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# ECP Announces Art Escape, A Cultural Initiative Featuring Regional Artists

Work from select Bay and Walton County artists to be showcased in the airport's concourse

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP), together with Life Media Publications, announces a new cultural initiative, Art Escape, which showcases contemporary work by local artists in the airport's concourse. The inaugural exhibit "Where am I Going?" opens July 1, with a plan for rotating works to cycle through the space over the next five months. Comprised of artists from across the region, this project brings together dynamic regional voices with the intent of enhanc-

ing the airport experience for those traveling to and from the Emerald Coast. Welcoming nearly 1.9 million passengers in 2024, ECP acts as a gateway to the cultural attractions of surrounding counties, which, beyond airport doors,



Francisco Adaro, "60, Buenos Aires a 30A"

include art galleries, worldclass live music, documentary film festivals, stand-up comedy, and much more.

"Where am I Going?" includes the work of artists Francisco Adaro, Christon Anderson, Mark Little,

Chandler Williams, Mandy Yourick, and Jamie Zimchek in mediums that range from painting to photography and installation.

"ECP is a gateway to both beautiful beaches and a region rich in culture. We're honored to enhance the passenger experience by sharing a little of that culture (with a touch of beach) at our facility," stated Parker McClellan, ECP Executive Director.

"We see this as a unique opportunity to bring the more contemporary work of local artists to an unconventional space," said Jamie Zimchek, who helped launch this endeavor. "Though visitors can get a glimpse of these working artists in galleries throughout the region, this show offers them the oppor-

tunity to present work that's a little more experimental and boundary pushing while working around a theme that relates to ideas about per-

## ART ESCAPE continued on page 23

# Governor DeSantis Signs New Law Restoring Public Beach Access in Panhandle

By Douglas D. Stauffer

Governor Ron DeSantis signed landmark legislation in Walton County recently that restores public beach access and returns local authority to communities across Florida's Gulf Coast. The bill, Senate Bill 1622, repeals restrictive provisions from a 2018 law that had limited customary use access to dry sand areas of privately owned beaches, creating years of controversy and confusion, especially in Walton County.

Speaking before a crowd of lawmakers, local officials, and beachgoers at Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar in Santa Rosa Beach, DeSantis emphasized that the new law will "put the power back in the hands of local governments and their citizens."

"This bill is about restoring local control, cutting the legal red tape, and putting our residents first," De-Santis said. "The people of this area

# PUBLIC BEACH continued on page 2

Season 13 is



Sept. 18 - Oct. 12



Oct. 23 - Nov. 2



Nov. 28 - Dec. 31



More Info and Tickets: www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org





#### **PUBLIC BEACH**

continued from page 1

have fought long and hard to regain the access they've traditionally enjoyed. Today, we're making that a reality."

#### **Reversing a Controversial Law**

The legislation repeals part of the 2018 law that required local governments to get court approval before enforcing customary use, an unwritten public right to access dry sand areas of beaches that has been traditionally practiced in many parts of Florida. The 2018 change forced counties to initiate costly, parcel-by-parcel legal battles, sparking widespread opposition in coastal communities.

State Senator Jay Trumbull, a sponsor of the bill, remembered how the 2018 legislation caught many residents off guard.

"Overnight, people

had walked the same stretch of beach for generations were being told that they were trespassing," Senator Trumbull said. "This law fixes that."

The new bill allows counties and municipalities to pass local customary use ordinances without first obtaining court judgments, reasserting the right of the public to access Florida's beaches for walking, fishing, swimming, and sunbathing.

#### **Accelerating Beach** Restoration

Beyond public access, SB 1622 also simplifies the process for beach renourishment projects in smaller Gulf Coast counties like Walton. Under the law, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) can now establish erosion control boundaries using the state's existing mean high-water line instead of conducting lengthy surveys or requiring separate approvals.

This change is expected to save time and money while enabling faster responses to severe beach erosion, a growing concern in the region. DEP Secretary Alexis Lambert noted nearly 19 of Walton County's 26 miles of coastline are critically eroded.

"Beach nourishment isn't just about tourism," said Representative Shane Abbott, who co-sponsored the bill. "It's about protecting our coastline, preserving property, and ensuring that locals and visitors alike can enjoy these beaches for years to come."

#### **Local Impact and Funding**

Florida has invested over \$550 million in beach restoration efforts since 2019, with an additional \$53 million allocated in this year's state budget. In Walton County, nearly \$60 million in state funds have been committed to local projects, and another \$60 million is expected in federal matching funds.

DEPSecretary Alex Lambert emphasized the significance of the new process: "This legislation simplifies how we set erosion control lines, allowing vital beach nourishment projects to move forward more efficiently."

#### A Victory for Coastal **Communities**

The signing of SB 1622 marks

a significant victory for coastal communities and public access advocates across the state. Local leaders praised the decision as a return to common sense and a reaffirmation of Florida's longstanding tradition of beach enjoyment for everyone.



"This is a great day for Walton County and the entire Panhandle," said Commissioner Danny Glidewell. "Our residents have been waiting for this for years, and I thank Governor DeSantis for listening and taking action." The bill takes effect immediately.

# **SWFD Awarded Gold Achievement**

Walton Fire District has received the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline® EMS Gold achievement award for its proven responses to patients experiencing heart attack and stroke emergencies.

These severe, time-sensitive events often begin in the prehospital setting, where Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers like SWFD serve as the key link in the survivability chain by

Going for gold! The South initiating rapid care. These Advanced Life Support (ALS) interventions address the onset of heart attack or stroke symptoms, with the goal of preventing serious injury or loss of life.

"Every second counts for us when someone calls 911 after the onset of symptoms," said SWFD Fire Chief Ryan Crawford. "From the time we first take the call in our dispatch center, it's up to us to do whatever we can to get the patient the



treatment they need, reassure them, and ultimately save their life with ALS care."

Both heart attacks and strokes can happen anywhere at any time. Once a 911 call is placed, the response begins in SWFD's **Emergency** Communications Center with dispatchers who render care through a Computer-Aided Dispatch system to determine a patient's medical status. When responders arrive in-person, they are tasked with conducting a thorough patient evaluation, administering the appropriate medications, and responding emergently to the nearest hospital. The most severe cases involve resuscitating patients in cardiac arrest.

"The medical side of the

job is not always something we can publicly convey due to our need to maintain patient privacy," Crawford said. "However, our community relied on us for approximately 6,000 medical-related calls last year alone. Emergency medical response is a foundational service that we provide to our taxpayers, so this recognition is well-deserved for our frontline personnel, our EMS Division, Medical Director, and our area healthcare partners."

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



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# **Upcoming Events**

#### **Farmers Markets**

Grand Blvd. Saturdays 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Grayton Locals Market Thursdays 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Hibiscus Guest House

Seaside Amphitheater Saturdays and Tuesdays 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Peddlers Pavilion Sundays 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Rosemary Beach at North Barrett Square Sundays 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

### Family Fun at The Village of Baytowne Wharf

Baytowne is for family fun this summer! Events include Scallywag Sundays 7-9 p.m., Movie Mondays at 8 p.m., Boomin' Tuesdays with a DJ Dance Party followed by fireworks 7:15-9:15 p.m., Wednesday Night Concert Series 7-9 p.m., and a Thursdaze Lights Show 9 p.m.

#### WCSO Back-To-School Splash Bash Aug. 2

The annual Walton County Sheriff's Office Back-to-School Splash Bash and backpack give-



away will be held by Walton County Sheriff's Office School Resource Deputies at Wee Care Park in DeFuniak Springs on Saturday, August 2nd from 3-6 p.m. The family-fun event features inflatable slides, bouncy houses, and kid's activities!

Backpacks will be given out on a FIRST COME FIRST SERVE basis along with some basic school supplies.

Follow the Walton County

Sheriff's Office on social media for safety updates, community news and events throughout Walton County.

#### Nature & Outdoors

#### Tackle Boxes Not Xboxes: Kids Fishing Day at Boathouse Oyster Bar July 22

Kids can enjoy a day of fishing aboard the American Spirit Party Boat. Includes event swag, lunch, water, and 6 hours of fishing starting at 8 a.m. Cost is \$60. Kids aged 11-14 on July 22. (Kids ages 6-10 took place on July 15.)

#### Wild Sea Turtle Wednesdays

Join South Walton Turtle Watch on Wednesday mornings for Wild Sea Turtle Wednesday at The Big Chill 30A from 9-11 a.m. Learn about sea turtles and take the Jr. Ocean Ranger pledge to help keep our beaches clean, dark and flat for nesting sea turtles and baby hatchlings.

Free and open to the public.

Guided Plant Walk at

Topsail Hill Preserve State

Park July 21

Join Master Gardner Bill Kuenstler for a guided stroll beginning at Tram stop #2 from 9-11 a.m.. Free with admission to the park.

# A Tea for All Occasions at E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center July 26

Enjoy a unique rustic tea party with refreshing cocktails, a selection of teas, tea sandwiches, and desserts. \$70/\$65 for Women of Nature members at 11:30 a.m.

#### **Vacation Bible School**

# Motion Summer Vibes at Destiny Worship Center July 16, 23 & 30

Every Wednesday through the end of July, celebrate summer with games, special events, and sermons geared towards youth in 6th-12th grade from 6:30-8 p.m.

#### Wonder Junction-Marvel at Jesus, Live for His Glory at Destiny Worship Center July 21-25

Enjoy a week of learning about the wonders of Jesus. There'll be snacks, games, worship, Bible teaching, and fun from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

#### **Performing Arts**

#### Kids Improv Bootcamp at The REP Theatre July 22, 24, 29 & 31

Kids ages 5-12 will have fun learning improv the basics of improv comedy and performance through challenges, teamwork exercises, and theatre games 2-3:30 p.m. Advanced registration is required. Cost is \$25 per session. Visit LoveTheRep.com.

# Comedy on the Boulevard at Emerald Coast Theatre Company Aug. 22

Come for an uproarious night of laughs! ECTC presents some of the Southeast's most hilarious

Continued on next page









# **Upcoming Events**



comedians. Hosted by resident funny guy Jason Hedden at 7 p.m..

### The REP Rumpelstiltskin in Seaside Mondays

The Seaside REP Theatre presents Rumpelstiltskin Mondays at 6 p.m. through Aug. 4 at the Seaside Amphitheater. This complimentary event will entertain the entire family. This captivating twist on a beloved classic is packed with adventure and humor. Visit LoveTheRep.com.

# 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 6:30 p.m. through August 6. This enchanting version of the classic Brothers Grimm fairytale features a heartwarming story, unforgettable characters, and many laughs, making it a delightful experience for the entire family! Visit LoveTheRep. com.

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

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

#### Camps

#### E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center Wednesday Summer Day Camps

Designed for children aged 5-12, these camps focus on nature exploration, animal encounters and environmental education. Sessions are held on Wednesdays fthrough July 30 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. \$55 per camper. Register by calling (850) 835-1824.

#### Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park Sunset Camps

Sunset Camps for ages 6-14 include dolphin encounters, beach exploration and dinner. Select dates in June-August, 4-9 p.m., at \$89 for the first child, with discounts for additional siblings. Visit gulfarium.com.

#### Games

### **Grand Boulevard Lawn Games**

Bring the entire family out to Grand Boulevard to enjoy some fun! Summer Lawn Games will take over Grand Park from 5-8:30 p.m. nightly through August 9. 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.

### Bingo at Stinky's Bait Shack Sundays

Enjoy 5 free rounds of bingo 4-6 p.m. on Sundays.

VISIT **SOUTHWALTON.LIFE** 



# Kayak on a Bay: Be Amazed. Be Free. Be Here.

For Joel and Kristen Lavy, kayaks are not just small boats. Kayaks are vessels that transport people into nature together, creating a shared experience that gives way to treasured lifetime memories. A memory discussed fondly amongst friends or family as the years pass by, as they do all too quickly. Kayak on a Bay's mission is simple: to help people slow down, reconnect, and be outdoors, be together, be present, and to create life long memories for its participants one paddle at a time.

Joel, who previously served in the U.S. Air Force, fell in love with kayaking years ago while navigating the demands of military life. Paddling became his escape—his reset button. "It's where I'm at peace," he says. That feeling stuck with him.



Now, as a husband, dad, and local business owner, he's sharing that same peace—and sense of play—with others. Joel's calm energy and love for the outdoors shape every part of the Kayak on a Bay experience, making it feel more like a neighbor inviting you out for an adventure.

Each rental includes everything you need: high-quality, non-sinkable kayaks, paddles,



life vests, biodegradable cooling towels, and foam water shooters for a little splash of fun. It's easy, safe, and designed for all ages and all adventure levels.

Kayaking isn't just exercise—it's memory-making. It's a chance to be with family, be social, be wild, or simply be still. Whether it's a screen-free afternoon with your kids, a unique date idea, or solo time to re-



charge, kayaking lets you feel something real.

Kayak on a Bay operates daily-not just on weekends. Locals enjoy special pricing, and it's the perfect recommendation for visiting friends and family looking to experience the real magic of the bay.

Because the bay is calling.

Be ready. Book your experience at www.kayakonabay.com, or scan the QR code to start your story.





## CBA's "State of the Basin"

### How Oyster Gardening Is Reviving Choctawhatchee Bay

By Allison McDowell, CBA

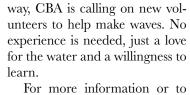
Along the shores of Choctawhatchee Bay, a quiet but powerful movement is taking place one oyster at a time. Families, retirees, and students are rolling up their sleeves to take part in a unique conservation effort led by the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA). Their mission? To rebuild the bay's critical oyster reefs through an innovative and community-driven initiative: the Oyster Gardening program.

Now entering its 2025 season, this hands-on program invites local volunteers to help restore the bay's ecosystem by growing young oysters at their homes or designated dock locations. It's a project where science meets stewardship, turning everyday citizens into environmental champions.

#### **A Simple Solution** with a Big Impact

Each oyster grown through the program can filter up to 50 gallons of water daily, making them natural purifiers for Choctawhatchee Bay. Beyond water quality, these tiny powerhouses also create habitat for fish and crabs and help stabilize shore-

The program has supported habitat restoration efforts at multiple sites around the bay, an



get involved, visit www.basinalliance.org or email reynol59@ nwfsc.edu.



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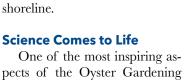






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This is Another Great Paradise Promotion



impressive achievement that's

benefiting marine life and bol-

stering the overall health of the

ecosystem. It's a grassroots effort

with ripple effects far beyond the

program is its educational value. Whether it's a retiree tracking oyster growth or a middle schooler observing changes in the water, participants are engaged in real-world marine science. The program transforms conservation into a fun, local, and impactful experience, nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards in the process.

#### **Get Involved**

With the 2025 season under-



# **Nominations for 2026 Perfect in Walton County Awards Open July 29**

The nomination period for the 2026 Perfect in Walton County Awards will be open from July 29 to Aug. 15. During this time, anyone can nominate their favorite businesses, events and activities using the online form only available at perfectinwaltoncounty.com.

"The Perfect Awards are such a powerful way to showcase and promote the outstanding businesses that are the heart of our community," said Matt Algarin, Walton County tourism director. "When our residents and visitors vote for their local favorites, they're not just recognizing great service—they're helping these businesses thrive and telling the world what makes Walton County extraordinary."

Nominations can be submitted in as many or as few categories, but only one online form per email address will be accepted. Every nomination counts. Visitor-facing businesses are encouraged to ask their guests, customers, followers, friends and family to nominate them in any of the thirty categories. Social media graphics are available to use at https://platform. crowdriff.com/m/s-fN- Z9OT-4F9-XAM.

To qualify, businesses and

individuals must primarily be in and serve Walton County. Additionally, those providing beach services (such as photographers, yoga instructors, bonfire organizers, chair vendors, etc.) must hold a current vendor permit from the Walton County Code Compliance Department. Please review the contest rules at https://www.waltoncountyfltourism.com/userfiles/2026 Perfect\_Award\_nomination\_ rules.pdf.

The top five businesses with the largest number of nominations in each category will advance to the final voting round, which will be held online at perfectinwaltoncounty.com from Sept. 2 to 19. The top three businesses with the highest number of votes in each category will be honored as Diamond, Platinum or Gold winners at the Perfect in Walton County Awards presentation in January 2025. These winners will be promoted in print and online by Walton County Tourism throughout the year. To see a complete list of last year's winners, visit waltoncountyfltourism.com/2025perfect-walton-county-awards/.

The 2026 categories include:



· Best Craft Beer/Spirits Selec-

· Best Personal Chef/Catering

· Best Fine Dining

 $\cdot \operatorname{Best} \operatorname{Happy} \operatorname{Hour}$ 

· Best Sweet Treats

· Best Wine Selection

· Best Lunch

Service

#### **Activity/Shopping**

- · Best Art Gallery/Studio
- · Best Event
- · Best Golf Course
- Best Kids Attraction
- · Best Nature Locale
- · Best Retailer
- · Best Shopping Area
- · Best Tennis Facility

#### **Accommodations**

- · Best Boutique Vacation Rental Company (Less than 50 units)
- Best Hotel/Resort
- · Best Rental Management Company (More than 50 units)

#### **Food & Drinks**

- · Best Breakfast
- · Best Casual Dining
- · Best Coffee House

#### **Services**

- · Best Beach/Event Services Provider
- · Best Fishing Charter
- · Best Local Musician/Band
- · Best Outdoor Adventure Activity
- · Best Photographer
- · Best Spa/Salon

#### **Venues**

- · Best Meeting/Conference
- Best Live Music Venue
- · Best Wedding Venue

For more information about the Perfect in Walton County Awards program, please contact Industry Relations Specialist Lisa Foster at Lisa@ WCFLTourism.com or (850) 333-2728.



# PERFECT IN WALTON COUNTY 2026

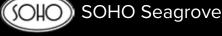
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**Community** 

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#### Community

# Chasing Perfection:

# Inside the World of the Blue Angels

By WILL ESTELL

Soaring by on a high-speed pass, barely one hundred feet above the runway—at a speed I'm told at the time is in excess of 700 mph—I can literally smell the fuel and feel the jet wash, before I hear the powerful roar of the F/A -18 Super Hornet as it soars by then climbs steeply just ahead of us, disappearing into the clouds, before diving back down in a corkscrew then leveling out about a mile away. All of this happens in about 20 seconds before another pilot with cojones of steel, and the skills to match, flies by completely inverted, slightly further away, but still close enough to feel the change in the atmosphere from where I am standing on the tarmac.

What I am witnessing up close and personal today is the same magical breath of patriotism that fans see at airshows all over this great country each year. The only difference is, today I'm taking it all in from the Blue An-

gels communication cart, surrounded by a small team of just eight of the Blues support staff, along with my wingman for the day, Blue Angels Public Affairs Officer, Lt. Ben Bushong.

Since being established in 1946, the U.S. Navy Blue Angels hold the unique distinction of being the most well-known aerobatic team in the entire world. While they regularly wow crowds with breathtaking performances right here in our own backyard, their mission extends far beyond dazzling crowds at airshows, as they aim to inspire future generations of patriotic Americans, by demonstrating the unmatched aptitude, attitude and professionalism of the men and women serving in the U.S. armed forces.

These aero superstars do so much more than simply entertain with a breathtaking aerial showcase. Their performances represent thousands of hours of precision flight, discipline, unshakable resolve and the unwavering spirit of naval aviation. For decades, they've captivated millions with gravity-defying maneuvers, embodying the excellence and teamwork that define the U.S. Navy Blue Angels—or as we affectionally refer to them along our beautiful Northwest Florida coastal communities, The Blues. I had the opportunity to spend a day inside the world of The Blues, guided by LT. Bushong, and gained some firsthand insight into their headquarters at NAS Pensacola. Including observing a morning flight meeting, pre-flight preparations, and the behind-the-scenes maintenance and logistics performed by their team of 158 active-duty Sailors and Marines, that keep this elite squadron at peak performance.

Here are some Q&As from my behind-the-scenes day with LT. Ben Bushong and the Blue Angels team, part of a multi-publication media experience with The Blues:

What is the age range of the pilots and does age play a part in the selection process?

The age of our pilots usually range from early 30s to late 40s. Age isn't necessarily a factor when applying for the team. All pilots need to have a minimum number of flight hours and experience to be able to apply.

As popular as the Blue Angels are around the country, how do you and your team feel about the escalation of attention after last year's hit Amazon original, The Blue Angels?

The film definitely gives viewers an inside look into what it means to be a part of the U.S. Navy's flight demonstration squadron, and it does it for an entire show season, including the selection process and intense

training that the pilots endure to get to where they are. As a team we're happy about the depiction and think the movie can only help bring our fans closer and hopefully create more interest in our mission.

Do the pilots still get any sense of nervousness when they fly or is it such a welloiled repetitive motion, due to all the practice and shows, that it becomes like driving your vehicle from home to work and back?

Everything we do is based on safety and having absolute complete trust in one another. We absolutely all have to count on that up there and on the ground. So, during winter training, we incorporate the crawl, walk, run mentality to continue to work towards the tight formations. As a team, we are always chasing perfection, 100% of the time.

What criteria would you say does play the largest part in the pilot and support team selection?

With all team members, trust and personality are two big fac-

tors when selecting new team members. If your current command is letting you apply for this team, then that means you have already checked all the boxes on paper for the prerequisites. But we are looking for people who would make great ambassadors for the Navy and Marine Corps, and someone that you would potentially spend 300 days on the road with in a given season. Our Maintainers and Crew Chiefs perform all the preflight inspections on every aircraft, so the pilots can strap in and go! It takes complete trust in a person, to be able to strap in and fly without performing your own preflight inspection of the aircraft. We are a successful team. because everybody has complete trust that the person next to you is doing their job effectively and efficiently.

With such vicious schedules between practices, social and event obligations, and traveling 300 days per year, how much sleep does the average pilot get?

Continued on next page





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# Palms Resort Brings Dinner, Drinks, Live Magic & Comedy to Destin!

An action-packed live show featuring World-Class Magic Comedy and Ventriloquism is now open with nightly shows at the newly renovated Palms Destin Resort Showroom.

Interactive magic takes place just inches away in an intimate showroom that offers excellent table seating. The performance features sophisticated magic & smart comedy targeting adults but is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. The show is headlined by Bart Rockett who hosted his own nationally syndicated television show for three seasons, had a co-starring role on the former NBC Drama Parenthood and headlined his own 1.000-seat theater in the tourist mecca of Branson, Missouri for



nine seasons. He has appeared in 85 countries around the globe and headlined for most every major cruise line.

Rockett, who started at the

age of 10, trained under Jeff Dunham and is recognized for his excellent comedy ventriloquism which is featured in the show. After growing up in the South, Rockett moved to Hollywood, California where his management team is located. He produced his teens to the finals of NBC's America's Got Talent and they have gone on to do major Hollywood proj-

ects over the years. Kadan, who starred in the movie Dark Skies with award winning actress Keri Russell and on CBS's rush hour combines forces with his Sister, Brooklyn to make guest appearances in Rockett's Destin show.

Brooklyn is well known for her viral Super Bowl commercial that currently has nearly 800 million views on YouTube and most recently played Hollywood superstar Bradley Cooper's daughter in a project with Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese

This talented family has been vacationing in Destin for many years and now that Rockett's kids are almost grown, he is excited to be back for a long-term residency in the place his Grandparents first introduced him to as a child. Rockett shared, "For me, coming back here feels like coming home. Some of my greatest childhood

memories happened on these beaches and it's my desire to bring something unique to the area that is a fun experience for families to attend & make their own amazing memories."

Nightly shows happen at 7:30 p.m. with 5 p.m. early seatings offered on Sunday's and select dates. A variety of alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages are available as well as a full menu of food and dessert offerings before or after the show. Parking is plentiful and free in The Palms Destin Resort multi-level parking garage, that is attached to the showroom.

Advance reservations are required and can be made at the official ticketing site: USATourTickets.LIVE.

#### **BLUE ANGELS**

continued from previous page

Wait...we're supposed to be sleeping too? [laughs] Thursday morning we fly to our show site. The first flight at every city is our "circles" flight, where we fly over the airfield to find all the checkpoints for the show. Followed by a practice. Thursdays are typically the longest, because it's a three-flight day: Transit, Checkpoint Flight and Practice. Friday we perform community outreach, visiting local schools and hospitals, then perform a full practice. Saturday and Sunday are show days, then we transit back to Pensacola after the show. Monday our team gets our day off, then it's back to Tuesday and Wednesday practices here in Pensacola. Actually, not getting enough sleep is never really too much of a factor. We always perform in the afternoons, so there's typically not many early mornings on the road.

Any other closing insight you and the team would like readers to know about the mission you all are fulfilling?

The Blue Angels are direct representatives of the 800,000 men and women serving in the Navy and Marine Corps. All of us are from the fleet and will return to the fleet after our time here. By design, our Navy and

Marine Corps is expeditionary in nature, meaning all our operations are happening overseas and out of sight. The Blue Angels were designed to showcase the teamwork and professionalism of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to the American public, and like we always say, "We're glad to be here!"

Will Estell is a seasoned writer, editor, and media entrepreneur with over 700 published articles spanning regional and national publications. His work covers coastal tourism, real estate, dining, automotive reviews, and celebrity interviews, earning him a strong reputation in Northwest Florida media. Currently the Chief Creative Officer of Estell Hussey Media, LLC, Will has co-founded 12 magazine titles and served as editor-in-chief for several others. Originally

from Booneville, Miss., Will is a father of three and lives in Destin and Navarre with his wife, ABC 3 news anchor Laura Hussey-Estell.



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# The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce Launches Speaker Search for "The Next BIG Thing"

The 2025 Annual Conference is on October 6th at Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa

Thing" Annual Conference, October 6th at the Hilton Sand-

The Walton Area Chamber presented by Ascension Sacred of Commerce opens speaker Heart Emerald Coast and Egsearch today for "The Next BIG" lin Federal Credit Union, set for

estin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. This unique and exciting speaking engagement will offer an unparalleled opportunity for



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business executives and industry leaders alike to reach a captive audience. The deadline to submit applications is August 9th.

The Next Big Thing will inspire over 200 emerging and established professionals alike in attendance, with innovative opportunities for personal business growth during one high-energy day. Attendees will choose from a diverse lineup of TED Talk-style breakout sessions, seminars, and workshops. The experience includes a welcome reception with coffee, mimosas, and light breakfast, lunch, a closing cocktail hour, and exciting extras like complimentary headshots.

Specifically, the Chamber is now seeking leaders willing to share their expertise on topics aligned with the conference's three distinctive growth tracks: Leadership Development, Entrepreneurship, and Women in Business. Selected speakers will have the unique opportunity to empower attendees both professionally and personally, nurture emerging and existing entrepreneurs, and inspire the next generation of leaders.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit their applications by Midnight on August 9th at https://business.waltonareachamber.com/form/ view/35802.

To attend the conference, visit https://www.waltonareachamber.com/the-next-bigthing/. Sponsorships for The Next BIG Thing are also still available: Local businesses and individuals interested in sponsorships should contact Gabrielle Hamilton at (850) 892-3191 Gabrielle@WaltonArea-Chamber.com.

The Walton Area Chamber would like to thank Ascension Sacred Heart (Presenting Sponsor), Eglin Federal Credit Union (Presenting Sponsor), The Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa (Event Venue Sponsor), 30A Flexspace (Lunch Sponsor), Florida Power & Light (Recharge Station Sponsor), D.R. Horton (Coffee Sponsor) and All In Credit Union (Coffee Sponsor), without whom The Next Big Thing would not be possible.

#### About the Walton Area Chamber

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce was established in 1925 and provides leadership for a healthy business community. As the area's leading voice of business, the more than 800-member organization represents the interests of business with government, promotes the local community and provides business education and networking opportunities toward building a strong Walton County economy. For more information, visit www.waltonareachamber. com or call 850-267-0683.

#### **Community**

### **Birds on Our Beaches**

By Helen Petre

Ever wonder which birds you are seeing on the beaches? Walton County has quite a few shorebirds. Read this article and you will be able to call them by their names, instead of saying "seagull" and "sandpiper."

# Snowy plover (Charadrius nivosus)

Snowy plovers are small, native shorebirds with white bellies and black foreheads. They feed along the shoreline and make solitary, ground nests in our dunes from February to August. Females lay three eggs in the sand, and they are so well camouflaged that you may step on them without even seeing them.

# Least terns (Sternula antillarum)

Those birds you call seagulls are probably least terns. They have yellow beaks, black heads and forked tails, and fly along the shore, diving for fish. Least terns nest in a group for protection. The male gives the female a fish, and the female allows the male to mate. The young hatch in June.

Snowy plovers and least terns are the reason you see signs and fences on the beach requesting that you stay off the dunes. Besides protecting the dune structure and vegetation, the breeding and survival of shorebirds depends on protection from predators.

### Brown pelican (Pelecanus occidentalis)

Brown pelicans fly in a line along the surf looking for fish, and plunge dive into the waves to scoop them up. They live year-round here on the Gulf and eat four pounds of fish and shrimp per day. Brown pelicans make nests of sticks and regurgitate food to feed their helpless young. They live for 20 years.

# Ruddy turnstone (Arenaria interpres)

Ruddy turnstones are common on our beaches in spring and fall. Sometimes they stay all year, as first-year nonbreeding birds stay all summer. Their name originates from their hab-



JACK CHILES. HAGERMAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. SHERMAN, TEXAS. 2025. Snowy plover



FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE. 2025 Least terns mating.



Brown Pelican



Ruddy turnstone

it of turning over stones to look for tasty invertebrates along the shore. Here in Florida, they turn over seaweed to find food. Ruddy turnstones live nine years. They nest in Alaska but



Sanderlings

return to the same beach every year. Since they have far to travel, they fly fast, around 40 mph, and travel about 600 miles a day.

Helen Petre is a retired USDA biologist and college biology professor. She spends her time volunteering, teaching, and writing science articles to share her interests with future generations.



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Wellness

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#### Wellness

# Forget the Sprint: Real Healing Happens in the Marathon!

At The Tortoise Clinic, personalized care and patience lead to powerful, lifelong wellness



By Dr. Karen DeVore

If you know the story of the tortoise and the hare, you already understand one of the most important lessons we can apply to health: slow and steady wins the race.

In a world where we're constantly bombarded with quick-fix solutions-miracle diets, instant detoxes, and one-pill answers—it's easy to lose sight of the long game. But with integrative healthcare practitioners, that's exactly what we focus on: your long-term, sustainable wellness. Not the shortcut, not the sprint—but the journey that leads to resilience, balance, and vitality for years to come.

#### What Is Integrative Health?

Integrative health is an approach to care that puts you, the whole person, at the center. It draws from both conventional Western medicine and evidence-based Eastern traditions to treat not just symptoms, but root causes.

This model acknowledges the value of modern diagnostic tools, lab testing, and pharmacology, while also embracing the centuries-old wisdom of acupuncture, herbal medicine, nutrition, and lifestyle medicine. At its core, integrative health is collaborative, personalized, and preventative.

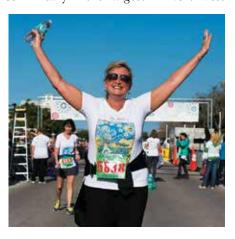
Instead of asking, "What drug treats this disease?" we ask, "Why is this symptom happening—and what's the best way to restore balance?" That might include medication, but it may also include herbs, dietary changes, movement, sleep support, or acupuncture. The goal is not to replace one system with another, but to combine the best

of both to offer more comprehensive, compassionate care.

#### How The Tortoise Clinic **Blends East and West**

At the Tortoise Clinic, we live and breathe this philosophy. We've served the communities of North Florida for over 30 years, building a practice that reflects the needs of our patients and the realities of modern life.

A typical visit here might include lab testing to evaluate hormones, inflammation, or nutrient deficiencies, followed by acupuncture to support nervous system regulation and pain relief. A patient might receive customized herbal formulations from our Chinese herb dispensary - the largest in Northwest



Florida, paired with guidance on nutrition and daily habits to support their health goals.

Because we're not bound by one medical model, we have more flexibility—and more tools—to help you feel your best.

#### **How Is This Different From Traditional Medicine?**

Traditional, Western medicine has done incredible things. It excels in acute care, emergency response, and surgical interventions. But when it comes to chronic illness, long-term prevention, and quality of life, many patients are left wanting more.

I hear it often:

"My labs are normal, but I still don't feel well."

"My doctor told me it's just part of getting older."

"I was given medication, but no one asked about my diet or stress levels."

Integrative medicine fills those gaps.

We take time to listen. We look at patterns, history, and lifestyle. We ask about your sleep, to your unique biology, goals, digestion, energy, and emotional well-being—not because it's "extra," but because it all matters. Our goal isn't just to mask symptoms, but to understand the story behind them and to create a care plan that's tailored

and life circumstances.

#### The Power of **Personalized Wellness**

No two bodies are the same. You are not your neighbor, your parent, or your coworker. What

works for one person may not work for another—and that's why personalized care matters.

When you work with an integrative provider, you're not handed a one-size-fits-all solu-

Continued on page 15

# **WOMEN'S WELLNESS** REIMAGINED

What if your story mattered as much as your labs?

What if "normal" isn't optimal for you?

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#### **Wellness**

# Book Review: Maybe You Should Talk to Someone



REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MCMA-NUS, LCSW

"Maybe You Should Talk to Someone" by Lori Gottlieb is a compelling and insightful exploration of the human experience through the lens of therapy. Gottlieb, a psychotherapist, weaves together her own journey as a therapist and her experiences as a patient, creating a narrative that is both personal

and universal.

The book introduces us to a variety of clients, each struggling with their own challenges—from the newly engaged to the terminally ill. Gottlieb's empathetic portrayal of her clients not only highlights their struggles but also underscores the shared nature of human emotion and the complexities of life. Her ability to blend humor with powerful and moving situations makes for an engaging read, allowing readers to reflect on their own lives while connecting with the stories presented.

What sets this book apart is Gottlieb's candidness about her own vulnerabilities. As she navigates her own therapy sessions, readers witness her growth and self-discovery, reminding us that even therapists are human and face their own battles. This dual perspective enriches the narrative, making it relatable and thought-provoking.

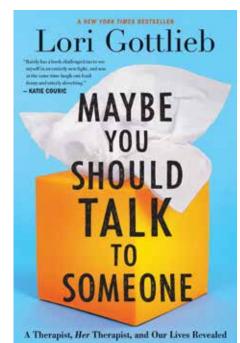
Gottlieb's writing style is engaging, filled with wisdom and insight. She skillfully distills complex psychological concepts into relatable anecdotes, mak-

ing the book not only informative but also enjoyable. The themes of love, loss, and the search for meaning resonate deeply, inviting readers to reflect on their own relationships and life choices.

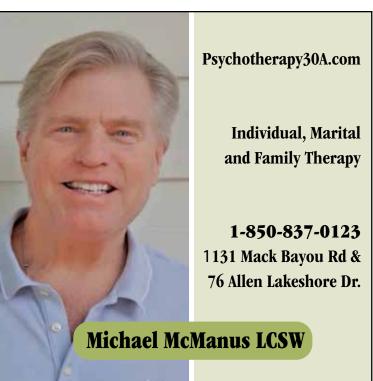
Overall. "Maybe You Should Talk to Someone" is a beautifully written examination of the therapeutic process, the importance of connection, and the resilience of the human spirit. It's a must-read for anyone interested in psychology, self-improvement, or simply seeking a deeper understanding of the com-

plexities of life and relationships. Lori Gottlieb has crafted a book that is both a mirror and a guide, encouraging us all to embrace our vulnerabilities and seek help when needed.

Michael McManus LCSW, is a psychotherapist in Santa Rosa Beach, FL, with his wife Angela, who is also



a psychotherapist. They have lived and practiced in the area for almost four decades. They have four children and in their spare time enjoy hiking, reading, jogging, yoga and bike riding. Michael can be reached by phone or text at (850) 837-0123. Visit the website:Psychotherapy30A.com.





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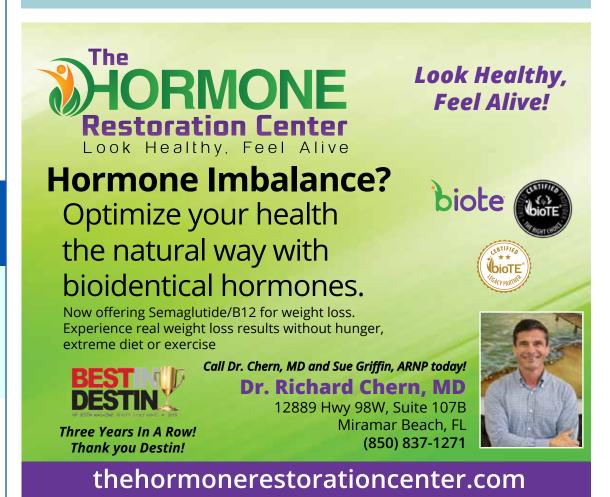
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# **Understanding Medicare Basics**



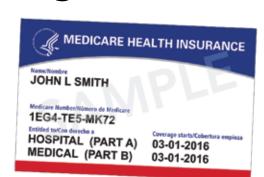
By Christian Regalado

Will you be eligible for Medicare soon? If you've been anticipating your move to Medicare for the first time, making the transition can seem overwhelming. After all, there are a lot of moving parts and options to consider. But don't worry. With the right information and guidance, you'll be armed to make informed decisions best suited for your needs.

So, when do you start? While certain groups qualify for Medicare early due to misfortunes such as being on disability for over 24 months, an ALS diagnosis, or end-stage renal disease, most of us become eligible for Medicare the month we turn 65.

If you're already receiving Social Security benefits, you will automatically be enrolled in Part A (Hospital Insurance) and Part B (Medical Insurance), and your Medicare card will be mailed to you. If you're not yet collecting Social Security, you will need to apply, ideally three months prior to your birth month. You can postpone and stay on a creditable employer plan if you prefer. Otherwise, don't wait!

Medicare isn't just one thing; it's divided into different parts, each covering specific health-care services. Part A is hospital insurance. It also covers skilled nursing facilities and hospice care. For most people, Part A is paid for through work history



payroll taxes.

Part B covers outpatient services such as doctor visits, lab tests, and X-rays. Unlike Part A, you will pay a monthly premium for Part B, which for most people is \$185 per month. in 2025. Higher-income individuals pay more due to the Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA). If this applies to you, consulting with a financial advisor or insurance broker can help identify strategies to mitigate these costs. Medicare A and B will cover about 80% of your medical expenses.

Next, you have two primary

options to consider for more comprehensive coverage. The first is purchasing a Medicare Supplement (Medigap) plan. These plans help fill in the gaps left by Original Medicare, and

they eliminate prior approval for most procedures. If you go this route, you'll also need to purchase a separate Part D prescription drug plan. Premiums for Part D plans can vary widely, depending on the coverage you select.

The second option is enrolling in a Medicare Advantage Plan (Part C). These plans often have zero premiums and include additional benefits like dental, vision, and hearing coverage—services not included in Original Medicare. Medicare Advantage Plans are suitable for those who are budget conscious and can tolerate some level of risk as these plans have varied cost structures and can have limited provider networks.

Deciding between these options can be complex, which is why consulting with a local and knowledgeable, certified Medicare broker really helps weed through options so you can select the coverage that best fits your lifestyle, needs, and budget. Remember, a broker's services are free to you, so please don't hesitate to reach out. I am a neighbor nearby that you can contact at any time. We can chat over the phone or meet in person. I'm happy to help! Email Christian@evergreenhealthins. com or call (850) 687-7606.

#### **REAL HEALING**

continued from page 13

tion. You're invited into a partnership, where we co-create a wellness plan that evolves with you. Whether you're working on hormone balance, fertility, digestion, chronic stress, weight loss, or simply optimizing your energy, our role is to guide and support your process with the right blend of tools.

Sometimes, that's acupuncture. Sometimes, it's a dietary shift, a carefully selected supplement, or lab-guided medical intervention. Often, it's all of the above.

#### **The Tortoise Mentality**

Health is not a destination. It's not a number on a scale or a perfect lab result. It's a relationship with your body, and like any relationship, it requires time, trust and patience.

True wellness isn't about "fixing" what's wrong—it's about learning what your body needs to thrive and honoring that through intentional, steady steps. That's what we mean when we say, "Wellness is a marathon, not a sprint."

As an integrative team, we walk beside you for the long haul—not racing to the finish,

but pacing with purpose. With every visit, every conversation, and every personalized plan, we aim to help you move closer to the healthiest version of yourself

So, whether you're just start-

Miramar Beach, FL 32550

ing your health journey or looking for a deeper, more connected approach to care, I invite you to embrace the pace of the tortoise—and discover the kind of health that lasts a lifetime.







# **Emotional Triggers**



By Stephenie Craig, IOURNEY BRAVELY

Remember a time someone else's behavior really got under your skin. Maybe your partner's emotional reaction stirred you up. Perhaps your child's behavior or attitude upset you.

A friend may have responded to you in a way that felt unsupportive. A stranger may have been unkind for seemingly no reason. Think about how you felt in that moment and how you instinctually wanted to respond or did respond. Did you call them out for their behavior? Did you withdraw and become silent and emotionally disengaged? Did you have big emotions and freeze and try to pretend everything was okay without engaging in a conver-

We all have emotional triggers that cause our nervous system to move into emergency mode. Our brain is prepared to engage in one of four behaviors to protect us when it determines we might be physically or emotionally unsafe including fight, flight, freeze or fawn. The fight

instinct tells you to move toward danger and confront. The flight instinct tells you to physically flee the situation. The freeze instinct tells you doing and saying nothing will keep you safe. The fawn instinct tells you to move toward danger and appease or placate the threat to find safety. When you are in emergency mode, your rational thinking goes off line and becomes unavailable to you. Your brain's primary concern is survival and safety.

When someone's behavior triggers an emergency response, you are likely to respond to the other person from a place of self-defensiveness, judgement, shame, blame, avoidance, fear or attack. These emergency driven responses lead to disconnection and eventual escalation in relationship problems. If you stay prolonged in emergency mode, you will begin to make up negative stories in your head about others that will make it difficult to repair and rebuild trust. The negative stories begin to feel true and you see yourself as a victim and others as villains. Your brain searches for negative examples to reinforce the negative story and begins filtering out the positive. And, before you know it, the relationship as a whole has become negative in your mind.

Both you and others will inevitably have big feelings and



emotional triggers. Often, people are responding to one another's big feelings and triggers more than to the heart of the

When triggered, most people respond better to compassion and connection than they do to shame and judgement. So, if you don't want your relationships to feel negative and you want to respond to others on a compassionate, heart level, what can you do?

#### 7 Ways to Navigate Your **Emotional Triggers**

- 1. Notice your brain moved into emergency mode. Notice body changes like tension, stomach and chest sensations, jaw grinding, heart rate increase. Notice changes in thoughts focused on fear, anger, self-defense, and blame. Notice thoughts related to gathering negative evidence.
- 2. Take steps to regulate your nervous system. Try taking

deep breaths, taking a restroom break, stepping outside for fresh air, take off your shoes and feel the floor/ground, eat sour candy or a strong mint, splash cold water on hands or face.

- 3. When calmer, check the negative story in your head. Remind yourself the other person is a whole person with strengths, weaknesses, and big feelings too.
- 4. Release judgement to embrace curiosity. Instead of, "You're being so rude and I didn't do anything to deserve it." try, "You seem overwhelmed. What's happening for you right now? How can I support you." Or try saying, "Are you okay?" "What do you need right now?
- 5. Move toward with compassion instead of withdrawing in punishment. Sit near quietly and take deep breaths. Ask the person if a hug would be helpful. Try validating their emotional experience instead of shaming it. "That does seem overwhelming. I can see why you're feeling emotional right now."
- 6. Let go of winning and pursue connection. "I'm here with you while you have big feelings. I want to be supportive. I'm also working hard to manage my feelings about your big feelings so I can be here for you."
- 7. When both parties are calm, try talking about the big feelings that happened and what you can each do to support one another when big feelings hap-

These strategies are not meant for relationships with emotionally or physically abusive dynamics. In those cases, distance is more appropriate. Next time you are feeling triggered by someone's behavior or big feelings, try something new and notice how it shifts the interaction. Connect with us for counseling or coaching along your journey at Journeybravely.

# WEIGHT LOSS

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# Sean of the South: Homegrown Tomatoes



By Sean Dietrich

Homegrown tomatoes. I love them. All kinds. Heirlooms, beefsteaks, superstars, Better Boys, Burmese sours, Cherokee purples, double-Ds, you name it.

A tomato is a magical thing. A love story in nutritional form. A tomato connects you with real life in a way nothing else can.

I want them room temperature. Sliced thick. Salted and peppered. Or placed onto a slab of soft white Bunny Bread, coated with enough Duke's mayonnaise to suffocate a small woodland creature. Eaten as a sandwich.

Also, chocolate. Love it. We went to Spain recently, and there is chocolate everywhere. They sell it at every tienda, mercado, and café. I even bought chocolate once at the police station.

Since being home, I've developed a crippling addiction to cocoa. I'm plowing through a bar of chocolate every day or so. My wife sincerely believes that I would be easy to kidnap because I take chocolate from strangers.

Likewise, I love my dogs. I have three. Thelma Lou (bloodhound), Otis Campbell (alleged Labrador), and Marigold (American coonhound). They are not well-behaved dogs, mind you.

Whenever company comes over to our house, for example, within seconds our dogs have coerced them into throwing balls and playing tug-of-war with various chew toys that resemble deceased hamsters. After only minutes in our home, many of our visitors suddenly remember urgent dental appointments.

And I love water. Big bodies of water. I love the lake, the Gulf, the rivers, whatever. I need water in my life.

American music. The old stuff. Fiddle tunes. Folk ballads. Old school R&B, when bands still had horn sections. And classic country before grown men wore glitter jeans. Old hymns.

I'm crazy about hymns. They hold a power over me I cannot shake. Why don't we write spiritual songs like this anymore?

Many of the historic spirituals are pure poetry. Whereas today's church music contains four lyrics, a lead guitar hook, and a dance break.

Even so, when you read the text of the old hymns, it's like reading Robert Burns:

"Here I raise my Ebenezer;

"Hither by thy help I'm come;

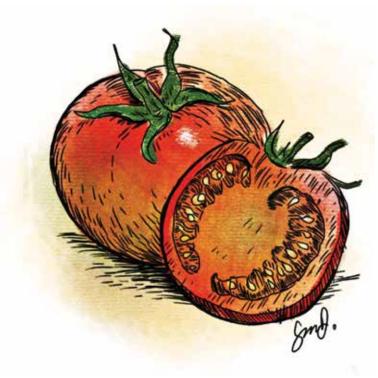
"And I hope, by thy good pleasure,

"Safely to arrive at home..."

Also. I love my wife. Nobody has ever believed in me the way she has. Nobody ever had reason to. Nobody expected much out of me in this life, and for the most part, they have not been disappointed.

But somehow, Jamie Richburg Martin could see through me. She understood me. We've been married 22 years, and I still can't believe it's been so long.

It feels like only yesterday that I stood at the altar, wearing a rented tux that smelled like someone else's b.o fumes, and trousers that ended up giving me a groinal rash.



While standing at that altar with her, I knew that this was the beginning of the rest of my life. The beginning of my spiritual development. The beginning of a decades-long crisis of perpetually trying to figure out what the hell is for dinner.

So anyway, I bring all this up because this morning when I woke, all I saw were horrible things. The news networks featured journalists all chewing the same depressing cud. My

whack-jobs I don't even know.

Every headline features global tragedy. Every internet video is clickbait. Everyone wants your money. Everyone wants to scare you. Fear, fear, fear. Buy, buy, buy.

But you know what you'll never read on social media? You know what you'll never see on your newsfeed? Real life.

No, to experience this mysterious and wonderful gift of reality, you must power down your phone, shut off the 24-hour talking heads, quit reading internet articles written by vary pore riters like this one, and breathe.

Maybe make a list of things you love, count them one by one, immerse yourself in these things, and never let them go. And then, when you are finally ready to experience the fullness of joy...

Eat a homegrown tomato.

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By Rev. Pete Hyde

Breathing heavily between sets in my weight routine, I stand at the second-story window of the gym looking out across the bay, stirred by a steady summer breeze on a hot, humid, normal summer day in Florida. My thoughts kind of wander from here to there as I try to catch my breath for a few minutes.

Movement in the sky catches my eye. A lone osprey with wings outstretched is circling in the updraft of the five-story hotel. Seemingly without moving a muscle and certainly without moving a feather, the graceful bird heads out over the open water in its relentless hunt for tonight's dinner for the family that will likely include a cou-

# A Pastor's Ponderings: Timing

ple of young chicks back at the nest. Its circle grows tighter as it almost hovers fifty or sixty feet above the surface of the brackish water. In an instant, wings are tucked back. Head is pointed to the water. With increasing speed, it heads toward the water like a dive bomber on its final run. Just before reaching the surface, wings are pulled back, legs and talons are extended to break the fall, and it soars back into the sky. Another one gets away. The majestic wings spread again as the routine starts over. What looks like lazy circles in the sky are an intense, unchanging work for survival for the osprey and its family.

In a moment, a second osprey appears and begins to circle in tandem with its mate just a few yards further out over the bay. Their soaring circles interlock as if they could hear heavenly music guiding the aerial ballet. If I were outside, I would be able to hear them calling to each other. But the dance is not for the enjoyment of the ospreys. It is vital work that dictates whether they and their young ones will



eat tonight. In what seems like random dives, the two ospreys, who mate for life and return to the same nest each year to raise their young, dive toward the surface. Sometimes they pull out of the dive and other times they hit the surface of the water with a splash. Each time they come up empty-handed.

I found myself rooting for them. I forgot my weight routine and became oblivious to those around me. One more dive. Come on, you can do it. I was about to return to my world when one of the ospreys started another dive. It hit the shallow water at full speed, creating a splash and spray that any ten-yearold cannon baller would have been proud of. There was a moment when it seemed to rest on the top of the water. Mighty wings stretched out and shook a little water off. Then. with mighty strokes,

it struggled to lift off carrying a large fish. Its mate joined it as they headed across the bay with dinner in hand. I almost cheered out loud.

I reluctantly return to the weight machines, pushing against the stacks of metal weights. God had not only touched me with a graceful and beautiful snapshot of his wondrous creation, but he had also given me a lesson.

All our lives, we toil and work and many times struggle as we strive to survive this thing called life. We spend hours circling and

searching – sometimes gracefully and sometimes not. We come up short and empty-handed as we dive into life and all that it tempts us with. Over and over, we try. Some give up after a while. Others are persistent and persevere and give it one more try. While we try and try, others come alongside us to call out encouragement and to be with us in the struggle. In God's time, the reward will come. When everything fits into His plan and schedule the dive into life will be successful, and we will be able to carry that blessing to share with everyone. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...My chains are gone. I've been set free. My God my Savior has ransomed me."

I push a little harder on the weights. My muscles ache. My soul offers praise.

Push hard, my friends. God will bless your pushing. Dive fast, my friends. God will reward your diving.

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

# New Life Church Launches Celebrate Recovery Program

to announce the launch of Cel-

New Life Church is excited ebrate Recovery, a Christ-cen- for anyone struggling with hurt, tered, 12-step recovery program

pain, addiction, or destructive

habits of any kind. The program will officially begin on Friday, August 8 at 5:30 p.m. at New Life Church, located at 120 Kingdom Way in Santa Rosa Beach.

Celebrate Recovery offers a welcoming, confidential, and judgment-free environment where individuals can find healing and restoration through the power of Jesus Christ. Unlike traditional recovery groups, Celebrate Recovery addresses a wide range of life issues—from substance abuse and codependency to anxiety, depression, grief, and more.

"We're thrilled to bring this transformative ministry to our community," said Pastor Shawn Baker, Lead Pastor of New Life Church. "Everyone is recovering from something, and Celebrate Recovery offers a path to healing that's rooted in grace, truth, and real-life change."

Celebrate Recovery founded in 1991 at Saddleback Church in California and has since expanded to over 35,000 churches worldwide. The program is based on the actual words of Jesus rather than psychological theory, making it a unique and spiritually grounded approach to recovery.

Each Friday evening gathering will begin with large-group worship and teaching, followed by gender-specific small groups where participants can share their struggles and victories in a confidential setting. Childcare will be provided, but must be indicated when registering for the gathering by scanning the QR

The program is open to everyone in the community—whether they attend New Life Church, another church, or no church at all. There is no cost to participate. Simply come as you are!

"This is a ministry where people can come and take off the mask," said Cherie Anderson, Celebrate Recovery Ministry Leader. "No one has to pretend. We walk together, trusting God to do the healing only He can do."

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Lee Campbell

Continued on next page





#### By Rick Moore

While spending time with my son in Boulder, Colorado, I visited a state park at the foothills of the Flatiron Mountains. Near the park entrance was a sign with the words "Chautauqua Park." I had seen the word Chautauqua on signs in Defuniak Springs, which is just thirty minutes from my home. I wasn't sure what the word meant or where the word came from. I asked someone in the Visitor Center of the Colorado Chautauqua if it was related to the Chautauqua in Florida. She gave me a brochure detailing the history of the Chautauqua Movement. This really sparked my curiosity, and I began researching.

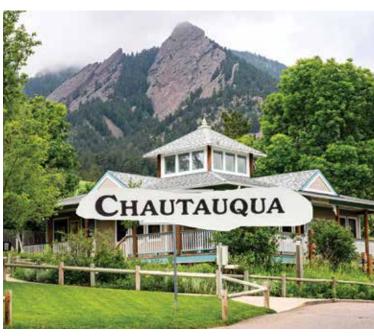
Chautauqua is a county in the northwest corner of New York where, in 1874, a Methodist minister and a businessman joined forces to create a camp to educate Sunday school teachers in the areas of art, education, recreation and religion. Although it started in New York, a few years later it moved to Florida, and then sprouted up across much of the nation. The Chautauqua in Defuniak Springs was so popular that several Presidents of the United States came to speak at it. Theodore Roosevelt, who spoke twice at the summer gathering, said, "Chautauqua is the most American thing in America." Thousands attended, with many staying for weeks at a time.

#### **NEW LIFE CHURCH**

continued from previous page

New Life Church invites anyone seeking hope, healing, and community to join the movement of recovery and renewal. Whether you're battling addiction, anger, fear, trauma, or any life challenge, Celebrate Recovery is here for you.

# Chautauqua



Records reflect that in the early 1900s at a typical Chautauqua, campers learned Latin or French, listened to Beethoven or ragtime, and sampled lectures on literature, art, science and history. Americans who had never studied chemistry saw frozen CO2 and other wonders. Chautauqua also started America's first book club, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. This movement thrived on American curiosity. It became so popular that it spread west to Boulder, Colorado. Today, the Chautauqua in Florida and in New York seem only a token of their glory days. Though there are still annual festivals at locations across the nation, with the advent of radio and television, the Chautauqua Movement lost most of its influence. That is, except for the Boulder location. The Colorado Chautauqua continues to thrive. Visiting there brought me back to a time when learning was very different. This hands-on approach

to education is the very opposite of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

AI is the number one news story of this year. I like Artificial Intelligence, but it should never replace non-Artificial Intelligence that is natural and organic. Think about the word artificial for a moment. Artificial sweeteners used to be advertised as superior to natural sweeteners. We now know that is not true. Even our animals can suffer from artificial synthetic ingredients and artificial additives in their food. My wife makes her own dog food because she has seen firsthand what artificial ingredients can do to our pets. When I see the word artificial, a red flag goes up. If feeding our bodies artificial ingredients is harmful, what does Artificial Intelligence do to our minds? What we feed our minds is no different conceptually from what we feed our bodies. Artificial Intelligence can be great, but it should not be a replacement for natural intelligence. Seeing an exotic flower grow on a mountainside is very different than seeing a picture of it on the internet or even with the latest virtual goggles.

If you can't make a trip to the Colorado Chautauqua to enjoy the current offerings of activities, I have a suggestion: There is a local attraction that in many ways carries on the spirit of the Chautauqua. It is the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center located on Highway 20 East in Freeport. Be sure and check the days and times it is open to the public. Perhaps you can go

visit a zoo or aquarium soon. The Artificial Intelligence you get from a VR Headset can never match the experience of being out in nature. The noise my sound machine makes at night is nice, but it will never replace the sound of the waves I hear while sitting on the beach. When you can, go natural.

Rick Moore is Communication Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.





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# The Christian Capitalist College Clubs:

### Helping Students Grow in Their Faith and in Business

By RICH SANDERS

Last April, my wife Rebekah and I had a terrific visit with two professors at the Mendoza College of Business at Notre Dame University while we were in South Bend to see our son, Will, pitch for the South Bend Cubs. We talked with Dr. James Otteson and Dr. John Sikorski about the Christian Capitalist movement and learned about their efforts to prepare students to be better Christians in business. We were truly inspired by the stories they shared about the rapid growth of their academic programs. Within about thirty minutes of visiting with them and seeing the "Force for Good" banner outside the bookstore, it occurred to Rebekah and me that we should start Christian Capitalist clubs on college campuses around the nation!

These clubs serve as training grounds for the next generation of leaders who want to integrate their faith with their business efforts. Through guest speakers, community service projects, book



Rebekah and Rich Sanders outside the bookstore at Notre Dame with the banner that inspired the idea of the Christian Capitalist College Clubs.

discussions, and local outreach, students can explore how capitalism and Christianity thrive together when rooted in scriptural values. "The more we make, the more we give!"

Our daughter, Caroline, a junior majoring in public relations, has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and was quick to volunteer to start the first club at the University of Alabama. She proclaimed: "Having the Christian Capitalist





President of the Auburn University Christian Capitalist Club.



Informational meetings hosted: 1 - Quinn Schaeffer, the President of the University of Notre Dame Christian Capitalist Club. 2 - Caroline Sanders, the President of the University of Alabama Christian Capitalist Club. 3 - Drew Moss, the

Club on campus gives students the opportunity to prepare for the next step of entering the workforce with Christian values."

Students at Auburn, Ole Miss, South Carolina and Notre Dame have since volunteered to start clubs at their schools. Most of the presidents were able to gather in Atlanta last Thanksgiving for a retreat to prepare for the launch of the Clubs, and several of them held informational meetings at the end of the Spring semester.

The Christian Capitalist College Clubs support students in growing their careers in business, regardless of their majors or academic fields of study, and developing an ethic of hard work and generous giving to the poor and needy during their time on campus and beyond. The Clubs will work with churches, local non-profit organizations and businesses in their greater communities, giving students a chance to directly express their love of neighbor during their time in college. Students are also learning through the Clubs that they can use their faith in business after graduation, not hide

Quinn Schaeffer, the President of the Christian Capitalist Club at Notre Dame and a double-major in accounting and finance at the Mendoza College of Business, summarizes the thoughts of many of her peers: "The Christian Capitalist Club at Notre Dame is a combination of what every student in the

Mendoza College of Business came to our Catholic school for: the interconnection of faith with commerce."

As the summer winds down, and college students head back to campus, if you or any students you know might be interested in joining or starting a Club at their schools, please pass along our website: christiancapitalist.life.

Rich Sanders is a pastor, small business owner, retired healthcare attorney and adjunct professor at Emory University, and former intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy, He and his wife, Rebekah, met at church in 1996, have been blessed with three children (James, William and Caroline) and live in Destin with their large golden retriever,







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# Road to Redemption: Eddie Mansfield, Managing Director at Path of Grace

By Victoria Ostrosky

God chooses to use some of the most broken people to accomplish His wonderful agenda of salvation. The Apostle Peter, for example, was tough, brash and confident. And because Jesus knew what Peter needed to learn, He allowed Satan to sift him as wheat. Not to demean him, but to show him that he was nothing without God. Peter would go on to be a charter member of the new ecclesia of God. God orchestrated Peter's first sermon on the Day of Pentecost to save 3000 souls. And the church was born. Peter, now

preaching the Word.

Most of us either know someone personally or know of someone whom God broke completely so He could make them into a vessel fit for His use.

Eddie Mansfield was born and raised in Kentucky in a Christian household with a praying mom (we'll come back to that later). Eddie wasn't really into Christianity, and, as he says, "I veered away from anything that looked like Christianity." Eddie personified the typical teenage rebellious attitude, and, in his case, began drinking and smoking marijuana. "I had

In 2011, Eddie says,"[I] realized my mom was right and started to see the vision she had. The Lord has given me the opportunity to help people like me."

Path of Grace, a faith-based transitional village in Freeport, opened in 2009. This place of healing specializes in helping women achieve lasting sobriety with, among other important things, therapy, both single and group, Bible studies and work assignments. The highly struc-

tured program is for 16 – 24 months.

Eddie has something specific to say to the addict: "There's a better life – give God a chance to help you and change you. When you're high, you're in another world and don't realize until you're free for a bit that you're hurting. There's freedom on the other side. Get in a Christ-centered program."

Eddie is currently the Managing Director at Path of Grace,

overseeing many women's lives being forever changed by Jesus. "God can take someone so messed up and turn it to good. I'm a firm believer that God has done all this. He's restored the vears the locust has eaten."

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



PODCAST

a progressing drug problem. I went to 7 rehabs and moved to different colleges wasting time and partying."

Drug use often accompanies arrests and jail time. Eddie's lifestyle played out the same. By the time

he was 38 he "had a messed up life, in and out of trouble."

When Eddie was finally, completely broken, and ready to listen to God's voice, he was once again in jail. A bunkmate, with whom he used to be friends in the drug world, suggested they do Bible studies while they served their time. They started in the Gospel of Mark. During Eddie's 7 months in jail, his praying mom began having a recurring dream about her son running a faith-based program for people in recovery. She believed God was doing something in Eddie and had faith that God would change him.

That was the end of 2006.



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laser-focused, was used mightily by God to bring the good news to, mainly, his Jewish brothers. The Apostle Paul, former-

ly Saul the Pharisee, spent his every waking moment hunting down followers of The Way to put them in prison and have them executed. His zeal for the Law took him down the false path of works until Jesus knocked him off his donkey. He was given a heart of flesh for his heart of stone, then spent the rest of his life hunting for the lost, mainly Gentiles, delivering the good news of the Gospel, and writing most of the New Testament, with many of those letters written while in prison for



# Dolly Parton Welcomes Guests to Pirates Voyage Grand Opening

By Paul Bonnette

It was with heavy anticipation that guests waited for the doors to finally open for Pirates Voyage Dinner and Show on Panama City Beach. For months, construction crews worked diligently building the 60,000 square foot theater from the ground up. It was worth the wait as Dolly Parton walked out on stage arm in arm with Crimson Captain Red Scarlett and Sapphire Captain Doubloon to welcome everyone to the grand opening of Pirates Voyage.

But let's go back to the beginning. On a chilly morning in February of last year, the first shovels of dirt broke ground in Pier Park on the brand-new 1,000-seat entertainment venue. From that point on, it was almost impossible not to steal a peek at the progress of the building as many drove by the area. Locals and visitors were not the only ones who were excited to start building. Dolly Parton was quoted as saying, "How exciting that we're breaking ground for my Pirates Voyage Dinner & Show in Panama City Beach. When we open this spring, there will be pirates, mermaids, exciting acrobatics, pyrotechnics, and even a few songs that I wrote – it's a show everyone in the family is going to love. Everyone knows I dream big, so we are definitely going 'overboard' with the details as we get started!"



The excitement continued on in the summer with a "topping out ceremony" as construction crews placed the final steel beam atop the building, an age-old construction tradition that signifies the finishing of the last major aspect of the building's exterior profile. As summer came to a close, construction began on the interior of "Buccaneer Bay," excavating approximately 5,500 tons of sand and soil to create a 15-foot, 600,000-gallon lagoon pool complete with two pirate ships.

As construction continued

this year, excitement continued to build as locals and visitors alike eagerly anticipated the grand opening, until at last the day had arrived. Having witnessed the building of this 60 million dollar investment from the ground breaking to the topping out ceremony, it exceeded all expectations. From the moment you enter, it's impossible not to become instantly immersed in the world of scallywags with a pre-show area with live entertainment, pirate-themed drinks and snacks, and a gift shop-or join the crew with pirate and mermaid makeovers. All this, before it's even time to enter Buccaneer Bay.

The main show dazzles and shines with acrobats, mermaids, sea lions, sword fighting, and even a spooky visit from the ghost of Davy Jones. The show is only rivaled by the food, which has proven to be just as big of a hit with their four-course feast including Half O' Roasted Chicken, Me Hearties Pulled Pork, Cob O' Buttery Corn, Matey's Mashed Potatoes and of course the famous Buccaneer Biscuit and Voyager Creamy

Vegetable Soup. Exceptional food, exciting action, and mesmerizing mermaids, what more could you want, except perhaps a visit from a very special guest?

As we took our seats, overwhelmed by Buccaneer Bay, a very familiar voice sang out, welcoming us to the show. "I bet you've never seen a pirate like me, right?" As Dolly walked out on stage at Buccaneer Bay, she went on to welcome everyone to the opening of the show.

"We want to invite all of you to Panama City Beach and to the brand new Pirates Voyage Dinner Show and it's going to be opening up for all the great folks that live around here and for all the great folks that come here on vacation....It's the perfect place to bring my next pirate crew and everybody here on Panama City Beach has been amazing."

Dolly closed out by thanking everyone and of course, adding a nod to one of her famous songs.

"You have fun, just know I love you, I will always love you, and thank you so much."

Whether you come for the exciting adventure with swash-buckling pirates and mermaids or perhaps the famous cuisine that Dolly Parton's show are known for, one thing is certain. This is sure to be an Arrrr'esome time for the entire family.



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#### **ART ESCAPE**

continued from page 1

sonhood, place, and, of course,

#### **About the Artists**

Francisco Adaro, a Walton County-based artist originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, blends whimsical charm with refined technique. From a young age, he dreamed of a life in art, studying at La Salle and painting murals while selling sketches on

the streets. A chance encounter with his now wife and Florida native Brooke, led him to 30A, where they opened Adaro Art Gallery. His vibrant oil paintings feature playful, stylized figures both human and animal—capturing moments of joy, curiosity, and tenderness. Inspired by his wife, children, and a lively menagerie of rescue animals, Adaro's work is a celebration of life's magic, infused with humor, warmth, and storytelling. His unique visual language invites viewers to see the world through a more joyful lens.

Christon Anderson is a selftaught Bay County artist out of Panama City. Anderson cultivates work that bridges the gap between poverty and privilege. Both bold and subtle mixed with abstraction and realism, Anderson's work acknowledges the duality in every singular subject.

Mark Little is a Walton County-based photographer whose work considers the connections that bring us together. Little's



Mandy Yourick, detail from "2025"



"Complementary Nuts"



Jamie Zimchek, detail from 'Connect the Dots'

Christon Anderson,

images bring into focus these connections, both with one another and the environments we inhabit; his photographs capture energy unfolding, offering a glimpse of the way it all intertwines. His work can be found in a variety of national spaces as well as 30A and greater Walton County.

Chandler Williams, a local photographer, was Walton County's artist of the year in 2021. His work has allowed him to experience life in many countries and interact with many amazing people along a multi-decade journey. Williams is assisted by an experienced crew in tune with his working style and has a fine art photography gallery in Grayton Beach.

Mandy Yourick is an artist and educator whose work includes drawing, collage, and installation. Her work engages with broader themes of creative placemaking and ecology, often reflecting on how we inhabit public and private spaces. She studies structures and shelters, as well as individual and collective agency as they relate to environments and change. Mandy earned her MFA in Visual Arts from Vermont College of Fine Arts and has completed artist residencies in Gijipo, South Korea, Madison, Wisconsin, and Skopelos, Greece. Her sculpture, Hometown, is part of the collection at the Underwater Museum of Art in Grayton Beach.

Jamie Zimchek is a multi-disciplinary artist with a background in painting and photography. Zimchek's work revolves around an exploration of pop-



Chandler Williams, "Rising From the Ashes"



Mark Little, "High Flying Birds"

ular narratives promulgated by power systems in private and public domains. She is particularly interested in the ways these systems use calculated storylines and absurd social constructs to shore up deeply entrenched self-interests. She has an MA in Mediterranean Studies from King's College London and an MFA in Visual Art from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Zimchek is co-founder of the I I I

### 2026 Gulf Coast Jam Lineup Revealed

Post Malone, Chris Stapleton, Keith Urban and Riley Green to Headline May 28–31, 2026 in PCB

Organizers of the 13th Annual Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam surprised fans by unveiling the full 2026 artist lineup on opening night of this year's festival in Panama City Beach—a first in the event's

Headliners Post Malone, Chris Stapleton, Keith Urban and Riley Green will be joined by more than 20 acts over four days at Frank Brown Park, May 28-31, 2026.

"Our four headliners are some of the most high-profile, in-demand artists we've ever had in our lineup," said Executive Producer Rendy Lovelady. "I mean, Keith Urban was

presented the Triple Crown Award, Chris Stapleton won Male Artist of the Year, Riley Green won Single of the Year, and Post Malone is one of the biggest artists in music, period. We're beyond excited about

The festival has drawn more than 30,000 attendees annually in recent years and continues to earn national recognition. Billboard called it one of "The 10 Best Country Music Festivals," and Music Festival Wizard named it the #1 Festival in the World (2024, Voter's Choice) and a top pick among Best Beach Music Festivals (2025).

COO Mark Sheldon add-

ed, "To have our full lineup in place and announced this early is testament to our Jammers giving us amazing feedback and to the incredible work our team puts in year after year to make this one of the top festivals in the country at one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. We love showing off our home, Panama City Beach!"

Tickets for 2026 are on sale now at www.GulfCoastJam. com, including General Admission, Military, College and First Responder passes, VIP options, hotel packages and payment plans. But they're going fastget yours before they sell out!





# The "Star-Spangled Banner":

# A Symbol of Resilience and Freedom

One of my piano students requested to learn "The Star-Spangled Banner," written by Francis Scott Key in 1814. As we learned the melody, we began to dive deeper into the meaning of the words and found that it is a powerful symbol of the American spirit, resilience, and the country's enduring commitment to freedom. Set against the backdrop of the War of 1812, the song's lyrics capture a pivotal moment in American history when the nation stood strong in the face of adversity. It's not only a celebration of victory but also a strong reminder of the sacrifices made to secure our country's independence and sovereignty.

The song's lyrics are derived from a poem titled "Defence of Fort M'Henry," written by Key after witnessing the British bombardment of Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore in September 1814. Key's words convey his emotions and thoughts as he watched the fort

endure relentless attacks, only to see the American flag still flying at dawn.

Here are the lyrics to the first verse of "The Star-Spangled Banner":

"O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,

Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,

O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming? And the rocket's red glare, the

bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that

our flag was still there;
O say does that star-spangled ban-

ner yet wave

O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave"

### The Meaning Behind the Anthem

The first line begins with the iconic question: "O say can you see, by the dawn's early light?" which calls attention to the sig-

nificance of the morning after a long and difficult night of fighting. The "dawn's early light" symbolizes hope, the light that shines after darkness, and a moment of clarity following struggle.

The mention of the "twi-light's last gleaming" contrasts the fading light of day with the unknowns of the night ahead, setting the stage for the challenges that lay before the American forces. The "broad stripes and bright stars" of the American flag are symbols of strength and endurance, standing resilient in the face of the battle. This imagery reinforces the idea that the flag, like the nation itself, is steadfast, even amid chaos and uncertainty.

The line "through the perilous fight" highlights the danger and hardship faced by the soldiers defending Fort McHenry. Yet, despite the bombardment, the flag still flies, symbolizing perseverance and defiance. The phrase "rocket's red glare" and

"bombs bursting in air" bring to life the chaos of the war, capturing the tension and fear that surrounded those moments. But despite these fierce assaults, the flag remains as a testament to the strength of the American resolve.

The final lines, "O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave / O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" are reflective and questioning. They ask whether the American ideals of freedom and bravery will persist, urging the listener to consider the true meaning of our nation's independence.

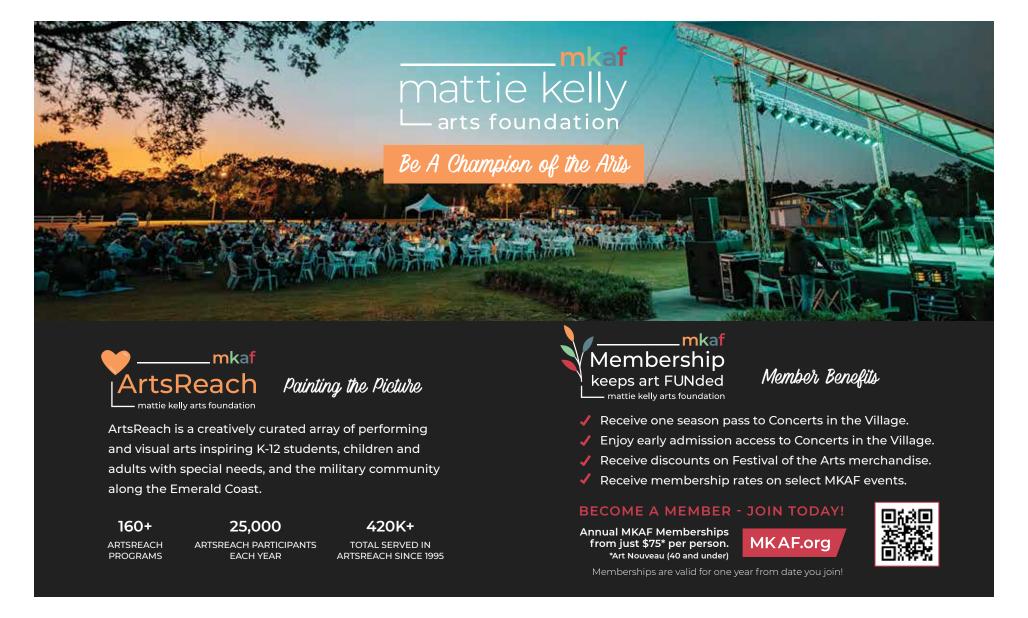
The lyrics have come to represent the broader resilience of the American people and their unwavering commitment to the values of freedom and liberty. The anthem's inclusion at major events (sports games, political rallies, and national holidays) reminds citizens of the nation's history and the sacrifices made by countless individuals to ensure the freedoms we enjoy

odav.

Additionally, the anthem speaks to the many experiences of the United States, symbolizing the military's bravery, and the aspirations and struggles of everyday citizens who continue to build a more perfect union.

In conclusion, "The Star-Spangled Banner" is more than just a song sung at public events. Its lyrics carry a rich meaning that reflects the historical and enduring strength of the United States. Through the symbolic imagery of the flag surviving the battle, the anthem is a reminder of the courage, sacrifice, and resilience that has defined Americans for over two centuries

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### **Gulf Coast Jam:**

# Twelve Years of Bringing Country to the Coast

By Paul Bonnette

For over twelve years, despite stormy weather conditions, pandemics, and hurricanes, Gulf Coast Jam has been bringing "Country to the Coast." This multi-day country music festival has seen its fair share of challenges, but has weathered them to become a staple event on the Emerald Coast. This year, thousands of fans from all 50 states packed into Frank Brown Park as headliners such as Sam Hunt. Blake Shelton, Tyler Childers and Lainey Wilson took to the stage for four nights of legendary country music. Whether it is shopping at the numerous vendors, enjoying food and fun or just coming to enjoy world-class country music, this event seems to offer something that brings out residents and visitors alike as tens of thousands of fans make this event a must-do.

However, it wasn't always the massive music festival it is now. Gulf Coast Jam began in 2013 as headliners such as Toby Keith,



The Charlie Daniel's Band and According to Executive Produc-Trace Adkins took to the stage and played to a crowd of 6,000.

er Rendy Lovelady, seeing the growth of the festival to what it is now is something he holds close to his heart.

"We've walked this path and seen it grow from the first year with 6,000 people being in October...the talent has grown, the crowd capacity has grown, the pull of the festival is in all fifty states now, just the overall texture of the festival has grown," says Lovelady.

According to Lovelady, they are always looking at new ways to grow and provide extra experiences. As part of the ten-year anniversary, Gulf Coast Jam added a fourth night to the already stacked festival as well as unique experiences, including the now popular Ferris Wheel ride.

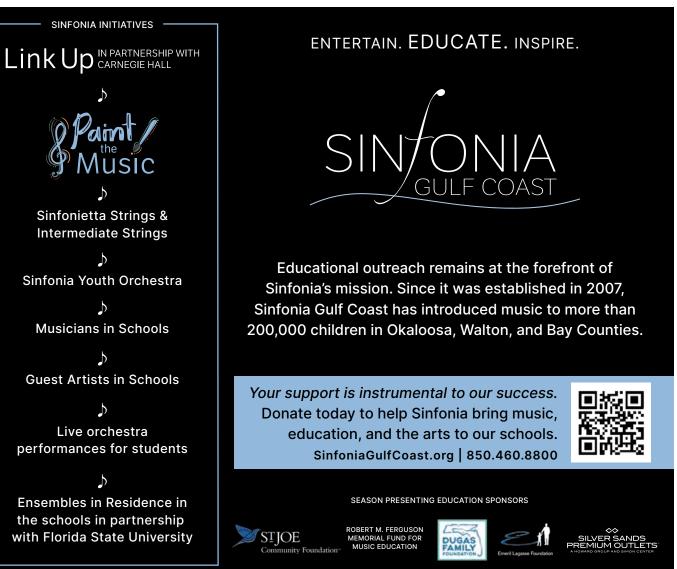
Gulf Coast Jam continues to grow and expand, and next year looks to be the biggest event in its history. For the first time in the event's history, Lovelady took to the stage on the first night to announce the full lineup for Gulf Jam 2026, which features legendary performers such as Chris Stapleton, Riley Green, Keith Urban and Post Malone. In addition to the headliners, Gulf Coast Jam 2026 will also feature performances by Koe Wetzel, Muscadine Bloodline, Marcus King, Treaty Oak Revival and many others.

Tickets have already been selling out for many of the tiers as fans eagerly await next year's

For Rendy Lovelady, despite the challenges, Gulf Coast Jam is an event that he hopes and plans will be around for a long time to come.

"I think Gulf Coast Jam is always going to be a staple for Panama City Beach. We have a long-term agreement with the city and it's in the top ten country events in the country. It draws from all fifty states, CMT covers it, so it has national television on it. It has become a real staple and I see it being very much a part of the future and hopefully it never goes away. I believe that Gulf Coast Jam is going to be here forever."







# Business Profile: Spotlight on Phoenix Restoration

Travis Kring has come a long way on his inspiring 4-year journey marked by faith, dedication, and an unshakable commitment to serving God and others. Just one year ago, he was recruited from the real estate world and joined Phoenix Restoration and Catastrophe. In that short time, by the grace of God, Travis and his team, led by Bobby Cates, have generated \$1.2 million in revenue. But beyond the num-

strong sense of leadership and heart. That same spirit now fuels his work with Phoenix Restoration, where he's become known across the Florida Panhandle for reliability, integrity, and genuine care for the community. His journey has been nothing short of incredible, transforming lives through service, bringing comfort in crisis, and building a reputation that speaks louder than words.

spection or help with restoration after a storm or fire, we are ready to show up and help, just like we would for our own family.

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your community. We'd love the opportunity to earn your trust and do business with you.

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bers, this season has been about building meaningful, spiritual, and professional relationships that continue to grow and bear fruit. Travis, Bobby, and the Phoenix team bring a passion for people and excellence into every home and project.

From his days on the court as a basketball player to his time coaching and mentoring players, Travis has always carried a We truly believe that the Phoenix Restoration team is just scratching the surface of what's to come. The growth, the connections, and the opportunities to serve are only beginning. Our Kingdom-focused team at Phoenix is excited to continue impacting our community with care, skill, and faith at the center of it all. Whether you're in need of a free HVAC ductwork mold in-

#### **ART ESCAPE**

continued from page 24

Artist Fund and an instructor in the art department at Gulf Coast State College.

#### About Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) is located less than 30 minutes from Panama City Beach, Panama City and the beaches of South Walton. Today, with service from American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, and United Airlines, ECP provides daily flights

to worldwide destinations, including daily and seasonal nonstop flights to Atlanta (ATL), Austin (AUS), Baltimore (BWI), Charlotte (CLT), Chicago (MDW/ORD), Dallas (DAL/ DFW), Denver (DEN), Houston (HOU/IAH), Indianapolis (IND), Kansas City (MCI), Nashville (BNA), New York City (LGA), Philadelphia (PHL), St. Louis (STL) and Washington DC (DCA). ECP provides Northwest Florida communities with first-class facilities and was strategically developed for major economic development opportunities. ECP is the gateway to visitors seeking Northwest Florida's famous beaches.



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# Michael Whalen Named Resort Operations Director at Seascape Resorts, Inc.

Michael has served as Director of Sales & Events and will continue to lead that division. In this newly expanded leadership role, he will now oversee all aspects of resort operations, including rental management, maintenance, housekeeping, group sales, events, business development, and owner relations. Additionally, Michael will play a key role in the continued growth of The Grove and other upcoming residential and commercial developments at Seascape Golf, Beach & Tennis Resort. He will also maintain his position as a Class B Director on the Seascape Master Homeowners Association Board.

Michael brings over 40 years

of hospitality experience, including a combined 12 years at Seascape. He originally joined us in 2008 as Rental Manager, was promoted to Director of Group Sales & Events in 2010, and held that role until 2014. After relocating to California for family reasons, he continued his career in leadership roles with Marriott and IHG-branded hotels before returning to Seascape in 2020.

Since his return, Michael has made a lasting impact, most notably by spearheading our partnership with Topeka, which introduced music vacation experiences to Seascape. These events have quickly become a signature part of our resort,



with over 15 successful music vacations held to date—and 6 more already planned for 2025. This year alone, we anticipate welcoming over 45,000 attendees through these events.

In addition to his professional achievements, Michael actively contributes to the local community. He serves on the Visit Walton Marketing and Communications Committee and is a dedicated advocate for both Seascape and the greater Miramar Beach area.

With Michael's leadership, Seascape Resorts, Inc. is excited to further enhance the guest and owner experience while continuing to build on the resort's proud legacy.

"I'm honored to step into the role of Resort Operations Director. Hospitality has been my life's work for over 40 years, spanning operations, sales, and events across hotels, meeting planning, and vacation rental resorts," says Whalen. "I'm deeply committed to Seascape and the people who make it special. I've experienced both challenges and milestones here—weathering the 2008 housing crash, the 2010 BP oil spill, and returning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through it all, our team has shown remarkable resilience. On a personal note, I've been married to my wife, Evelyn, for 32 years. We have two grown sons and one grandson, and we love to travel. So far, we've explored 35 states and 28 countries—and we're not done yet.

There's a bright future ahead for Seascape, and I look forward to leading us through the next chapter. Thank you to everyone who has supported me along the way. I'm proud to be part of this incredible team and community."

# Through My Clear Eyes

By A Window
I stand in silence, day by day,
a frame for all I see —
from blush of dawn to starstrewn night,
the world looks back at me.
I watch the sun climb from the
gulf,

its warmth against my face. I cradle morning's gentle light and watch the world awaken,

bright.
When I am clean, oh what a gift —
the world shines brighter than

before. Colors sharpen, sky expands,

each view a living grace.
I catch the waves of waving hands.

the press of small, wide eyes. Their chalked rainbows, smudged and sweet, become my best disguise. I watch the people passing by; I hope they'll pause and look inside —

to see the welcome waiting there, the space where smiles reside. And then the clouds come gathering near,

the sky turns steel and gray. The rain taps gently, cool and clear —
a storm is on its way.
The downpour fades; the light

returns,
and bathes all I embrace.
The world feels fresh, the air is
clear.

the sun resumes its place.
So here I stand — both shield and frame —

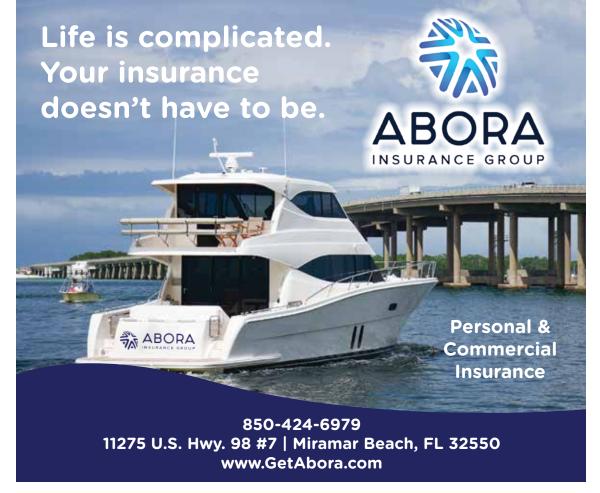
to share what's all around, grateful to help you see each day

the Emerald Coast's great town.

When your windows are clean, the world truly does shine

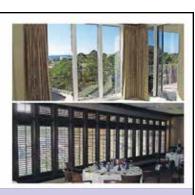
brighter, just as these verses reveal. Fish Window Cleaning understands the importance of a clear view — not just for beauty, but for connecting you to the vibrant life outside. Let's bring that brilliant clarity to your home and business, so you, too, can fully embrace every moment, every view, every impression and every day on the Emerald Coast.

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# Embracing the Shade:

# Why Awnings are Essential for Florida Living

By Chris Balzer

Florida, the Sunshine State, is renowned for its abundant warmth and vibrant outdoor lifestyle. However, the very sunshine that draws so many can also be relentless, bringing intense heat and harmful UV rays. This is where awnings step in, transforming exposed patios, decks, and windows into comfortable, shaded havens. Far more than just aesthetic additions, awnings are a practical and increasingly essential investment for any Florida homeowner or business, offering a multitude of benefits that enhance comfort, protect property, and even reduce energy

One of the primary advantages of awnings in Florida is their ability to provide crucial sun protection. The state's strong UV radiation can quickly make outdoor spaces unbearable, limiting their use during peak daylight hours. Awnings offer a protective shield, allowing residents to enjoy their lanais, outdoor kitchens, or pool decks without fear of sunburn or excessive heat. This protection extends beyond people;

valuable patio furniture, outdoor rugs, and even interior furnishings visible through windows are safeguarded from fading, cracking, and deterioration caused by prolonged sun exposure.

Beyond personal comfort and property preservation, awnings play a significant role in energy efficiency. By shading windows and glass doors, especially those facing east or west, awnings can dramatically reduce the amount of solar heat gain entering a home. This lessens the burden on air conditioning systems, leading to noticeable reductions in energy consumption and, consequently, lower utility bills - a welcome relief in Florida's sweltering summers. Studies show that awnings can reduce indoor temperatures by several degrees, making a tangible difference in a home's cooling load.

The versatility of awnings available today means there's a solution for every need and aesthetic. Retractable awnings are a popular choice for their flexibility. These can be extended to provide shade when the sun is high and retracted to allow

full sunlight on cooler days or during storms. Many come with motorized options, allowing for effortless operation with a remote control or even smart home integration, some even featuring wind sensors that automatically retract the awning in strong gusts. This adaptability is particularly valuable in Florida's unpredictable weather, offering the ability to quickly adjust to changing conditions.

Material choices also cater to various preferences and requirements. Fabric awnings, often made from solution-dyed acrylics like Sunbrella, are highly popular due to their vibrant color options, resistance to fading, and ability to withstand mildew and moisture - crucial in Florida's humid climate. These fabrics are also flame-resistant, adhering to safety standards. Metal awnings, typically aluminum, offer a more contemporary look and exceptional durability, often chosen for commercial applications or for their low maintenance.

When considering awnings in Florida, it's essential to be aware of local building codes and regulations. These codes often dictate specifics regarding height clearance (especially over public property), projection limits, and material fire ratings. It's always advisable to consult with a reputable awning professional who is knowledgeable about local requirements and can assist with any necessary permitting.

Installation is another critical factor. Given Florida's climate, awnings must be securely installed to withstand strong winds and heavy rains. Hiring experienced professionals ensures proper mounting, structural integrity, and adherence to manufacturer guidelines, maximizing the awning's lifespan and performance. Many local awning companies offer comprehensive services, from custom design and fabrication to professional installation and ongoing support.

The cost of awnings in Florida can vary widely depending on the type, size, material, and complexity of the installation. While a range from several hundred to a few thousand dollars per unit is common, the long-term benefits – including energy savings, ex-

tended outdoor living space, and enhanced property value – often make them a worthwhile investment.

In conclusion, awnings are more than just an accessory in Florida; they are a strategic enhancement that significantly improves the quality of life. By offering superior sun protection, contributing to energy efficiency, and expanding usable outdoor living areas, awnings allow residents and businesses alike to fully embrace the vibrant, outdoor-centric lifestyle that defines the Sunshine State, all while staying cool, comfortable, and protected.

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

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