Dog-Harmony 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. more information about sponsorship opportunities or event details, contact hello@dog-harmony.org.

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 longest-running fishing tournament, this premier surf fishing event attracts over 150 anglers—from weekend warriors to seasoned proscompeting 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

A Party 18 Years In The Making

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,



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.

Follow along for updates, lead-

erboards, and the best fish tales

on Instagram @stinkysbaitshop

and Facebook @stinkysbait-

the tournament benefits the

South Walton Artificial Reef

Association, helping to preserve

and enhance our local marine

ecosystems.

Sponsorship

A portion of proceeds from

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SSUS 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, had arrived in Mobile, Ala., after being chaperoned by multiple tug boats 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 is

continuing 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 are also being 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 features 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-tourism/ssus.

Fun Facts About the SSUS:

• The design of the SSUS



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





was so innovative that the details of her construction were kept top-secret. 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 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 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.)

Continued on next page



Scouting America Gulf Coast Council Celebrates 115 Years

Scouting America, formerly Boy Scouts of America, is the nation's foremost youth program, providing young people with unique opportunities focused on character development, leadership, fun and outdoor exploration. The non-profit's mission is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. The Scout Law states that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. The Scout Oath states, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

Our own Gulf Coast Council serves more than 2,500 youth throughout eight counties in the Florida panhandle and three counties in Alabama.

On February 8, the organization celebrated its 115th birthday, marking a pivotal moment in its journey as it officially adopts its new name, Scouting America. The organization continues to adapt to meet the evolving needs of young people, ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to benefit from this transformative program.

For more than a century,

Scouting America's mission has remained the same: to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. Whether it's a camping trip, a pinewood derby car race, or a trail hike, every adventure encourages personal growth by teaching youth how to set goals and achieve them with determination. As we look to the future, Scouting America is dedicated to providing young people with the values, skills, and experiences they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

"Scouting America helped instill timeless values for multiple generations of Americans," said Roger Krone, Scouting America president and CEO. "In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the values and skills instilled by Scouting are more critical than ever, and the need for strong character, ethical decision-making, and effective leadership remains paramount. As we celebrate 115 years of service to our nation, we are reaffirming our commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment where young people can develop these essential qualities, empowering them to reach their full potential and preparing them to become responsible and engaged citizens."



Scouting America has remained committed to providing youth with a safe environment where they can learn meaningful life skills, create lifelong memories, and grow into tomorrow's leaders. In fact, more than 130 million Americans have been through Scouting America programs since our founding in 1910. Currently, more than 1 million youth are served by 477,000 dedicated adult volunteers in local councils throughout the country.

"Scouting programs for young men and women ages 5-20 provide an exceptional opportunity for quality time for the families of the Emerald Coast," says Steve Williams, Gulf Coast Council Scout Executive and CEO. "Scouting allows families to experience the outdoors in a safe environment, where they can strengthen bonds and build lifelong memories. These programs provide the unique ability for families to grow together. Through Scouting, young

people learn leadership skills, communication skills, civility, self-reliance, and teamwork. No other program can provide more well-rounded programming to improve schools, communities, and lives."

Scouting America invites families, individuals, and communities nationwide to join its mission. In our area, the Choctawhatchee District, part of the Gulf Coast Council, serves Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Meetings are held at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Niceville. For more information, visit https://gulfcoastcouncil.org/council-information/lakesands-district-2/ or contact district chairman Drew Bowman at drew.bowman@bit-wizards.com.

Perhaps you come from a family with a Scouting tradition or are considering Scouting for the first time. To learn more, visit www.BeAScout.org.

Register for the Gulf Coast Council's 5th Annual Shooting for Scouts Series

Whether you're a clay-shooting ace or a big fan of supporting youth in the area, this event brings together shooters and community members to benefit the Gulf Coast Council's efforts.

This year's series takes place on two separate days: one in Holt and another in Panama City Beach. Each event will include team-versus-team clay shooting competitions, with the top three places earning commemorative plaques. Youth competitors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian, and all participants must bring their own guns and ammo. Food will be prepared and served to attendees by Scouts from Troop 78 based in Milton.

Individuals and teams are welcome to register, and those who want to attend both days can select the "Complete Series" to save 15% on registration costs. Businesses and local organizations are also invited to support the Gulf Coast Council through various sponsorship opportunities for each event.

When:

Event 1 - April 5, 2025 Event 2 - April 26, 2025

Where:

Event 1 - The Element Training Complex, 4418 Cooper Lane, Holt, FL 32564

Event 2 - Bay County Shooting Range, 10900 Steel Field Road, Panama City Beach, FL 32413

To Register:

Event 1 - https://donations. scouting.org/#/council/773/ event/627/register

Event 2 - https://donations. scouting.org/#/council/773/ event/634/register

SSUS

continued from previous page

- 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/artificial-reefs/.

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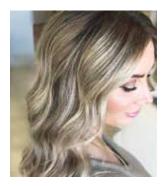








Trends & Treasures!













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Second location: Pure Collective Salon, 600 Grand Blvd., Suite 102.

(850) 424-3935 | facebook. com/PureandCouture pureandcouture.com

Hippity, Hoppity, Easter's on its Way! **Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds**

Warmer weather is herethe Easter bunny's arrival is near! Yippee, Easter is Sunday, April 20, and the Frill Seekers Gifts creative team invites you to HOP into the shop for personalized treats and treasures from Easter baskets and bags to spring-themed custom gifts

for parents, grandparents and teachers. Festive options include basket name tags in the shape of bunnies or chicks, to monograms or names, to make the ones you love smile. Surprise your friends and family members with a special personalized gift that they can use to enjoy the holiday and as they entertain all year long, such as a charcuterie board with the family name or monogram engraved on it or a set of custom engraved wine glasses with the family name. If vou celebrate Easter at a friend or family's home, it's a Southern tradition to bring along a "hostess gift," a small token of appreciation. What about a tea towel, blessing beads, a set of stationery or monogrammed tote bag? For hostesses, Frill Seekers can create a menu and letter place cards for your guests. Personalize and customize! Hop to

Shop now at FrillSeekers-Gifts.com or stop by the motherland of all things monogrammed!

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Newness of Spring Brings New Designs Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Let's design something for you this spring! With so much colorful variety like the colors of spring, your only challenge is choosing. Whether you are shopping for an engagement ring or are on the golf course and remember it's your anniversary, Beyond Measure is here for

Stop by the shop and try to decide which shape suits you best. Owner Ashleigh Woolly specializes in diamond, gemstone and precious metal jewelry pieces, and the Beyond Measure Jewelers' showroom at City

Market is full of diamond and gemstone bracelets, rings, necklaces and earrings. Ashleigh is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry and selling it. She especially has a heart for selling engagement rings, wedding bands and working with couples, because "it is truly special to help people celebrate one of the biggest moments of their lives. Beyond Measure designs hundreds of custom projects. Whether it's an engagement, wedding or special occasion, you can trust your custom project to Beyond Measure. No matter what your taste, plan to be amazed. At Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, a one-on-one exquisite jewelry experience is waiting.

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Spring Has Sprung in a Variety of Flavors! **Smallcakes Destin**

USA TODAY listed Smallcakes as one of the "Top Ten Cupcake Places to Try" in the country! Smallcakes at City Market not only creates award-winning cupcakes that wow judges and find their way to celebrities, it's like spring cupcake heaven on earth with flavorful frostings and a variety of new cupcake flavors for March! Fit your flavor fancy and request a custom order for, well, just about any creation you can think of! Then personalize with custom edible logos and images on gourmet cupcakes, custom cakes, mini cupcakes, birthday cakes, wedding cakes and tempting treats baked fresh daily. There's even gluten-free options! Specializing in custom, holiday, gourmet cupcakes, housemade ice cream wedding cakes and birthday cakes—even "pup" cakes for your furry friend—every day Smallcakes offers 13 signature flavors, 4 specialty flavors, 12 ice cream flavors, jumbo cookies, gourmet popcorn, gourmet

cupcakes, cookie cakes, brownies, cupcakes-in-a-jar and more. Choose from an array of frostings in colors of the spring season. Sample all flavors with a 12-pack of assorted minis!

Call ahead for pre-orders, DoorDash or curbside pickup! Hours: Mon. through Sat., 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Sun. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

(850) 842-9002 Small cakes Destin.comFollow @SmallCakesofDestin

Rejuvenate For Spring CRYO850 Performance and Recovery Center

What better way to celebrate the newness of the season than rejuvenating damaged cells? Red Light Therapy, a.k.a. Photobiomodulation (PBM), is changing the health game due to its ability to renew your body at the cellular level, rejuvenating damaged cells from the inside out, healing both on the surface and at the cellular level. The Mito Red Light Therapy system offers three wavelengths of light that offer full-body exposure. CRYO850's Near Infrared Lighting boosts ATP (energy) and balances hormones.

Find a long list of drug-free services beyond the cold also, such as the Wellness Circuit access to six therapies including: Infrared Sauna, Red Light Therapy, Whole Body Cryotherapy, Localized Spot Treatment Cryo, Vibration Plates and Compression Therapy. Membership offers access to the Circuit on a consistent basis. Visitors and first-time guests can enjoy the same services via a day, week or two-week pass. Beyond the Circuit, Pagani Muscle Recovery Therapy is a favorite for sore and strained muscles. Alternating hot and cold application creates the same healing as hours with heat and cold packs. For additional pain management and relief, the Cocoon Fitness POD takes recovery to a higher level with combined

heat, light and full body vibration. Visit CRYO850 and make March a time to focus on you. Membership options start as low as \$99 a month with military discounts of 10%, spousal discounts of 15% and students always get 25% off! Pre-register online.

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Sell Your Home for Top Dollar! **Brian Locicero, REALTOR®**

Are you ready to tap into the best-kept secrets of successful home sellers? You can sell any home in any market when you know these secrets. Luxury RE-ALTOR® Brian K. LoCicero's new book reveals the most effective tactics to get the most money out of your home in the shortest amount of time. These strategies have helped sell thousands of homes, and now, you have them all at your fingertips.

The strategies in Brian's book have been thoroughly tested and proven effective time and time again. Sellers won't want to miss out on this opportunity to learn tips and plans employed by the wealthiest home sellers. "In this book, I've provided an effective guide for you to have the most successful real estate transaction possible," shares Brian.

"We hired Brian to help us navigate 30A's tough real estate market. He has serious negotiating skills and expertise. Because of his efforts and strategies that he details in his book, we quickly sold our Destin home and bought a 30A beach front home, below asking price," said client, A. Albright.

Destin Life readers can get a FREE copy of the book, for a limited time, by emailing Brian@BeOnTheCoast.com or give him a call at (850) 739-



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.

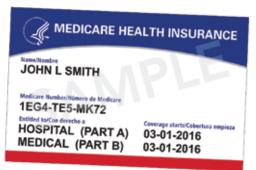
But wait! You can't stop there. You will need Part B, which covers medical costs outside of the hospital at about 80%. If you are collecting social security, you will automatically be enrolled about three months before your 65th birth month. If not, you need to apply at ssa. gov/medicaid.

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 D.

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 coverage.

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) 687 7606.







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Wellness



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

The Only Person You Can Change Is You

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 in-

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 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?



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

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

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 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. Instead, 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.



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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 fun-

Continued on next page



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Book Review: Brain Energy by Dr. Chris Palmer



REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MCMANUS, LCSW

Dr. Chris Palmer's "Brain Energy" is a groundbreaking exploration of the intricate relationship between brain health and energy metabolism, presenting a fresh perspective on mental well-being that is both enlightening and empowering. Palmer, a psychiatrist with extensive experience in the field, delves into how our brain's functioning is deeply intertwined with the food we eat, the energy we consume, and the lifestyle choices we make. I've always believed in a holistic approach to mental health and in 1984 at Louisiana State University I did my master's thesis on "The positive effects of exercise on mental health." In this book, Dr. Palmer has done a skillful job of describing a holistic approach.

The book is structured in a way that makes complex scientific concepts accessible to the layperson. Palmer explains how the brain requires a significant amount of energy to operate effectively and how fluctuations in energy levels can impact mental health. He introduces readers to the concept of "brain energy," emphasizing that mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and even schizophrenia can be viewed through the lens of energy deficits and imbalances.

One of the standout features of "Brain Energy" is Palmer's use of real-life case studies to illustrate his points. He shares stories of patients who have experienced profound transformations by implementing dietary changes, particularly a ketogenic diet, which focuses on healthy fats and minimizes carbohydrates.

These accounts provide compelling evidence of how adjusting our diet can lead to noticeable improvements in mood, clarity, and overall brain function.

Palmer's writing is engaging

and relatable, making it easy for readers to connect with the material. He blends personal anecdotes with scientific research, creating a narrative that is both informative and motivating. His passion for the subject shines through, encouraging readers to consider the role that nutrition and lifestyle play in their mental health.

Moreover, "Brain Energy" challenges traditional views on mental health treatment by advocating for a more holistic approach. Palmer emphasizes that while medication can be beneficial, it should be complemented by lifestyle changes that address the root causes of mental health issues. This perspective is refreshing and offers hope to those who may feel stuck in conventional treatment paradigms.

In conclusion, Dr. Chris Palmer's "Brain Energy" is a thought-provoking and practical guide that empowers readers to take charge of their mental health through a better understanding of brain energy. It's a must-read for anyone interested in enhancing their cognitive function and overall well-being. Palmer's compassionate approach and clear explanations make this book not only a valuable resource for those struggling with mental health issues

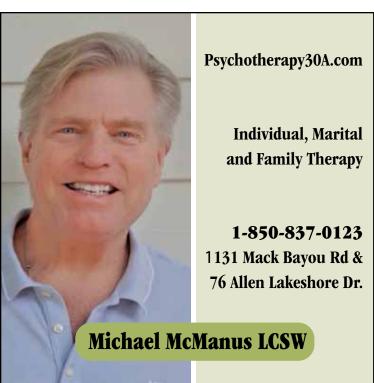
Michael McManus LCSW is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach Florida and can be reached for an appointment by text or phone at (850) 837-0123 or Psychotherapy30A.com.

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AGING GRACEFULLY

continued from previous page

damentals 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? Mus-

cle 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.

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.



Oh No! Please Say It's Not So... Yellow Flies!

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

Yellow Flies, known for their persistence and painful bites, are about to make their return to South Walton. If you haven't had the "pleasure" of encountering this dreaded insect, well, you just might want to have a seat and buckle up because you are about to embark on a bumpy 6-week adventure! Let us, your friends at South Walton Mosquito District introduce you to the terrifying yellow fly!

Unlike mosquitoes, these nasty flies create an open wound to draw your blood. Their mouth is well designed for this, featuring stabbing and scissors-like appendages. The combination of these allows the dreadful yellow fly to stab its host and to hang on. It then inserts the scissors to enlarge the wound before piercing further inward. We know what you're thinking, and yes! It does get worse! The scissors have both sharp and serrated edge surfaces, and then they release anticoagulants to keep the blood flowing which potentially may trigger an allergic reaction, in some. Finally, another specialized mouth organ absorbs the blood meal from you!

Like mosquitoes, only the females seek out blood meal for egg production while males feed on nectar and pollen. These daytime feeders are often found near tree lines in wet areas, especially on cloudy days. They're fast and quiet, often going unnoticed until they bite and will continue to bite until they're satisfied.

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be an effective means of population control, but we have some possible words of wisdom for you. We recommend NOT wearing dark colored clothing, as the female yellow flies are attracted to those black yoga pants and dark baseball caps. Dark sunglasses can also catch their attention. Aside from staying inside, we also recommend loose, light colored clothing, and you will want to use a mosquito repellent containing DEET. As we stated above, these mean ladies are out all day enjoying the weather and looking for their victims, but their numbers do seem to increase during dusk and dawn hours.

Oh, and please don't forget





your pets! Yellow flies love your furry friends just as much as they love you! If you have concerns about how yellow flies might affect your pets, please contact your yet.

Now that you are completely beside yourself and questioning your decision to live in this beautiful area, we do have a little bit of good news! South Walton Mosquito District will begin their annual distribution of those wonderful free yellow fly kits starting Tuesday, April 1st,

www.southwaltonmosquitocontrol.org and click on the yellow fly tab. You'll find a map of the South Walton area, along with information on where to buy additional kits if needed.

LIVE YOUR

Your friends at South Walton Mosquito District wish you the best of luck this yellow fly season!









CBD Nature Wellness:

A Commitment to True Health & Wellness

In an industry flooded with trends and quick-profit products, CBD Nature Wellness stands apart as a brand rooted in integrity, quality, and a deep commitment to holistic wellness. Founded with a passion for natural healing, our mission has always been to provide pure, high-quality CBD that meets the highest wellness standards—without compromising on values.

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As the CBD market exploded, many companies rushed to sell Delta-8 THC, vapes, and smoke products, prioritizing profit over health. CBD Nature Wellness chose a different path. From day one, we have remained true to the essence of wellness, offering only premium organic CBD—clean, effective, and free from unnecessary additives.

Rather than following fleeting trends, we focus on what truly matters: supporting health, restoring balance, and enhancing daily life.

Integrity in Every Bottle

For eight years, we have built CBD Nature Wellness on a foundation of trust, transparency, and uncompromising quality. From sourcing the finest organic hemp to using minimal, high-quality ingredients, we ensure that every bottle of CBD is pure, effective, and crafted with care.

Why We Stand Out

- No Smoke, No Haze We don't sell vapes, smokeables, or Delta-8 THC. Just clean, effective CBD.
- True to Wellness Our products are designed for balance, relaxation, and overall health.
 - Uncompromising Quality



– Our production facility is US-DA-certified organic, ensuring purity at every step.

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At CBD Nature Wellness, we believe in more than just selling CBD—we believe in educating, empowering, and inspiring people to live healthier, more balanced lives.

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our customers.

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Blood Sugar: How's Yours?



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.

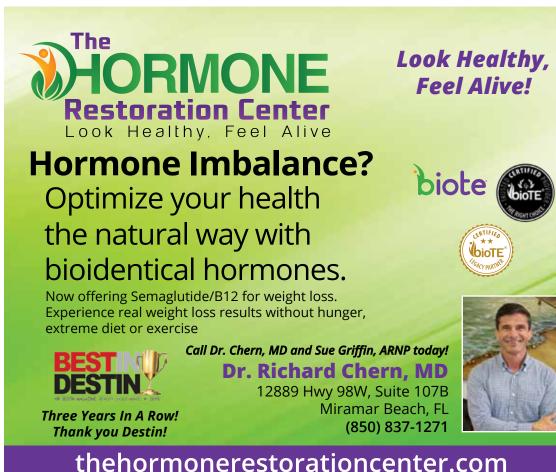
Here are the lifestyle choices to get and keep this important cycle in shape:

- 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





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 au-

tomated external defibrillator (AED) from the bus.

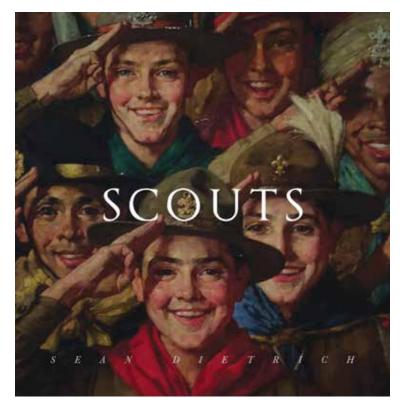
Why did a bunch of average kids from Texas have a piece of expensive portable medical equipment on their bus? The answer is: Because they were Scouts.

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 ambu-

lance 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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Musing

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 back vou look 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."

I pray for each of you and the 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 un-

known
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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Lee Campbell



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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Experience the Best of Destin's Hidden Gem: Henderson Park Inn, Beach Walk Café & Tiki Bar

Nestled along the sugar-white sands of Destin's Emerald Coast, Henderson Park Inn has long been a beloved retreat for visitors seeking an intimate, gulf front escape. But locals, take note—this stunning haven isn't just for travelers. With its award-winning Beach Walk Café and the laid-back Tiki Bar, there are plenty of reasons to make Henderson Park Inn your go-to destination for exceptional dining and beachfront relaxation right in your own backyard.

Beach Walk Café: A Dining Experience Like No Other

Imagine an evening where the waves provide the perfect soundtrack to an unforgettable meal. At Beach Walk Café, Destin's most romantic waterfront restaurant, locals can savor the finest coastal cuisine while basking in panoramic Gulf views.

From fresh seafood to expertly prepared steaks, the menu at Beach Walk Café is designed

to delight the most discerning palates. Standout dishes like the Grouper Vince, encrusted with toasted macadamia nuts and drizzled with Frangelico butter sauce, or the meltin-vour-mouth Filet Mignon, seared to perfection, offer a truly indulgent dining experience. Complement your meal with a selection from the extensive wine list, featuring both local and international vintages curated to elevate your eve-

For those seeking an intimate and unforgettable experience, the Toes in the Sand dining option allows you to enjoy a private









table directly on the beach. As the sun sets over the Gulf, let Beach Walk Café transport you to a world of culinary excellence and romance—without ever leaving Destin.

Locals can also enjoy brunch at Beach Walk Café, the first Sunday of each month, featuring an indulgent spread of breakfast favorites, as well as Wine Down Wednesdays, where guests can unwind with curated wine selections paired with amazing dishes.

Tiki Bar: Your New Favorite Local Hangout

Whether you're winding down after work or looking for the perfect weekend spot to gather with friends, the Tiki Bar at Henderson Park Inn offers a relaxed, beachside vibe that's impossible to resist. This openair hideaway serves up refreshing cocktails, ice-cold beers and light bites, all with breathtaking views of the Gulf.

Kick back with a handcrafted mojito, a classic piña colada or one of the bar's signature frozen drinks, perfect for cooling off on a warm Florida day. The friendly bartenders and welcoming atmosphere make the Tiki Bar an ideal spot for locals to escape the crowds and enjoy a little slice of paradise, just minutes from home

Visit Today and Experience Destin's Best Kept Secret

For those who call the Emerald Coast home, there's no need to travel far for an unforgettable escape. Whether you're indulging in a fine dining experience at Beach Walk Café, unwinding with a cocktail at the Tiki Bar or planning a special staycation at Henderson Park Inn, the best of Destin is right at your doorstep.

Make plans to visit today and discover why locals are falling in love with this hidden gem all over again. Reservations at Beach Walk Café are highly recommended, and the Tiki Bar is open daily for walk-ins.

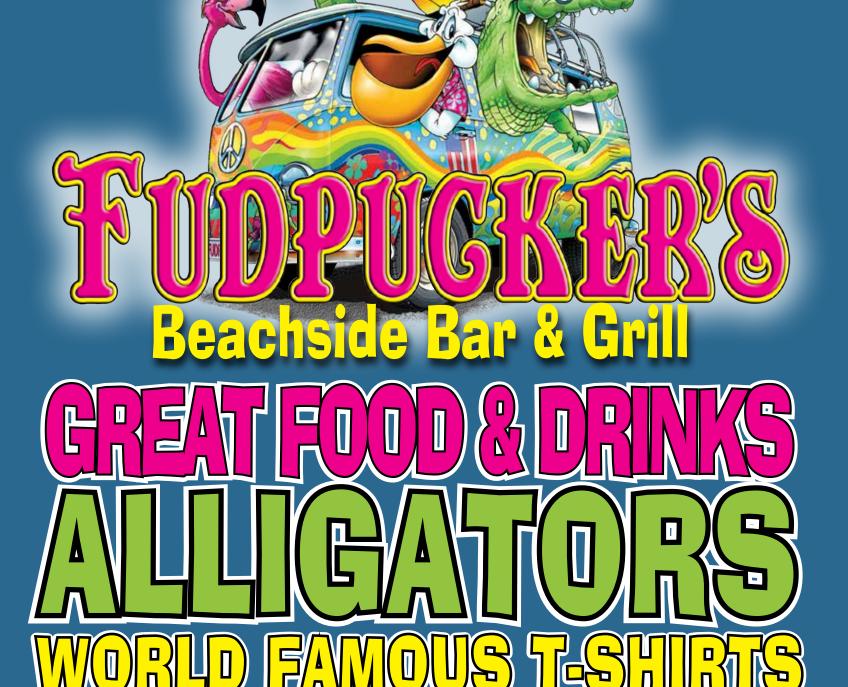
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Our Hometown Hero: Shirley Simpson

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 audienc-

Continued on page 29





The Health Benefits of Playing a Musical Instrument

Playing a musical instrument complex emotions. This emooffers 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. Research 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 tional 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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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 Flor-

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 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.

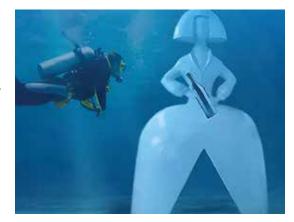
Azzato reflects on the significance of his latest work, stating, "The Menina of the Reef is more than just a sculpture—it is a symbol of strength, transformation, and resilience. Just as the ocean nurtures new life around these underwater sculptures, I hope this artwork serves as a source of inspiration 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 visi-

tors in Walton County. UMA is located in a one-acre permit patch of seabed off Gravton Beach State Park, and the 2025 installation will expand the artwork count to 53. UMA sculptures are

deployed with SWARA's existing USACOA and FDEP-permitted 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 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 Director, Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation. "A partic-

Continued on page 29















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June 5 | A1A: Jimmy Buffet Tribute

June 12 | Adrenalize: Music of Def Leppard

Purchase Tickets at MKAF.org/Events











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



The Watersound Club® Team Announces the Opening of Its Newest Course, The Third

Designed by Golf Legend Davis Love III

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—deliv-

ering 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 campcreekinn.com/golf/the-third-golf-course.



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23rd Annual Seaside School™ Half Marathon & 5K Race Weekend Breaks Records with \$650K Raised

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—Seaside 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 growth.

As one of Florida's pioneer public charter schools, Seaside SchoolTM 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 SchoolTM 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 SchoolTM 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



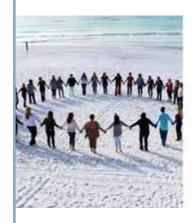
the third time overall.

The Race Weekend festivities concluded with a lively finish line after-party featuring live music by the Seaside Neighborhood SchoolTM 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 SchoolTM Race Weekend, please visit RunSeasideFL.com. For more information about Seaside SchoolTM, please visit SeasideSchools.net.

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Roofing Questions - Part 2

By Byron Toups

Florida's picturesque landscape and sunny weather make it a dream destination for many, but its vulnerability to hurricanes and tropical storms requires homeowners to carefully consider their roofing options. In this two-part comprehensive guide, we delve into key questions about Florida roofs, providing insights into their lifespan, insurance coverage, repair options, installation process and more. Read Part 1 in Bay Life, February 2025, at MyBayLifeN-WFL.com.

What Is Flashing and Why Is It Important in Florida?

Flashing, an extremely important waterproof layer placed over joints in the roof, plays a crucial role in Florida's roofs. It prevents water infiltration during heavy rains and storms, safeguarding vulnerable areas such as valleys, chimneys, skylights, and pipes.

Key Considerations for Choosing Florida Roofing Materials

When deciding on roofing materials for Florida homes, several crucial factors must be considered to ensure durability and resilience in the face of the state's weather conditions. From humidity and hurricanes to potential water damage, homeowners in Florida must evaluate various options based on factors such as durability, cost, energy efficiency, and resistance to wind and water damage. Understanding these key considerations empowers homeowners to make informed decisions regarding the best roofing materials for their specific needs in Florida.

Humidity Challenges in Florida Roofing Florida's high humidity poses significant challenges for roofing materials, leading to issues like mold, mildew, and algae growth, as well as deterioration over time. Regular maintenance, including inspections, cleaning to remove mold or algae, and applying protective coatings, is essential to combat these effects. Proper ventilation in the attic space also helps prevent moisture buildup under roofing materials.

Given Florida's intense heat and strong UV rays, selecting roofing materials with excellent heat resistance and UV protection is vital. Materials like metal,



tile, and certain types of asphalt shingles are known for their ability to reflect and dissipate heat, providing a more comfortable indoor environment and reducing energy costs for air conditioning. Proper insulation, such as foam insulation or reflective barriers, further enhances energy efficiency by minimizing heat transfer.

Top Roofing Materials Suited for Florida Homes

Several roofing materials are well-suited for Florida homes, resisting wind, rain, and heat while complementing the home's aesthetic.

Asphalt shingles are a cost-effective option known for their durability, ease of installation, and low maintenance requirements. Architectural shingles, thicker and more resistant than 3-tab shingles, offer enhanced durability and wind resistance, making them suitable for areas with harsh weather conditions like Florida. GAF Timberline HDZ Shingles are designed with LayerLock technology for exceptional durability and wind resistance. They have a Dura Grip adhesive seals that help the shingles to withstand winds up to 130 mph.

Metal roofing stands out for its unmatched resilience to Florida's climate, withstanding high winds, heavy rain, and intense heat. Standing seam metal roofs, featuring interlocking panels and raised seams for enhanced protection, provide durability and energy efficiency, reflecting heat and reducing energy costs.

Concrete roof tiles provide a durable and stylish roofing solution, resistant to weathering, fading, and fire. While initial costs may be higher than clay tiles, concrete tiles offer longterm cost-effectiveness with their durability and low maintenance requirements.

Clay roof tiles offer superior protection against harsh weather conditions, though their installation and maintenance may require careful consideration due to associated challenges and costs.

Slate roof tiles, known for their timeless beauty and exceptional durability, provide long-lasting protection from wind, rain, and snow. Though initial costs may be higher, slate tiles offer cost-effectiveness in the long run with minimal maintenance requirements. Composite roof tiles, visually appealing and budget-friendly, mimic traditional materials like slate while offering durability and resistance to harsh weather conditions.

Single-ply membrane flat roofing systems, including EPDM, TPO, and PVC options, offer durability, energy efficiency, and cost-effectiveness for both commercial and residential roofing projects. Lightweight, easy to install, and resistant to extreme weather conditions, these membrane systems provide excellent waterproofing and energy efficiency, contributing to

long-term sustainability and cost savings.

Conclusion: Choosing the right roofing materials for homes in Florida involves careful consideration of the state's climate challenges and the specific needs of the homeowner. By evaluating factors such as durability, cost, energy efficiency, and resistance to wind and water damage, homeowners can select roofing materials that provide long-lasting protection and peace of mind in Florida's unique climate. Contact me for a free consultation at 850-332-3330

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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.

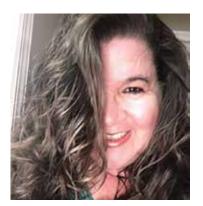
Insurance is for you, so that you can be made whole again in the event something happens. To make it easier for you to be indemnified, making small adjustments to your existing coverage will help you feel better about the coverage you have.

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 $100/300 \stackrel{.}{X}$ 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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SHIRLEY SIMPSON

continued from page 22

es 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 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 heart.

Visit South Walton, the Na-

tional Endowment for the Arts,

Walter Marine / The Reef-

maker, the St. Joe Community

Foundation, the Florida Cancer

Specialists Foundation, Beachy

Blooms 30A, The Ellis Fami-

ly, and Hilton Sandestin Beach

Golf Resort & Spa.

CUTURAL ARTS

continued from page 24

ularly 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 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 (Highlandville, 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

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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