



PARENT'S GUIDE to SUMMER FUN



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SUMMER 2026

VOL. 1, NO. 1

In this issue:

Local adventures,
arts and more!

Letter from the Editor



If you've ever spent a summer here along 30A, you know it's not just a season—it's a feeling.

I raised my kids here, and when I think back on those years, it's not the big things I remember most. It's the everyday moments that just sort of added up to a really good life. My daughter was always at dance, my boys were usually covered in grass stains from soccer, and in between all of

that, we were just... outside. A lot.

We rode bikes on the 30A path more times than I can count. We picked blueberries at local farms (and probably ate more than we brought home). We went camping, stayed up too late, and tried to soak in as much of summer as we could before school started back up again. And one of my favorite memories—watching shooting stars on the beach. There's just something special about having unstructured time with your kids.

The truth is, you don't have to go far or spend a lot to create a meaningful summer here. It's all around us.

That's really why I put this little publication together. SoWal Life Parent's Guide to Summer Fun isn't meant to be overwhelming or over-

thought—it's just a helpful starting point. A collection of local ideas to help you find what fits your family, your schedule, and your version of fun.

Whether it's signing up for a camp, trying something new, or just being more intentional with your time together, I hope this guide helps you make the most of the season.

Because these summers go fast. And the little things? They end up being the big things.

I hope you and your family find your own kind of summer magic here.

See you on the bikepath,

Sarah Stewart
Parents Guide to Summer Fun
Sarah@lifemediagrps.com



Make today a beautifully painted day!

Paint. Relax. Create.

1. Pick your piece
2. Paint your piece
3. We glaze and fire your piece
4. Take your masterpiece home



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A Season to Grow: How Gulf South Soccer Develops Walton County Players Year-Round

“A Season to Grow: How Gulf South Soccer Develops Walton County Players Year-Round”

Summer gives young players something they do not always have during the school year: space to grow. Without the pace of homework, school routines, and full competitive calendars, children have more freedom to stay active, sharpen skills, and enjoy the game in a lower-pressure environment. That is one reason summer can be one of the most valuable seasons for player development.

At GulfSouth Rush Soccer Club, summer is viewed as more than just offseason activity. It is an opportunity for players to build strong technical

habits, improve confidence on the ball, and develop in an age-appropriate, positive setting. Founded in 2012 and recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2014, GulfSouth serves families across Walton, Okaloosa, and Bay Counties and has built its reputation around professional coaching, winning standards, and a pathway from local developmental soccer to regional and national competitive travel teams under our parent club Coastal Rush.

For younger players, that development starts with the right foundation. GulfSouth Academy, designed for ages 5-8, focuses on helping children become confident, ball-comfortable players through purposeful play, skill-building, and



engaging activities. Academy is a complement to Walton County's recreational soccer, giving young athletes a place to build confidence, creativity, and essential skills from experienced licensed coaches who have played at the professional and collegiate levels.

For older players, summer is a key time to stay sharp and keep progressing to be ready

for the Fall Soccer Season. GulfSouth's coaches provide a variety of summer training clinics and we partner with non-club affiliated coaches to ensure parents and players can choose the best training paths that translate directly into better performance when the fall season begins.

Our commitment to competitive development is backed by real structure. With over a dozen youth travel teams serving 300 youth athletes ages 8-18, all supported by a mission to develop confident, character-driven players through professional coaching and a clear pathway from Academy to competitive teams and college opportunities. As part of the Rush Soccer Na-

tional pathway through Coastal Rush, local players also gain access to broader resources and expanded opportunities like ECNL and college ID camps while still training in a community-centered environment at Walton Sports Complex in Santa Rosa Beach.

When children are challenged, encouraged, and excited to come back each week, they improve faster and enjoy the process more. Whether a player is just starting out or looking to prepare for the next level, GulfSouth Rush Soccer Club helps youth athletes build skills, gain confidence, and grow in the game close to home while providing opportunities to play at the regional and national level.



KICK OFF SUMMER WITH GULFSOUTH RUSH

Fun, development-focused soccer for players ages 5-18



YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS



Academy (Ages 5-8)

Fun, age appropriate training that builds confidence, coordination, and ball mastery.



Skills Camps & Clinics

Technical training, finishing, footwork, futsal, speed/agility and positional training to keep players active and improving.



Club / Travel Teams (Ages 8-18)

Competitive & developmental travel teams competing at grassroots to national levels

THE GULF COAST'S FINEST



Founded in 2012



Walton County's home for youth soccer



Serving Walton, Okaloosa, & Bay Counties



Professional, licensed coaches. Paid training & licensing for new coaches



Clear pathway from tots academy to college



Local, Regional, & National level teams

REGISTER FOR SUMMER

Scan to view programs & register

www.GulfSouthSoccer.com

Walton Sports Complex • Santa Rosa Beach



BUILD SKILLS • GAIN CONFIDENCE • LOVE THE GAME

GulfSouthSoccer.com



South Walton Dance Company: Where Community Meets Movement



Founded in 2018, South Walton Dance Company was built on a simple but powerful vision: to bring the community together through dance. What began as a passion project has grown into a thriving studio located in Freeport, Florida, serving dancers of all ages and skill levels.

Whether you are a local resident or visiting the area, South Walton Dance Company offers a diverse range of classes designed to meet every dancer where they are. From beginner recreational classes to advanced training, the studio pro-

vides opportunities for growth, creativity, and connection.

Owned and operated by Ashley Brooks alongside Jenni Grubbs and Mike Grubbs, the leadership team blends artistic vision with strong business structure. This collaboration ensures that every aspect of a dancer's experience—from instruction to environment—is intentional, supportive, and high quality.

A defining strength of South Walton Dance Company is its exceptional faculty. The studio is home to a diverse team of highly trained instructors whose backgrounds span professional performance, collegiate dance programs, and commercial industry experience. Many have performed at the professional level, danced on university teams, or hold



formal degrees in dance. This depth of experience allows the studio to offer well-rounded, technically sound training while exposing dancers to a wide range of styles and perspectives.

For those seeking a more competitive path, the Infinity Dance Collective represents the studio's elite training program. These dancers are committed to expression, dis-

cipline, and progression, pushing boundaries while representing the studio at competitions and performances.

South Walton Dance Company is deeply rooted in community involvement. Dancers regularly participate in local parades, perform at events, and engage in unique training experiences—from football fields to basketball courts—bringing dance beyond the studio walls and into the heart of the community.

SWDC is a place where every dancer—regardless of age, background, or experience level can feel welcomed, supported, and inspired.

If you've ever dreamed of

dancing, there's no better time to begin.

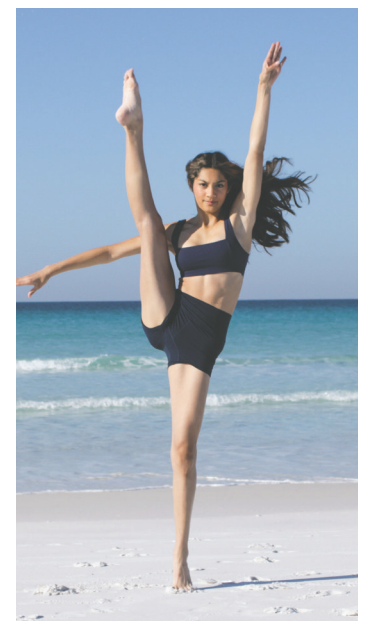
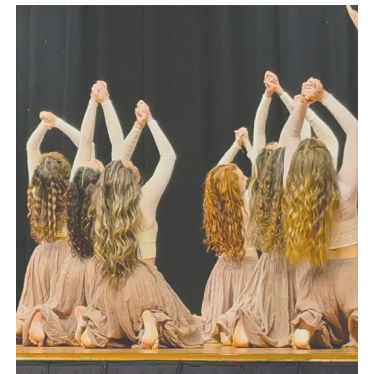
"Never miss the chance to dance."

For class schedules, registration, and more information, visit their website at sowaldance.com

Phone: 859-240-5323 Email Info@SoWalDance.com The studio is located at: 1255 Old Jolly Bay Rd, Unit B102 Freeport, FL 32439



To learn more, visit sowaldance.com or contact the studio at studio@sowaldance.com



The Stage Is Calling: A Summer of Possibility

There is a moment—just before the lights rise—when the world seems to hold its breath. For children, that moment can become a beginning. At Emerald Coast Theatre Company, it often is.

Here, theatre is not just performance—it is transformation. A shy voice becomes confident. A curious mind becomes creative. A child becomes a storyteller. Acting invites young people to step into someone else's shoes, to understand emotion, timing, and connection. These are not just stage skills—they are life skills.

What makes this jour-

ney extraordinary at Emerald Coast Theatre Company is the professionalism behind it. Their drama teachers are working artists and dedicated educators who guide students with both expertise and care. They teach discipline without dimming imagination, structure without stifling creativity. Every rehearsal becomes a safe place to grow, take risks, and discover hidden talents.

And this summer, the stage truly comes alive for young performers.

Through an exciting lineup of 2026 summer camps and classes, children of all

ages can step into the spotlight. From imaginative Mini Player Camps for younger students—featuring themes like Frozen, Moana, and Trolls—to full-scale musical experiences like Madagascar: A Musical Adventure, kids are immersed in acting, singing, and movement. Teen performers can even dive into advanced intensives like Hometown: Teen Edition, building skills at a pre-professional level. These programs culminate in live performances, giving students the unforgettable thrill of a curtain call.

Meanwhile, the professional stage continues to inspire. Currently, audiences can experience vibrant productions like Mystic Pizza, a high-energy musical filled with beloved hits, lighting up the theatre with humor, heart, and music. Special events and performances throughout the season ensure there is always something cap-



tivating unfolding just beyond the curtain.

This is the beauty of theatre: children don't just watch the magic—they become part of it.

For any child with curiosity, creativity, or simply the courage to try something new, the stage at Emerald Coast Theatre Company is waiting.

*Emerald Coast Theatre Company
560 Grand Blvd, Suite 200
Miramar Beach, FL 32550
Phone: (850) 684-0323
Website: emeraldcoasttheatre.org*



Visit us on facebook @ECTheatreCompany



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SEASON 14

COME FROM AWAY SEPTEMBER 10-27	THE 39 STEPS OCTOBER 15-25
MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET CHRISTMAS DECEMBER 3-20	DOLLY PARTON PRESENTS 9 to 5 THE MUSICAL JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 7
KEN LUDWIG'S Dear Jack DEAR LOUISE FEBRUARY 18-28	Disney FROZEN THE MUSICAL MAY 6-23

Make This Summer Unforgettable at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center

Where families connect with nature all summer long

If you're looking for something more meaningful than another screen-filled afternoon this summer, the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center in Freeport has you covered. Nestled in the heart of Walton County's long-leaf pine landscape, this nonprofit nature education center offers a full season of events, community days, and hands-on experiences designed to spark curiosity and a lifelong love of the natural world.

Friday Community Days — June & July

Every Friday throughout June and July, the Biophilia Center opens its doors from



9AM to 2PM for families to explore at their own pace. Walk the trails, meet the ambassador animals, and discover what Florida's native ecosystems are all about. These relaxed, drop-in days are perfect for families with kids of all ages — no registration required, just show up ready to explore. Admission applies, with discounted rates available for members.

A Summer Packed with Special Events

Beyond the Friday community days, the Biophilia Center has five signature summer events that are not to be missed:

- **Botanical Tea Party (May 9, 10AM–12PM)**

A charming spring celebration featuring curated teas, delicious food provided by The Bakery Lady and floral-themed activities. Dress up your little ones and enjoy a picture-perfect morning surrounded by nature. Space is limited, so reserve early.

- **Summer Kickoff (May 30, 9AM–2PM)**

Ring in the season with live music, food trucks, a bounce house, animal

chats, a reptile room, raffles, and water activities. This festive nonprofit fundraiser is fun for the entire family.

- **Summerfest (June 27, 9AM–2PM)**

The center's beloved community celebration returns, offering another full day of nature-inspired fun just in time for peak summer.

- **Creature Feature (July 25, 5PM)**

A fan-favorite evening event focused on the amazing wildlife that shares our region. Bio-Members attend free!

- **Back to Nature (August 22, 9AM–2PM)**

A perfect send-off for sum-

mer, inviting families to reconnect with the natural world before the school year begins.

Bio-Members enjoy free or discounted admission to most events. Memberships are available at eowilsoncenter.org and make a wonderful gift for any nature-loving family.

To learn more, visit eowilsoncenter.org, call (850) 835-1824, or email information@eowilsoncenter.org. The center is located at 4956 State Highway 20 E, Freeport, FL 32439.

Your Best Summer Starts Here



Explore Florida's wild side with hands-on nature experiences, animal encounters, and community events the whole family will love.

Friday Community Days
 Every Friday · June & July · 9AM–2PM*
 Open to all · Admission applies
 *Closed July 3rd

eowilsoncenter.org · (850) 835-1824
 4956 FL-20 E, Freeport, FL

Summer 2026 Events

- **Botanical Tea Party**
May 9 · 10AM–12PM
- **Summer Kickoff**
May 30 · 9AM–2PM · Live Music + Food Trucks
- **Summerfest**
June 27 · 9AM–2PM
- **Creature Feature**
July 25 · 5PM · Members Free
- **Back to Nature**
Aug 22 · 9AM–2PM



🌟 Yellow events = **FREE for Bio-Members!** Become a member at eowilsoncenter.org

A nonprofit organization
 All events support conservation education

Step Into Their World: A Kid's Animal Adventure Awaits

Whether you're discovering Alaqua Animal Refuge for the first time, or you're a longtime supporter, get ready for a visit that's equal parts fun, heartwarming, and unforgettable, especially for kids! From the moment you arrive, the Refuge invites young animal lovers to step into a world where curiosity leads, tails wag, and every experience brings you closer to the animals who call Alaqua home.

A visit to Alaqua is anything but ordinary. Kids can enjoy hands-on moments like gentle puppy cuddles, meeting friendly cats, and spending time with barnyard animals eager for a scratch behind the ears. Beyond the familiar faces, there's always something unexpected to discover, from giant tortoises and curious emus to colorful parrots and other unique or exotic species, ensuring every visit feels new and exciting. Whether it's visiting goats, saying hello to horses, or simply exploring the peaceful grounds, each interaction is designed to spark joy while building a natural connection to animals. It's a place where learning happens without even realizing it, through laughter,

discovery, and those quiet moments of wonder that stay with you long after you leave.

Parents love Alaqua just as much, knowing their children are not only having fun, but also experiencing something meaningful. Every visit helps introduce important values like kindness, respect, and compassion for all living beings, all in a setting that feels welcoming, safe, and full of life. It's the kind of outing that feels good in every sense: a chance to unplug, explore the outdoors, and share in something truly special together.

And if you're looking for a way to make a child's big day even more memorable, Alaqua's birthday parties offer a celebration unlike any other. Imagine celebrating surrounded by furry friends, where guests can interact with animals, explore the Refuge, and enjoy a day filled with laughter and connection. It's playful, unique, and full of moments kids will be talking about long after the candles are blown out.

For those who want to take their love for animals even further, Alaqua's Humane Heroes program offers kids



and teens a chance to stay involved. With hands-on learning and engaging activities, it's a fun and meaningful way to grow confidence, build empathy, and become a voice for animals in their own communities.

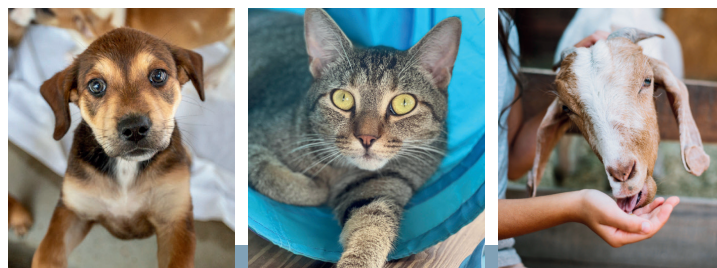
At Alaqua Animal Refuge, every visit is an opportunity to play, learn, and connect; creating joyful memories for kids and families, while helping give animals the care and second chances they deserve.



Visit us on facebook
@AlaquaAnimalRefuge



BIRTHDAY PACKAGE



DURATION
2 hours

PARTY
up to 20

COST
\$400

INCLUDES

Group animal interactions, chairs, setup/breakdown and a special stuffed animal gift for your birthday child!

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Tess Johnson

tjohnson@alaqua.org | 850.880.6247

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Pedal Into Adventure with **Big Daddy's Bike Shop**



Along the scenic stretch of 30A, where salty breezes and sunshine set the pace, one local

favorite has been helping families and cycling enthusiasts ride a little farther and smile a little bigger: Big Daddy's Bike Shop.

Founded in 1998 with just 25 bicycles rented from the shade of a bamboo tiki hut tucked among banana trees and strolling peacocks at Patrone's Hide Away in old Grayton Beach, Big Daddy's Bike Shop has grown into a beloved staple of South Walton. From those early days, locals and visitors alike



jumped at the chance to leave their cars behind and explore neighboring communities and

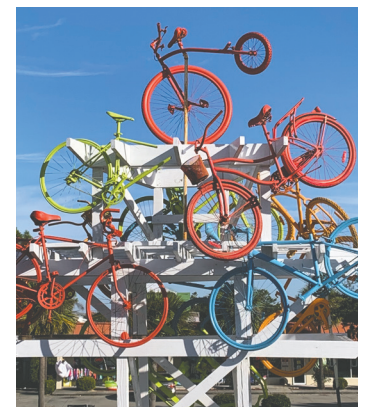
beautiful beaches along Scenic Highway 30A—on two wheels.

Today, that same spirit of adventure is alive and well. Owner Peggy continues to foster a welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere where everyone—from first-time riders to seasoned cyclists—feels right at home. Step inside and you'll likely meet Jim, the longtime bike mechanic whose experience and know-how have kept countless bikes rolling smooth-

ly over the years.

Biking along 30A offers something for everyone. The paved path winds through charming beach towns, coastal dune lakes, and shaded stretches perfect for a relaxed ride. Kids can build confidence, families can reconnect, and friends can explore together at their own pace. It's not just about the destination—it's

Continued on next page





about the moments shared along the way.

Big Daddy's makes getting started easy with a wide selection of bikes for all ages and skill levels. Whether you're

cruising to the beach, discovering a hidden trail, or just enjoying the fresh Gulf air, you'll find everything you need to make the most of your ride.

And if you're up for a little adventure, there's talk of a special biking challenge around the 30A area. Those who complete it may earn a coveted prize waiting back at the shop—but only if you finish the ride. See you on the bike path!

Big Daddy's Bike Shop
 2217 W. Co. Hwy 30A
 Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459
 (850) 622-1165



Visit us on facebook
 or instagram
 @bigdaddysbikeshop



A Summer of Strength, Smiles, and Somersaults

If you're looking for a summer activity that keeps your kids active, engaged, and growing in confidence, U.S. Gold Gymnastics is a standout option right here in our community.

In the summer U.S. Gold offers 3-day coed summer camps for kids ages 4.5 to 10 years old. U.S. Gold also offers classes year round for children of all levels and abilities starting at 18 months old.

More than just a place to

burn off energy, U.S. Gold offers a structured, encouraging environment where kids can learn skills that last far beyond the mat. In addition to gymnastics, U.S. Gold has tumbling, cheerleading, and Ninja. The programs are designed to meet children where they are - whether they're trying something new for the first time or building on existing abilities.

What makes U.S. Gold especially valuable is the balance it strikes between fun and discipline. Kids are constantly moving, jumping, flipping, and challenging themselves physically, but they're also learning focus, patience, and perseverance. Each skill takes



practice, and that process helps children understand the reward that comes from sticking with something - even when it's difficult.

U.S. Gold helps improve your child's strength, flexibility, coordination, and overall fitness in a way that feels more like play than exercise. In an age where screens often compete for attention, having a place where kids want to be active is a huge win.

Summer is the perfect time

to jump in - kids have the freedom to explore new interests without the pressure of a full school schedule. But many families find that once their child gets started, U.S. Gold quickly be-

comes a favorite year-round activity. It's not just a seasonal program; it's a hobby that builds confidence, resilience, and healthy habits that carry into the school year and beyond.

U.S. Gold Gymnastics has two locations: 2312 Chat Holley Rd, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459 Phone: (850) 660-6150, and 12432 Emerald Coast Parkway, Miramar Beach, FL 32550 Phone: (850) 654-3124.



Visit us on facebook
or instagram
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U.S. GOLD
Gymnastics

usgoldgymnastics.com

12432 Emerald Coast Pkwy
Miramar Beach, FL 32550
(850) 654-3124

2312 Chat Holley Rd
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459
(850) 660-6150

The Gift of Unstructured Childhood

In a world filled with schedules, notifications, practices, homework, and glowing screens, many parents quietly wonder if childhood is becoming a little too crowded. We all want to give our children every opportunity to learn and succeed—but sometimes the most valuable moments are the simplest ones.

Children need free, unstructured time.

Not every moment has to be productive. Not every afternoon needs a plan. Some of the best growth happens in the spaces where kids are allowed to be bored for a little while, to wander outside, invent games, build forts, dig holes, collect sticks, ride bikes, or dream up entire imaginary worlds from nothing at all.

That kind of play may look ordinary, but it's doing extraordinary work.

When children create their own fun, they develop problem-solving skills, creativity, confidence, resilience, and independence. They learn how



to negotiate with siblings and friends, how to manage frustration, and how to explore the world around them with curiosity instead of constant stimulation.

Screens certainly have their place. Technology can educate, entertain, and even connect us. Most parents are doing the best they can in a busy world, and there is no value in guilt or shame. Sometimes a screen helps everyone simply make it through the day—and that's okay.

But screens should not replace the small human mo-

ments children truly need.

Kids remember the feeling of being included in everyday life. They remember helping make pancakes on Saturday mornings. Tossing a ball in the yard. Playing cards around the kitchen table. Walking the neighborhood after dinner. Catching fireflies. Going for ice cream. Listening to stories. Laughing over silly games in the living room.

It doesn't have to be expensive, elaborate, or perfectly planned.

In fact, children often thrive most in the ordinary moments adults tend to underestimate.

Even fifteen minutes of intentional connection can make a child feel seen and secure. A quick bike ride. A game of tag. Sitting outside together at sunset. Reading one extra chapter before bed. These small moments quietly build relationships that last for years.

Nature also offers something screens never can: stillness. The outdoors slows children down in healthy ways.



Mud puddles, trees, sand, grass, fresh air, and open-ended play help calm overstimulated minds and encourage imagination to return naturally.

Perhaps the goal is not to eliminate technology entirely, but to create more balance. More room for childhood to breathe.

Children do not need parents who are endlessly entertaining them. They need parents who are present when they can be, who create space for wonder, and who understand that growing up should include scraped knees, messy art projects, tree climbing, backyard adventures, and long afternoons that feel beautifully unhurried.

Childhood passes quickly.

The dishes can wait a few minutes. The emails can pause. The to-do list will still be there tomorrow.

But the little hand asking you to come outside and play will not stay little forever.



SoWal Life Parent's Guide to Summer Fun

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The Play Studio Brings Elevated Indoor Play to South Walton Families

South Walton, FL — Founded by husband-and-wife team Margaret and Corey Short, The Play Studio is a thoughtfully designed indoor play space created to support both children and their families. Built from a long-held dream, the studio reflects the Short family's passion for fostering connection, creativity, and meaningful childhood experiences. At the heart of the concept is Margaret Short, a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), whose professional background in behavior analysis and parent coaching helped shape the studio's intentional, child-centered environment.

The Play Studio officially welcomed families during

its Soft Launch Opening on March 9th and is currently offering open play sessions, birthday parties, classes, and membership pre-sales. Each open play session is limited to just 15 children, ensuring a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience for every family. Due to this limited capacity, guests are encouraged to book their play sessions online in advance.

In addition to open play, The Play Studio offers flexible and memorable birthday celebrations. Families can choose from Basic Birthday Party packages, which include a full venue takeover for two hours along with tables and chairs, allowing hosts to bring their own food and décor. For those



seeking a more elevated experience, Fully-Styled Birthday Party add-ons are available, featuring themed balloon garlands, arch backdrops, and curated décor to create a beautifully styled event.

Designed with both chil-

dren and parents in mind, The Play Studio provides a clean, modern environment where kids can explore through imaginative play while parents enjoy a welcoming, community-focused space.

Looking ahead, families can

anticipate a Grand Opening celebration in early fall, when The Play Studio will unveil its final custom play structures currently being built by local contractors—further supporting the South Walton community.

For more information, to book a play session, or to explore party options, visit theplaystudiofl.com.

Media Contact:
The Play Studio
hello@theplaystudiofl.com

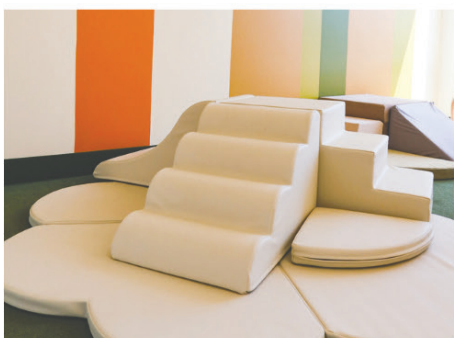


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Promotion ends July 31, 2026.

Growing Young Minds: Mary Louise Gillis Brings a New Vision for Learning to Santa Rosa Beach

In Santa Rosa Beach, a new chapter in education is beginning — one rooted in curiosity, creativity, and a deep belief in what every young person is capable of.

At the center of it is Mary Louise Gillis, an educator with more than 20 years of experience and nearly a decade working within the Acton Academy network. After years serving as Founding and Lead Guide in Austin, Texas — where Acton first began — Mary Louise has brought her commitment to innovative, learner-driven education home to the Emerald Coast.

Her new school, Canopy | An Acton Academy, is set to open near Walton Sports Complex, offering families a radically different approach to education — one that centers independence, critical thinking, and creativity.

What Is Acton Academy?

Acton Academy is a global network of learner-driven schools designed to empower students to take ownership of their education. Instead of traditional classrooms, Acton studios emphasize hands-on projects, real-world problem solving, and the development of character alongside academics — because at Acton, those things aren't separate.

Learners are encouraged to set goals and track their progress, take on real-world challenges through project-based learning, collaborate with peers across age groups, and learn through exploration rather than memorization.

The result is an environment where children don't just absorb information — they actively engage with it. They know why they're learning and who they're becoming in the process.



Introducing Canopy: A Place to Grow

At Canopy | An Acton Academy, Mary Louise is fostering those same principles right here in Santa Rosa Beach. The name reflects the vision: a supportive environment where young learners can grow, stretch, and thrive — together.

Her goal is simple but powerful: to create a space where young people are inspired to ask questions, test ideas, and discover their own paths.



A Summer of Creativity: Neuron Garage Growth Mindset Camp

Before Canopy's fall opening, families can experience this approach firsthand through Neuron Garage, a Growth Mindset summer camp hosted at the Canopy space.

This isn't your typical camp. At Neuron Garage, kids will build using recycled materials, experiment with creative solutions and open-ended problems, and test ideas — and then test them again. The focus isn't on getting everything right the first time. It's on developing the persistence, innovation, and resilience that lasts well beyond summer.

In other words, it's about discovering that failure isn't the end of the process — it's part of it.



Partnering with Storytellers

Mary Louise's vision for creativity extends beyond science and engineering. This summer — and each season after — she is partnering with Emerald Coast Storytellers to offer a series of writing and storytelling workshops for young people through Junior Emerald Coast Storytellers.

Held at Canopy on the first and third Tuesday of each month, with a final celebration

event at Distillery 98, these workshops give young participants a chance to explore imagination through words — learning how to craft stories, share ideas, and build confidence in their voice, all while being in community with others who are finding theirs.

An Invitation to Local Families

Whether your child loves to build, write, imagine, or explore, this summer is a chance to try something new — and to discover what's possible when learning feels like it actually belongs to them.

Because sometimes, all it takes is the right environment and the right encouragement for a young person to discover just how capable they are.

Canopy | An Acton Academy A learner-driven community serving ages 4–18 to find a calling that can change the world. www.canopy30a.com | 850.790.2806 | @canopy30a

Neuron Garage — The Growth Mindset Camp

Where 5 to 12 year olds have fun building with recycled materials, make friends, and develop the tools for a growth mindset. www.neurongarage.com | 448.444.5172 | @neurongaragesantarosabeach

Junior Emerald Coast Storytellers

A space for young writers and creatives ages 8–13 to explore storytelling in all its forms — through writing, sharing, and connecting with others their age who are learning to find their voice, too. www.emeraldcoaststorytellers.com/junior-storytellers | @junioemeraldcoaststorytellers

Unlock your child's full potential.

THE GROWTH MINDSET CAMP

Where kids have fun building with recycling, make friends, and develop the tools for a growth mindset.

Learn more at neurongarage.com

STORYTELLING NIGHTS

SUMMER SERIES

4:15 PM TO 5:15 PM

EVERY 3RD TUESDAY

- MAY 19TH
- JUNE 16TH
- JULY 21ST @ DISTILLERY 98

DM US TO RSVP OR VIA LINK IN IG BIO

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Illustrating Joy: Stories Rooted in 30A

By PAIGE TURNER

I met the author on a breezy 30A morning, the kind that feels lifted straight from the pages of a children's book—and in her case, quite literally so. Her trio of titles—"Arlo's Day on 30A", "Gigi's Shells", and "Dog Beach Party"—are more than stories; they are love letters to a place and a season of life.

Each book, she tells me, began not with a publishing plan, but with a paintbrush.

"I hand-painted and drew (in the case of "Dog Beach Party") every page," she says, almost casually, though the work itself is anything but. "I wanted children to feel like they were stepping into something personal—something real."

That authenticity shows. In "Arlo's Day on 30A", readers follow a sun-soaked adventure along the familiar bike paths



and beach accesses locals know by heart. Gigi's Shells feels quieter, more reflective—a gentle celebration of curiosity and small treasures found along the shore. And Dog Beach Party bursts with energy, capturing the joy and community of seaside life, where even the dogs

seem to have a social calendar.

When I ask what inspired her storytelling, she doesn't hesitate: "Reading with my children."

It was a daily ritual, she explains—one that shaped not only her children, now grown, but her own creative voice. Their shared bookshelf was filled with folk tales, the imaginative mischief of Roald Dahl, the rhythmic charm of Dr. Seuss, and the immersive worlds of J.K. Rowling.

"We didn't just read stories," she says. "We lived in them."

That sense of immersion is woven into her own books. There's a warmth, a familiarity, as if each page carries echoes of bedtime reading and sandy feet tucked under covers.

Her work is also deeply rooted in place. Set along 30A, the stories reflect a lifestyle many

families cherish—slow mornings, salt air, and simple joys. It's no surprise her books have found homes in beloved local shops throughout the panhandle. Sarah's books are available at The Hidden Lantern in Rosemary Beach, Clay 30A in Seagrove, Sundog Book in Seaside, The Zoo Gallery and the Studio Gallery in Grayton Beach, Lola's Boutique in Santa Rosa Beach, Topsail Preserve, La Luna Children's Boutique in Grand Blvd, Footprints in Miramar Beach and Tailwinds at Northwest Florida Beaches International.

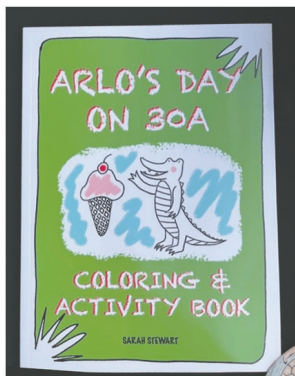
Before we part, I ask what she hopes children take away from her stories.

She smiles. "That the ordinary moments—the walks, the shells, the laughter with friends and family—are actually the most magical ones."

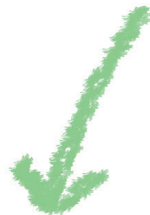


It's a fitting sentiment. Much like her books, it lingers with you long after the last page is turned.

Discover the magic of 30A... one story at a time.



website :)



Kid Tested: Librarian Approved



Summer Reading Recommendations from Bonnie Shelton —Media Specialist at Butler Elementary

- **Age 4:** Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
- **Age 5:** Elephant & Piggie books by Mo Willems
- **Age 6:** The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams
- **Age 7:** Good Dog books by Cam Higgins
- **Age 8:** The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams
- **Age 9:** Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren

- **Age 10:** Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls
- **Age 11:** The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- **Age 12:** Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Each of these books offers something special—whether it's imagination, humor, adventure, or heartfelt lessons. Perfect for building a lifelong love of reading over the summer!

Happy reading,
Bonnie Shelton



*“Shhhhh,
These Books
Are Really
Good”*

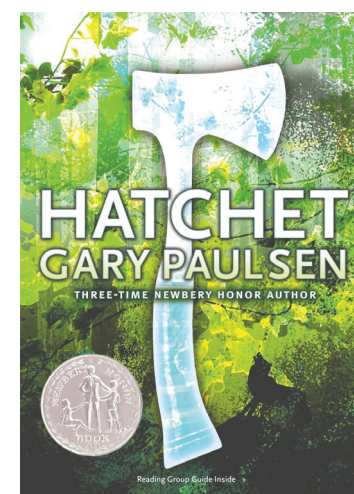
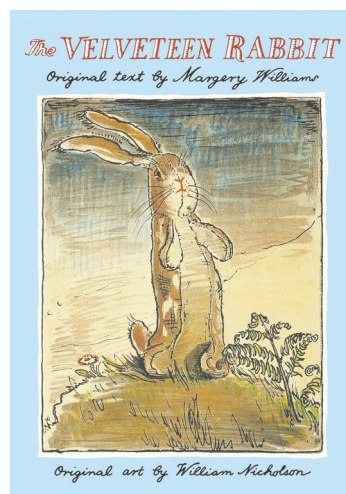
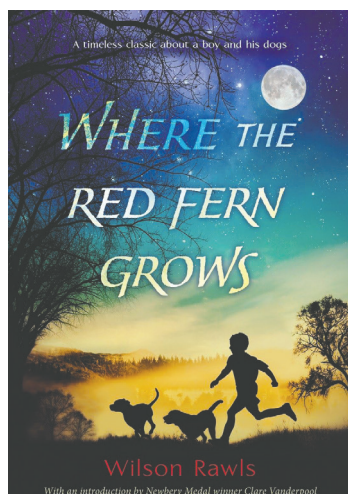
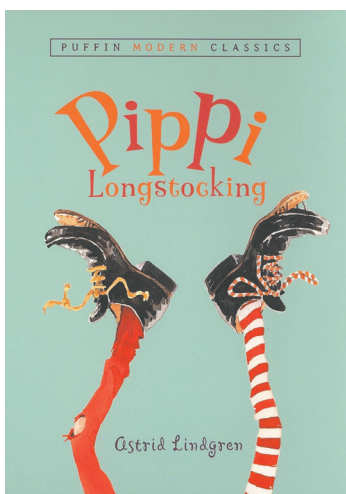
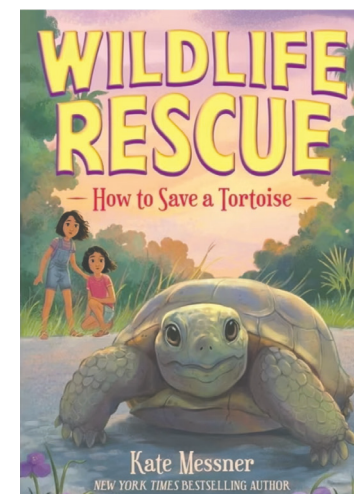
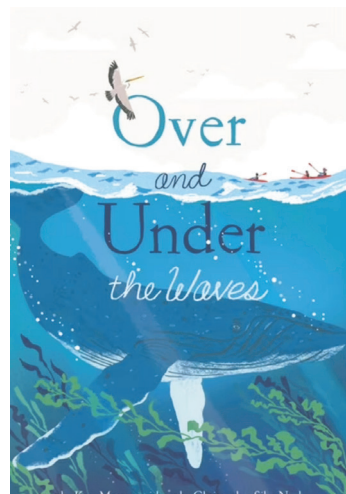
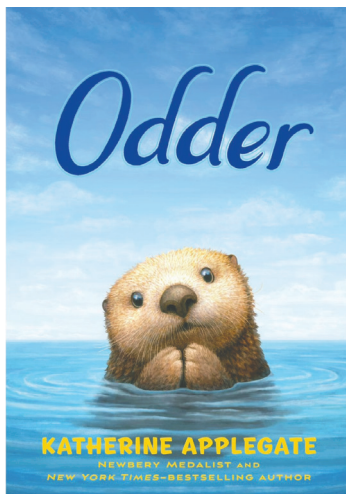


Summer reading recommendations from Rachel Carol —Media specialist at Dune Lakes Elementary

- **Ages 3-6:** Odder (picture book) by Katherine Applegate
- **Ages 5-8:** Over and Under by Kate Messner
- **Ages 5-8:** Fireworks by Matthew Burgess
- **Ages 7-9:** Wildlife Rescue by Kate Messner
- **Ages 8-11:** Odder (novel) by Katherine Applegate
- **Ages 9-12:** Manatee Summer by Evan Griffith

Katherine Applegate is one of my favorite children's book authors! Her newer book, “Odder,” is excellent and was recently made into a picture book as well. The “Over and Under” books are great nonfiction choices. Kate Messner has a new series called “Wildlife Rescue” that is inspired by her time rescuing animals in FL. The reviews are positive. Manatee Summer is another book that takes place in FL. And Fireworks is this year's Caldecott winner!

Keep turning pages,
Rachel Carol



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

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BEACH FLAGS

*Entering the Gulf during double red flag conditions can result in a \$500 fine and criminal charges. Absence of flags does not assure safe waters. Swim at your own risk. For emergencies call or text 911.

For more information, visit BeachSafety.com.

 **DOUBLE RED FLAGS**
WATER CLOSED TO PUBLIC*

 **RED FLAG - HIGH HAZARD**
High Surf and/or Strong Currents

 **YELLOW FLAG - MEDIUM HAZARD**
Moderate Surf and/or Currents

 **GREEN FLAG - LOW HAZARD**
Calm Conditions, Exercise Caution

 **PURPLE FLAG - STINGING MARINE LIFE**
Man O' War, Jellyfish, Stingrays

Beach Safely in South Walton

For a complete guide on Walton County's beach rules, visit BeachSafety.com.



Glass containers and littering are prohibited



Vehicles, dogs, and bonfires require permits*



Obey all beach flag warnings



Items left on the beach overnight will be discarded



Keep off the dunes



Removal of sand, water or vegetation is strictly prohibited



Sea turtle nesting season is May 1 through October 31

Visit SouthWaltonSeaTurtles.com for more information

*PERMITS MAY BE OBTAINED THROUGH CODE COMPLIANCE AT (850) 622-0000