



JULY/AUGUST 2026
VOL. 10, NO. 2



PRSR STD
ECRWSS - EDDM
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Santa Rosa Beach, FL
PERMIT NO. #11

Postal Customer Local

From Seacrest Beach to the White House: Lulu's Story Changes America

BY LORI LEATH MILLER

Two years ago, our community witnessed something that few who were there will ever forget.

On June 7, 2024, what began as a beautiful summer afternoon at Seacrest Beach turned into one of the most extraordinary stories of courage, faith and humanity our area has ever experienced. (See July 2024 issue of MyDestinLife.com for original article: <https://destin.lifemediagrps.com/the-miracle-at-seacrest-beach-america-responds/>)

A shark attacked 15-year-old Lulu Gribbin as she swam in the Gulf. Within moments, complete strangers rushed into the water. A beach attendant, vacationing families, physicians, nurses, an EMT, a former lifeguard and countless others worked together to save her life before South Walton Fire District crews, Walton County Sheriff's deputies and emergency medical personnel arrived.



When we first shared Rick Karle's powerful story, "The Miracle at Seacrest Beach:



PHOTOS: LULU STRONG (INSTAGRAM)

America Responds," we weren't simply reporting on a tragedy. We were celebrating

the remarkable people God placed on that beach that day. As one physician later reflected, "When we come together, great things can happen."

Now, that miracle has led to something even bigger.

Recently, President Donald Trump signed Lulu's Law, federal legislation that will allow shark attacks to become eligible for Wireless Emergency Alerts—the same emergency notification system used for Amber Alerts and severe weather. The goal is simple: if a confirmed shark attack occurs, emergency officials can quickly notify people nearby before another family unknowingly enters the water.

The legislation, sponsored by U.S. Alabama Sen. Katie Britt, is named for Lulu, who was one of three people bitten during a string of shark attacks along the Florida Panhandle that day. Lulu lost her

LULU'S STORY
continued on page 2



Walton Area
Chamber of
Commerce
Searching for
Industry Leaders and
Area Professionals to
Speak at The Next
BIG Thing Annual
Conference

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce calls for speakers today through August 10 for The Next BIG Thing Annual Conference, presented by Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast and Eglin Federal Credit Union on October 26th at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. Specifically,

NEXT BIG THING
continued on page 2



With 18 years of expertise, SecureVision delivers customized **fiber internet, TV, and phone services** to **HOAs, COAs, short-term rentals, and multifamily properties** along the Gulf Coast.

Call Today 251-216-9434 | Email sales@secvis.com | Visit www.secvis.com



Fast Fiber Internet • Bundled Services • Worry-Free Support





ADVENTURE Awaits

We offer a wide selection of Street Legal **Electric** and **Gas** carts. Get yours now!

Shop by brand.

✓ Club Car	✓ Atlas	✓ Garia	✓ Epic/Icon
✓ GEM Car	✓ Star EV	✓ EVolution	
✓ Yamaha	✓ Hunt VE	✓ Denago EV	

**ELECTRIC CART
COMPANY**

(850) 622 2000
www.ElectricCartCompany.com
Sales@ElectricCartCompany.com
5426 US Hwy 98 W Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

Community

NEXT BIG THING

continued from page 1

the Chamber seeks area professionals who are leaders in their field, entrepreneurs, women in business and women in empowerment. These speakers should bring actionable insights from their field, challenge the way we think and lead and share ideas that feel new, relevant and worth talking about.

This is a targeted opportunity for area professionals at the top of their game to empower attendees both professionally and personally; nurture emerging and existing entrepreneurs; and inspire the next generation of leaders while sharing ideas, knowledge and strategies with a captive audience. Selected speakers will share their expertise on topics aligned with the conference’s three distinctive growth tracks: Leadership Development, Entrepreneurship, and Women in Business.

“Speaking at The Next BIG Thing last year was one of the

highlights of my year,” says Joelle Moray. “The energy, not just in the breakout room, but throughout the entire event was palpable and exciting! This left me wanting to connect with the businesses even more.”

Every year, The Next Big Thing draws over 250 attendees who are entrepreneurs, community visionaries, and business movers and shakers all wishing to expand their professional and personal growth in the span of one high-energy day. Guests will have the opportunity to choose from a diverse lineup of TED Talk-style breakout sessions, seminars, workshops and hear from three nationally known keynote speakers. The experience also includes a welcome reception with coffee, mimosas, and breakfast bites, lunch, a closing cocktail hour, and exciting extras like raffle prizes and complimentary headshots.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit their applications by Midnight on August 10 at The Next Big Thing 2026



Speaker Call Applications are reviewed and scored by a selec-

tion committee. Early bird tickets to The

Next BIG Thing are on sale now through September 1st at \$150 for Chamber Members and \$200 for non-members available at The Next BIG Thing - Walton Area Chamber of Commerce. Vendor Booths and sponsorships for The Next BIG Thing are also now available: Local businesses and individuals interested in sponsorships should contact Gabrielle Hamilton at (850) 892-3191 or Gabrielle@WaltonAreaChamber.com.

The Walton Area Chamber would like to thank Ascension Sacred Heart (Presenting Sponsor), Eglin Federal Credit Union (Presenting Sponsor), The Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa (Event Venue Sponsor), Centennial Bank (Breakfast Bites), NBI Properties and Emerald Coast Hospice Care (Cocktail Hour Sponsors) without whom The Next Big Thing would not be possible.



LULU'S STORY

continued from page 1

left hand and part of her right leg in the attack and has spent the time since advocating for better safety measures to help protect others.

The idea grew from a heart-breaking reality. About 90 minutes before Lulu was attacked off Seacrest Beach, another swimmer had been bitten just a few miles away. Had beachgoers throughout the area known

about that first attack, Lulu’s family has often said, the outcome might have been very different.

Today, Lulu has become much more than a survivor. She has become an advocate, sharing her story across the country and encouraging lawmakers to improve beach safety.

In addition to helping inspire Lulu’s Law at both the state and federal levels, she and her family established the Lulu Strong Foundation, which

works to improve the accessibility, performance and affordability of advanced prosthetics, virtual reality therapy and other life-changing technologies for individuals with limb differences.

Her resilience has drawn national attention. In 2025, Southern Living named Lulu its “Southerner of the Year,” recognizing not only her advocacy efforts, but also the remarkable way she has embraced life after the attack. Today, she is an accomplished adaptive golfer and water skier who continues to inspire others while still enjoying life as a teenager.

While Florida has not created its own statewide shark alert system, the new federal law directs the Federal Communications Commission to establish rules allowing state and local emergency officials to use Wireless Emergency Alerts after confirmed shark attacks.

For those of us along the Emerald Coast, this legislation is deeply personal.

We remember the helicopters overhead. We remember praying for Lulu and the other victims. We remember the countless heroes who stepped forward without hesitation. And we remember a frightened teen-

age girl who whispered just one sentence after surgery: “I made it.”

Today, because of her courage and determination, Lulu’s story is helping protect beachgoers not only here on the Emerald Coast, but across America’s coastlines.

Publisher’s Note: We believed then that God was working through ordinary people to save Lulu’s life. Today, her story continues to save lives in a different way—by changing how America responds when every second counts.

PITELL

LAW FIRM, P.L.



LISA Y. SHORTS PITELL

ATTORNEY AT LAW

- Wills, Trusts, Estate Planning
- Corporation, LLCs, Business Law
- Taxation law & Tax returns
- Contracts
- Guardianship, Probate & Estate Administration

1402 Cat Mar Rd., Suite B, Niceville, Florida 32578

850.897.0045 | LYP@LYP-LAW.COM

The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience.

WALTON AREA CHAMBER

HOST SPONSOR: Hilton

OCTOBER 26

8AM-5PM

- LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- WOMEN IN BUSINESS

SCAN TO REGISTER OR VISIT WWW.WALTONAREACHAMBER.COM



PRESENTED BY:

Eglin Federal

Ascension Sacred Heart

THE NEXT BIG THING

CONFERENCE

Events Around the Beach

Farmers Markets

Grand Blvd. Saturdays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Grayton Locals Market Thursdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Hibiscus Guest House
Seaside Amphitheater Saturdays and Tuesdays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Peddlers Pavilion Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Rosemary Beach at North Barrett Square Sundays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Greenway Station 30A Wednesdays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
The Big Chill 30A Thursdays 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Village of Baytowne Wharf Family Fun

Sallywag Sundays: Watch as featured pirate Captain Davy takes you on an adventure with two magic shows on stage at 7 and 8 p.m. **Movie Mondays:** A free to attend event, grab a lawn chair or blanket and cozy up on the Events Plaza Lawn for a featured film on the big screen at 8 p.m. **Boomin' Tuesdays:** Baytowne lights up the night



with fireworks over the lagoon at 9:15 p.m. Before the show, enjoy a dance party starting at 7:15 p.m. with DJ Mike Whitty in the Events Plaza. **Thursdaze Lights Show:** Experience a unique aerial display that blends technology and coastal charm at Thursdays 9 p.m.

ECTC Children's Theater at Seaside Mondays

This summer, families are invited to uncover the secrets, stories, and history of one of America's most beloved beach

towns as Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) in collaboration with SEASIDE proudly presents The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt at the Seaside Amphitheater. Beginning at 6 p.m. Mondays through August 3rd, bring a blanket and enjoy dinner from any of Seaside's delicious eateries.

Written by ECTC founders Anna and Nathanael Fisher, The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt combines live theatre, local history, and plenty of fun as audiences follow clues and meet

colorful characters with Southern charm.

Huck & Lilly @ Seaside Amphitheatre 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!

Wild Sea Turtle Wednesdays at The Big Chill 30A

It's all about turtles every Wednesday from 9-11 a.m. at The Big Chill 30A! Join the South Walton Turtle Watch to learn about wild sea turtles and how to help protect them. Talks will begin promptly at 9 & 10 and last about 10 minutes. Children attending will receive a complimentary string backpack

filled with goodies while supplies last! You can paint a wooden sea turtle to take home or get a new South Walton Turtle Watch bracelet from the merchandise table supporting local conservation efforts.

Guided Plant Tour at Topsail State Park July 20

Join Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and Master Gardener Bill Kuenstler on the third Monday of 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.

Biophilia Center Creature Feature July 25

Join the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center from 5 to 7 p.m. for a Creature Feature, an exciting opportunity to explore wildlife and practice Biophilia. This event is free to attend, donations are always appreciated. Bring blankets, pillows, and wear comfy clothes for a showing in

Continued on next page



ONE OF A KIND
CRAFTSMANSHIP

A. JAFFE

EST. 1892 NEW YORK

MCCASKILL & COMPANY
—Finest Jewelry & Watches—

13390 Highway 98 W, Destin,
FL 32550 | (850) 650-2262

Community

EVENTS

continued from page 3

the indoor theater. Concessions such as pizza and popcorn will be available for purchase.

Biophilia Center Summerfest Aug. 1

Join the center at Summerfest from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for family-friendly fun! This is a nonprofit fundraiser packed with something for everyone! Enjoy animal chats, food trucks, a bounce house, games, raffles and the Reptile Room. Don't

forget a towel and a spare change of clothes for water activities! It's the perfect way to celebrate summer while connecting with nature and wildlife.

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!

July 22nd: Casey Kearney Band
July 29th: Shenanigans
August 5th: Boukou Groove
August 12th: Sevenply
August 19th: One False Move

30Avenue Summer Concert Series Every Evening

Come out to 30Avenue for the Summer Concert Series from 6-9 p.m. on the green. LIVE MUSIC every night in July. Gather your people for dinner, sips, shopping and live music under the stars. Guests are encouraged to bring a blanket



or low-back lawn chairs. See the full lineup at www.thirtyavenue.com/calendar.

Sounds Like Summer: 30A Songwriters Showcase Thursdays

The Watersound community invites you to join them for Sounds Like Summer Thursdays through August 13, featuring live music, theater, children's activities and more under the shade of The Pavilion at Watersound Town Center. With ample parking, a covered pavilion, and even ceiling fans, all events are free and open to the public.

- July 23rd: 30A Songwriters Showcase – Cat Ridgeway Band
- July 30th: Children's Play – Pirate Who Learns to Say Please
- August 6th: Neighborhood Fun Run
- August 13th: 30A Songwriters Showcase – Mindy Smith

Bingo, Bubbly & a Chance to Win a Designer Handbag August 8

If your idea of a perfect Saturday afternoon includes a little sparkle, a glass of prosecco and the chance to take home a designer handbag, mark your calendar for Pearls & Prosecco Handbag Bingo at The Alice in Destin.

Presented by The Alice and benefitting The Ground Up Project Inc., this elevated twist on traditional bingo combines fashion, fun and philanthropy into one stylish afternoon. Guests will enjoy light bites, drink tickets and 10 rounds of bingo, with designer handbags up for grabs. After all, who

says bingo is just for grandma?

The event takes place Saturday, Aug. 8 at 2 p.m. at The Alice, one of Destin's most beautiful waterfront gathering spaces.

General admission is \$100 and includes light bites, two drink tickets and one bingo card for each round. VIP guests receive all general admission benefits plus an extra drink ticket, raffle tickets, a Grand Finale bingo card, VIP recognition and table service.

Whether you're hoping to win your dream handbag or enjoy an afternoon out with

friends, you'll also be helping support a mission that extends far beyond childhood.

Because autism doesn't end at 18.

The need for support, opportunities and community doesn't end either.

So, gather your friends, don your pearls and enjoy an afternoon of laughter, bubbly, a little friendly competition, lots of memories—and perhaps even a fashionable victory! Pearls & Prosecco Handbag Bingo is shaping up to be one of the season's most stylish events.

~ Presents ~

PEARLS & PROSECCO

Handbag Bingo

THE ALICE | DESTIN

Saturday August 8 | 2:00 PM

An elevated afternoon of bingo, bubbly, and designer handbags benefitting

General Admission \$100
Includes light bites, 2 drink tickets, and 10 bingo cards (1 per round).

VIP Admission \$150
Includes all General Admission benefits plus: 1 extra drink ticket, 2 raffle tickets, 1 Grand Finale card, VIP recognition, and table service.

Lunch sponsor
CHANNELL COMMUNICATIONS

Bar & Entertainment sponsor
PITELL LAW FIRM, PL

Bag sponsors
THE LYNCH FAMILY
THE WYATT FAMILY
M&D PRESSURE WASHING
EGLIN FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
KRUEGER WELLNESS INSTITUTE

JOIN US FOR

Camp girl power

A free, end-of-summer girls' camp for health, wellness, fun and creativity

Ages: Rising 3rd - 5th grade girls in Walton County

Live Music • Yoga • Art Activities

Wed, July 29 • 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Freeport Community Center
112 Hwy. 20 West, Freeport

Mon, Aug 3 • 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Grand Boulevard
(former Orvis location next to Kihuna)
425 Grand Boulevard, Miramar Beach

Tues & Wed, Aug 4 & 5 • 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Walton County Fairgrounds
790 N 9th Street, DaFuniah Springs

Registration is Required at CulturalArtsAlliance.com

PRODUCED BY

WITH SUPPORT FROM

The Top 5 Things Your Doctor Wishes They Could Tell You (Without Hurting Your Feelings)



BY DR. KAREN DEVORE

If you’ve ever sat across from a healthcare provider and wondered what they were really thinking, I can assure you it’s not judgment. Most of us chose this profession because we genuinely want to help people live healthier, happier lives.

That said, there are a few things many doctors wish we could say more directly. Not because we’re frustrated, but because these truths have the power to change your health more than any prescription, supplement, or procedure ever could.

Here are five things your doctor would probably tell you

mood shifts, or your body starts functioning differently, pay attention. These are not inconveniences to ignore. They are valuable pieces of information. The earlier you investigate a problem, the easier it often is to address.

2. You can’t out-supplement a lifestyle that isn’t working.

I say this as someone who believes supplements can be incredibly helpful when used appropriately. But no supplement can consistently overcome poor sleep, chronic stress, a sedentary lifestyle, excessive alcohol consumption, or a diet built primarily around convenience foods.

Many people are searching for the one thing that will fix everything. The reality is that health is usually built through hundreds of small decisions repeated over time. The basics are not exciting, but they work. Sleep. Movement. Nutrition. Stress management. Meaningful relationships. Consistency. Those habits may not come in a bottle, but they are often the

tion, blood sugar regulation, hormone production, immune function, sleep quality, and even how quickly you age. Managing stress is not selfish. It is a fundamental part of maintaining your health.

4. Aging is inevitable. Feeling terrible is not.

One of the most common statements I hear is, “I guess I’m just getting older.”

While aging does bring changes, we often blame age for

things that deserve a closer look. Low energy, poor sleep, decreased strength, brain fog, loss of motivation, weight gain, and declining vitality are not things

Continued on page 14



if they knew it wouldn’t hurt your feelings.

1. Your body is talking to you. Stop waiting until it’s screaming.

Many people ignore symptoms for months or even years. Fatigue becomes “normal.” Weight gain is blamed on age. Brain fog gets brushed aside. Digestive issues become part of daily life.

The problem is that most chronic health issues don’t appear overnight. They often start as whispers before they become alarms.

When your energy changes, your sleep deteriorates, your

most powerful medicine available.

3. Stress is affecting your health more than you realize.

When patients come to me with fatigue, digestive issues, weight struggles, hormone imbalances, headaches, anxiety, or chronic pain, stress is often somewhere in the picture.

We’ve become so accustomed to being busy, overwhelmed, and constantly connected that many people no longer recognize what chronic stress feels like. They simply assume it’s normal. Your body, however, keeps score.

Stress influences inflamma-



INTRODUCING M.O.M.

MEN’S OPTIMIZATION MEMBERSHIP

M.O.M. is a monthly wellness membership for men focused on energy, recovery, body composition, hydration, longevity, and hormones.

- Initial Lab Draw & Complete Panel
- 1-Hour Initial Consultation & Lab Review w/ Provider
- 1 Monthly I.V. Therapy, Acupuncture Treatment, or Massage
- 1 30-Minute Monthly Check-in w/ M.O.M (Virtual or In-Person)
- 1 Monthly Vitamin Injection
- 10% Off Supplements and Peptides
- 10% Off I.V. Add Ons
- 10% Off Clinic Services (Massage, Acupuncture, Etc.)
- Priority Scheduling

\$299/MO LIMITED-TIME OFFER

Regular Price: \$349/month | Regular Retail Value: \$3,310
6-month Commitment. No Up-front Fees.

SCHEDULE YOUR CHECK-IN WITH M.O.M. TODAY!



2441 U.S. Hwy 98, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

TortoiseClinic.com | 850.267.5611

Now Open 7 Days a Week from 8 AM - 5 PM

Virtual Appointments Also Available



Donna Johns:

A Commissioner Who Chose Service Over Spotlight

In an era when politics often rewards the loudest voices, Donna Johns has taken a different path. She doesn't measure success by headlines or social media arguments. She measures it by projects completed, constituents helped, and decisions made with the long-term interests of Walton County in mind. A lifelong believer in service, Donna first took an oath to defend the Constitution while serving in the United States Air Force. Years later, she took another oath as Walton County Commissioner for District 4. Though the uniforms changed, the commitment remained the same: serve with integrity, protect the public trust, and put people before politics.

Since taking office in 2022, Donna has approached county government as a student first. She completed extensive training through the Florida Association of Counties, earning certifications in county government, ethics, planning, budgeting, infrastructure, emergency management, and leadership. She believes good decisions begin with understanding the issues—not simply reacting to them.

That preparation has shaped her approach on the Board. She has consistently supported investments that improve quality of life across Walton County: new parks and playgrounds, ADA-accessible recreational facilities, enhanced lighting, public safety improvements, and community spaces that families can enjoy for generations. While elected to represent District 4, she has repeatedly voted to support worthwhile projects throughout the county because she believes every community deserves to thrive.

Donna has also shown she is willing to cast difficult votes when she believes they are in the county's best interest. She has opposed developments she believed were incompatible with Walton County's character, supported measures to protect residents from inappropriate growth, and has never hesitated to vote "no" when she believed a proposal threatened the quality of life residents cherish.

Her philosophy is simple: growth should be responsible, government should be accountable, and every tax dollar should be treated with respect.

Constituents often find Donna at community meetings, ribbon cuttings, workshops, neighborhood discussions, or simply listening. She understands that being a county commissioner is far more than attending board meetings. It means studying complex issues, meeting with county staff, responding to residents, balancing competing interests, and making decisions that will shape the county long after today's headlines are forgotten.

Perhaps what best defines Donna Johns is not a single vote or project, but her perspective on public service.

As your District 4 County Commissioner, I voted:

✗ NO to Blackstone

✗ NO to 30A Surf Club

✗ NO to High Density Townhomes

✗ NO to Data Centers

✗ NO to Monster Homes

✗ NO to Ghost Chairs

✓ YES to E-Bike Regulations

✓ YES to Neighborhood Plans

✓ YES to an Olympic Pool in DFS

✓ YES to Citizen Workshops

✓ YES to more Lifeguards

✓ YES to Senior Centers

✓ YES to LSV Pull Over Pads

✓ YES to Stormwater Improvements

✓ YES to Protecting Wetlands

✓ YES to Coastal Dune Lake protections

The decisions made at the County level impact your quality of life, your economy, your environment, and your future. I believe those decisions should be made by someone who is prepared, informed, and committed to continuous learning.

Vote

AUGUST 18

to KEEP ME WORKING for you

I am ready to continue serving Walton County with the knowledge, experience, and dedication this position requires.

You deserve nothing less.



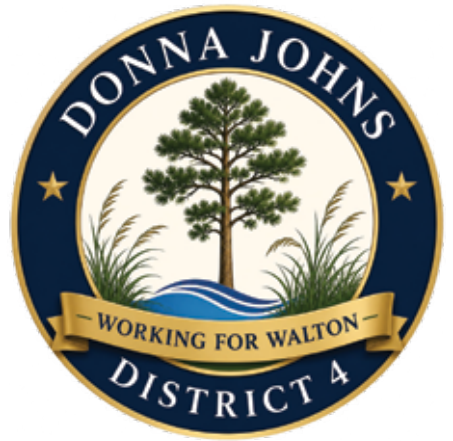


Donna Johns

WALTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER







She believes leadership is not about creating the world she wants. It is about helping create a better future for everyone.

That means listening before speaking.

Learning before deciding.

Working before taking credit.

In a political climate often defined by division, Donna Johns has chosen a quieter path—one rooted in preparation, integrity, and service.

For her, public office has never been about holding a title.

It has always been about honoring the trust placed in her by the people of Walton County.

Deer Moss Creek®

New homes in a vibrant community of Niceville, Florida



621 CHAMOMILE COURT
4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,761 SF
\$899,000 | construction completed
Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



410 MARSH DEER RUN
5 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,259 SF
\$612,000 | ready November 2026
Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



221 FOXGLOVE RUN
4 Bedroom | 3.5/.5 Bath | 3,539 SF
\$1,219,990 | ready October 2026
Listed by Jodie Snell 850.621.6535



412 MARSH DEER RUN
4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,257SF
\$601,000 | ready October 2026
Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



723 REINDEER ROAD
4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,600 SF
\$695,000 | ready September 2026
Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



251 FOXGLOVE RUN
4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 3,994 SF
\$1,425,000 | ready December 2026
Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



Contact Ruckel Properties for a full list of available lots.

PHASE 11 LOTS
SIZE: 0.16 - 0.26 ACRE
PRICE: \$100,000 – \$149,000

PHASE 7A ESTATE LOTS
SIZE: 0.49 – 0.64
PRICE: \$209,000 - \$269,000

70 RPi
ANNIVERSARY 1955 - 2025
Ruckel Properties, Inc.
REAL ESTATE & DEVELOPMENT

Visit our model homes
in Deer Moss Creek®

1413 CLARY SAGE LANE
Monday - Saturday 12 - 4 pm
Sunday 1 - 4 pm

301 GAZELLE COURT
Friday & Saturday 12 - 4 pm
Sunday 1 - 4 pm

850.678.2223

RUCKELPROPERTIES.COM

South Walton Fire District Welcomes New Therapy K9

BY MACKENZIE MCCLINTOCK,
SWFD PUBLIC INFORMATION
OFFICER

The newest addition to South Walton Fire District has four legs, a wagging tail, and an important role all her own. In partnership with the K9s For Warriors Station Dog Program, SWFD is proud to introduce Molly as the District's official therapy K9 dedicated to supporting responder mental health and wellness.

Specially trained to provide comfort and emotional support, Molly will work alongside the District's Peer Support Team, helping to relieve stress after significant or traumatic calls, boost morale within fire stations, and strengthen community connections.

"Our responders spend a lot of time taking care of others, but Molly's role is to take care of us," said SWFD District Chief and K9 Handler John Adams.

"In our short time with her so far, you can feel how she changes the atmosphere in a room and how well people respond to her."

Molly is a medium-sized mixed breed, approximately one and a half years old. She is fond of belly rubs and enjoys time around people, especially children.

She is just one of 90 dogs placed nationwide through the K9s For Warriors Station Dog Program. The program pairs trained therapy dogs with first responder agencies to support the mental health and wellness of those who routinely face high-stress and traumatic situations in the line of duty.

These dogs are provided to agencies at little to no cost, with K9s For Warriors covering the initial K9 supplies, as well as the training through an American Kennel Club therapy dog program.



"Her impact has been immediate," Adams said. "She's already supported our personnel

and neighboring departments in multiple critical incidents. Whether it's through peer support or her interactions with the public, she's quickly becoming an equal and beloved part of our team."

In Molly's first months of work as a Station Dog, she has been part of more than 10 critical incident debriefs, District events, and community appearances. Her comforting presence for responders is also reflected through her developing role in the community, where she is a conversation starter. Not just for the District to share its mission and

desire to be involved, but to also educate taxpayers on responder mental health and wellness.

"This is the start of even better and more thorough discussions about what comes with a career in the fire service," Adams said. "The community doesn't always know what kind of toll the job takes on our men and women, but they do appreciate being educated about what we experience. Truly, when you think about what her impact will be, it's an endless list of possibilities. She is going to help so many people, not just within the walls of our fire stations. It's a privilege for us to be part of that."

To learn more about K9s For Warriors and its Station Dog Program, visit k9sforwarriors.org.



Proven Choice. Proven Leader.

*Why Rhonda Skipper Endorses Brian McBroom
for Walton County Tax Collector*

Dear Friends,

I invite you to join me in voting for **Brian McBroom** as our next Walton County Tax Collector on August 18, 2026. Brian has my full support, and I hope you'll vote for him too.

I have worked with Brian for 21 years and have seen what an outstanding leader and colleague he is. Respected by his team, the community, and others in the tax collection field, Brian's dedication and loyalty to Walton County are unmatched.

As Chief Tax Collector, Brian consistently goes above and beyond to deliver exceptional customer service to our residents, continually seeking ways to improve how we serve the public. His servant leadership and problem-solving skills have made the office a positive and unified place.

Brian shows integrity, honesty, faith, family values, and strong morals in everything he does. These are qualities that matter in an elected official. He is a humble, community-minded professional who always puts the community and team first.

Brian has the exact character, integrity, and hands-on experience needed to lead our County's office seamlessly into the future. I hope you'll join me in voting for him as our next Tax Collector!

With my blessings,
Rhonda Skipper

P.S. Please visit Brian's website to learn more: www.VoteMcBroom.com



PAID POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT MADE INDEPENDENTLY OF ANY CANDIDATE AND EXPRESSES MY ADVOCACY FOR BRIAN MCBROOM.
THIS ENDORSEMENT IS PAID FOR BY RHONDA SKIPPER (ADDRESS PROTECTED). THIS ADVERTISEMENT WAS NOT APPROVED BY ANY CANDIDATE.



Pairing and Sharing

A WINE DINNER
benefiting
CARING & SHARING OF SOUTH WALTON

Thursday
AUG 27 | 6PM

ROSEMARY BEACH
TOWN HALL

Featuring

MORE DETAILS AT CARINGANDSHARINGSOVAL.ORG

Sliding Glass Doors Hard to Open? Dont Replace It, We Can Fix It!



Fast and Affordable Repairs
FREE ESTIMATES! Fully Insured

- Roller Replacement
- Track Maintenance
- Locks & Handles
- Highest Quality Parts

850-987-5433

www.BeachsideSlide.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC.

They Searched Everywhere, then They Found Watersound Fountains

Gerald and Sheree McKenzie searched farther than most before deciding where retirement would begin.

When they started thinking about retirement, they didn't limit themselves to one city — or even one country.

Over the years, they explored retirement destinations across Florida's Gulf Coast and considered places as far away as South Africa. They weren't simply looking for a beautiful home. They wanted a place that fit the life they had imagined for themselves: active, connected, close to nature, and close to family.

Eventually, that search led them to Watersound Fountains in Inlet Beach.

"It was just a good situation for us," Gerald says.

For Gerald, the day often starts outside.

Some mornings begin with golf at a nearby course before returning home for a fitness class or a swim. Other days start with a walk to Watersound

Town Center for coffee before the day unfolds from there.

One of the things that surprised him most wasn't just the beauty of the area—it was how easily everyday life came together.

"You really don't need a car here at all," Gerald says.

Within walking distance are restaurants, coffee, Publix, community events, and everyday conveniences that make the neighborhood feel connected rather than isolated. Just beyond the community, protected forest and nature paths offer another kind of access — quiet, beauty, and room to breathe.

That ease continues inside the community, where dining, wellness, learning, and social connection are designed to feel just as natural as the neighborhood around it.

Gerald enjoys an active schedule.

Sheree prefers a quieter pace.

Both found exactly what they were hoping for.



"You can be as active as you want to be here," Gerald says.

That flexibility is one of the things Members talk about most. Some mornings begin with movement. Others with coffee and conversation. Some days include beach outings, lectures, live music, or time with friends. Others are intentionally slower.

There isn't one right way to spend retirement here.

After careers that took them across the country—and years spent searching for the right place to settle down—the McK-



enzies discovered something they weren't expecting.

The destination mattered.

But the shape of everyday life mattered even more.

Today, that shape includes nearby golf, walkable mornings, chef-prepared meals, new friendships, and being close enough to family that seeing one another no longer requires weeks of planning.

For Gerald and Sheree, Watersound Fountains didn't simply end their search.

It gave them the kind of life they had been searching for all along.

Discover retirement living near 30A. Call 850-601-3174 or visit WatersoundFountains.com to schedule your visit.

Sunlight. Salt air. Space to breathe.

Experience refined, resort-style retirement living, grounded in wellness and the coastal beauty of the Panhandle.

- No insurance.
- No property taxes.
- No upkeep.
- More freedom.

Learn More About Savings in Bloom



RETIREMENT LIVING 65 Origins Parkway, Inlet Beach, FL 32461
WatersoundFountains.com | 850-601-3174

 Community

Think Blacksmiths Disappeared? Think Again.

Local craftsmen are keeping a centuries-old tradition alive through fire, steel and fellowship

By LORI LEATH MILLER

Blacksmithing may have been popularized in recent years by television shows such as *Forged in Fire* and *Men at Arms*, but in our state, the tradition has been thriving for more than four decades thanks to the Florida Artist Blacksmith Association (FABA).

Founded in 1984, FABA has spent the last 41 years teaching the craft, preserving its history and helping establish historical blacksmith shops throughout the state. Its mission is simple: To teach – To preserve. “Blacksmithing has experienced a renaissance in recent years, but this isn’t new to us,” said David Sandlin of the Far West Panhandle Blacksmiths chapter. “FABA has been teaching the craft and preserving the traditions of blacksmithing in Florida for more than four decades.”

Today, FABA includes eight chapters across the state, each hosting monthly meetings where blacksmiths of all skill levels gather to share techniques, ideas and stories while working hot iron at the forge.

For local residents, that opportunity is available through the Far West Panhandle Blacksmiths chapter, headquartered

at Traditions Workshop, 418 Green Acres Road in Fort Walton Beach. Meetings regularly feature demonstrations, hands-on projects and open forge time, allowing participants to learn new skills or work on personal projects alongside experienced smiths. “Our mission is to teach and preserve the noble art of blacksmithing,” Sandlin said. “We enjoy the open exchange of ideas as we smite hot iron on the anvil.”

First-time visitors are always welcome at no charge. After that, annual family memberships are just \$30 and provide access to FABA events across Florida, discounts on the organization’s annual conference and a digital subscription to *The Clinker Breaker*, FABA’s monthly newsletter featuring blacksmithing news, projects and events from around the state.

One of the highlights of each year is the statewide convention in Gainesville, where blacksmiths gather for three days of demonstrations, classes and fellowship. This year’s event, FABA CON 41, is scheduled for Oct. 16-18 at the Best Western Gateway Grand in Gainesville.

Beyond teaching traditional skills, FABA members actively

seek opportunities to introduce the public to blacksmithing through demonstrations at museums, libraries, festivals and community events. “FABA is always looking for opportunities to put the noble craft of the blacksmith before the public eye,” Sandlin said. “Museums, libraries and community venues have proven to be great places to meet people and generate interest in our craft.” The organization also welcomes recommendations from groups interested in hosting a demonstration or “hammer-in” event.

Upcoming Far West Panhandle Blacksmiths Events

July 25 John Butler Family Farm, 4112 Bell Lane, Pace | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

The focus shifts to the annual gift-exchange project, “Something That Twists or Turns.” Demonstrations will include forging a corkscrew under the shade of the pecan trees. Lunch provided; donations appreciated.

Aug. 22 Traditions Workshop | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Members pursuing Journeyman certification will work toward completing required



Oct. 16-18 FABA CON 41 | Best Western Gateway Grand, Gainesville

The statewide convention features three days of demonstrations, classes and educational opportunities for blacksmiths of all experience levels.

Oct. 31 Traditions Workshop | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Members will share techniques, ideas and discoveries gathered at the conference while resetting equipment for upcoming competitions.

Nov. 7 Timber Creek Distillery, 6451 Lake Ella Road, Crestview | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

The annual chapter competition returns with a mystery challenge announced closer to the event. Participants will have five hours to create a forged project using either their own steel or material from the chapter’s scrap supply. The day traditionally includes pizza from Timber Creek’s stone oven, fellowship and plenty of friendly competition.

Winter Schedule: No December meeting is planned due to holiday activities and Renaissance fair commitments.

For safety, all participants and visitors under the forge tent are required to wear safety glasses and sturdy closed-toe shoes or boots. Long pants and long-sleeve shirts made from cotton or other natural fibers are strongly recommended.

For more information about membership, events or hosting a demonstration, visit www.blacksmithing.org or contact David Sandlin at david@traditionsworkshop.com or 850-974-1548.

standards in preparation for recognition at the October state conference.

Sept. 12 Traditions Workshop | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

This special out-of-cycle meeting will focus on completing both the chapter competition project and individual gift-exchange projects before the conference season begins.

Oct. 10 Traditions Workshop | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Members will prepare equipment and pack the trailer in advance of FABA CON 41 in Gainesville.

BRIGHT BLUE POOLS

Commercial & Residential
Pool Remodeling
No Pool Too Big

We'll Make
Your Pool
Look New

Professional Plastering and Tile
Blue Diamond Finish • Pebble Finish
10 Year Guarantee • Free Quotes

Our owner, Curtis Nelson, makes it a point to be on the jobsite for every project to ensure everything goes according to plan.

Plastering Pools Since 1975

850.496.2025
BrightBluePools.com

Proudly serving the entire Florida Panhandle!



Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner Returns to Benefit Caring & Sharing of South Walton August 27

Sip, savor, and support your community at the Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner, benefiting Caring & Sharing of South Walton. This year's event will take place on Thursday, August 27 at 6:00 PM at Rosemary Beach Town Hall, offering guests an elegant evening of food, wine, and philanthropy in the heart of Rosemary Beach.

Guests will enjoy a multi-course dinner prepared by Swiftly Catered, known for creating thoughtful, elevated dining experiences with a focus on fresh ingredients and beautiful presentation. Each course will be expertly paired with exceptional wines from Jessup Cellars, a Napa Valley winery celebrated for its handcrafted wines, rich character, and memorable tasting experiences.

The annual Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner brings together community members, donors, and supporters for an intimate evening benefiting Caring & Sharing's programs,

which provide food, financial assistance, mental health counseling, and case management to Walton County neighbors in crisis.

"The generosity of our donors and patrons allows us to continue meeting the increasing needs of our community," says Carly Barnes, Executive Director of Caring & Sharing of South Walton. "We're now serving an average of 850 local families each month, and events like Pairing and Sharing help us sustain our programs and continue providing Walton County families in crisis with necessary support."

Pairing and Sharing 2026 is made possible by the generous support of our sponsors: The Mark & Karen Gergel Foundation, Rosemary Beach, Jessup Cellars, Swiftly Catered, H&M event rentals, and Bouquet at Clay.

Tickets are \$250 per guest or



\$2,000 for a reserved table and must be purchased in advance. To learn more about the event, purchase tickets, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities, please visit www.caringandsharingsowal.org/events or email carly@caringandsharingsowal.org.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton provides crisis relief to neighbors in need through food, financial assistance, mental health counseling, and case manage-



ment. Founded in 1994, the organization now supports more than 850 local families each month. Proceeds from the Caring & Sharing Thrift Store help fund essential services. Store inventory

includes clothing, housewares, furniture, electronics, books, and more—with every purchase helping a neighbor in need. For more information, visit www.caringandsharingsowal.org

LARGEST SELECTION OF STREET LEGAL CARTS



EXCLUSIVE GIFT

Present this layout upon purchasing a cart to receive an exclusive gift.





SALES • SERVICE • PARTS AND ACCESSORIES • FINANCING • RENTALS

Join the *Neighborhood* Fun

SHOP BY BRANDS

Garia
Star EV
EVolution

GEM Car
Hunt VE
Club Car

Yamaha
Denago EV
Atlas

Epic/Icon
Hunt VE



 Community

Trends & Treasures!



A Sweet Summer Tradition Smallcakes: A Cupcakery

Some summer traditions involve the beach. Others involve ice cream. At Smallcakes: A Cupcakery, you can enjoy both—in dessert form.

Known for its gourmet cupcakes, custom cakes and house-made ice cream, Smallcakes continues to be a favorite destination for locals and visitors looking to satisfy a sweet tooth.

Their display case is filled daily with signature cupcake flavors, rotating seasonal specialties and colorful creations that are almost too pretty to eat. Almost.

Beyond cupcakes, guests can enjoy gourmet cookies, brownies, cookie cakes, cupcakes-in-a-jar, gourmet popcorn, gluten-free options and even pup cakes for four-legged family members.

Planning a celebration? Smallcakes also creates custom orders featuring logos, photos and personalized messages, making them perfect for birthdays, weddings, corporate events and special occasions.

Their assortment of mini cupcakes is a great way to sample a variety of flavors—or share with friends if you're feeling generous.

Open Mon.–Sat. 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

Sun. 11 a.m.–4 p.m.
(850) 842-9002
SmallcakesDestin.com
@SmallCakesofDestin

Recharge Your Summer Routine CRYO850 Performance & Recovery Center

Summer is meant for making memories—not dealing with aches, fatigue or burnout. Whether you're chasing personal fitness goals, spending long days on the water, working demanding shifts, or simply looking for ways to feel healthier and more energized, CRYO850 Performance & Recovery Center

offers innovative wellness solutions designed to help you recover and perform at your best.

With Day, One-Week and Two-Week Pass options, guests can experience CRYO850's complete wellness circuit, including infrared sauna, red light therapy, whole-body cryotherapy, localized cryotherapy, vibration plates and compression therapy.

The combination is designed to help reduce inflammation, improve circulation, promote recovery, support better sleep and boost overall wellness. Many clients report feeling refreshed and rejuvenated after just one visit.

Voted Best in Destin, CRYO850 now accepts HSA and FSA cards, making it even easier to prioritize your health and wellness.

Start feeling your best this summer.

(850) 279-4145
www.cryo850.com
Follow @CRYO850 on Facebook and Instagram.

Summer Sparkle Starts Here Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Summer is the perfect time to add a little extra sparkle to your collection, and Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry offers beautiful pieces designed to shine all season long.

Owner Ashleigh Woolly specializes in custom jewelry design, helping clients create meaningful pieces that celebrate life's biggest moments. From engagement rings and wedding bands to statement jewelry and everyday favorites, each piece is thoughtfully selected or designed with exceptional craftsmanship.

Now through July 25, take advantage of the Summer Sale Event. Shop in-store or online and receive 20% off plus free shipping using promo code Summer2026.

This season's trends include

vibrant gemstones, coastal-inspired designs and stackable diamond bands that can be worn individually or layered for a customized look. Whether you're searching for a gift, commemorating a milestone or creating a one-of-a-kind design, Beyond Measure offers a personalized experience you'll treasure for years to come.

Some items online may not be available. Larger inventory available in-store. Call or message with questions.

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

Your Bridal Beauty Dream Team Pure & Couture Salon | Pure Collective Salon

Every bride wants to feel confident, beautiful and completely herself on her wedding day. Having recently experienced it firsthand, I can tell you that the talented professionals at Pure & Couture Salon and Pure Collective Salon helped make all the difference.

For my wedding, I chose hand-tied hair extensions, and they were truly a game-changer. They added the fullness, length and confidence I had always wanted, helping me feel like the very best version of myself as I walked down the aisle.

From customized hair extensions and bridal styling to flawless makeup application, their team specializes in creating looks that enhance your natural beauty while bringing your wedding vision to life.

Whether your style is classic, romantic, boho or glamorous, their experienced artists create personalized looks designed specifically for you. Services include bridal hair, airbrush makeup, spray tanning, lash extensions, blowouts, consultations and trial appointments.

The salons offer both in-studio and on-location wedding

services, making planning even easier for busy brides.

Now serving clients from two locations—Pure & Couture Salon in Destin and Pure Collective Salon at 600 Grand Blvd., Suite 102—the team also provides a full range of beauty services year-round, including haircuts, extensions, facials, makeup and more.

(850) 424-3935
pureandcouture.com
purecollectivesalon.com

Celebrate Your Big Day in Personalized Style Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Planning a wedding comes with countless details, and the personalized touches are often the ones guests remember most. As a recent bride myself, I can attest that Frill Seekers Gifts was one of my favorite resources for adding those special details that made our wedding feel uniquely ours.

From beautifully embroidered bridesmaid bags and personalized gifts to custom cocktail napkins, koozies, cups and more, Frill Seekers helped bring our wedding vision to life while creating keepsakes our bridal party and guests could enjoy long after the celebration ended.

Looking for the perfect bridal party gift? Their popular Letter Luggage collection offers stylish overnight bags, totes and cosmetic bags that can be personalized with initials, making them thoughtful gifts for bridesmaids, mothers of the bride and groom, or even the bride herself. The elegant bags are not only beautiful but practical for destination weddings, bridal weekends, honeymoons and future travel adventures.

Whether you're planning an intimate beach ceremony, a grand celebration or a destination wedding along the Emerald Coast, Frill Seekers specializes in helping couples add mean-

ingful, personalized details that make every event feel extra special.

Visit their City Market Bay-side location in Destin or shop online to discover custom gifts, wedding accessories and personalized treasures for every member of your wedding party.

Mon.–Fri. 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
(850) 460-2700
frillseekersgifts.com

A Season of Opportunity for Homebuyers Be On The Coast™ Real Estate Group

As the real estate market continues to evolve, many buyers are asking the same question: Is now a good time to purchase a home?

According to REALTOR® Brian K. LoCicero, homeownership remains one of the most effective ways to build long-term financial stability. While market conditions may fluctuate, owning a home allows buyers to lock in their housing costs through a fixed-rate mortgage rather than facing potential rent increases year after year.

In addition to providing stability, homeownership offers the opportunity to build equity over time while benefiting from potential appreciation.

"Owning a home has historically been one of the strongest ways to build wealth and create financial security," says LoCicero. "The sooner you begin building equity, the sooner you're investing in yourself instead of someone else's property."

Whether you're looking for a primary residence, vacation home or investment property, now may be the perfect time to explore your options.

brian@beonthecoast.com
850-739-3800
BeOnTheCoast.com



Don't Be a Hurdle, Save a Turtle

Keep the Beaches Clean, Dark and Flat

BY HEATHER BENNETT EYE

Long before the beaches were our escape and playground, before we built homes near the dunes, before we built sandcastles, dug holes and left beach chairs and umbrellas behind overnight, beaches were, and still are, nesting grounds for sea turtles. Not for decades. Not for hundreds of years. Not for thousands of years. Scientists have proven that turtles have been nesting along the Gulf beaches for millions of years.

Sea turtle nesting season on the Emerald Coast is May 1 through October 31. During this time, local wildlife authorities and conservation organizations, like South Walton Turtle Watch and Friends of South Walton Sea Turtles, urge beachgoers to keep the beaches clean, dark and flat. When we fail to do this, there can be detrimental consequences for nesting sea turtles.

In June, a Kemp's ridley, the rarest sea turtle, washed ashore

on Blue Mountain Beach, entangled in a beach chair. Deceased. Sea turtles face a gauntlet of survival challenges: predators, storms, climate change, boats, poaching, fishing gear, coastal development and pollution. Of all these hurdles she had to overcome, her life was ended by a beach chair, which was something that could have been prevented.

This tragic event followed a false crawl made by a disoriented loggerhead earlier in the month. While false crawls happen, South Walton Turtle Watch's observation of the tracks led the group to believe this was due to artificial lighting and obstacles on the beach. She had been stuck in a hole for some time before returning to the Gulf.

Please remember that it's critical to all marine life that we pick up our trash and any other trash we find, and remove it from the beach. At the end of the day, we need to remove all



beach furniture and toys. We also need to remove obstacles by knocking down sandcastles and filling in holes. If you have a property near the beach, please turn off your lights at night or use amber or red lights. If your property is a rental, please educate your renters on these best practices. It's up to us to keep

the beach clean, dark, and flat.

The sea turtles that nest on our beaches are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The Kemp's ridley is the rarest and most endangered sea turtle species in the world, with only around 2,000 to 3,000 nesting females remaining today.

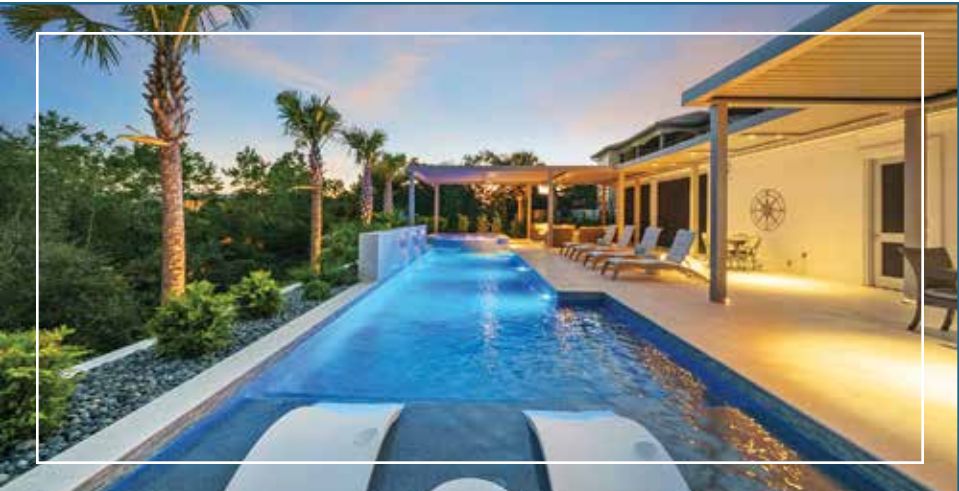
While we choose to use the

beaches for our own recreation and enjoyment, we need to remember that we are guests. We are stewards of a land they've chosen to lay their eggs on, and the sea they call home. It's our duty to protect these vulnerable creatures and ensure their species continues and thrives.



EMERALD COAST POOLS

Build Your Dream Pool



Elevate Your Outdoor Space

Custom Designed Pools & Spas

Emerald Coast Pools designs and builds custom pools with a commitment to craftsmanship, innovation, and personalized service.

Pool Renovation Services

Pool Resurfacing • Tile Installation • Structural Damage
Equipment Replacement • Spa and Jacuzzi Additions
Deck Repair or Replace • Paver Installation & Repair
Saltwater Conversions • Pool Heating Systems
Outdoor Kitchens • Fire Pit Installations

Call Now: 850.880.6657 | **Email:** danielemeraldcoastpools@gmail.com
Visit: 17661 U.S. Highway 331 South, Freeport | **On the Web:** emeraldcoastpool.com

Community

Pure Water in Your Home

By MARTA ROSE-THORPE,
WWW.ASUPERIORMECHANICAL.COM

A Superior Mechanical is a 24-year-old Veteran-owned business, now serving Bay, Walton and Okaloosa Counties. For the first 23 years we focused on Air Conditioning, keeping our customers Cool as a Cucumber! Now as you know, in our current economic climate, many service companies are getting bought out by larger corporations; we've been made our fair share of offers. Companies have a choice: to either sell out or expand, and we decided to expand. I sometimes call us One of the Last Local Mom & Pops.

Late last year, we started adding services: Plumbing and Electrical. We started expanding our reach, and we now serve Destin, Niceville, Fort Walton Beach... and we continue to head west. We wanted to be our customer's One-Stop Service Shop. So, when we really started thinking about Whole Home Systems,

two more things kept coming up: Clean Air and Clean Water. Last year, we entered the world of IAQ, also known as Indoor Air Quality. This is particularly important for family members with allergies or asthma. We can come to your home or business and add Air Scrubbers, which remove pollutants in the air and reduce allergens and irritants. These activated carbon filters also help neutralize odors from pets, cooking and smoke. We started to realize all the interest in IAQ, which led us to diving into the Pure Water space two months ago. So now we offer Water Purification Solutions such as Reverse Osmosis, which uses a semi-permeable membrane to remove impurities and contaminants from the water. Reverse Osmosis is commonly used for drinking water, desalination, water treatment in industrial processes, and F&B production.

What is the importance



of Water Purification? First, Health, because its removing harmful pathogens and contaminants. We use a water softening process to remove hard chemicals from the water; namely calcium and magnesium; this also improves taste and odor of water. Hard water can lead to scale build-up which leads to problems with plumbing and problems with your appliances including dishwasher and washing machine. Softening the



water feels silkier on the skin, is better for skin and hair, and you can actually use less soap, shampoo and laundry detergent.

The primary source of water for Walton County is the Upper Floridian Aquifer; the primary source of water for Bay County is Deer Point Lake. What we're looking for is not more than one part per million (PPM) of any of these common toxins that are in these waters: Chlorine, Lead and Copper. Environmen-

tal runoff and water treatment processes can add contaminants to water like Aluminum, Barium, Radium and Nitrate. In the warmer waters of summertime, Blue-Green Algae and Cyanotoxins are frequently found in the water and can produce toxins affecting the liver and nervous system.

Currently, A Superior Mechanical is offering a FREE WATER ASSESSMENT for your home or office. Just call our office at (850) 258-3225 to set your appointment, and we'll come out, totally free of charge, and check your water. If you have particulates in your water, we have numerous solutions to remove them, and we can discuss that. We're here for you and are happy to be your One-Stop Service Shop, and part of your Whole Home Wellness System.

For more information, feel free to call me at (850) 814-3822.

TOP 5
continued from page 5

you simply have to accept. Many of these concerns may be related to nutrition, hormones, inflammation, stress, metabolic health, or other factors that can often be improved.

The goal isn't to look 25 forever. The goal is to feel your best at every age.

5. Nobody cares more about your health than you do.

This may be the hardest truth on the list. Your doctor can guide you. We can educate

you. We can order tests, recommend treatments, and help create a plan. But we cannot make choices for you.

The patients who experience the greatest transformations are not necessarily the ones with the most resources or the perfect genetics. They are the ones

who become active participants in their own health. They ask questions. They stay curious. They follow through. They view their health as an investment rather than an expense.

Your healthcare team can walk beside you, but ultimately, you are the most important member of the team.

At the end of the day, these truths are not meant to make anyone feel guilty. They're meant to be empowering. Your

body is remarkably resilient. It is constantly adapting, healing, and responding to the choices you make each day. Small improvements, practiced consistently, can create extraordinary changes over time.

And if there's one thing I hope every patient understands, it's this: it's never too late to start listening to your body and giving it the care it deserves.

Stay Cool As A Cucumber

A SUPERIOR MECHANICAL

Veteran Owned Business

850.258.3225

A Superior Mechanical

Everything You Need For Your Family's Wellness:

- Air Conditioning
- Indoor Air Quality
- Plumbing • Electrical
- Water Filtration Systems

850-258-3225

ASuperiorMechanical.com

Plumbing Services:

• Plumbing Repair, Replacement & Installation	• Plumbing Fixture Replacement
• Water Heater Repair & Replacement	• Tankless Water Heater Services
• Toilet Repair & Replacement	• Commercial Plumbing
• Sewer & Drain Services	• Clogged Pipes & Drains
• Water Purification & Softening	• Reverse Osmosis
• New Construction Plumbing	• Camera Inspection

Waterline Repair

EMERGENCY PLUMBING

LICENSED & INSURED:

CAC1821064

CFC1431881

EC13004739

We are hiring HVAC and Plumbing Technicians in Walton and Okaloosa Counties. Call 850-258-3225.

EMERALD COAST NETWORKING

IS YOUR NET WORKING?

JOIN OUR GROUP. GROW YOUR NETWORK. GROW YOUR BUSINESS.

Where Emerald Coast professionals connect and refer business.

Building relationships. Growing businesses. Strengthening our community.

THURSDAYS 8:30 A.M.

DESTIN METHODIST CHURCH

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP: \$25

Visitors Welcome! (588) 260-7453 info@emeraldcoastnetworking.com EmeraldCoastNetworking.com

Floral Trends We’re Loving in 2026



BY KRISTIN LOCKHART, OWNER & LEAD DESIGNER, COUTURE FLORALS & EVENTS

One of my favorite parts of being a floral designer is watching wedding trends evolve while helping couples create celebrations that feel timeless and uniquely their own. Every year brings fresh inspiration, and 2026 is proving to be a beautiful blend of modern elegance, organic design and personal expression.

As we continue designing weddings and events across the Emerald Coast, several trends are standing out in a big way this year.

One trend that continues to dominate wedding receptions is the use of bud vase tablescapes. Couples are embracing the understated beauty of individual stems arranged in collections of small vases rather than large, traditional centerpieces. The look feels intentional, romantic and sophisticated while maintaining the minimalist aesthetic many couples are seeking. Bud vases create visual interest across a table while allowing guests to easily connect and converse.

Another trend we’re seeing is a move away from the traditional floral arbor and toward statement floral columns. Large floral installations create a dramatic focal point while offering a more contemporary, architectural feel. Whether framing a ceremony or anchoring a reception space, floral columns make an impact without overwhelming the venue.

I’m also loving the continued shift toward organic, nature-inspired floral design. Today’s couples are less interested in perfectly symmetrical arrangements and more drawn to florals that feel gathered, textured and naturally beautiful. These designs often incorporate movement and unexpected elements that create depth and visual in-



terest while still feeling refined and elegant.

If there’s one floral element making a statement this year, it’s hanging amaranthus. Its flowing texture adds drama and romance to bouquets, ceremony installations and reception designs.

We’re also seeing continued demand for calla lilies and other modern floral varieties with clean lines and sculptural forms. White-and-green palettes remain incredibly popular, offering a fresh, sophisticated look that complements nearly any setting.

But don’t get me wrong—modern neutrals aren’t the only trend here to stay.

Soft pastel palettes continue to be a favorite among brides, bringing romance and timeless beauty to wedding celebrations. We’re also seeing plenty of blue-toned palettes, especially along the Emerald Coast, where the colors naturally complement the water, sky and coastal surroundings. From soft blush and lavender to dusty blue and French blue, these color combinations continue to create stunning, memorable events.

While trends are always fun to follow, the most beautiful weddings are the ones that reflect the couple’s personality and story. Flowers should do more than decorate a space—they should help create an experience and leave guests with lasting memories.

The best part of 2026’s wedding trends is that there truly is something for everyone. Wheth-



er your style leans modern and minimalist, romantic and colorful or somewhere in between, today’s floral designs offer endless opportunities to create something uniquely your own. And honestly? We love it ... all of it.

Kristin Lockhart is owner and lead designer of Couture Florals & Events, serving couples across the Emerald Coast with custom floral and event design. Visit www.couturefloralsdesign.com.



COUTURE

FLORALS & EVENTS

WHERE EVERY DETAIL

Blooms

BEAUTIFULLY

DESTIN | 30A | EMERALD COAST

Custom floral and event design specializing in breathtaking weddings, elegant installations and unforgettable celebrations.



WEDDINGS • BRIDAL EVENTS • CORPORATE EVENTS
LUXURY INSTALLATIONS • FULL-SERVICE DESIGN

Schedule Your Consultation Today

COUTUREFLORALSDESIGN.COM
850-830-5865 | 214-733-1100



PERFECT

IN WALTON COUNTY

2027

NOMINATE YOUR FAVORITES! JULY 27 - AUG. 14



PerfectInWaltonCounty.com

From incredible dining to outdoor adventures, help spotlight the businesses, activities and people that make Walton County your perfect place.

 Community

Monarchs and Milkweed

By HELEN PETRE

Lots of living things are in our Monarchs (*Danaus plexippus*) are everyone's favorite butterfly and for good reason. There are a lot of them, they are easy to identify, and they have this amazing migration that everyone knows about. Besides flying hundreds of miles and only eating milkweed, monarchs are having a hard time, even though everyone loves them and tries to help them. Therein might lie the problem. We humans do not always understand how to help nonhumans.

People try to catch monarchs and raise them. This sounds fun, but it is not fun for the monarch. Just like you do not want to be put in a cage and have organisms watch while you go through your life stages, monarchs do not particularly enjoy it either. Humans also tend to think they should go to the store and buy milkweed. That sounds like a good idea, but stores are businesses that make money. They sell anything you will buy. Stores sell non-native and invasive plants, and for the most part, are not aware that they are doing this.

Migration

Historically, monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains migrate through the panhandle on

their way to winter in Mexico, but some deviate from that path and winter in south Florida. Can you blame them? Humans do that too. Are they staying for the nice weather? Maybe.

Some people think that monarchs are staying because we Floridians buy tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*), a nonnative milkweed that blooms all year.

Tropical milkweed is sold at stores and is treated with insecticides in the greenhouses where it is grown. Monarchs are insects. Insecticide kills insects. This is not good.

OE (*Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*)

Tropical milkweed increases the incidence of a monarch protozoan parasite we call OE. Adults carry this parasite, leaving some infected spores on milkweed plants as they feed and lay eggs. If monarchs migrate, they move on. If they stay, and they are infected, they stay infected, and so do all the other butterflies and newly hatched offspring that visit the plant.

OE was originally discovered in Florida around 1960. Spores of the protozoa are on the infected monarch's scales, especially on the abdomen. When the monarch feeds, or lays eggs, the spores get stuck onto the



milkweed. The next monarch that lands to lay eggs becomes infected. Often the offspring that hatch and eat, ingest the spores. Thus, infected monarchs cannot migrate, or fly, or mate, and will die.

Xerces

I recently started a monarch project with FWC and Xerces. I have learned a lot, and I am having tons of fun. We catch monarchs, use tape to collect scales from the monarch abdomen, and look at them under a microscope to identify OE. OE is not good for Florida monarchs, and there is more of it here than I would like to admit.

Nectar Plants

Monarchs need milkweed, but it is the caterpillars that eat the milkweed. Native milkweeds are hard to find in stores. In order to help monarchs, it is much



Asclepias tuberosa, Wikipedia



Purple thistle, Kerry Woods, NC State Ext.



Tropical milkweed. J. Garg. Florida Wildflower Foundation.

more effective to buy, transplant, or just let grow, some native nectar plants. Adult butterflies need energy for their trip, and they get this in the form of sugar, or nectar, from flowers.

For our Xerces project, we look for milkweed, but to find adults, we look for thistles (*Cirsium horridulum*). Thistles are spiny, but they are native, and provide excellent food for bees, butterflies, and birds. Thistles are the favorite nectar source for monarchs.

To help monarchs, plant nectar plants: *Liatris* species, *Bidens* species, asters, frostweed, goldenrod, and mistflower. Plant native plants that have evolved over thousands of years with monarchs. Native plants do not need fertilizer, pesticides, or even water. Just buy, or plant, native nectar plants, like the ones you see growing in fields, and recently burned areas.

Is it just because we are buying tropical milkweed that monarchs are infected with OE?

Probably not. None the less, it is never a good idea to buy non-native plants and expect native results.

Native milkweed

Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a common, orange, native milkweed that blooms in fall. In the beach dunes, pink swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*) blooms in summer. Everyone loves monarchs, and it is easier than you think to help them. Do nothing. Let nature plant native plants, and monarchs will come. Enjoy your native plants without pesticides, herbicides, mowing, and fertilizers, and enjoy your native pollinators.

Helen Petre is a retired biologist. If you have any questions or suggestions for articles, please email: petrehelen@gmail.com.



BOOTH SPACE SELLING OUT FAST

for the Largest and Best TWO-DAY Business Event in NorthWest Florida



Saturday & Sunday • October 10th & 11th, 2026
at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center



CLICK HERE TO REGISTER
OR FOR MORE INFO

SPONSORED BY



AND THE FOLLOWING AWESOME BUSINESS OWNERS

Mention You Saw This Ad in Life Media and Receive A 10% DISCOUNT on Your Booth Space



To Become a Vendor or Sponsor in This Great Event - Contact
Wes Fell (Event Promoter) at 850-353-2832 or WesFell@Cox.Net
More Info & Registration Form at www.ParadisePromotionsfl.com

This is Another Great Paradise Promotion

SS United States Nears Final Voyage as World's Largest Artificial Reef

After more than 50 years of retirement and several unsuccessful attempts at restoration, America's fastest ocean liner is preparing for one final record-breaking voyage—not across the Atlantic, but beneath the Gulf waters off Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

The historic SS United States is one step closer to beginning that next chapter. Okaloosa County officials recently announced that environmental remediation of the legendary vessel is complete. The ship remains docked in Mobile, Alabama, awaiting final approvals from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency before deployment as the world's largest artificial reef.

title no passenger ship has ever surpassed.

Rather than allowing the vessel to be scrapped, Okaloosa County chose a different path.

The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners approved the purchase on Oct. 1, 2024. After nearly 30 years docked in Philadelphia, the ship departed on Feb. 19, 2025, arriving in Mobile on March 3, 2025, where extensive environmental remediation began. That work was completed in May 2026, bringing the project significantly closer to deployment.

The approximately \$13 million effort is funded through tourism development revenues and partner contributions. Funding covers the ship's pur-

United States will become the crown jewel of one of the nation's most successful artificial reef programs. Since the 1970s, Okaloosa County has deployed 48 large vessels and developed nearly 600 artificial reefs in Gulf waters.

County officials expect the ship to generate significant tourism benefits as divers from around the world travel to experience the historic vessel. The project is also expected to support local hotels, restaurants, charter operators, retailers and other businesses throughout the region.

Equally important are the environmental benefits. Prepared under strict federal and state standards, the vessel will create vital habitat for marine life, including grouper, snapper, tuna, mahi-mahi, marlin, sea turtles and countless other species that support a healthy Gulf ecosystem.

For those concerned about preserving history, county leaders emphasize that the project does exactly that. Rather than disappearing into a scrapyard, the SS United States will continue telling her story beneath the Gulf as a thriving artificial reef

while a future museum shares her remarkable legacy with visitors from around the world.

For a ship that once connected continents, her final voyage will connect history, conservation and tourism in a way few projects ever have. Soon, the world's fastest ocean liner will begin her slowest journey—settling beneath the Gulf and becoming home to thousands of marine creatures while inspiring future generations of divers, anglers, scientists and visitors.

For updates on the project, visit destinfb.com/explore/eco-tourism/ssus.



SS United States Update (Photos taken May 2026)

For many local residents, the announcement marks another milestone in a project they have followed closely since Okaloosa County purchased the ship in 2024. What began as an ambitious vision to preserve an American icon has become one of the most unique environmental and tourism projects in the nation.

Launched in 1952, the SS United States carried four U.S. presidents, Hollywood celebrities, military personnel and countless travelers during her years at sea. More than seven decades later, she still holds the trans-Atlantic speed record, a

chase, towing, environmental preparation, deployment and support for a future land-based museum dedicated to preserving its history.

Partners include Visit Pensacola, the Coastal Conservation Association, Yamaha Rightwaters, the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Force Blue, NAUI Worldwide, the Explorers Club and Diver's Alert Network. Scientists from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution will conduct long-term research documenting how an entirely new reef ecosystem develops on the vessel from day one.

Once deployed, the SS

30A HOT TUBS

- Made in USA
- Installations & Removals
- Crane Services Available



- Free Delivery
- Cover & Steps Included
- 120 or 240 Volt

(850) 830-0003

30AHOTTUBS.COM | 33 Private Court, Miramar Beach, FL



New Service - Crab Island Express

Easiest, Most Affordable, and Fun way to Crab Island - \$69

(plus taxes and fees)

When the sun is out, and the water is pretty, hop on a pink tiki boat for a crab island adventure with family and friends. See 20% discount coupon in back of paper.

2 hr Open Party trip, max of 14 passengers • Mondays / Wednesdays / Thursdays / Sundays
Tikis Depart Top of the Hour 11am / 12 noon / 1 pm / 2 pm
B.Y.O.B. - Bottled water provided • Upscale Tiki Boat with a restroom, music, and water toys

Offered by Destin Private Tiki

Located on the Destin Harbor Boardwalk, at Heron Harbor Marina, 314 Harbor Blvd, Destin

Ph: 850-424-1119 | www.DestinTiki.com

Locals: Ask about the Locals Only Unlimited Access Pass

Only \$40 / mo plus taxes and fees x 12 mo.

You and free guest. Available exclusively to residents of Okaloosa and Walton Counties. See details for limitations and restrictions. Call Michelle 850-424-1119.

Donna Johns:

A Commissioner Who Chose Service Over Spotlight

In an era when politics often rewards the loudest voices, Donna Johns has taken a different path. She doesn't measure success by headlines or social media arguments. She measures it by projects completed, constituents helped, and decisions made with the long-term interests of Walton County in mind. A lifelong believer in service, Donna first took an oath to defend the Constitution while serving in the United States Air Force. Years later, she took another oath as Walton County Commissioner for District 4. Though the uniforms changed, the commitment remained the same: serve with integrity, protect the public trust, and put people before politics.

Since taking office in 2022, Donna has approached county government as a student first. She completed extensive training through the Florida Association of Counties, earning certifications in county government, ethics, planning, budgeting, infrastructure, emergency management, and leadership. She believes good decisions begin with understanding the issues—not simply reacting to them.

Her philosophy is simple: growth should be responsible, government should be accountable, and every tax dollar should be treated with respect. Constituents often find Donna at community meetings, ribbon cuttings, workshops, neighborhood discussions, or simply listening. She understands that being a county commissioner is

I've invested countless hours in professional development through the Florida Association of Counties, completing:

- Certified County Commissioner Program
- Advanced County Commissioner Program - Levels I, II & III
- County Government Education Program
- Legacy Leadership Program

Through these programs, I've gained valuable knowledge in areas such as:

- Land Use & Development
- Planning & Zoning
- Infrastructure
- Grant Management
- Governmental Operations
- Ethics & Accountability
- Stormwater Management
- Florida Law

The decisions made at the County level impact your quality of life, your economy, your environment, and your future. I believe those decisions should be made by someone who is prepared, informed, and committed to continuous learning.

I am ready to continue serving Walton County with the knowledge, experience, and dedication this position requires.

You deserve nothing less.

Vote

AUGUST 18

to KEEP ME WORKING for you



Donna Johns

WALTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER





far more than attending board meetings. It means studying complex issues, meeting with county staff, responding to residents, balancing competing interests, and making decisions that will shape the county long after today's headlines are forgotten. Perhaps what best defines Donna Johns is not a single vote or project, but her perspective on public service. She believes leadership is not about creating the world she wants. It is about helping create a better future for everyone. That means listening before speaking. Learning before deciding. Working before taking credit. In a political climate often defined by division, Donna Johns has chosen a quieter path—one rooted in preparation, integrity, and service. For her, public office has never been about holding a title. It has always been about honoring the trust placed in her by the people of Walton County.

Meet Andrea Campoblanco:

Executive Chef at Watersound Fountains

I'm currently the Executive Chef at Watersound Fountains, a resort-style senior living community. I moved to Florida two years ago after spending eight years in the Hudson Valley (New York), where I worked in several fine dining restaurants focused on seasonal, farm-to-table cuisine. During that time, I also worked at local farmers markets and in an orchard, experiences that gave me a deep appreciation for fresh ingredients, seasonality, and the relationship between chefs, farmers, and the local community.

perience a little bit of Peruvian gastronomy in a thoughtful and memorable way.

Lomo Saltado

Serves 4

Lomo saltado is a popular Peruvian stir-fry dish featuring marinated strips of steak, onions, tomatoes, and French fries, all cooked in a hot pan with a savory sauce. It is typically served with rice on the side.

Ingredients

700 g (1½ lb.) beef tenderloin, cut into thick strips

Vegetables

- 1 large red onion, cut into thick wedges
- 2 Roma tomatoes, cut into large wedges
- 1 fresh ají Amarillo (or 1 jalapeño), thinly sliced
- 2 scallions, cut into 2-inch pieces (optional)

es (optional)

A handful of fresh cilantro

Fries

- 3 large russet potatoes
- Neutral frying oil
- Salt
- Rice

2 cups cooked long-grain white rice

Preparing the Fries

Use the double-fry method. Cut the potatoes into thick batons.

Continued on page 22



Before moving to New York, I lived in Utah for a year and a half after arriving in the United States on a J-1 visa to work at Deer Valley resort. That experience is where my culinary career truly began and where I discovered my passion for hospitality.



I'm originally from Peru, and my culture continues to be one of my biggest inspirations in the kitchen. I have a deep passion for Peruvian cuisine and love finding ways to incorporate those flavors into my cooking while honoring the local ingredients around me.

My cooking style is inspired by seasonality, local products, and the connection between food, culture, and community. Through my food, like the recipe to follow, I hope to give people the opportunity to ex-

- 2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp neutral oil (grapeseed or avocado oil)
- Sauce
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar or white vinegar
- 1 tsp oyster sauce
- 2 tbsp beef stock
- 1 tsp ají Amarillo paste (best way to make ají Amarillo is with frozen ají Amarillo)

CHECK OUT OUR NEWLY RENOVATED LOCATION!



GET OUT. GET ACTIVE. BE INSPIRED. LIVE YOUR PASSION.

Silver Sands Premium Outlets



Chasing the “Weeeeeee!”



By STEPHENIE CRAIG, JOURNEY BRAVELY

When was the last time you remember experiencing such fun and glee that your face hurt from smiling and your body was overwhelmed with joy? Do you remember being a kid pushed super high on the swing, getting a delicious, cold popsicle from the ice cream truck or riding a bike fast with the wind in your face? Little children who have not yet been taught to be measured and self-conscious

say, “Weeeeeee!” when they have deeply joyful experiences. “Weeeeeee!” is another way to say “I love life,” “This is amazing,” “I was made to live in this moment.”

Somewhere along the way of growing up and adulthood, you can begin to lose both the pursuit and the childlike fascination with joy. You can lose the “Weeeeeee!” in life and days can run into weeks tending to responsibilities and forgetting that life was also made for joy regardless of your age. Loss of joy and over-focusing on the hard, uncomfortable experiences in life can leave you feeling emotionally numb, depressed, exhausted, lacking purpose and generally grumpy. Adult life is best lived in a state of balance between taking care of business and consistent, intentional pursuit of “Weeeeeee!” moments.

You might view joy as an

extra, unnecessary, low priority in life. However, it’s hard to stay motivated and emotionally checked in if life is primarily full of bills, stress, obligations, annoying people, exhausting experiences and unengaging tasks. Your body was designed to also experience a sense of passion, fun, purpose, creativity, light-heartedness, laughter, connection and feeling lit up from the inside out.

So, you know you need more joy and “Weeeeeee!” moments in life, but how can you make it happen?

6 Ways to Chase the “Weeeeeee!” Moments

- 1. Remember and learn from earlier versions of yourself.** Think about what used to spark joy and light you up as a kid. Maybe it was singing, dancing, art, reading, bike riding, rides at the fair, catching bugs, fishing, running fast, splashing, rolling in the grass, playing with your pet or building. Remember times of laughing, silliness and being un-self-conscious and notice what you were doing at the time.
- 2. Notice your body sensations.** Think about where you felt the joy and the “Weeeeeee!” in your body in childhood. Maybe your face hurt from laughing,



- your chest felt warm and full, your limbs felt light and floaty or you felt energetic.
- 3. Connect the past with the present.** Try noticing when your body feels the joy sensations now. Maybe being in the ocean, riding in a boat, riding your bike, seeing dolphins, being in nature, creative pursuits or some other current experience gives you a “Weeeeeee!” feeling if you pay closer attention.
- 4. Return to past experiences of joy.** Try bringing childhood joyful activities into your adult life. Write a story, pick up painting, make a fun cake, read a book you have loved, make a handmade card, roll down a hill with your kids, catch a big fish, watch the squirrels, build Lego, tie-dye a shirt or ride a roller coaster.
- 5. Track your joy.** Try keeping a list in your notes app of “Weeeeeee!” activities. Then try planning intentional time in your calendar each week for those activities. Start with once

- a week for 15 to 30 minutes and work your way up to more amounts of time that work into your life.
 - 6. Reflect.** Over time, reflect on how life feels different as you look for and intentionally incorporate more “Weeeeeee!” moments into your life. Use reminders in your phone and on sticky notes for a few months to keep you on track with your practice of joy until it becomes a habit.
- If you are a person who experienced a difficult childhood, it may be hard to find historical times of joy to guide you. That’s okay. You aren’t alone. You can start noticing now what makes you want to say, “Weeeeeee!” and intentionally pursue those activities while you cultivate a practice of joy for the first time. Have fun as you chase the “Weeeeeee!” in your day-to-day life. Connect with us along your journey for coaching and counseling at Journeybravely.com.



Audiologist Dr. Mandy Rounseville-Norgaard
Accepting New Patients
850-517-6977

42 Business Centre Drive, Unit 306
Summit Building • Miramar Beach
Check us out on Facebook!

miramarbechaudiologyassociates.com



**Dr. Chern, MD,
Sue Griffin, ARNP
Presley Pulse, APRN**

Look Healthy, Feel Alive!

Personalized Hormone & Wellness Care

At The Hormone Restoration Center, we help you restore balance, energy, and confidence through personalized, science-backed care—designed for your body and your life.

Bio-Identical Hormone Therapy • Thyroid Optimization • Weight Loss • Anti-Aging & Aesthetics

Miramar Beach, Florida
850-837-1271
thehormonerestorationcenter.com

BEST IN DESTIN





Stephenie Craig, LCSW
Therapist
918-221-9987 | stepheniecraig@journeybravely.com

Todd Craig
Life & Leadership Coach
918-740-1232 | todd@journeybravely.com

www.journeybravely.com



Medicare High Deductible G Plan vs. Advantage PPO



By CHRISTIAN REGALADO

I've been wanting to write this article for a while now because there isn't a lot of discussion going on with retirees about the Medicare High Deductible G plan. With the rising costs and shrinking benefits offered with Medicare Advantage PPOs, this plan is worth exploring. More and more carriers are trying to push people into HMO plans because they cost insurers less, but I rarely recommend HMO plans in our area due to their limited network, need for referrals, and delays and risks that may come with prior authorization. This is why many locals choose a Supplement plan G or N if it fits their budget, or an Advantage PPO plan.

Many Medicare Advantage PPOs across the country have been consistently raising costs and trimming benefits due to recent changes enforced by CMS. Specialist copays are climbing. Dental, vision, and hearing allowances that once felt generous are now more limited. Some carriers in certain areas have been cancelling their PPOs altogether. So far, we still have decent options here, but the benefits are waning.

Our retiree population is smaller and more spread out than a city market, which means insurers have less leverage to build deep, competitive networks here. Advantage plans route members toward our one hospital in Miramar Beach, or facilities in Fort Walton Beach

and Destin. But if you need a specialist who isn't on staff locally, or you split time between 30A and a home up north, the PPO's flexibility gets tested fast.

PPOs are sold on freedom. See more doctors, in or out of network, the brochures promise. Technically, that's accurate, but many retirees discover the catch only when they need it most. Out-of-network care here often triggers higher coinsurance. Imaging, hospital admissions, and specialty referrals may require prior authorization before a procedure can even be scheduled. Specialist copays can run \$50-\$100 per visit, and add up quickly for anyone managing more than one condition.

High-Deductible Plan G is a lower premium Medicare Supplement, not an Advantage plan, and that distinction is exactly why it's an option worth considering for those considering a lower cost plan. Most premium costs are well under \$100 per month, but vary based on the carrier.

For 2026, the HD-G total deductible is \$2,950. Think of that as your max out of pocket. There's a \$283 upfront deductible required before any coverage begins. Once that's met, you pay 20% coinsurance (Medicare pays the other 80%) until you reach the full \$2,950. After that, the plan pays 100% of covered Medicare Part A and Part B expenses, excluding premiums, for the rest of the year. Compare that to a PPO, where a difficult health year could mean a higher out-of-pocket maximum and fewer care options. With HD-G, you have a much lower worst-case number, but the main selling point is the extensive network with no referrals or prior authorizations.

The catch is that the HD-G plan only supplements Medicare parts A and B. This means you will still need to choose a



stand-alone Prescription Drug Plan just like any other supplement plan. There are also no extra perks like silver-sneakers gym memberships, dental, hearing, or eyewear coverage. Depending on your situation, Medicare Advantage PPO or even an HMO may be your best choice. However, it is important to understand all of your options so that you can make the best decision.

Call (850) 687-7606 or email me, Christian Regalado, at christian@30ahealthins.com anytime. I will be happy to be your trusted local contact for navigating this important decision.

MARIJUANA REMAINS MEDICAL IN FLORIDA

Elevate Your Wellness in 2025 with Medical Marijuana

BOOK A VISIT!

PANAMA CITY

MIRAMAR BEACH

PENSACOLA

MARIANNA



THEKAYALIFE.COM

850-213-1215

Obtain Your Physician Consultation and Med Card for a Healthier, Happier You!



Bluewater

PLASTIC SURGERY

Steven J. Clark, MD, DMD, FACS

Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Michelle Sasala MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner/Aesthetic Injector

Maya Newell, Licensed Esthetician





TURN BACK THE CLOCK!

Non-Surgical Treatments

Botox Bar

Facial Fillers

Laser Hair Removal

Laser Pigmentation and Wrinkles

New - Ultra Clear Laser

Surgical Procedures

Breast Augmentation

Breast Lift or Reduction

Tummy Tuck

Mommy Makeover

Liposuction (Vaser, 360)

Facelift, Necklift, Eyelift

Gynecomastia (Male Breast Reduction)

Post Weight Loss

Labiaplasty

Skincare & Aesthetician Services

Medical Grade Skin Care

Facials

Diamond Glow

Dermaplane

Peels

Book your appointment today!

Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach

(850) 530-6064 | bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

Sean of the South: Ball Games



BY SEAN DIETRICH

I remember going to a ball game with my old man. I remember the smells. Stale beer, human sweat, and the odor of unnaturally pink hotdogs that turned your bowels into stone.

I remember before the game, things got very quiet. All 30-odd thousand people rose. The throngs of stadium chairs creaking sounded like the world was splitting.

Everyone’s dad put down his non-evangelical beverage, SLOWLY, careful not to spill. Thousands of American grandpas removed lit cigars and balanced them, with surgical-like

care, onto armrests.

The anthem was played.

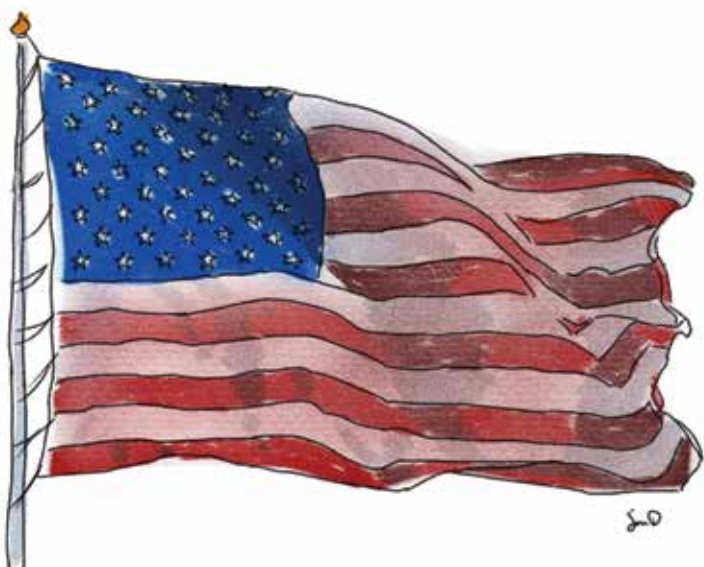
Back in those days, the anthem was handled differently than it is today. Back then, guest artists did not take the mound, wearing asymmetric haircuts and crotch-revealing trousers. Neither did singers demonstrate 10 minutes of vocal gymnastics until their anthem performance resembled a febrile seizure.

No. Back then the organ played. And everybody sang.

We used to be a nation of singers. Remember that? Singing was just normal for us. Our childhood classrooms had upright console pianos, and our teachers knew how to play them. Mrs. Moore would bang out “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” before each class. Mrs. Smith played “This Land is Your Land” every Friday after the Pledge.

Well, that was a long time ago.

Recently, I attended a modern baseball game. It was a very different experience. My wife and I ordered \$34 nachos from



a kiosk, and the cashier asked whether I wanted to leave a 25-percent tip. Beers were \$18 apiece.

During the game, a huge LED timer runs between pitches so TV producers can fit in more commercials on broadcasts. The bases are now bigger, the distance between bases is now shorter. They’re changing our game.

But none of that bothered me. Not really. A Major League park is what it is. Get over it. At a ball game, you get what you get, and you don’t pitch a fit.

What I was most interested in, truthfully, was the anthem.

I was curious about it. I wondered: Do people still sing together the way they did 40 years ago?

After all, our world is nothing like it was. Our current world, for example, is almost devoid of classroom pianos. In 1938 the New York Times reported that 5.8 million pianos were sold in America each year. Whereas last year we barely sold 30,000.

So anyway, the moment of truth arrived. The announcer asked everyone to rise for the anthem.

People stood. Chairs creaked. Dads placed beers beneath seats. People who were vaping

expelled a final blast and hid their devices from security.

Everyone looked at the flag. The music began.

And...

Everyone knew the words. Everyone sang. The stadium sounded like it was going to crumble beneath the volume of mass singing.

The boy next to me held his hat over his heart, singing so loudly the vein in his head showed. The old man beside the boy was singing even louder.

But when the song finished, the people were not. In fact, the crowd was only just getting warmed up. They kept cheering. For whole minutes, they cheered.

Fists pumped into the air. People were hugging. A flag waved on the mega-tron screen. The sound of unified voices was engulfing. Fighter jets flew overhead. Fireworks. People were amazingly, wholeheartedly, demonstratively together. Even if only for a few seconds in time.

And in that beautiful moment of oneness, that moment of palpable joy, do you know something?

Nobody seemed to care about Cracker Barrel’s sign.

DESTIN SMOKE SHOP

16055 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin

Next to the Destin Walmart

CBD • Delta 8 • Kratom • E-Cig • Walking Humidors

Hookah • Pipe • Vape • Cigarette • Tobacco • Novelty Items

850.837.0237

DestinSmokeShop@gmail.com



10% Off Purchase

w/Coupon (Excluding cigarettes)

CAMPOBLANCO
continued from page 19

tons. Soak them in cold water for 30 minutes. Drain and dry

thoroughly. Fry at 300°F for 5–6 minutes. Let them cool completely (Put them in the freezer) Fry again at 375°F until deep golden and crispy.

Season immediately with salt.

Return the beef to the pan. Pour in the prepared sauce. Toss everything together for 15–20 seconds, just until the sauce lightly coats the beef and vegetables. Fold most of the fries into the stir-fry at the very end so they absorb some of the sauce while maintaining their crispness. Reserve a few fries for plating. Finish with freshly chopped cilantro.

Preparing the Beef

Pat the beef completely dry. Season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. In a separate bowl, whisk together all of the sauce ingredients.

Heat a wok or heavy carbon-steel skillet until it is just beginning to smoke. Add the oil.

Sear the beef for 45–60 seconds per side. Do not overcrowd the pan or it will steam the meat. Remove the beef immediately and set aside.

Tips:

Beef tenderloin delivers the most tender texture. Cook the beef in small batches to maintain maximum heat and achieve the characteristic smoky flavor known as wok hei.

Avoid overcooking the tomatoes; they should stay bright, juicy, and hold their shape.

The onions should remain slightly crisp.

Stir-Frying

Using the same blazing-hot pan, add the red onions and stir-fry for about 45 seconds, aji Amarillo and tomatoes. Toss for only 20–30 seconds. The vegetables should remain crisp.



ROOF PRO

Roofing Specialists

Most Awarded Roofing Contractor

State Licensed • License # CCC133693

Shingle - Metal - Tile Roof Replacement Experts

FREE Estimates within 24 Hrs.

 Scan this QR Code for a 5% Discount!





A Pastor's Ponderings: **Priorities**



BY REV. PETE HYDE

It is already in the 80s outside and the humidity is higher than the temperature. I sit at the table in the breakfast room enjoying the first cup of coffee of the morning. Neil Diamond sings “Cracklin Rose” on Alexa. Just outside the breakfast room window, a rose bush has burst into bloom with six new red roses stretching their delicate, velvety petals toward the sky. Each one is perfectly formed and pointed toward their creator as if raising their hands in praise and thanksgiving to God. A tangle of jasmine has taken over the flower bed. An azalea bush is showing its new growth as a promise of a full bloom of pink flowers to come in the spring. The willow tree hangs its branches like a light green cur-



tain. The sun is peaking in and out of the clouds of a Florida morning. I pause for a moment to just relax. “If I Could put Time in a Bottle” by Jim Croce plays on the radio, followed by the “Sounds of Silence” by Simon and Garfunkel. “And the people bowed and prayed to the neon god they made.”

Most of us grew up, lived, and continue to live out the mantra of “work hard and you can be a success.” We set for ourselves unrealistic goals and objectives that became the priorities of our lives. They often took precedence over the really important things in life, like our spouses, children and grandchildren. These work/success priorities also took precedence over our relationship to God and our call to serve Him. Even after retirement, many have filled their lives so full of activities that God and family have many times not been given a chance to reenter the priority list. The words of the song have come true. “And the people bowed and prayed to the neon god they made.”

As a gift to my son on his graduation from law school and to my daughter on her wedding day, I gave each one a leather-bound journal in which I reflected on and recorded memories and thoughts of their growing up years. One of the reflections I shared in each journal was my regret for spending so much time “working” and the priority “work” had taken in my life as they were growing up. I’m not saying we didn’t share special, God-given times, but I truly believe there could have

so, they bring beauty and light and inspiration to all who would notice and learn. Anne Murray sings, “And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.”

“Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

“Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint.”

Let’s take some time to reflect on the labors and priorities of our lives. Take a moment to tell your spouse you love them. Touch base with your kids and grandkids today. Most of all lift your eyes toward heaven like the roses and thank God for the blessings and gifts His creation, love and mercy.

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



**Ear, Nose, Throat, Allergies
Hearing**

Facial Plastic Issues
From newborns to the elderly

Stop suffering from painful sinus issues.
Services offered by Emerald ENT are comprehensive and unique to this area.



We are thrilled to announce our second location in Panama City Beach.

12909 Panama City Beach Parkway, Panama City Beach, FL 32407

Accepting New Appointments!

(850) 797-6191 | Emerald-ENT.com

141 Mack Bayou Loop, Suite 102, Santa Rosa Beach
12909 Panama City Beach Pkwy., Panama City Beach, FL 32407



Published Monthly
Mailed FREE to the communities of Sandestin, Miramar Beach (32550), Emerald Bay (32541)

P.O. Box 1424
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

Editor & Publisher

Dave White
dave@southwalton.life

Art Director

Kim Harper

Advertising Department

850-399-0228
sales@southwalton.life

SoWal Life assumes no financial liability for errors or omissions in printed advertising and reserves the right to reject/edit advertising or editorial submissions.

© Copyright 2026 SoWal Life

• Path of Grace Thrift Stores •

RECOVERY THROUGH FAITH



Please Consider Donating to Support Women in Recovery and to Reunite Families

ITEMS NEEDED FOR STORE & MINISTRY:

Artwork — Paddle Boards — Vehicles — Kayaks — Apparel — Appliances — Boats
Jewelry — Household Goods — Furniture — Electronics

Come in to see our beautiful chalk painted furniture!

10962 U.S. Hwy. 98 W, Miramar Beach | 850-654-8500 Call for Pickup



Christian Capitalist: Breanna Becker - Serving Those Who Served



By RICH SANDERS

Breanna Becker, a Christian Capitalist and entrepreneur, owns a marketing company with an innovate approach to help all kinds of businesses with their marketing and development needs. Recently, Breanna has shifted the focus of her work to assisting non-profits that have military or faith-based initiatives.

Just like so many of our neighbors, Breanna moved to the Emerald Coast after she fell in love with it visiting her mother, who lives in Sandestin. Once the combination of the entrepreneurial spirit and sug-

ar-white sand took hold of her heart, she sold her house and left her executive position with a national restaurant group in Texas and moved here three years ago!

An active member of the Destiny Worship Center, Breanna embodies the ethic of the Christian Capitalist: the more we make, the more we give. She puts her neighbors in need at the center of her day, every day.

Her company, Ignite Collective Agency, started off working with businesses of all types in our community. Over the last year, however, her work has evolved from traditional marketing and business development into something much more mission-driven. Ignite has intentionally shifted its focus toward serving non-profit organizations, particularly those supporting veterans, military families, faith-based initiatives, and efforts to combat human trafficking.

Breanna was drawn to this work for a simple reason: her



clients' purpose matters to her! After years in corporate leadership and business development, she realized that her greatest passion is helping organizations with meaningful missions expand their reach, strengthen their systems, and connect with the people who believe in their cause. Whether it's supporting veteran wellness programs,

faith-centered community initiatives, or organizations restoring hope to vulnerable populations, her goal is to help good people do more good.

Breanna notes that: "the core of my work is about building relationships, creating sustainable growth, and helping mission-driven leaders amplify their impact. When strong systems, authentic storytelling, and servant leadership come together, organizations can spend less time struggling for resources and more time changing lives!"

About this time last year,

Breanna called me with an urgent request that exemplifies her spirit of service. A church from Houston was visiting the Emerald Coast with dozens of men, women and children. When their bus driver abandoned them for the return trip to Texas, they sought refuge near Destiny. Breanna rallied her friends and family to provide food, drinks and comfort for these fine people while they waited ten hours in the heat for their backup bus driver to arrive!

Breanna 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 Breanna Becker!

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



Did they even consider bamboo straws?

Theo is a little turtle on a big mission...

Theo the Turtle is here to save the threatened sea turtles. Help support the cause—a portion of every Theo purchase goes directly to charity.

Plushies • Backpacks • Bamboo Straws • Keychains
Coloring Books • Children's Books • Hats • Pillows and More

Shop www.theotheturtle.com

Honoring 250 Years of America

Enjoy 20% Savings On All Outdoor Furniture

Thoughtfully crafted pieces designed for gathering, relaxing, and creating lasting memories outdoors.

A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY THANK YOU

Spend \$5000 on outdoor furniture & Receive an Additional

\$250 Off

In-stock items only.
Offer cannot be combined with other promotions.
Sale Ends July 31, 2026.

CLAY GARDEN AND GIFTS, 4808 E COUNTY HWY 30A, SEAGROVE BEACH, FL 32459

Take it Outside: Finding the Right Outdoor Furniture

Outdoor living along Florida’s Scenic Highway 30A demands outdoor furniture that balances vibrant style with extreme durability. Outdoor spaces serve as true extensions of the home. However, the region’s intense sun, heavy humidity, salt air, and sudden rainstorms will quickly destroy low-quality materials. To survive the Gulf Coast climate, material selection is your most critical decision.

Southern-based company, Summer Classics, has engineered its outdoor collections to withstand high UV exposure, humidity and relentless salt spray. They offer many options in material and style that will fit your style. Their proprietary N-Dura UV Resin Wicker will not peel or fade under intense Gulf Coast sunlight, unlike some of the less expensive brands. Inexpensive plastic wicker becomes brittle, leading to cracking and unraveling within a season or two. Stainless Steel, brass and powder-coated aluminum are best to look for when wanting metal designs.

Teak is another great option

for our harsh climate. Summer Classics as well as Three Birds Teak use only premium plantation grown Marine grade teak. Teak's high oil content prevents it from shrinking or splintering under intense heat. Marine-grade stainless steel hardware is used to resist salt-water pitting and rusting. Teak furniture tends to be heavier than other types of furniture, making it a great option if the strong afternoon breeze and severe coastal storms are a concern. When left exposed to the coastal elements, the natural honey-golden hue of the teak will gradually oxidize over a few months, shifting into a classic, silvery-gray patina.

Another quality product is Envirowood. It is a high-density polyethylene that is completely non-porous and salt-inert, meaning it cannot absorb moisture or rot. Seaside Casual has mastered this furniture line, using marine-grade stainless steel fasteners or painted hardware. The Envirowood is infused with UV-stabilized pigments. Because the color is consistent



throughout the entire piece rather than just painted on the surface, the furniture resists fading, peeling, and "chalking" under direct sunlight. It also handles thermal expansion cleanly without warping or cracking.

If your outdoor living space is fully exposed to the elements or sits directly on the beach where

salt spray is constant, sticking to the powder-coated aluminum, marine-grade polymer, N-Dura resin wicker collections, Teak, or Envirowood will yield the longest lifespan with the lowest maintenance. Always insist on premium outdoor textiles like Sunbrella for cushions and umbrellas. These fabrics resist UV

fading, mold, and mildew while staying easy to clean. Selecting the right furnishings and materials ensures your patio, deck, or pool surround remains a beautiful oasis for years.

Stop by Clay Garden and Gift at 4808 E Scenic Hwy. 30A in Seagrove Beach to see these furniture lines and our Outdoor Living Cottage.



garden • pottery
blessings

4808 E Scenic Hwy 30A
Seagrove Beach, FL 32459
850.231.2150
Info@Clay30A.com



Arts & Music

Emerald Coast Theatre Company Presents "The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt" at SEASIDE®'S Ampitheatre

This summer, families are invited to uncover the secrets, stories, and history of one of America's most beloved beach towns as Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) in collaboration with SEASIDE® proudly presents The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt. This original, family-friendly summer production takes audiences on an interactive adventure in the heart of Seaside every Monday at 6 p.m. through August 3 at the Seaside Amphitheater. All performances are free and open to the public.

Written by ECTC founders Anna and Nathanael Fisher, The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt combines live theatre, local history, and plenty of fun as audiences follow clues and meet colorful characters with Southern charm while discovering what makes Seaside the #1 Best Family Beach Vacation Destination in the Nation, according to U.S. News & World Report.

The cast consists of Maxwell Jenns-Binetti as Tex, as a cartoonishly fast cattle dog from Dallas; Teresa Lombardi as Dolly, a charming Labradoodle from Nashville with an extraordinary nose and a habit of breaking into song; Karly Johnson as Peaches, a confident English Bulldog from Atlanta who



believes she's always in charge; and Lucca Bucalo as Bud, Seaside's earnest dachshund ambassador and self-appointed tour guide. Performances are directed by Trenton Bainbridge, with set design by Rebeca Lake, costumes by Taylor Walker, and props by Ora Wolfgram. This production invites audiences of all ages to join the hunt while learning about the people, places, and stories that helped shape Seaside into the iconic community it is today.

"The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt is a wonderful way for families to experience live theatre together while learning about the unique history and charm of Seaside," said Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director of ECTC. "We're

excited to expand our great partnership with SEASIDE® and continue to tell stories and create experiences that entertain, educate, and inspire our community."

"This production represents the very best of what collaboration can accomplish," says Seaside Community Development Corporation General Manager Kevin Boyle. "Together with Emerald Coast Theatre Company, we set out to create something that is both entertaining and educational, giving children and families an opportunity to experience the story of Seaside and the principles of New Urbanism through the imagination and wonder of live theater."

Join ECTC at the Seaside Amphitheater for an evening of



storytelling, music, and laughter. Whether you're a local resident or visiting the Emerald Coast, The Great Seaside Treasure Hunt offers a one-of-a-kind adventure through the history, landmarks, and legends that have made Seaside one of America's most treasured beach communities.

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





Studio 237 Music Lessons

Piano • Voice • Guitar • Bass • Drums
Ukulele • Song Writing and Shofar

Call Today for your appointment 850-231-3199

237 Dawson Rd, Santa Rosa Beach

Visit www.Studio237Music.com



SEASON 14



COME FROM AWAY

SEPTEMBER 10-27



THE 39 STEPS

OCTOBER 15-25



MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 3-20



DOLLY PARTON 9 to 5 THE MUSICAL

JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 7



DEAR JACK DEAR LOUISE

FEBRUARY 18-28



FROZEN THE MUSICAL

MAY 6-23



The Heart of ECTC YOU

ECTC would like to thank all of our donors, sponsors, patrons, and volunteers for their continued support.

Purchase your VIP membership and get first pick at reserved seating and other wonderful benefits!



Tickets or info, call 850.684.8323 or visit EmeraldCoastTheatre.org

1000 Grand Boulevard, Suite 204 | Miramar Beach, FL 32136

A Decade of Gratitude: Thank You David White

For the past ten years, Studio 237 Music Lessons in Santa Rosa Beach has been blessed with a wonderful opportunity to share our story, our students, and our passion for music through the pages of South Walton Life Newspaper. As we reflect on this decade-long partnership, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to David White for his generosity, encouragement, and commitment to building community through local journalism.

Music has a unique way of bringing people together. It inspires creativity, strengthens relationships, and enriches the lives of people of all ages. At Studio 237 Music Lessons, our mission has always been to help students discover the joy of music while fostering a sense of connection throughout our community. The opportunity to regularly share articles in South Walton Life has helped us extend that mission far beyond the walls of our studio.

David White has consistently recognized the value of local stories and community-centered organizations. By providing a platform for Studio 237 Music Lessons over the past decade, he has helped shine a light on the importance of music education and the positive impact it has on families throughout the South Walton area. Through student achievements, musical insights, educational articles, and stories of inspiration, countless readers have been encouraged to appreciate the role music plays in



Ray Cyr, left, and Dave White with a copy of SOWAL Life's first issue.

enhancing our lives.

Local newspapers are more than just sources of information; they are the heartbeat of a community. They celebrate accomplishments, preserve local history, and connect neighbors through shared experiences. David's dedication to South Walton Life Newspaper has created a welcoming space where businesses, artists, educators, and residents can come together and support one another. His efforts have helped strengthen the sense of community that makes South Walton such a special place to live.

We are especially thankful for David's belief in the importance of arts education. In a world that often moves at a fast pace, music provides a source of comfort, inspiration, and personal growth. The opportunity to discuss these benefits with readers year after year has allowed us to reach families who may never have considered

music lessons and has helped cultivate a vibrant local music community.

On behalf of our students, families, instructors, and supporters, we extend our heartfelt thanks to David White and South Walton Life Newspaper for ten years of friendship, support, and partnership. Your

commitment to serving our community has made a meaningful difference, and we are honored to have been part of the stories shared through your publication.

We look forward to many more years of celebrating music, community, and the people who make South Walton a place

where creativity and connection continue to flourish.

Thank you, David, for your kindness, your vision, and your unwavering support of Studio 237 Music Lessons and the arts in our community where the "Locals get it!"

Sincerely, Ray and Lisa Cyr



ENTERTAIN. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

20 SINFONIA GULF COAST

YEARS DEMETRIUS FULLER
MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

YOUR SYMPHONY EXPERIENCE ... REDEFINED

SINFONIA INITIATIVES



Link Up IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CARNEGIE HALL

Sinfonietta Strings & Intermediate Strings

Sinfonia Youth Orchestra

Musicians in Schools

Guest Artists in Schools

Live orchestra performances for students

Ensembles in Residence in the schools
in partnership with Florida State University

Educational outreach remains at the forefront of Sinfonia's mission. Since it was established in 2007, Sinfonia Gulf Coast has introduced music to more than 220,000 children in Okaloosa, Walton, and Bay Counties.

Donate today to help Sinfonia bring music, education, and the arts to our schools.

SinfoniaGulfCoast.org | 850.460.8800



YOUR SUPPORT
IS INSTRUMENTAL
TO OUR SUCCESS

Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its music education and community engagement initiatives throughout Northwest Florida.

SEASON PRESENTING EDUCATION SPONSORS



ROBERT M. FERGUSON
MEMORIAL FUND FOR
MUSIC EDUCATION

SILVER SANDS
PREMIUM OUTLETS
A HOWARD GROUP AND SIMON CENTER



Serving ALL of Walton County...ONE STUMP AT A TIME!

850-803-2205

www.StumpGrindingBySteve.com

[@StumpGrindSteve](https://www.facebook.com/StumpGrindSteve)

CAA & CVHN Partner for a Second Summer of Camp Girl Power

Children’s Volunteer Health Network (CVHN) and the Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA) of Walton County are proud to present the second annual Camp Girl Power—a free, joy-filled summer experience for girls entering 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade in Walton County.

Building on the success of last year’s inaugural camps, which welcomed more than 80 girls across two locations, Camp Girl Power returns this summer with expanded programming in Miramar Beach, Freeport, and DeFuniak Springs, making this empowering experience more accessible to families throughout Walton County.



(former Orvis location next to Kilwin’s)
625 Grand Blvd., Miramar Beach

790 N. 9th St., DeFuniak Springs

Wednesday, July 29
9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Freeport Community Center
112 Highway 20 W. (behind City Hall)

Tuesday, August 4 | 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Walton County Fairgrounds
790 N. 9th St., DeFuniak Springs

Monday, August 3
9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Grand Boulevard Town Center

Wednesday, August 5 | 9 a.m.–2 p.m.
Walton County Fairgrounds

Designed to celebrate the power of being yourself, each camp day is packed with engaging experiences including yoga with instructors from Studio Thirty A, hands-on art projects, music with 2025 ‘Made in Walton County’ Songwriters Showdown winner Sammi Accola, creative expression, wellness activities, games, and plenty

of opportunities to make new friends in a supportive, uplifting environment.

The camps are completely free, but registration is required and space is limited.

“Watching Camp Girl Power come to life last summer was incredibly rewarding,” said Megan Trent, Executive Director of Children’s Volunteer Health Network. “The joy, confidence, and friendships that blossomed throughout the day reminded us just how important it is to create spaces where girls feel seen, encouraged, and empowered. We’re excited to bring the experience to even more families this year and continue building a community where every girl knows her voice matters and her creativity shines.”

“One of the most rewarding parts of Camp Girl Power is seeing how the arts create opportunities for connection, confidence, and self-discovery,” said Jennifer Steele, President & CEO of the Cultural Arts

Alliance. “By partnering with Children’s Volunteer Health Network, we’re combining creativity and wellness in a way that gives young girls the tools to express themselves, build resilience, and support one another. It’s a wonderful example of what can happen when organizations come together with a shared commitment to investing in the next generation.”

Camp Girl Power is presented by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and Children’s Volunteer Health Network with generous support from the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation’s Galentine’s Fundraiser, The St. Joe Community Foundation, and United Way Emerald Coast.

To learn more or register, visit CulturalArtsAlliance.com/upcoming-events or call the CAA office at 850.622.5970.



- ✓ Receive one season pass to Concerts in the Village.
- ✓ Enjoy early admission access to Concerts in the Village.
- ✓ Receive discounts on Festival of the Arts merchandise.
- ✓ Receive membership rates on select MKAF events.

BECOME A MEMBER
- JOIN TODAY!

MKAF.org



ART, MUSIC, AND MORE
FREE EVENT!
OCTOBER 25 & 26



THURSDAY NIGHT
CONCERT SERIES



CHANGE A LIFE -
SUPPORT THE ARTS!
160+ ARTSREACH
PROGRAMS



BY DON CARTER,
SECURE VISION

Summer is here, and across the Emerald Coast, communities are seeing what they wait all year for: full parking lots, packed pools, busy amenity spaces, and high occupancy.

For HOA boards and property managers, however, peak season brings a different challenge. Every arriving resident and vacation guest brings multiple connected devices, creating a dramatic increase in demand on a community's internet infrastructure.

A typical vacationing family may arrive with smartphones, tablets, laptops, streaming devices, gaming systems, smart watches, and connected home technology. Multiply that across

hundreds of units, and a network that performed well in February can quickly be tested in July.

When connectivity issues occur, residents rarely see them as technical problems. They see interrupted streaming, dropped video calls, buffering televisions, and unreliable Wi-Fi around the pool or clubhouse. The result is frustration, complaints, and in some cases negative reviews that impact the overall perception of the community.

The strongest-performing communities don't wait for complaints to identify issues. They take a proactive approach by evaluating network performance before occupancy reaches its peak.

Key areas boards should consider include:

- Available bandwidth during peak occupancy periods
- Wi-Fi coverage in amenity areas such as pools, fitness cen-



ters, clubhouses, and outdoor gathering spaces

- Aging equipment that may no longer support modern device demands
- Network design that separates resident, guest, and operational traffic

- Visibility into performance issues before residents experience them

Internet service has evolved from a convenience into a critical utility. Residents and guests expect the same reliable connectivity they experience at home,

regardless of whether they are visiting for a week or living in the community year-round.

Communities that invest in reliable connectivity create a better resident experience, reduce support issues, and position themselves for long-term success.

As occupancy reaches its highest levels of the year, now is the ideal time to evaluate whether your community's network is performing as expected and identify opportunities for improvement before small issues become larger problems.

Secure Vision works with associations throughout our area to design, implement, and support connectivity solutions built for modern demand.

Visit www.secviz.com.



It's just not clean unless it sparkles!

CLEANING SERVICES:
Home - Business - Vacation Properties - Deep Cleaning
Construction Cleans - Move-In / Move-Out

What they are saying:
"I use Sparkles for my vacation rental, and the guests ALWAYS rave about how clean it is. Highly recommend!"



CALL TODAY!
850.517.5581

Visit us on the web:
www.sparklescleaningflorida.com

SEE COUPON IN BACK OF PAPER

**Life is complicated.
Your insurance
doesn't have to be.**



ABORA
INSURANCE GROUP



Personal & Commercial Insurance

850-424-6979
11275 U.S. Hwy. 98 #7 | Miramar Beach, FL 32550
www.GetAora.com



850-837-2600
147 Professional Place

LITHIUM BATTERY UPGRADE!
As low as \$1,995.00 installed
Includes: Charger, Meter, Charge Port, DC Converter

Our Mobile Repair Experts can bring your cart back to
PEAK PERFORMANCE!



SOWAL LIFE'S BUSINESS SERVICES DIRECTORY

Attorneys / Lawyers

PITELL LAW FIRM, P.L.
Corporate, business & taxation law,
estate & trust services. Niceville.
(850) 897-0045 | lyp@lyp-law.com

Attractions & Adventures

DESTIN PRIVATE TIKI
Crab Island Express Rides and more.
850-424-1119 | www.DestinTiki.com

Computer Sales & Service

MINH'S COMPUTER
Full service computer sales & service.
(850) 376-3412

Golf Cart Sales & Service

ECCO MOTORS
Gold cart sales and service.
147 Professional Place, Miramar Beach
(850) 837-2600 | eccomotors.com

ELECTRIC CART CO.

Street legal electric and gas golf carts.
5426 US Hwy, 98 W, Santa Rosa Beach
(850) 622 2000
Sales@ElectricCartCompany.com
www.ElectricCartCompany.com

Health Care

HORMONE RESTORATION CTR
Feel young again!
850-837-1271

JOURNEY BRAVELY
STEPHENIE CRAIG, LCSW
Therapist & coach.
stepheniecraig@journeybravely.com
918-221-9987 | www.journeybravely.com

TORTOISE CLINIC
Integrative health clinic.
2441 U.S. Hwy 98, Santa Rosa Beach
TortoiseClinic.com | 850.267.5611

KAYA LIFE CANNABIS CLINICIANS
thekayalife.com | 850-213-1215

BLUEWATER PLASTIC SURGERY
Santa Rosa Beach
(850) 530-6064
bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

EMERALD ENT
Ear, nose, throat, allergies, hearing,
facial plastic issues.
Miramar Beach
(850) 797-6191 | Emerald-ENT.com

Home Services & Repairs

A SUPERIOR MECHANICAL
Air conditioning, indoor air quality,
plumbing, electrical, water filtration
systems.
(850) 258-3225

SS GRANITE AND TILE
Santa Rosa Beach | 850-267-0599

EMERALD COAST ENERGY
SOLUTIONS, LLC
Green energy solutions.
850-588-2870 | www.trusteces.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR
MAINTENANCE, LLC
BeachsideSlide.com
850-98-SLIDE (850-987-5433)

SECUREVISION
Fiber internet, TV, and phone services
for HOAs, COAs, short-term rentals, and
multifamily properties.
251-216-9434 | sales@secvis.com
www.secvis.com

STUMP GRINDING BY STEVE
No job too big or too small!
850-803-2205

ROOFPRO ROOFING
850-332-3330 | Roofprorooing.com

SPARKLES CLEANING SVC.
850.517.5581
www.sparklescleaningflorida.com

Insurance Services

ABORA INSURANCE
11275 U.S. Hwy. 98 #7 | Miramar Beach
850-424-6979 | www.GetAbora.com

Music Instruction

STUDIO 237 SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Musical instruction for all ages.
Santa Rosa Beach
Call 850-231-3199
www.studio237music.com

Pools & Spas

TAMTECH POOLS & SPA
185 N. Holiday Rd., Miramar Beach
850-650-3747 | tamtechpools.net

BRIGHT BLUE POOLS
Commercial & residential pool
remodeling.
850.496.2025 | BrightBluePools.com

30A HOT TUBS
(850) 830-0003 | 30AHOTTUBS.COM
33 Private Court, Miramar Beach

EMERALD COAST POOLS
Custom designed pools & spas,
renovation.
850.880.6657 | emeraldcoastpool.com
danielemeraldcoastpools@gmail.com
17661 U.S. Highway 331 South,
Freeport

Real Estate

JOHN MARTIN GROUP
850-714-3731
johnmartin30a.com

Shopping

MCCASKILL & COMPANY
Finest watches and jewelry.
13390 Hwy 98 W, Destin,
McCaskillandCompany.com

MOUNTAIN HIGH OUTFITTERS
Top-Quality Outdoor Apparel and Gear.
Silver Sands Premium Outlets

PATH OF GRACE THRIFT STORES
10962 U.S. Hwy. 98 W, Miramar Beach
850-654-8500 Call for Pickup

DESTIN SMOKE SHOP
Next to the Destin Walmart
850.837.0237
DestinSmokeShop@gmail.com

CLAY 30A
Garden center, pottery, blessings.
4808 E County Hwy. 30A, SRB
(850) 231-2150 | Clay30A.com

Retirement Planning

WATERSOUND FOUNTAINS
Refined, resort-style retirement.
65 Origins Parkway, Inlet Beach
WatersoundFountains.com
850-601-3174

Website Design

DESIGNWORKS
Graphic Design Studio
850-376-6255
kim.designworks@gmail.com

LIMITED TIME OFFER
FOR THE NEW YEAR



14' X 28' POOLS
RETANGULAR
OR FREEFROM

\$49,500

Includes pump,
filter, tab chlorinator
6" x 6" tile, 1' ft cool
deck coping, LED light,
original Pebbletec
plaster, autofill,
permits, inspections,
and mainenance
equipment.

tamtech *Pool & Spa*

Florida Licensed Residential and Commercial Pool Builder License #RP-252555412

185 North Holiday Rd, Miramar Beach

850-650-3747 • tamtechpools.net

Help Wanted!



FAMILY OF LOCAL PAPERS

Life Media is Growing!

We're looking for bright, driven, relationship-minded sales pros to join Life Media, the fastest-growing media group on the Emerald Coast.

What You'll Bring:

•A positive, outgoing personality

•Strong communication skills

•Desire to grow with a dynamic company

What We Offer:

•Established publications with built-in audiences

•Digital Advertising Solutions

•Opportunity to shape your own success

Call Scott Miller at (850) 688-9886

Email Scott@LifeMediaGrp.com

SOWAL *Life*

DESTIN *Life*

BAY *Life*

FWB *Life*

PCB *Life*

FREEMPORT *Life*

VISIT SOUTHWALTON.LIFE

Offer expires 8/31/26
(850) 830-0003 | 30AHOTTUBS.COM
33 Private Court, Miramar Beach



JOHN MARTIN GROUP

SOUTH WALTON
REAL ESTATE



John Martin

John Martin Group is Your
Trusted, Professional
Hometown Real Estate Advisor

Listed and **Not Selling?**
Call John to **Get it SOLD.**



Alden Lagasse



Andrew Dungan

Bringing you EXP Realty's
Cutting-Edge Technology
and **Global Reach**

Scan or Contact Us for a
Free **Home Evaluation**



“ **WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING**

“John Martin is hands down THE BEST realtor that I have experienced! If you are looking to buy or sell a property on 30A...he is your guy! John was able to educate my wife and I on all of the areas throughout 30A. But more importantly he possesses the rare quality that you will not find in many sales agents... HE LISTENS!” - Client

850.714.3731
john@johnmartin30a.com

johnmartin30a.com