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Festival of the Arts Marks 30 Years of Color, Creativity and Community



By LORI LEATH SMITH

The first time I walked into the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation office, it felt like coming home. It reminded me of my mom—a talented artist with a gift for detail who loved bringing barns, old buildings, people, trees and landscapes to life in watercolor and pen & ink. Growing up, weekends often meant traveling to art shows, helping her set up and soaking in the creative buzz of those events. I even sold my own pet rocks (don't judge—some of you remember!) and tried my hand at leatherwork and

paint. Those early shows were my first classrooms in community—how art unites strangers in one place and somehow sends them home as friends.

Perhaps that's why today, as a Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) board member, my love of art and artists still runs deep. And the Festival of the Arts remains one of my favorite times of year. This year, we celebrate MKAF's 30th anniversary, a milestone for one of the Southeast's premier juried art festivals.

Arty Kick Off Party

The celebration begins Friday night, October 24, with the Arty Kick Off Party at 6 p.m. at the MKAF Cultural Arts Village. Guests will vibe to tunes by DJ Josh, sip curated pours from Vinuv and enjoy light bites while mingling with artists and friends in a colorful, artsy crowd. Illustrator Janae Erickson—best known for the Niceville mural, MKAF's 30th anniversary logo and her role as Sr. Director of Design at Frances Roy Agency—will be creating live digital art on the Dugas Stage, bringing her process to

life in real time.

It's also the perfect chance to learn about MKAF's new Artist Level Membership, designed to support the arts while unlocking exclusive perks. Tickets are \$50 per person and include one drink voucher, with MKAF members saving \$20. Proceeds benefit MKAF and its Arts-Reach community outreach education initiatives.

A Celebration for All

On October 25–26, the MKAF Cultural Arts Village

FESTIVAL OF ARTS

continued on page 2



Remembering Charlie



By METROPOLITAN TIKHON SHEVKUNO

Half of our country is quite familiar with Charles Kirk, who was tragically gunned down in on September 10. What shocked Life Media Group was the stunning and worldwide impact of his ministry. The

CHARLIE KIRK

continued on page 3



The Bobby J Team



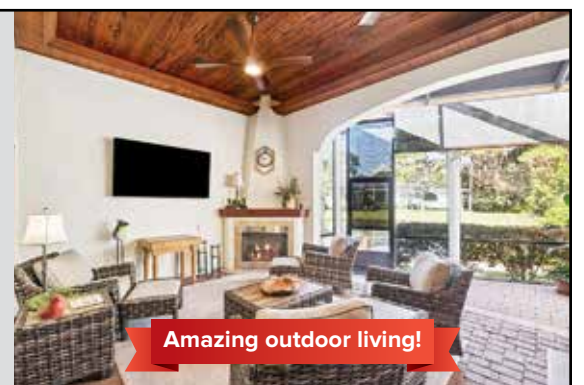
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 Community

FESTIVAL OF ARTS
continued from page 1

in Destin will transform into a kaleidoscope of creativity, color and connection. Festivalgoers can stroll through more than 100 artist tents filled with original artwork from throughout the U.S., experience live demonstrations, enjoy continuous live music, and sample food truck fare or relax in the beer and wine garden. Street performers will bring their playful artistry, children can dive into hands-on art activities, and visitors can cast their vote for the People’s Choice Award on Saturday. Admission is free, ensuring this beloved event remains accessible to all.

“The Festival of the Arts is one of our signature events,” says Festival Producer Deb Nissley, “It’s where our mission to enhance and inspire every life through Arts and Culture truly comes alive.”

A Legacy Rooted in Community

The festival is inseparable from the story of the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation itself. Founded in 1995 in honor of Destin matriarch Mattie May Kelly, the Foundation grew out of her vision that the cultural arts

should be available to everyone. A pianist, organist, composer, poet and patron of the arts, Mattie dedicated her life to learning and to lifting others. Together with her husband, Coleman, she helped pioneer Destin’s tourism and fishing industries while remaining a generous benefactor of culture and community.

Today, MKAF carries her legacy forward. Over the past three decades, the Foundation has delivered more than 160 ArtsReach programs, partnering with 100+ schools and agencies to bring the arts to students, veterans and individuals with special needs. Each year, more than 25,000 participants experience these programs—everything from music residencies in classrooms to therapeutic art sessions for military families. Since its founding, MKAF has touched more than 420,000 lives throughout Northwest Florida. And it’s not just individuals—more than 500 business and individual patrons continue to fuel this work, proving that when a community invests in the arts, everyone benefits.

A Showcase for Artists

Hospitality is at the heart of the Festival of the Arts. Year after

year, artists return not only for the opportunity of multi-year sales, but for the experience itself. Staff and volunteers work year-round to create a warm and welcoming environment where creativity thrives. Jurying is conducted by three art industry professionals, and awards totaling \$12,000 are distributed, including Best in Show, People’s Choice, Awards of Excellence, Awards of Merit and Judge’s Recognition Awards.

For artists, it’s more than a weekend—it’s a stage to share their life’s work and connect with collectors who appreciate it. For the public, it’s an accessible way to experience museum-quality art outdoors in our own paradise.

Membership: Fueling the Mission

Becoming a member of MKAF means more than access to events; it means fueling a mission that changes lives. Membership levels—from the \$75 Art Nouveau tier (for those 35 and under) to the \$500 Impresario tier—offer benefits such as early admission to Concerts in the Village, discounts on Festival merchandise and season passes. But the real benefit is knowing that membership dollars help sustain programs like Arts for All

Abilities, Warrior Arts and Arts Empower—programs that create safe spaces, provide therapeutic experiences and inspire growth for thousands in our region.

Volunteers: The Heart of the Festival

It takes an army of helping hands to bring the Festival of the Arts to life, and volunteering is one of the most rewarding ways to be part of it. Opportunities include everything from setting up tents and greeting guests at the main entry to assisting artists, helping in the children’s tent or staying for breakdown on Sunday evening. High school seniors can even earn community service hours while participating. “All volunteers are welcome to arrive early or stay after their shift to enjoy the festival,” says Volunteer Coordinator Stephanie Shea. “It’s a wonderful way to both give and receive.”

More Than a Festival

Beyond the art tents, food trucks and live music, the Festival of the Arts symbolizes something larger: the weaving together of a community that values creativity as an essential part of life. In our area—a place already blessed with white sand and emerald waters—the arts bring depth,

connection and meaning. They remind us that beauty isn’t just found in landscapes, but in the resilience of a child with special needs learning through paint, in the courage of a veteran rediscovering expression through the arts, and in the collective joy of friends and family gathering under tents, sharing culture, laughter and hope.

As a MKAF board member for several years, I hope you’ll join us for our 30th Annual Festival of the Arts. I say this not just as a publisher and writer, but as someone who believes in what this event stands for. Browse these amazing artists from all over. By supporting them, you’re also supporting those who need help right here in our community.

This October 25–26, at the MKAF Cultural Arts Village in Destin, come for the art, stay for the memories and leave knowing you’ve been part of a tradition that for 30 years has helped transform not just canvases and clay, but lives. We appreciate you and look forward to seeing you all there!

For more information, visit mkaf.org.



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CHARLIE KIRK

continued from page 1

following excerpts, for example, are from an editorial written by the Patriarch of the Russian Church— in essence, the other side of the Christian Church.

Just a week ago, the name Charlie Kirk was virtually unknown in Russia. Then, like a supernova explosion, he burst into our information space, unleashing a wave of both indignation and admiration. Some saw in him the embodiment of values they found unacceptable and reacted with open hatred and outrage toward Kirk: *“How can an American (an American!) be like that?”*

Others—astonished and grieved that he is no longer among the living—discovered in him an unexpected kindred spirit. Death, without a doubt, became both the chief sermon and the pinnacle of Charles Kirk’s ministry. It also illuminated his complete image—one filled with faith, resolve, and Christian love—refuting the slanders of those who read the Gospel with their soul’s eyes shut, failing to understand that the bold defense of Gospel truth is love in action.

The murderer—and all those

who stood behind him—are powerless to place a final period on the existence of a man who believes in Christ. And in the hearts of millions of his like-minded followers and friends, Charlie’s martyr death breathed new, greatly multiplied life in service of their goals, thoughts, and convictions.

In an age of post-truth, relativism, and libertarianism—when reality is constructed by the media and social networks, and conformity has become the norm—truth is drowning in a sea of political correctness. Charlie Kirk dared to go against the current. He acknowledged no shades of gray, no compromises, no deals with the conscience. He couldn’t have cared less about what was fashionable, accepted, or dictated by the crowd. He allowed himself a luxury almost unheard of in our time—to call things by their proper names, even if that meant that such a royal choice would, inevitably and without a doubt, bring a series of consequences, including the most dreadful ones.

What is especially admirable about Charlie Kirk is his willingness to go and speak about the Kingdom of Heaven, about traditional values, about conserva-



“I’m nothing without Jesus. I’m a sinner. I fall incredibly short of the glory of God. We all do. I gave my life to the Lord in fifth grade, and it’s the most important decision I’ve ever made, and everything I do incorporates Jesus Christ.”

tive principles in the very places that seemed most unsuitable—places whose inhabitants, for the most part, do not want to hear anything of the kind. He chose a “mission field” perhaps the most

important, but—as we now see—far from safe, not unlike preaching somewhere among a tribe of cannibals. University campuses, the youth culture of Generations Z and Y. But Charlie Kirk, even

among these young and often aggressive beings—so dearly loved by him in a truly Christian way, each one of whom he saw as bearing the image and likeness of God—was not afraid to be a “black sheep,” was not afraid to go against the current, was not afraid to speak the truth as he understood it, even if it frequently provoked anger and rejection.

The example of Charlie Kirk is a lesson for us.

Charlie Kirk spoke, first and foremost, about what he truly believed. His sincere passion, integrity, and conviction were contagious to young people and compelled them to think. That is precisely why he was both loved and hated—but he left no one indifferent.

The life and death of Charlie Kirk—his entire life’s work—cannot help but evoke the deepest respect. His stand against retreat and decline, against what our Orthodox elder Father John (Krestiankin) once called “the march of the destroyer,” proved, despite the confessional differences, to be strikingly resonant for many of us.

Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkuno is the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church

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SWFD Celebrates Completion of Miramar Beach Fire Station Reconstruction

By: MACKENZIE MCCLINTOCK,
SWFD PUBLIC INFORMATION
OFFICER

For the past two years, the sights and sounds of progress for local emergency services could be seen and heard along S. Geronimo Street in Miramar Beach.

This progress required equal parts of vision, patience, and passion to create a new home for the South Walton Fire District in Miramar Beach. Thanks to the right mix of these ingredients, the District can officially celebrate the total transformation of a 1980s-era metal fire station into what is now a 10,000 square foot facility with modern upgrades.

“It was clear the facility needed to grow based on the growth of the community around it, as well as the condition of the building itself,” said SWFD Fire Chief Ryan Crawford. “We can look at what we have now and know we’re built better from an emergency response standpoint, as well as a facilities standpoint when you

consider this new building’s capabilities to withstand hurricanes and severe weather.”

The original fire station on S. Geronimo Street was built in 1989 and housed one fire engine. As the Miramar Beach community grew, the Fire District adapted by adding an ambulance in 2008, then a Battalion Chief in 2022. These changes brought the total number of response units assigned to the Miramar Beach fire station to three.

The District began reconstruction on the facility in 2023 in a phased approach so the fire station could remain operational. The construction included a new station layout and design, increased square footage, room to house as many as nine firefighters, and a larger apparatus bay suited for as many as four apparatuses.

“Our Board of Fire Commissioners led the way for us through the budgeting and planning process,” Crawford said. “What’s unique about this project was the funding mechanism with 68 per-



cent of the dollars used coming from impact fees, allowing us to grow the station’s footprint and enhance emergency services in Miramar Beach.”

Like other governmental entities, SWFD collects a one-time impact fee on new residential or commercial construction within its jurisdiction to help pay for the additional fire protection facilities, equipment, and infrastructure needed to serve that new growth.

The fire station reconstruction and expansion project pre-

viously set aside funds over multiple budget cycles, allowing the project to be paid for entirely “in cash.” This forward-thinking approach eliminated the need to borrow money, saving taxpayers from the added expense of loan interest.

As one of the final steps in celebrating the reconstruction progress was to hold an Open House at Station 5 on September 23 and invite the community into the facility.

Activities for the evening included fire station tours, family-friendly activities, educational booths, refreshments, and plenty of fellowship.

“We want our residents and visitors to see this investment and take some pride and ownership in the role it will play in our community’s well-being,” Crawford said. “Each improvement we make is ultimately about making ourselves better for them, so it was rewarding to see that positivity reciprocated from everyone in attendance.”

SWFD thanks its Board of Fire Commissioners, administrative staff, construction teams and contractors, as well as all operational personnel, who all contributed to the reconstruction project. The community is encouraged to continue to stop by the fire station at 217 S. Geronimo Street in Miramar Beach and view the advancements.



sented the ideal opportunity for the District to utilize impact fee revenue as part of the funding plan for this expansion. In addition, District leadership stra-



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Coastal Seniors October Updates

COASTAL SENIORS

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Exercise Classes – Angela Gibson will lead classes every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 a.m. at 70 Logan Lane, Grayton Beach. Cost is \$5 per class for CSSW members and \$10 for non-members. Sign up on the email list. If you are not already on the email list, call (850) 280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Core Class - Angela Gibson will lead a 30-minute core class every Tuesday at 9:15 a.m. Participants will be screened to meet the safety and health requirements of this class. A yoga mat and Pilates ring are used for this class. Cost is \$5 per class for CSSW members and \$10 for non-members. For information or screening, call (850) 280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Chair Yoga - Amy Lindsey with Santa Rosa Physical

Therapy, will lead a one-hour Therapeutic Chair Yoga class on Thursdays, October 9, 16, and 23, at 8:45 a.m. at 70 Logan Lane, Grayton Beach. Cost is \$5 per class for CSSW members and \$10 for non-members. To be added to the email sign-up list, call (850) 280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Art Classes –Watercolor Painting Class – Karen Peterson will teach classes on Fridays, October 3, 10, 24, and November 7, 21, from 8:45 a.m. – Noon. Classes held at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Cost is \$15 for CSSW members and \$30 for non-members. Registration required as space is limited. To be added to the email sign-up list, call (850) 280-5342 or email

coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com All supplies are included.

Pickleball - Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex Courts on October 8 and 22 at 6 p.m. This beginner class is open to Walton County residents only. (Ages 18 and up) Registration is required. Register through the Parks and Rec Website at secure.recl.com. Email Sandy Gulak at sowalpickleball@gmail.com for more information. Class is FREE and equipment is provided or use your own. Boys and Girls Club fall session play runs through December 11 on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 9:30-12:30. Beginners welcome. Come learn how to play. Demo paddles available. 6 indoor courts.

Cost is \$5 per day plus \$35 waiver fee at initial registration. Please join the SolWal 30A Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

Monthly Meeting - Friday, October 17, at 11 a.m. at 70 Logan Lane, Grayton Beach. Guest Speakers will be Matthew Kamplain of Somerby Santa Rosa Beach and Marti Hearn of SHINE. A light lunch will be provided by Somerby. R.S.V.P. by replying to the Sign Up email. To be added to the email sign-up list, call (850) 280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Membership Appreciation Dinner - will be held

at Watersound Fountains on Thursday, November 13 at 4 p.m. R.S.V.P. by replying to the Sign Up email. To be added to the email sign-up list, call (850) 280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Seniors 50 years of age and up residing in or visiting Walton County are invited to join CSSW. Membership is \$30 for individuals, \$40 for family, and \$100 for businesses (your business will be listed on our home webpage and our Facebook page). You can become a member via email at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com, or on the website at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org. Also, follow us on Facebook at Coastal Seniors of South Walton. Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization for active adults.



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 Community

Dog-Harmony's 10th Annual Barktoberfest Returns Oct. 30 – Pre-Registration Now Open!

Dog-Harmony's much-loved Barktoberfest is back for its 10th year, and pet lovers across Northwest Florida are invited to join the fun on Thursday, October 30, 2025, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Grand Park in Grand Boulevard.

This family-friendly event fea-

tures festive music, cold drinks, light bites, a lively dog costume contest, and plenty of wagging tails. Proceeds from Barktoberfest support Dog-Harmony's ongoing work to keep dogs out of shelters and in happy, healthy homes through therapy dog programs, humane education, and

community outreach.

Pre-registration is now open, and early sign-up is encouraged to ensure entry and receive event perks. Participants are encouraged to register in advance and save, \$15 pre-registration (now open) and \$20 day-of registration available. Participants can find registration information, sponsorship opportunities, and full event details by visiting dog-harmony.org or checking out the Barktoberfest event page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1402815197498157>



Coats For Kids Returns This Fall

The Knights of Columbus, Council 17689 out of Saint Rita Catholic Church, will once again be raising funds to provide coats for area children. The goal this year is to buy over 700 coats through donations to exceed \$11,000.

The program will begin in mid-September and conclude in early November. This is the third year of the effort and is run in partnership with Caring & Sharing of South Walton. For more info, please call Jeff Ricketts at (616) 901-5825.



Please help by using the QR code now to make a contribution to help those in need.

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A Weather Channel for the Emerald Coast

BY ED OFFLEY

A weather channel dedicated to Florida Panhandle localities is set to begin operations this month, its co-founders tell Life Media.

Meteorologists Chris Smith and Dan Nyman left Panama City Beach TV station WJHG on June 15 to create “Panhandle Weather,” a 24/7 weather channel that will be available online and on most streaming channels. The target date for the launch was set for October 1.

The channel will focus on weather for the Florida Panhandle, with specific segments for individual cities and counties throughout the day. It will also have the capability of issuing weather emergency warnings for severe storms, tornadoes and hurricanes.

“This is going to be the wave of the future for weather,” said Smith, who had worked at WJHG for sixteen years of his three-decade career before making the move into independent weather forecasting. “You don’t need a TV station to broadcast now.”

The data collection process for “Panhandle Weather” is the same as that for traditional broadcast outlets. Smith and Nyman will have a constant feed of information from the National Weather Service on cloud cover, wind, rain, temperature and humidity. From that, they will create specific situational reports and forecasts by incorporating locally collected weather data into the program.

Nyman, who worked at the station for three years after graduating from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, said the programming goals for Panhandle Weather are far different from national cable channels like The Weather Channel. “The online weather operations have been taking off for a decade now,” he said. “But they are not local,” Smith added. “We’re going to be hyperlocal.”

Operating on a continuous 24-hour cycle, “Panhandle Weather” will have the capacity to focus on specific locations from Pensacola to Blountstown and from Crestview to Apalachicola. It will offer



immediate reports and forecasts of strong interest to both residents and for tourists with a future vacation reservation in Panama City Beach and other Emerald Coast destinations.

“We’ll be able to do a lot more content,” Smith said. “We’ll be more relevant to a lot of people locally.”

The channel will be produced and streamed from a studio at Smith’s Inlet Beach residence. Florida Setworks, a Pensacola-based broadcast studio design firm, has built the set from which Smith and Nyman will monitor the region’s weather.

To enhance reporting accuracy, “Panhandle Weather” is preparing to initially install a half-dozen sophisticated remote weather stations that will continuously transmit weather and storm data into their computer system, as well as transmitting live weather videos. Smith said they are still negotiating with potential businesses across the region to install the devices at key locations. Depending on the location, the remote stations will transmit their data via Ethernet or by the Starlink satellite network.

“We want to have one on Panama City Beach,” Smith noted. “PCB has never had a weather sta-

tion.”

The app for “Panhandle Weather” will be available at the Google Play Store, the Apple Store and on most of the streaming channels such as Amazon Fire, Apple TV+, Amazon Prime and others. The app is free and customers can utilize “Panhandle Weather” at no cost. The operation will rely on corporate sponsors and advertising for its revenue, he said.

Smith described the true value of “Panhandle Weather” if a serious weather emergency should occur. “Say if a tornado is coming and you catch the alert on your computer or TV, you can grab your phone and go to your safe space, and continue to watch everything from there,” he said. “It’s totally seamless.”

Nyman said there are already about a dozen stand-alone weather forecasting firms in operation in the United States. “Panhandle Weather” is the first of its kind in Florida.

Exterior Painting Before Winter: Protecting Your Home from Coastal Weather

BY KYLE SPARKS,
OVATION PAINTING

Living on the Emerald Coast is a dream, but our homes face tough conditions. Salt air, humidity, and intense sunshine can take a toll on exterior paint, leaving siding, stucco and trim faded or peeling. Fall is the perfect time to get ahead of it.

Cooler weather allows paint to cure evenly, and lower humidity means fewer interruptions in the process. Tackling an exterior project now not only boosts curb appeal, but also adds a layer of protection that will carry your home through winter storms and into the spring.

Think of exterior paint as your home’s armor. Quality coatings seal out moisture, guard against wood rot, and resist fading from the relentless Florida sun. A full repaint every 7–10 years is recommended in coastal areas, but high-traffic spots—doors, shutters, and trim—may need attention sooner.

The beauty of painting in the fall is that crews can work efficiently without battling summer’s heat or the unpredictability of

spring rain. By the time warmer months arrive, your home is already looking sharp and well protected.



If your exterior is showing signs of wear, now is the time to act. Don’t wait until peeling paint or water damage makes repairs more extensive. A fresh coat today means peace of mind tomorrow.

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Captured Clothing Launches Collegiate Collection Featuring Vintage College Tees



Captured Clothing, 30A's top-rated men's store, has unveiled its newest addition: a hand-picked Collegiate Collection featuring vintage college t-shirts and custom gear opportunities.

The collection, available exclusively **in-store at Grayton Beach**, includes authentic, pre-loved tees from universities across the country — each with its own history, faded colors, and soft textures. Perfectly broken-in, these shirts bring a nostalgic vibe that blends seamlessly with Captured Clothing's coastal style.

What makes the Collegiate Collection unique is the opportunity for customers to get involved. Shoppers are invited



to **bring in their own old college shirts**, which can be reimagined into custom gear — from hats and hoodies to other apparel pieces. “It’s a way for people to give their favorite college shirt a second life,” said owner Chandler Williams. “We love the idea of creating something fresh while keeping the story of that shirt alive.”

While the Collegiate Collec-

tion is an in-store experience, Captured Clothing's full range of coastal apparel, original artwork, and leather goods can also be found online at **30AmenStore.com**.

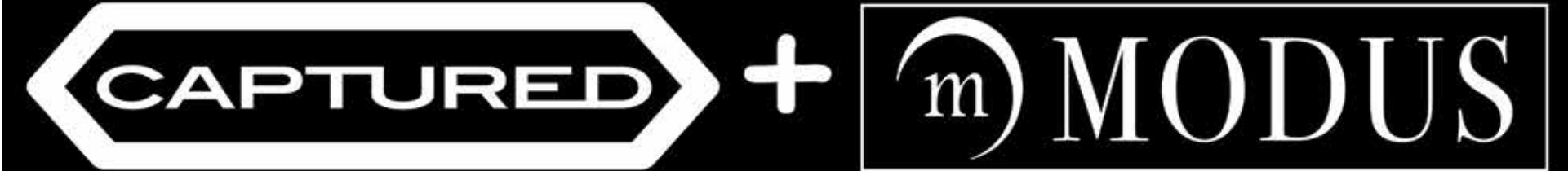
About Captured Clothing

Located in Grayton Beach, Captured Clothing is a lifestyle men's store offering coastal apparel, original artwork, leather

goods, and curated finds. Known as the #1 rated shop along Highway 30A, Captured Clothing blends local culture with global style.

Captured Clothing has custom apparel and curated goods from all over the globe.

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South Walton Launches First Annual Jazz Festival: SOWAL Jazz Fest, Nov. 6–8, 2025

This November, South Walton will host its first annual SOWAL Jazz Fest, a three-night celebration of timeless music and cultural connection. Running November 6–8, 2025, the festival transforms some of 30A's most beloved venues into intimate jazz clubs, with performances benefiting the non-profit SOWAL Foundation.

Festivalgoers can select from two showtimes each evening—6 p.m. and 8 p.m.—at every venue. Each ticket is valid for one specific performance, giving guests the flexibility to create their own festival experience. Tickets start at \$50 per show, with guaranteed seating for all. Guests may

choose VIP Reserved Seating for the best views or General Admission with first-come seating.

Performances

- Frank Sinatra Tribute – Josh Sirten and The Velvet Jazz Quartet swing through Ol' Blue Eyes' greatest hits at SOWAL House on Thursday and Friday nights.
- Billie Holiday Tribute – Sheila Ford with The Velvet Jazz Quartet delivers 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 – Bobbie Storm, Wayne Mitchum, and Jimmy Ward offer coastal jazz and southern soul at Black Bear's Bar Room, all three nights.
- The Reid Murphy Quartet bring a high-energy fusion of jazz and funk, live at Wild Olives in Greenway Station on 30A on Saturday night.

Venues

- SOWAL House – A cultural hub offering intimate, world-class performances.
- Distillery 98 – A lively mix of craft cocktails and distillery experiences.
- Black Bear's Bar Room – A cozy Grayton Beach hideaway, perfect for soulful, up-close jazz.
- Wild Olives - Offering chef-

inspired food & flair in an incredible environment at Greenway Station.

Benefiting the SOWAL Foundation

Proceeds from the festival benefit the SOWAL Foundation, the non-profit arm of SOWAL House.

Registration Open for 24th Annual Seaside Half Marathon + 5K

Registration is now open for the 24th Annual SEASIDE SCHOOL™ Half Marathon + 5K Race Weekend, set for February 12–15, 2026, along Scenic Highway 30A in Seaside, Fla. Presented by Visit South Walton, the popular race draws thousands of runners from across the Southeast, with proceeds benefitting the Seaside School Foundation™. Funds support Seaside Neighborhood School™ and Seacoast Collegiate High School, helping provide one of Florida's top public charter school experiences.

The race weekend includes the Taste of the Race culinary event, early packet pickups, Race Expo, live

entertainment, and an after-party to celebrate participants. The half marathon, a USATF-certified course and qualifier for the New York City and Chicago Marathons, kicks off Sunday at 7 a.m., followed by the 5K at 7:30 a.m.

Every registration includes a commemorative medal, T-shirt with original artwork by local artist Billie Gaffrey, and exclusive swag from The Seaside Style™. Spots are limited, and the event sells out each year, so early registration is encouraged. Discounts are available for military, first responders, and educators.

Learn more or register at RunSeasideFL.com.

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



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2025

SOWAL JAZZ FESTIVAL
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Community

Tikis & Tequila Bar Hop to Benefit Emerald Coast Autism Center

Party on the Destin Harbor to raise money for Emerald Coast Autism Center at their annual Fleets & Eats event.

With today’s national incidence rate of 1 in 31 children being diagnosed with Autism, everyone has a connection to the autism community. Emerald Coast Autism Center invites you to party on the harbor at their annual Fleets & Eats bar hop event.

Emerald Coast Autism Center (ECAC) provides Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy, education, and vocational training to children and young adults with Autism and other related unique abilities across northwest Florida. ECAC was founded in 2009 by Heidi Blalock and Staci Berryman to fill a need in the community and initially served five clients while sharing their space with another business. Now, ECAC has expanded to two buildings of their own on the Northwest Florida State College campus and provides services to just over 100 children and young adults between the clinic and the school, Emerald Coast Learning Center (ECLC).

The expansion and continuation of services are made possible through special events and donations from the community. Each year, ECAC hosts several fundraising events to be able to continue providing these necessary services to the families that attend, and one of those events is Fleets & Eats – a bar hop on boats in the Destin Harbor.

This year will be the first year since 2014 that ECAC hosts this awesome event, and they’re planning to come back with lots of fun new ideas. The theme for 2025 is Tikis & Tequila. Guests are encouraged to wear luau attire and get ready to ride tiki boats to three local bars. Tailfins Waterfront Grill is the Presenting Sponsor this year and is also the location of the afterparty, where guests will have the chance to win fabulous raffle prizes while dancing to live music and sipping on tequila. The boat hop will include stops at The Edge Seafood Restaurant & SkyBar and Harbor Docks who will each provide heavy hors d’oeuvres and a signature cocktail. Tickets for Fleets & Eats can be purchased online at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fleets-eats-tickets-1623155906009?aff=oddtotcreator>. Guests are able to purchase tickets to attend the whole bar hop or just the afterparty at Tailfins.

There are still sponsorship opportunities available for Fleets & Eats. Sponsor levels start at \$250 and all include perks for the sponsoring business. For more information about sponsorships, ticket sales, donations, or general event questions, contact Jordan Eberle at ECACoutreach@ecautismcenter.org or (850) 279-3000 ext. 217.

Other fundraising events for ECAC include the ONE Run 5k in April and Hole in ONE Golf Tournament in September – both of which raise money for the ECAC Scholarship Fund as part of their ONE Campaign. For the ladies, there is a Valentine’s themed event on February 21, 2026 at Wine Bar in Grand Boulevard that will include charcuterie, wine, and silent auction items specifically for women.

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Editor & Publisher

Dave White

dave@southwalton.life

editor@southwalton.life

Production & Layout

Dawna Shackley

graphics@southwalton.life

Advertising Department

850-399-0228

Advertising Manager

Raymond Cyr

850 797-3546

sales@southwalton.life

Contributing Writers

Heather Bennett

850-399-0228

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Seacoast Collegiate High School and Northwest Florida State College Celebrate the Opening of Expanded South Walton Center

BY BOBBY PARKER

A new era of education has officially begun. In August, Seacoast Collegiate High School (SCHS), the high school under the SEASIDE SCHOOL™, and Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) held a celebratory ribbon cutting with the Walton Area Chamber of Commerce to mark the grand opening of the newly expanded Northwest Florida State College South Walton Center – home to brand new college facilities and Seacoast Collegiate High School.

The event brought together key state and local leaders including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Congressman Jimmy Patronis, Senator Jay Trumbull, Representative Shane Abbott, Florida Department of Education Commissioner Anastasios Kamoutsas, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer Tom Glavine, and many other local and state officials. Their presence underscored the importance of this groundbreaking project that expands the high school's capacity but also ensures all students of Walton County have personal access to a Northwest Florida State College education where they live. The project is designed to expand access to high-quality high school and post-secondary education and prepare the next generation of leaders in STEM, business, healthcare, and beyond.

"This center is more than a building—it's a bold investment in the future of Walton County," said Dr. Tom Miller, Executive Director of SEASIDE SCHOOL™. "Together with Northwest Florida State College, we're creating a center that expands access, inspires achievement and prepares our students to lead in a rapidly changing world."

The expansion comes during a historic milestone year for the SEASIDE SCHOOL™—celebrating its 30th year in operation as one of Florida's first and most successful public charter schools. The project also highlights the ongoing impact of the SEASIDE SCHOOL FOUNDATION™, which has partnered with the SEASIDE SCHOOL™ since 2008.

The new, state-of-the-art facility represents a dynamic partnership between Seacoast Collegiate High School and NWFSC. The College's South Walton Center houses both the Seacoast Collegiate High School facility and Northwest Florida State College facilities. The College will use its buildings on-site to provide opportunities for both dual enrollment students from any Walton County high school and traditional college students with direct access to college-level instruction, labs, workforce training, and advanced academic pathways.

"The South Walton Center is a model for how collaboration between K-12 and higher education can change lives," said Mel Ponder, President of Northwest Florida State College. "We're not just opening doors to classrooms – we're opening doors to opportunity for every student in Walton County. Critically, this landmark expansion of the South Walton Center will welcome students to the College from all walks of life, whether they are a traditional college student seeking their college education or a dual enrollment from SCHS, any Walton County school, or a home educated student."

The center will serve more than 500 students across the high school and College this fall, with the capacity for more significant growth in the coming years. But the impact reaches far beyond enrollment. With the College offering dual enrollment, workforce certifications, and student-focused resources on a local center, families across South Walton now have affordable, high-quality college education within reach.

This milestone was made possible through significant state and local investment. Triumph Gulf Coast awarded a \$9.5 million grant to expand STEM and workforce programs, and Governor Ron DeSantis approved \$9 million in state appropriations in 2023, \$500,000 in 2024, with an additional \$750,000 granted in 2025. An investment of over ten million dollars in South Walton's education and workforce development.

"We are proud to invest in educational infrastructure that



Photo Credits: Amy Ward Photography @amywardphotography

meets the needs of Florida's future workforce," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "This center is an example of how public dollars, strategic vision, and local leadership can come together to make a real, lasting impact."

In addition, the Glavine Family Foundation contributed a \$1 million leadership gift, securing lifetime naming rights and helping launch the project from vision to reality.

"As a longtime advocate for education and youth development, I'm proud to support this incredible initiative," said Tom Glavine. "This center gives students the chance to dream big,

work hard, and succeed in ways that impact their entire community."

From ninth graders beginning their high school careers to high school graduates and adult learners pursuing college credentials, this expanded center is designed to serve a diverse range of students. Whether preparing students for college, career, or both, the expanded NWFSC South Walton Center is set to strengthen the local talent pipeline and fuel regional economic growth.

"Students in Walton County now have a hometown path to higher education, career

advancement, and personal growth," said A. Russell Hughes, Walton County School District Superintendent. "This is what it means to invest in people, not just buildings."

With this expansion, Northwest Florida State College and Seacoast Collegiate High School continue to lead the way in educational innovation, workforce development, and community impact. This collaborative project stands as a beacon of what's possible when public education, higher education, government, and philanthropy work hand-in-hand.

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Investing: Miles and Miles and Miles

BY CLINT GHARIB,AIF®, CFEd®

September 18th marked the one-year anniversary since the Federal Reserve began lowering interest rates. The S&P 500 Index is up roughly 17% over that period. I’m repeatedly being asked by folks “Now what?”. Unfortunately, my crystal ball is in the shop (sarcasm). There are so many data points coming at us daily: geopolitical, interest rates, spending, debt, corporate earnings, etc. It can be very noisy and confusing. Yet the latest spending announcements by many of the largest technology companies, especially the blockbuster announcement by Open AI to deploy 10 gigawatts of AI data centers, provide a clear signal to me. This is such a big number, it’s almost unfathomable. One gigawatt is like powering the city of Denver or Seattle for a year. Now one project is 10 of those and there have been many other projects announced. Hey, I don’t see how this much energy is going to be possible to generate to run all of these projects at present. But even at a third of this, the extent of expanding power generation,

the grid, chips, infrastructure, etc has me humming “I can see for miles and miles and miles and miles” from the famous song by The Who ‘I Can See for Miles’. This is an undertaking akin to reconstruction after World War II, it’s mind boggling. Again, I’m not here to state with any conviction the feasibility of it in totality but simply to say the potential from this overall buildout is massive and gives the appearance that it is for many years ahead. That is one data point that has umbrella like impact. That said, I have yet to experience or read about a market that just goes straight up. The rally in AI related stocks over the past year has left even me astonished, grateful, but astonished. I would urge investors to be cautious with chasing performance, especially at these levels. It’s like when you’re cleaning out your gutters and you are already at the top of the ladder but want to stretch just a little further to clean more before climbing back down to move the ladder. Profit taking selloffs will come around. I continue to believe we are in a new bull market. Though history has shown that within long-term bull



markets there can be big selloffs. (Just think back to mid-February to April this year). So, if you already have comfortable exposure to stocks for your risk tolerance, especially growth stocks, remember my gutter cleaning example above.

And don’t sweat the rhetoric around a possible US Government shutdown. Historically, there have been 21 US Government Shutdowns, actual shutdowns since 1978 according to the Congressional Budget Office. In a Dec. 2024 article by Morningstar, ‘A government shutdown looms. Here’s how U.S. stocks performed during past closures’: “There have been six government shutdowns since 1978 that lasted five days or more, and the S&P 500 Index SPX gained in the four most recent shutdowns, ...,

which comes from a Friday note by Brian Gardner, chief Washington policy strategist at Stifel (Nicholas).”

It’s been my experience when big sell-offs happen what I call a sale in the markets, many who claimed to desire the sale end up scarred when it comes and don’t take advantage of the opportunity. So when the next big sell-off comes (a sale), remember this idea of so many proposed data-center projects to shop during the sale. I don’t know the future, but I can see “miles and miles and miles” of proposed spending ahead.

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Debunking the Top 5 Misconceptions About Acupuncture



By DR. LISA FORSYTHE

Despite being practiced for thousands of years, acupuncture remains one of the most misun-



derstood healing modalities in modern medicine. As a licensed acupuncturist with a background in both Eastern medicine and neuro-acupuncture, I've seen how powerful this therapy can be—not just for pain relief, but for whole-body wellness. I've also heard just about every myth and misconception along the way. Let's set the record straight.

Misconception #1: "Acupuncture is painful."

This is the most common fear I hear, and it's almost always followed by surprise once someone finally tries it. Acupuncture needles are extremely thin—about the width of a human hair—and nothing like the hypodermic needles used for injections. Most people feel little to no discomfort when the needles are inserted. In fact, many feel deeply relaxed or even fall asleep during treatment.

Truth: Acupuncture is typically a calming, restorative experience. Some patients feel a light tingling or warmth, which is simply the body responding to the stimulation.

Misconception #2: "It's only for pain relief."

While acupuncture is well known for its ability to reduce pain—including back pain, arthritis, and migraines—its applications go far beyond that. I regularly treat patients for anxiety, insomnia, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances, immune support, and even neurological conditions like stroke recovery and PTSD.

Truth: Acupuncture works by regulating the nervous system, improving circulation, and restoring balance to the body's

internal systems. That's why it benefits both physical and emotional health.

Misconception #3: "There's no science behind it."

This one couldn't be further from the truth. Over the past several decades, research on acupuncture has exploded. Studies have shown that acupuncture influences the brain, nervous system, and endocrine function. It can reduce inflammation, release endorphins (your body's natural painkillers) and modulate the immune response.

Major institutions like Johns Hopkins, Cleveland Clinic, and Mayo Clinic now offer acupuncture as part of integrative treatment programs for chronic pain, cancer support, fertility and more.

Truth: Acupuncture is backed by evidence-based research and is increasingly integrated into mainstream health-care systems.

Misconception #4: "It's not safe for kids, older adults, or people with medical conditions."

Acupuncture is one of the safest medical therapies when performed by a licensed practitioner. At the Tortoise Clinic, I treat patients of all ages—from kids with anxiety or ADHD to seniors with arthritis or stroke recovery needs. We tailor every treatment to the individual's age, condition, and comfort level.

Truth: Acupuncture is gentle and can be adapted for almost anyone, including those who are medically fragile or on multiple medications.

continued on page 32

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Green Thumb Garden Club Holiday Bazaar and Season of Giving Fundraisers Will Support Walton County Scholarships and Charities

By KATHLEEN EDGE,
PUBLICITY & WEBSITE CHAIR

“Where Every Day is a Celebration” is the theme of the fifth annual Green Thumb Garden Club Holiday Bazaar that showcases unique seasonal décor and other items made by members and other local artists. Special thanks to Cantina Laredo for again allowing the Club to have the event, to be held on November 15, 2024, at their Grand Boulevard location

The Bazaar net proceeds will fund 2026 scholarships, which are awarded to deserving Walton County horticulture college students every year, as well as youths participating in Timpoochee 4H Youth Camp, E.O. Wilson Biophilia Naturalists Outdoor Program and Westonwood Ranch programs.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton will receive donations

for their food pantry prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Walton County Sheriff's Santa Patrol will receive gifts and gift cards for young children and teenagers at the GTGC Holiday Party on December 10, 2025, at Bricktop's Grand Boulevard.

The Club will also choose a well-deserving Walton County family as its 2025 Habitat for Humanity holiday family. The family will receive monetary donations and gifts to help ensure a great holiday season for everyone. The gifts are delivered to the family in mid-December.

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

A Superior Mechanical Launches Hometown Heroes Comfort Club

A Superior Mechanical, a trusted veteran-owned HVAC company serving Bay County for 23 years, has announced the launch of its new Hometown Heroes Comfort Club, a special membership program providing peace of mind and savings on HVAC services. In a show of appreciation for our community's hometown heroes in Bay, Walton and Okaloosa Counties including first responders, veterans and active military, teachers, doctors and nurses, A Superior Mechanical is offering free Comfort Club membership to these individuals. All other residents can join the club for just \$99 per year.

Membership Benefits Include:

- No trip charge during normal business hours for one full year.

- No overtime fees after hours or on holidays for one full year.
- Priority scheduling and peace of mind during emergencies.
- 5% off new installations; 10% off repairs and IAQ products.
- Exclusive access to promotions and discounts.

“We want everyone to have affordable, reliable comfort in their homes, and peace of mind that comes knowing their equipment is working well,” says Jimmy Thorpe, owner of A Superior Mechanical. “Our community's heroes pour into local residents on a daily basis, keeping them safe, healthy, and well educated. This is our way of giving back to them.”

Residents can sign up or learn more by visiting ASuperiorMechanical.com or calling (850) 258-3225.

End Polio Now Day

The Rotary Club of South Walton is holding their annual Purple Pinky Day to End Polio, hosted by The Donut Hole on Friday, October 24, from 7-9 a.m. at the Santa Rosa Beach location at 6745 US Highway 98.

According to Rotary International, polio eradication will be one of history's greatest public health achievements, with polio possibly following smallpox to become only the second human disease eradicated from the world. However, if all eradication efforts stopped today, within 10 years,



polio could paralyze as many as 200,000 children each year.

Rotary needs additional funding to immunize more than 400 million children against polio every year, and to hire 150,000 health workers to find every child. Once vaccinated, children have their pinky fingers dipped in a purple dye, hence the name Purple Pinky Day. Together, we can end polio.

Rotarians in South Walton ask that you preorder a dozen by calling Tara Nettles at (850) 855-7208 or pick up a box of donuts on Friday, October 24, from 7 to 9 a.m. at the Donut Hole.



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 Community

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 desire to bring something unique to the area that is a fun experience for families to attend & make their own amazing memories."

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

Advance reservations are required and can be made at the official ticketing site: [UsaTourTickets.LIVE](https://www.UsaTourTickets.com).

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Finding Hope in the Fight Against Alzheimer's

By MATT EATON

For Panama City resident Kathy Hobbs, Alzheimer's disease has always been part of life.

"I remember being around great-aunts and uncles and hearing mention of the 'family curse,' but I wasn't old enough to understand what it meant," recalled Hobbs. "It wasn't until my adolescent years that I truly understood Alzheimer's and saw how deeply it had affected my family across multiple generations. That was scary for a kid—and heartbreaking to witness."

According to the Alzheimer's Association, individuals who have a parent or sibling with Alzheimer's are at an increased risk of developing the disease. This risk rises further when multiple family members are affected. For people like Hobbs, a high family prevalence can make Alzheimer's feel unavoidable. But there is hope.

"It's important to remember that Alzheimer's is a disease, not a normal part of aging," said Tina Henson, a development manager with the Central and North Florida chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. "Many people assume it's inevitable, but there are proactive steps we can take to reduce our risk."

While researchers continue to investigate Alzheimer's causes, known risk factors include age (especially over 65), family history, ge-



netics and lifestyle choices. Some risk factors like age and family history cannot be changed, but there are things anyone can change to reduce their risk. In fact, recent studies show that even those genetically predisposed to Alzheimer's can reduce their risk of cognitive decline by adopting healthy lifestyle habits.

The Alzheimer's Association highlights 10 research-backed habits to reduce cognitive decline. These include challenging your brain by learning new skills or engaging in artistic activities, lifelong education, regular physical activity, protecting the head from injury, quitting smoking, managing blood pressure and diabetes, and eating nutritious foods such

as leafy greens, lean proteins and limiting processed foods.

"Even incorporating just one or two healthy habits into your routine can make a difference," Henson emphasized. "Think about what you can start doing today. Maybe it's walking a few times a week or picking up a new hobby to stimulate your mind. It's never too late to begin."

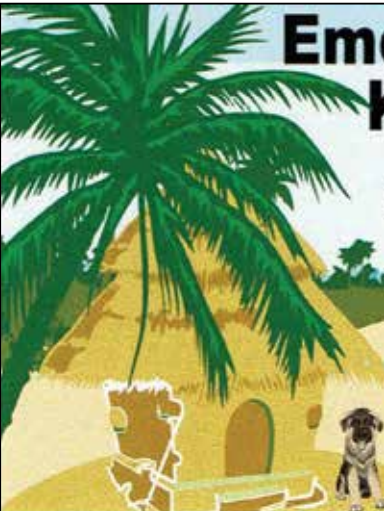
For Hobbs, actively participating in the fight against Alzheimer's has been vital.

"Generations of my family have faced Alzheimer's directly or indirectly, and I'm grateful for their willingness to donate their blood or brains to research," Hobbs said. "Their generosity helps ensure future generations

might enjoy a better quality of life, even if diagnosed."

On Sunday, Nov. 2, Hobbs will join hundreds of others impacted by Alzheimer's and dementia at the Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast. The event brings together families, friends, local leaders and businesses to raise funds and awareness in the fight against the disease. The Walk opens at 2 p.m. at FSU Panama City with an opening ceremony at 3 p.m. and the walk immediately following.

To register or learn more, visit alz.org/EmeraldCoastPCWalk.



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 Community

Butterflies of Fall

BY HELEN PETRE

Blooms of fall bring butterflies, gathering sweet nectar provided by the colorful flowers. Nectar provides energy for migration and egg production. Flowers and butterflies are abundant on recently burned pine savannahs, where flowers have sun and room to bloom.



Gulf Fritillary
(*Dione vanillae*)

The most common butterfly in the fall is the Gulf Fritillary, which lays its eggs on passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*), so the caterpillars can eat the leaves. While Gulf Fritillaries use lantana and other flowers for nectar, lantana is an invasive nonnative and poisonous to animals. Since animals cannot eat the leaves, nothing inhibits its invasive spread.

The adult Gulf Fritillary lives for only two weeks. Adults migrate north in spring and south in fall.

Gulf fritillaries, like monarchs, have chemical defense mechanisms, which make them unpalatable to predators.

Gulf fritillary feeding on a Mexican sunflower. Wikipedia.

Blazing star (*Liatris species*)

Gulf Fritillaries are especially attracted to *Liatris*, feeding on nectar before their southern migration. *Liatris* attracts other butterflies, such as swallowtails, hairstreaks, monarchs, and buckeyes, as well as native bees and moths. There are many species of *Liatris* native to Florida, and different species often grow together in dunes and pine savannahs. Common names include blazing star and gayfeather. All have lavender flowers and bloom from August to October.

Liatris grows best in disturbed areas and scrub, areas prone to wildfire, and recently burned areas. If there is no disturbance, pines overgrow, preventing sun-

light from reaching the ground, and preventing *Liatris* from growing. This demonstrates the importance of natural areas and fire. *Liatris* is also threatened by coastal development. Monarchs on *Liatris*. NC State Extension.

Frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*)

Frostweed blooms with pretty, terminal white flower clusters in late summer through fall and grows tall among *liatris* and goldenrod on the edges of woods, in disturbed areas, and in the dunes. It is a food source for butterflies, especially monarchs, as well as native bees.



Frostweed. Wikipedia.

Sweet goldenrod (*Solidago odora*)

Sweet goldenrod leaves smell like licorice when crushed. There are many species of gold-

enrod, but sweet goldenrod is the only one that is aromatic. Sweet goldenrod is an important nectar source for native bees and moths. No goldenrod species causes hay fever. Goldenrods bloom from August to September along with ragweed, so people often erroneously attribute allergies to goldenrod. Ragweed has windborne pollen. Goldenrod pollen is carried from flower to flower by native bees. It is not windborne, so it cannot cause hay fever.



Sweet goldenrod. NC State Extension.

Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemesifolia*)

Ragweed is an annual, native species, but it is invasive and a noxious weed. It blooms from July to October and induces allergies due to copious amounts of windblown pollen. The seeds contain oil, which is coveted by birds.



Ragweed. Wikipedia.

All of these fall-blooming plants are important food sources for butterflies, birds, and native bees. Fall provides an amazing display of wings and blooms. Enjoy the native ecosystems!

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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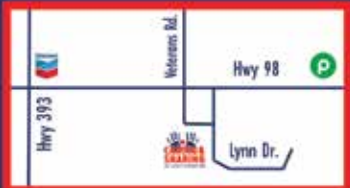
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Seaside School’s Capital Campaign: Building Opportunity for Walton County

The doors have opened — but the vision continues. In August 2025, Seaside School, in partnership with Northwest Florida State College, officially cut the ribbon on its expanded Seacoast Collegiate High School campus at the South Walton Center. The milestone was more than a new building — it’s a cornerstone of a broader campaign to transform access to higher education and workforce training in Walton County.

The Seaside Capital Campaign undergirds this transformation. It is the financial engine powering not just the campus expansion, but a host of strategic initiatives designed to uplift students, local industry, and the community. With continued philanthropic support, the campaign aims to ensure this expansion reaches its full potential — and becomes a model for other regions.

Why It Matters

Walton County has long faced a gap: promising students often must travel outside their community to access college-level courses and career training. The new campus changes that. With the expansion, Seaside and NWFSC will serve over 500 students in dual enrollment, degree programs, and workforce-focused certifications — adding capacity for more than 250 additional high school students seeking college-level work.

But infrastructure is only the beginning. Over the past 12 months, the Seaside School Foundation has:

- Secured a \$9.5 million Triumph Gulf Coast grant to support programming, equipment, and staffing in the expansion.
- Launched new career-aligned pathways in health care, IT, business, entrepreneurship, cybersecurity, AI, and more — all tied to real workforce needs.
- Established partnerships with local businesses to host students for internships, externships, and mentorships — connecting classroom learning with local opportunity.
- Increased access to industry certifications and associate degree pathways so students graduate high school already credentialed.
- Strengthened public-private collaboration, blending legislative,



philanthropic, and educational investment to drive long-term change.

These efforts reflect a central tenet: the expanded campus must not only house classes but act as a hub for innovation, community engagement, and regional workforce readiness.

Naming Opportunities — A Legacy in Education

To help sustain momentum, Seaside offers naming opportunities across scales. Donors can leave an indelible mark:

Legacy Tiles — \$1,000–\$5,000
Major Legacy Tile Placement — \$10,000

Classrooms and Offices in SCHS and NWFSC — \$25,000

Already, generous gifts have brought the campaign to life:

The Glavine Family Foundation donated \$1 million for lifetime naming rights to the Seacoast Collegiate High School building.

Patrick and Jennifer McCarthy gave \$100,000 to name the Accelerator Great Hall.

The Weil Family contributed \$100,000 for the third-floor student terrace.

Tucker Family Foundation funded “The Front Porch” walkway naming (\$100,000).

The Widman Family gave \$50,000 toward the Accelerator Conference Room.

These gifts are not just names on glass — they are tangible commitments to education, community, and a future where local students can thrive without leaving their homes.

Looking Ahead

The Capital Campaign’s impact is already evident. In a historic display of demand, 616

students applied in 30 days for Fall 2025 enrollment — the highest in Seaside’s history. The incoming freshman class filled all 134 seats, with a waiting list to match.

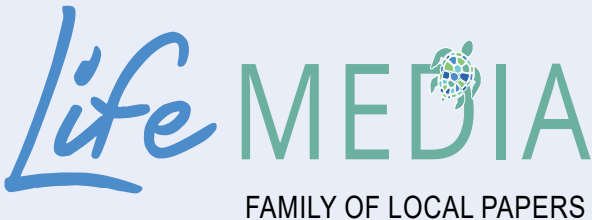
Later in 2026, the college arm plans to launch an Associate in Science in Business Administra-

tion on-site, equipping students with practical business knowledge and management skills. Seaside also intends to add additional secondary certifications in bookkeeping, entrepreneurship, AI, and cybersecurity.

Ultimately, the expanded cam-

pus is more than a facility — it’s a blueprint. Seaside aims to become a replicable example of how public education, higher education, and industry can partner to break down barriers and reimagine the high school–college transition.

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The Most Talked-About Home on 30A Just Hit the Market — Inside the Reality TV Episode That Turned It Into a Coastal Icon

In the latest episode of Southern Sand, Southern TV’s hit reality series dedicated to showcasing the best of Florida’s Gulf Coast, viewers are taken inside one of the most exclusive new listings on 30A: 41 Martha’s Lane.

Presented by Whitney Cooley of Scenic Sotheby’s International Realty, the custom-built residence is more than a high-end home, it’s the backdrop of a design-forward story led by two of the Emerald Coast’s most influential female

entrepreneurs. A Listing That Deserves the Spotlight With over 4,200 square feet, five bedrooms, a custom bunk room, wine cellar, butler’s pantry, and a third-floor guest retreat, 41



Martha’s Lane isn’t just a property — it’s a statement. And in a market where lifestyle is just as important as layout, Southern Sand captures exactly what makes this Santa Rosa Beach neighborhood such a coveted gem.

“On 30A, buyers aren’t just looking for square footage,” says Whitney Cooley, luxury real estate agent and co-star of the show. “They want to know the story behind a home — who designed it, what inspired it, and what kind of life they can live there. That’s what makes this listing special.”

Interior Design That Stops the Show

At the heart of the episode is Amy Kelly, founder of Après Sun Interiors, and her first-ever collaboration with Stock & Trade Design Co., one of Santa Rosa Beach’s most iconic furniture and home décor destinations. With the clock ticking, Amy brings her signature style to life with hand-picked furnishings from Stock & Trade, transforming the home’s spaces into magazine-worthy moments.

“Having the opportunity to collaborate with Stock & Trade on this home was a game changer,” said Kelly in the episode. “Their pieces brought the entire design vision together — and now, I can’t imagine doing it any other way.”

From furniture selection to finishing touches, the episode gives viewers a rare, behind-the-scenes look at Amy’s creative process, showcasing her ability to take a luxury build

from blank canvas to fully curated, livable art. Through Après Sun Interiors, Amy continues to push the boundaries of coastal design, blending relaxed sophistication with personalized, elevated detail.

On 30A, Open Houses Are Events — And This One Delivered

The episode culminates in a next-level open house unlike anything Scenic 30A has seen before — complete with a live band, a raw oyster bar, curated food by Chef Ernie Danjean, Whitney’s father and owner of Café Nola, and a guest list of serious buyers and local tastemakers. This wasn’t just a showing, it was a full sensory experience designed to reflect the elevated lifestyle this listing represents.

“On 30A, open houses aren’t just showings — they’re events,” said Cooley. “You’ve got one shot to make it unforgettable.”

And unforgettable it was. From Amy’s magazine-worthy staging to the energy of the evening, everything came together in a way that reminded viewers why 30A is in a league of its own.

“Amy went all out,” added Cooley. “Her designs are like nothing I’ve ever seen. This was a showstopper on the next level.”

Together, Whitney and Amy, through Scenic Sotheby’s International Realty and Après Sun Interiors, prove that luxury real estate and exceptional design go hand in hand. And when women support women in business, the results speak for themselves.

Watch the Full Episode Now Southern Sand is now streaming on the Southern TV app, where you can catch this episode and others highlighting real estate, design, and lifestyle along Florida’s famous Scenic Highway 30A. Southern TV is a proudly propaganda-free platform created by Southern storytellers for Southern audiences, showcasing the best of life, business, and creativity in the South.

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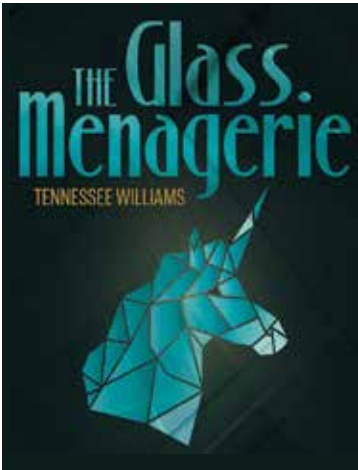




Fragile Dreams, Heavy Expectations: Why The Glass Menagerie Still Speaks to Us Today

BY CAMERON HUGHES

There’s something about The Glass Menagerie that stays with you after the curtain falls. Tennessee Williams’ classic play feels both intimate and universal, showcasing the raw struggles of family, the reality of dreams, and the weight of expectations we all carry. It’s a story that hits close to home, not through flashy moments, but through the honest feelings we usually bottle up to ourselves.



This is why The Glass Menagerie is such a powerful addition to ECTC’s thirteenth season. It’s not simply a play about a family in the height of the Great Depression; it’s a reflection of the weight of societal pressures and expectations we all carry. Tom feels the pull between family obligations and his own ambitions, Amanda shows the distance that parents go to protect and guide their families, even while wrestling with their own disappointments and “what ifs”. These “what ifs” highlight the tragedy of Amanda’s character but also a universal challenge of balancing love, guidance, and the limits of control as both a parent and a partner. Laura shows a universal vulnerability of not measuring up in a world that often feels overwhelming. For so many

of us today, the path to success feels steeper than ever. College degrees are the expectation, yet the job market is tougher. Social media makes it feel like everyone else is thriving in extravagant cars and on vacation in the Maldives, adding a new layer of comparison. Many people feel like they’re running out of time to “figure it out,” and the weight of those expectations can be overwhelming in an everchanging world. The characters feel trapped in their circumstances, but their aspirations for something greater is universal. We’ve all experienced moments where our dreams feel out of reach, where we’re torn between what we owe to others and what we owe to ourselves. That’s what makes The Glass Menagerie such a timeless piece of theatre. It’s a story that mirrors our humanity, reminding us of both our fragility and our resilience even in the toughest of times. In recent years, we lived through COVID-19 lockdowns where the entire planet hit the pause button. It forced us to slow down, to reevaluate priorities, and to confront our own dreams and fears in a way we never expected. Like the characters on stage seeking escapism, we’ve experienced uncertainty, longing, and the quiet hope that something better lies ahead all while looking for outlets to make things feel as normal as we could. And it’s why I think this season at ECTC is so special. Each show holds up a mirror to the human experience. The ups and downs, the struggles and triumphs, the dreams and nightmares. Here at ECTC, we believe storytelling is a bridge that connects us all, no matter where we come from or what we’re going through. Just like Laura’s glass menagerie, they reflect our vulnerabilities, our dreams, and the strength we find in community.

That’s why The Glass Menagerie isn’t just another play on the ECTC stage, it’s an invitation to see ourselves more clearly.

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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St. Joe Community Foundation Donates \$35,000 To Emerald Coast Theatre Company

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is honored to announce a generous \$35,000 donation from the St. Joe Community Foundation in support of its 2025–2026 season. This contribution helps sustain ECTC's mission to enrich and entertain the Emerald Coast community through professional theatre productions, youth educational programs, and impactful community outreach.

The St. Joe Community Foundation has long been a champion of the arts and community development in Northwest Florida. Their continued partnership with ECTC ensures that local audiences, students, and families can experience the transformative power of live theatre. "We are deeply grateful to the St. Joe Community Foundation for their



longstanding investments in our mission and belief in the work we are doing here at ECTC," said Producing Artistic Director Nathanael Fisher. "Their continued support not only helps us further provide quality professional theatre for our local community, it also expands our ability to provide meaningful educational programming and opportunities for children."

The \$35,000 donation directly supports ECTC's 13th season, which opened with the Tony® and Grammy® Award-winning *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, and continues with an inspiring lineup of productions, educational offerings, and special events. With this support, ECTC is able to foster creativity, connection, and cultural growth across the region.

ECTC's 2025–2026 season is made possible with generous support from Grand Boulevard Town Center, St. Joe Community Foundation, South Walton, Howard Group, and Jerry and Alice Zich.

To make a tax-deductible do-

nation, join as a VIP or sponsor or to learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, call (850) 684-0323 and visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org. Engage with ECTC on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Art News

30A Songwriters Festival Returns for 17th Year!

For 17 years, the 30A Songwriters Festival has drawn thousands of music fans from around the world to Scenic Highway 30A, transforming the Gulf Coast into a mecca for original songwriters. The 2026 festival takes place January 16–19 with more than 125 artists performing over 300 shows across 30 unique venues, from intimate patios to 6,000-seat outdoor stages.

Presented by Grand Boulevard, this year's festival will feature headline performances at Grand Boulevard's Town Center main stage by Mavis Staples, *Toad the Wet Sprocket*, 10,000 Maniacs, *I'm With Her*, Nikki Lane, and Paul McDonald & the Mourning Doves. Additional artists will be announced this summer.

Venues throughout South Walton will once again be converted into state-of-the-art listening rooms, ranging from 100 to 1,000 seats. Amphitheaters, town halls, restaurants, bars, and theaters provide fans with the rare opportunity to experience world-class songwriters in intimate settings. WMOT, based in Nashville, will again record select performances for its *World Cafe* sessions in partnership with WXPB Philadelphia.

Weekend passes and VIP tickets are available now. VIP packages include premium seating

and complimentary gourmet food and drinks in the VIP tent during main stage shows, as well as full weekend transportation options for groups.

The festival is produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and Russell Carter Artist Management, presented by Grand Boulevard with support from Visit South Walton, Water-Color Inn & Resort, and ASCAP. Festival passes and details are available at 30ASongwritersFestival.com.

Sean Dietrich Releases New Novel *Over Yonder* Explores Family, Fatherhood and the Unexpected Roads of Redemption

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

Part Southern road novel, part meditation on fatherhood, *Over Yonder* follows a defrocked priest just out of prison, a pregnant teen searching for a way forward, and an emotional support goldfish as they journey through the Deep South. Poignant and humorous, the story is Dietrich's tribute to second chances, flawed families, and the unexpected ways people find grace and connection.

ART NEWS

continued on page 23

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Berkowitz Contemporary Foundation Breaks Ground On Longleaf Art Park In Northwest Florida

The Berkowitz Contemporary Foundation (BCF) held a ground-breaking ceremony on October 7, marking the start of construction on Longleaf Art Park, a transformative cultural destination in Walton County, Florida. The 15.5-acre public art park and pavilion is designed by OLI Architecture and will be anchored by the late artist Richard Serra’s monumental sculpture *Passage of Time*.

Plans for Longleaf Art Park were first announced in 2024, when BCF unveiled a vision for a dynamic cultural space that unites Serra’s work with the natural landscape of the region. The site’s design, led by OLI Architecture in close collaboration with Serra prior to his passing, emphasizes environmental sensitivity, with construction disturbances minimized to preserve and protect the existing ecosystem.

At the heart of the park will be the late Richard Serra’s sculpture *The Passage of Time*, which will be housed in a bespoke pavilion designed by OLI Architecture. The 217-foot-long, 540,000-pound installation consists of eight towering weathering steel plates, each 13.5 feet high and two inches thick, arranged in Serra’s signature parallel formation. Visitors will approach the pavilion via a winding path and boardwalk that leads through na-



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Berkowitz Contemporary Foundation

tive flora, berms, and a tranquil pond before entering the glass-walled vestibules that usher them into the sculpture’s immersive environment.

“The park and pavilion are inseparable, designed to feel as though they have always been here. Native plantings recall the land’s history, while concrete facades - cast with the textures of felled pines - capture the passage of time,” said Hiroshi Okamoto of OLI Architecture. “In front, Longleaf pines extend this dialogue in living form. Inside, steel structure and trapezoidal skylights harmonize to create a space suffused with shifting natural light.”

Additional park features will include an outdoor event space and areas designed for future public programming and educa-

tion. The park will host a range of free, year-round offerings, including workshops, guided tours, community events, and collaborations with local arts organization Cultural Arts Alliance and the Walton County school district. When complete, Longleaf Art Park will provide free and direct access to world-class contemporary art in a setting designed for reflection, discovery, and community engagement.

“Longleaf Art Park represents BCF’s deep commitment to making groundbreaking art accessible to everyone,” said Chloe Berkowitz, Founder and President of Berkowitz Contemporary Foundation. “We believe that powerful artistic experiences should be available to all, and by placing Serra’s *Passage of Time* at the heart of this open, free-to-access



park, we’re creating a cultural destination for locals and visitors alike.”

Richard Serra (1938–2024) was one of the most influential artists of the 20th and 21st centuries, known for radically expanding the possibilities of sculpture. His work, housed in collections

such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, emphasized material, space, and the viewer’s embodied experience. Longleaf Art Park is expected to open in 2026.

ART NEWS

continued from page 22

“This book is a love letter to fatherhood,” said Dietrich. “Fathers, 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.”

Laura Wheeler, senior acquisitions editor for Thomas Nelson Fiction, added: “Sean is an innately gifted storyteller—his voice can’t be taught; it’s simply who he is. 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 will be available in bookstores nationwide

Oct. 7. Learn more at tnzfiction.com/9781400235681/over-yonder/sean-dietrich.

Northwest Florida Ballet Unveils 2025-26 Season

Northwest Florida Ballet’s upcoming season features three distinctive productions. It opens Sept. 19–20 with the Emerging Choreographers’ Project Blackbox at NFB Studios in downtown Fort Walton Beach. Showcasing the innovative choreography of selected members of the NFB company, this production features ballet and contemporary works set to a diverse range of music genres, accompanied by a visual art exhibition that offers audiences a compelling glimpse into the next generation of artists from the NFB Académie.

The beloved holiday classic *Nutcracker* returns Nov. 21–23 to the Mattie Kelly Arts Center,

featuring more than 140 performers, including international guest artists and over 100 local children, with live music by the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra.

The season concludes March 7–8 with the company premiere of Jill Eathorne Bahr’s *Alice in Wonderland*, a vibrant new adaptation blending neoclassical dance and imaginative storytelling.

Season subscriptions, which include tickets to *The Nutcracker* and *Alice in Wonderland* plus numerous subscriber perks and discounts, are now available at NFBallet.org—\$80 per adult and \$37 per child (12 and under), a savings of more than 15% compared to box office prices. You can also purchase season subscriptions, additional performance and event tickets, and membership packages.



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Grayton Locals Market Thursdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Hibiscus Guest House
Seaside Amphitheater Saturdays and Tuesdays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Peddlers Pavilion Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Rosemary Beach at North Barrett Square Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Walton County Fair Oct. 13-18

Join us as we celebrate 101 years of community, agriculture, and family-friendly fun. Expect live performances, livestock shows, arts and crafts exhibits, delicious food vendors, and thrilling rides for everyone. View ticket pricing and see the entertainment plus activity schedule online: waltoncountyfair.com.

Comedy Under the Stars at Hotel Effie Oct. 15 & 29

Join Ara Rooftop Pool & Lounge under the stars 7:30 - 9 p.m. for bold, unfiltered stand-up

from touring comedians and local talent presented by High Tide Comedy. Sip handcrafted cocktails and settle in for a lively evening of adult-only entertainment — sophisticated, spirited, and anything but ordinary. Visit hoteleffie.com.

Eden Gardens Fall Film Series Oct. 16 & 23

The Friends of Eden Gardens announce the return of the Fall Film Series, a series of family-friendly, spooky, classic films played on an outdoor screen under the oak trees at Eden Gardens State Park. The event is free with paid park admission (\$4 per vehicle). Films will be shown on the lawn near the pavilion starting at 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 16: Hocus Pocus
Oct. 23: Frogs (1972 & Filmed at Eden)

Rocky Horror Interactive Murder Mystery Dinner at AJ's Grayton Beach Oct. 18

Join ICMT Murder Mystery

Company & AJ's Grayton Beach for a Rocky Horror themed interactive mystery dinner show where YOU become the detective! Doors open at 6:30 p.m. This show has some ADULT themes - Rocky Horror theme - PG 13. \$65 ticket price includes a 3-course meal with salad, your choice of three different entrees, and a specialty dessert. Visit ajsgayton.com for more info.

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

Four days. World-class wine. Unforgettable food. From Friday's sultry Harvest After Dark to Saturday's legendary Grand Tasting and elegant Sunday brunch, this is one of the Southeast's premier festivals. Proceeds benefit Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation. Tickets and details at dcwaf.org.

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

Bid for a cause! Help fight



hunger in Okaloosa and Walton counties while enjoying food, drinks and community fun. Proceeds support ECFR's mission to deliver 250,000 pounds of food monthly. Details: emeraldcoast-foodrescue.org.

Run Watersound 5K & 10K Oct. 25

The annual RUN WATERSOUND will take place with

two event distances, a 5K & 10K. All races will begin at the Watersound Town Center with a flat scenic course through the paths and streets of the Watersound Origins community. The finish line will be back at Watersound Town Center. Register at: <https://watersound.itsyourrace.com/event.aspx>.

Continued on next page



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Photo by: Nick Nelson

Seaside Halloweener Derby: Dachshund Race & Dog Costume Contest Oct. 25

Join fellow dog lovers on Saturday, October 25 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. for the 15th Annual Halloweener Derby and Dog Costume Contest in the Seaside Amphitheater. Benefitting H.E.A.R.T. Animal Rescue, registration is now open! There are only 90 spots available for the derby, so don't wait to register. Register here: <https://bit.ly/46WptTH>.

Rosemary Beach Monstrous Halloween Bash Oct. 25

Join the Merchants of Rosemary Beach as they host the Annual Monstrous Halloween Bash in the community of Rosemary Beach from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Enjoy trick-or-treating, games, a photo booth, costume contests, pumpkin decorating, balloon fun, music and more! This event is fun for the whole family. Free and open to the public. This event is courtesy of the Merchants of Rosemary Beach.

Barktoberfest at Grand Boulevard Oct. 30

Thursday, Oct. 30, | 4:30-6:30 p.m. Grand Park, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin
Paws down, the cutest fall fest around! Bring your pup in costume 4:30-6:30 p.m. for trick-or-treating, a legendary doggie costume contest, live DJ, photo booth, and tasty bites. \$15 pre-registration (\$20 day-of). Benefits Dog-Harmony. Register at dog-harmony.org.

Witches of South Walton Charity Ride Oct. 31

The Witches are set to ride in the 22nd Annual Witch Ride this October! Every year, the Witches decorate bikes and fly throughout their communities. These Witches dress to impress, decorate their bikes/brooms and have a wicked fun Halloween celebration. The ride will leave from Gulf Place between 6:45-7:15 a.m. The Witches will again be riding to support the mission of Children's Volunteer Health Network (CVHN). Event registration at Register.WitchRide.com.

Trick or Treat Seaside Oct. 31

There's no place like Seaside

for Halloween. Follow the Yellow Brick Road through Central Square at the annual Trick-or-Treat in Seaside, happening from 4-7 p.m. This year, the magic takes a turn to the Emerald City theme. Stroll through town collecting treats from Seaside's merchants, meet beloved characters along the way, and enjoy the sights, sounds, and sweetness of the season. Special outdoor screening of The Wizard of Oz under the stars at 7 p.m. Costumes are encouraged for kids and kids-at-heart.

The Red Bar Halloween Party Oct. 31

Get ready for a spooktacular night of fun, music, and Halloween magic! Come dressed in your best costume by 9 p.m. and win exciting prizes!

Trick or Treat Street at The Village of Baytowne Wharf Oct. 31

Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins take over Baytowne! Trick-or-treat at merchant booths 6-8 p.m., enjoy live music, and don't miss the fireworks at 8 p.m. Free admission. Details: baytowne-wharf.com.

Eggs on the Beach Nov. 1

Big Green Egg fans unite at Seascap! Sample unlimited bites from 20+ cook teams 10 a.m.-1 p.m., including nine nonprofits, and cast your votes for the 2025 People's Choice Awards. A distinguished panel of judges features local chefs, Big Green Egg grill masters, and celebrity talent from Netflix and Food Network. Hosted by Bay Breeze Patio, this fan-favorite foodie fest benefits Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food For Thought. Tickets & details at EggsOnTheBeach.com.

Pirate Brew Fest at Fudpucker's Nov. 1

Ahoy, mateys! Fudpucker's hosts the Pirate Brew Fest 11 a.m.-3 p.m., a lively afternoon of food, fun, and frothy brews. Enjoy live music, 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. More info at PirateBrewFest.com.

Harbor Docks Take a Kid Fishing Day Nov. 2

Some 300 children will be treated to a day of fishing on the Gulf of Mexico or Choc-tawhatchee Bay. Each child - and their chaperone - are served breakfast before boarding one of Destin's finest charter boats for a morning of fishing. Upon return, the day is celebrated with a fish fry lunch, and every child is sent home with a t-shirt and their own rod and reel. This is for children from 7 to 13 years old. More information: www.harbordocks.com.

Seeing Red Wine Festival Nov. 6-9

Grand and reserve tastings, live music, local cuisines, a themed brunch, vintners' dinner, and more! Seeing Red offers a fun-filled weekend, whether you choose to experience every event or just one. Customize your weekend experience by purchasing curated packages or individual tickets and reservations. Details and tickets at seeingredwinefestival.com!







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Mommy Makeovers: What They Are and When to Consider One



BY DR. CLARK, BLUEWATER
PLASTIC SURGERY

Motherhood is an extraordinary journey — one filled with love, transformation and growth. However, the physical changes that occur during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding can leave many women feeling disconnected from their pre-pregnancy bodies. At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we often hear from women who say, “I love being a mom, but I just don’t feel like myself anymore.” For those looking to restore confidence and feel comfortable in their skin again, a customized Mommy Makeover may be the solution.

What Is a Mommy Makeover?

A “Mommy Makeover” isn’t a single procedure, but rather a personalized combination of surgeries designed to address the areas most commonly affected by pregnancy and childbirth. The most common procedures include:

- **Tummy tuck (abdominoplasty)** to remove excess skin and tighten weakened abdominal muscles.
- **Breast augmentation, lift, or reduction**, depending on how the breasts have changed post-pregnancy.
- **Liposuction** to sculpt and remove stubborn pockets of fat that diet and exercise alone can’t address.

These procedures are usually performed in a single surgical session, which minimizes recovery time compared to spacing them out over months. The goal is not to “snap back” to a previous version of yourself, but to help you feel empowered, confident, and at ease in your own body.

Is It Right for You?

- Ideal candidates for a Mommy Makeover are women who:
- Are finished having children (future pregnancies can impact the surgical results).
 - Are close to their target weight and committed to a healthy lifestyle.
 - Have completed breastfeeding for at least six months.
 - Are in good overall health with realistic expectations about results and recovery.

A Mommy Makeover is not about perfection — it’s about feeling more like you again. Whether it’s restoring volume to your breasts, regaining core strength, or simply being able to wear clothing comfortably, these changes can be deeply meaningful.



What to Expect

Recovery varies depending on the combination of procedures, but most women take about two weeks off work and gradually resume normal activities over 4–6 weeks. While the initial results are visible fairly quickly, final results continue to refine over the following months as swelling subsides and the body heals.

At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we take a thoughtful, individualized approach. During your consultation, we’ll discuss your goals, medical history, and any concerns. Together, we’ll build a safe, strategic plan that supports your vision and lifestyle.

Ready to Feel Like Yourself Again?

You’ve given so much of yourself to your family. If now feels like the right time to reclaim a part of yourself, we’re here to help. A Mommy Makeover can be a powerful act of self-care — one that’s deeply personal and uniquely tailored to you.

To schedule a private consultation and explore your options,

contact Bluewater Plastic Surgery today. As a board-certified plastic surgeon, my practice is dedicated to cosmetic surgery, and I have performed thousands of procedures over the

past 25 years. My priority has always been patient safety and achieving superior cosmetic results. I believe the best measure of success comes from my patients themselves—with more

than 250 five-star reviews, their experiences speak louder than anything I could say.

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Five Competencies of Emotional Intelligence Linked to Happy Marriage

By JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PhD

Happily married couples have Emotional Intelligence.

After years of research on predicting and preventing divorce, John Gottman concluded that “Happily married couples aren’t smarter, richer, or more psychologically astute than others. But in their day-to-day lives, they have hit upon a dynamic that keeps their negative thoughts and feelings about each other (which all couples have) from overwhelming their positive ones”.

Gottman called this an “emotionally intelligent marriage.” He emphasized that Emotionally Intelligent couples are better able “to understand, honor, and respect each other and their marriage”, which, not surprisingly, leads to marital satisfaction.

What Makes an Emotionally Intelligent Marriage Work?

An Emotionally Intelligent Marriage involves mastering the same five competencies Daniel Goleman identified as key to individual success: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Specifically, partners equipped with high Emotional Intelligence (EQ) are better at recognizing and managing their own emotions, understanding their spouse's emotions, and using this understanding to communicate, empathize, and resolve conflict. This ultimately fosters deeper

intimacy, mutual trust, and long-term happiness

But, as they say, it takes two to tango.

An Emotionally Intelligent Marriage requires both partners to be equipped with high EQ. Their combined high levels of self-awareness, empathy, social skills, and emotional regulation allow partners to navigate challenges, express needs effectively, and create a supportive environment for individual achievement and relationship growth.

Recognizing Low Marriage EQ

Most couples start out living a happy life that resembles an Emotionally Intelligent Marriage. But, for couples with low EQ, this positivity erodes over time because they lack the competencies to manage the inevitable irritations, conflicts, and challenges of married life.

Partners with underdeveloped Emotional Intelligence are not adept at recognizing and managing their own emotions. And they lack understanding of their partner’s emotions and reactions to events. As a result, they struggle to explain their own emotions, dismiss or minimize each other’s perspectives, don’t communicate empathy, and don’t really know how to effectively manage conflict. As misunderstandings build up, resentment grows into a state of negativity that interferes with their ability to sustain a mutu-

ally supportive relationship. So, they become emotionally disconnected.

During tense moments, they either withdraw or escalate ar-

guments through harsh criticism and defensiveness, making conflicts seem more like fights than conversations. They start attributing mistakes to each other’s

character and lose confidence in each other’s support. So, trust

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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Wellness

Vitiligo and the Beautifully Unblemished Vitiligo Support Group, Inc.

By BRIDGET SULLIVAN, PA-C,
COASTAL SKIN SURGERY AND
DERMATOLOGY

Vitiligo is a long-term skin condition that causes patches of skin to lose pigment, creating areas lighter than the surrounding skin. Vitiligo, an autoimmune condition, occurs when melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing skin color, are destroyed. While vitiligo is not

contagious or life-threatening, its effects can extend beyond the skin. Many people living with vitiligo face emotional challenges, including self-consciousness, anxiety, and stigma from others who do not understand the condition.

Vitiligo can develop at any age. A person may start to see changes in their skin as a child, a teen, in middle age, or as a senior. The journey with vitiligo

is unique for everyone. Some individuals may have only a few small patches, while others experience widespread pigment loss across their face, hands, and body. Treatments such as topical medications, light therapy, and camouflage cosmetics can occasionally help even out skin tone, but there is cur-



embrace their skin and celebrate their uniqueness. The organization also provides resources for newly diagnosed individuals and their families, helping them understand treatment options and how to navigate the emotional aspects of the condition.

Beautifully Unblemished support groups exist in central and southern Florida. However, Tonja

Johnson and I are aiming to expand those support groups as well as vitiligo advocacy to the panhandle and surrounding areas. Therefore, we will be hosting an online event on Thursday, October 16 from 7-8 p.m. to provide further information on how interested persons can get involved. Through support, education, and advocacy, Beautifully Unblemished has created a movement that uplifts and empowers. For many members, finding this community means no longer feeling isolated. Instead, they discover a sense of pride, resilience, and confidence.

Vitiligo may change the skin's appearance, but groups like Beautifully Unblemished remind us that true beauty is far deeper than the skin. By embracing differences and supporting one another, they are redefining what it means to be beautifully unblemished.

Currently no cure. Because of this, support, education, and community play an essential role in empowering those affected.

That is where Beautifully Unblemished, a vitiligo support group, comes in. Founded by Tonja Johnson in 2017, Beautifully Unblemished's mission of providing hope and encouragement for those with vitiligo creates a safe space where individuals with vitiligo can share their stories, connect with others, and find strength in community. The group hosts meetings, educational workshops, and outreach events to raise awareness about vitiligo and to advocate for those living with the condition.

One of the group's most powerful messages is that beauty comes in all shades and patterns. Rather than viewing vitiligo as a flaw, Beautifully Unblemished encourages members to



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By CHRISTIAN REGALADO

It's that time of year, again, and we're getting a clearer picture of what 2026 is going to look like in the world of personal health insurance. I'm writing this article in late September, and many of the new Medicare plans are just being released. As of October 1, brokers are allowed to discuss specifics about 2026 Advantage and prescription drug plans. The enrollment period runs from October 15 through December 7. It would be advis-

able to make an appointment with a broker as soon as you can, since it will be a very busy time.

A change for 2026 is that most Medicare carriers that offer Advantage plans are choosing not to renew some or all of their PPO plans because they are less profitable due to out-of-network costs that they can't control. If you are currently on a Medicare PPO plan, you may have to switch carriers to remain on a PPO or switch to an HMO plan that won't have out-of-network benefits but may have "Travel Passport" benefits. These are benefits allowing you to use the carriers' national or regional network.

Referrals are also going to be required by one carrier on their HMO plans to help reduce costs.

By now, you should have received your Annual Notice of Change and if you have been

advised that your plan will be cancelled, you need to enroll in a new plan for 2026 by December 31. If you don't, you will only have original Medicare starting January 1st. Because of this disruption and plan elimination, online brokers (800 brokers) will be very active trying to collect your information and attempting to enroll you in a new plan. Be careful, their incentive is not always to enroll you in the plan that is best for you which accepts your doctors and hospitals. Use a local broker who is familiar with plans that are accepted locally.

If you have any dental needs coming up, be sure to be familiar with your plan's dental benefit for 2026. This will vary plan to plan, and many dental benefits have been cut, so keep that in consideration when deciding which plan will make the most sense for

2026.

Medicare Supplement plans are not included in the Annual Enrollment Period (AEP). However, your prescription drug plan is, and there will be many changes in these plans in 2026 due primarily to increased drug costs. There will be PDP plans with a \$0 monthly premium, but expect a high drug deductible. Depending on your prescriptions, it may be cost-effective to pay some premium for a plan that covers your prescriptions. There will also be a price reduction on ten expensive drugs, such as Eliquis and Januvia. These savings can be as much as 75%.

Open enrollment for those under 65 starts November 1. The 2026 plans haven't been released as of this writing, and big questions remain regarding tax credits. If the tax credits go

away or are severely reduced, many people may not renew their plans due to lack of affordability. I will probably know more by the time you read this, but I don't expect good news. If this affects you, don't go without any type of coverage. There are low-cost plans that provide some reimbursement benefits for emergencies, critical illnesses, and hospital stays.

Give us a call, and we can help you sort out the best 2026 options for you. Our services are always free of charge, and there is never an obligation to change plans. 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.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

continued from page 27

also erodes. Eventually, they lose respect for each other and their marriage.

The negative spiral caused by low marital EQ is not necessarily the beginning of the end of a marriage. But it is a clear sign that the couple needs to enhance their emotional intelligence competencies. In fact, without improving EQ, there is little hope for these couples to regain their once happy marriage.

Emotional Intelligence Can Be Learned

The good news for people in a low EQ marriage is that, unlike IQ, which is relatively stable over a lifetime, Emotional Intelligence can be learned and improved through intentional effort and practice. To improve marital EQ, both partners must commit to actively working together on the five key competencies of Emotional Intelligence.

1. Self-Awareness: Utilize self-reflection to understand your own emotions, their triggers, and how they impact your thoughts and behaviors toward one another.

2. Self-Regulation: Seek and accept feedback from each other to help you express your emotions appropriately and

effectively, control your arousal, and adapt to challenging situations, particularly during conflict.

3. Empathy: Learn to actively listen so you can understand each other's perspectives and share each other's feelings. Express empathetic understanding to foster compassion and deeper intimacy. Let your empathy inspire true apologies and make forgiveness easier.

4. Social Skills: Practice open communication by being honest about your thoughts, needs, and feelings. Handle conflict constructively by focusing on managing the issue rather than attacking or criticizing your partner. Show gratitude by expressing appreciation for the positive things your partner does. Engage with each other in ways that create predictability, dependability, and trust.

Motivation: Incorporate each other's individual goals into your marital goals. Adopt an optimistic view and remain resilient in your mutual support of your

marriage and each other's goals, despite challenges and setbacks. This will help you create a compelling sense of shared meaning for your marriage.

If your marital EQ is underdeveloped, invite your partner to work with you on the five key competencies of Marital Emotional Intelligence. Whether your marital EQ needs a little or a lot of improvement, start now, before the negative spiral takes you past the point of no return.

Let me know how I can help. *Jamie C. Williamson, PhD is a FL Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator and Member of the Gottman Referral Network, with a Certificate in the Science of Wellbeing and Happiness from the Harvard School of Medicine. She is an owner and partner at Amity Mediation Workshop, a mediation practice specializing in "friendly divorce" mediation and psycho-educational couples counseling. Dr. Jamie speaks frequently on relationship topics and authors the blog "Work it Out." You can find her online at amitymediationworkshop.com.*

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Leading With Love



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

When were you last wronged, hurt or offended by someone? Think about the intense moment of offense and try remembering how it felt and what you wanted to do next. Maybe you wanted to use snarky words to put them in their place. Perhaps you wanted to justify your rightness and their wrongness. Or, you may have judged them from a place of self-righteousness. Maybe you labeled the person as bad and less valuable. And, maybe, most of all, you decided to see them as your enemy.

Labeling others as enemies is easy and comfortable, because it allows you to feel right and to

avoid self-examination. When you label someone as “them” or your enemy, you view them as a villain and yourself as a victim; a victim of their behavior, a victim of their values, a victim of their choices, a victim of their decisions. Initially, labeling someone as an enemy feels intoxicating.

You feel justified, good, right and have the illusion of standing on higher moral ground. However, eventually, seeing yourself as a victim creates insidious results. You begin to feel resentful, bitter, vengeful, powerless, depressed and hateful.

In many cases, embracing victimhood results in you becoming a different version of a villain. You may find yourself feeling justified in “an eye for an eye” perspective toward your proclaimed enemies because, after all, their bad behavior justifies your poor response. Labeling others as enemies gives a false sense of permission to treat others poorly without taking accountability for living out your own values. Making others into enemies most often stirs up fear, hatred and defensiveness, rather than stirring

love, compassion, confidence and kindness.

While it’s an undeniable reality you will encounter, people who challenge your values and sensibilities, ultimately you are responsible for how you show up in the world. Someone else’s behavior or attitude does not determine yours, even when you see them as an enemy. You have the empowered ability to be in charge of your attitude and behavior regardless of how anyone else is showing up. So, how do you walk away from making enemies easily and lead with love instead?

7 Ways to Lead with Love Even When It’s Hard

Notice. Notice who you see as an enemy. Who is hard for you to love? Why? Be curious within yourself about why you are bothered by the other person. Focus less on the other person’s behavior and more on what is happening inside of you in response to them.

Self-examine. Reflect on your own struggles. Where are you being unforgiving, unkind,

judgmental, self-righteous, envious. Remember your own imperfection before you judge others harshly and label them as enemies. Imagine the grace you would like to receive from others in your areas of weakness when you consider your approach toward others.

Remember our shared humanity. Being human isn’t easy and can be a painful struggle. Often those you see as enemies are hurt people struggling with wounds they don’t know how to resolve. Try preceding your judgement with understanding and compassion.

Remember your values. Do you value love, forgiveness, justice, goodness, kindness? Consider how you can align your treatment of others with your values in the way you hope others would apply them to you.

Love anyway. Try walking in the way of love toward others, even those who feel like enemies. Do something kind when you want to retaliate. Be generous when you want to punish. Walk away when you want to say something unkind. Pray for peo-

ple who challenge you. Practice radical love even when it is hard to do so. In loving this way, it will become more clear to you how loved you are by God. Also, it is hard to demonize others when you are busy loving them.

Engage your power. You are not a victim of anyone, no matter how difficult the other person is for you. You have been given the power to determine how you want to live and treat people. Use your power wisely and for the greater good.

Release. Release your perceived right to hold grudges and hatred toward others. Clinging to bitterness poisons you and the world around you.

We live in a cultural moment that encourages us to see enemies around every corner. Consider trying something different. Instead, remember the best chance of inspiring change in others and the world is to embody a loving, joyful approach to your values while inviting others to come along. Connect with us at Journeybravely.com for support along your journey.

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Pain in the Foot

By KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTH ARCHITECT

Over the last couple months, I have talked to friends and acquaintances that have shared their struggle with Planter Fasciitis. Maybe you or someone you know is dealing with this ‘pain in the foot.’

The plantar fascia (noted as pf) if a fibrous tissue that connects the toes to the heel along the bottom of the foot. This thick band can become over-stretched or have excess strain due to repetitive stress, which can lead to chronic degeneration or small tears in the fascia fibers where it connects to the heel bone. In addition, ultrasounds often show calcifications and a thickening of the pf.

The cause is not fully understood, but has been connected to activities such as running, ballet and other types of dance, age, weight or occupation.

The pain experienced most often shows up first thing in the morning when the foot first touches the floor and is localized in the heel. This is due to over-



night inactivity and the pf stiffening (like a sore muscle). Choosing to avoid walking on the foot can eventually lead to problems in the foot, knee, hip or back.

There are several therapies that can aid in the healing process:

- **Stretching:** Take time before letting your feet hit the floor to slowly stretch. Place your ankle over your knee, pull the toes up until you feel the stretch. Holding that position gently massage the pf for a few minutes. This will help the pf to relax relieving some of the sharp pain one experiences after a period of inactivity.
- **Calf Stretch:** Standing in front of a wall bend the knee on the good foot a step back on the affected foot. Slowly move the injured foot from the balls of the foot to placing the heel on the ground. This stretches both the calf and the pf. If you can’t place your heel on the ground due to the pain, bring the leg in a bit to lessen the ‘stretch.’
- **Ice the foot** after stretching or if your pf begins to act up due

- to over-activity.
- **Athletic Tape:** Learn how to properly apply from a professional such as a physical therapist to support your pf during your active times.
 - **Night Splints:** This over the counter product keeps the pf in a stretched position while you sleep which can lessen the pain experienced upon rising.
 - **Orthotics:** These can support your pf during the day.
 - **Boot, Cane, Crutches:** These can be helpful with severe cases or to allow the inflammation to decrease before adding other treatments.
 - **Steroids:** The use of steroid injections can offer temporary relief. However, multiple shots are not recommended as they can weaken the pf and possibly cause it to rupture.
 - **Plasma Injections:** Platelet rich plasma from your own blood can be injected to promote healing. An ultrasound is used to aid in precise needle placement.
 - **Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy:** This is for chronic plantar fasciitis when other therapies have failed. Sound waves are directed at the area of the heal pain to stimulate healing. This therapy hasn’t been shown to be consistently effective even

though some studies have shown promising results.

- **Ultrasonic Tissue Repair:** A minimally invasive technology where ultrasound imaging is used to guide a needlelike probe into the damaged pf tissue. The probe tip vibrates rapidly to break up the damaged tissue which is then suctioned out.
- **Surgery:** When all else fails. The surgery entails detaching the pf from the heel bone.

There are so many fall festivals coming our way. If you don’t want to miss your favorite ones, be sure to include breaks throughout your day to stretch and massage your pf and don’t forget your orthotics. Taking care of our feet allows us to have a more active and fun life. Even if you have healthy feet, a good foot massage from time to time couldn’t hurt.

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Book Review: Hour of the Heart

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL
McMANUS, MSW LCSW

Irving Yalom’s “Hour of the Heart” isn’t your typical therapy manual-it’s a raw, almost confessional dive into what makes human connection tick, even when time’s running out. Picture this: a ninety-three-year-old psychiatrist, facing his own mortality, decides to ditch long-term therapy for intense, one-session encounters. Each chapter feels like Yalom’s pulling you into a dimly lit room, where he’s just finished a profound sixty-minute talk with someone on the edge - a grieving widower, a suicidal teen, even a celebrity hiding behind a facade. What’s gripping is how Yalom leans into vulnerability, sharing his own fears of aging and irrelevance.

Take the story of Mark, who breaks down after Yalom admits he’s scared of losing his mind; that raw honesty flips the dynamic, turning the session into a mutual rescue. Yalom’s style is deceptively simple, even conversational, like he’s sitting across from you over coffee, but it’s packed with insight. He nails why here and

now matters: in one hour, you can unearth a lifetime of buried pain if you dare to be real. The book stumbles slightly with repetition; those existential themes circle like vultures, but it mirrors life’s stubborn loops, so it works. At its core, it’s about the fleeting magic

of being seen, not fixed. Yalom proves that you don’t need months to change a life; one genuine moment can do it. If you’ve ever craved deeper connections, this’ll hit you like a quiet epiphany. Highly recommend.



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 Wellness

ACUPUNCTURE

continued from page 14

Misconception #5: “If I don’t feel better after one session, it didn’t work.”

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Acupuncture invites your body to do what it’s designed to do: heal. Whether you’re dealing with chronic illness, stress, fatigue, hormonal imbalance, or recovery from injury or trauma, acupuncture offers a safe, natural, and effective way to reset your system and restore balance.

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As the only Neuro-Acupuncture specialist within 300 miles of Santa Rosa Beach, I offer advanced treatments that blend classical Chinese medicine with cutting-edge neuroscience to support complex neurological conditions. And as a team, we’re committed to delivering integrative, personalized care that truly listens to your story and your goals.

Curious about how acupuncture could support your health? Schedule your consultation today at TortoiseClinic.com or give us a call at 850.267.5611 and mention this article to receive \$30 off as a new patient.

At the Tortoise Clinic, healing is not a race—it’s a journey. Let’s walk it together.



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Rise and Shine with F3 Emerald Coast

By HEATHER BENNETT EYE

We all want to be the best version of ourselves—the friend who shows up when needed, the parent who guides with love, the partner who supports through good times and bad, the employee who gives their best with integrity. But finding that first step can feel overwhelming. For men along the Emerald Coast, F3 offers a way forward.

Founded in 2011 in Charlotte, North Carolina, F3 is a nationwide network of free, peer-led workouts with a simple mission: “to plant, grow, and serve small workout groups for the invigoration of male community leadership.” The three “Fs” stand for Fitness, Fellowship, and Faith — faith being a belief in something larger than yourself. Across all 50 states with more than 5,600 weekly gatherings, men of all ages discover a place to belong, strengthen their bodies, and build character and community.

What makes F3 unique isn’t just the workouts, it’s the accountability and community that comes with it. If you miss a workout at a gym, no one might notice. If you miss an F3 workout, people will know. Your fellow members care about your physical and personal growth; they want to know how you’re doing and what’s going on in your life.

Our local chapter, F3 Emerald Coast, was started in 2023 by two men, who were joined shortly after by Gordon Emerson, who is 71 years old. Gordon started his F3 journey in 2016 in Waynesville, North Carolina, and enjoys maintaining his fitness and growing friendships. After moving to 30A,

Gordon missed the camaraderie he’d found up north and was excited to find the fledgling F3 chapter here.

Nathan Faber, 39, who had discovered F3 in 2022 in Colorado, started coming to the 30A group when he saw it posted on the official national F3 map. He was also missing the energy boost and brotherhood that F3 offers. “Aside from the price being right (F3 is always free), I really enjoy the fellowship and meeting other guys who are local, being able to work out, and do other activities outside of working out, to develop our community,” stated Nathan.

F3 Emerald Coast welcomes men of all ages and fitness levels to participate. They have a small core group that greatly expands during the summer, and on spring and fall breaks, when other vacationing F3 members from around the country want a workout. The exercises are led by different members who volunteer each week. “When people are visiting, we love to have them lead workouts. We get to see new exercises that we haven’t thought of,” said Gordon. “That’s one thing I enjoy,” added Nathan, “You never know what you’re going to get.”

The group meets at Ed Walline Regional Beach Access parking lot and works out on the beach in the summer or the grassy lawn at Gulf Place in the winter. Exercises consist of lifting cinder blocks, body weight exercises, running and physical games. All workouts can be modified for your fitness level. “We don’t want anyone to get hurt. We just want you to show up every



week, get better every week and just be a part of the group,” said Gordon. “It’s really just you now versus you the week before,” added Nathan. The goal is not to be competitive with each other, but to continually improve yourself week over week. “If you’re the last person in the pack running, someone will drop back and run with you,” stated Nathan. There’s no man left behind during an F3 workout, but no one will be left where they are found.

More than the workouts and physical improvement, there’s the support and connection that men build in F3. “We always end the workout with a Circle of Trust. You have the opportunity to share what you’re going through, what’s on your mind, concerns you have, or good things that are happening,” said Gordon. “That’s not always easy to do. For me personally, it’s very hard to share something deep that’s on my mind. It helps me to see we’ve all got things weighing on our minds, and it’s nice to know somebody’s there.”

As a member of F3, communication is as easy as reaching out on

a Slack channel. You can reach out at any time and find someone who can help if you’re in need, from something as simple as getting a ride because your car broke down to moving help, aid while traveling, disaster support, and more. With F3 being a national network, members are never alone nearly anywhere in the United States.

Both men credit F3 with personal growth. Nathan attributes F3 to building his confidence and making him a better leader. He usually works independently in his job, and F3 has boosted his confidence by giving him the chance to lead group workouts. “In F3 when you’re the leader, everyone is listening to you, and they might need direction from you. Having that confidence to communicate clearly, and to bring others alongside you, even if it’s just in a workout, it’s something I’ve developed and it’s transferred to other areas of my life,” said Nathan.

For Gordon, F3 has kept him engaged and involved in a community of fellowship. “I’m typically an introverted person. I’ve met some of my best friends through F3, and

the interaction with other people and what I get from them makes me a better person,” said Gordon. “Even on the days I don’t want it, it’s what I need. It’s good for me.”

Gordon and Nathan are also looking for ways that F3 can be more involved in the community. Gordon’s F3 group in North Carolina helped with hurricane recovery and Nathan’s group in Colorado would volunteer to pick up furniture and serve at food banks. Being stewards of the Emerald Coast community is something they look forward to growing as their F3 continues to gain more members.

Men of all ages in the local community are encouraged to join F3 Emerald Coast on Tuesday mornings at 5:45 a.m. at Ed Walline Regional Beach Access. For those further east, there is also a Thursday group that meets at 5:45 a.m. at Pier Park in the Margaritaville Parking lot. Workouts are open to all ages and fitness levels. There’s no religious denomination or political affiliation. There’s no specific type of person they are looking to join, except those who want to become a better version of themselves.

“Any guy who wants to get better physically, but also wants to have a way to deal with stress, a way to build bonds with other men, wants a way to be a better father, husband, son, person in your community, F3 is a great way to start,” said Nathan. “The only cost is showing up.”

If you’d like more information on F3, please visit their website at <https://www.f3emeraldcoast.com>.



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Musing



By Rev. Pete Hyde

We returned from the mountains on Friday after taking a much-needed break. The trip was filled with joys, adventures, cool weather (37 degrees one morning on the porch of the cabin), winding mountain roads, a touch of early fall color, bright sunshine, spending time with family, an accident between the shuttle bus we were on at the Atlanta airport and a car that tried to cut the bus off at an intersection, two hours on the Blue Ridge Parkway, a visit to the urgent care center in Boone,

A Pastor's Ponderings: Back Roads

North Carolina for sinus infection that is now making its way through the other travelers, little out of the way restaurants like Shoo-Booty's in Murphy, North Carolina, The Chicken Shack in Luverne, Alabama and Barney's Café in Mt. Airy North Carolina (the town that inspired Mayberry in the Andy Griffith Show) for a piece of homemade coconut cream pie. Kay and I always try to take the back roads when we travel. There are always things to discover and inspire.

The narrow, two-lane road with no shoulder wound its way through the mountains with a guardrail protecting a several-hundred-foot drop on one side and a rock wall on the other. Up and down, around curves marked 25 mph signs that meant it, the strip of asphalt wandered through the woods. Every so often, there would be an intersection with another road winding its way somewhere. More often than not, there would be a church on the corner.

Even where there was no intersection of paved roads, there would be a sign next to a dirt road leading up a hill or down a valley indicating a church was down that road somewhere. We would travel for miles without seeing a house or any sign of civilization, but there would be a church "back in there somewhere" ministering to those unseen inhabitants of the Blue Ridge Mountains. None of them were "mega churches" and none of them probably wanted to be. They were small bodies of Christ ministering to the needs of those specific people in those specific places, as are most of the churches in America.

In the midst of the grandeur of the mountains in the fall, when God's handiwork and presence

could not be mistaken or misunderstood, you know and feel that God is everywhere. Standing on an overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway on this particular day, you could see for 30 or 40 miles across the hills and valleys of God's glorious creation. But the real statement of God's presence is each of the little churches along the almost forgotten back roads, not only of the mountains, but much of the rural areas of our country. They do not have grand buildings and groomed campuses. They do not have the array of programs and ministries that many of us use to define a "successful" church. But they are the presence of God in every nook and cranny of our nation. They stand as witness to God's seeking a relationship with

His children no matter where they are. Their witness to the message and presence of God is as much a miracle as the sweeping landscapes and seascapes of God's great creation.

It would be good for us to remember the next time we gather for worship in our beautiful buildings and comfortable pews and a myriad of programs of ministries from which to pick and choose, that our church was placed here to be the same witness to our community as the thousands of other churches across this land. If we would all do our best in the place where God planted us, we could change the world for the sake of His kingdom.

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

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Holland loves Jesus and has dedicated his life to sharing God's love. While studying at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and pastoring churches for almost forty years, he discovered Jesus is so much more than school and church—Jesus is life. Genuine faith is not about organizations, denominations, or personalities, but it is about discovering the depths of God's love and grace. Dave and his wife Jonie live in Destin, Florida. Contact Dave by email at davidvholland54@gmail.com.



Sean of the South: Looking for God



BY SEAN DIETRICH

I woke up looking for God. I always look for Him in the mornings. Sometimes, however, He's hard to find. Sometimes He hides.

I went through my morning routine. I made the coffee. Let the dogs out to pee.

I turned on the TV news.

The TV headlines are shocking. Mostly, about wars, rumors of war, and celebrity mating habits. The news anchor doesn't smile as he recites talking points.

I feel sorry for Newsguy. Even HE looks sorry he has this job as he talks about the shootings in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Evergreen, Colorado; and the killing of Charlie Kirk in Utah.

I pour coffee. I go to my laptop. Time to do some writing. I have deadlines. Open web browser.

The computer is bombarding

me with more news. I skim headlines.

Today's headlines are nothing like the newspaper headlines of yore. They are click-bait, weirdly worded, as if their sole purpose is to get me to click and nothing more. As if the organization behind each headline doesn't give a flying fig whether I read the actual story, as long as I click the title.

"Click me," I hear the headline whispering. "Come on, handsome. You know you want to. Just click me. Me love you long time."

Here are some actual headlines I read:

"7 Products I Stopped Buying Once I Realized They Were Silently Killing Me."

"Study Shows Hugging Can Cause Cancer."

"Pamela Anderson Speaks Out; She Has A Lot To Get Off Her Chest."

That's not to mention all the stories about AI. Robots, robots, robots. If ever there was a trending topic in the news world, it's the rise of AI.

Humanoid robots with water powered muscles. Robot humanoids being developed to possibly become law-enforcement officers. Humanoid robots expected to be operating within most American homes by the year 2042.



In the same vein, there are throngs of articles about "smart glasses," and all they can do, and all they WILL be able to do, and how someday most humans on the globe will be sophisticated smart-glass-wearing people who let their household humanoid robots do everything from cut the grass to follow them into their bathrooms to wipe their own noses.

Smart glasses, the headlines tell me, are all about AR (altered reality), which is widescale technological integration of digital content with the real world. AR. How inspiring.

So within the next decade, according to the headlines, we will all be lying on our sofas, blissed

out, lost within a half-digital hallucinatory trip. Our children will grow up making swiping gestures in the air as though they are playing on giant invisible iPads.

I haven't been awake for 30 minutes, and already I need an Alka Seltzer.

Namely, because I'm starting to feel like a stranger on this planet. A stranger in my own society. I want to weep. I want to cry. I want to tell my fellow humans to "Wake up!" I don't understand where the future is leading us. And I don't understand why everyone seems to WANT to go there.

Soon, I feel almost sick to my stomach. How did this happen to us? How did we become a race of

tech-junkies who let AI do everything from read our news, to fight our wars?

What happened to our human spirit? What happened to our unique genius for creativity? Where are our Michelangelos and Monets?

How about our human capacity for kindness? Where'd that go? Where are the Ghandis, Saint Franceses, Mother Teresas, and Fred Rogerses of our time? Have we let ourselves become so numbed by the opioids of technology that we have suffocated our saints?

And what about the lessons we were put on earth to learn individually? Lessons of compassion, forgiveness, bravery, and unconditional love? Will we ever find God in a world like this one? Do we even WANT to find Him? Or is "God" becoming a dirty word? Will our future's children even be aware that there IS a God within the next 100 years? Will they even care, or will humanity be too smart for such archaic beliefs?

Then it hits me.

I quietly turn off my TV. I shut off my phone. I close my laptop screen.

And, just like that, I found God.



Providing Sanctuary for Victims of Human Trafficking: Christian Capitalist Jared Cartee

BY RICH SANDERS

Jared Cartee may be from a small town in Alabama, but he has developed a global presence here in the Emerald Coast by working to help victims of a worldwide crisis: human trafficking.

Jared and his wife, Julia, met during their studies at Troy University. While there, Jared was called into campus ministry and pursued that mission field for more than ten years. After living in a few different places, Julia developed her business with Plexus, a health and wellness company, and they had a lot more flexibility to focus on their faith and family.



Once he and Julia decided to move to the Emerald Coast with their five children in 2023, however, God called Jared into an entirely different area of ministry. His new friend and fellow Christian Capitalist, Bruce Bailey, alerted Jared to the global crises of human trafficking with a simple problem locally: while law enforcement efforts at intervening and rescuing women and children from human trafficking have dramatically improved in recent years, a person rescued from that horrific situation has nowhere to go!

Jared, working with a non-profit called Safe in the Panhandle, set out to change that situation. He, Bruce, and local law enforcement officials agreed that victims needed a temporary sanctuary to recover from these terrible situations, rest and recuperate, and figure out their next steps in a safe environment that supports them and validates them as humans.

With this goal set before them, Safe in the Panhandle developed Ruthlake Farm, a sustainable sanctuary for women to recover and start the journey to healing with a 24/7 emergency shelter. On the day we recorded his podcast episode, Jared was sore: "I just planted 1,400 blueberry bushes yesterday!" The goal of all those blueberry bushes, orange

trees, and honeybee hives is to provide agricultural sources of revenue for Ruthlake Farm... and to provide a way for people to work their hands and take their minds off their recent traumatic events.

Ruthlake Farm is already operational. The 24/7 emergency shelter aims to open its doors in October and begin hosting victims of human trafficking to help them begin their long road to recovery. Once she leaves Ruthlake Farm, a woman can choose to go to one of over seventy long-term trauma recovery centers around the nation as a next step in her healing process. Safe in the Panhandle will also host a Christmas market November 21-22 at the Emerald Coast Convention Center. You can learn more about it and help

anytime by making a donation at safeinthepanhandle.com.

Jared recently appeared on the Christian Capitalist podcast in April of this year, and you can listen to the entire episode on SOWAL Life's website! We are excited to share inspirational stories of hard work and generous giving to the poor and needy in the name of Jesus Christ, like Jared, Safe in the Panhandle and Ruthlake Farm!

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

Lori Smith – the God who Sees Me

By VICTORIA OSTROSKY

Hagar was in trouble. Twice. The Bible says the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, weeping. Her mistress, Sarai, had mistreated her, so she ran. She was all alone, pregnant, and without resources. The LORD spoke kindly to her, instructing her to go back to her mistress. The second time, she was forcefully expelled, along with her young son, where she wandered in the wilderness, again. And again, God saw her and rescued her. “The God who sees me,” she called Him.

Naomi’s husband died, then her two sons died. She was left alone with two daughters-in-law. Between the three of them, they had nothing. She journeyed back from Moab to Judea, her home, and Ruth came with her where Ruth gleaned in the fields, picking up the left-over grain so they could have something to eat. Do you know who King David’s great-great grandmother was? Naomi.

Lori Smith was like most of us. Working hard every day,

doing the best to take care of her family. Then divorce happened and her mom died. “When you go through things like that you have an array of emotions. It becomes a hopeless situation, at least it feels like that.” Life grabs you by the throat sometimes and shakes you. Three years of slogging through a divorce and the word ‘failure’ comes to mind. You feel very alone, and things are often out of your control.

Lori remembers that through the whole ordeal, losing everything materially, moving to a new location and starting over, she knew God was there watching over her. “The feelings are real, the hopelessness you feel is real and the suffering and heartaches are real, but just like the fear, God is there. You have to know on the inside that He is there for you. Call to Him and He will answer.”

For Lori, spending time in God’s Word, praying, and finding characters in the Bible who also went through tough times, brought her comfort. Joel 2:25 is one of her favorite verses: “I will restore to you the years the



locust has eaten.” Lori knows the “the latter is greater than the former. Though it’s a process, God gives you little nuggets to let you know He’s there.”

Lori understands what shaky ground feels like, but she also understands that “you don’t have the spirit of fear but are an overcomer. Allow Him to take you and cover you. He is all you have, and He can lift you up.



Those wounds will be healed even though it takes years.”

During that devastating time in her life, Lori sought God’s

will. She wanted to know what direction He desired her to go. She considered going into ministry. “I was so afraid I didn’t know my calling. It took many years, and God said – you are a marketplace minister.”

Being a publisher and executive editor of Life Media Group, a multi-media company, Lori finally realized just where God wanted her to be. “Being in PR and marketing, I get to go and see clients and pray with them.” God uses her career to open up doors of opportunity to individually care for others.

Each follower of Jesus is called to ministry. Each believer has been given a specific spiritual gift that we are called to use to its fullest. If you aren’t sure what yours is, ask Him. His plan is for you to have a life full of service to others, pointing them to Jesus.

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

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Civility



BY KIRK MCCARLEY

In 2011, The Civility Project, a two-year bipartisan attempt to get politicians and others to respect one another, closed down after only three members of Congress agreed to the project's pledge. The pledge was a simple 32-word statement: "I will be civil in my public discourse and behavior; I will be respectful of others, whether or not I agree with them; and I will stand against incivility when I see it."

"You three were alone in pledging to be civil," Christian publicist Mark DeMoss wrote in a letter announcing an end to the project. "I must admit to scratching my head as to why only three members of Congress, and no governors, would agree to what I believe is a rather low bar," DeMoss said.

The three who agreed were Sen. Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn., Rep. Sue Myrick, R-NC, and Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va. Sen. Lieberman has since passed and Rep's., Myrick and Wolf no longer hold office.

Sadly, I wonder if not just three, but any of our elected officials would adhere to such a standard 14 years later. What would you do if you were called to that task? What do you do when there's toxicity in your work environment or in relationships or on the playing field? What about when you're "disrespected?" Don't you have to sometimes unleash your anger and sprinkle it with a healthy dose of a profanity-laced diatribe to show 'em who's in charge? After all, that's just how it is these days.

A "stand-up guy (or gal)" refers to one who is honest, reliable, and possesses good character. They are someone who can be counted on to be trustworthy and do the right thing, even when it's difficult. It implies someone who is loyal, dependable, and stands up for what they believe in. Might they

subscribe to the tenets of Paul from Philippians "with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself."

Are you stand-up?

I watched season 2 of "Quarterback" on Netflix. This year's series followed three NFL quarterbacks in the 2024 season, including Kirk Cousins, of the Atlanta Falcons. Late last season, Cousins got banged up and statistically, his performance diminished as did his team's fortunes. A quarterback change was made and rookie first round draft pick Michael Penix, Jr. was inserted into the starting slot. The decision was obviously disappointing to Cousins, and the expectation may have been for him to have complained, demanded a trade, or publicly criticized Falcons management or the head coach. Instead, he called Penix, congratulated him on being named the starter and pledged to do what he could to assure his success.

Attorney, motivational speaker, and author Nathan Whitaker clerked early in his law career for US District Judge William Hodges. Judge Hodges had been given a cell phone by the government and each month Nathan watched the judge write a check to the United States, reimbursing taxpayers for any personal calls. The judge never commented on his procedure to his clerk.

One day Nathan commented, "Judge, isn't it because of your job that you even need to make personal phone calls?" The judge responded, "That may be true, but sometimes it's the appearance of impropriety that matters most. Following that course will never lead to criticism of me or my position."

Not only impropriety itself, but the appearance of it!

Countless other examples of civility and integrity exist. Cincinnatus gained fame for his selfless devotion to the ancient Roman republic in a time of crisis and then gave up his reins of power to return to his farm when the crisis ended. Abraham Lincoln's reputation for honesty made him a trusted figure in political disputes, often being sought to act as a mediator or judge.

How do you rate yourself on the scale of civility? How do

your actions demonstrate that to others? Like Judge Hodges, does what you say or think imply a perception of uprightness and integrity? What do you do to cultivate a high standard of civility within your circle, tribe, and with those who don't know you? What else might you do to

raise the standard and leave an impressionable legacy?

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCauley is a Certified Professional Coach as well as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM-CP Certified. He is also a Production Assistant for both

college football and basketball for ESPN and leads group cycling classes as a Certified Spinning instructor. Contact kirk@theseedsowercoach.com, theseedsowercoach.com, or call (314) 677-8779.



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Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation Donates \$3 Million to Local Children's Charities

More than \$38 million donated to help children in need in Northwest Florida since 2005

The Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) recently donated \$3 million to 16 local children's charities following another successful year of fundraising. The funds were awarded at a private check presentation ceremony on Sept. 18 at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. Since its inception in 2005, the organization has given more than \$38 million to help children in need across Northwest Florida.

"As we bring our 20th anniversary to a close, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary vision and dedication of our founders—the foundation upon which our success has been built," said DCWAF President Karah Fridley-Young. "Their legacy has carried us to this milestone, and it now falls to us to ensure that same spirit carries forward for the next 20 years and beyond. The continued success of DCWAF is not only vital to our mission, but also essential to the well-being of the partner charities we fund. As we look ahead, a steadfast focus on sustainability will be key to securing our future and deepening our impact."

2025 Beneficiaries

Sixteen charities received funding to support programs that directly impact children and families in need:

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast – \$210,000 for fetal monitors, Giraffe warmers, and other NICU equipment.

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast – \$250,000 to provide access to a licensed mental health counselor and subsidize youth development programs benefiting more than 200 children annually.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton – \$200,000 to expand family counseling services and its Kids Specific Pantry with diapers, formula, and other essentials.

Children in Crisis – \$225,000 to provide housing, food, clothing, and care for abused, neglected, and abandoned children.

Children's Home Society of Florida (newest beneficiary) – \$150,000 to expand school-based services including tutoring,



medical, and behavioral health care.

Children's Volunteer Health Network – \$175,000 to staff and maintain the Mobile Dental Clinic, serving uninsured and underinsured children.

Ellison McCraney Ingram Foundation – \$200,000 for scholarships for teens who have benefited from at least one DCWAF partner charity.

Emerald Coast Autism Center – \$200,000 to support the Phase II Learning Center, expanding programs for teens in the Transition to Work program.

Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center – \$225,000 to fund mental health therapy, case advocacy, and the CARES abuse-prevention program.

Habitat for Humanity of Walton County – \$275,000 to build two new homes for local families.

Mental Health Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties – \$137,000 to fund the Brain Health Program for uninsured students ages 12–21.

Opportunity Place, Inc. – \$175,000 to provide emergency housing and child-centered support for homeless families.

Point Washington Medical Clinic – \$150,000 for pediatric medications, nutrition programming, and family resources.

The Arc of the Emerald Coast – \$100,000 to renovate its children's daycare program facility for kids with developmental differences.

Westonwood Ranch – \$175,000 to provide scholarships and transportation support for students with developmental differences.

Youth Village – \$160,000 for program operations, teacher salaries, and scholarships for low-income children in VPK and after-school programs.

Building for the Future

In addition to these grants, DCWAF contributed \$93,000 to

the Jumonville Family Children's Fund, a reserve established to strengthen the organization's long-term sustainability and serve as a safety net for its partner charities during emergencies.

Tickets are still available for DCWAF's upcoming Harvest Wine & Food Festival, Oct. 16–

19 in WaterColor at dcwaf.org.

Looking ahead, DCWAF's signature fundraising event, Destin Charity Wine Auction Weekend, is scheduled for April 24–25, 2026. Tickets and details will be released in January.

For more information, visit www.DCWAF.org.

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Dining & Entertainment

30A BBQ Festival Returns to Grand Boulevard Nov. 7th

Proceeds from the annual event benefit The Sonder Project

30A BBQ Festival, presented by 360 Blue, will return to the North Lawn at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin® on Friday, November 7, with proceeds benefiting The Sonder Project.

Barbecue lovers and aficionados are invited from 5-8 p.m. to sample unlimited barbecue from various regional and local eateries, each competing for the title

of “Best BBQ”. Restaurants and pitmasters confirmed to compete at this year’s event include 3 Sons BBQ, Auston’s Oyster Bar and Grill, Back Beach Barbecue, Cajun Corner, Cinders and Salt, Evie Mae’s Barbecue, Local Smoke at The Big Chill, Moe’s Original BBQ, Sons of Amvets Post 29, Swiftly Catered, Uncle KÜ’s BBKÜ, The Village Door,

Vin’tij Food and Wine, and more. Attendees will choose the first, second, and third place winners while a panel of guest judges will sample each dish and award the overall “Judge’s Choice” and “Most Creative” winner.

“Every year the competition gets more delicious, so we can’t wait to taste what this year’s vendors have on their grills,” said Chad Zibelman, CEO of The Sonder Project.

In addition to unlimited samples of barbecue, attendees will have full access to the Heritage 850 Plumbing and Gas Bar featuring complimentary beer from Grayton Beer Company and complimentary wine from 30A. Water will also be available courtesy of Grand Boulevard Arts and Entertainment. Jake’s Beach Service will outfit the lawn with complimentary seating while musician, River Dan, will be headlining on stage for the second year in a row, courtesy of David Scott Lee Buick GMC.

Guests will have the opportunity to snap a photo in the commemorative photo booth, sponsored by Blankenship Watkins

Advisory Group - Christie’s International Real Estate, and shop from a variety of local vendors, including the 30A Company, Action Audio Visual, Dozer Custom Trucker Hats, Bad Cards for Good Golfers, and Shore Thing Cigars. Local artist, Lindsay Tobias of Art by Doman, will also be selling her original works and live painting a special piece throughout the event, which will then be auctioned off in the silent auction. There will be additional items for guests to bid on in the auction, including vacation stays, gift cards, gift baskets, jewelry, and much more. All proceeds raised from the silent auction will directly benefit The Sonder Project.

“2025 marks our 10-year anniversary, and we can’t wait to celebrate with our 30A family — right where it all began,” Zibelman said.

The Sonder Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to transform lives in Africa. Since its founding in 2015 in Santa Rosa Beach, The Sonder Project has drilled 68 wells providing clean water to 65,000+ people, sponsored 394 students to attend school over 791 cumulative school years,

distributed textbooks to over 1,500 students, maintains a community farm providing economic opportunity and food security for over 1,000 people, and much more. Last year, the 2024 30A BBQ Festival raised \$103,228 to support these efforts and the goal is to raise \$125,000 in 2025.

General admission tickets are on sale for \$60 and include access to the festival, unlimited barbecue samples, and complimentary beer and wine. VIP tickets are also on sale for \$125 and include the same benefits as general admission, plus exclusive perks. Upon entry, VIP guests will receive a bag and special gift sponsored by Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. They will then have access to the private Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort VIP Lounge featuring a full bar, additional seating with prime location to the stage, photo booth sponsored by Esteem Wealth Partners, and dessert from Kilwins Sandestin and Sweet Henrietta’s, courtesy of SOJO. Both general admission and VIP tickets can be purchased online at bit.ly/30ABBQ2025.

For guests traveling from out of town, there are special room rates available. To book a room at Hotel Effie, visit <https://bit.ly/EffieBBQ> and use code ES7, or to book a stay at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, visit www.sandestin.com and use code BBQ30A. Additional lodging is also available through our presenting sponsor, 360 Blue, at 360blue.com.

30A BBQ Festival would like to thank the additional businesses and individuals sponsoring this year’s event, including 30A, Barker Williams & Shoreline Title, Beard Equipment, Bracken Law, EZ-PZ Recycling, Fine Coastal Cuisine Professional Chef Services, Grand Boulevard, Hufham Farris, Panache Tent and Event, Royal Destinations, VIP 30A Magazine, and Visit South Walton.



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Four Habits of Successful Music Students

Success in music doesn't come overnight. Behind every impressive performance are hours of regular practice, strategic learning, and consistent effort. While talent plays a role, it is the habits that students build over time that often determine their success. Whether you're a beginner or aspiring professional, adopting the right habits can dramatically improve your musical journey. Here are four key habits that successful progressing music students have in common.

1. Consistent and Focused Practice

The most successful music students don't just practice; they practice "well". This means setting aside regular time each day to work on technique, songs, and musicianship. But it's not just about logging hours. These students are taught how to focus during practice sessions, break down difficult passages, use a metronome to improve timing, and set small, achievable goals for each practice session. They learned that mindless repetition doesn't lead to progress, whereas thoughtful, intentional practice does.

For example, instead of playing a whole piece from start to finish repeatedly, a successful

student might isolate a tricky section, slow it down, check their fingering, and gradually increase the speed. This methodical approach leads to more efficient learning and better long-term memory.

2. Active Listening and Musical Awareness

Successful students are not only performers; they are also keen listeners. They listen to recordings of great musicians, study different interpretations, and develop a critical ear. This habit helps them understand phrasing, dynamics, articulation, and tone in a deeper way. Listening is how they internalize the language of music and learn to express themselves artistically.

Additionally, they often record their own practice sessions (with their cell phone or iPad) to listen back and assess their progress. This self-evaluation helps them notice issues they might miss while playing and adjust accordingly. Developing this level of musical awareness is a game-changer for any student aiming to perform at a high level.

3. Seeking Feedback and Being Open to Critique

Another hallmark of successful music students is their

openness to feedback and change. They actively seek input from teachers, peers, and even audiences. Rather than becoming defensive, they view critique as an essential part of growth. This mindset allows them to continuously refine their skills and deepen their understanding of their instrument.

They also tend to ask relevant questions during lessons, showing curiosity and a desire to understand not just what to play, but why something works musically or technically. This proactive approach accelerates learning and fosters a deeper engagement with their instrument.



has highs and lows and that self-discipline keeps them moving forward.

In conclusion, while every musician's path is unique, these four habits: focused practice, active listening, openness to feedback, and goal-oriented motivation, are common among those who succeed. Cultivating these behaviors at a young age (or old) can turn raw talent into true musical excellence and

make their musical journey both productive and rewarding

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4. Goal Setting and Self-Motivation

Successful music students set both short-term and long-term goals. Whether it's preparing for a recital, mastering a song, or improving sight-reading skills, having clear goals keeps them motivated and focused. They also understand that progress

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Music

South Walton Live Music Scene October 2025

Old Florida Fish House Weekdays

For over a decade, Old Florida Fish House has proudly featured local live music. Catch artists playing inside the coveted bar and lounge area, as well as in the large outdoor dining space situated among the palm and oak trees under the twinkling lights next to Eastern Lake throughout the week. Visit www.oldfloridafishhouse.com.

Moon Crush Luke Combs Bootleggers Bonfire Music Experience Oct. 23-25

Featured artists include Luke Combs, David Lee Murphy, Ella Langley, and more! Get ready for an unforgettable weekend of incredible live music, community activities, beautiful daytime beach hangs and breathtaking sunsets. Purchase tickets, learn more about Luke Combs Bootleggers Bonfire, the lineup, your safety, and the experience here: <https://booking.topeka.live/pages/bootleggersbonfire25>.

FOOW Live Music Fridays and Sunday Brunch

Enjoy live music on Friday nights, as well as Saturdays and Sundays for Brunch, featuring bottomless mimosas at FOOW - Fish Out of Water. The Gulf front restaurant invites you to delicious dining paired with live



music. Visit foow30a.com.
Oct. 18: Lori Ubowski
Oct. 19: Luke Pinegar
Oct. 25: Brett Stafford Smith
Oct. 26: Matt McCarthy

AJ's Grayton Brunch and Live Music

AJ's is the place to be to celebrate all things Sunday Funday in Grayton Beach! Come for brunch starting at 11 a.m., and stay for the music and dancing. Have a mimosa or go all in with their famous Build Your Own Bloody Mary bar. Enjoy live music with the Christon Birge

Duo 12-4 p.m., the Pickled Pickers at 5 p.m., and another band TBA at 8 p.m. Join in the fun on Karaoke Night starting at 8 p.m. every Thursday night (also Prime Rib Night). Check ajsgrayton.com for other live music throughout the week.

Brozinni Pizza Seagrove Beach Live Music

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ber! Check www.brozinnispizza.com/seagrove-live-music for more info.

Shunk Gulley

Shunk Gulley is a premier location on 30A for live music, bringing in artists from around the Gulf Coast and beyond. Whether you just want to relax to indie guitar players or upbeat party songs, the talented musicians know the vibe of the area. Visit www.shunkgulley.com.

Red Fish Taco

Live music is a central component of Red Fish Taco's festive atmosphere. Rock out to local and visiting musicians in their outdoor covered Garden Room. Don't miss: Cadillac Willy 25th Anniversary Party from 6-9 p.m. August 29th! Catch the Catalyst Dance Band every Sunday, Brett Stafford Smith every Monday, and Casey Kearney every Tues-

day. Check redfishtaco.com for other featured musicians every day of the week.

The Bay

Come out to The Bay with family and friends every Wednesday night starting at 5 p.m. for dinner, cold drinks and a bonfire with various musicians on the beach of the Choctawhatchee Bay. It's a midweek tradition in South Walton. Sunday Pickin' @ The Bay features The Sand Ole' Opry with Mike Whitty & Friends on stage from 4-8 p.m. Mike brings in new musicians to play every week.

Sounds of Seaside Concert Series Wednesdays

Enjoy an evening of live music in the Seaside Amphitheater from 5-7 p.m. Sounds of SEASIDE features musicians ready to entertain the whole family. Bring a chair or blanket, snacks and drinks, and enjoy the show. Free and open to all ages.
Oct. 15: Boukou Groove
Oct. 22: MECO
Oct. 29: Max McCann
Nov. 5: Fred Domulot
Nov. 12: MECO

Baytowne Wednesday Night Concert Series

Live music concerts take place in the Baytowne Events Plaza every Wednesday night from 7-9 p.m. Various local and regional artists perform throughout the year - see the lineup. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets. Free and open to the public.
Oct. 15: Six Piece Suits
Oct. 22: Modern Eldorado's
Oct. 29: Forrest Williams Band



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FWC Concludes Operation Processor 24 to Protect Wildlife and Prevent CWD Spread

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s (FWC) Operation Processor 24 concluded earlier this year, following a 4-month effort to inspect businesses involved in meat processing and taxidermy of highly regulated wildlife species. The operation began on Nov. 1, 2024, and concluded its inspections on March 1, 2025, with several investigations still ongoing.

The operation covered all 16 counties of the Northwest Region, from the Alabama state line to Jefferson County. It included 88 businesses known to work with regulated species. Of those, 70 were actively operating during the inspection period. The initiative focused on ensuring compliance with wildlife conservation laws while supporting hunters and trappers.

“This detail underscores the

FWC’s commitment to protecting Florida’s wildlife and holding processors and taxidermists accountable to the law,” said Maj. Robby Creech, FWC Northwest Regional Commander. “The results speak for themselves and further support our ongoing efforts to prevent the spread of CWD throughout our state.”

A total of over 100 violations of Florida laws and rules were cited during the operation. These included but were not limited to:

- Failure to submit harvest re-

- ports.
- Hunting without a license.
- No deer permit.
- No archery permit.
- Taking deer during closed season.
- Taking deer by illegal method.
- Exceeding daily bag limit for deer.
- Exceeding seasonal bag limit for deer.
- Antler restriction violations.

- Illegal sale of deer meat.
 - Taking bobcat during closed season.
 - Illegal take of fox.
 - Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) violations.
- The operation also led investigators to violations that occurred in other states. FWC partnered with Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky

and Mississippi to curtail wildlife violations crossing state lines.

The FWC would like to remind hunters to report their deer and wild turkey harvests. For more information on harvest reporting requirements, see MyFWC.com/HarvestReport

For additional FWC Division of Law Enforcement news, visit MyFWC.com/LENews

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Clean Finish: 5 Small Goals to End the Year Feeling Proud

BY DANICA LAFAIRE, OWNER,
FISH WINDOW CLEANING

Hey there!
As the slightly cooler fall air moves in and the holiday season twinkles on the horizon, it's so easy to feel that end-of-year rush. We get so wrapped up in the busy schedules and the growing to-do

lists, don't we?
But what if we could shift our focus? What if we saw these next few months not as a sprint to the finish line, but as a golden opportunity to reflect, reset and celebrate some awesome personal wins?
I've always believed that clar-

ity is a game-changer—in business and in life! Just like a clear window lets in more sunshine and helps you see the world more brightly, a clear, intentional plan for the rest of the year can help you finish strong and truly enjoy all the magic of the season.
So, as a fellow business owner and neighbor who absolutely loves seeing people win, I want to share five simple goals you can set to feel proud of yourself when the year ends.

1. Celebrate a Friend or Mentor

It's easy to get so focused on our own goals that we forget to celebrate the incredible people around us. I want to encourage you to think of a friend or mentor who has had a great year, reached a personal milestone, or simply been a positive influence in your life. Take a moment to reach out and genuinely celebrate them! This isn't about giving a big gift; a simple phone call, a heartfelt text or even a handwritten note can make their day. The act of cheering on someone you care about can bring you just as much joy and fulfillment as their success brings them.

2. Tackle That One Lingering Task

You know the one I'm talking about, right? That one personal project or chore that's been hanging around on your mental to-do list forever. It's like a foggy window pane—it just clutters your view and takes up space in your head. Well, this month, let's get it done! Whether it's organizing that one messy closet, finally framing those favorite photos, or deep-cleaning the garage, getting it done will give you a powerful

boost of energy and confidence. Trust me, the sense of accomplishment is incredible.

3. Take Time for a "Highlights Reel"

Before you get swept up in the holiday hustle, set aside just an hour to reflect on your year. This isn't about focusing on what you didn't get to. Instead, let's create a personal "highlights reel" of your wins, no matter how small! Did you learn a new skill? Read some great books? Make a meaningful connection? Overcome a challenge you didn't think you could? Write these things down! This simple act of celebrating yourself will help you see just how far you've come.

4. Prioritize Your Health in a Small Way

The end of the year often brings busy schedules and plenty of temptation, and it's easy to put our well-being on the back burner. So, instead of waiting for a New Year's resolution, let's set a small, achievable health goal now! It could be as simple as adding an extra glass of water each day, taking a 15-minute walk along the beach or making one healthy meal a week. These tiny, consistent habits will build up and leave you feeling more energized and ready to enjoy all the holiday festivities.

5. Protect Your Rest

Here's a big one: the holidays are not just for busy social events; they are for resting, recharging, and spending time with the people you love. You deserve a break! Make it a point to schedule your time off and commit to it. Taking a break isn't a luxury; it's essential for avoiding burn-out. A well-rested mind is more productive, more creative, and ready for whatever comes next. By planning for rest now, you'll be stepping into the new year feeling refreshed and ready to take on new opportunities.

By focusing on these five goals, you can navigate the end of the year with purpose and pride. This isn't just about crossing things off a list; it's about building a strong foundation for continued success and a mindset of confidence.

As we finish this year strong, may your windows be clear, your goals achievable and your heart full.

-Stay Safe, Danica



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