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Postal Customer Local

Dog-Harmony Establishes "Paw Pantry" with Caring & Sharing of South Walton

By Christie Solomon

Dog-Harmony is proud to announce the launch of its new program, Paw Pantry, designed to support local families and their beloved canine family members. This initiative, an expansion of the non-profit's "Keeping Dogs in Homes" program, will ensure that no family has to make the difficult choice between feeding themselves or feeding their dog.

In partnership with Caring & Sharing of South Walton, Paw Pantry will initially serve 15 families, with plans to expand as the program grows. "We currently serve an average of 850 local families each month," says Caring & Sharing Case Manager Dani Aylsworth. "We are paw-sitive there will be room to grow with the Paw Pantry partnership."

The Paw Pantry collaboration supports Dog-Harmony's mission of preventing shelter surrenders by addressing a key barrier to pet ownership:



access to pet food. Dog-Harmony will collect donations of pet food and distribute them through partners, like Caring & Sharing, to areas where they are needed most.

This way, every bowl can be filled, helping to ensure dogs remain in their loving family homes.

Dog-Harmony Founder Nancy Bown, CPDT-KA, says, "We are thrilled to establish the Paw Pantry partnership with Caring & Sharing of South Walton. By providing dog food assistance to families in need, we prevent beloved family dogs from being surrendered to already overwhelmed and overcrowded animal shelters in our communities."

In the past three years, Dog-Harmony has distributed more than 10,000 pounds of dog food to families in need. With Paw Pantry, the non-profit is building on that success and establishing new donation drop-off points across the community to make it even easier to give.

Drop-Off Locations

Community members can drop off unopened dry dog food at one of Dog-Harmony's trusted community partner locations below:

• Berry Veterinary Animal

PAW PANTRY

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Swing and Sip for Autism:

Upcoming Fundraisers You Won't Want to Miss



By Heather Bennett Eye

Emerald Coast Autism Center (ECAC), a 501©3 non-profit organization in Niceville, has two big fundraising events coming up this fall. Their 12th Annual Hole in ONE Golf Tournament will be held on September 19, 2025, and the Fleets and Eats harbor hop will take place on October 25. These events help ECAC to continue to provide resources, such as therapeutic and educational services, to individuals on the autism spectrum who live on the Emerald Coast and nearby communities.

ECAC is found on the campus

SWING AND SIP

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Season 13 is Coming!



Sept. 18 - Oct. 12



Oct. 23 - Nov. 2



Nov. 28 - Dec. 31



More Info and Tickets: www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org



Community

SWING AND SIP

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of Northwest Florida State College. They have a clinic where they provide one-on-one Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Therapy, and the Emerald Coast Learning Center, a non-profit ABA Therapy-based private school and vocational center.

The learning center provides academic classrooms and a specialized vocational training center. Vocational training programs provide young adults with the opportunity and experience to gain skills that can be transferred to the workforce.

"We have a commercial kitchen, a laundry room, a car wash, and we work with the college," said Community Outreach Coordinator Jordan Eberle. "Students work in their greenhouse and mail room to learn real vocational skills that can be applied at jobs in the area. We just had our first grad-



uate and she's now working at the Raider Café at the college."

Right now, ECAC serves just over 100 students, but they are continuing to grow as autism becomes more prevalent. Many people move from out of town, or even out of state, for their kids to attend and get the type of therapy and education they need. This is why supporting these fundraising efforts is so important for our community.

The 12th Annual Hole in ONE Golf Tournament on Friday, September 19, 2025, will be



held at The Raven Golf Club in Sandestin from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Check in will begin at 7:30 a.m. with the scramble kicking off at 9 a.m. Players will have the opportunity to bid on silent auction items and participate in a 50/50 raffle. There will be games throughout the course, skills competitions, and a trophy and custom hats for the tournament winners. Boxed lunches are included in the registration price and beverages will be available for purchase.

This golf tournament is part of ECAC's ONE Campaign.

It's one of two annual events that help raise support for students with proceeds going directly to the ECAC Scholarship Fund. The other event is their annual ONE Run 5K held in April. "Everybody has the one in their life. The rate is now 1 in 31 autism incidence in kids. So, we ask that you play for the one in the golf tournament and run for the one in the 5K," said Jordan. Spots for the golf tournament are still available. If you enjoy golf, please consider signing up and playing for a cause.

Fleets and Eats, hosted by

ECAC on Saturday, October 25, 2025, will be a Lu'au, barhop type event that will begin and end at Tailfins. With the theme being "Tiki and Tequila," guests will enjoy a tequila-based signature cocktail and heavy hors d'oeuvres at The Edge Seafood Restaurant and SkyBar and Harbor Docks as they are transported via Tiki Boats from Tailfins. Guests will have the chance during the afterparty at Tailfins to win prizes. Sponsors and inkind donations are still needed for this event. Registration will be available soon on the ECAC website, https://ecautismcenter.org, for guests interested in attending. It's a party for a purpose you won't want to miss.

If you would like more information on either event hosted by the Emerald Coast Autism Center, or to make a donation, please visit https:// ecautismcenter.org or email Jordan at ECACOutreach@ecautismcenter.org.

PAW PANTRY

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Hospital (29 S Shore Dr, Miramar Beach, FL 32550)

- The Doggy Bag (34904 Emerald Coast Pkwy, Suite 126, Destin, FL 32541)
- Salty Paws Pet Boutique and Barkery at Destin Commons (4265 Legendary Dr Unit J106, Destin, FL 32541)

Acknowledgments

Paw Pantry wouldn't be pos-

sible without the support of the compassionate veterinary partners in our community. The generosity of Kindness Pet Hospital, Capital Veterinary Specialists, and Emerald Shores Pet Hospital Resort and Spaw has already helped Dog-Harmony fill bowls and keep tails wagging.

Ways to Get Involved

Make a Monetary Donation: Your financial contribution has the most significant impact. By donating, you enable



Dog-Harmony to purchase food in bulk at discounted prices, stretch every dollar further, and respond quickly to families in urgent need. Monetary donations also help us keep Dog-Harmony's partners like Caring & Sharing of South Walton from being inundated with excess supplies. A \$25 donation can feed a dog for two weeks, while \$100 can support an entire family's pets for a month.

Donate Unopened Dry Dog Food: If you'd prefer to give food directly, Dog-Harmony welcomes donations of unopened bags of dry dog food at its drop-off locations in Destin (The Doggy Bag and Salty Paws Pet Boutique and Barkery) and Miramar Beach (Barry Veterinary Hospital).

Spread the Word: Not everyone is able to donate, but everyone can make a difference. Help Dog-Harmony reach more families and keep more dogs in loving homes by sharing the news about the Paw Pantry launch with your friends, neighbors, and local businesses. You can also stay updated on the nonprofit's news by following their accounts on Facebook at www.facebook.com/dogharmonyinc, Instagram at www. instagram.com/dogharmonyinc, LinkedIn at www.linkedin. com/company/dogharmonyinc, or by signing up for their Paw Print Press newsletter at https://dog-harmony.org/pawprint-press.



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Upcoming Events

Wine & Fries Returns at Hotel Effie Rooftop Sept. 19



Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Florida and McDonald's bring back Wine & Fries, presented by Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast—an elevated evening pairing favorite wines with McDonald's french fries. Enjoy rooftop views, a DJ-led dance floor, a silent auction and "Classic Carnival" charm, plus a moving story from a family served by RMHC at the Hotel Effie Sandestin Rooftop 6-9 p.m. Proceeds support RMHC's "home away from home" for

families with children receiving medical care. Tickets: \$115 at rmhc-nwfl.org (available until one hour before start). Details: Allie Moore, 850-477-2273; allie@rmhc-nwfl.org.

International Beach Cleanup South Walton Sept. 20

Keep Walton County Beautiful will host this year's International Coastal Cleanup from 8-10 a.m. There will be clean up contests with fun prizes, free event t-shirts, and a free postclean-up breakfast served at some favorite local restaurants. Volunteer sign-up at www. keepwaltoncountybeautiful. org/events. All participants are encouraged to bring their own bucket, mesh bag, gloves, and trash grabbers. Don't forget your water bottle and sun protection! Locations Include: The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island, The Crab Trap/James Lee Park, The Surf Hut, June White Decker Park, Henderson Beach State Park.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton Annual Fall Fashion Show Sept. 21



Caring & Sharing of South Walton is proud to announce the return of its much-anticipated Fall Fashion Show, presented by Emerald Coast Hospice Care, on Sunday, September 21st at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa.

What started as a creative way to showcase the mission behind Caring & Sharing's Thrift Store has evolved into one of the area's favorite fashion events. Guests will enjoy a runway show featuring volunteer models wearing one-of-a-kind looks styled entirely from thrift-

ed donations. Following the show, attendees can shop these runway pieces—as well as other handpicked items—in the onsite pop-up boutique, sponsored by ExVoto Vintage.

Tickets are available online only at https://caringandsharingsowal.org/events. Individual tickets are \$65, and reserved tables for eight are available for \$600.

Harvest Moon Fundraiser Sept. 26-27

Point Washington Medical Clinic (PWMC) is proud to announce its annual Harvest Moon Fundraiser Weekend, taking place September 26-27, 2025. This beloved three-day community event combines wellness, exceptional dining, entertainment, and philanthropy to support PWMC's mission of providing high-quality primary healthcare regardless of patients' means or access to insurance. All events sell out annually, so early registration is recommended.

For tickets, sponsorship op-

portunities, or more information about PWMC's services, visit thepwmc.org or contact Jackie Ward, PWMC Community Engagement Director via email at jackie@thepwmc.org or via telephone at (850) 527-1205.

LadyWorld Festival - Pop Culture, Podcasts & Power Vibes Sept. 26-28

The LadyGang is back with LadyWorld 2025 at Seascape Resort, an immersive weekend escape packed with pop culture, comedy, music, and inspiration. This 3-day retreat features powerhouse headliners like Hannah Berner and the Girls Gotta Eat podcast duo, plus Kaitlyn Bristowe, Rachel Lindsay, Stassi Schroeder, and more. Dive into glam workshops, wellness events, live podcasts, signature cocktails, photo ops, and plenty of Instagrammable moments! Multiple ticket tiers and accommodation options available. VIPs get exclusive merch, pri-

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EVENTS

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vate planning access and more. Grab your girlfriends and get your passes at Ladyworld.co.

Fore Her 13th Annual Golf Outing - Swing for a Cause Sept. 26

Fore Her invites golfers of all levels to tee off for a very "pink" cause at its 13th Annual Golf Outing, presented by Emerald Coast Hospice Care at The Links Golf Club. Proceeds help local breast cancer patients cover living expenses, utilities, and transportation costs during treatment. The four-person scramble includes on-course food and drink, a catered lunch by Evie Mae's BBQ, the fan-favorite "Dress Like a Lady" hole, and an after-party with prizes, raffles, and giveaways. Info, registration, and sponsorships: ForeHer.org/golfouting.

Destin Seafood Festival Sept. 26-28

One of Destin's most beloved traditions is back and bigger than ever. The Destin Seafood Festival returns Sept. 26–28 for its 47th year, transforming



the Destin Harbor into a milelong celebration of fresh Gulf seafood, live music and coastal culture. More than 30,000 locals and visitors are expected to attend this free, family-friendly event.

Stretching from HarborWalk Village to Heron Harbor, the festival features five stages of live music with local and regional artists performing everything from rock and reggae to country and tropical tunes—and more. The pedestrian-friendly, waterfront boardwalk and docks become a feast for the senses as more than 100 local food and craft vendors — jewelry, clothing, sculpture, glass, watercolors, oil paintings, designs and more — plus Destin's favorite restaurants - serve up seafood specialties, cold drinks and handmade art.

For information, festival

maps, VIP passes and sponsorship opportunities, visit Destin-SeafoodFestival.com or email info@destinseafoodfest.com.

Come hungry. Leave happy. See you on the Harbor!

Destin Fishing Rodeo Oct. 1-31

The Destin Fishing Rodeo began in May of 1948 to bring people to Destin. It worked! Destin shortly became known as a summer tourist destination and "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village." The Destin Fishing Rodeo is the ultimate fishing tournament for salt water anglers of all ages.

Weigh-ins are everyday on the docks at AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar from 10 am until 7 pm. Everyone is invited!

All weigh-ins are FREE and open to the public. Share in the fun and excitement as anglers show off their winning catch of the day. When a shark or a big grouper or tuna is on the scale, the crowd reaches "standing-room-only" status.

Visit destinfishingrodeo.org.

Cars of 30A at Alys Beach Oct. 3-4

Alys Beach + Cars of 30A:

An Elite Automotive Experience is an extraordinary celebration of craftsmanship, luxury, and innovation, where exquisite design meets performance. Join for two unforgettable days as Cars of 30A presents an elite, highly curated collection of over 150+rare and high-performance automobiles, set against Alys Beach's iconic landscape. Purchase tickets and learn more: carsof30a.com.

Destin Songwriter Festival Oct. 10-11

The festival's Main Stage at 314 Harbor Blvd. is where the weekend crescendos, with both general admission and VIP tickets available. Here fans will get up close with a premium production setup complete with drink and food vendors, along with world-class performances by such renowned writers and performers such as James Otto, Kent Blazy, and Andy Griggs. The three aforementioned not only for their stage presence, but for their hit songs gracing country radio and streaming playlists around the globe.

Supporting artists performing on the Destin Songwriter Festival Main Stage include Justin Holmes, Matt Wynn, Justin Andrews and Nashville recording artist, Jessie G — who also happens to be festival founder Matthew Pennings' lovely and talented wife.

A portion of proceeds will benefit Operation Song, a 501(c) (3) dedicated to helping veterans, active-duty service members, and their families tell their stories through songwriting.

Music lovers can visit www.

destinsongwriterfestival.com for the latest updates, ticket information, artist announcements and insider tips for making the most of your festival fun.

Baytowne Beer Fest Oct. 10-11

Time to roll out the barrel and discover unique suds & ales! The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin is gearing up for its 17th Annual Baytowne Beer Fest, one of the Emerald Coast's favorite fall traditions. This two-day celebration of hops, malts, and mouthwatering bites returns Oct. 10-11 with more flavors, more music and more reasons to raise a glass. American specialty beers from around the nation will be available for participants to sample and savor.

Best of all, it's beer and bites for a cause – a portion of proceeds benefits Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and the Sandestin Foundation for Kids.

Visit baytownebeerfestival. com for updates and full beer and food lineups.

10th Annual Bloody Mary Festival Oct. 11

Get ready to Eat, Drink, and B MARY! Celebrate 10 years of bold flavors and brunch vibes at the 10th Annual Bloody Mary Festival at The Market Shops, powered by Step One Automotive Group. Sample unlimited creative Bloody Marys from the area's best restaurants and bars—loaded with over-the-top garnishes from grilled cheese to sushi. Also enjoy craft brews, bubbly, food vendors, live music,

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Community

EVENTS

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a cigar bar, and SEC football on the big screen. 21+ only. Proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity – Walton County. Info and tickets: TheMarketShops. com/Bloody-Mary-Festival.

Harvest Wine & Food Festival at Watercolor Oct. 16-19

Raise your glass to four days of epicurean delight at WaterColor's acclaimed Harvest Wine & Food Festivalone of the Southeast's finest wine-and-food celebrations and a meaningful fundraiser for our local children's charities. Held in beautiful Cerulean Park, this year's lineup delivers worldclass experiences throughout the weekend: intimate wine dinners, Friday's sultry Harvest After Dark evening, Saturday's legendary Grand Tasting or go VIP for enhanced lounge access and live music, and elegant Sunday brunches such as Brunch de Blanc. Want more? Multi-day bundles let you combine favorites such as Harvest After Dark and Grand Tasting or VIP combo-while taking advantage of some savings. Tickets are on



sale now—rain or shine—and proceeds benefit the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation's efforts supporting our children throughout Northwest Florida. Visit www.dcwaf.org/harvest-festival.

Support the Fall Silent Auction Benefiting Emerald Coast Food Rescue Oct. 24

Emerald Coast Food Rescue (ECFR) invites the community to its Annual Fall Silent Auction at Local Market, Destin 6-9:30 p.m. Join an evening of giving, good food and meaningful impact, raising vital funds to support ECFR's mission of rescuing food surplus and redirecting it to those facing hunger in Okaloosa and Walton counties. In-kind donations for the auction will directly help fund operations that deliver over 250,000 pounds of

food each month—at no cost—to 43 local programs, including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, after-school programs and subsidized clinics. Your support ensures that food doesn't go to waste—and families don't go hungry. To donate or learn more, visit Emerald Coast Food Rescue or email info@emerald-coastfoodrescue.org.

Eggs on the Beach Nov. 1

Cook team registration now open! Get fired up for the 11th Annual Eggs on the Beach, the beloved Big Green Egg cooking competition hosted by Bay Breeze Patio at Seascape Resort! This family-friendly foodie fest brings together backyard grillers, chefs, and nonprofit teams to serve up creative, bitesized samples hot off the Egg to a hungry crowd and a panel of honorary judges. Proceeds benefit Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food For Thought, two impactful local charities serving military families and food-insecure children. Whether you're grilling or grazing, you won't want to miss this smokin' hot event. Sign up or sponsor at EggsOnTheBeach. $com\ or\ call\ (850)\ 269-4666.$

Pirate Brew Fest Nov. 1

Ahoy, mateys! Fudpucker's hosts the Pirate Brew Fest, a lively afternoon of food, fun, and frothy brews. Enjoy live mu-

sic, games, artists and vendors, alcohol samples, and a pirate costume contest. Festivities also include a magician, mermaid, fire performer, and beer memorabilia on display. Pirate attire is encouraged—and the first 100 pirates through the gate will receive special gifts. Admission is free. Details at PirateBrewFest. com.

SOWAL Jazz Fest Nov. 6-8

South Walton is striking a new cultural chord this fall with the launch of its inaugural SO-WAL Jazz Fest, a three-night celebration of world-class music and community connection. The festival will transform some of 30A's most beloved venues into intimate jazz clubs, offering unforgettable performances that benefit the non-profit SOWAL Foundation.

Frank Sinatra Tribute – Josh Sirten and The Velvet Jazz Quartet bring Ol' Blue Eyes' greatest hits to life at SOWAL House on Thursday and Friday nights.

Billie Holiday Tribute – Sheila Ford with The Velvet Jazz Quartet captures the haunting beauty of Lady Day at SOWAL House on Saturday night.

Amy Winehouse Tribute – Teresa Lombardi and The Midnight Muses Quartet channel Winehouse's raw power and passion at Distillery 98, all three nights.

The Quiet Storm – Jazz legends Bobbie Storm, Wayne Mitchum, and Jimmy Ward deliver coastal jazz and Southern soul at Black Bear's Bar Room, all three nights.

Tickets begin at \$50 per show and are available now at www.sowaljazzfest.com. Each ticket guarantees entry to one performance. Guests may select VIP Reserved Seating or General Admission to personalize their festival experience.

Emerald Coast Classic Basketball Tournament Nov. 24-25 and Nov. 28-29

Since its debut in 2014, the Emerald Coast Classic has become the premier sporting event in the area, drawing top college basketball programs from around the country. For the first time, fans will be able to watch some of the nation's best men's and women's basketball teams compete within a six-day span.

CBS Sports Network will televise both the semifinal and championship rounds.

The women's tournament will feature eight teams Nov. 24-25, divided into the Bay and Beach Brackets.

The men's tournament will be played Nov. 28-29 at Raider Arena.

Details and tickets for both tournaments are on sale now at www.emeraldcoastclassic.com.







The Flight of Jackie Cochran Reclaims Legacy of Forgotten Aviation Pioneer

A new documentary, The Flight of Jackie Cochran, is set to reintroduce one of the most groundbreaking—and largely forgotten—women in American history. Directed by Jessica Anderson, the film explores the extraordinary life of Jackie Cochran, the first woman to break the sound barrier and a driving force behind the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)

during World War II.

Cochran, who grew up in poverty in Walton County, Florida, rose to become one of the most celebrated aviators of her time. She set more speed, altitude, and distance records than any pilot—male or female—and played a pivotal role in establishing women's place in military aviation. Yet today, her name has largely faded from

public memory.

"Jackie Cochran was as bold as she was forgotten," says director Jessica Anderson. "This film is about reclaiming her place in history—and reflecting on how quickly even the most significant contributions can fade from public memory."

The documentary draws inspiration from local actress and award-winning playwright Nancy Hasty, whose acclaimed one-woman play of the same name reignited interest in Cochran's story. Hasty's powerful portrayal provides the foundation for the film's dramatized scenes, blending theatrical storytelling with cinematic style.

Produced by Dave King, founder of the SOWAL Foundation and SOW-AL House, the project is a deeply local collaboration. The creative team includes cinematographer Mark Little, editor Megan Kasabian, and associate producers Nancy Hasty and Ray

Houseknecht. Rare archival footage and expert insights further bring Cochran's legacy into sharp focus.

Now in post-production, The Flight of Jackie Cochran is preparing for festival submissions in 2025–26 and has been submitted for consideration in the Suncoast Regional Emmy® Awards. A screener and full press kit are

THE FLIGHT

Tackie Cochran

available for reviewers and industry professionals.

With its mix of history, artistry, and local roots, the film brings Jackie Cochran's remarkable journey back into focus—charting the rise, triumphs, and quiet disappearance of one of the 20th century's most influential aviators.



Vote for Your Favorites in the 2025 Perfect in Walton County Awards!

It's time to select your favorites for the 2025 Perfect in Walton County Awards! The final voting period runs from Tuesday, Sept. 3, through Friday, Sept. 20, at perfectinwalton-county.com.

The top five nominees in 30 categories have been chosen, and now it's time to cast your final votes! We encourage everyone to vote online for their preferred businesses, events and activities online at perfectinwal-toncounty.com.

The finalists with the most votes in each category will be honored as Diamond, Platinum or Gold winners at the Perfect in Walton County Awards ceremony in January 2025. These winners will be showcased in print and online media by Walton County Tourism throughout the year. To see last year's winners, visit waltoncountyfltourism.com/2024-perfect-waltoncounty-awards.

Voting closes at 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 20. Each person can vote once per email address, so make sure your voice is heard!

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



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Community

Deer Moss Creek®



623 CHAMOMILE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,745 SF \$899,000 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



110 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,481 SF \$680,000 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



621 CHAMOMILE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,761 SF \$924,935 | construction completed Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



156 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 3 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,290 SF \$669,900 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



311 SWEET BASIL LANE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,927 SF \$974,900 | construction completed Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



203 RED DEER RUN, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,475 SF \$660,000 | ready September 2025 Listed by Yeska Sand 850.368.5936



314 GAZELLE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,500 SF \$699,000 | ready September 2025 Listed by Yeska Sand 850.368.5936



421 SORREL WAY, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,301 SF \$799,990 | ready October 2025 Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



312 GAZELLE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 5 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,259 SF \$612,000 | ready December 2025 Listed by Jodie Snell 850.621.6535



Registration Now Open for Tom Glavine's Field of **Dreams Golf Outing at Camp Creek Golf Course**

Registration is now open for the highly anticipated Tom Glavine's Field of Dreams Golf Outing, happening on Monday, October 13, 2025, at the award-winning Camp Creek Golf Course. Hosted by MLB Hall of Famer Tom Glavine, this premier tournament offers golfers the chance to play a world-class course while directly supporting the academic goals of young adults in Walton County through the SEASIDE SCHOOL FOUNDATION™ with a goal of raising \$200,000 at this year's event.

The Field of Dreams Golf Outing promises a memorable, once-a-year experience combining sport, philanthropy, and networking. Golfers of all skill levels will enjoy the challenge and beauty of Camp Creek's undulated fairways, sand dunes, and Audubon-certified settingan unforgettable backdrop for a legendary day.

"I've always loved the way golf brings people together," said Tom Glavine. "To pair a great day on the course with a cause that expands opportunities for students and families in Walton County makes this event even more special. I can't wait to see everyone out at Camp Creek."

Alongside the tournament, the Silent Auction has become one of the outing's signature highlights, raising nearly \$20,000 last year to support the SEASIDE SCHOOL FOUN- $DATION^{\mbox{\tiny TM}}.$ This year's auction will once again feature exciting items including signed sports memorabilia and experiences generously donated by community partners, with all proceeds benefiting the school and its transformative projects. The community at large will be able to take part in the online silent auction even if they are not attending or playing in the tourna-

Sponsorship opportunities are also available, offering businesses and individuals premier visibility at one of the region's most anticipated golf events. Sponsors will enjoy unique rec-



ognition, exclusive networking, and the opportunity to directly impact the future of education in Walton County.

Proceeds from the event benefit the new Seacoast Collegiate High School and Northwest Florida State College's Dual Enrollment and Workforce Development Center in South Walton. The project is transforming education in the region by creating a fully functioning satellite campus of NWFSC in South Walton offering full degree programs for dual enrollment and traditional college students.

This multi-million-dollar, multi-phase initiative includes a new Seacoast Collegiate High School building, a Northwest Florida State College building, and a future community building. Both the Seacoast Collegiate High School building and Northwest Florida State College building are now open and welcomed students at the start of the new school year - marking a historic milestone for education in Walton County.

"This project will be a difference-maker for our community," said Dr. Tom Miller, Executive Director of SEASIDE SCHOOLTM. "The opening of these new buildings is proof of what bold vision and strong partnerships can achieve. Events like Tom Glavine's Field of Dreams Golf Outing fuel this progress by rallying support for education that will benefit both students and adult learners for generations to come."

Tom Glavine's Field of Dreams Golf Outing will be held at Camp Creek Golf Course, a Watersound Club destination located just 20 miles northwest of Panama City Beach. Known for its natural beauty and award-winning design, Camp Creek offers a challenging yet welcoming course golfers will remember long after the final putt drops.

Foursomes, sponsorships. and silent auction opportunities are limited and expected to fill quickly. In addition, participants will gain the rare opportunity to build meaningful relationships with the region's top business and government leaders, joining an exclusive network of influential decision-makers. The connections made on the course often lead to valuable partnerships, contracts, and collaborations - making this event as impactful for your professional growth as it is for the community it serves. Register and learn more at SeasideSchools.net.

For more information about the tournament, sponsorships, or auction donations, please contact Callie Cox, Director of Advancement and Donor Relations for the SEASIDE SCHOOLTM at coxc@seasideschools.net.







Florida Governor's Dinner Coming to Okaloosa Island

The Republican parties of Okaloosa, Walton, Santa Rosa, and Escambia counties are joining forces this fall to host the first-ever Panhandle Governor's Dinner. The event is set for Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025, at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center on Okaloosa Island.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will deliver the keynote address,

joined by Lt. Gov. Jay Collins and Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia. A VIP reception, social hour, and silent auction begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 6:45 p.m.

Early bird tickets are available through Sept. 21 at \$150 (general) and \$300 (VIP). Prices increase after the deadline.

Proceeds benefit the four participating county Republican parties, helping fund operations, outreach, communications, and state-level participation.

Sponsorship opportunities range from \$3,000 to \$10,000, each including a reserved VIP table for 10. Silent auction donations are also welcomed, with businesses contributing items

valued at \$1,000 or more receiving sponsorship recognition. A Patriot Sponsor level of \$600 provides two VIP tickets for First Responders, Veterans, or young Republicans.

Organizers emphasize the dinner as a major fundraising opportunity to support upcoming elections and strengthen conservative leadership across Northwest Florida.

For more information, sponsorship details, or ticket reservations, visit www.Okaloosa-GOP.com or email Media@OkaloosaGOP.com. Business or semi-formal attire is requested.



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 projects 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 de-

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sire 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.





Coastal Dune Plants

By Helen Petre

The Gulf Coast is a high-energy coast with a large quantity of quartz sand deposited in offshore bars. This results in white sand beaches with no vegetation and sandy dunes shoreward of the high tide line. Protection of the dunes is protection of

the beach. If the dunes are destroyed, the sand goes away, and there is no beach.

There is a good reason you see signs in the dunes suggesting that humans should not enter. These are seabird breeding and essential plant and animal habitats. Plants maintain the dunes because they have roots that hold the sand in place. There is no nutrition in the sand, but the sea spray brings potassium, calcium, sodium, and magnesium that plants use.

The most obvious tall plants close to the gulf are sea oats (Uniola paniculata). They are

wind-pollinated, and the seeds are wind-dispersed, perfect for this location. The roots are long, deep, and colonized by fungi that help the plant to grow. In Florida, sea oats are protected plants. Sea oats are food for red-winged blackbirds and beach mice.

Pennywort (Hydrocotyle bonariensis) is a nonnative plant from South America that naturalized in the early 1900s. The spreading stems root into the sand. Pennywort has little white flowers blooming in summer.

Ilex vomitoria, or yaupon holly, is common in the back dunes where there is more organic matter and shelter from salt spray. Yaupon is dioecious. There are separate male and female plants. The females produce white flowers that attract bees and butterflies and develop into red berries that make excellent wildlife food but are

toxic for humans. The leaves of yaupon contain caffeine. Yaupon was used in native American cleansing rituals. People fasted for days, then drank large quantities of yaupon tea, which induced vomiting. Yaupon tea is commercially available. Unless you drink a few gallons after fasting for three days, it is like drinking weak coffee or tea. The leaves are fine. The berries are not.

Rosemary, Ceratiola ericoides, is a fragrant, long-lived shrub of the back dunes. Separate male and female plants form rounded shrubs often growing with Choctawhatchee sand pine (Pinus clausa immuginata) and sand live oak (Quercus geminata). Rosemary is allelopathic. It prevents other plants from growing nearby. Rosemary shrubs can live 50 years, but only if there is no fire. Fire destroys the plant. Seeds germinate after fire, but the plant takes 12 years to flower.

Sand live oak (Quercus geminata) defines the forest behind the back dunes. It is often







sculpted by the salt spray and onshore winds, with the leaves and trees facing landward. Sand live oak is not the same majestic tree as live oak (Quercus virginiana) that grows farther inland, although they look similar. Sand live oak is scrubby and forms thickets, although it can grow to 50 feet if there is no fire. Leaves look like inverted bowls and are evergreen. Leaves are replaced in the spring, and the year-old leaves fall when the new ones emerge. A member of the white oak group, the acorns are preferred food for birds, deer, turkey and squirrel because white oak contains less tannin than red oaks. Acorns are usually in pairs. With winter burns, germination increases but trees only grow to 20 or 30 feet.

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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Calm the Chaos: Understanding Cortisol and How to Take Back Control of Your Health

By Dr. Kar-EN DEVORE Let's talk about cor-

tisol. You've probably heard it called "the stress hormone"and while that's true, it's also a bit of an oversimplification. Cortisol is one of the most essential hormones in your body, playing a key role in everything from your energy levels and metabolism to your mood and immune system.

But like anything in the body, balance is everything. When cortisol is too high or too low for too long, it can wreak havoc on your health.

I see this every day—patients who are feeling tired, wired, inflamed, anxious, or burnt out, but whose lab work comes back "normal." Often, the missing piece of the puzzle is cortisol imbalance.

So, What Exactly Is Cortisol?

Cortisol is a hormone produced by your adrenal glands, two small glands that sit on top of your kidneys, and acts like a built-in alarm system. Its job is to help your body respond to stress—physical, emotional, or environmental. It also plays a role in blood sugar regulation, blood pressure, circadian rhythm (your sleep-wake cycle), and inflammation control.

When your body perceives a threat—whether it's a traffic jam or a tough meeting—your brain sends a signal to your adrenals to release cortisol. In the short term, this is a good thing. It sharpens your focus, gives you a burst of energy, and helps you respond quickly.

But here's the problem most of us are living in a state of chronic stress. And your body doesn't always know the difference between an actual emergency and an overflowing inbox or constant worry. In a healthy rhythm, cortisol rises in the morning to wake you up and drops in the evening to help you sleep. This natural rise and fall is what keeps your energy, focus, and mood stable.

Signs Your Cortisol Might Be Out of Balance

When cortisol levels stay ele-

vated for too long (or crash too low after prolonged stress), your body begins to show signs. Common symptoms include:

- Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Anxiety, irritability, or feeling "on edge"
- · Weight gain, especially around the abdomen
- Brain fog or poor memory
- Low libido or irregular cycles
- Frequent illness or slow recov-
- · Cravings for sugar, salt, or caffeine

Sound familiar? You're not alone. Cortisol dysregulation is incredibly common—but it's



often overlooked or misunderstood in conventional medicine.

Why Conventional **Approaches Often Miss the**

In a traditional medical model, symptoms like these are often treated individually: fatigue gets a stimulant, mood gets a prescription, sleep gets a sedative. But those approaches rarely look at the bigger picture.

Instead, we ask: What's going on beneath the surface? Why is your body stuck in survival mode? How can we help it shift into healing mode?

That's where integrative care—and a deeper understanding of cortisol—can make all the difference.

How We Help: An **Integrative Approach to Cortisol Health**

We begin by mapping your body's stress response through advanced testing. This often includes saliva-based cortisol panels or the DUTCH test, which track your hormone rhythms over the course of the day. From there, we create a personalized plan that supports your whole system—mind and body.

True healing takes a wholebody approach. Here's how we support cortisol health with integrative strategies:

Nervous System Sup- moting resilience over time. **port:** Acupuncture is one of the most powerful tools we have for regulating the nervous system. It helps shift the body out of "fight or flight" and into "rest and digest," lowering cortisol and pro-

Herbal & Nutritional **Therapy:** Adaptogenic herbs like ashwagandha, rhodiola, and holy basil can help regulate

Continued on page 21

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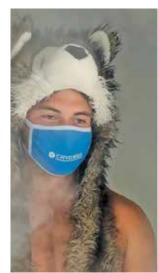
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This fall, turn heads with flowing locks, chic braids, or the added volume and length of Invisible Beaded Extensions—seamlessly styled by Pure & Couture's certified IBE specialists. Think caramel swirls, bronzed curls, bold reds, chocolate melts, or a blonde beachy bob—your hair is your canvas, and the fall color palette is endless.

From weddings and special events to everyday glam, Pure & Couture offers blowouts, cuts, color, lashes, airbrush makeup, spray tans and more. Gift cards, pro products, curbside pickup and online ordering make beauty effortless.

2nd Location: Pure Collective Salon, 600 Grand Blvd., Suite 102.

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Ashleigh's passion shines through in every custom project, offering a personal, one-on-one experience that makes jewelry shopping truly special. Discover the piece that tells your story—because your moments deserve to shine beyond measure.

(850) 424-7011 | Facebook. com/beyondmeasurejewelers beyondmeasurejewelry.com

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Cool Down, Power Up! CRYO850 Performance & Recovery Center

Football season is in full swing, and CRYO850 is keeping athletes game-ready with late hours every Thursday night. From middle school to college, the CRYO850 team works with coaches, trainers and parents to keep bodies healthy, speed recovery and reduce injury risk.

Student discounts make it easy to train smarter: Whole Body Cryo (\$30), Compression (\$22.50), Chillax Cryo + Compression (\$39), Localized Cryo (\$20), Infrared Sauna (\$22.50), Pagani Muscle Recovery (\$30), Cocoon Sauna Pod (\$30) and PEMF Therapy (\$30). Purchase a la carte or save even more with punch cards, Student Season Passes (\$350) or memberships starting at \$75/month.

Want an edge? Step into CRYO850's Performance Center for Visionbody Wireless EMS Training and Reflexion Neuroscience Vision Training—helping athletes with mobility issues, boosting focus, coordination and reaction time. The Reflexion Vision Board, designed for cognitive training, includes hand-eye coordination, response time, peripheral awareness and focus, offering valuable insight after a hard hit.

Call for more information or to schedule a team night or a team fundraiser.

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Want to sell your home for top dollar in the shortest time possible? Luxury REALTOR® Brian K. LoCicero has compiled his proven strategies—used to successfully sell thousands of homes—into a powerful new book. Inside, you'll discover the same tested tactics, negotiation skills and marketing insights that help sellers maximize value in any market. One client shared, "Because of Brian's efforts and strategies that he details in his book, we quickly sold our Destin home and bought a 30A beachfront property below asking price." For a limited time, Destin Life readers can claim a FREE copy of Brian's book by emailing Brian@BeOnThe-Coast.com or calling (850) 739-3800. Learn how to sell smarter, faster and for more!

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Caregiving for a Loved One with Alzheimer's:

Tips for a Compassionate Journey

By Nicole Lesson

Brook Batson and her family recently moved to Freeport, FL from Tennessee to help take care of her Father-in-law who has Alzheimer's.

They moved in with her mother-in-law to assist her in taking care of her husband.

"He is mobile but gets very confused," Batson said. "Thankfully, he does remember myself, my husband, Danny and my kids. Once we knew what was going on, we wanted to come before there was a crisis."

Baton shares what she wants people to know about Alzheimer's and other dementia.



"This is a disease, not just age appropriate behavior, yes some behaviors are age appropriate but if they can't manage a majority of their daily activities on their own, it's more than aging," Baton said.

According to research from the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, more than 1,500 Walton County residents age 65 and up are living with the disease. Florida has the second highest prevalence of Alzheimer's in the U.S, with more than 580,000 Floridians living with the disease supported by 870,000 unpaid caregivers.

For more than 17 years Brook worked in senior care, both as-

sisted living and memory care. Her passion for helping families through their journey with dementia has now hit her own family. She offers this advice.

"Find a support group, go to the alz.org website, call an assisted living facility as some have memory care daycare, surround yourself with those who understand what you are going through," she said. "Manage it as a family, as it takes a village."

For many, caregiving can be overwhelming and individuals in the role often report experiencing higher rates of stress. According to the Alzheimer's Association 2025 Alzheimer's

Disease Facts and Figures report, 66% of Florida caregivers reported at least one chronic health condition, 29% reported having depression and 14% reported being in poor physical health.

Practicing self-care is vital to ensure both caregiver and the person being cared for can have the best quality of Services like respite care, adult day care, and support groups can ease the challenges of caregiving.

Many of these are available at low or no cost to Floridians through state and local programs. For more information, call the Alzheimer's Association free, 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

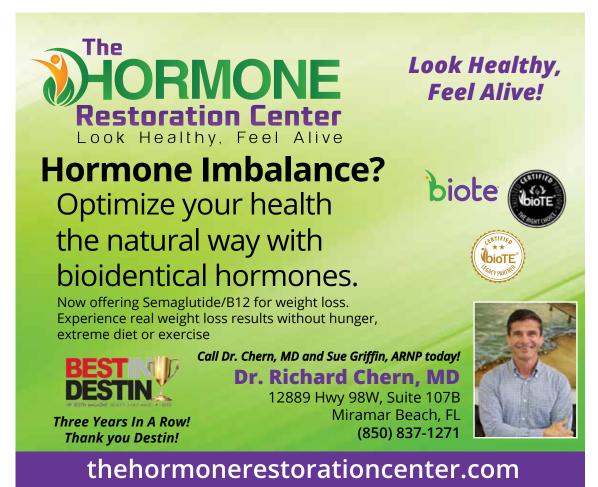
Walk to End Alzheimer's®, an event held across Florida to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's, has been a place of support for Batson. She is the new Community Engagement Chair for the Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast-Okaloosa County.

"At the Walk you will meet people, companies and vendors that understand exactly what you are dealing with," she said. "You are going to walk away with information you didn't have."

Join others impacted by Alzheimer's for the 2025 Walk to

End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast Okaloosa County on Saturday, November 1 at Northwest Florida State College in Niceville. Registration starts at 9 am with the ceremony at 10 am, followed by the Walk. Register your team today at Alz.org/EmeraldCoastOCWalk.







Book Review: **Not Nice**

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL McManus, MSW LCSW

"Not Nice" by Dr. Aziz Gazipura is a thought-provoking exploration of the complexities

surrounding kindness and assertiveness. Dr. Gazipura, a clinical psychologist, addresses a common struggle—how to be true to oneself while navigating the ex-

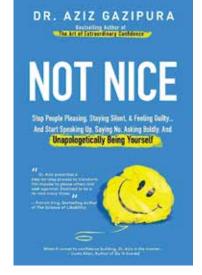
EMERALD

pectations of others. The book dives deep into the detrimental effects of people-pleasing and the societal pressures to always be "nice." I have been referring this book to quite a bit to clients who tend to people, please, and lose themselves in the process and then end up being resentful.

What sets "Not Nice" apart is its practical framework. Dr. Gazipura combines personal stories with psychological insights, making the content relatable and engaging. Each chap-







ter includes actionable exercises

that encourage readers to reflect

on their own behaviors and beliefs. This hands-on approach is

a standout feature, empowering

readers to actively work on their

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Michael McManus LCSW

personal growth. The writing is conversational and approachable, which helps demystify the often intimidating topics of assertiveness and selfworth. Dr. Gazipura emphasizes that being assertive doesn't mean being unkind; rather, it's about honoring one's own needs and boundaries. This message resonates strongly and offers a refreshing perspective on self-advocacy.

The overall impact of the book is profound, as it encourages introspection and challenges long-held beliefs about nice-

In conclusion, "Not Nice" is a compelling read for anyone grappling with the balance between kindness and self-assertion. Dr. Gazipura provides a roadmap for embracing authenticity and building healthier relationships, making it a valuable addition to the self-help genre.

Michael McManus, LCSW, is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach. He and his wife, Angela, also a psychotherapist, have raised four children and enjoy swimming, biking, hiking, yoga, reading, and cooking. If this topic intrigues you and you're interested in working on this topic, Michael can be reached by text or phone at (850) 837-0123 or at his website: psychotherapy30A.com

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Planning for Healthcare in 2026



By Christian Regalado

Healthcare insurance will be changing for many people starting next year. For those under 65 who are not covered by a group health insurance plan, overall healthcare costs are expected to increase tremendously due to the loss of federal tax credits, rising premium fees, prescription drug costs, and general inflation.

If you get healthcare through healthcare.gov, how much will your premiums increase? That'll depend on your age and where you live. Those aged 55 to 64 are expected to be the hardest hit. Because of premium increases, the forecast is that many individuals will find their healthcare policies become unaffordable. Many Floridians who purchase health plans through the exchange are projected not to renew their health insurance coverage as premium fees increase.

If you find yourself in these shoes, what can you do? Right now, we're looking at betterthan-a-sharp-stick-in-the-eye options. If you can no longer afford comprehensive coverage, you may want to consider purchasing an accident, hospital indemnity, and/or cancer plan. These plans, while not comprehensive, offer some protection in emergencies and can potentially save you a great deal of money for a reasonable premium. I'm looking more into what will be available in our local market for 2026, and I'll follow up in future articles.

It's not just those under 65 who will experience changes in health insurance in 2026. Insurance companies' Medicare Ad-

vantage, PDP, and Supplement plans and premiums for 2026 will become public on October 1. I mentioned in last month's article that 2026 will be a year of disruption in the Medicare market. We know that most Advantage plans will likely reduce benefits such as dental and vision. Companies offering Medicare Supplement plans are projected to impose meaningful premium increases, and carriers offering prescription drug plans will likely be increasing premiums significantly. A federal test program in six states, thankfully not including Florida, will start requiring prior authorization for Supplement Plans. Avoiding prior authorization is one of the main reasons people enroll in a Medicare Supplement plan.

What is the good news? For those fortunate enough to qualify for a Medicare Supplement or Advantage plan, they will still offer better coverage than individual plans in 2026

Those of us living in South Walton County have a wide range of Advantage plans to choose from including Chronic Special Needs Plans (C-SNPs). These plans allow a special enrollment period for someone recently diagnosed with a chronic or disabling special needs condition such as a cardiovascular disorder, chronic heart failure, diabetes, as well as other chronic conditions to change Advantage plans for stronger coverage. This is important to know if you are enrolled in an Advantage Plan and ever find yourself with a chronic health condition. Regardless, the time to review your current coverage and take any necessary action will be coming. I'll touch more on this in next month's article.

Remember: don't be fooled by 800-number commercials

promising better coverage if you qualify. They're aiming to mine and sell your personal information to other online companies. It's always been advisable to utilize a local, certified broker to help choose the best options for you, and with increasing complications coming in 2026, that's all the more important. I am available to speak with you anytime and there is no fee to you for my services. If I can help, please reach out! We can chat over the phone or meet in person. I'm happy to help! Email Christian@evergreenhealthins. com or call (850) 687-7606.

Stay safe; stay local!





Two years ago, a German girl walked into CRYO850 asking if I would work with her with EMS technology. New to town (and the U.S.), she needed someone to buy into her training system that used electricity to create contractions, allowing for muscle building without heavy weights.

EMS Training works 10 muscle groups simultaneously cutting a workout down to only 20 minutes.

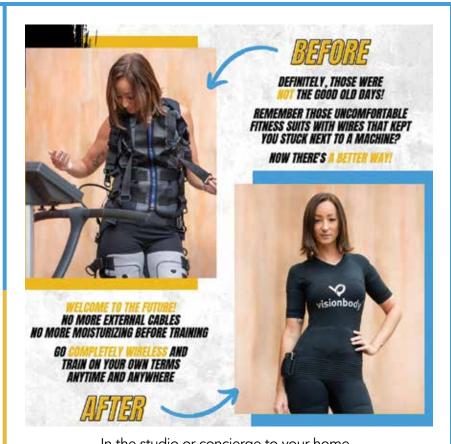
I loved the idea of offering this technology to my customers. So, I rented the space next door and began remodeling it to build her a studio. The project stalled when my dear friend and contractor tragically passed. She decided she no longer wanted the studio, and I was left with an empty space and no clue how to fill it. A time of horrible loss and sadness was topped off with what seemed like a financial disaster.

BUT GOD HAS A PLAN & THERE IS ALWAYS A SILVER LINING!

After deliberating with staff, I decided to stick with the original plan. I researched EMS and found a newer and more advanced version that would also work for athletes looking to gain a competitive edge.

While traditional EMS requires the user to be wet and tethered to a machine (think Dolph Lungren on the treadmill in Rocky), **Vision Body EMS** uses a dry suit with bluetooth capability allowing users full freedom of movement and no wetsuit. In the end, I traded the flip phone for an Apple 16 and now can serve a broader clientele! With the help of Gina Loya and Bonnie Bee, we launched the new program, and everyone has seen amazing results. I'm excited to announce with our new partnership with Personal Trainer, Susie Rodriguez, **Vision Body Next Level EMS Training** is taking the Emerald Coast by storm! We are now helping clients to ENGAGE 10 muscle groups at a time to ENHANCE strength, performance and recovery with the most EFFICIENT technology on the fitness market today! Whether you want to go deeper into muscle fibers to gain a competitive edge, need to build muscle without heavy weight, or just need to double the workout in half the time, we've got you.

~ Amy Milligan, Owner/General Manager



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Transitional Brain



By Stephenie Crag

I'm 17 years into sending kids back to school. And, every year, it is still hard. Switching from one life rhythm to another in a day is hard on the brain and body. The sleep schedule

changes, the morning and evening rhythms shift. Everyone in the house is a little overwhelmed and irritable. It gets better each week, but I've found six weeks to be the sweet spot when we are all reoriented and things feel normal again.

Transitional discomfort is not isolated to returning to school. Maybe you've started a new job, added a child to the family, started care-giving for a family member, moved homes or dropped off a child at college. Or, maybe you're making a habit change like quitting smoking, eating healthier, moving your body or trying to be more optimistic. All kinds of life transition can feel overwhelming at first and you might find yourself saying, "Why is this so hard?"



Your brain is wired for routine and repetition. Whatever you have been doing most consistently is what your brain gravitates toward. When you shift gears, make a change or transition into a new way of doing things, your brain initially pulls you back toward your old, familiar routines it associates with safety and security. Rewiring your brain to the new pattern requires daily repetition over 3-6 weeks. In the beginning, you might feel overwhelmed and frustrated with the effort required to sustain your new rhythm. However, as you reach week three, you will often find it's getting a little easier. After week 3, your brain begins to gravitate more and more toward the new behavior. And usually,

around the 6-week mark, your brain doesn't feel like it's fighting the new direction you've purposed to go.

So, what are you supposed to do when transitional brain strikes and sticks around for 3-6 weeks?

8 Ways to Support Yourself Through Transitional Brain

Notice and acknowledge. Notice feelings of overwhelm, irritability, brain fog, stress and exhaustion. Remind yourself you are experiencing transitional brain and it's normal. Be kind and remind yourself it will take several weeks to feel your normal groove again.

Name the source of transition. Observe what might be a transitional event in your life.

Name back to school, moving homes, new responsibilities or whatever else defines your transitional time.

Slow down. Your brain won't go from zero to 60 in a day. Give yourself steps. This week we are going to focus on sleep schedule and homework. Next week we will focus on family dinners. The week after that we will focus on balancing school with weekend fun. When you force your brain to overhaul everything at once, you are less likely to sustain anything well.

Prioritize rest. Transitional brain makes you tired. Try getting enough sleep at night and saying no to some commitments so you have time to rest and recharge.

Regulate your mood. You are more likely to be frustrated, grumpy, and irritable during transitional brain. Notice when you are getting edgy and engage some regulating practices like stretching, sitting in nature, deep breathing, watching a funny show, reading a book, moving your body, or talking to a friend. Remember to circle back and apologize to others if you've not been your best self.

Be gracious to others. Try remembering others around you are also often having transitional brain. Be kind and curious rather than judgmental and shameful when others are struggling.

Keep going. Put one foot in front of the other and you will find that days turn into a week and weeks turn into a month. At some point, you will be surprised to look up and notice you are feeling more normal and settled in your new life rhythm.

Remember for next time. Try writing yourself a brief note in the notes of your phone about your experience with transitional brain so you can look back and see in your own words that you really will make it through next time.

You aren't alone. People all around you are navigating various changes resulting in transitional brain. Try talking about it and connecting with your friends to normalize your experience. Hard things together feel better than alone. Connect with us for counseling and coaching along your journey at Journey-bravely.com.







Sean of the South: Our Father



By Sean Dietrich

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Even though this name has been so misused, misapplied, and misappropriated throughout history.

I mean, what even is your actual name? People in various countries call you different things. There have been wars over which is the correct name.

How many people have been slaughtered in, quote-unquote, "Your Name?" We humans are still fighting about what, exactly, that name is.

The American evangelicals, ironically, choose a Middle English translation of a Latinized version of a Greek iteration of a Hebrew nickname, that was officially sanctioned by King James I, who most historians believe was bisexual. I'll bet the evangelicals love that.

Still, other people use other words for Your name. But the Jewish culture, in my humble opinion, gets it right. Because they won't even say your name. It's too holy. Plus, once you use someone's name, you've already kind of boxed that someone in. But you can't be boxed in.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Because heaven knows sometimes it sucks down here.

Even so, there's got to be a plan to this mess we call life. There are all these coincidences happening. People call these instances different things: Grace, providence, karma, synchronicity, God winks. Whatever you call them, they happen. Every moment. And there seems to be a reason for it.

Give us this day our daily bread. Us. Not just me. Us. Collective. Personally, I have never known hunger, I was raised in a food secure household. But



there are many other people included in "us." People who are starving. People who don't have what they need. And it's not just bread.

There are people lying in hospitals, prisons, nursing

homes, or crack houses. They are drunk, and homeless, living from dumpsters. They have needs. And it doesn't seem fair that I sit on my duff, eating Fritos while others go without.

And forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Why is it that we humans have no problem asking a great invisible omnipotent being for forgiveness. But we'd rather burn in hell before saying "I'm sorry" to our loved ones? I have questions, Lord.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Because, let's face it, when left to our own devices we screw everything up.

There was a scientific experiment done with laboratory rats recently. The rats were put into a cage with an electrical device that would shock them, giving them immense pain. The rats were held in the cage with nothing to entertain them.

In less than 24 hours the rats became so bored they started shocking the crap out of themselves just for entertainment value. We aren't that different from rats. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Because it all belongs to you.

None of this is ours, even though we pretend like we own everything. We try to own land, we try to own people, we try to own everything. But man owns nothing.

We're just guests in your world. We're expressions of your beautiful nature. But we are not owners. The whole train-model set belongs to You, Lord. Everything and every-ONE.

After all, we're all your children. Believer and atheist. Clergy and inmate. Straight and gay. Republican and Democrat. Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Native American. Everyone. Every race. Every tribe. Every creed. Every confused and lost idiot who tries to put words into your mouth. Sort of like I did here.

Amen.

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A Pastor's Ponderings: Way Finding



By Rev. Pete Hyde

The morning broke with anticipation. A destination had been selected for the day's outing. The directions were reviewed. The last swallow of coffee was finished, and off we went. The morning sun splashed through the trees, casting long shadows onto the highway. As we turned off the highway onto a side road, we noted the odometer reading so we could follow the directions to the tenth of a mile. After about a mile, the sign read "pavement ends," which it did rather abruptly. It was not a bad gravel road, but it had been a while since a road grader had visited this remote area.

The odometer showed it

was time for another turn. The road sign was tucked behind the overgrowth on the shoulder, so we had to back up to make the turn. The turn was steep and rutted. Our little SUV spun its tires a moment, caught its grip and inched us up the narrow road that made a tunnel through the forest. After about a hundred yards, the road smoothed out. We crept our way through the woods, coming to fork after fork in the road. We wondered each time if our choice was right. In a moment of anxiety, we stopped to look at each other and the written directions once again. The GPS had long ago lost our position. The line read, "This road is for high clearance vehicles only." Well, that made us think twice. We really wanted to get to the destination. The directions offered another route. We turned around on the narrow road and headed back.

It took us about a half hour to reach the alternate route. We had again lost the pavement and were creeping through another forest tunnel. This time, the road was a little wider and in a little better condition, but was completely unmarked. We glanced at each other with unsure looks. "Do we really want to continue to pursue this destination?" "Let's go a little far-



ther." "Really?"

We rounded a curve and the road widened a little and began to slope down. At the bottom, muddy water was standing in two huge puddles across the entire road. A little farther down as an old Airstream trailer just off the road, cars in all states of disrepair and an old shed covered with a blue plastic tarp. We rolled to a quiet stop about 50 yards from the muddy puddles. An unspoken tension filled the car. The question arose, "Do we really want to pursue this destination?" "Maybe we

weren't meant to go there after all." We turned around, retraced our path to the main road, then back to the highway. Another destination was selected and we had a wonderful day.

Many times we select destinations, goals, dreams, wishes, directions and outcomes. Sometimes we do this prayerfully and other times we just head off because of some book we read or some notion that "this ought to work." We get so focused on accomplishing the goal, making this a success, that it becomes the work of our

hands, and we ignore or choose not to see and accept the obstacles placed in our way. We try to find ways around them or try to explain them away when in reality we may not have been meant to go in this direction at all. Perhaps God has another goal, a different direction, alternate dreams, bigger outcomes, greater dreams for us if we will pray, discern, and yield to His will and follow His direction.

Perhaps our stubbornness to accomplish the goals, fulfill the dreams and make the successes "we" set for ourselves may not be God's plan at all. It is not until the obstacles seem insurmountable that we turn around, count our losses and head back to God's main road to go in a different direction — God's direction — to accomplish God's will and goals.

Consider the obstacles you face today. Are those being placed there by God to get you back on the proper track with His will and direction for your life? Stop for a moment today, open your heart in prayer, and listen for the voice of God. Be open to the nudging of His Spirit to go in a different direction – His direction.

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

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Road to Redemption: June Kohls – God is Always Working

By Victoria Ostrosky

"Don't drink the polluted water the world offers. Seek Christ. God is working behind the scenes, and He has called you for a purpose."

Ruth was a Gentile, the widow of a Jewish man. She accompanied her mother-in-law back to Israel after her husband's death, and God took this outsider and blessed her. She became the great-grandmother of King David. In the New Testament, there's Mary of Magdala, a demon-possessed woman, another outsider from the community. She met Jesus, who released her from her demons; she was the first person to see the risen Savior, and a testimony for the ages.

Of course, we know about the woman at the well. The Samaritan woman. Jews didn't associate with half-breed Samaritans. They went out of their way to avoid their town. In addition, this woman was an adulteress, shunned from good society, which was the reason she was coming to draw water in the heat of the day. But Jesus knew $\,$ all about her. "He knew she felt like less because of how others looked at her. He made the trip just for her." You might remember, Jesus had told his disciples that He needed to go through Samaria. He knew exactly who He was going to encounter and



the changed lives that would be birthed from that visit.

June Kohls knows what it feels like to be looked down on. She and her brothers grew up in a dysfunctional home with a father with anger issues and a co-dependent mother. "We did our best to cope. It was hurtful and embarrassing. We nev-

er knew when Dad would have another explosion of temper." June loved going to church on Sunday, though. Her mom would take her and her brothers every week. But even while soaking in the good news of the Gospel, she felt like she didn't fit in. "As a little girl, I could feel almost rejection or like I didn't matter to some of the people in church from what I called 'normal' families. I felt shunned." She realizes now that it's possible it was just her perception, but at the time, it felt very real.

But through it all, June knows that God was always working through her pain. Emotional fragility

drags around its own baggage of feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Sometimes it's warranted, sometimes not. But it still does its damage. As a believer, staying in the Word, spending time with other brothers and sisters, and most of all, spending lots of time with Jesus brings necessary healing.

"The Lord used every difficulty and heartache to bring me to a place to be well watered." Once she became involved in a women's Bible study, she suddenly had mentors. Other women, also growing in their faith, whom she could relate to and ask questions of. Although God is always working, as June says, "the enemy is always working as well. He will do anything possible to prevent you from being successful."

Through the loss of her newborn baby girl, the end of a marriage, and partial loss of eyesight, June is determined to continue to follow the Lord. "My calling is to love women and minister to them. Let them know it's ok what your past was."

Throughout scripture, God had the men who penned the words recount stories of insignificant, outcast, and broken people to convey a shocking truth. "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise: God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." (I Corinthians 1:27) As the Apostle Paul wrote after asking God three times to remove his thorn in the flesh - God said - "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

You can listen to June Kohls' entire interview and many other incredible stories on the weekly Road to Redemption radio show and podcast at www.rtrd-estiny.com.



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Level Up Sept 25-27: Chris Cumby Brings Faith and Business Together on the Emerald Coast

By RICH SANDERS

Chris Cumby grew up in a rough-and-tumble neighborhood in Toronto, Canada, but has become an important part of the Emerald Coast community during the last decade. Through inspirational leadership, coaching and networking in churches and Bible studies, Chris has developed a role that he describes as a "super-connector of people," culminating each year in a business conference called Level Up. This year's Level Up Emerald Coast conference will break out at the Oceans Church in Destin from September 25-27th and host more than 400 entrepreneurs!

Before he came to this beautiful part of the world, Chris was had two successful careers in different industries: soft drinks and energy. First, he learned the basics of corporate life with a variety of roles with Pepsi in Toronto. After seven years with Pepsi, Chris became a powerful force in the energy business.



In describing his role with a start-up company in the energy business, Chris describes an early surge: "We did 12 million in profit in the first 18 months!" By helping large consumers of energy, such as hotel chains, manage their risk in consuming electricity, Chris' company likewise became energized. This put him in an environment of abundance.

It also taught him important lessons about life and wealth. As he started to travel and experience more of the world, Chris says: "I've seen the richest, and I've seen the poor." All that experience led him to Jesus, and he was born again through baptism last year on March 16th!

Now, as a follower of Jesus, Chris has developed an incredible level of discipline. Early each day, he awakens to read the Bible, calls his father (his parents still live in Canada and have been married nearly 60 years), then heads to the gym for strenuous exercise. After all that morning preparation, he's ready to be the super-connector! "Every day I seek walking with Jesus in my heart and looking for opportunity from a perspective of helping people. I've just always

been a helper, a servant."

That servant leadership inspired Level Up. "I truly believe you have to interact, go with intention, and be full of faith," Cumby says. "Because when you are, people, places, events, and circumstances show up."

This year's conference, he says, is more than a business event. "Level Up Emerald Coast isn't just an event – it's a movement. It's where faith meets action, leaders rise, and vision turns into reality. This is the room where breakthroughs are born!"

Registration is open at levelupemeraldcoast.com. Cumby also recently shared his story on Episode 21 of the Christian Capitalist podcast, available at SouthWalton.life.

As host of the podcast, I'm excited to share inspirational stories of hard work and generous giving to the poor and needy in the name of Jesus Christ, such as Chris Cumby's and the Level Up Conference!







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Sean Dietrich's Over Yonder Explores Family, Fatherhood, and the Unexpected Roads of Redemption

Acclaimed Southern storyteller Sean Dietrich, known for his thoughtful reflections on family, faith, and finding joy in the ordinary, releases his newest novel, Over Yonder, on October 7.

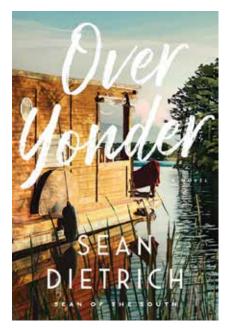
Part Southern road novel, part meditation on fatherhood, Over Yonder follows a defrocked priest just released from prison, a pregnant teen searching for a way forward, and an emotional support goldfish as they journey through the Deep South. At once poignant and humorous, the story is Dietrich's tribute to second chances, flawed

In this heartfelt and funny tale, the trio embarks on a winding journey through small towns, bayous, and backroads—discovering the unexpected ways redemption, grace, and human connection can transform lives. With his signature blend of dry humor and emotional insight, Dietrich reminds readers of the healing power of presence and the profound meaning found in everyday moments.

families, and the unexpected

ways people find grace and con-

"This book is a love letter to fatherhood," said Dietrich. "Fa-



thers, those misguided, flawed, beautifully imperfect humans who tried, failed, got everything wrong, and, in spite of themselves, somehow became our greatest teachers on the subject of love."

"Sean is an innately gifted storyteller—his voice can't be taught; it's simply who he is," said Laura Wheeler, Senior Acquisitions Editor for Thomas Nelson Fiction. "His novels are emotional and redemptive, filled with cantankerous old men with big hearts, tongue-in-cheek humor, and flawed characters who remind us that forgiveness and

kindness can be found in the most unlikely places. Over

Yonder brims with hope and love for humanity, inviting readers to see the world through Sean's uniquely compassionate lens."

Beloved for columns and

stories featured in newspapers across the region, Dietrich once again captures the heart of Southern life—its people, its places, and the quiet moments that bind them together.

Over Yonder will be available in bookstores nation-

wide on October 7. To learn more or purchase a copy, visit https://www.tnzfiction.com/9781400235681/ over-yonder/sean-dietrich/.

Follow Sean's daily writing at seandietrich.com or @seanofthesouth on Instagram.

CALM

nection.

continued from page 11

stress response and support adrenal function. We also assess your nutrition and supplement needs to ensure you have the raw materials (like magnesium and B vitamins) to make and regulate cortisol.

Sleep & Circadian Rhythm Repair: We address sleep habits and may use gentle support like melatonin or phosphatidylserine to help reset your rhythm. A good night's sleep is one of the most powerful cortisol regulators.

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How Cafe Nola and Chef Ernie are Bringing Small-Town America Back

By Jason Philips

Chef Ernie Danjean runs Cafe Nola and Hotel Defuniak in North Walton County, and could easily be the face of the downtown district. I recently visited Defuniak Springs for three days, and Chef Ernie made me feel at home, as he does with all of his guests. His masterful culinary skills and infectious exuberance made me eager to board the next train back to Defuniak Springs.

Hotel Defuniak

Chef Ernie is the general manager of Hotel Defuniak, which connects to his restaurant, Cafe Nola, adding another layer of charm to the restaurant's chic elements. The European decor and 1920s aesthetic were just as appealing as I expected, and a unique aspect of the hotel is that guests essentially have the run of the place. Although there is a proper cleaning crew, there is no desk service, save for Ernie when he has business to attend to, giving guests the freedom to roam around and soak in its history.

Cafe Nola

A born-and-bred Cajun from New Orleans, Ernie decided to bring the colorful flavors of his upbringing to the colorful town of Defuniak Springs, and the community is grateful for it. My first dining experience introduced me to the sophisticated, inviting decor of the main dining room with its dark walls, perfect lighting, and gold ceiling. As I sat down, Chef Ernie was making a Cajun-style brown sugar and spicy shrimp for guests who had tried the dish in New Orleans. Ever the gracious host, he prepared a plate for me, and my first bite took me straight back to NOLA.

The menu has just the right amount of dishes, including curated drinks. I started with the signature Cafe Nola Hurricane, then knew I had to try his award-winning gumbo, which took home first place in 2025. The gumbo had the perfect amount of seasoning and heat, leaving no need for extra salt or pepper. Chef Ernie has found the perfect balance of location, scenery, charm, and flavor to take this restaurant to the next level, and I never saw it empty, even in the middle of the week.



Attractions

Cafe Nola and Hotel Defuniak are the ideal greeting for a North Walton County getaway. From Chef Ernie's place, there are several shops and restaurants within a two-block radius, and none of them disappointed. The courtesy with which he recommends them is just a small part of how Defuniak Springs' downtown is bringing back small-town America, and I am grateful for my visit and looking forward to the next one.





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Dining







From Carole King to Our Community: Beautiful Ushers in a Season of Storytelling at ECTC

By Cameron Hughes

Fresh out of graduate school for business administration and taking on a new marketing role at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, I find myself connecting with Carole King in ways I previously never thought of. Her story is deeply individualistic and personal, starting out as a teenager writing songs for others, struggling with self-

doubt, then stepping into the spotlight and forever changing music. Though what dawned on me is how her journey doesn't just belong to her. It belongs to all of us.

That's why I think that Beautiful: The Carole King Musical is a fantastic opener to ECTC's biggest season yet. It's a reflection of the universal journey of finding yourself. Every one of

us, in some way, goes through those same pitfalls and struggles. We stumble through uncertainty, question ourselves, and, at some point, have to decide to step forward into who we really are. For someone like myself in their twenties, it can be about moving to a new city, starting a career or trying new hobbies once the tassel is turned. It may be back in high school, where

we are pressured to fit into the everchanging trend, but at the same time testing out who we want to be. For parents, it can be learning how to balance their own identity with the responsibility of raising a family. For those later in life, it might be deciding to move on from a lifelong career and finally retire or pursuing long-held dreams they once set

Carole King's music has always had that wide-reaching quality that doesn't just speak to individuals but rather to entire generations. They carry themes of love, connection, resilience and hope that transcend time and circumstance with

the same importance as all those years ago. That's why, decades later, her work still resonates with audiences who weren't even alive when those songs first topped the charts. Especially in a world that can feel divided, distracted or disconnected, her story reminds us that art brings people together, across generations and backgrounds.

Here at ECTC, our Season 13 lineup feels like an extension of that idea—that storytelling is never just about one person, but about us as a community. The Glass Menagerie reminds us of the weight of societal expectations. Annie gives us hope in the face of hardship. Murder on the Orient Express reminds us that the truth matters, even when it's hard to uncover. Forever Plaid celebrates the importance of friendship in times of uncertainty, while Mystic Pizza captures the search for belonging

and identity in this giant world as we come of age. All of the stories, like Carole's, are mirrors we hold up to ourselves.

Carole King's life is about resilience, reinvention, and the universal search for meaning which is what makes Beautiful the perfect start to this season at Emerald Coast Theatre Company: it's a story that belongs to all of us.

About Cameron Hughes

Cameron is the Marketing and Sponsor Relations Manager at Emerald Coast Theatre Company. He grew up on 30-A, graduating from Florida State University in 2023 with a Bachelor's in Marketing and an M.B.A in 2024. After becoming a first-generation master's graduate, Cameron returned to the Emerald Coast in search of a valuable way to contribute to his community, thus landing him at ECTC.



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Music Lessons:

Inspiring Generation Alpha to Think for Themselves

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, Generation Alpha, those born roughly between 2010 and 2025, are experiencing a world of technology, innovation, and unprecedented connectivity. However, despite their immersion in digital tools, the importance of cultivating traditional skills such as music has not lessened. In fact, private music lessons are becoming an integral part of their learning journey. These lessons not only enhance musical abilities but also influence cognitive development, emotional growth, and social skills, providing benefits that extend far beyond just mastering an instrument.

Cognitive Benefits and Brain Development

Research has long shown the connection between music education and mind development. For Generation Alpha, private music lessons provide an individualized approach to learning

that embellishes brain development. Learning an instrument requires concentration, problem-solving, and memory, all of which engages multiple regions of the brain.

Music lessons activate both the left hemisphere (responsible for logical reasoning) and the right hemisphere (associated with creativity and emotion), helping to create a balanced, well-rounded intellect. When children learn to read music, develop rhythm, or memorize, they are strengthening brain connections that aid in mathematical, language, and spatial reasoning. The one-on-one nature of private lessons allows the instructor to tailor the pace and methods to the learner's specific needs, ensuring that cognitive benefits are maximized.

Emotional Development and Confidence

For Generation Alpha, private music lessons can be particularly impactful in fostering emotional intelligence. Music is an inherently emotional form of expression, allowing children to connect with their feelings and understand the nuances of emotion through sound. This emotional engagement helps them develop empathy, self-regulation, and resilience.

Private lessons offer a safe space for students to explore their musicality at their own pace. This personalized attention ensures that students are not only guided technically but are also encouraged to express themselves freely. As they learn a new song, children gain a sense of accomplishment and confidence. These experiences play a crucial role in building self-esteem and motivation.

Enhanced Focus

In an age where distractions are everywhere, private music lessons can serve as a sanctuary for focused, distraction-free learning. Unlike group lessons, which often compete for attention, private lessons enable a more concentrated and disciplined approach. Students focus entirely on their instructor's guidance, mastering the details of their instrument.

Social Skills and Self-Expression

Though private lessons are individualized, they still provide important opportunities for social interaction. Students may perform in recitals or collaborate with peers in ensembles, helping them develop social and teamwork skills. These experiences encourage public speaking, managing performance anxiety, and sharing one's unique voice in front of others.

Music lessons enable children to explore their creative side and express their individuality. In a world that often emphasizes conformity and standardization, music offers an outlet for authentic self-expression, fostering a strong sense of identity and personal fulfillment.

Private music lessons offer

Generation Alpha a multitude of benefits that go beyond just mastering an instrument. From cognitive development to emotional intelligence, enhanced discipline, and improved social skills, these lessons help shape well-rounded individuals. As this generation continues to navigate an increasingly complex, mind-altering, and Ai generated world, the skills learned through music lessons will serve them well, preparing them to become discerning, creative, confident, and thoughtful individuals who can make their own decisions and think for themselves.

Studio 237 Music Lesson's staff are ready to teach students ages 6 and up on piano, guitar, voice, drums, ukulele, songwriting and more. Call us at 850.231.3199 or email Studio-237Music@gmail.com and/or visit our website at www. Studio237Mu-









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From Palette Knife to Poster: Kathy Schumacher's Art Sets Sail for MKAF's 30th Festival

By Zandra Wolfgram

With bold strokes and vibrant color, Niceville artist Kathy Schumacher will set the tone for the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's 30th Annual Festival of the Arts as this year's official poster artist. This milestone event kicks off Friday, October 24 with the Arty Kickoff Party, followed by the festival weekend October 25-26 at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin.

Schumacher's winning piece, Sails in Symphony, is a vibrant 30 x 24-inch impasto oil painting bursting with jewel-toned sailboats poised for a magical coastal voyage. "It's inspired by Destin—by the water, by the coastal lifestyle—and it just feels like Mattie Kelly," says Schumacher. "I wanted it to be more colorful than my usual sailboat paintings so it would stand out on a poster. It reflects the beauty of our area and pairs perfectly with the festival's music and atmosphere."

While this is Schumacher's first time as the festival's featured poster artist, she is no stranger to the event. She first exhibited at the MKAF festival of the Arts in 2013, taking home the People's Choice Award her debut year, and has returned nearly every year since. "I love the festival," she says. "It offers such a wonderful variety of art—paintings, jewelry, pottery, and more—in a beautiful setting with live music, great food, and activities for all

From Wisconsin Fields to Florida's Gulf Coast

Schumacher's journey as an artist began later in life. Raised in Wisconsin's rolling farmlands, she developed an early appreciation for the natural world but didn't pick up a paintbrush until her 40s. At the time, she was a busy mom and military spouse, traveling the globe with her husband and raising two children. A casual acrylic painting class with friends sparked an instant

passion. "From day one, I loved it," she recalls. Encouraged by instructors impressed with her natural ability, she began exploring oil painting using traditional Old Masters techniques.

Her artistic path took a new turn during a move to New Mexico. With no job or kids at home, she immersed herself in classes at the New Mexico Art League, experimenting with pastel, watercolor, figurative work, and re-

alism. The turning point came when she discovered the work of a Ukrainian palette knife artist. Captivated by the sculptural texture and bold color, Schumacher set out to master the technique herself, eventually developing her signature style: richly textured oils with luminous layers of color and an almost three-dimensional effect.



The Palette Knife Signature

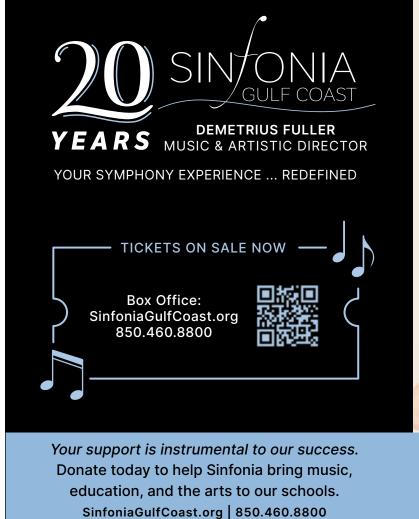
Today, Schumacher paints exclusively with palette knives. Her process begins with toning the canvas in underlying colors that peek through the top layers, adding depth and vibrancy. "I think that underpainting gives my work another dimension," she says. While many palette knife artists work in acrylics,

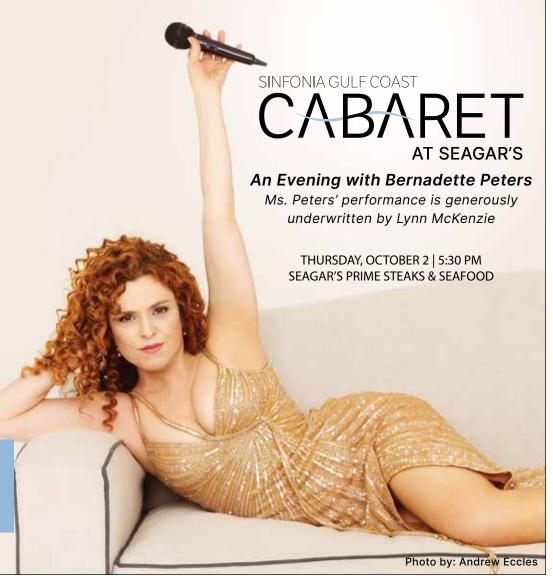


she prefers the richness of oil pigments. Her subjects-often coastal landscapes, sailboats, marshes, wildflowers, and birds—reflect her deep connection to nature and her Niceville waterfront surroundings.

Nature, she says, is endlessly inspiring. "Whether it's a quiet marsh, a burst of wildflowers,

Continued on page 28







FSU Panama City Art Exhibit Features Local Artists

Florida State University Panama City will host a month-long exhibition, "Many Hands Make Light Work," a contemporary art exhibit featuring the work of local artists Mandy Yourick and Jamie Zimchek. The show will open with an artist introduction and public reception in the Holley Academic Center atrium, 4750 Collegiate Drive, from 5-7 p.m. on Sept. 19.

"FSU PC encourages cultural engagement in the commu-



nity through our Illumination Event Series," said Irvin Clark, Ed.D., FSU PC associate dean for Students and Strategic Initiatives. "Art exhibits are just one way of bringing the community and students together in an environment designed to encourage conversation. This is a part of our mission as a university—opening doors for discussion."

Both Yourick and Zimchek are instructors in the Visual and Performing Arts department at Gulf Coast State College. By merging site-based textile forms, wall-hung works, and a participatory workshop, "Many Hands Make Light Work" will empower participants of all backgrounds to contribute to a shared cultural fabric, both literally and metaphorically. The

> exhibit models how collective effort can lighten both creative burden and human connection.

"As locally based artists and educators, we're delighted to have the opportunity to bring our practices and the community together this way," said Zimchek, a multi-disciplinary conceptual artist. "Yourick and I attended the same graduate school almost a decade apart, but as we worked together on components for 'Many Hands Make Light Work,' we realized just how interconnected our roots really are."

"In blending material and meaning, the exhibit invites mulcommunities-students, staff and area residents—to experience a well-used space in a new way," said Yourick, whose is part of the Underwater Museum of Art in Grayton Beach. "The accompanying workshop offers students a hands-on opportunity to engage in collective creation, reinforcing the idea that shared effort can shape shared space."

Yourick's multi-disciplinary work explores placemaking and the dynamics of agency in the context of environmental and social changes. She holds an MFA in Visual Arts from Vermont College of Fine Arts and has participated in artist resi-

dencies in South Korea, Greece, and Wisconsin.

The exhibit will remain on display through Oct. 18. Admission is free and accessible to the public during regular Holley Academic Center hours.





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Zimchek's work revolves around an exploration of the popular narratives promulgated by power systems in private and public domains. She has an MA Mediterranean Studies from King's College London, an MFA in Visual Art

from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and is co-founder of the | Artist Fund.

2025 sculpture, "Hometown,"



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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 numbers, 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 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.

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 inspection 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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SCHUMACHER

continued from page 26

or the rhythm of the sea, I'm captivated by the way light, color, and space interact. My goal is always to create a moment of connection between the viewer and the natural world."

A Family Legacy in Art

Art is a family affair for Schumacher. Her daughter. Krista Schumacher, is an award-winning palette knife artist based in San Diego, and the two occasionally collaborate on projects, including large-scale commercial installations. "It's been such a joy to share this journey with her," Kathy says. "Watching her develop her own style in the medium we both love has been a source of immense pride."

Meet the Artist at the **Festival**

Festivalgoers can meet Kathy Schumacher in person and view Sails in Symphony—alongside her other original works-in Tent No. 61 during the festival. As the official poster artist, her

winning design will appear on the festival's poster, program guide, t-shirt, MKAF website, social media channels, and throughout the event's marketing campaign.

The Festival of the Arts will feature more than 100 artists from across the U.S., competing for \$12,000 in cash prizes across 18 categories, including Best in Show and People's Choice. Visitors can enjoy live music, a collaborative art exhibit, hands-on children's activities, an art raffle, and a variety of local food trucks with beer and wine available. Admission is free, and proceeds benefit MKAF's ArtsReach initiatives serving K-12 students, individuals with special needs, and the military community.

Reflecting on her selection, Schumacher says, "This is truly such an honor. The festival has been such a big part of my journey as an artist, and I'm thrilled to help represent its 30th anniversary."

For more about Kathy Schumacher and her work, visit kathyschumacherart.com. For more information on the Festival of the Arts, visit MKAF.org.



Florida State Parks Foundation's Greener Initiative Provides 25 e-bikes for Florida State Parks Rangers

The Florida State Parks Foundation announced a major expansion to the statewide fleet of rugged, durable e-bikes for use by rangers across Florida's award-winning network of state parks.

Through the Foundation's Greener Initiative — a multitiered campaign to increase environmental sustainability — 25 Velotric Nomad 2 Fat Tire e-bikes will be distributed to state parks across Florida. Each e-bike features a 750-watt motor, 65-mile range and a maximum payload of more than 500 pounds.

The Foundation announced an initial purchase of 25 similar e-bikes in July 2024. Today's additions bring the statewide total to 50. "When we saw the response to our first wave of e-bikes last year, we knew we had to add more as soon as possible," said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. "The Greener Initiative has done incredible things to reduce our environmental footprint, and it's even more amazing when Greener projects align with resources that support our

rangers and the work they do every single day."

All e-bikes were funded directly through sales from the "Explore Our State Parks" specialty license plate, and each e-bike is equipped with a miniature replica plate.

E-bikes provide rangers with quick and easy transportation across expansive park landscapes, can navigate rugged and remote areas that may be inaccessible to large vehicles and do not produce any emissions.

The Great Bicycle Shop, which has served Tallahassee and the surrounding area since 1971, facilitated the purchase, assembly and delivery of this year's e-bike allotment.

"E-bikes are helpful for so many aspects of park operations, and our rangers absolutely love them," Florida State Parks director Chuck Hatcher said. "We are grateful to the Foundation and The Great Bicycle Shop for their support and look forward to putting these e-bikes to use all across the state." Since it launched in 2023, the Foundation's Greener Initiative has identified and im-



plemented projects that reduce waste and emissions, lower energy demands and enhance experiences for park visitors.

Previous Greener Initiative projects include:

- Water-bottle refilling stations at 98 state parks and trails.
- Upgrading or replacing traditional lighting with efficient LED bulbs and fix-
- The hybrid-electric "Great Blue Heron" river tour boat at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park.
- An initial wave of 25 e-bikes for state parks.

Greener Initiative projects are funded through generous contributions from community partners, as well as from sales of the "Explore Our State Parks" specialty license plate. More than 20,000 state parks enthusi-

asts and nature lovers have purchased an "Explore Our State Parks" specialty license plate since its debut in 2022.

Parks in our area receiving e-bikes in 2025:

- Topsail Hill Preserve State Park (Santa Rosa Beach)
- Grayton Beach State Park (Santa Rosa Beach)
- St. Andrews State Park (Panama City)

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