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A Place to Belong

BY HEATHER BENNETT EYE

In the heart of South Walton, a new kind of living community is taking shape, one built not just with brick and mortar, but with love, determination, and a belief that everyone deserves the chance to live a full and independent life. Established as a 501(c)(3), Harlan's Place is a nonprofit housing community designed for adults with Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities, created by parents who dared to imagine a brighter future for their son and for countless families who share the same hopes.

Harlan Carey, who's now eight, is at the heart of this vision. Like all parents, his family dreamed of a life where he could make his own choices, form friendships, and experience the everyday joys of independence. Yet, they also faced a reality familiar to many families of individuals with disabilities, "What will happen when we can no longer provide care?" From that question, Harlan's Place



was born. "I was looking at what his future looked like, and how I wanted him to live his adult life," said Harlan's father and Harlan's Place founder, Michael Carey. "I started doing a bunch of research. Everything was either institutional or a group home. That's just not what I had envisioned."

Out of that concern, Harlan's Place was born. Michael is committed to

building a living environment that goes beyond traditional models of disability care. The goal is simple but powerful: to create a place where people with Down syndrome can thrive, grow, and belong while maintaining dignity, purpose, and independence, and giving families peace of mind when thinking about their child's future. "Every other parent is having the same challenge. Hopefully, we can resolve that

for many," said Michael.

Located next to Stock & Trade Design, Co., the community will feature 60 thoughtfully designed apartment homes for adults who do not require licensed medical care. Each residence will offer a safe, welcoming environment that encourages self-reliance while providing

HARLAN'S PLACE
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Walton County Tourism to Launch New Beach Tram Routes Starting March 1st

Walton County Tourism (WCT) is expanding its free Beach Tram service on Sunday, March 1, connecting municipal parking facilities to regional beach accesses in an effort to ease parking demand and improve beach access. Route details are available at WaltonTransportation.com, which will act as an informational hub for the transportation program.

"This program has been years in the making," said Tabatha Bolen,

BEACH TRAM
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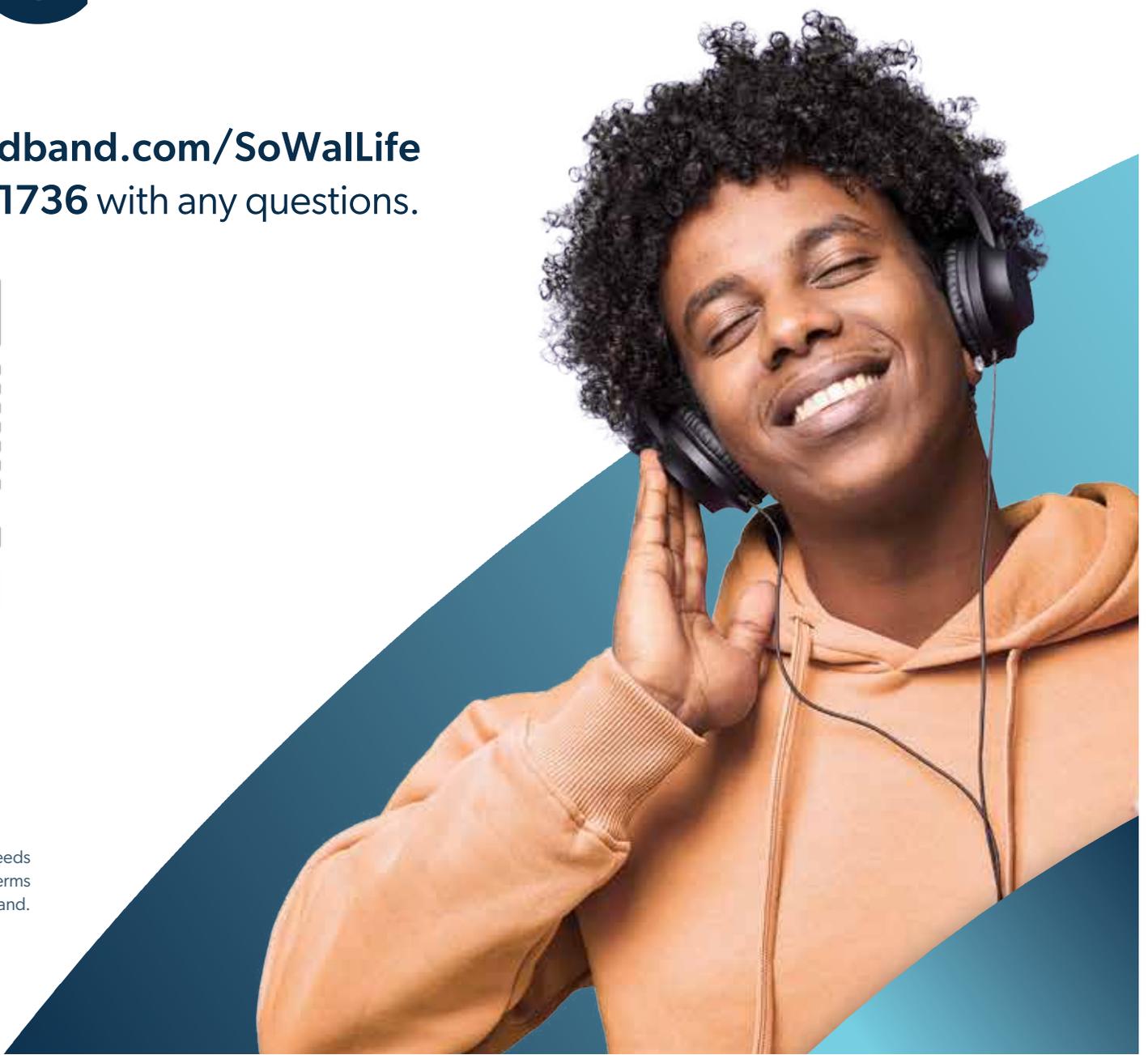
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 Community

HARLAN'S PLACE

continued from cover

the support needed to succeed. But Harlan's Place is much more than housing. It's a purposefully designed apartment community where residents can enjoy shared amenities such as a swimming pool, a walking trail, and a clubhouse for social gatherings. There's also a communal dining space where residents can enjoy a meal together. For residents who want to cook, they will be able to grab ingredients and directions to prepare meals at home.

There will also be recreational activities to promote physical health, creativity, and connection. There will be sporting classes, basketball, and pickleball, along with the outdoor walking trail. "Something will be happening all the time in the gymnasium," said Michael. "There are going to be so many activities. We just want people that had their day packed to feel accomplished."

Harlan's Place also believes that true independence comes from being part of the greater community. Residents will have opportunities for job training, volunteering, and community integration, ensuring they



become active, valued members of South Walton and the surrounding areas. "We want people that are outgoing, and they want to have responsibility, they want to have interactions with people. They want to show what they can do," stated Michael. "I've been reaching out to people to put together a culinary program," he adds. "Not only



for individuals that live there, but for any intellectually disabled people that want to come to just do the program, and for even those without disabilities to do the program." Michael also sees potential for the culinary program to lead to a business that provides pastries for local

shops and cafes.

"I want this to be a part of the community where we can offer services. If there needs to be speech therapy for a young child, we're not going to be worried about how someone's going to pay for it. We'll work with the resources we have and not be focused on the bottom line that so many businesses are focused on," said Michael.

At its core, Harlan's Place represents a promise to families, to individuals with Down syndrome, and to the community at large, that a future filled with purpose and possibility is not only achievable but worth building together. This is not just a residence. It is a community of hope, where independence is nurtured, uniqueness is celebrated, and

everyone has the chance to belong. "We're a nonprofit. Everything is going back into serving these individuals and helping them find everything they need," said Michael.

While they haven't broken ground yet, they are hopeful this is the year of great things to come. They secured their development order at the end of last year and are about 40% through with the construction design while they wait on financing. "We've had great feedback, and community involvement. We've had two galas now with tremendous support," stated Michael. "I feel like this is going to be the year that we really make some good ground coverage."

Michael hopes that the model of Harlan's Place can be adopted and put into place all around the country. "We're going to prove how this is successful. It'll be something easily replicable, something every community would want because it brings positivity to a community and brings a necessity," stated Michael. "We can grow it from here, and we can show what an asset these individuals can be to businesses in life. I can see it taking off and multiplying once we get off the ground."



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Community

Celebrating March with Walton County Public Schools

By JOSHUA BLEDSOE,
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

February provided an opportunity to celebrate what makes public education strong. During National Public Schools Week, Walton County School District joined communities across the

nation in recognizing the essential role public schools play in preparing future leaders and sustaining vibrant local communities. Florida's Future: Powered by Public Schools.

Public schools are accountable to the families they serve. They are governed locally, open

to every child, and built on responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. That stewardship is evident in our continued partnership with Schneider Electric, which is helping transition district facilities to energy-efficient LED lighting.

This districtwide LED conversion is projected to generate approximately \$4 million in long-term savings and produce a 14% reduction in utility costs. LED systems consume significantly



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less energy than traditional lighting and have a much longer lifespan, reducing both power usage and maintenance expenses.

March is an exciting month of celebrations as we recognize several important observances:

Music in Our Schools Month celebrates the impact of music education on student creativity and achievement. Walton County has a strong commitment to developing the Whole Child, and that means strong music programs.

National Nutrition Month highlights the connection between healthy choices and academic performance. We ensure students receive food that they like to eat while also taking care to provide food that is thoughtfully prepared and nutritious.

Women's History Month honors the achievements and contributions of women throughout history and in our own community.

We are also proud to recognize the finalists for this year's No Ordinary Joe School Award,

which honors outstanding students across Walton County:

Walton High School
Edward O' Daniels, Nevaeh Messer, Julie Laviolette
The WISE Center
Aaliyah McCullough

Freeport High School
Larae Smith, Helena "Lainey" Pitts, Davis Goodwin

Magnet Innovation Center
Michael (Gabe) Griffin, Brent (Beau) Melancon, Grace Petty

Paxton School
Grace Tyner, Teghan Araneo, Forrest Geoghagan

South Walton High School
Joseph Gilmore, William Justiss, Sophia Mijatovic
These students exemplify what it means to be EPIC!

Dates to Remember
March 13 – Early Release Day

March 16-20 –
SPRING BREAK!

March 23 – Teacher Workday
(No School for Students)



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Community

Coastal Seniors March Updates

COASTAL SENIORS

OF SOUTH WALTON

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. 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

Watercolor Painting Class – Karen Peterson will teach classes on Fridays March 6, 13, 27 and April 10 and 24 from 8:45 a.m. to noon at 70 Logan Lane, Grayton Beach. Cost is \$20 for CSSW members and \$40 for non-members. Sign Up Required Due To Limited

Space. No walk-ins.. Sign up by the email list. If you need to be added to the email list, call 850-280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Advanced Watercolor Painting Class - Karen Peterson will teach classes on Thursdays March 26 and April 9 and 23 from 12 to 3 p.m. at 70 Logan Lane. Cost is \$20 for CSSW members and \$40 for non-members. Participants will be responsible for their own supplies. No supplies will be provided. Sign Up Required Due To Limited Space. Sign up by email list. To be added to email sign up list, call or email 850-280-5342 or coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Northwest Florida Health Council - will provide FREE health screenings on March 19 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. at 70 Logan

Lane, Grayton Beach.

Pickleball- Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex Courts at 6 p.m. **The March dates are To Be Determined** Please Check The Sites Listed Below For Updates. This beginner class is open to Walton County residents only. (Ages 18 and up) Registration is required. Register through 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. Open play at Boys and Girls Club play every Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through April 30. Beginners welcome. Demo paddles available. Cost is \$5 per day plus \$35 waiver fee at initial registration. Please join the SolWal 30A Pickleball As-

sociation on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

Monthly Meeting - Friday March 20 from 11 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Mike Storey with the Walton County Sheriff's Office will give information on the current scams and fraud targeting seniors. A light lunch will be served. Sign up on the email list or email CSSW at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Line Dancing with Sue Westphal every Wednesday through March 18 from 3-4 p.m. at 70 Logan Lane, Grayton Beach. Sign up on the email list or to be added to list, call 850-280-5342 or email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Mahjong - Mary Swift will host a Mahjong group every

Monday beginning March 2 from 12:30-2:30 p.m. at 70 Logan Lane. If you are interested in joining this group, contact Mary Swift at 210-722-7939.

30a Dementia Caregivers Support Group - Karen League will lead a caregivers support group the first Wednesday of each month, beginning April 1, from 1-3 p.m. at 70 Logan Lane.

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

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Whether for a few days, a few weeks, or an entire season, a short-term stay allows guests to step into the rhythm of the community without pressure or long-term commitment. It's an opportunity to live here — not imagine it.

Mornings begin quietly. Sunlight filters through the windows. Coffee is unhurried. Some guests head to the fitness center or pool. Others ease into the day with a walk, breakfast with neighbors, or time outdoors near the surrounding protected forest.

"I happened to be here spending the weekend," one member laughs. "And I haven't left. I just stayed."

That moment, when a stay starts to feel like everyday life, often comes as a surprise.

During a short-term stay, guests enjoy full access to the community. Chef-prepared meals. Wellness classes. Fitness studios. Social spaces designed for conversation and connection. Maintenance and daily details are handled, freeing up both time and mental space.

By mid-morning, the community hums gently with activity. A balance class here. Coffee with new friends there. Someone deciding, on a whim, to try the golf simulator or join a book discussion. There's always something happening, but nothing is required.

That flexibility is intentional. "I like that I don't have to commit to anything," a member shares. "Some days I'm busy. Some days I'm not. Either way feels right."

Afternoons stretch into easy hours. Guests gather in the W Lounge, spend time poolside, or explore nearby favorites along 30A. On Fridays, many discover one of the community's most loved traditions: dinner at The



Mark, where reservations, conversation, and chef-prepared meals turn an ordinary evening

into something to look forward to.

For some, a short-term stay is about proximity — spending more time near children or grandchildren and being close enough for everyday moments,

not just holidays. For others, it's about location: enjoying coastal living, escaping colder climates, or simply experiencing a different pace of life for a while.

What short-term guests often mention isn't just the amenities or the setting. It's how effortless daily life becomes.

No home maintenance. No property upkeep. Beaches, shops, and local favorites just a short drive away. A new Publix supermarket is right next door.

"It's life, just with fewer things to manage," one member explains. "There's more time to enjoy the day."

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Community

If We Want Authenticity, We Have to Initiate It

Walk into almost any major retailer right now and you'll see the same pattern: racks packed tight, new collections already replacing last month's inventory, markdown signs quietly preparing for the next cycle. The system depends on constant turnover. More product. Faster releases. Shorter relevance.

That model works in cities built on trend velocity. It doesn't feel right on 30A.

This coastline moves differently. The light changes daily, but the landscape remains. The dunes don't reinvent themselves every month, and Western Lake doesn't rebrand each season. There's a steadiness here — a quiet consistency — and it makes you question why everything else has to move so quickly.

Fast fashion has conditioned us to expect constant novelty. Weekly drops. Micro-trends. Clothing produced in such large quantities that disposal is factored into the business model. When something fades, stretches, or falls out of style, replacing it feels easier than keeping it.

But speed carries a cost.

Not only environmentally, but culturally. It shifts how we value what we wear. When garments

are built to be temporary, our attachment to them becomes temporary too.

There's a difference between buying something because it's inexpensive and buying something because it feels right. One fills space. The other earns it.

Along 30A, where lifestyle is deeply tied to place, that distinction matters.

At Captured Clothing 30A, we've tried to avoid the fast-fashion, mass-produced approach as much as we can. Not because it sounds good in marketing language, but because it doesn't align with how we want to operate. Producing in limited runs forces discipline. When quantities are smaller, decisions carry more weight. Fabric selection matters. Construction matters. Fit matters. You consider whether a piece will still feel relevant next season — not just next week.

It also requires accepting that when something sells out, it may stay sold out.

That isn't about scarcity as a tactic. It's about restraint as a principle. It keeps creativity honest and prevents excess from quietly stacking up in back rooms and landfills. It allows space for



evolution instead of overproduction.

Spring on the coast reinforces that philosophy. The season isn't about excess — it's about refinement. A well-constructed layer for cool mornings. A sweatshirt that holds its shape after exposure to salt air and sun. Colors that feel drawn from the shoreline rather than pulled from a corporate forecast.

Quality reveals itself over time. Stitching that doesn't twist. Fabric that softens instead of thinning. Structure that endures beyond a single season.

Well-made clothing doesn't demand attention. It earns loyalty.

Sustainability is often presented through bold claims and certifications, but sometimes it's simpler than that. Sometimes it's choosing to produce less. Resisting the urge to overstock. Being comfortable selling through instead of marking down. Designing pieces meant to be worn repeatedly, not photographed once and forgotten.

In a community that depends

on the health of its environment, restraint isn't abstract. Our dunes, our rare coastal lakes, and our shoreline exist because someone chose preservation over expansion. Because someone understood that more isn't always better.

Clothing can follow the same philosophy.

As both a retailer and a photographer, I'm drawn to what endures. The same stretch of water looks different every day, but it never loses its identity. That thinking shapes our Modus Made pieces — smaller releases, thoughtful construction, and designs intended to outlive a single season.

Authenticity doesn't happen by accident. It requires intention. It requires the willingness to produce differently, even when speed would be easier.

If we want authenticity — in our communities, in our businesses, in what we wear — we have to initiate it.

We have to choose better over more. Quality over quantity. Longevity over immediacy.

The Gulf doesn't compete. It endures.

What we create, and what we choose to wear, can do the same.



CAPTURED

+

m) MODUS



BEACH TRAM

continued from cover

transportation manager for WCT. "The entire team has put so much work into making it what it has become. It is exciting to be part of a program that provides a needed service that truly benefits our guests, both visitors and the local community."

The 393 Municipal Parking Facility (MPF), at 1668 S County Hwy 393, and the Grayton Beach Municipal Parking Facility, at 1505 S County Hwy 283, are the first two lots that will be on the transportation program.

At 393 MPF, service will run daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The A-to-B Route will run directly from 393 MPF to Ed Walline Regional Beach Access (RBA), departing every 10 minutes. The West Route will include stops at Dune Allen Regional Beach Access and Fort Panic RBA, depart-

ing every 15 minutes.

At Grayton Beach MPF, also known as Grayton Central, the A-to-B Route currently operates from 6 a.m. to 9:45 p.m. daily, with direct service to the corner of Hotz Avenue and Garfield Street every 10 minutes.

Beginning March 1, Grayton Central will add a West Route running from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. with stops at Blue Mountain RBA, Gulfview Heights RBA and 393 MPF. This route will depart every 15 minutes.

A third location, Driftwood Road MPF, will be added to the transportation program after construction is completed. Planned service includes a direct route to Miramar RBA and additional stops along Scenic Gulf Drive. Final route details are pending. For more information, please contact Beach Operations at (850) 267-4578.

Spring Prep: Refreshing Exteriors Before the Busy Season Arrives



BY KYLE SPARKS - OVATION PAINTING - BIG PROJECTS. BEAUTIFUL RESULTS. DONE RIGHT.

March on the Emerald Coast signals the start of one of the busiest times of year. With spring break visitors arriving in full force, homes and rental properties are suddenly in the spotlight. First impressions matter — and nothing makes a property feel fresh, clean, and cared for like a newly painted exterior.

For homeowners, a spring exterior refresh protects against salt, sun, and rain while boosting curb appeal. It's a smart way to tackle peeling paint, fading, or water damage before

those issues grow. By updating now, you'll enjoy the fresh look all season long while adding a protective layer that carries you through summer.

For property management companies and rental agencies, spring is make-or-break season. Families notice details the moment they pull up, and a home that looks tired on the outside can leave the wrong impression before guests even step inside. A clean, crisp exterior communicates quality, care, and professionalism — all of which help boost bookings and keep owners confident in your services.

March and April are high-traffic months, so scheduling painting projects can take coordination. That's why it's wise to look ahead to May, when spring break slows and there's a short window of breathing room before the summer surge begins. Planning now means your property — or your portfolio of homes — will be ready to shine when the next wave of seasonal activity arrives.



Whether you're a homeowner, a rental agency, or managing multiple properties, spring is the season to get ahead. A freshly painted exterior not only protects your investment but ensures your property looks its absolute best during one of the busiest times of the year.

Ready to give your home the protection it deserves? Reach out to Ovation Painting and let's plan your refresh today. Call or text us at (850) 830-9668 to get started. And as a thank you to those who serve, we proudly offer a military and first responder discount!

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Ascension Sacred Heart Medical Group is celebrating the opening of its first Urgent Care in Walton County, expanding access to convenient care for residents and visitors near 30A.

Sacred Heart Primary Care and Urgent Care - South Walton is located at 5551 US Hwy 98 in Santa Rosa Beach. The clinic is open seven days a week for walk-ins. Hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and

URGENT CARE
continued on page 37



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 Community

Top 5 Supplements to Spring into Health

By DR. KAREN DEVORE,
TORTOISE CLINIC

Here along the Gulf Coast, the arrival of spring means longer days and a return to the outdoor living that defines our beach communities. For many, it feels like a natural inflection point of renewed momentum and a reminder to re-prioritize energy,

strength, and overall well-being. It's often during this season that people begin reaching for supplements and vitamins in hopes of supporting this shift.

At the Tortoise Clinic, I remind people that supplements are never a substitute for the fundamentals including balanced, protein-forward meals made from

real food, restorative sleep, building and maintaining muscle mass, hydration, and thoughtful stress management. Supplementation and targeted nutrient support are tools within a larger health strategy, most effective when guided by informed science and thoughtful clinical oversight.

Not every supplement is ap-





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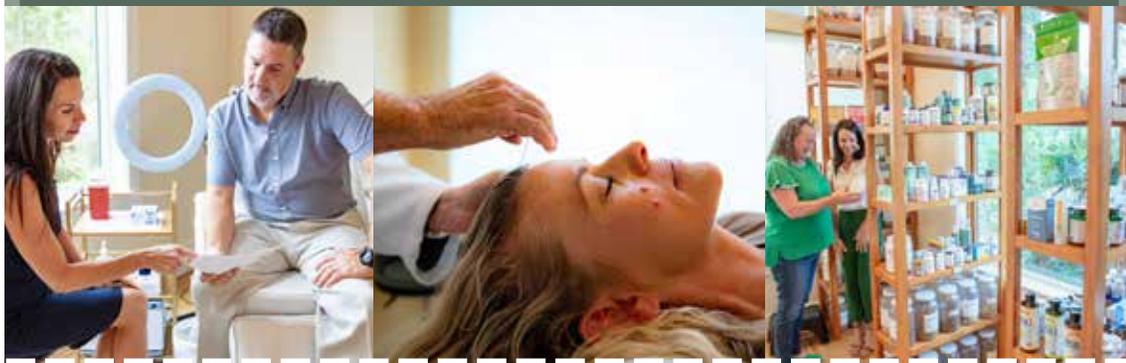
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propriate for every person. When selected strategically, with attention to quality, bioavailability, and individual physiology, they can support the systems that drive sustainable energy and resilience.

Here are five I commonly evaluate this time of year, and how I think about applying them.

Vitamin D – A Hormone with Broad Impact

Despite its name, Vitamin D functions as a hormone in the body. It plays a role in immune balance, bone strength, muscle function, and mood regulation. Vitamin D receptors are found throughout the body, which helps explain its wide-reaching influence.

Deficiency remains common, even living in Florida. Indoor work, sunscreen use, skin tone variability, and seasonal shifts all contribute. When levels are sub-optimal, people may notice fatigue, slower recovery, decreased muscle strength, or a subtle dip in mood.

When I look closer: recurrent illness, low energy that doesn't improve with rest, mood changes, bone or muscle concerns, and limited sun exposure

Practical Tip: Vitamin D absorbs best when taken with food that contains healthy fats. Testing provides clarity — optimal levels are individualized, not guessed.

Magnesium – Calm Energy & Recovery

Magnesium supports muscle relaxation, sleep quality, blood sugar balance, and healthy stress response. It participates in hundreds of biochemical processes and is one of the most common nutrients I see run low.

Despite the beauty of coastal living, daily demands such as work, activity, travel, and stress still accumulate, and magnesium depletion is common.

Two forms I often consider: Magnesium Glycinate: Supports relaxation and restorative

sleep.

Magnesium Threonate: May support focus, cognitive clarity, and emotional steadiness.

When I look closer: muscle tension, poor sleep, stress reactivity, headaches, and difficulty focusing

Practical Tip: Magnesium glycinate is often best tolerated in the evening. Magnesium threonate can be used in the morning when focus support is desired. Some individuals divide doses based on response. Because magnesium influences muscle relaxation, higher amounts may also influence digestive rhythm. Gradual adjustments help the body adapt comfortably.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids – Inflammation & Heart Support

Omega-3 fats help regulate inflammation and support heart health, joint comfort, brain function, and mood stability. Even with access to fresh seafood, consistent intake of meaningful amounts of omega-3s is less common than many assume. Modern dietary patterns tend to favor inflammatory fats over anti-inflammatory ones. As activity increases and seasonal allergens rise, balanced inflammatory support becomes increasingly important.

When I look closer: joint stiffness, cardiovascular risk factors, brain fog, mood variability, and seasonal inflammatory symptoms

Practical Tip: If fish oil results in occasional upper digestive discomfort or burping freezing capsules may help. Those taking blood thinners should consult their provider. Wild-caught fatty fish remains an excellent whole-food option.

Probiotics + Prebiotic Fiber – Digestive Precision

The gut influences immune function, hormone balance, inflammation, and mood. Probiotics introduce beneficial bacteria,

TORTOISE
continued on page 32



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KOLTERHOMES®

 Community

Investing: In 2026, Don't Miss This Roth IRA Sweet Spot

CLINT GHARIB, AIF, CFED

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act opened up a Roth IRA sweet spot for folks previously shut out from contributing to a Roth.

Beginning in 2026, if you're a married couple earning roughly \$150,000 to \$225,000, you're in one of the best — and most overlooked — positions in the tax code.

In this range, you can make Roth IRA contributions without backdoor conversions, while the common marginal tax rate is usually 22% to 24%. That combination matters. You're paying a



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Clint Gharib

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reasonable tax rate today to permanently eliminate taxes on possibly decades of future growth.

At these income levels, traditional IRAs usually don't provide a deduction if you're covered by workplace retirement plans. That makes the real choice Roth vs. taxable investing — and Roth often wins decisively. Roth dollars grow tax-free, come out tax-free, and don't force required minimum distributions later on.

The hidden benefit is flexibility. Roth withdrawals don't raise your taxable income in retirement. That means better control over tax brackets, Medicare premiums, Social Security taxation, and capital-gain planning. Traditional accounts limit those choices; Roth accounts expand them.

This sweet spot doesn't last forever. As income climbs toward the low-\$240,000s, Roth eligibility starts phasing out and planning gets more complicated. Below the \$150k range, traditional IRA contributions may still make sense. Above \$225k, Roth access becomes harder.

If you're in the \$150k-\$225k window, Roth contributions aren't just savvy — they're one of the cleanest, highest-confidence financial moves you can

make. We invite you to contact us with your questions about ideas like this.

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Hop to Dog-Harmony's 11th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza

Grab your bunny-eared best friends to celebrate Dog-Harmony's 11th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza, a canine-only Easter egg hunt and social, on Friday, April 3, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin. This beloved doggie social tradition invites families to enjoy an evening of community fun and a comical, action-packed canine egg hunt.

Dog-Harmony Founder Nancy Bown, CPDT-KA, says, "Doggie EGGstravaganza offers an entertaining family experience that helps fund our non-profit's therapy dog team program in hospitals, schools, and libraries, and Paw Pantry, which aims to keep families in need together through donations of pet food and supplies."

With a \$20 pre-registration per pup (or \$25 on the day of the event), each registered dog will receive a souvenir bag for the race to collect nearly 1,000 colorful eggs containing sniff-worthy treats scattered across the greens. Separate egg-hunt areas for dogs, split by weight (over and under 35 pounds), ensure a fair competition. Dog-Harmony requests that families not use retractable leashes or apply prong, choke, or shock collars at the event.

Attendees can also enjoy a cos-

tume contest with prizes awarded for the top 3 best "bunny" ensembles, delicious JC's Gourmet served with libations, pup-approved Davis Dog Treats, music curated by DJ Diamond Dan, and a fabulous silent auction sponsored by local businesses.

Spring Into Event Sponsorship

Early sponsors include JC's Gourmet, Davis Dog Treats, Destin Flooring America, Theresa Felton, REALTOR®, Elevate Next, and the Polakoff Group with Scenic Sotheby's International Realty. Grand Boulevard serves as the annual host sponsor through its Coastal Culture Series Arts & Entertainment Program.

A local favorite, Doggie EGGstravaganza draws more than 150 dogs and their human families for an Easter egg hunt unique to the area. Sponsors enjoy broad brand exposure by supporting Dog-Harmony's mission to reduce shelter surrenders through humane education, therapy dog programs, and community food support drives. To register your pup for the egg hunt and learn more about Dog-Harmony's sponsorship opportunities, visit <https://dog-harmony.org/events/doggie-eggstravaganza-2026>

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Community

Panama City Symphony Performs Final Concert of the Season: Pictures at an Exhibition & Bruch Violin Concerto

Panama City Symphony's 30th Anniversary Season Finale, Pictures at an Exhibition & Bruch Violin Concerto, will take place on Saturday, April 11. This unique, sensational show combines visual art with music, with works by Bernstein, Bruch and Mussorgsky. A curated collection of original art, inspired by the music, will adorn the Barbara W. Nelson Fine Arts Center foyer; these paintings will be for sale.

Three Dance Episodes from 'On the Town' capture the spirit of New York City, while Bruch's evocative Violin Concerto No. 1



showcases guest violinist Annika Jenkins' artistry and virtuosity. After the intermission, the season culminates with Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition,' a masterpiece that brings paintings to life with each note. Annika Jenkins is a U.S. Presidential

Scholar in the Arts and a recipient of the Congressional Award Gold Medal. She has soloed throughout the United States and abroad and performed as concertmaster of numerous national and international orchestras. A multi-instrumentalist, Annika

was awarded the Paderewski Gold Medal for piano performance by the American College of Musicians and a Certificate of Music Performance in Singing from Trinity College London-Guildhall School of Music. Annika holds a Bachelor of Music

with Academic Honors degree from The Juilliard School and a master's degree in International Relations - National Security from Harvard University.

Pictures at an Exhibition & Bruch Violin Concerto takes place at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 11, at the Barbara W. Nelson Fine Arts Center at Bay High School, 1200 Harrison Avenue in Panama City. Tickets are available on Eventbrite.com and PanamaCitySymphony.org. Details on Panama City Symphony can also be found on social media: @PanamaCitySymphony.

Green Thumb's Junior Gardener Program is Growing at Butler Elementary School

BY KATHLEEN EDGE, PUBLICITY & WEBSITE CHAIR

Green Thumb Garden Club's Junior Gardeners Program was started in 1993 by then-

President, Margo Yourick. The 2025/2026 program at Butler Elementary School is in its fifth year, with 40 fourth and fifth-grade students participating this year. The program includes

class time as well as hands-on projects with five teaching teams. Recently, the students learned that all plants, including Spanish moss and air plants, do not need dirt to grow. Early Spring

planting included potatoes and onions along with strawberries. The Junior Gardener program is supported by eight GTGC members, two Butler teachers and one support person, plus a student's father who helps with cultivation and fertilization of the raised beds. GTGC is very appreciative of all Junior Gardeners program volunteers.

The April 15, 2026, Member meeting program, also at Westwinds Conference Center, is Farm-to-Table focused on sourcing local food. There will be a Bake Sale with proceeds benefiting scholarships and other GTGC charities. Members are asked to bring their favorite sweets to support the effort.

March's member meeting is on Wednesday, March 18, 2026, at Westwinds Conference Center in Sandestin. Jeff Talbert, Coastal Dune Lakes project leader at Deer Lake Park, will update attendees on the current state of and future plans for the precious Panhandle Dune Lakes as well as his work at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Yellow fly kits will be distributed by Walton County Mosquito Control District.

The Green Thumb Garden Club, Inc., located in Walton County, Florida, is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to stimulate interest in the beautification of Walton County, furthering the education of its members and the public in botany, community beautification, conservation of natural resources, environmental awareness, floral design, gardening, horticulture, and nature studies and instill in our youth the love of gardening and respect for the environment. Please note: Programs are subject to change.

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32nd Annual SEASIDE Prize™ Celebration

The SEASIDE Institute™ Celebrated 32nd Annual SEASIDE Prize™ Recipients, Marianne Khoury-Vogt and Erik Vogt, February 6-8, 2026

By CHRISTY MILLIKEN

The 32nd Annual Seaside Prize, held from February 6-8, 2026, brought together leaders, visionaries, and community members to celebrate excellence in architecture, urban design, and community development. This year's event featured a series of engaging presentations, insightful panel discussions, and networking opportunities, all set against the picturesque backdrop of the coastal communities of SEASIDE®, Rosemary Beach®, and Alys Beach®, Florida. Attendees enjoyed learning from esteemed speakers, attending town tours, and honoring this year's SEASIDE Prize recipients, Marianne Khoury-Vogt and Erik Vogt for their outstanding contributions to architecture and to the built environment through new urbanist principles.

Event Highlights and Community Engagement

Beyond the formal program-

ming, the weekend included social gatherings, walking tours, and awards dinners that fostered meaningful connections among participants. The event once again underscored Seaside's role as a model for innovative, people-focused community planning and design. The weekend also highlighted the neighboring New Urbanism communities of Rosemary Beach and Alys Beach.

Private Reception at the Palmer House

Khoury-Vogt Architects welcomed clients, sponsors, friends, and the Seaside Institute Board of Governors on Thursday evening to the Palmer House for a sunset reception. The Palmer House, designed by KVA, served as a welcoming venue where the homeowners graciously hosted attendees for the evening gathering on Camp Creek Lake overlooking both the lake and the Gulf. The home was meticulously designed in the style



that Khoury-Vogt Architects are known for, creating a memorable experience for all who attended.

Town Tour, Welcome Reception, & Keynote Conversation at Alys Beach

Alys Beach offered attendees a guided town tour led by Marianne Khoury-Vogt, providing insight into the community's architectural features and

urban design. Following the tour, participants gathered at Caliza for a welcoming reception, setting the stage for an engaging keynote conversation. The keynote featured Andrés Duany and Scott Merrill, who discussed the origins and development of the new urbanism movement, and the beginnings of the Seaside Institute as an instrument that has been fostering education surrounding this movement for forty-three years and helped

inspire the foundation of CNU (The Congress for the New Urbanism). CNU works to implement and activate the principles in their mission.

During the keynote conversation, participants delved into the development and ongoing impact of new urbanism, focusing on the distinctive qualities that define Seaside, Rosemary Beach, and Alys Beach. Seaside, recognized as a pioneering community in this movement, served as a central case study. The discussion also examined how Rosemary Beach and Alys Beach have contributed their own unique features to the new urbanism landscape.

A highlight of the conversation was Andrés Duany's remarks, which underscored the significant achievements of Khoury-Vogt Architects. He emphasized the influential role of Marianne Khoury-Vogt

SEASIDE

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Living Shoreline Enhances Choctawhatchee Bay

By LORI LEATH SMITH

Okaloosa County has completed 2,000 feet of living shoreline along the Choctawhatchee Bay at Ross Marler Park on Okaloosa Island, marking a major milestone in shoreline protection and coastal restoration.

The multi-year project utilized a cost-effective, nature-based solution designed to mitigate erosion while enhancing the coastal ecosystem surrounding Veterans Park and Marler Park.

“This unique landscape is home to so many species that we need to protect,” said Okaloosa County Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel (District 2). “This living shoreline will supplement their success, the health of our bay and extend the life of these wonderful parks.”

Living shorelines are natural or nature-based solutions that protect coastal areas from erosion while supporting habitat and improving water quality. Unlike traditional hard structures such as seawalls or riprap, living shorelines use native vegetation, oyster reefs, coir logs, and other natural materials to stabilize shorelines. These systems work with natural coastal processes by absorbing wave energy, trapping sediments, and providing essential habitat for fish, crabs, and birds, while also enhancing nutrient filtration, carbon storage, and overall ecological health.

The living shoreline approach was significantly more cost-effective than traditional shoreline barriers and aligned with the parks’

intended use by visitors while prioritizing preservation of the surrounding natural environment.

“Projects like these involve a team from multiple departments in the County,” said Okaloosa County Vice Chairman Drew Palmer (District 5). “I want to thank the engineers, project managers, coastal scientists and grant specialists who worked together to complete this project and ensure that our shorelines are protected for the future enjoyment of the public.”

In addition to reducing long-term erosion maintenance costs, the living shoreline is expected to grow and strengthen over time. Funding for the project included \$1.5 million in tourism bed tax revenue, a \$1.5 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and \$1.6 million from the RESTORE Council through the Gulf Consortium.

“It’s never wrong to be good stewards of the blessings that surround us, and thankfully, this now includes our shoreline,” said Okaloosa County Commissioner Sherri Cox (District 3).

Residents can learn more about living shorelines, including local projects in Choctawhatchee Bay, through the UF/IFAS Okaloosa County Extension Sea Grant program, which works to educate the community on resilient, sustainable coastal solutions that balance shoreline protection with ecological function. Learn more at sfl.ifas.ufl.edu/okaloosa/fl-sea-grant-coastal-science/choctawhatchee-bay-living-shorelines.



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SEASIDE

continued from page 15

and Erik Vogt in shaping the built environment, particularly through their work as the town architects of Alys Beach. Their contributions were recognized as instrumental in advancing the principles.

Signature SEASIDE® Saturday – Symposium, Town Tour, and Awards

On Saturday, the Seaside Institute and the town of Seaside warmly welcomed both attendees and former Seaside Prize recipients for a day filled with signature events. The day’s program featured a symposium with notable speakers, guided town tours, a closing panel discussion, and celebratory awards ceremonies.

The symposium brought together a group of esteemed speakers, including Scott Merrill, Michael Imber, Richard John, Maria Fernanda Sanchez, Pedro Pablo Godoy, Marieanne Khoury-Vogt, and Erik Vogt. Their presentations offered valuable insights into architecture, urban planning, and the ongoing impact of new urbanist



principles in shaping the community. The closing panel discussion, skillfully moderated by Marina Khoury, featured perspectives from Mike Watkins, Geoffrey Mouen, Ty Nunn, and the year’s prize recipients, providing a platform for thoughtful dialogue and reflection on the event’s themes. The town tours were led by Robert Davis, Andrés Duany, and Dhiru Thadani.

Attendees also had the opportunity to view artwork by local artist Allison Wickey. Wickey’s creation, inspired by the architects, town planners, and the mission of the Seaside Institute, was on display and available for purchase. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this work will benefit the ongoing initiatives of the Seaside Institute, reinforcing the event’s commitment to fostering creativity and community engagement.

The awards celebrations were held at The Chapel at Sea-

side, where Robert and Daryl Davis presented honors to the recipients. The evening culminated in an awards dinner at Bud & Alley’s Waterfront Dining, offering a fitting conclusion to a memorable day dedicated to recognition, fellowship, and the advancement of community ideals.

Rosemary Beach Breakfast and Tour

On Sunday, The Rosemary Beach Homeowner’s Association graciously hosted a breakfast for attendees at Edward’s, creating a welcoming atmosphere to begin the morning. Following the meal, participants embarked on a guided town tour led by master planner Andrés Duany, DPZ CoDesign and Rosemary Beach Town Architect, Bret Azzarelli. This tour provided an in-depth look at the design principles and planning strategies that have shaped the distinctive character of Rosemary Beach, offering attendees valuable insights into the community’s architectural vision and development.

Community Gatherings and Cultural Events

Following the insightful town tours, attendees reconvened in



Seaside to immerse themselves in the local culture and connect with the broader community. The afternoon began with a Matcha Tasting at Amavida, where participants enjoyed a unique and flavorful experience that fostered conversation and camaraderie. Afterwards, guests attended an art opening at Anne Hunter Galleries, featuring the work of artist Melissa Davis. This event provided an opportunity for attendees to engage with local art and creativity, further enriching the weekend’s celebration of community and innovative design.

Each year, Anne Hunter generously donates a portion of sales from her gallery opening following Prize festivities to the Seaside Institute. This ongoing commitment exemplifies the concept of Civic Art, which plays a vital role in nurturing a holistic community. By supporting the Institute through her artistic endeavors, Hunter helps

reinforce the values of creativity, collaboration, and community engagement that are central to the mission and spirit of the Seaside Institute.

Weekend Overview

The Seaside Institute Executive Director, Christy Milliken, with the support of the Seaside Institute Board of Fellows and Board of Governors, Sponsors, and dedicated volunteers, curated an inspiring weekend that underscored Seaside’s ongoing leadership in innovative community planning. The event featured a thoughtfully designed sequence of activities; each aimed at celebrating people-centered urban design and fostering community among participants.

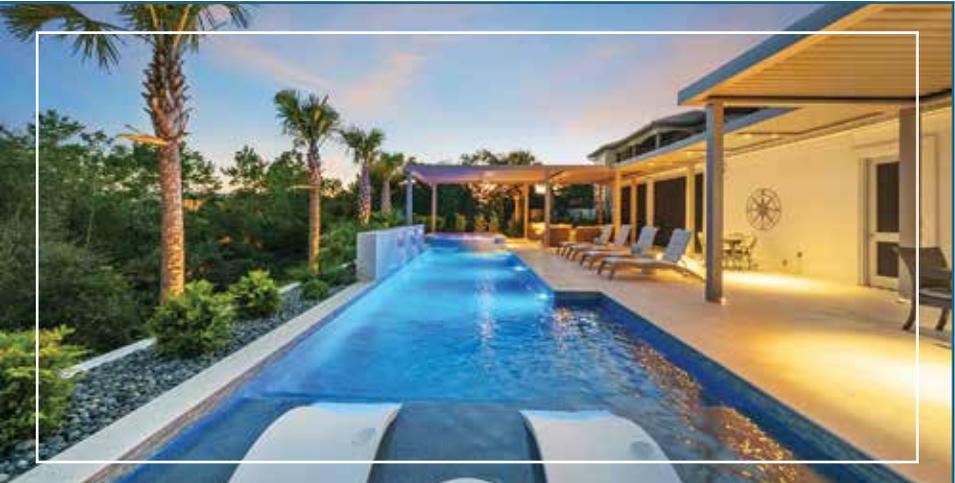
Throughout the weekend, the program fostered meaningful connections among attendees, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of ideas. The recognition of influential individuals further emphasized the importance of Seaside and its neighboring communities as exemplary models for people-focused urban planning and design.

Photo Credit Brandan Babineaux



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Community

Destin Gets Magic + Comedy for Another Year!

After a well-received, successful first season at The Palms Resort in Destin, the Magic & Comedy Destin show has signed

on for a second season — along with several new enhancements for guests. The showroom now features

all table seating, with bar wait-staff taking drink orders prior to the performance. Guests can enjoy alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages delivered directly to their tables so they don't miss a moment of the live show.

The action-packed production features world-class magic, comedy and ventriloquism, with interactive illusions performed just inches from the audience. While the sophisticated magic and smart comedy are geared toward adults, the show remains family-friendly and appropriate for all ages.

The residency is headlined by Bart Rockett, who hosted his own nationally syndicated televi-



sion show for three seasons, had a co-starring role on the former NBC drama "Parenthood," and headlined his own 1,000-seat theater in Branson, Missouri, for nine seasons. He has performed in more than 90 countries and headlined for most major cruise lines worldwide.

Rockett, who began performing at age 10, trained under Jeff Dunham and is recognized for his ventriloquism, which is featured prominently in the show. After growing up in the South, Rockett moved to Hollywood, California, where his management team is based. He also coached his children to the finals of NBC's "America's Got Talent," and they have since appeared in major Hollywood projects.

His son, Kadan, starred in the film "Dark Skies" with Keri Russell and appeared on CBS's "Rush Hour." He joins his sister, Brooklyn, for guest appearances in the Destin show.

Brooklyn gained national attention for her viral Super Bowl commercial, which has nearly

800 million views on YouTube. Most recently, she portrayed the daughter of Bradley Cooper in a project involving Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

The Rockett family has vacationed in Destin for many years. Now that his children are nearly grown, Rockett says he is excited to return for a long-term residency in the place his grandparents first introduced him to as a child. "I am excited to be back for another season here on the Emerald Coast and to continue creating magical memories for our guests," Rockett said.

A new restaurant, The Blue Lagoon, is now open before and after each show where guests can enjoy an extensive menu. Known for its Italian fare, the restaurant is located next to the showroom, and beverages may be brought into the theater.

For a full schedule and reservations, visit MagicDestin.com. This season includes 7 p.m. evening performances and 4 p.m. matinees on select Sundays. Advance reservations are required. Parking is free and plentiful.

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Pine Pollen and Smilax: Ready for Spring?

BY HELEN PETRE

Yes, we are! Winter has been cold and dreary, even though there was no snow this year. While wishing for warm weather, I read a book about Theodore Roosevelt and J.P. Morgan and their solution to the coal strike. I empathize with the cold, wet, mine workers. I am grateful that I am not a coal miner and I do not live in 1902.

In 1902, in the middle of the coal strike, Roosevelt had a state dinner for the King of Prussia to celebrate his new yacht. None of them had any idea things were not going to end well for Prussia or Germany, so they all had a

great time being rich and spending money. World War I dissolved Prussia and the poor king was not a king anymore, however the state dinner was a fabulous success. They ate terrapin and ice cream, and Edith Roosevelt decorated the dining room with Smilax species vines (those briar kind of vines that grow up trees and everywhere). Smilax is the reason they make those jeans with the extra layer of jean on the front legs so foresters, and other people who crash through the brambles, don't tear their jeans to shreds. Edith strung the vines from the chandeliers and light fixtures, and everywhere

she could around her husband's stuffed bears, elk, bison, and moose heads.

The state dinner was in February, so there was probably nothing else green in DC, however I think Edith is quite the genius, encouraging native plants in an environment of yachts and expensive cigars.



Smilax species. Edith's decorative display for the state dinner.



The Roosevelt dining room is minus Edith's Smilax but complete with Theodore's moose and elk. Library of Congress. <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/white-house-tour/state-dining-room>.

What's Blooming?



Southern wax myrtle is just starting to produce flowering parts. This evergreen shrub

SPRING

continued on page 21

A Superior Mechanical to Host Its Inaugural Veterans Appreciation Lunch in Niceville

The Walton and Okaloosa communities are coming together to give recognition and thanks to our first responders, veterans, and active military. A Superior Mechanical will hold its inaugural Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Lunch at the Niceville Community Center, 204 Partin Drive North, Niceville, FL 32578 on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, from 11:30 AM to 1:00 pm. Please save the date!

During the event, A Superior Mechanical will donate a new

AC system complete with installation to one First Responder or Veteran in need. This giveaway is open to all who have served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and all first responders including EMT/Medics, Police, Sheriffs and Fire Fighters. Register to win at ASuperiorMechanical.com and go to ABOUT US > HVAC GIVEAWAY.

"We are honored to give thanks to the men and women who put their lives on the line

every day for the citizens of our community," says A Superior Mechanical owner, Jimmy Thorpe. Local businesses are invited and encouraged to donate door prizes and giveaways. Thorpe says he hopes this giveaway serves as an example of how others can give back. "We wanted to somehow give back to others and simply decided to give back what we have: AC systems."

The event includes a delicious hot lunch catered by Swiftly Catered, a brief welcome from the

sponsors and supporters, and the AC Giveaway. This event is supported and sponsored by the City of Niceville and Niceville Community Center, Niceville High School (who will present the colors), Rocky Bayou Christian School (who will sing the National Anthem), United Community Bank, NHance Cabinet

Makeovers, Blanken Management, and Beachworx CoWorking Spaces. Damien from Coastal Wildlife is our event's MC-Host. Walton and Okaloosa County businesses are encouraged to sponsor; for more information contact Marta Thorpe at (850) 814-3822.

AC GIVEAWAY: At every Lunch, A Superior Mechanical gives away one new AC Unit-plus-Installation to a Veteran or First Responder, who are encouraged to apply at ASuperiorMechanical.com > HVAC Giveaway.

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 Community

Saddle Up for a Cause: Westonwood Ranch Rodeo

By LORI SMITH

Freeport's hometown rodeo is back — and it's more than just a

night of bulls, broncs and barrel racing. The 7th Annual Westonwood Ranch Pro Rodeo returns March 27–28 at the Freeport Re-

gional Sports Complex, bringing high-energy entertainment to the community while raising vital support for one of Walton

County's most meaningful non-profit missions.

Presented in partnership with the Walton County Sheriff's Office and the City of Freeport, the two-night event invites families from across the Emerald Coast to gather for live rodeo action, music, food vendors and kid-friendly fun — all while helping teens and young adults with developmental differences build brighter futures.

Doors open at 6 p.m. each evening, with Professional Cowboy Association performances kicking off at 7:30 p.m. Fans can expect classic rodeo events including bareback bronc riding, steer wrestling, breakaway roping, ladies barrel racing, team roping and bull riding. Children's activities, bounce houses and local vendors will add to the festive, family-focused atmosphere.

Tickets are sold at the gate only, with proceeds directly supporting Westonwood Ranch programs that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Freeport and throughout Northwest Florida.

More Than a Rodeo: The Heart Behind Westonwood Ranch

While the rodeo has become a beloved local tradition, its true purpose goes far beyond the arena lights. Westonwood Ranch is a Freeport-based nonprofit dedicated to helping teens and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities gain life skills, job training and independence through hands-on, real-world experiences.

Located on a holistic ranch campus along U.S. Highway 20, Westonwood provides vocational training, functional learning opportunities and social enterprises that build confidence and prepare participants for meaningful

employment. Programs focus on recognizing “ability over disability,” giving individuals the tools they need to thrive and live productive, independent lives.

Through farm-based activities, animal care, vocational training and structured life-skills programs, participants experience daily victories — mastering new tasks, developing friendships and discovering their unique potential.

A Growing Impact

Westonwood Ranch has become a vital resource for families across Walton and Okaloosa counties, filling a critical transition gap between high school and adulthood for individuals with developmental differences.

The organization's impact continues to expand. Recent investments and community support are helping fund new training spaces and future supportive housing initiatives designed to create inclusive living environments where young adults can work, learn and build lasting friendships.

Events like the annual rodeo play a key role in making that growth possible, bringing neighbors together while raising funds that sustain programs year-round.

Whether you're a longtime rodeo fan or simply looking for a unique way to spend a spring evening in Freeport, the Westonwood Ranch Rodeo offers something for everyone — from thrilling cowboy competition to community connection.

But at its core, the event is about celebrating inclusion and creating opportunities for individuals who often face barriers to independence.

For more information about Westonwood Ranch or its upcoming rodeo, visit westonwood.org.

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SPRING

continued from page 19

smells like bayberry. It is dioecious, with separate male and female plants. Fruit forms on female plants and is food for turkeys and other birds. Wax myrtle fixes nitrogen more efficiently than legumes.

Wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)

Male on right. Mature fruit bottom. Wikipedia.

American olive (*Cartrema americana*)



American olive starting to bloom.

Another dioecious, evergreen shrub that grows well in our sandy forests, American olive is just about ready to produce white, fragrant flowers, which will mature into blue black fruit in the fall.

Choctawhatchee sand pine (*Pinus clausa immuginata*)



Choctawhatchee sand pine (Pinus clausa immuginata) Male on left.

It is the time of yellow pine pollen from all our pine trees, but

especially from our native Choctawhatchee sand pine, which grows on marine, acid, sandy Entisol soils deposited during the Pleistocene.

Choctawhatchee sand pines grow only on the Panhandle between Pensacola and Panama City and nowhere else. All Choctawhatchee sand pines grow within one degree of latitude, on about 100,000 acres.

As with all pine trees, pollen forms on the male structures, which grow on the bottom half of the tree. Pollen is wind-blown up to the female pinecones at the top of the tree. Each scale of the female cone contains a winged seed. The female cones open when mature, without fire, but stay on the tree for what seems like forever.

Sand pines provide food and cover for birds and small mammals and make great Christmas trees.

Pine pollen, like goldenrod pollen, is way too big and heavy to cause allergies. It is advertised on Amazon for men, and you are welcome to buy it, but I am quite sure it does nothing.

Embrace our natives!

There are many other native trees, shrubs, and flowers getting ready to bloom as the weather warms. Here on the Panhandle, we are blessed with native plants and pleasant weather, dune lakes, and the Gulf of America, along with Smilax vines and pine pollen. Embrace nature and the natives. If Smilax is good enough for a White House state dinner for presidents and royalty, it is certainly good enough for us. Enjoy.

If readers have questions or suggestions for articles that concern science, nature, or wild things around the Panhandle, please email petrehelen@gmail.com.

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.

Emerald Coast Theatre Company Presents "Comedy On The Boulevard" March 12th

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) invites audiences for the year's first Comedy on the Boulevard, a one-night comedy showcase taking place at 7 p.m. on March 12 at ECTC's theatre located in Grand Boulevard. Featuring some of the Southeast's most entertaining stand-up comedians, this event promises an evening packed with big laughs, quick wit, and entertainment.

Hosting the evening is ECTC favorite Jason Hedden, fresh off his recent turn as Monsieur Bouc in *Murder on the Orient Express*. March's Comedy on the Boulevard will be headlined by Nathan Wallace, a standout comic known for his high energy and crowd-pleasing humor who traded being a plumber in for comedy. Rounding out the lineup is Holly Ballantine, whose relatable storytelling have earned her a growing fan base across the region. Together, the trio brings a dynamic mix of comedic styles, ensuring there's something for everyone.

"Comedy on the Boulevard is all about bringing people together for a fun and relaxed night out," said Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director of ECTC. "We're excited to continue to

showcase great comedic talent while giving our community a chance to experience something different on our stage."

Comedy on the Boulevard is proudly supported by presenting sponsor, BlueWater Oral Surgery Center. ECTC's 2025-2026 season is made possible with generous support from Grand Boulevard Town Center, St. Joe Community Foundation, Visit South Walton, Howard Group, and Jerry and Alice Zich.

To make a tax-deductible donation, become a VIP or sponsor, or learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, call (850) 684-0323 or visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org. Follow ECTC on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for the latest updates.

About Emerald Coast Theatre Company

Emerald Coast Theatre Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit professional theatre founded in 2012 by Nathanael Fisher, MFA, and Anna Fisher, MA. Located in Miramar Beach, Florida, ECTC's mission is to enrich and entertain the Emerald Coast community through professional productions, engaging educational programs, and a steadfast commitment to the arts. Educational outreach includes after school and homeschool programs, touring and staged productions, summer camps, workshops, and classes that inspire creativity and connection for students of all ages.



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A New Era of Elegance:

McCaskill & Company's Expansion Culminates in a New Rolex Environment

BY CAITLYN BURRUS

In Miramar Beach, McCaskill & Company Fine Jewelry & Watches has completed a carefully curated expansion that redefines the in-store experience while honoring the values that have guided the family-owned jeweler for generations. Long known for its elevated selection of fine jewelry and luxury timepieces, the gallery's multi-year transformation culminates in the completion of a new Rolex space, set to debut in early March 2026.

The expansion began with a practical need—more parking—but quickly evolved into a broader vision with a total showroom renovation and expansion. As McCaskill & Company's designer offerings and customer base grew, so did the desire to create a space that reflected the caliber of the brands represented, particularly Rolex.

For the late Elizabeth Campbell and her daughter, Carolyn Brigman, who together led the gallery alongside husband and father Bill Campbell, the opportunity was about more than square footage.

"We were laser-focused on interesting architectural accents, stonework, and materials that tell a story," they share. "As a family-owned gallery, we wanted the space to feel warm, residential, and elegant—somewhere guests could truly enjoy the experience."

Architect Cherri Pitts of Studio C Architecture in Birmingham, Ala., led the design, while Grand Bay Construction brought the vision to life. While executing one



of the largest commercial renovations in the Miramar Beach area, the team faced the added challenge of keeping the gallery operational throughout the process, which required careful coordination.

The expanded west showroom was the first phase of the transformation, introducing a refined, guest-focused layout with comfortable seating areas, custom artwork, sculptural objects, and lighting designed to enhance the natural brilliance of each piece of jewelry. The Bridal Gallery quickly became a standout, with crystal snowflake-inspired lighting creating a sense of intimacy and celebration.

As work continued, attention shifted to the east showroom, where the most immersive elements of the expansion unfold. Guests will enter through a foyer featuring handblown-glass maple leaves hanging from the ceiling, created by artist Brit Deslonde. "To reflect the store's commitment to exceptional craftsmanship, each glass maple leaf was hand-blown at the furnace without molds and embedded with 24-karat



gold and pure silver, ensuring that every piece is entirely unique," Deslonde says. "I sculpted the leaves to create a light, floating canopy suspended overhead that interacts with light and space, echoing the refinement, individuality, and material beauty found in fine jewelry."



Steps to the right, the Rolex environment represents the grand finale of McCaskill & Company's expansion. Designed to align with Rolex's world-renowned standards of craftsmanship, fit, and finish, the space offers a focused, elevated experience for guests.

Additional brand-focused spaces include a dedicated David Yurman area, reinforcing McCaskill's commitment to full-service, design-driven luxury. The second phase also introduces an enhanced Service Department, including an authorized Rolex Service Center staffed by two highly credentialed watchmakers.

Large viewing windows allow guests to observe the intricate work of watch and jewelry repair and custom design firsthand. "Our goal has always been to offer an elevated shopping experience that still feels personal," Carolyn reflects. "Luxury, to us, means warmth, connection, and artistry."

With the debut of its new Rolex environment, McCaskill & Company completes a transformation defined by intention, craftsmanship, and collaboration, setting a new benchmark for fine jewelry and timepieces on the Emerald Coast.

Visit McCaskillandCompany.com or follow them on Instagram @mccaskillandcompany to learn more.

Publisher's Note:

The Life Media family extends our heartfelt prayers and deepest condolences to the Campbell family and the entire McCaskill & Company team on the recent passing of Elizabeth Campbell. Elizabeth's warmth, vision and dedication helped shape an experience cherished by so many across our community. She will be remembered with admiration, gratitude and great respect.

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Know Your Neighbor: Zoran Subotich

The Person Behind the Music, the Moments, and the Magic

BY LORI SMITH

I'll admit it — when I first sat down to write this, I smiled. Once upon a time, before publishing deadlines and page counts, I was a DJ myself. I know the rush of reading a room, the quiet pressure of timing it just right, the invisible responsibility of holding a moment in your hands and not dropping it.

So, when I say that Zoran Subotich gets it, I mean that in the deepest, most professional, been-there way.

For more than 30 years, Zoran has been the steady heartbeat behind thousands of celebrations across the Emerald Coast — from barefoot beach weddings on 30A and Destin to elegant military galas, mitzvahs, milestone birthdays and reunions that people still talk about a decade later. Four counties. Thousands of events. And somehow — no missed cues, no awkward silences, no stressed brides.

That doesn't happen by accident.

Zoran doesn't just plan parties. He engineers memories. Through his company, Cele-

brations By The Sea, Zoran offers a truly full-service approach — the kind that allows couples and families to relax and stay present in the moment while he quietly handles the flow behind the scenes. His services include:

- DJ and professional emcee services
- Full event planning and coordination
- Licensed wedding and event officiating
- Ceremony and reception direction
- Lighting and atmosphere design
- Timeline creation and flow management
- Multilingual hosting and announcements

All of it is tailored. All of it intentional. And all of it delivered with a calm confidence that makes even the most complex events feel effortless.

Why Locals Love Him

Ask around Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Miramar Beach or along 30A, and you'll hear the same things again and again.

Zoran shows up early. He stays



calm under pressure. He listens — really listens.

Locals trust him because he doesn't force a formula. He reads the room, adapts in real time, and keeps the focus where it belongs — on the people, not the production. Brides feel at ease. Families relax. Guests stay engaged. The event flows naturally, without feeling overproduced or rushed.

Another reason locals love Zoran? Range.

His background spans far beyond weddings and private events. Zoran is a former radio

professional, trained actor, multilingual host, crisis intervention specialist, and even a black belt — a combination that gives him rare command, empathy and intuition. His résumé includes television credits on MTV's *Road Rules* and *Prison Break*, experiences that sharpened his ability to perform under pressure and connect with audiences of every kind.

That versatility allows him to move seamlessly from a beachfront ceremony at sunrise to a formal military banquet or multigenerational family celebration — always reading the energy of the room before the first guest even arrives.

And perhaps most importantly, he treats every event — big or small — like it matters. Because to the people there, it does.

That mindset has earned Zoran decades of loyalty, word-of-mouth referrals and, most recently, recognition as "Best of Business Rate 2025" for Wedding Services in Fort Walton Beach, an award based on verified reviews

and consistent excellence.

This year, that heart for meaningful moments took on even deeper purpose.

Zoran and Celebrations By The Sea partnered with Wish Upon a Wedding, a nonprofit that grants weddings to couples facing terminal illness. On August 18, 2025, Zoran helped make Taylor and Ivan's wedding wish a reality — proof that for him, making moments matter isn't just business. It's deeply personal.

Based in Fort Walton Beach, Zoran serves the full Gulf Coast with a hands-on, full-service approach that has made Celebrations By The Sea a trusted name for locals, military families and destination couples alike.

"Excellence is our standard, but joy is our mission," Zoran says — and honestly, that says it all.

Not everyone knows how to make a moment matter.

Zoran does — every single time.

For more information, visit celebrationsbythesea.com, call (850) 217-5710, or follow @celebrationsbythesea and @wishuponawedding.



JAWS

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MARCH HAPPENINGS IN SOUTH WALTON

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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.

CVHN Soirée on the Bay March 13-14

Enjoy a lavish gathering with fine wine, food and spirits at Soiree On The Bay: Act V, an elevated weekend benefiting Children's Volunteer Health Network, honoring 20 incredible years of care, compassion, and community impact. This weekend is presented by the Dugas family and will take place on their stunning family estate overlooking the Choctawhatchee Bay in Santa Rosa Beach. Details and tickets at givebutter.com/c/Soireeonthe-BayACTV.

Grayton Beach Spring Art Fest March 14

Shacks Art Grayton Beach invites fellow art-lovers to the Grayton Spring Art Show. Beginning at 10 a.m. The art show will be held at Shacks, extending across the street to 30a Local Real Estate. Extra parking will be available across the street in the shuttle lot. A day fun of FUN, the Grayton Spring Art Show will feature 100+ artists, kids crafts, live music, food & drinks.

Mac & Cheese Festival at Destin Commons March 15

The 8th Annual Mac & Cheese Festival returns to Destin Commons for a delicious day celebrating everyone's favorite comfort food. Enjoy unlimited samples from local favorites, family-friendly fun, and a lively festival atmosphere. All proceeds from this event will go to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, which works in our community to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls. Purchase tickets at <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/8th-annual-mac-and-cheese-festival>.

Guided Plant Tour at Top- sail State Park March 16

Join Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and Master Gardener Bill Kuenstler on the third Monday each month from 9-11 a.m. for a Guided Plant Stroll. The stroll begins at Tram Stop #2. This program is free with regular park admission.

Huck & Lilly @ Rosemary Beach Mondays

Sing and dance with Huck & Lilly, a beloved children's music duo, in Rosemary Beach this spring. Beginning at 5:30 p.m. in North Barrett Square every Monday thru April 6th, enjoy pure fun for the whole family.

ECTC Children's Theater at Seaside Mondays

Step into a world of magic, mischief, and moonlit romance as Emerald Coast Theatre Company presents A Midsummer Night's Dream in a family-friendly adaptation at the SEASIDE Amphitheater. Beginning at 6 p.m. Mondays thru August 3rd, bring a blanket and enjoy dinner from any of Seaside's delicious eateries. This joyful

retelling of Shakespeare's beloved comedy brings love, laughter, and live theatre to Central Square. It's an enchanting experience for audiences of all ages.



Huck & Lilly @ Seaside Ampitheatre Tuesdays and Thursdays

Huck & Lilly will perform LIVE in the Seaside Amphitheater Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 - 5:45 p.m. Bring a chair or blanket, snacks and drinks, and enjoy the show. Free and open to all ages. Singer/songwriters Ken Johnson and Andi Zack-Johnson as Huck and Lilly specialize in music for kids AND the grown ups who love them!

Bark for Books at Coastal Branch Library Wednesdays

Join Dog-Harmony and the Walton County Coastal Library

for Bark for Books—a tail-waggingly fun way for kids to build confidence by reading aloud to a friendly therapy dog! Held every Wednesday from 3:30-4:30 p.m. through May 20, this unique literacy program gives children the chance to practice their reading skills in a calm, pressure-free environment.

St. Patrick's Day Party at AJ's Grayton Beach March 17

AJ's St. Patrick's Day Party kicks off at 11 a.m. with drink and food specials. Celebrate ALL day with green drinks, great vibes, and a stacked live music lineup. Wear your green, grab your crew, and make it a shamrockin' good time!

Baytowne St. Paddy's Day Delight March 17

Celebrate the luck of the Irish at the Village of Baytowne Wharf's St. Paddy's Day Delight from 6-9 p.m. Sandestin is painting The Village GREEN from the lagoon to the lights! A free to attend event featuring Carpenter Academy of Irish Dance and live music from Shenanigans, this is one St. Patrick's Day party you don't want to miss.



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MARCH HAPPENINGS IN SOUTH WALTON

CAA Creative Kids Night March 27

Take the night off while your kids enjoy a cozy, holiday-inspired Parents' Night Out at the CAA! Creative Kids Night returns to the Bayou Arts Center from 5-8 p.m. This month's feature project: Enchanted Forest Canvas Paintings. Kids are encouraged to come in their pajamas and bring a sleeping bag to snuggle up with during the film! Aprons will be provided. Kids will kick off the evening with an exciting hands-on painting, then, refuel with a pizza dinner before winding down for a cozy movie screening of Fern Gully with an accompanying themed snack. Learn more & purchase tickets: <https://www.culturalartsalliance.com/upcoming-events>.

Under the Moonlit Pines Gala at Biophilia Center March 28

Join the Biophilia Center for Under the Moonlit Pines Gala, its signature gala celebrating environmental education, biodiversity, and the natural beauty of Northwest Florida at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center from 4-9 p.m. Guests will enjoy live music from the Panama City Youth Orchestra, delicious catering, an exciting auction featuring unique items, and opportunities to connect in support of the Center's mission. For tickets and more information, visit eowilsoncenter.org. All proceeds benefit the Center's hands-on environmental education programs.

Caring & Sharing Spring Fashion Show March 29

Join Caring and Sharing for their Spring Fashion Show beginning at 11 a.m. at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. During the event, guests will enjoy a fashion show, lunch, a complimentary welcome drink, a silent auction, music, a photo booth, and more. Items will be for sale after the Fashion Show at the popular pop-up boutique curated specifically for this event. Purchase tickets at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/caring-sharing-spring-fashion-show-tickets-1981237758469>.

Doggie Eggstravaganza at Grand Boulevard April 3

Dog Harmony presents the 11th annual Doggie EGGstravaganza, the annual canine social where dogs hunt for eggs filled

with yummy treats from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin. Guests will enjoy delicious food, family-friendly games, great prizes, and music. For a \$20 donation in advance (or \$25 on the day of the event), humans and their leashed canine companions will receive a souvenir bag to sniff out 1,000 colorful eggs filled with delicious dog treats. With two designated hunting areas for dogs over and under 35 pounds, every furry friend has a chance to join in on the fun. Visit dog-harmony.org to learn more, volunteer, donate, adopt.



UNwineD April 3-4

UNwineD returns to Panama City Beach at Aaron Bessant Park. Spend the weekend tasting craft beer, wine, and spirits while sampling cuisine from renowned area chefs and local eateries. For details and to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/unwined>.

Seaside Easter Celebration April 5

Celebrate Easter Sunday in Seaside! Bring the whole family for a day filled with complimentary photos with the Easter Bunny, live music, face painting, and exciting activities for kids. Kicking off at 1 p.m., the Easter Egg Hunt has over 25,000 eggs and promises an egg-citing adventure for children of all ages.

Gulf Coast Salute Air Show April 11-12

The Gulf Coast Salute Air Show, a premier aviation event held in Panama City Beach showcasing a spectacular lineup of military and civilian aerial performances, is scheduled at the Russell-Fields City Pier from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. This is a free family-friendly experience. The Thunderbirds will perform at 3 p.m. daily. The other entertainers will proceed them. Food & beverage vendors will be lined up along the beach accesses near Russell-Fields City Pier.

Veterans & First Responders Appreciation Lunch April 21

A Superior Mechanical will host its inaugural Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Niceville Community Center (204 Partin Drive N., Niceville). The community-focused event honors local veterans, active military and first responders with a catered hot lunch from Swiftly Catered, special presentations and an AC system giveaway to one deserving service member or first responder in need. Eligible participants include members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, EMT/Medics, Police, Sheriffs and Firefighters. Register for the HVAC giveaway at ASuperiorMechanical.com under ABOUT US > HVAC GIVEAWAY. Supported by the City of Niceville, Niceville Community Center, Niceville High School, Rocky Bayou Christian School and several local sponsors, the event also welcomes business partners to contribute door prizes. For sponsorship details, call Marta Thorpe at (850) 814-3822.

South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival April 23-26

Tickets are on sale now for the South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival, returning to Grand Boulevard with more than 600 wines, beers and spirits to sample across four days of tastings, live entertainment and culinary experiences. Guests can purchase fea-

tures wines on site, with proceeds benefiting Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation and children in need across Northwest Florida. Get full details and tickets at sowalwine.com.

Destin Charity Wine Auction Turns 21 and Goes Wild for Kids April 24-25

The 21st Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction, presented by the Jumonville Family, benefits children in need across Northwest Florida through Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation's (DCWAF) 16 partner children's charities. In 2025, the foundation donated \$3.1 million following one of its most successful auctions to date.

The 2026 auction will feature an impressive lineup of celebrity chefs and internationally renowned vintners. Held in conjunction with the South Walton Beaches Wine and Food Festival, the auction also takes place at Grand Boulevard the same weekend. The festival showcases hundreds of premium wines, spirits and culinary offerings, with pro-

ceeds benefiting DCWAF. Full details are available at dcwaf.org.

FORE! The Love of Animals Golf Tournament Returns to Sandestin May 9

Tee up for a great cause at Alaqua Animal Refuge's 5th Annual FORE! The Love of Animals Golf Tournament, presented by Sandestin Investments, on Saturday, May 9, at The Links Golf Club at Sandestin (165 Sandestin Blvd. N., Miramar Beach). This signature fundraiser brings golfers and animal advocates together for 18 holes of scramble-format play with a shotgun start, on-course contests, raffles, awards and a "Pups & Pours" after party. Registration includes a cart, boxed lunch and two drink tickets. Proceeds support Alaqua Animal Refuge's rescue, veterinary care, rehabilitation and adoption programs across the Southeast. Registration deadline is May 4. Details and sign-up: app.eventcaddy.com/events/2026-fore-the-love-of-animals.





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 Community

Tickets On Sale Now for the 2026 Caring & Sharing Spring Fashion Show & Luncheon

Caring & Sharing of South Walton for the Spring Fashion Show, presented by Emerald Coast Hospice, on Sunday, March 29th, 2026, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. The much-anticipated event promises an afternoon of fun, fashion, and community support, featuring a fashion show, lunch, music, a silent auction, a photo booth, and much more.

The doors will open at 11:30 a.m., with guests being greeted by a complimentary welcome drink. Attendees will have the opportunity to mingle, shop the boutique, and place bids on silent auction items before the ballroom opens at 12:30 PM for lunch and the fashion show.

“The Caring & Sharing Fashion Show is not only an exciting and unique event, but it also raises awareness in the community about our neighbors in need,” said Mary Catharine Miller, Board President of Caring & Sharing. “I’m proud, not



only as the Board President, but also as an active volunteer.”

Volunteers and supporters of Caring & Sharing will walk the runway, modeling outfits made entirely of items donated to the Caring & Sharing Thrift Store. These featured pieces, along with additional thrift store clothing items, will be available for purchase at the on-site pop-up boutique, specially curated for this event.

“In my five years as a volunteer and board member with Caring & Sharing,” said Miller. “I’ve witnessed this event grow

year after year. It’s been exciting to see its continued success and to watch our guests enjoy themselves while supporting such a meaningful cause.”

Tickets are available for purchase online only. Caring & Sharing offers individual tickets for \$75, as well as the ability to reserve a VIP table for eight or ten guests. Tickets can be purchased here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1981237758469?aff=oddtcreator> or www.caringandsharingsowal.org to purchase tickets.

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Caring & Sharing of South Walton provides crisis relief to our neighbors in need in Walton County through financial assistance, food, counseling and case management. Founded in 1994, the organization serves over 800 local families each month. Caring & Sharing of South Walton also operates a Thrift

Store. Sales in the Thrift Store help cover operating expenses and generate funds to help those they serve. Items for sale in the Thrift Store include clothing, housewares, bedding, furniture, electronics and books. For more information about Caring & Sharing of South Walton visit www.caringandsharingsowal.org

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport Continues Record-Breaking Growth Trajectory

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) has once again surpassed its previous record-breaking passenger numbers in 2025 by serving over 1,937,000 passengers.

In 2025, the Airport served 1,937,224 passengers, a 3.10% increase over its 2024 total of 1,878,945.

Since opening in 2010, ECP has consistently increased year-over-year passenger volume, with daily nonstop and seasonal flights to destinations served by American, Delta, Southwest, and United Airlines.

“Our Airport was built as an economic driver for the Region. We’re 15 years young, with 4,000 developable acres, a global air traffic network, and developable

sites near a 10,000-foot runway. As business grows at the Airport and throughout the region, we’re seeing travel well beyond tourism, and it’s reflected in the numbers,” stated Airport Board Chair Mark Sheldon.

On January 9, Airport officials announced their Terminal Expansion project during a groundbreaking ceremony. Sheldon believes the expansion will only broaden ECP’s horizons. “The expansion will enhance the passenger experience from check-in, the passenger holding areas, an expanded baggage claim, and three additional gates to accommodate more airline partners. We’re preparing for our continued and future success.”

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Special Enrollment Periods for Health Insurance



BY CHRISTIAN REGALADO

It's March. Do you have health insurance?

If you're under 65 and need to buy your own health insurance, finding an affordable, quality health plan for yourself and your family became more challenging for the self-employed and others in the individual marketplace this year. Open Enrollment for 2026 ended January 15, and I saw many families choosing to downgrade their health plans due to increased premium costs. If there's an upside, one of

the most crucial benefits secured by the ACA that remains is guaranteed issue. That means you can't be denied health coverage because of a pre-existing health condition.

Rumor has it Congress is working on bipartisan solutions to address the drivers of high healthcare expenses here in the U.S.; we'll see how it goes. In the meantime, we're working with what we've got!

If you are under 65 and uninsured, you'll need to qualify for a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) in order to enroll in a new health plan for 2026.

There are several events that can trigger a Special Enrollment Period (SEP). The first is if you've lost employer sponsored health coverage for any reason. Second, a SEP is triggered if you move to an area outside your existing coverage area. Other qualifying life events such as getting married or hav-

ing a baby can open a SEP for you. If you have a life event that triggers a SEP, don't wait to find a new plan. Generally, you only have 60 days from the reported "event" to apply.

For folks turning 65 this year, the important timeline you'll want to keep in mind concerns your initial enrollment period. You have to take the initiative to enroll in Medicare through ssa.gov unless you're already collecting Social Security. You can apply as soon as 3 months prior to your birth month or you can delay up to 3 months past your birth month, but unless you have other creditable coverage, you really shouldn't. Understanding

all of Medicare's moving parts is a bit of a learning curve, and sorting through it with the free services of a local independent broker can be game-changing. If you're navigating Medicare for the first time this year, I'd be happy to help you through it.

If you're over 65, there are three common circumstances that may find you enrolling for coverage outside the annual enrollment period. The first would be if you retained insurance through your employer past 65, but are ending that coverage now. In this case, you're likely already enrolled in Part A. You have 60 days to report your creditable coverage loss and enroll for

Part B without penalty. Then you can choose an Advantage Plan or a Supplement and PDP plan to complete your coverage. The second common circumstance is a SEP triggered by a move outside your service area. The third is a Medicare Disaster-related SEP. These are triggered when a natural disaster or storm event happens in your area during a standard election enrollment period.

As usual, broker services are offered at no cost to you, and I will be happy to discuss your options in my office or over the phone. Reach out anytime! Email Christian@evergreenhealthins.com or call (850) 687 7606.

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Wellness



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PHD

Jealousy can be toxic or healthy for married couples.

Toxic jealousy is a red flag. But healthy jealousy can actually signal that you and your partner want to protect your bond. For healthy jealousy, both partners share the blame for the jealous feelings, and both have a role in determining the impact of jealousy on their marriage.

Toxic Jealousy

Toxic jealousy is rooted in low self-esteem, insecurity, and a debilitating fear of abandonment. These psychological drivers can transform a loving spouse into a "green-eyed monster" who monitors texts and emails without permission, makes accusations of lying without evidence, engages in controlling behavior, and might

even stalk their partner.

People who feel jealousy this intensely are still responsible for controlling their behavior. Acting out through anger, controlling, and spying is inappropriate, unhealthy, and damaging to the relationship. These obsessive actions lead to conflict and dissatisfaction. If unchecked, they could be considered abusive and constitute a "red flag" of concern that should be addressed professionally.

Healthy Jealousy

Healthy jealousy, by contrast, is a fleeting, manageable emotion that often acts as a protective mechanism for the relationship rather than a sign of dysfunction.

Feelings of jealousy naturally and understandably arise when a person experiences a real or perceived threat to their marital relationship. Although jealousy is more commonly experienced by people who are insecure, even the most secure people can experience a twinge of jealousy when someone flirts with their spouse

and during circumstances that involve loss of time with or attention from their spouse. Add a bit of vulnerability to the mix, and jealousy escalates, but can still remain healthy.

Fortunately, normal, healthy jealousy can be managed through open communication, trust-building, and mutual reassurances of commitment.

Shared Blame and Joint Responsibility

Jealousy in marriage is rarely caused by just one person, but rather a combination of one partner's internal fears and the other partner's actions (or lack thereof).

Why Blame the Person Who Feels Jealous:

Rooted in Insecurity: Jealousy often stems from personal insecurities, low self-esteem, or past traumatic experiences, rather than the partner's actual behavior.

Emotional Regulation: Individuals are responsible for managing their own emotions (fear, anger, anxiety) rather than pro-

jecting them onto their spouse.

Unrealistic Expectations: Sometimes jealousy arises from unrealistic demands on a partner's time or social life.

Why Blame the Person Who Causes It?

Inconsiderate Behavior: Actions that trigger jealousy, such as flirting, keeping secrets, or failing to prioritize the spouse, can exacerbate insecurity.

Lack of Trust/Connection: Not providing enough reassurance, emotional closeness, or honesty can foster an environment where jealousy thrives.

Ignoring Boundaries: Continuing behaviors that a partner says makes them uncomfortable shows disrespect and erodes marital trust.

Responsibility of the Jealous Person

While feelings themselves aren't "wrong," the individual experiencing them is responsible for managing their internal reactions and behaviors.

Root Causes: Identify and use approaches that will reduce personal insecurities and increase self-esteem.

Accountability: Be responsible for owning your emotions and communicating them using "I" statements (e.g., "I feel insecure when...") rather than making accusations.

Behavioral Control: Practice self-control. Feeling jealous is natural but does not excuse expressing those feelings through antisocial behaviors like controlling or spying.

Responsibility of the Person "Causing" Jealousy

People are not responsible for their spouse's internal feelings, but they are responsible for their own actions and how those actions affect the relationship's security.

Avoid Fuzzy Boundaries: Help create a secure environment. Don't display secretive behavior; break commitments, or maintain inappropriate closeness with others.

continued on next page



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The Art of Healthy Unproductivity



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

Healthy unproductivity is an art and a practice worth learning. Are you a person who has fun and rests without any guilt or internal drive to return quickly to productivity? If so, well done and others can learn from you. Or, are you a person who feels pressure to be productive, to work, to tend to your to-do list all of your waking hours? Maybe you're a person who says work must come first and be complete before you can enjoy yourself and relax. Perhaps you believe that unproductivity is useless and lazy. Life gives you all sorts of messages about productivity vs. unproductivity that can be very hard to sort.

American culture transmits clear values about productivity. Get up earlier, fit more into a

day, work harder, earn more, save more, buy more, buy bigger...all in the name of achieving success and the American Dream. The family you come from may also have transmitted some values regarding productivity. Work before play, the early bird gets the worm, only lazy people rest, always moving, never sitting, slowing down will get you left behind. Your personal goals can also be strong drivers that do not permit unproductivity.

While having a good work ethic is admirable and important, it can be overdone. Personal growth matters, and at the same time, your brain and body need breaks from the stimulation of productivity. Living in overproductivity can result in hypervigilance in your physical body that often leads to anxiety, depression, excessive tension, chronic pain, other health issues, and relationship problems. Balance between productivity and unproductivity is actually a worthy goal. You don't always need another growth-oriented book, instagram account, or podcast.

Sometimes what you need is

consistent time to intentionally put away productivity and embrace fun and rest. Your body was made to need both productive work and unproductive activities meant to spark enjoyment.

So, how do you slow down and pursue some healthy unproductive time?

7 Ways to Practice Healthy Unproductivity

1. Evaluate your current balance of productivity vs. unproductivity. Do you have trouble resting or being still? Do you turn fun activities into something productive? Are you ruled by a to-do list? How often do you engage in intentional unproductive fun or rest?

2. Go deeper. Reflect on what is driving your overproductivity. What current or historical messages make you feel behind or guilty when you rest or are unproductive? What did your parents and other family members teach you about productivity and rest/fun? What are you afraid will happen if you stop producing? How might your sense of value as a person be connected

with your productivity? What spiritual messages might be influencing your views of rest/fun?

3. Give yourself permission to engage in healthy unproductivity. Remind yourself that life is best lived with a balance of productivity and fun/rest. Your mental and physical health need some unproductivity. Rest/fun are not lazy but healthy and kind for yourself. You will be more productive in your work time when you take unproductive rest time.

4. Explore unproductive activities. Remember the whole point is that it is not productive. Remember what has been fun or restful to you before. Read an unproductive book, use creativity for the sake of fun, play with your pet, lay in a hammock, take a nap, dance to music you love, bake for the joy of it, color, do puzzles, watch a funny show, take a long bath, sit in nature, take a stroll, soak up some sun. Find your version of unproductive fun and rest.

5. Plan. Create intentional and consistent space in your schedule for healthy unproductivity. Mark your calendar. Keep

things you need for your fun pursuits handy so participating in activities is accessible. Create a restful space where you can enjoy rest and fun regularly.

6. Practice. Pick an unproductive activity and spend an hour engaging in it. It's okay if it is uncomfortable at first. Gently remind yourself that some unproductivity is good for your mind, body, and soul. Let yourself get immersed. Your tasks will still be there later.

7. Repeat. Mark time off in your calendar once a week when you will not schedule other things. Use that time for healthy unproductivity and through repetition, your brain will begin to embrace your new habit.

Taking time for restorative unproductivity is very likely to bring energy and enthusiasm back into your productive life pursuits. Be gracious and consistent with yourself as you explore healthy unproductivity as a life practice. Connect with us along your journey for counseling and coaching at Journeybravely.com.

continued from page 28

Provide Reassurance: In a healthy marriage, partners act as allies. So, readily offer reassurance and adjust behaviors that may be legitimate jealousy triggers for a spouse.

Be Transparent: Being open about schedules or interactions builds trust and can help rebuild trust if there has been a past breach.

Bottom Line: Fix the Problem, not the Blame

If you and your partner need to navigate healthy jealousy is-

suess, start by acting like cooperative allies. Avoid the blame game. Concentrate on open communication, setting clear boundaries, and strengthening trust. Jealous partners should examine their insecurities and learn to express their feelings constructively. At the same time, the triggering partners should be mindful of their spouse's vulnerabilities and intentionally avoid actions that will activate their spouse's insecurities and jealousy. Together, you can tame the green-eyed monster.

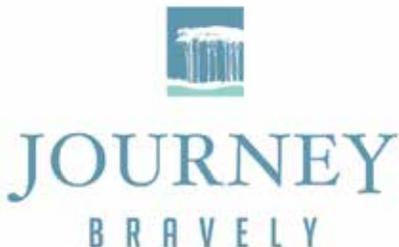
Let me know if I can help.

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 like jealousy and authors the blog "Work it Out". You can find her online at amitymediationworkshop.com.



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Wellness

When Spring Comes Back to Life



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

We don't notice it happening at first. Winter rarely announces itself all at once—it settles in quietly. Shorter days. Colder mornings. Longer evenings spent on the couch. Same house, same routine, but something feels different. There's less energy, less motivation, less desire to care.

Where we once enjoyed moving our bodies, getting outside,

and feeling strong and capable, now the alarm rings and staying in bed feels easier. Joints ache. Muscles feel weaker. Even simple routines—exercise, cooking well, making time for ourselves—feel like work instead of something life-giving. It's easy to dismiss it as stress, age, or just “the time of year.”

As spring approaches, the light begins to change. A familiar spark returns—the desire to feel better, to take care of ourselves again, to re-engage with life. But the energy we expect doesn't necessarily follow the season. Motivation fades as quickly as it appeared, leaving frustration and the quiet question: Why don't I feel like I should?

At The Hormone Restoration Center, we hear this story every year.

Winter blues aren't just about the weather. They're also about



hormones. As daylight decreases, hormonal signaling in the body shifts. Testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, thyroid hormones, cortisol—and even Vitamin D—all influence how we feel, how we move, how we sleep, and how we recover. What many people don't realize is Vitamin D isn't just a vitamin; it functions as a hormone, affecting mood, immune health, muscle strength, and bone density. During the winter months, when sunlight exposure drops, Vitamin D levels often fall right along with energy and motivation.

When hormones decline or fall out of balance, energy drops,

mood flattens, sleep suffers, and winter feels longer and heavier than it should.

Hormones also do far more than influence mood or libido. They are foundational to the body itself. Testosterone and estrogen are essential for maintaining muscle mass in both men and women. When levels are low, the body loses lean muscle—even with consistent exercise. As muscle declines, metabolism slows, joints lose support, and fatigue becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Hormones play a critical role in bone health as well. Estrogen, testosterone, and Vitamin D

work together to protect bone density. When any of them are deficient, bone loss accelerates, increasing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures in both men and women. This loss happens quietly, often for years, before it ever makes itself known.

This is why so many people feel tired, frustrated, and fragile. Why workouts stop working. Why motivation disappears. Why winter feels like survival instead of rest—and why spring can feel like a letdown.

Hormone optimization helps.

When hormones are restored to healthy levels the body responds. Energy improves. Muscle becomes easier to build and maintain. Bones are protected. Sleep deepens. Mood stabilizes. That natural desire to care for yourself returns.

Hormone Replacement Therapy isn't about pushing the body beyond normal. It's about restoring what time, stress, and life have gradually taken away.

At The Hormone Restoration Center, we take a comprehensive, personalized approach. You're not broken, and you're not alone. You don't have to wait for another season to feel like yourself again. Just call us: (850) 837-1271. It might just change your life.

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Inside the Therapy Room: What Really Happens in a Session



By MICHAEL MCMANUS
LCSW/PSYCHOTHERAPIST

For many people, starting therapy can feel like stepping into unfamiliar territory. What does a therapist actually do? What happens in a session? And how does talking to a professional lead to lasting change?

At its core, psychotherapy—also called counseling or talk therapy—is a process that helps people explore their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a safe, private, and supportive environment. Therapists are trained to help clients gain insight into their patterns, manage anxiety or depression, recover from trauma, improve relationships, and cultivate personal growth.

The First Session

The first meeting is often about building comfort and gathering background information. Your therapist may ask what brings you in, what's been troubling you, and what goals you'd like to reach. It's also a time for you to ask questions—about the therapist's style, confidentiality, or what therapy might look like.

Many clients feel relief simply from being heard without judgment.

What Therapists Actually Do

Good therapists don't just listen; they guide conversations in ways that promote awareness and change. They may highlight recurring themes, reflect emotions, or help connect past experiences with current challenges. Depending on their approach, a therapist might use specific techniques like:

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT): Challenging unhelpful thinking patterns and replacing them with realistic, balanced thoughts.
- Psychodynamic therapy: Exploring how early experiences shape present behavior and relationships.
- Humanistic or person-centered therapy: Emphasizing self-acceptance and aligning behavior with one's true values.
- Mindfulness-based therapy: Developing awareness and presence to reduce reactivity and stress.

Most therapists blend several methods to fit each client's needs rather than adhering rigidly to one model.

Common Themes in Therapy
People come to therapy for countless reasons—relationship conflicts, grief, anxiety, stress, or a search for meaning. Over time, certain themes often surface: set-



ting boundaries, improving self-esteem, healing wounds from the past, identifying personal values, or reclaiming a sense of agency in life.

The Path Toward Growth and Healing

Therapists help clients grow by doing more than offering advice—they create conditions

where insight, self-compassion, and change can occur naturally. They model empathy, curiosity, and acceptance, helping clients internalize these attitudes toward themselves. Progress often unfolds gradually as clients learn to tolerate difficult feelings, challenge limiting beliefs, and practice new ways of thinking and relating.

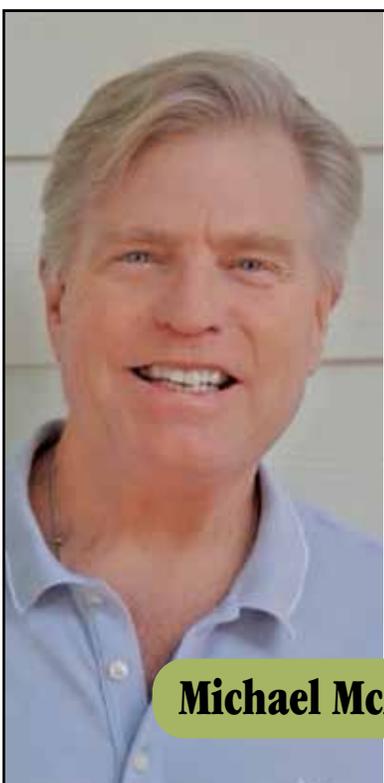
Beyond Symptom Relief

The ultimate goal of therapy isn't only to reduce distress but to foster self-actualization—the process of becoming one's fullest, most authentic self. Clients begin to see their challenges not just as problems to fix, but as opportunities for growth. A successful therapeutic relationship helps people rediscover their own resilience, wisdom, and capacity for joy.

In the end, therapy is less about being told what to do and more about learning how to listen deeply—to one's own mind, body, and spirit—and using that understanding to live with greater freedom and purpose.

Michael McManus LCSW is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach. He can be reached by text or phone at 1-850-837-0123 or visit psychotherapy30A.com

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Wellness

Consider a Chemical Peel Before Summertime Arrives

By BRIDGET SULLIVAN,
PA-COASTAL SKIN SURGERY &
DERMATOLOGY

There are many different types of chemical peels and many benefits from this cosmetic treatment. Chemical peels, also known as chemexfoliation, trigger the repair and regeneration process in the epidermis and the dermis, resulting in the remodeling of the skin's surface. Chemical peels differ in how deeply they penetrate the different layers of skin. The different types of peels are superficial, medium-depth and deep peels. Chemical peels can help with conditions like acne and acne scarring, melasma, hyperpigmentation, sun damage, fine lines and wrinkles, uneven skin

tone, and dull skin.

Depending on the type of chemical peel you choose depends on the goal you are trying to achieve, your skin type, and your desired recovery time. The many benefits of chemical peels can include: evening out skin tone, helping with fine lines and wrinkles, decreasing pore size, improving skin texture, stimulating collagen production, brightening dull skin, decreasing sebum or oil production, decreasing sun damage, helping improve skin products to absorb more effectively, and reducing acne and acne scarring.

This treatment is typically preferred to be done in the colder months because during the recovery process, which is

about a week, you want to avoid direct sunlight and have minimal sun exposure. The recovery process will vary greatly depending on the type of chemical peel you choose, but for a typical medium-depth peel, you will experience skin shedding for 4-7 days. A post-care packet and instructions will be provided after your procedure to ensure understanding and optimal results. Not everyone is a candidate for a chemical peel, so make sure to have a consultation with your medical provider to ensure the best fit for your skin type and desired results. Healthy skin leads to beautiful skin, and we all deserve to love the skin we are in!



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TORTOISE

continued from page 10

the “seeds,” while prebiotic fibers provide the nourishment that allows them to flourish. Together, they help shape digestive terrain.

Not all probiotics are the same. Strains and potencies vary, and prebiotic fibers can aggravate some digestive systems if introduced too quickly. Because not every gut responds the same way, they should be introduced thoughtfully and increased gradually.

It's also important to recognize that not every digestive system benefits from supplemental probiotics or prebiotic fibers. Certain digestive patterns or underlying gut conditions may require a more targeted approach rather than broad supplementation.

When I look closer: bloating or

irregular digestion, recent antibiotic use, immune imbalance, and skin or hormone concerns

Practical Tip: Start low. Increase gradually. Monitor response carefully. Individuals using GLP-1 medications may benefit from additional digestive support due to slowed gastric emptying, but adjustments should always be gradual and individualized.

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When I look closer: persistent

fatigue, brain fog, elevated stress, hormonal shifts, and limited dietary variety

Practical Tip: Form matters. If B12 has not been helpful in the past, the issue may be the form rather than the dose.

Supplements are tools, not shortcuts. Quality matters. Formulation matters. Dosage matters. Context matters most. The goal is not to take more. The goal is to take what is appropriate for your body, your current demands, and your season of life.

Spring is about renewal, not rushing. Sustainable health is built through steady habits, thoughtful evaluation, and informed decisions, not trends or impulse purchases. When the foundation is strong and support is chosen strategically, small adjustments create meaningful momentum.



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Silver Linings



By RICK MOORE

Leadville, Colorado, is known for the Silver Dollar Saloon, Doc Holiday, Jessie James, and the unsinkable Molly Brown. It all began in 1860 when Abe Lee discovered gold in the Rocky Mountains. Over a thousand miners set up camp in the surrounding area, hoping to strike it rich as well. Five years later, most of the gold was depleted. The camps dwindled down to only a few hundred men. It seemed the only thing left in town was the mounds of lead ore extracted from the mines that were tossed aside and considered worthless. Then, a few years later, it became clear there was a fortune in those lead ore mounds due to the amount of silver they contained. That “black sand” as it was called, contained 40 ounces of silver per ton. In two years time, the town became known for its silver mining, the population grew from a few hundred to 30,000, and many in the community became very wealthy. The town had no more gold, but there was definitely a “silver lin-

ing” to their story.

Just outside of Orlando, Florida, in a city named Winter Park, there is an affluent area known as The Vias. Because the area had an excellent public education system, my wife and I wanted to live there so our boys could attend school in that district. We certainly could not afford to purchase a home in The Vias, as most of them cost millions of dollars. However, one of my boys told us about a home for rent in The Vias, and we were shocked to discover it was within our budget. The house was located on a canal that was part of the chain of lakes connecting Maitland to Winter Park. When we went to check it out, we looked at each other and asked, “Where is the house?” It appeared there was only a two-car garage on the property. Come to find out, what looked like a garage was the house. Developers were purchasing old properties in the area, tearing down the dilapidated structures and building mansions. This particular lot had yet to be cleared. We decided to rent the property and make it an ad-



venture.

At first I was paranoid about meeting others who lived nearby. They lived in mansions, and we lived in what looked to be a garage. The first week we moved in, my youngest son made brownies for our neighbors and

insisted we introduce ourselves to them. There was no “Big I - Little U” attitude from anyone. We were welcomed into the community with open arms. The next morning, as I looked out our kitchen window toward one of the perfectly manicured

estates, I pondered what it would be like to live in such an edifice. Then, I went to our sliding glass door and looked across the canal to another incredible home and contemplated what it would be like to live in that luxurious property. Suddenly, it dawned on me; I had the best view in the entire neighborhood. They had to look out of their windows and see a run-down house that looked like a garage, and I got to look out of my windows and see mansions! At that moment, I truly understood what it is like to have a silver lining.

The phrase “silver lining” is from a poem by John Milton in 1634: “Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud turn forth her silver lining on the night?” This expression was used to represent hope and the hidden benefits in negative situations. There is a bible verse that is somewhat similar. Romans 8:28 says, “All things work together for the good to those who love Him...” It can be hard to find the good in tough times. Just keep looking.

Rick Moore is Communication Pastor at Destiny Worship Center

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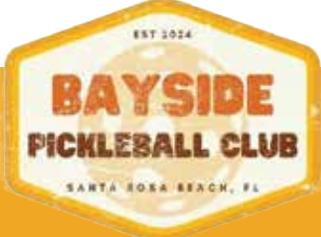
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 Musing

Lauren Ewashko: Airman, Model and Christian Capitalist



By RICH SANDERS

Like so many members of our community, Lauren Ewashko moved to the Emerald Coast courtesy of the U.S. Air Force. When her service concluded, Lauren stayed because her “soul loves it here” (Locals Get It)!

Lauren traveled the world

extensively, mostly with just a backpack. Like most Christian Capitalists, Lauren benefited from hard work. “Every time I put everything in storage. I’d go for six months, come back, and work really hard. It was just easy to pick up gigs and get enough funds to support myself to go out

for months at a time. I loved it!”

Her simplified life brought her closer to God: “Every time I’d come back, I would clear more out of the storage unit. I started feeling more clarity. My clarity with God started.”

Lauren then landed on a core principle of the Christian Capi-



talist: “I am so grateful to give because I receive... there’s something that I just trust and have faith that more will come. There is trust in a gift.... so I choose to give. Therefore, I choose to allow and to trust and to receive and live and just let God move through me.”

A few months after her young daughter passed away, Lauren decided to go to a restaurant for the first time. Her server was in a desperate situation. When she was ready to leave, God called Lauren to give the server \$100 - that was half of all the money Lauren had left! Lauren explains: “So I go in and I take her a hundred dollars and I give it in love. I’ve got tears pouring down my face. I was like: ‘I’m so grateful.’ This is the first time I’ve been out. You blessed my life.”

As many folks have mentioned on the podcast, Lauren received a benefit from her gift very quickly after that. A few months later, she received a surprise invitation to a coaching course called Immersion on a Friday, and the course started on the next Monday. “Guess how much the course costs? \$10,000! A hundredfold for that \$100 that just a few months later after I gave it... It is one of the reasons why I’m here right now... It’s a blessing to be a blessing to others. It just comes back if you’re open to receiving.”

Lauren decided that the best way for her to recover from her grief was to give back to the community. As the Chief Engagement Officer of the Advanced Sacred Heart Academy, a school for children with developmental differences in Fort Walton, Lauren gets to advocate for those kids every day, and she helped raise funds for its new building.

Lauren recently appeared on the Christian Capitalist podcast, 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 Lauren Ewashko!

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BY REV. PETE HYDE

Just a mile or two east of the small (population 200) rural town situated in the vast, open, windy, "big sky" plains of western Oklahoma is the Lochman ranch. It is a modest spread in terms of size but has features not found on many of the larger arid wheat farms and cattle ranches of the western high plains. Just east of the farmhouse, barns and outbuildings is a small butte (a flattop hill) known as Lochman's Hill. It rises abruptly out of the flat plains a hundred feet or so. The flat stony top is probably 50 feet in diameter. From the top (not too bad of a climb), you can see "forever" in all directions - especially on a clear day. The lonely whistle and rumble of one of the 10 or 15 Santa Fe/Burlington Northern freight trains on the mainline from Chicago to

A Pastor's Ponderings: God Sightings

LA can be heard and felt well before the multi-engine and up to 60 or 70 freight cars can be seen coming over the horizon to pass by the butte and come through the town of Fargo, slowing to 40 or 50 miles per hour.

In the middle of the flat top of Lochman's Hill, an old, rugged, weathered cross, probably 10 to 15 feet high, has been erected. The church I pastored there gathers on Lochman's Hill for a sunrise service each Easter morning. The sun breaks across a treeless horizon with a dazzling beauty and glory that will rival any beach sunrise. A close and concentrated look to the west and a little north at sunrise from the top of the butte on a clear morning will reveal what looks like a little white fence post standing right at the edge of the horizon. As the sun gets higher, the image disappears. I asked Oliver Lochman about the image one Easter Sunday. He said it was the white CO-OP grain elevator from a small town across the Texas border, some 25 miles away. When the sun is just right, and the sky is just clear enough, there it stands almost like a lighthouse on the

horizon - a beacon - shining in the distance for just a few short minutes when all the conditions are right.

For some reason, this memory from Lochman's Hill has been floating around in my mind. The vast expanse of God's creation from Lochman's Hill is a God sighting, as is a sunrise or sunset on the beach, a walk through a forest, or up a mountain trail.

The little, white, fence-post-sized grain elevator reflecting the morning sunlight on the horizon on a perfect morning; the crying, lonely wail of the train whistle in the distance on a dark and lonely night; the dedication and quiet, Christian spirit of Oliver Lochman are all God sightings for me. God has blessed me through them and blesses me again in the memory of them.

Stop for a moment, close your eyes, and reflect on where you have seen God. Where have you had a "God Sighting?" Let those images and "God-touches" comfort you and give you peace. Open your eyes and resolve today to see and recognize where God touches you today and every day.

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



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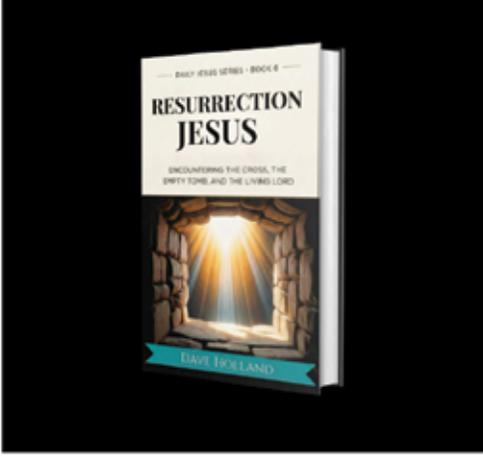
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 Musing


By KIRK MCCARLEY

It's now been 43 years since musician and songwriter Declan Patrick McManus intentionally committed himself to a new challenge: writing a song in less than ten minutes. "Everyday I Write the Book" went on to chart in the Top 40 in both the US and UK, his first effort to accomplish that feat in both countries.

Some years later, in an interview, McManus, better known as Elvis Costello, commented.

"'Everyday I Write the Book' was a song I wrote in ten minutes almost as a challenge to myself. I thought, maybe I could write just a simple, almost formula song and make it mean something...I invested less emotionally in it than any other

songs from that time yet it's the one that everyone warmed to."

Other songwriters and musicians have also found success in brevity. The Guess Who's "American Woman" came to be while Randy Bachman was tuning his guitar when he stumbled upon a new riff while replacing a broken string. Overhearing, vocalist Burton Cummings improvised some lyrics. The song peaked at the top position in both Canada and the US in 1970.

Beyond music, consider a handful of other "brief" achievements.

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, all of 272 words, took about two or three minutes to recite.

Austrian skydiver Felix Baumgartner set a world record for the highest free fall and became the first person to break the sound barrier relative to the surface without vehicular power on his descent. Diving from more than 130,000 feet, he spent only nine minutes in the air.

In 1967, Sweden switched from driving on the left to the right side of the road. While the planning took years, the actual, massive, one-day switch involved a 10-minute total traffic freeze at 4:50 a.m. to change sides.

Once considered physiologically impossible, English athlete Roger Bannister clipped the threshold of running a mile in less than four minutes in 1954.

We are conditioned to believe that noteworthy achievements always require intense effort and hours and days, if not years of work and preparation. Though the milestones cited are not to be minimized as a significant amount of planning and prepping were devoted to the tasks, the actual execution required mere minutes.

Though we "mortal souls" may not possess the talents of prominent musicians, gifted athletes, or skilled leaders, do we not have it within our capacities to have a significant impact? Let me explain.

Kids: The "parentals" have been nagging you to make your

bed. How long does that take?

Parentals: Though it's not your assigned job, might today be an opportunity to help out and make the sack lunches?

Is there a friend or former client you've not connected with for a while? What's the harm in a brief text message? Who knows, maybe that client just needed a reminding nudge to re-engage.

You're stuck on a project or concerned about a potentially difficult conversation upcoming. What about a ten-minute walk to clear your head?

Does someone need a prayer for their welfare or a difficult time?

More than 40 years ago, when an attorney first began writing part-time, he would commit a brief period each day to composition. Sometimes the words flowed almost effortlessly, other times not so much. He discovered the value in writing daily as an exercise.

"Write at least one page every day, without fail. If you're trying to write a book,

and you're not writing at least one page a day, then the book is not going to get written."

The novel was finally completed. Until a small publishing house picked it up, however, it was rejected at least 28 times; perhaps more. It was only after the publication of his second novel, that his first one began to gain attention.

The second novel was "The Firm." The first one was "A Time to Kill."

Today, more than 37 consecutive number one fiction best-sellers later, John Grisham has long since retired from his law practice.

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCarley is a Certified Professional Coach as well as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM-CP Certified. He 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@theseedsovercoach.com, theseedsovercoach.com, or call (314) 677-8779.

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Sean of the South: Dogs



BY SEAN DIETRICH

My truck cab was filled with three barking dogs and one idiot. The dogs were in the backseat. The idiot was behind the wheel.

“Sit down!” the idiot kept saying.

But my dogs do not sit when I drive. They never sit. They dutifully explore their space when the vehicle is underway.

To the untrained eye my dogs appear to be acting disobediently. But that’s not it. Really, they are just looking for food.

They are always looking for

food. They even look for food in places where there has never been any food, such as my bathroom. In a pinch, they will even resort to eating non-food items such as my reading glasses, my sandals, sheetrock, etc.

But they particularly go crazy when in my truck because they know the odds of finding abandoned food here are exponential. Thus, they are constantly on the lookout for expired Corn Nuts, old pistachio shells, or a petrified French fry predating the Reagan administration.

So we finally arrived at the dog park. I turned them loose. They ran. They chased squirrels. They wrestled. They hunted around for any threatening or suspicious objects so they could sniff them, bark at them, then pee on them.

And then, basically, all the dogs in the dog park just stood around. That’s all the dogs do there. They play for short bursts, then they stand around and look at their owners.

“Why do dogs just stand around at dog parks?” one dog owner asked the group of us dog owners who were also, as it happens, just standing around.

Another dog owner said, “I drove forty-five minutes to get here, just so my dog could stand around.”

One of the other dog owners remarked, “You ever wonder what would happen if dog and human roles were reversed? What if DOGS took US to human parks? Would we go to the bathroom in front of each other?”

We all just looked at him.

And, of course, at dog parks, dogs sniff each other’s rears. I don’t know why dogs do this. This behavior has always perplexed me. They are not picky about whose butts they sniff. They’ll sniff any butt you give them.

I’ve read that rear-sniffing is a primal greeting of sorts wherein complex pheromone scents are



swapped in everything from cat feces to armadillo remains.

And one time when I was in a major city—this is a true story—walking my bloodhound after hours, we were near the dumpsters. It had been a long night. I had just given a speech and I was tired, so I wasn’t paying attention.

When I got back to the hotel, the clerk looked at me and said, “Sir, there’s something in your dog’s mouth.”

“Drop it, Thelma Lou!” I said.

It turned out to be—remember I am not kidding—a retired breast implant. The thing hit the floor.

The clerk and I stared at the prosthesis and, in a moment I will never forget, the clerk said flatly, “Double D.”

I’m running out of room here, but I’ll close by saying, the more I learn about people, the more I like my dogs.

exchanged. But I think it’s something dogs do because they like nasty things.

I have been owned by 13 dogs in my lifetime. And I have learned that dogs are not above wallowing in stinky objects. I have seen my dogs roll them-

URGENT CARE

continued from page 9

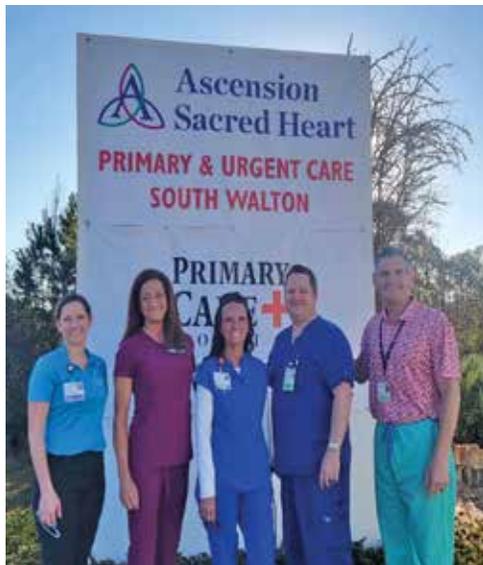
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High temperatures, intense humidity and an influx of visitors drive a surge in emergency medical calls across Destin and South Walton County each sum-

mer. The need for convenient, accessible care extends year-round and the new urgent care helps meet that demand.

Ascension Sacred Heart Medical Group also expanded



primary care in February with the opening of a new clinic in Santa Rosa Beach. Ascension Sacred Heart Primary Care - Mack Bayou is located in the Medical Office Building on Mack Bayou

Loop. Laura Bruck-Hillas, APRN, is accepting new patients. Appointments can be made by calling 850-278-3932.

Walk-in care is available in Okaloosa County at Ascension Sacred Heart Medical Park and Walk-in Clinic - Destin, 36500 Emerald Coast Parkway in Destin. Hours are Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast has more than 20 primary care providers for adults and chil-

dren with 9 clinic locations in Walton and Okaloosa Counties. Ascension Sacred Heart Primary Care and Urgent Care

- South Walton will be adding primary care later this year. To find medical care near you visit GetSacredHeartCare.com.

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 Dining

Beignets & Brew: Bringing People Together

Grayton Beach just got a little sweeter. Husband-and-wife team Chris and Shannon Kramolis opened Beignets & Brew, a café concept known for its hot, made-to-order New Orleans-style beignets and specialty coffee creations. But for the Kramolis family, the café represents far more than a place to grab breakfast or a morning latte—it’s a space designed to bring people together.

Beignets & Brew has built its reputation around a simple but meaningful idea: creating moments of connection. According

to Shannon, the mission behind the brand is rooted in hospitality and community.

“We are rooted in a mission to create spaces where people can slow down, connect, and enjoy life’s sweetest moments,” she said.

From the moment guests walk through the doors, the experience is designed to brighten their day. The café blends warm hospitality with a thoughtfully crafted menu that centers on comfort, connection, and celebration. The brand’s guiding philosophy,

known as the “Spread the Sweetness” initiative, encourages small acts of kindness and shared moments that can leave a lasting impact.

At the heart of the menu are the café’s signature beignets—pillowy French donuts served hot and fresh, generously dusted with powdered sugar. Guests can enjoy them in their classic form or topped with specialty flavors and seasonal creations. The beignets are meant to be shared across tables, passed between friends, and enjoyed together. In



meeting friends in the afternoon, or treating their family after school, the menu is designed to make every visit feel like a small celebration.

The space itself reflects the brand’s welcoming spirit. Designed with a modern bistro style and an Instagram-worthy aesthetic, the café aims to create an inviting environment where guests feel comfortable lingering, connecting, and capturing memorable moments.

In addition to the café’s signature pastries, the menu also features indulgent breakfast and honey butter chicken croissants and rotating limited-time creations that bring new flavors and excitement throughout the year.

Complementing the beignets is an innovative coffee program designed to balance comfort with creativity. Guests can choose from traditional drip coffee and espresso drinks or explore specialty lattes and unique flavor combinations like the signature Biscoff Cookie Butter Latte. The café also offers plant-based energy drinks, smoothies, and refreshing beverages designed to appeal to guests of all ages.

Whether someone is stopping in for an early morning coffee,

connecting, and capturing memorable moments.

For the Kramolis family, community involvement is just as important as great food and coffee. Beignets & Brew actively partners with local schools, participates in community events, and supports nonprofits making a difference in the area. From hosting spirit nights to celebrating teachers and nurses, the café looks for meaningful ways to give back and stay connected to the neighborhood it serves.

With its focus on hospitality, community, and a little powdered-sugar magic, Beignets & Brew is set to become a sweet new gathering place in Grayton Beach—one beignet at a time.



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Gators + Food + Booze = Fun at Fudpucker's GatorFest 2026

GatorFest 2026

Get ready for GatorFest 2026, returning on May 2, 2026 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for four action-packed hours of food, fun, and Florida wildlife. Hosted at Destin's favorite family hotspot, this annual celebration brings locals and visitors together to honor one of the Gulf Coast's most iconic creatures, the alligator.

And here's the best part: General Admission is FREE.

GatorFest Activities

GatorFest 2026 delivers an immersive Florida festival experience with something for every age group.

- Thrilling Gator Shows featuring up-close demonstrations and educational insights
- The fan-favorite Gator Tail Cook-Off Competition, where local chefs compete for bragging rights
- Live entertainment and music throughout the event

The Kid Zone is packed with family-friendly fun, including face painting and gator-themed games designed to keep young adventurers engaged and smiling all afternoon.

Adults can explore specialty vendors, sample bold flavors, and soak in the coastal festival energy that makes this event a local favorite year after year.

Admission Options

General Admission is FREE. Enjoy full access to the vendor marketplace, Kid Zone, live music, gator shows, and all general festival entertainment.

Bring the whole crew, no ticket needed.

VIP Experience

Upgrade your day with exclusive access to the VIP tent and Gator Tail Cook-Off tasting.

\$30 (21+) – Includes alcoholic samples.

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VIP is your ticket to tasting the best gator tail on the Emerald Coast in cool, shaded comfort.

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Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill continues to lead the way in family-friendly entertainment along the Emerald Coast. Home to Gator Beach, known as "The World's Greatest Alligator Park," guests can experience safe, educational interactions with live alligators all year long.

From Pirate Brew Fest to Kid's Day to the Noon Year's Eve Balloon Drop and other signature events, Fudpucker's has built a reputation for unforgettable experiences, and GatorFest is no exception.

Food, Fun & Gators

Whether you're coming for the free family fun, the VIP tastings, the live shows, or just an excuse to spend a Saturday surrounded by great food and great people, GatorFest 2026 is the place to be.

Mark your calendar, invite your friends, and join us at Fudpucker's, where the wild is welcomed and the memories are

legendary.

So, stop by and have some fun at Fud's Gatorfest – see you later,

alligator!

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South Walton Live Music Scene March 2026

Alvarado Family Benefit Concert March 15

In lieu of regular Sunday morning service, A Simple Faith Church will host a benefit concert at 10 a.m. to support beloved South Walton locals, the Alvarado family. Bands include: Prodigal Blues, The Backsliders & The Rascally Robots. Special guest appearance by local musicians: Matt Miller, Scott Rockwood, Shawn Hartung, Dustin Barlack, Nick Turner and MORE!

A Simple Faith is a non-denominational, unconventional Christian congregation located in the South Walton, Florida, community.

Alaqua Sunday Sessions Sundays March 15-May 31

Sunday Session, a weekly gathering in the Alaqua Arena filled with live music, delicious food, and the peaceful charm of the Refuge, returns every Sunday through May 31st from 1-4 p.m.

Free to attend, bring your friends, your family, and your love for animals.

Made in Walton County Songwriter Showdown March 26

Made in Walton County Songwriters Showdown returns to The Pavilion at Watersound Town Center from 6 - 8 p.m. Join in for an evening of live music and friendly competition as local songwriters take the stage to perform original, homegrown songs and compete for cash and prizes. Grab your chair and meet under the shade for this free, family-friendly event. A food truck on site will offer food and drink for purchase.

Forrest Williams Band @ Local Catch Bar & Grill March 28

Forrest Williams Band returns to Local Catch Bar & Grill! Beginning at 6 p.m., gather your

crew and bring your dancing shoes to boogie with Forrest Williams Band with special guests, Jason Campbell & Robby Deal.

Spring It On! Concert Series at Rosemary Beach Wednesdays

Wednesdays in Rosemary Beach mean music, family and fun. The Spring It On! Concert Series takes over the St. Augustine Green on Wednesdays, March 4th through April 8th, from 5:30-8 p.m. Bring your blankets and chairs to enjoy a free night of music under the stars.

March 18: Still Standing - Elton John Tribute

March 25: Gage Coward Band

April 1: Will Thompson Band

April 8: Sons of Saints

Baytowne Wednesday Night Concert Series

Join The Village of Baytowne Wharf as they host the Wednesday Night Concert Series, a free



weekly tradition on the Events Plaza Stage from 7-9 p.m. featuring local & regional talent from all kinds of genres. Bring your lawn chairs, blankets & your crew for some great tunes!

March 18th: Funky Lampshades
March 25th: Forrest Williams

Bands on the Boulevard Spring Music Series Thursdays

Introducing Bands on the Boulevard, a brand new live music series coming to Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach through April 16 from 6-8 p.m. Join in for laid back evenings filled with great music, fresh air, and the unmistakable energy of the Boulevard.

March 19: 12Eleven

March 26: Boukou Groove

April 4: River Dan

April 9: Will Thompson Band

April 11: Josh Drake Band

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. Dueling pianos Thursday through Saturday. Visit www.oldfloridafishhouse.com for more info.

FOOW Live Music Fridays and Sunday Brunch

Enjoy live music on Friday nights, as well as 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.

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LIVE MUSIC

continued on page 46



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A Blooming Music Community

Music has a quiet way of weaving itself into the fabric of a community. It plays at local events, fills school auditoriums, drifts from open windows, and brings people together in moments both ordinary and unforgettable. Beyond simple enjoyment, music offers deep social, emotional, and cultural benefits and when music education is accessible, those benefits don't just exist; they grow, multiply, and bloom.



One of music's greatest gifts to a community is connection. Concerts, recitals, festivals, and jam sessions create shared experiences where people of different ages, backgrounds, and stories gather with a common purpose. Music becomes a universal language that tells a story, allowing individuals to communicate and relate even when words fall short. These shared moments build stronger bonds between neighbors and foster a sense of belonging that is essential for a healthy, vibrant community.

Music also supports emotional well-being. Listening to or creating music can instantly change the atmosphere, reduce stress, lift spirits, and provide comfort during difficult times. Music is everywhere if you actively listen for it. In communities where people face busy schedules, economic pressure, or social isolation, music offers a powerful outlet for expression and healing. Local music programs, choirs, bands, and ensembles give individuals a safe and supportive space to process emotions and feel seen and

heard.

Culturally, music helps preserve identity and celebrate diversity. Communities are shaped by their histories, traditions, evolving influences, and music reflects all of it. Whether it's classical, jazz, country, pop, or music rooted in cultural heritage, local music scenes honor the past while inspiring creativity for the future. When communities value music, they affirm that creativity and culture matter.

Music lessons play a vital role in nurturing and expanding these benefits. Education transforms passive appreciation into active participation. When individuals learn to play an instrument or use their voice, they gain confidence, discipline, and a sense of accomplishment. It is one of the greatest forms of expression and communication. These personal skills ripple outward, strengthening the community as students perform at events, collaborate with others, and eventually mentor the next generation of musi-

cians. Music speaks when words cannot be spoken.

For children, music lessons build foundational life skills. They enhance focus, listening, teamwork, and perseverance skills that extend far beyond the music room. For adults, lessons offer lifelong learning, goal de-

velopment, stress relief, and renewed creativity. In both cases, education keeps music alive and evolving within the community rather than letting it fade into the background.

Perhaps most importantly, music lessons create sustainability. They ensure that community

music programs, ensembles, and traditions continue to thrive. Each new student represents a future performer, teacher, audience member, or advocate for the arts. With guidance and encouragement, a single lesson can spark

BLOOMING MUSIC

continue on page 46



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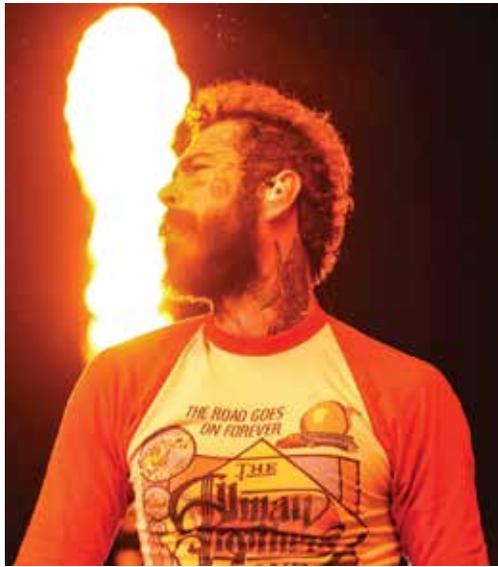
Music

Gulf Coast Jam 2026 Brings Star Power, Theme Nights and High-Energy

One of the Gulf Coast's most anticipated music events is gearing up for another unforgettable year as the 14th Annual Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam returns May 28-31, 2026, at Frank Brown Park in Panama City Beach. Recently named by Billboard as one of "The 10 Best Country Music Festivals," the four-day celebration promises chart-topping performances, themed nights and a high-energy coastal vibe that continues to draw fans from across the country.

Headliners Post Malone, Chris Stapleton, Keith Urban

and Riley Green will lead a lineup of more than 20 artists performing across the Country On The Coast™ experience. The festival has seen tremendous momentum in recent years, selling out with crowds of 30,000 the past two years and earning recognition as the No. 1 festival in Music Festival Wizard's Top 50 Most Popular Fests



win and Hueston.

Saturday's high-energy lineup features Riley Green, Koe Wetzel, Ole 60, Josh Ross, Ashland Craft and Hannah McFarland. The weekend wraps Sunday, May 31, with genre-blending superstar Post Malone, plus Muscadine Bloodline, 49 Winchester, Elizabeth Nichols, Them Dirty Roses and SkeeZ.

Theme Nights Add Extra Fun

Beyond the music, Gulf Coast Jam's fan-favorite Theme Nights are returning bigger than ever, giving attendees a chance to dress up and lean into the festival spirit each evening.

Thursday's Neon Night invites bright colors and glowing outfits as Keith Urban launches the weekend. Friday's 'Merica Night celebrates country pride with red, white and blue flair during Chris Stapleton's headlining set. Saturday turns to Camo Night for Riley Green's high-octane performance, while Sunday's Rhinestone Cowboy Night encourages fans to shine alongside Post Malone for a sparkling finale.

Whether guests go all out in

themed attire or add a simple nod to the night's vibe, organizers say the goal is to create shared memories and a fun, welcoming atmosphere.

Passes and Packages Available

A variety of pass options are currently on sale, including General Admission, Military, College and First Responder passes, Caymus Vineyards VIP Pit experiences and hotel or lodging packages. Premium offerings such as Skyboxes, Luxury Suites, Super VIP, Side Stage access, The Overlook Club and the new Eagles Nest have already sold out — a testament to the festival's continued popularity.

Payment plans are available for all pass levels, making it easier for fans to secure their spot early.

Jammers are encouraged to follow Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam online and on social media for lineup updates, special announcements and festival news as the countdown to Memorial Day weekend begins.

For tickets and details, visit www.GulfCoastJam.com.

In The World 2024 – Voter's Choice poll, along with top honors among beach music festivals in 2025.

A Star-Studded Lineup

The festival kicks off Thursday, May 28, with Keith Urban headlining alongside Treaty Oak Revival, Wyatt Flores, Cooper Alan, Walker Montgomery and Gannon Fremin. Friday night brings powerhouse vocals from Chris Stapleton, joined by Marcus King, Jackson Dean, Brent Cobb, Cole Good-

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Conservative Audie Rowell Announces Campaign for Florida's 2nd Congressional District with Major Local Endorsements

Retired Walton County Chief Deputy aims to Further President Trump's Agenda and Continue Serving Floridians in Congress

Today, Audie Rowell, Retired Walton County Chief Deputy, announced his candidacy for Florida's Second Congressional District. A native Floridian and active member of the community, Rowell retired from Walton County Sheriff's Office last year, and now seeks to continue serving the residents of the Big Bend and Panhandle area in a new capacity – as their Representative in Congress.

Upon announcing his campaign, Rowell released the following statement:

“As a lifelong resident of the Florida panhandle and an active member of the community from an early age, I know how to meet the needs of Florida's Second Congressional District because they are mine as well. From addressing the increased cost of living to expanding education resources to protecting the integrity of our elections, I will fight to ensure the voices of Florida's 2nd Congressional District are not only heard in Congress, but

prioritized.”

He continued, “Throughout my 40 years on the police force, I had the unique opportunity to serve and protect the members of our community. Now, I ask for the opportunity to serve you in a new way, as your Representative in Congress. While the uniform may look different, my heart behind the job is the same. My desire is not simply to enact policies that I believe in, but create lasting change that will benefit our community for generations to come.”

As a Christian, Audie Rowell will fight to uphold the traditional values our country was founded on. He believes in the rights protected by the United States Constitution and will fight for policies that uphold freedom and prosperity by strengthening American defense and encouraging innovation. A strong supporter of President Trump, Rowell will work to further the Administration's initiatives in Congress and in turn, improve

the lives of Floridians and Americans at large.

Rowell concluded, “I would also like to express my deep gratitude to everyone who has expressed their love and support so far. I look forward to our continued work together as we fight to ensure our community has the best representation in Congress.”

Rowell launches his campaign with elected official, community, and law enforcement endorsements from across the district, including:

- Sheriff Mike Adkinson, Walton County
- Sheriff Jared Miller, Wakulla County
- Sheriff Wayne Padget, Taylor County
- Sheriff John Tate, Holmes County
- Tony Anderson, Walton County Commissioner
- Fred Nicols, Wakulla County Commissioner
- Todd Bierbaum, DeFuniak Springs Councilman
- Josh Sconiers, DeFuniak

Springs Councilman

- Laurie Hood, CEO Alaqua Animal Refuge
- Julie Porterfield, CEO Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center
- Lindy Wood, CEO Westwood Ranch Developmental Disability Program

A 6th-generation Floridian raised in Tallahassee, Audie Rowell graduated from North Florida Christian School and afterward began his law enforcement career in Leon County, serving the people of Florida for 40 years before retiring as Chief Deputy

in Walton County. In addition to his time in uniform, Rowell has served his community in many other capacities, including President of the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center Board of Directors, Board Member of Emerald Coast Crime Stoppers, and as a member of the Walton County Chamber of Commerce, Capital City Republican Club, and Optimist Club of Tallahassee.

Audie and his wife, Cheri, have four children and one grandchild.



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 Business


BY DANICA LAFAIRE

Before they ever walk in, your customers have already decided.

The Invisible Sales Killer on Your Sidewalk

Spring Break is coming whether we are ready or not.

If you're a business owner, you can feel it. The conversations are shifting. Attention to detail is back in the room. Customer experience isn't just a buzzword this year—it's strategy.

Because here's the truth: Just because it's built... doesn't mean they will come. We have to earn it.

And earning it starts before a customer ever opens your door.

The Purchase Begins on the Sidewalk

Picture this: You walk up to a restaurant. The windows are streaked. There are cobwebs in the corners. The entry glass hasn't been touched in weeks.

You haven't even looked at the menu yet — but your brain al-

ready has. You may still go inside. But instead of ordering the fresh catch or the chef's special, you play it safe.

"Maybe I'll just get the chicken strips."

Why? Because the brain is wired to look for signals of safety and quality. Cleanliness is one of the fastest indicators we use to assess whether something is trustworthy (Journal of Environmental Psychology).

The mind starts building a story long before a transaction happens.

Now imagine the opposite.

You walk up to a storefront that is bright. Inviting. The glass is spotless. The entry feels intentional.

There are no red flags firing in your brain.

Instead of scanning for problems, you're thinking:

"I can't wait to see the menu."

"I want to try that dress on."

"This looks promising."

Clean glass doesn't shout.

It simply removes friction.

Exterior Maintenance Impacts Spending Behavior

Research shows that exterior appearance significantly influences whether customers choose to enter a business and—more importantly—how long they stay.

The Psychological Reality:

- If your building looks cared for, customers assume your product is cared for.

- If your exterior feels neglected, customers subconsciously question everything inside.

- When uncertainty enters the "buying brain," spending decreases. Not because your product isn't good, but because doubt arrived first.

Windows Are Marketing — Whether You Mean Them to Be or Not

We spend thousands on social media ads, SEO, and promotions. But one of the most overlooked marketing tools is the physical condition of the building itself.

Your windows.

Your entry doors.

Your frames.

Even the facade your signage sits against.

They are not just surfaces.

They are signals.

After years working with storefronts, I've seen the difference firsthand. Businesses that consistently maintain their glass don't just

look better—they feel more established, more intentional, and more trustworthy.

The Hard Truth: Your exterior is either reinforcing your brand... or quietly working against it.

High Volume = High Impression Count

Seasonal surges don't just bring more people; they bring more first-time visitors. These are customers who:

- Don't know your reputation yet.
- Don't know your history.
- Haven't built loyalty with you.

All they have is what they see.

Customer experience isn't just what happens inside your walls.

It starts in the parking lot.

On the sidewalk.

In the reflection of your glass.

Are you being intentional about all of it?

This Season, Be Intentional

Spring Break will bring opportunity.

The traffic will increase.

The impressions will multiply.

The opportunities will show up.

The question is — are you positioned to earn them?

Before you invest more in ads this season, take a walk across the street from your building.

Look at it the way a first-time visitor would.

Is there anything creating friction?

Because clean windows don't just look good.

They remove doubt.

They signal care.

They support spending.

And in a season where every interaction matters, why would we leave something that visible to chance?

A Final Thought

At Fish Window Cleaning, we maintain more than glass.

We care for entryways, doors, frames, and storefront facades — because your exterior is part of your marketing whether you plan for it or not.

Our job isn't just to make something shine.

It's to help you protect your reputation and position your business to earn every opportunity that walks up to your door.

If you're preparing for season and want to be intentional about the impression you're making, we're here to help. 850.842.2162





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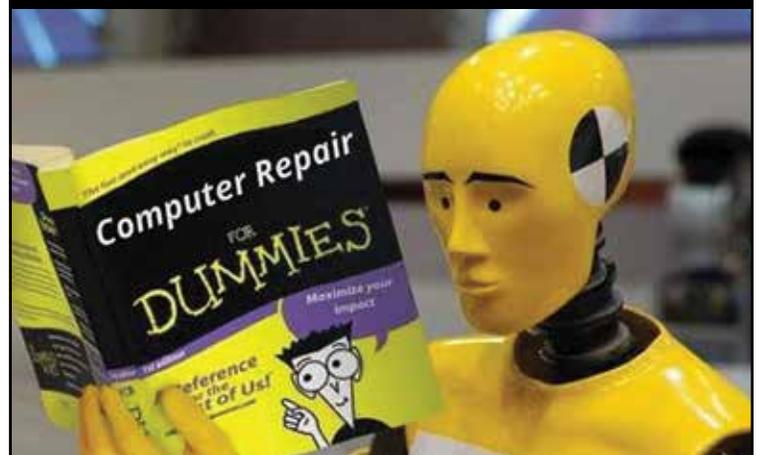
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BLOOMING MUSIC

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a lifelong relationship with music that enriches not only the individual but everyone around them.

When a community invests in music education, it invests in connection, well-being, and cultural vitality. Music benefits us all but music lessons give those benefits roots, allowing them to grow deeper, stronger, and more beautifully with each passing year.

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LIVE MUSIC

continue from page 40

Birge Duo every Sunday at 12 p.m. for a delightful morning filled with delicious food, refreshing drinks, and engaging tunes. Have a mimosa or go all in with their famous Build Your Own Bloody Mary bar. Then enjoy live music from The Pickled Pickers 5-8 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 live music throughout the week.

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. Check redfishtaco.com for 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. Check The Bay's Facebook or Instagram pages for details.

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