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In "Paradise," a Promise: Harvest Wine Festival Turns 10 with NWF's Children at Heart

By Lori Leath Miller

The wine is exceptional. The food is unforgettable. But the true beauty of Harvest Wine & Food Festival is found in the lives being changed long after the final glass is poured.

As Harvest Wine & Food Festival prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary, Kate MacMillan is marking a milestone of her own: 10 years with Northwest Florida Children's Foundation (NFCF), formerly Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF). I recently caught up with Kate, now NFCF's senior director of strategic partnerships, about what the festival's first decade has meant beyond the festivities. She has had a front-row seat to Harvest's growth—and the deeply personal ways its mission touches local families.

The new name reflects the organization's broader mission and the reach of its work on behalf of children throughout Northwest Florida.

A few years ago, a young mother and local business owner called Kate out of the blue about sponsoring the festival. Her connection to the organization had begun long before that call. Years earlier, her youngest son had spent time in the NICU at Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast. She first noticed the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation name at the NICU entrance. Then she saw it again on equipment throughout the room where she sat rocking her baby.

Later, after learning her son was on the autism spectrum and would likely need specialized educational support, she encountered the DCWAF name once more while touring Westonwood Ranch and Emerald Coast Autism Center.

The organization now known as Northwest Florida Children's Foundation had quietly been there throughout her family's journey, supporting trusted local organizations when help was needed most.

Years passed. Her business

WINE FESTIVAL
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Dog-Harmony's 11th Annual Barktoberfest Returns to Grand Boulevard Oct. 30

Emerald Coast's dog costume contest and canine-only trick-or-treat features Oktoberfest-inspired drinks, music, prizes, and a silent auction; proceeds support Dog-Harmony's community education and wellness programs.

Grab your four-legged best friends and don matching ensembles to compete for prizes at Dog-Harmony's 11th annual Barktoberfest, a Halloween costume

BARKTOBERFEST
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Community

WINE FESTIVAL

continued from cover

grew. And when she found herself in a position to give back, she knew exactly which organization she wanted to support. "Her story captures the heart of our mission: supporting a network of trusted nonprofit partners that can care for children through different needs and stages of life," Kate said. "It also demonstrates how generosity comes full circle—helping a family during a critical time and inspiring that family to create the same opportunity for others."

That story explains the heart of Harvest better than I—or any event schedule—ever could: a family receiving support during a frightening time, then one day extending that same support to someone else.

It's also a reminder that behind every ticket purchased, every bottle poured, every auction bid, every wine dinner hosted and every sponsorship is a child whose life may be changed in ways most festival guests will never see.

Harvest returns Oct. 15-18 in WaterColor. Over the past decade, the festival alone has raised more than $1 million for programs addressing healthcare, education, housing, food security, mental health and other essential needs of children throughout Northwest Florida. "As we celebrate this milestone, we are especially proud that every ticket purchased, every bottle poured and every partnership formed has helped create meaningful, lasting impact right here at home," Kate said. That is certainly worth celebrating!

What began as an elevated wine and culinary experience has grown into one of our area's most anticipated fall events. I know—I've attended for several years, and it's truly one of the best I've experienced. It is beautiful and sophisticated, but also warm, lively and fun. There's something special about strolling beneath the trees in WaterColor, discovering a remarkable wine, tasting food prepared by gifted local chefs and sharing it with friends.

I've even had the delightful surprise of running into friends from Birmingham—my hometown. Those unexpected reunions, warm hugs and opportunities to catch up over a glass of wine help make Harvest so special. It's fun to look across the crowd and spot a familiar face.

Harvest gives guests every reason to enjoy themselves. But it also gives that joy a greater purpose.

In Northwest Florida, we live in a place so beautiful we often describe it simply as paradise. Visitors see white-sand beaches, emerald water, lovely homes, thriving businesses and bustling restaurants. But, what they might not see are the families sustaining that tourism economy while struggling with rising housing and living costs. "Our area is known for its beauty and hospitality, but that image can obscure the realities facing many families who sustain our tourism economy," Kate said. "As housing and other living costs continue to rise, even those working full time can struggle to meet basic needs, leaving their children vulnerable to housing and food insecurity, limited healthcare access and educational disruption."

They may not see the child living with housing instability or hunger. The child whose education is repeatedly disrupted. The child recovering from abuse. The child who needs medical treatment, therapy or specialized instruction that a family cannot afford alone. Those hardships rarely exist in isolation. "The challenges facing children in Northwest Florida are deeply interconnected, making it difficult to identify any single need as the most urgent," Kate explained. "A child experiencing housing instability may also face food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, disruptions in education or trauma."

That is why NFCF's network of 16 partner charities is so important. "Their collective strength lies in working together to support the whole child," Kate said. "By sharing resources, identifying gaps in services and connecting families with additional support, our partners create a coordinated network of care that extends far beyond what any one organization could provide alone."

Since its founding in 2005, Northwest Florida Children's Foundation has donated more than $42 million to Northwest Florida charities, impacting more than 100,000 young lives. Those are extraordinary numbers. But numbers alone cannot fully express what that help means.

I was reminded of that at the organization's recent check pre-

WINE FESTIVAL
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Community

October: Elevating EPIC To Heights Unseen

By Dr. Joshua Bledsoe, Public Information Officer, WCSD

Walton County School District's Flight 250 is underway, and throughout October, our students, employees, families, and community partners continue to elevate EPIC—Excellence, Professionalism, Innovation, and Collaboration—To Heights Unseen.

Homecoming season is underway and September saw two of our high schools win the night! Congratulations to Walton High School on its 36–3 victory over Freeport High School and to South Walton High School on its 28–20 win against Pine Forest High School. We are proud of the student-athletes, coaches, bands, cheerleaders, school employees, families, and fans whose dedication and school spirit made each celebration memorable.

Next on our October Homecoming Flight Plan is Freeport High on October 23. Best of luck to the Bulldogs as they take the field against Destin High School!

National School Principals' Month: October provides the opportunity to recognize the outstanding leaders who guide our schools with professionalism, vision, and an unwavering commitment to student success.

National Bullying Prevention Month: Reminds us that reaching new heights requires a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

National School Lunch Week, WCSD celebrates October 5-9, and October 19-23. We thank our school nutrition professionals for fueling our students with nutritious meals and caring service.

National School Bus Safety Week: October 19–23, allows us to recognize our transportation employees and reminds drivers, families, and students to make safety a shared responsibility.

Red Ribbon Week: October 23–31, empowers students to make healthy, drug-free choices. Through education, encouragement, and positive decision-making, we help students remain focused on bright futures.

As Flight 250 continues, we are grateful for everyone helping Walton County's students climb higher. By working together and living our EPIC values, there is no limit to the heights we can reach.

Pecan Jacks to Open New Panama City Beach Store and Franchise Training Facility in October

Expanded location will showcase the brand's latest design as Pecan Jacks grows across 10 states

Pecan Jacks will open a new corporate image and training store this October at the Vintage Lake Powell development, 24202 PCB Parkway, Suite 3, Panama City Beach, FL 32413. The opening comes as the ice cream and candy brand expands across 10 states.

The new store will bring Pecan Jacks' latest design to a space of more than 1,400 square feet, up from approximately 900 square feet at its original Florida location. Guests will have more room to enjoy the brand's ice cream and handcrafted sweets, while future franchisees can experience a working example of the Pecan Jacks store they could bring to their own communities.

"Opening this store is an exciting step for our guests and for the people building the future of Pecan Jacks with us," said Veronica "Ronnie" Wyatt, co-founder and chief operating officer. "As we grow across 10 states, it's important for future franchisees to walk into a store and see what Pecan Jacks could look and feel like in their community. We want them to experience the design, the products, and the way we welcome every guest."

The Panama City Beach location will also serve as the training and development facility for Pecan Jacks Franchising. Franchisees will train in the store, learning how the team prepares products and creates the guest experience. A taste lab will give the Pecan Jacks team a place to develop new ice cream and candy flavors.

"This new space brings so much of what we love about Pecan Jacks together under one roof," Wyatt added. "We can welcome guests, help franchisees prepare to open their stores and keep creating new flavors for people to

PECAN JACKS

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Community

Coastal Seniors Update for October

COASTAL SENIORS OF SOUTH WALTON

Exercise Classes – Angela Gibson will lead classes every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 a.m. at Padgett Park. Cost is $5 per class for CSSW members and $10 for non-members. Weights and bands are used for classes. Sign up through SignUp Genius email. To be added to SignUp Genius email, contact us at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Core Class - Angela Gibson will lead a 30 minute core class every Tuesday and Thursday at 9:15 a.m. at Padgett Park. A yoga mat and Pilates ring are used for this class. Cost is $5 per class for CSSW members and $10 for non-members. For information or screening, email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Watercolor Painting Class – Karen Peterson will teach beginners watercolor painting on Friday October 2, 9, and 23 from 8:45 - 12 noon at Padgett Park. All supplies will be provided. Cost is $20 for members and $40 for non-members. Sign up through the SignUp Genius email. To be added to SignUp Genius email, contact us at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Pickleball- Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex Courts on October 21st at 6 p.m. This beginner class will be open to Walton County residents only. (Ages 18 and up) Registration is required. Register through Parks and Rec Website at secure.rec1.com The class is FREE and equipment will be provided or you may use your own. Email Sandy Gulak at sowalpickleball@gmail.com for more information. Open play at Boys and Girls Club every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday through December 17 from 9:30 - 12:30. Beginners welcome. Demo paddles available. Cost is $5 per day plus $35 waiver fee at initial registration. Please join the SoWal 30A Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

Monthly Program - Monthly Program with light lunch will be Friday October 16, from 11 a.m. -1 p.m. at Padgett Park. Guest speaker will be Jeff Goldberg, Director at Walton County Emergency Management. He will present information on hurricane preparedness. Sign up through Sign Up Genius email. To be added to SignUp Genius email, contact us at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Mahjong - Mary Swift will host a Mahjong group every Monday at 1 p.m. at Padgett Park. For more information contact Mary Swift at (210) 722-7939 or on Facebook join The Emerald Coast Social Club-a Mahjong Group.

Water Aerobics - Two Classes will be held on Mondays October 5 and 12 and Wednesdays October 7 and 14 at 9 a.m. and at 10:15 a.m. at Watersound Fountains pool located at 65 Origins Pkwy, Inlet Beach. Cost is $5 for members and $10 for non members. A pool noodle and set of water bells are used for class. Sign up through Sign Up Genius email. To be added to SignUp Genius email, contact us at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com

Dementia Caregivers Support Group - Karen League will lead this support group for caregivers to provide a safe place to share experiences, provide practical information and mutual support. The meetings are the first Friday of each month from 12:30 - 2 p.m. at the Coastal Branch Library meeting room located at 437 Greenway Trail. For more information, contact Karen League at (706) 491-0812.

Northwest Florida Health Council - Will provide free health screenings on October 15th from 9 - 11:30 a.m. at Padgett Park. Screenings could identify possible health issues, answer questions, and aid with connections to specialized care.

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

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Community

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce Announces Speakers for "The Next BIG Thing," Annual Conference

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce announces a dynamic speaker lineup 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.

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 and an impressive lineup of 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.

The action-packed day begins with a light breakfast featuring mimosas, coffee, and networking in the bustling Vendor Hall, where attendees can also take advantage of complimentary professional headshots provided by Epic Photo Co. Participants will immerse themselves throughout the day in a dynamic lineup of TED Talk–style breakout sessions led by thought leaders and innovators from across the region.

The event culminates with a lively cocktail hour, complete with a complimentary beverage, heavy hors d'oeuvres, music, and thousands in prizes. Exciting raffle giveaways will also be available throughout the day.

These inspiring and distinguished speakers will present in three dynamic growth tracks including Leadership Development, Entrepreneurship, and Women in Business, with a total of nine breakout sessions all igniting ideas and sparking innovation for attendees.

Keynote Speakers - Captain Kerry Titheradge, Captain Kerry Titheradge, an international television celebrity, business executive, and founder of Yachting Concepts LLC,

will kick off the day as the Morning Keynote Speaker, presenting on personal development with "Don't Rock the Boat:" How staying safely anchored in your comfort zone is the fastest way to let your business and personal growth rust. Titheradge's impactful message is aimed directly at rising leaders and entrepreneurs while he shares how to build the psychological resilience needed to break away from safe harbors, embrace calculated risks, and successfully navigate professional development without losing your bearings.

Lunch Keynote Speaker Brian Franklin, Co-Founder and CEO of Vows & Speeches (which he founded with his wife and business partner Nicole Franklin) will present "No Home Runs Without Big Swings: Finding your calling despite life's landmines and rookie errors." Franklin was dubbed "The Humorist" by the New York Times.

Laura Quick, founder of Good Grit Magazine and media parent company, will close the day as the Afternoon Keynote Speaker with "Nobody Told Me Healing Would Affect My P&L," where attendees will learn why mental health and personal growth aren't just personal issues but leadership issues. The session will offer a fresh perspective on how self awareness, boundaries and emotional health influence communication, decision-making and team culture.

The Next Big Thing Session Speaker Lineup will include a Leadership Track with Nathan Cordle, Shantelle Dedicke, and a panel including Jennifer Higgins, JR Hadaway & Kiley Thomas. The Women in Business Track will feature Tolliny Rankins, Karen Smith, and Maria White and the Entrepreneurship Track will include Howard Partridge, Ryan McNay, and Sarah Davis.

Session topics will include, but not be limited to: The AI Flywheel - How to Train Your Smartest Employee; Protecting What Makes Us Human; Referrals Made Simple - How to Build a Predictable Stream of High Quality Clients without Paid Advertising; Flip the Script: Why the Best Leaders Serve; Leading Without Losing Yourself: Burnout, Boundaries & Sustainable Leadership; The SHEstoration Conversation: Restore - Build - Rise to The Next Big Thing; Three Truths That Can Change the Way You Speak, Live, and Love; and Embracing the Elephant - Taking the "Difficult" out of the Conversation.

"We look forward each year to what The Next Big Thing will bring to our community as this very special day leaves a lasting impression on our local business leaders, entrepreneurs and executives," says Megan Harrison, CEO of the Walton Area Cham-

THE NEXT BIG THING
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Community

Needles, Fire and Herbs: The Not-So-Scary Side of Acupuncture

By Dr. Karen DeVore

October is the season for haunted houses, bubbling cauldrons and things designed to make us shiver. Yet for many people, nothing sounds quite as intimidating as voluntarily lying down while someone places needles in their body. Add herbs, glass cups and perhaps even a flame, and I can understand the hesitation.

Fortunately, acupuncture is usually far gentler than the anticipation. The needles are remarkably thin, and most patients are surprised by how comfortable—and often deeply relaxing—the experience can be.

But the needle is only the beginning of the story.

Acupuncture exists within a much broader Eastern medicine tradition that considers patterns, relationships and the interplay between structure, function, energy and environment. Traditional acupuncture, neuroacupuncture and facial rejuvenation acupuncture can use the same tiny needle in very different ways. Herbal medicine, cupping and other complementary techniques expand the possibilities even further.

So, in the spirit of October, let's make the needles, herbs and fire a little less mysterious.

Traditional Acupuncture: Much Bigger Than You Think

If your idea of acupuncture begins and ends with back pain, you are seeing only a small part of the picture.

People explore traditional acupuncture for headaches, sleep, stress, digestive concerns, fertility, hormonal transitions, musculoskeletal complaints, neuropathy and chronic or complex pain. For one person, it may complement physical therapy or medical treatment. For another, it may be part of preparing for pregnancy, navigating perimenopause or staying active as the body changes with age.

Eastern medicine has also long valued prevention—paying attention to changes in sleep, digestion, energy, tension and recovery before they become impossible to ignore.

Acupuncture is about more than placing a needle where something hurts. Research continues to explore its relationship with pain modulation, sensory signaling and nervous system activity, while the traditional framework considers the individual's larger pattern of function and balance. That versatility allows it to be restorative or proactive, highly focused or whole-person, and able to stand alone or complement other care.

Neuroacupuncture: When the Nervous System is Part of the Story

Neuroacupuncture takes acupuncture into remarkably complex territory. This specialized approach incorporates carefully selected scalp and body acupuncture around neurological and functional goals involving the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves, movement, sensation, balance and coordination.

This is where neuroplasticity becomes particularly interesting. The brain and nervous system retain an ability to adapt and reorganize in response to stimulation, learning, injury and rehabilitation—even in adulthood.

Neuroacupuncture may be incorporated as supportive care during stroke recovery or for people living with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, neuropathy, neuralgia, tremors, weakness or certain forms of paralysis. It may also be explored around specific symptoms or functional goals for people with PTSD, anxiety or autism, as well as neurological symptoms associated with complex chronic illnesses.

Treatment is individualized around the person, their neurological presentation and their goals. Neuroacupuncture does not replace appropriate neurological, medical, psychological or rehabilitative care. Instead, it offers another potential tool within a thoughtful, coordinated plan.

Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture: A Different Approach to Aging Well

Needles in the face may sound particularly appropriate for October, but these needles are tiny, remarkably fine and meticulously placed.

Facial rejuvenation acupuncture is considerably more sophisticated than placing a few needles around a wrinkle. Precise needling creates controlled stimulation within the tissues, supporting local circulation and the body's normal tissue-repair response. Research continues to explore its potential influence on skin elasticity and other features associated with facial aging.

This is typically a progressive approach, with sessions building upon one another as the practitioner monitors the response over time. It may appeal to someone noticing that stress,

TORTOISE

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Community

Where Food, Culture & Community Come Together

For Executive Chef Andrea Campoblanco, a memorable meal begins long before the first bite. Originally from Peru, Andrea built her culinary career through experiences that shaped the way she cooks today — from discovering her passion for hospitality at Deer Valley Resort in Utah to spending eight years in New York's Hudson Valley working in fine-dining restaurants focused on seasonal, farm-to-table cuisine.

Today, she brings that perspective to Watersound Fountains, where dining is an important part of a larger Retirement Living experience.

Fresh ingredients and thoughtful preparation set the tone, but what happens around the table matters just as much. Members can meet friends for lunch, linger over dinner, try something new, or enjoy a familiar favorite across four distinctive dining venues. Andrea's menus reflect both her Peruvian heritage and her appreciation for seasonal ingredients, creating opportunities to experience food that feels thoughtful, personal, and never routine.

That same attention to experience extends well beyond the dining room.

At Watersound Fountains, resort-style living means more time to enjoy the day and fewer details to manage. A 24/7 concierge is there to help make life easier. Members can work on their swing in the golf simulator, spend time by the pool, connect with friends, or take part in programs designed around Watermark's 360Well® approach to whole-person wellness.

It's a lifestyle built around choice, ease, and staying connected to what feels good — physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally.

And as the holiday season approaches, that ease can feel especially meaningful. Imagine less time planning meals, shopping, cooking, cleaning, and managing the house — and more time gathered around the table with family and friends.

That is what Retirement Living at Watersound Fountains is designed to offer: exceptional dining, thoughtful hospitality, whole-person wellness, and more freedom to enjoy the moments that matter. Come experience Retirement Living on 30A. Schedule a tour — and stay for lunch.

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Community

Fall Is Prime Painting Season on the Emerald Coast

By Kyle Sparks,
Ovation Painting

If you've been waiting for the right time to tackle a larger painting project, October may be it. Here along the Emerald Coast, fall gives us a welcome break from the intense summer heat and humidity—and it gives homeowners a good opportunity to see what another Florida summer has done to their homes.

Take a walk around your house and look closely. Our strong sun can fade exterior paint surprisingly quickly, especially on the sides receiving the most direct exposure. Add salt air, humidity, wind and summer storms, and you may notice chalking, peeling, cracking or areas where the finish simply looks tired.

Paint, of course, makes a home look beautiful, but exterior paint has another important job: protecting what's underneath. When a painted surface begins to fail, moisture can find its way into places you don't want it. Addressing those areas early can help prevent a cosmetic problem from becoming a more expensive repair.

October is also a great month to think bigger. Maybe your home's exterior color feels dated, or several interior rooms no longer flow together. A whole-home exterior or substantial interior repaint can dramatically update a property without the cost and disruption of remodeling.

And coastal doesn't have to mean the same familiar blue and white. We're seeing homeowners embrace warm whites, soft natural neutrals, muted greens and deeper accent colors that work beautifully with our Northwest Florida surroundings.

Kyle's Tip: Don't choose an exterior color from a tiny paint chip alone. Florida sunlight can dramatically change how a color appears. Test larger samples on different sides of your home and look at them in morning, midday and late-afternoon light before making your final decision.

At Ovation Painting, preparation is just as important as the finish coat. Proper cleaning, repairs, surface preparation and choosing products suited for our climate all contribute to a paint job designed to last.

If summer left your home looking a little worse for wear, fall is a great time to give it some attention—and enjoy the results well beyond the season.

Call or text Kyle Sparks at Ovation Painting at 850-830-9668 to discuss your next painting project. Military and first responder discounts are available. Visit ovationpainting.com.

PSA: Food Distribution Sites

Caring & Sharing of South Walton: 112 Lynn Drive, Santa Rosa Beach, (850) 267-2866. Provides clients access to drive-thru food pantry twice per month on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Must complete a New Client Form. For questions regarding eligibility, please call (850) 267-2866, Ext. 206, or stop by during distribution hours. Little Free Food Pantry 24/7. May also be able to provide baby items, various hygiene products, help with housing, prescriptions, clothing and thrift store vouchers, counseling and case management. Visit caringandsharingsowal.org/assistance.

Open Door Food Pantry at The Church at the Bay: 24388 US-331, Santa Rosa Beach. Weekly food distribution 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Saturdays. Does not seek qualifications. Visit www.thechurchatthebay.com/open-door-food-pantry.

Black Creek Methodist Church: 278 Memorial Lane, Freeport. (850) 496-6687. Weekly food box distribution Wednesdays at 8 a.m. until gone. Distributions vary by scheduling and holidays, so it is recommended to call ahead or check their Facebook page.

Freeport Library Little Free Food Pantry: 76 FL-20, Freeport. Available 24/7.

Matrix C.O.C.: 37 North 9th Street, DeFuniak Springs. Weekly drive-thru distribution Thursdays 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (Schedule may vary. Sign up for text alerts on their website.) The Little Food Pantry is available 24/7. Fishes & Loaves Pantry with case-managed food support. Visit www.matrixcoc.org.

Saint Margaret Catholic Church: 247 US Highway 331 North, Defuniak Springs. Monthly distribution every third Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. Anyone in need of food is welcome. Distribution by The Caring Coach, an outreach program of Catholic Charities.

All of these organizations welcome volunteers and donations.

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Community

New Home, Same Mission: Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast to Be Held at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach

By Alzheimer's Association Central North Florida

Hope is on the horizon as communities across the Emerald Coast gear up for the annual Walk to End Alzheimer's. This year, we invite you to walk with us for a cause that touches so many families right here at home in the Walton County community.

Alzheimer's disease is not only a health crisis, but a deeply personal journey for countless families. It is the most common form of dementia, a general term for the loss of cognitive function and memory. More than 7 million Americans live with Alzheimer's, and two-thirds of them are women. In Florida, nearly 580,000 individuals live with Alzheimer's or another dementia.

That is why the Alzheimer's Association exists. We lead the fight to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia through research, risk reduction, early detection and quality care, and every fall we ask our neighbors and friends to join us for the Walk to End Alzheimer's. It is the world's largest event of its kind and far more than a fundraiser. Walk is a movement that brings hope to families living with this disease today.

This year's Emerald Coast Walk will be held Saturday, Nov. 7 for the first time in Walton County at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach, Florida. It's a true destination spot, where participants can dine and shop, pre- or post-walk and enjoy everything the Emerald Coast has to offer. Walkers can expect plenty of parking and a scenic, tree-lined route through the beautiful Sandestin neighborhood.

Participants will have the opportunity to honor those affected through the poignant Promise Garden ceremony, carrying flowers in colors that represent their own connection to the disease. Blue is for someone living with Alzheimer's or another dementia. Purple is for someone who has lost a loved

one to it. Yellow is for someone currently supporting or caring for a person with the disease. Orange is for everyone who supports the cause.

Together, those colors signify our solidarity. Walk for families facing the disease today. Walk for advancements in treatment. Walk for the next generation. Walk for a future without Alzheimer's.

And a day like this takes the whole community. We are grateful to Emerald Coast Hospice, this year's presenting sponsor, whose support helps power our mission across the Emerald Coast. We're equally thankful for the leadership of our Walk Chairperson, Tara Nettles of Gulf Coast Bank, who has poured her heart into bringing this new location to life.

We hope you'll join us for this fun and meaningful event that all ages look forward to and enjoy. You can register today at alz.org/emeraldcoastwalk or scan the QR code above. Your participation will make a difference in the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's. To learn more or find support for someone you care about, visit alz.org or call the 24/7 Helpline at (800) 272-3900.

Community

Join Us for Life Media Sponsored Events!

Fire Up the Flavor at Eggs on the Beach

Saturday, Nov. 7 | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Seascape Resort | Miramar Beach

Get ready to taste, vote and enjoy some serious Big Green Egg creativity when the 12th annual Eggs on the Beach Big Green Egg Cooking Competition fires up! Hosted by Bay Breeze Patio, the popular culinary competition brings together nonprofit organizations, backyard grill masters and restaurant teams, all cooking up bite-sized creations on Big Green Eggs.

Tasters get in on the action, sampling the dishes and voting for their favorites, while honorary judges score entries for taste, presentation and creativity. And it's so good, it's challenging to judge. I know, because I've been one! Winners earn prizes, the coveted Judges' Trophy and, of course, bragging rights.

The competition also cooks up plenty of good for the community. Many nonprofit teams have signed on and each participating nonprofit earns a cash donation based on taster votes.

A few spots remain, and registration fees are waived for nonprofit teams. Spots also remain for backyard and restaurant teams, with registration $50 for teams of up to six.

Advance taster tickets are $60 for adults and $21 for ages 11-17; children 10 and younger are free.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

For tickets, team registration and information, visit EggsontheBeach.com or call 850-269-4666.

Celebrate with a Cause: Animore Weekend 2026!

Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest presented by Cafe Thirty-A
Saturday, Nov. 14, 2026 | 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Alaqua Animal Refuge Grounds (155 Dugas Way, Freeport)

There are fall events — and then there are those special days you look forward to year after year. For me, this is one of them! I've attended for several years, and it's always a highlight of the season and truly unlike anything else in our area.

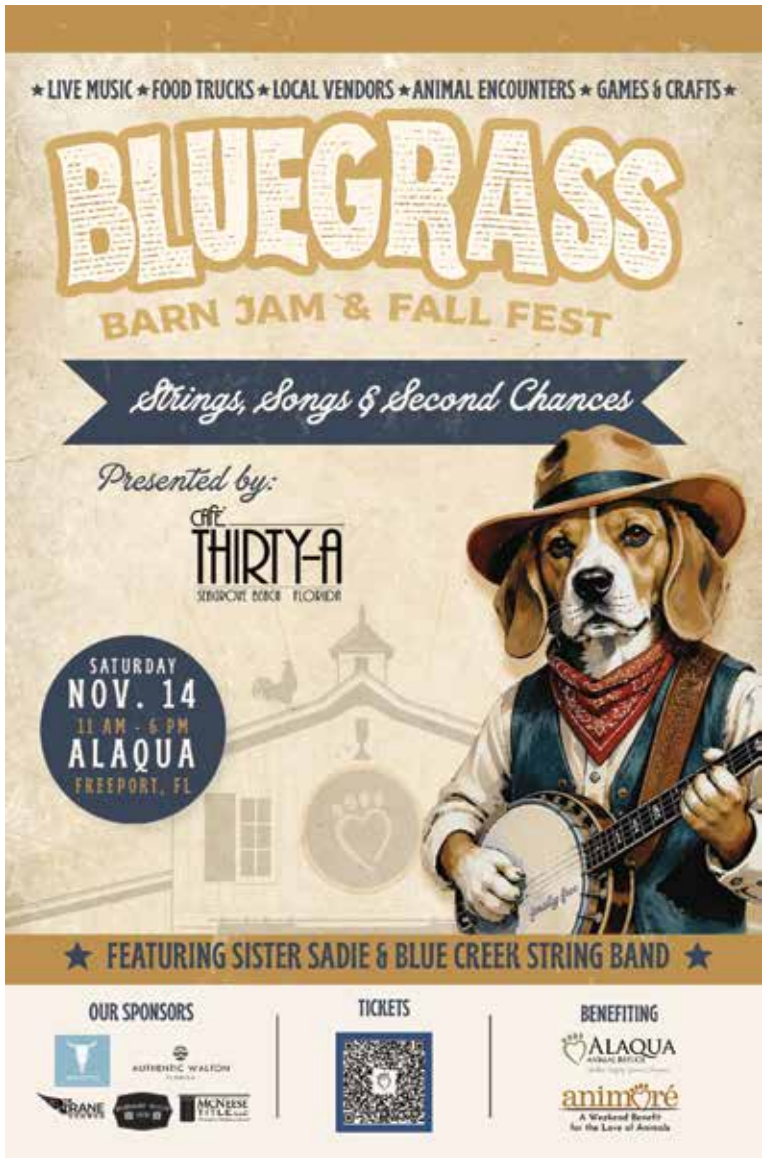
Spend a beautiful autumn day surrounded by the peaceful acreage of Alaqua Animal Refuge, where live bluegrass music fills the air, local vendors offer plenty to browse and shop, and family-friendly activities make it a fun outing for all ages. There's just something about the combination of crisp fall air, great music, animals, friends and community coming together in such a beautiful setting that makes this event feel extra special.

And perhaps the best part? Your day of fun has a purpose. Every ticket purchased directly supports Alaqua's lifesaving mission of rescuing, rehabilitating and finding hope and new beginnings for animals in need.

Come for the music, shopping and fall fun — and leave knowing you helped make a difference. It's one of those uniquely local experiences you really don't want to miss!

TICKETS: Online Pre-Sale Tiers: Available through Nov. 11. At-the-Gate: $15 for Adults | $5 for Children (under 12). Online sales end Nov. 12. VIP Experience: Includes preferred concert seating at Angel's Arena and access to the exclusive VIP Patron Lounge.

For more information & tickets: alaqua.org



Community

Investing: Vote Your Convictions, Invest the Facts.

By Clint Gharib, AIF®, CFEd®

Here we go again.

Every election season I hear some version of: "If they win, I'm getting out of the market."

I've been managing money for almost four decades through presidents and Congresses controlled by both parties. One thing I've learned: voting with your convictions and investing with your political emotions are two very different things.

Back in my 2020 Market Update, I wrote: "Emotions are to Investing like drinking is to driving—a terrible mix." Six years later, I wouldn't change a word. (oxfordra.com)

The market doesn't carry a voter-registration card.

Midterm years have historically brought more volatility, but what happens as uncertainty clears is interesting. BlackRock found that since 1970 the S&P 500 has historically begun rallying about one month before midterm elections and averaged a 14.1% total return during the six months afterward. BlackRock's point was not that one party is better for stocks, but that markets have often responded positively as election uncertainty fades. Source: BlackRock, "What History Says About 2026 Midterm Elections and Market Performance," June 11, 2026.

Fidelity's research goes back even further. Since 1938, the S&P 500 posted a positive price return during the 12 months following midterm elections 95% of the time. Fidelity also found average returns of roughly 5% during the second year of a presidential term versus about 14% during the following 12 months.

More importantly, Fidelity concluded that markets historically have responded more to changes in policy uncertainty than to which party wins or loses. Source: Fidelity Viewpoints, "The Surprising Truth About Midterms and Stocks," August 12, 2026.

Of course, historical averages are not predictions and past performance does not guarantee future results.

This is where investors can get into trouble. You can find statistics claiming stocks perform better under Democrats, others under Republicans, and still others under divided government.

As economist Ronald Coase famously said, "If you torture the data long enough, it will confess to anything."

The problem is that focusing only on which party controls Washington ignores the Federal Reserve, interest rates, corporate earnings, valuations, economic growth, wars, energy prices and countless other forces moving markets.

A president cannot turn the U.S. economy like a Jet Ski. It is more like turning an oil tanker.

That is why I would be careful making major portfolio changes based primarily on an election result. Fidelity's research makes the same broader point: corporate earnings, business investment and economic conditions have historically mattered more to long-term returns than elections.

So vote however your convictions lead you. But when it comes to your portfolio, leave the red and blue jerseys at the door.

For 2026, my reminder is simple: Vote your convictions. Invest the facts.

The election matters. It just may not matter to your investments in quite the way the headlines suggest.

Please know we moved into our new office in Santa Rosa Beach at 116 McDavis Blvd, Suite 218, across from Dune Lakes Elementary School. Vsit www.OxfordRA.com for more information.

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While integrous is the adjective of integrity,

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Community

TORTOISE

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hormonal changes and time are showing differently in the mirror—or someone interested in complementing an established aesthetic or skin-health routine.

Eastern medicine brings an interesting perspective to aesthetics: the face does not exist independently from the person attached to it. Sleep, chronic stress, hormonal transitions, nutrition and overall health eventually show up in how we look and feel. The goal is not to make someone look like a different person, but to support the face while still paying attention to the whole person.

Herbal Medicine: More Than "Natural"

No October discussion of Eastern medicine would be complete without a few herbs.

Botanical medicine has deep roots across Eastern traditions, where plants may be used individually or combined into carefully constructed formulas. Plants contain biologically active compounds, which is precisely why species, preparation, sourcing, formulation and dose matter.

Herbal medicine may provide additional support alongside conventional care or offer another avenue when certain options are limited or poorly tolerated. That does not mean ignoring pathology. Good integrative care respects diagnosis, appropriate testing and conventional treatment while continuing to ask what else may reasonably support the individual.

At Tortoise Clinic, our in-house dispensary includes raw Chinese herbs, carefully selected formulas, professional-grade supplements and targeted nutrients. It supports individualized patient protocols and is also open to the public.

Cupping: An Old Practice with Modern Appeal

Cupping has been used for centuries and has found a modern audience in sports, physical recovery and wellness settings.

Traditional fire cupping may be dramatic to watch, but the flame is removed before the glass cup is placed on the body and never touches the skin. Contemporary methods create a similar lifting effect without fire.

Unlike the downward pressure of massage, cupping lifts the tissues and may be incorporated for muscular tension, mobility, restriction, discomfort or recovery after physical activity. Whether it is a golfer maintaining shoulder mobility, a runner recovering from training or someone carrying years of tension through the neck and back, cupping offers another tool within a broader approach to movement and recovery.

Eastern medicine can appear mysterious from the outside. There are needles, unfamiliar herbs, glass cups and occasionally even fire. Behind them is a long history of observation, individualized care and an evolving body of research.

For me, the interesting part is not choosing between Eastern and Western medicine. It is understanding where each has something meaningful to offer and when they can complement one another.

So, this October, save the fear for the haunted houses and scary movies. The needles are tiny. Fire is optional. And the herbs are far more sophisticated than a bubbling cauldron might suggest.

Dr. Karen DeVore is the owner of Tortoise Clinic in Santa Rosa Beach, a multidisciplinary clinic bridging Eastern and Western perspectives and providing the North Florida community with thoughtful, individualized, whole-person care. Visit https://www.tortoiseclinic.com.

Emerald Coast Wrestling Club Hosts Fall Festival

Emerald Coast Wrestling Club will host a Fall Festival and Chili Cook-Off on Saturday, Nov. 14, 2026, from 2–7 p.m. at American Legion Post 296, 311 Main Street in Destin.

The family-friendly event is being graciously hosted by the American Legion and is open to everyone in the community. The afternoon will include food, games, a bouncy house, dunk tank and activities for both kids and adults.

The Chili Cook-Off will give local cooks a chance to bring out their best recipes, compete against one another and see who makes the best chili in town.

Proceeds from the event will benefit Emerald Coast Wrestling Club, a volunteer-run 501(c)(3) nonprofit youth wrestling club that started earlier this year.

"We started Emerald Coast Wrestling Club after last wrestling season because there were kids who wanted to keep wrestling, but they didn't have a place to go here in Destin," co-founder Autumn Hipp said. "So much had to fall into place for this club to work, and God had our backs. We have five volunteer coaches, families who have jumped in to help and the American Legion has been a huge supporter of what we're trying to do."

The club wasn't sure what kind of turnout to expect when it held its first practice.

"We really didn't know if it was going to pan out," co-founder Josh Hipp said. "Then 30 kids showed up to our first practice. We were blown away. In the five months since we started, we've had 72 kids come through the club. It became pretty clear that there are a lot of kids in this area who want to wrestle."

As the club has grown, so have its needs.

"There's a big demand for youth wrestling in Destin," Josh Hipp said. "Our biggest goal right now is getting a club mat of our own. We also want to be able to help kids who might not otherwise be able to afford to wrestle, whether that means helping with their membership,

WRESTLiNG CLUB

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Community

Meet Jim Jaquess

Candidate for South Walton Fire District Commissioner, Seat 4

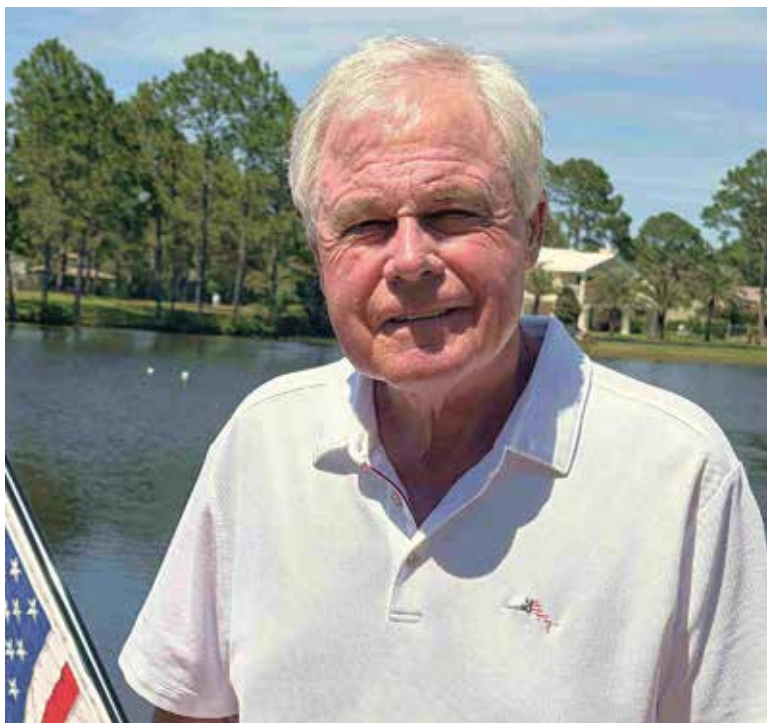
Jim Jaquess and his family have been residents of South Walton for more than twenty years. They are members of the Chapel at Crosspoint Church in Santa Rosa Beach and have been involved in various South Walton volunteer activities for many years.

Jim has served the community in a number of capacities, including as a member of the Walton County Sheriff's Posse and has served on numerous boards over a span of forty+ years. Several years ago, Jim was appointed by the BCC to the Walton County Zoning Board of Adjustment and is currently a member of the Planning Commission which makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on major development applications as well as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.

He states that he is not running to be an EMT or a firefighter, SWFD has many well qualified experts in that arena. However, he would bring his management and board experiences to the table in order to strengthen the organization by conservative budgeting, increasing compensation for district employees while lowering SWFD taxes through innovative revenue generation and providing direction in regard to overall management of the district.

As a member of the Northwest Florida State College Institute of Senior Professionals, Jim was instrumental in conducting a review of the Destin Fire Department, publishing a report providing recommendations for improvement. SWFD was used as a model for the report, which included reviews of similar size fire districts.

During his professional career in electric power generation, he was tasked with the development and implementation of fire protection programs to minimize risk and assure regulatory compliance at local, state, and federal levels. He has conducted root cause evaluations of oil and natural gas pipeline failures on an international basis.



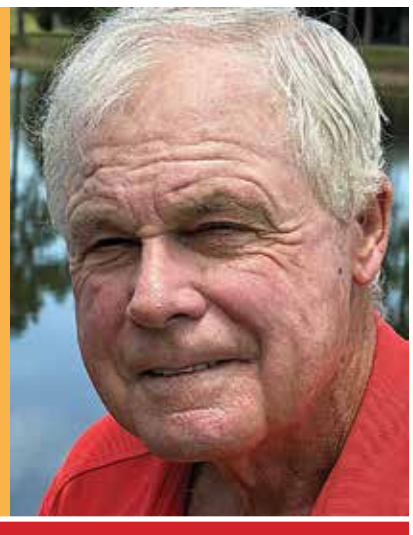
Jim's youngest daughter graduated from Freeport High (prior to the existence of South Walton High School). His wife retired from full time teaching, but has served as a substitute teacher at South Walton High. Both daughters (Regina and Renee) are elite level athletes who serve on various boards within the United States Olympic Committee while owning/operating Emerald Coast Compounding Pharmacy in Santa Rosa Beach.

The Jaquess family has a long history of military service. Jim's father served in the Philippine Islands during WW2 where he was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart and three Bronze Stars. Jim's grandfather retired as a USAF colonel who served during WW1, WW2 and the Korean war. He was awarded the Air Force Legion of Merit for his service in Europe. Jim is a member of the Emerald Coast Chapter of Sons of the American Revolution.

Jim has been a Board Member of the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, NW Florida State College - Institute of Senior Professionals, Walton County Taxpayers Association, University of Southern Indiana Alumni Association and USA Water Ski (USOC). He is recognized as a Kentucky Colonel and Notable Alumnus of the University of Southern Indiana.

He holds a Juris Doctorate from Georgia State University, MBA from Indiana State University, and BS from University of Southern Indiana.

VOTE
JIM JAQUESS



South Walton Fire District Commissioner, Seat 4

Jim has served the community in a number of capacities, including as a member of the Walton County Sheriff's Posse and has served on numerous boards over a span of forty+ years. Jim was appointed by the BCC to the Walton County Zoning Board of Adjustment and is currently a member of the Planning Commission.

Jim Brings Management and Broad Experience to the Table

Political ad paid for by candidate.

THEO BEACH TOWELS
NOW ON SALE!

Check out the new beach towels at **Pecan Jacks** in Santa Rosa Beach.

All Theo-inspired products benefit the educational mission of the **Friends South Walton Sea Turtles** nonprofit organization.

WRESTLING CLUB

continued from page 13

getting them shoes or headgear, or helping our wrestlers get to competitions and practices with other clubs."

Emerald Coast Wrestling Club is run by volunteers, and the money raised goes back toward supporting the wrestlers and growing opportunities for youth wrestling in the community. The club is currently raising money for a wrestling mat, competition and travel expenses, joint practices with other clubs, membership assistance and wrestling gear for kids who need it.

The Fall Festival and Chili Cook-Off is a chance for the community to come out, have some fun and support local kids at the same time. You don't have to have a wrestler or know anything about wrestling to attend. Everyone is welcome.

Local businesses and individuals who would like to get involved can also support the club through sponsorships and donations.

Emerald Coast Wrestling Club Fall Festival & Chili Cook-Off

Saturday, Nov. 14, 2026
2–7 p.m.

American Legion Post 296 | 311 Main Street, Destin, FL

For information about the Fall Festival, Chili Cook-Off, joining the club, sponsorships or donations, contact Emerald Coast Wrestling Club at 509-344-9796 or info@ecwrestling-club.com

PECAN JACKS

continued from page 3

discover."

The opening marks a transition for Pecan Jacks' original Florida store in Santa Rosa Beach on

30A. After 10 summers, that location will close following a change in ownership of the building it occupies.

"We're grateful to everyone who made our Santa Rosa Beach store part of their summers," said Tim Wyatt, co-founder and vice president. "We look forward to carrying that same warmth into a larger space where guests can make new memories with us."

For Pecan Jacks, the new store is also an investment in the support behind its expansion. It will give franchisees a place to learn from the team, see the latest store design in action, and bring those lessons home as the brand reaches more communities.

"Growth works best when franchisees can see the experience they're preparing to create," said Cory Mosley, vice president of growth. "This store gives them that opportunity, while giving our team a home for training and the new flavors that will shape what comes next."

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Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

Benson Chiropractic is a family chiropractic clinic located in Santa Rosa Beach. Dr. Levi Benson, DC, delivers modern, results-driven care for patients of all ages—from newborns to seniors—combining cutting-edge techniques and therapies with a genuine, patient-first approach. He specializes in corrective care for back and neck pain, headaches, migraines, prenatal and pediatric care, scoliosis, sciatica, sports injuries, auto accident injuries, and more. Our mission is to help you get back to doing what you love. We are currently accepting new patients and have same-day appointments available.

Dr. Levi Benson D.C. 850-920-9838 www.drlevibenson.com

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APPLY FOR THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

APPLICATIONS FOR SEATS ON THE WALTON COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL WILL BE ACCEPTED THURSDAY, OCT. 1, UNTIL 5 P.M. CDT ON FRIDAY, OCT. 30

Currently, Tourist Development Council seats 4, 7, and 8 are open:

- **Seat 4** *calls for a person who is involved in the tourism industry with an interest in tourism development and is the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the Tourist Development Tax.*
- **Seats 7 and 8** *call for a person who is involved in the tourism industry with a demonstrated interest in tourism development but is not the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the Tourist Development Tax.*

These terms shall serve through Dec. 2030.

FOR THE LINK TO THE TDC APPLICATION, GUIDELINES AND CODE OF CONDUCT:
www.waltoncountyfltourism.com/tdc-application/

Submit applications online or send a hard copy by Oct. 30 to Walton County Tourism Visitor Center, located at 25777 U.S. Hwy. 331 South in Santa Rosa Beach

For more information, please contact Dana McDowell at (850) 267 - 1216 or Dana@WCFLTourism.com
www.waltoncountyfltourism.com

WALTON COUNTY TOURISM

Community

A Legacy of Service, Leadership, and Supporting the People Behind the Call

By: Mackenzie McClintock, SWFD Public Information Officer

For 33 years, Assistant Chief Brian Hughes served the communities and firefighters of Northwest Florida. For the past 25 of those years, he has done so as a member of the South Walton Fire District.

After more than three decades in public service, Hughes is retiring from the career he built around one central priority: Taking care of the people who take care of everyone else.

Hughes' career has taken him across numerous agencies, and through his work with the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative, to firefighters across the state. Before moving into fire service leadership, he established himself on the front lines as a firefighter/paramedic and flight paramedic, also working locally as a nurse.

At South Walton Fire District, Hughes became a steady presence within the Operations Division, responding to some of the most significant incidents in the District's history. But the significance of Hughes' career cannot be measured solely by the calls he answered.

As Assistant Chief, he helped shape how South Walton Fire District cared for its own personnel. His focus was not simply on getting firefighters and lifeguards ready to respond to the next emergency, but on making sure they were equipped to remain healthy, capable, and prepared throughout their careers.

He strengthened the District's annual physical program, expanding screenings to provide personnel with more comprehensive health assessments. He became a statewide advocate for firefighter cancer prevention through his work with the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative (FFSHC). His work with the Collaborative eventually received national-level recognition, when the FFSHC became a co-recipient of the Senator Paul S. Sarbanes Fire Service Safety Leadership Award in 2019.

He also improved the District's incident command systems, helping ensure that the organization behind the response was as prepared as the personnel operating on the front lines. He fueled his efforts with his own experiences on the fireground, striving to find better and more efficient ways to command incidents, protect the community, and improve firefighter accountability.

In the months before his retirement, he also spearheaded and developed an in-house physical therapy program, specifically designed to prevent injuries and help personnel maintain the physical demands of the job. It was one of the first of its kind, creating an on-site clinic and physical therapy service for personnel of all divisions to utilize.

Much of this work may be easy to overlook because it often happens away from the many eyes that watch an emergency scene unfold, however, his influence also extended beyond operations and into the everyday culture of the District.

Hughes was known for his dry sense of humor, his understated wit and, perhaps just as importantly within the fire service, his ability to put his skills in the kitchen to work. Whether cooking for the crews under his leadership during initiatives like National EMS Week or flipping pancakes for the District's Fire Prevention Week Pancake Breakfast, Hughes was content to put in the work regardless of what recognition would follow.

It was another reflection of the way he approached service: whether standing in command at a major incident, advocating for firefighter health, or standing behind a griddle, Hughes consistently found ways to contribute.

Over 33 years, he has earned numerous honors, helped save lives through his own work, and prepared countless others to do the same. His impact reaches far beyond the individual emergencies he answered or the programs he helped establish.

Perhaps the most enduring measure of his service is found in the personnel who will continue to walk through the doors of a fire station, answer the call, and return home to their families.

Because of the work Hughes championed, they will do so with greater awareness of their health, better resources to care for their bodies, and a stronger organizational foundation beneath them. This is a legacy that will never retire.

South Walton Fire District is grateful for the 25 years Hughes dedicated to the organization and for the 33 years he devoted to public service. His leadership, experience, and commitment to the people around him have left a lasting mark on the District and the fire service.

Chief Hughes, thank you for a career defined not only by the emergencies you answered, but by the people you made better, safer, and healthier along the way. On behalf of your SWFD family, enjoy the next chapter. You have more than earned it.

Community

GASWORKS: Bringing Comfort, Style & Craftsmanship to the Florida Panhandle

For more than 11 years, Gasworks has been proudly locally owned and operated, serving homeowners, builders, designers, and businesses throughout the Florida Panhandle. What began with a commitment to quality gas services has grown into a full-service company specializing in gas lines, fireplaces, outdoor kitchens, and gas lighting.

At Gasworks, we believe the right gas system is about more than function—it's about creating spaces where people gather, relax, entertain, and enjoy their homes. Whether you're building a new home, renovating an existing property, or adding the finishing touches to an outdoor living space, our experienced team is here to help bring your vision to life.

Our expertise covers the complete process, from gas line installation and piping to the installation of beautiful, high-quality fireplaces, outdoor kitchens, and gas lighting. By offering these services under one roof, we make it easier for our customers to create a cohesive, dependable, and beautifully finished project.

Designed for the Way You Live

The Florida Panhandle is known for its beautiful homes, coastal lifestyle, and incredible outdoor spaces. Gasworks helps homeowners take full advantage of that lifestyle with custom solutions designed for both indoor comfort and outdoor entertaining.

A fireplace can transform a room into a warm and inviting gathering place. A professionally designed outdoor kitchen can turn a patio into an extension of your home. Gas lighting can add warmth, character, and timeless appeal to outdoor spaces. Behind it all, properly installed gas piping provides the dependable foundation that makes these features possible.

We understand that every property and every customer is different. That's why we take the time to listen, understand your goals, and provide solutions tailored to your home and lifestyle. Our approach combines quality products, knowledgeable service, attention to detail, and local experience.

Your Local Gas & Outdoor Living Experts

After 11 years in business, Gasworks has built its reputation one project and one customer at a time. We're proud to be part of the communities we serve and to work with the homeowners, contractors, and businesses who make the Florida Panhandle such a special place.

Visit our showroom at 3214 US Hwy 98, Suite 402 Santa Rosa Beach, FL to explore options, get inspired, and talk with our team about your next project.

Community

South Walton Mosquito District Urges Residents To Remain Vigilant During Peak West Nile Virus Season

While only one case of West Nile virus (WNV) has been detected in Walton County so far this year, the South Walton Mosquito District is reminding residents that mosquito-borne disease activity remains a concern during the peak of West Nile virus season.

West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses are more prevalent during the summer and early fall. The South Walton Mosquito District continues to monitor mosquito populations throughout South Walton County and is taking proactive measures to reduce mosquito populations and the risk of disease transmission.

Monitoring and Mosquito Control Efforts

The District deploys adult mosquito traps throughout South Walton County to monitor mosquito population densities and test for mosquito-borne diseases. The District currently has 22 permanent trap locations, primarily positioned near swampy areas and populated communities. Traps are checked twice a week, and collected mosquitoes are brought to the District's laboratory, where the Entomology Department identifies the species present.

Trap data helps guide mosquito-control decisions, including when and where adulticide treatments, commonly known as nighttime spraying, may be necessary. Adulticide treatments are used as a last line of defense when mosquito populations and disease risk warrant additional control measures.

The District also conducts weekly inspections and treatments at known mosquito breeding sites. Field technicians apply larvicide, a biopesticide that targets immature mosquitoes before they develop into biting adults. Residents who notice increased mosquito activity can also submit a service request, prompting technicians to investigate the area for additional breeding sites.

Sentinel Chickens Help Detect Mosquito-Borne Disease

Thirteen of the District's trap locations also serve as sentinel sites for 52 chickens. Blood samples are collected from the chickens weekly and sent to the Florida Department of Health laboratory in Tampa for testing for mosquito-borne illnesses, including West Nile virus and Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE).

Chickens are useful for surveillance because they typically do not show symptoms of these diseases and are considered dead-end hosts, meaning mosquitoes cannot acquire the virus from them and transmit it onward.

If a chicken tests positive, District technicians conduct additional surveillance in the surrounding area, including checking for breeding sites and increasing mosquito trapping. Positive sentinel chickens are not harmed; they are placed in new homes or donated to programs such as Future Farmers of America (FFA).

Additional adulticide treatments may be considered based on mosquito populations, species composition, disease activity and other surveillance data. The Florida Department of Health may issue a public health advisory when multiple birds in an area test positive for a mosquito-borne illness.

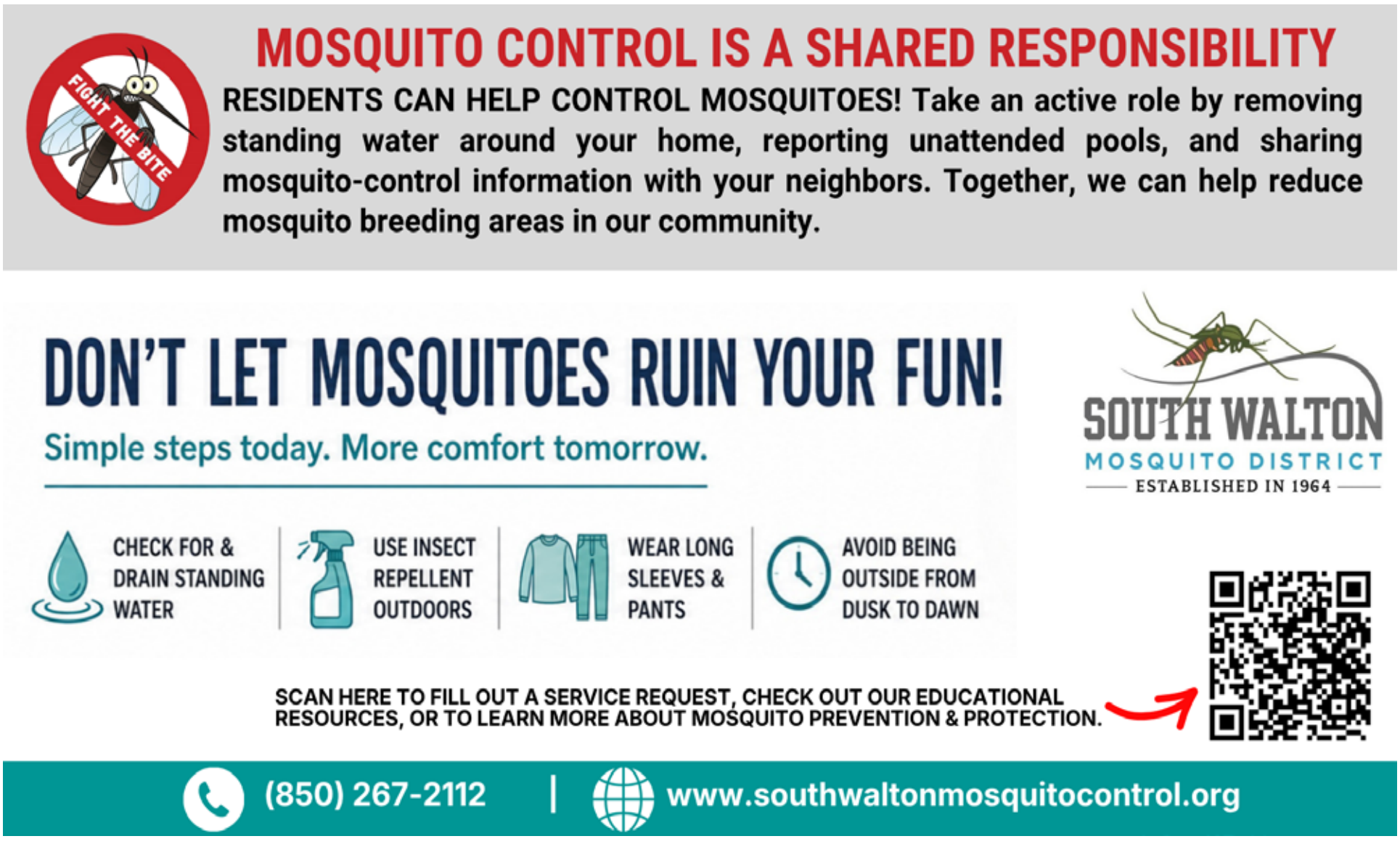
Rainfall Can Increase Mosquito Populations

Recent and ongoing rainfall can significantly increase mosquito populations by creating breeding habitat for floodwater and container-breeding species. Mosquitoes can lay eggs in almost anything that holds water, including tires, buckets, wheelbarrows, clogged gutters, swimming pools, tarps, toys and kiddie pools. Under favorable conditions, mosquitoes can develop from eggs to adults in approximately five to seven days.

Residents are encouraged to spend 10 minutes each week inspecting their property and eliminating standing water.

Residents should:

- Tip over or discard containers that collect water.
- Keep swimming pools and fountains operational and circulating.
- Tip over items such as buckets, toys, kiddie pools, trash cans and plant trays.
- Change water in birdbaths and pet bowls at least weekly.
- Aerate ornamental ponds and fountains or stock them with fish or mosquito dunks when appropriate.
- Store outdoor toys, empty containers and other water-holding items upside down when they are not in use.



Community

SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED IN 1964

Residents with large, non-circulating water vessels or ponds may also request free mosquito fish through the District's service request system.

Protect Yourself From Mosquito Bites

- Residents can reduce their risk of mosquito bites by taking the following precautions:
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use air conditioning or, when outdoors, sit within the air stream of a fan when possible.
- Make sure window and door screens are in good condition.
- Use mosquito repellents containing EPA-registered active ingredients such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535 or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Always follow the product label when applying mosquito repellent.

Request Mosquito Control Services

Residents can report mosquito-related concerns or request service by:

Calling (850) 267-2112
Submitting a service request online at South Walton Mosquito District
Emailing publicrelations@swcmcd.org

For additional information about mosquito prevention, mosquito-borne diseases and District programs, visit www.southwaltonmosquitocontrol.org.

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Mint Julep Owner

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Arts

Seagrove Garden Club Learns Florist's Favorite Tricks and Tips

Kirby Holt isn't opposed to incorporating spray paint, hot glue or even a faux flower or two to create floral arrangements to please demanding clients.

A seasonal flower demonstration by Holt, owner and lead designer at Blossoms, a Chipley floral and gift shop, launched the Seagrove Garden Club's 2026-27 season on Sept. 9 at Watersound Fountains.

The club's new president Debbie Schneider said she looks "forward to fostering a welcoming and positive environment for all our members."

Holt created several floral arrangements with the help of his son, Brad, who also shared with members examples of his latest passion: songwriting.

For an arrangement with fall color not naturally found along the northwest Florida coast, Holt sprayed everyday foliage with a heavy layer of buttery yellow spray paint, followed by pops of paprika. He added fake gourds, yellow and orange flowers and short grass for texture.

Holt will share his designer tips at his 30th annual Holiday Decorating Showcase Oct. 22 at the Washington County Ag Center in Chipley. The event is a must for anyone interested in creating dramatic holiday decorations in a short amount of time. Holt donates part of each $20 admission ticket to the club. For information on tickets, message the club on its Facebook page.

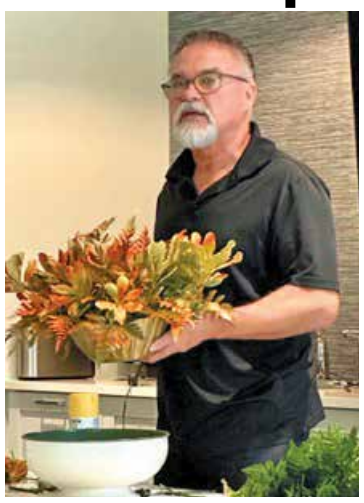
The 63rd Seagrove Garden Club season continues in October with a program about tropical plants by horticulturist Karen Dowd of Nature's Way Farms. Club members will hold the annual Gifting & Giving fundraiser in November. In 2025, the club distributed more than $11,000 to local charities to benefit children and families.

After the new year, chef Gary Serafin of Emerald Coast Catering/Gourmet to Go will share his story in January. Guardians of the Summer Meadow will be the subject of the February meeting with Joshua Criss with the University of Florida Extension Agency. In March, Kurt Cox of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will discuss invasive creatures. In April, the club holds its annual plant swap and will learn about mosquito management from the South Walton Mosquito Control District. The season wraps up with a local garden tour in mid-May.

Schneider is beginning a two-year term as president. Carolyn Dzelzkahns returns as treasurer. Vice president duties will be shared by Linda Cox, Sheri Allen, Kathy Askew and Ashley Brammer. Patsy Powell will take over as club secretary. Past president Marie Spafford is the club parliamentarian. Cora Brettel will continue to spearhead the club's Charity of the Month effort.

Visitors to Ascension Hospital Emerald Coast in Santa Rosa Beach, the nearby Ascension Cancer Center, Genesis Care and residents of three assisted-living facilities enjoy the weekly handiwork of Seagrove Garden Club members who create dozens of arrangements with donated flowers.

Organized in 1963 in South Walton County, Seagrove Garden Club is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit. The club's early focus on sharing the culture of coastal flowers and experiences has evolved into a mission of giving to the community through flowers and monetary support. Since becoming a tax-exempt organization in 2019, the club has raised more than $86,000 to support charities in Walton, Bay and Okaloosa counties. For more information on Seagrove Garden Club activities and membership, visit the group's Facebook page.



Blossoms owner Kirby Holt uses spray paint to create a base of fall colors not easily found along the Northwest Florida coast.

Debbie Schneider, left, takes over as president of Seagrove Garden Club, succeeding Marie Spafford, center, who will serve as parliamentarian. Former president Patsy Powell, right, will serve as secretary.

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Arts

A Season of Enchantment at Clay Garden & Gifts

There is a particular kind of magic that arrives with the holidays—the glow of twinkling lights, the sound of familiar carols drifting through the air, the gathering of friends and neighbors, and the simple pleasure of discovering something beautiful and unexpected.

This November, that magic comes to life at Clay Garden & Gifts during its Annual Holiday Open House on Sunday, November 8.

Guests are invited to wander through the gardens and cottages of Clay and experience the property dressed in its holiday best. The afternoon's festivities will unfold from 2 to 4 p.m., transforming an already distinctive destination into a charming Christmas experience filled with music, food, libations and the spirit of the season.

At the heart of the celebration is a Christmas Crawl through the cottages, inviting guests to meander from one space to another, discovering beautifully curated holiday displays, gifts and seasonal treasures along the way. With each cottage offering its own character and collection, the experience is meant to be savored rather than hurried—a leisurely afternoon of inspiration and discovery.

Adding to the enchantment will be the voices of Emerald Coast Theatre, performing beloved Christmas carols throughout the afternoon creating nostalgic moments that remind us why we love this time of year.

And because the best gatherings linger over good food and good company, guests will be treated to culinary offerings prepared by Seagrove Village Market, accompanied by festive libations from the Tipsy Mule. Together, the music, food and drinks create an atmosphere designed for lingering—an afternoon to catch up with friends, meet new ones and enjoy the simple pleasures of the season.

For Clay Garden & Gifts, the Annual Holiday Open House is more than the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. It is a celebration of place and community.

Over the years, Clay has become a destination for those drawn to beautiful gardens, distinctive gifts, thoughtful home décor and the art of creating spaces that feel welcoming and inspired. The cottages and gardens give the property a sense of history and discovery, while its ever-changing collections offer something new around every corner.

During the holidays, that experience becomes even more special. It is an invitation to slow down—to look, to linger and perhaps to find the perfect gift for someone you love, or a little something beautiful for your own home.

Come for the Christmas Crawl. Stay for the carols. Enjoy a bite from Seagrove Village Market and a festive libation from the Tipsy Mule. Wander the cottages, take in the holiday displays and let yourself be swept up in the warmth of the season.

On Sunday, November 8, Clay Garden & Gifts invites you to leave the ordinary behind for an afternoon and step into a little holiday enchantment.

The season begins at Clay.

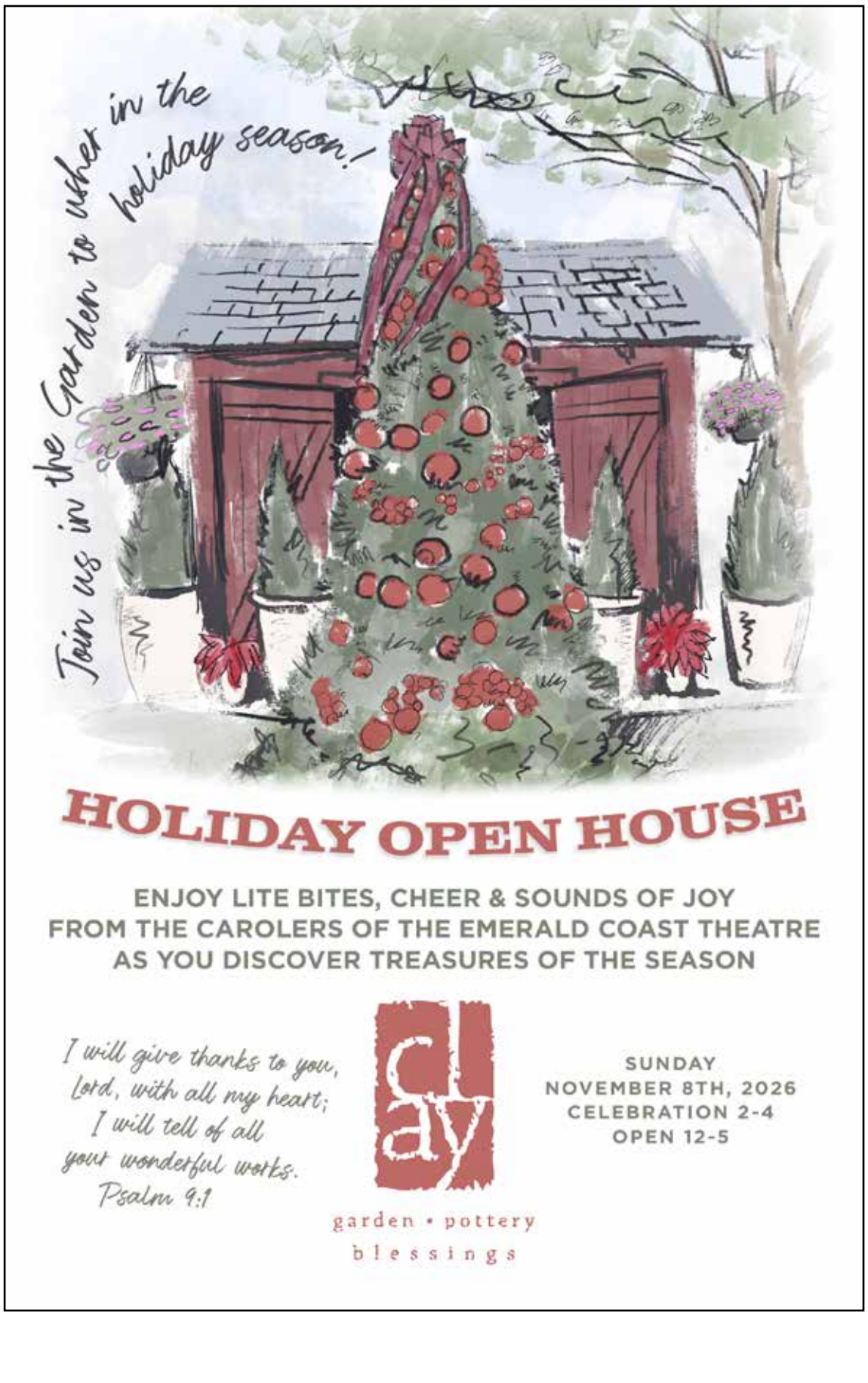
Clay Gardens is located at 4808 E County Hwy 30A in Santa Rosa Beach. For more information, visit their website at clay30a.com.

A Superior Mechanical to Host Second Veterans & First Responders Event in Niceville

The Walton and Okaloosa communities are coming together again to give recognition and thanks to our first responders, veterans, and active military. A Superior Mechanical will hold its second Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Lunch at the Niceville Community Center, 204 Partin Drive North, Niceville, FL 32578 on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, from 11:30 AM to 1:00 pm. Please save the date!

During the event, A Superior Mechanical will donate a new Water Heater System complete with installation to a local First Responder or Veteran in need. This giveaway is open to all who have served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and all first responders including EMT/Medics, Police, Sheriffs and Fire Fighters. Register to win at ASuperiorMechanical.com/Giveaways.

The event includes a delicious hot lunch catered by Swiftly Catered, a brief welcome from the sponsors and supporters, and the Hot Water Heater. This event is supported and sponsored by United Community Bank, Lyle Allamon-Realtor & Homes For Heroes, the City of Niceville and Niceville Community Center, Niceville High School (who will present the colors), and Rocky Bayou Christian School (who will sing the National Anthem). Walton and Okaloosa County businesses are encouraged to sponsor; for more information contact Marta Thorpe at (850) 814-3822.



Community

WINE FESTIVAL

continued from page 2

sentation, where $3.25 million in funding was awarded to 16 charities in a single year. Pure joy—that is what I felt walking into the ballroom and seeing the people behind these local charities: founders, directors, board members, volunteers and donors who serve children day in and day out.

I witnessed tears of joy. Excited joy. Thankful, grateful joy. You could hear it in the voices of those who stepped to the microphone, and you could feel it throughout the room.

Every person who donates, volunteers, serves on a board, bids in an auction, hosts a wine dinner or simply purchases a ticket to an event such as Harvest plays a part in changing real lives right here in our own backyard.

You may never know how many children you helped grow up and graduate. How many you helped escape a terrible situation. How many you gave hope, healing, a safe place to sleep or even a beautiful new smile. You might never meet them or hear their stories. But the difference is real.

That deeper purpose does not diminish the fun of Harvest. If anything, it adds to it. "Wine and food have a remarkable ability to bring people together and create a shared sense of community," Kate said. "Our events begin with an exceptional experience, but the connection to our mission gives that experience greater meaning."

"This anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate how far Harvest has come, but it is also the beginning of its next chapter," Kate said.

That next chapter begins Thursday with six intimate wine dinners at acclaimed locations throughout South Walton, featuring Alpha Omega Wine Collective, Bordeaux wines, Innumero Wines, Lerner Project, Pahlmeyer and Sign of the Dove.

On Friday, Harvest After Dark returns to Cerulean Park with elevated wines and culinary creations from celebrated chefs across the Southeast. "This year's festival will honor the experiences guests have come to love while adding a little extra sparkle in celebration of our 10th anniversary," Kate said.

That reimagined evening will blend glamorous after-hours energy, unexpected pairings and a touch of Studio 54 flair. "It will feel distinctly celebratory while remaining true to what has made Harvest so special for the past decade: exceptional wine and food, meaningful connections and a shared commitment to supporting children in need across Northwest Florida," she said.

Saturday brings the signature Grand Tasting, where guests can explore hundreds of wines from around the world while enjoying seafood, barbecue and other creations from talented chefs and makers.

The weekend concludes Sunday with a jazz cocktail brunch featuring ingredient-driven cocktails and a New Orleans-inspired menu by award-winning chef Tory McPhail.

A virtual silent auction featuring rare wines, luxury travel and staycations will add another way to participate—even for those unable to attend in person.

It promises to be a spectacular four days. Yet the most meaningful result will not be found on a menu, in a wineglass or beneath the lights of a beautifully decorated tent. Through stories like the young mother's, we know that impact extends far beyond the festival weekend. It is found months—and even years—later in a NICU, a classroom, a counseling room, a safe home or a mother's arms.

I have long believed the compassion and generosity of our relatively small Northwest Florida communities rival those of much larger cities and regions. We may be small in size, but when it comes to giving, serving and taking care of our own, our hearts are huge. Harvest is one more beautiful expression of that heart.

In a place known as paradise, it is easy to celebrate what is visible. Harvest asks us to look deeper—to notice the needs that are often hidden, to pull up another chair and to make room at the table for children who deserve every opportunity to thrive. Ten years in, that is something truly worth raising a glass to!

Visit HarvestWineandFood.com for tickets, the schedule and virtual-auction information.

NEXT BIG THING

continued from page 6

ber of Commerce.

"We take great pride in curating and culling an assembly of the freshest and most brilliant minds in their fields then provide access to these individuals where our community can tap into their wellspring of knowledge in a fun and exciting environment, all in one day."

Tickets are $250, with a $50 discount for Chamber Members at waltonareachamber.com. For a comprehensive schedule or for tickets, visit waltonareachamber.com.

The Walton Area Chamber would like to thank Venue Sponsor: Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa; Presenting Sponsors: Eglin Federal Credit Union, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast; Mingle & Mimosas Sponsors: Buffalo Rock–Pepsi, McKibbon Hospitality | Courtyard Sandestin, Hyatt Place Sandestin, Residence Inn Sandestin; Cocktail Hour Sponsors: Emerald Coast Hospice Care, NBI Properties; Break Sponsor: Gulf Coast Bank & Trust; Recharge Station Sponsor: Florida Power & Light; Coffee Sponsors: SBDC Florida, Mills Heating & Air; Networking Lounge Sponsor: The St. Joe Company®, Coastal Stagedesigns LLC.; Lunch Sponsors: Dunlap & Shipman, 30A FlexSpace; Wellness Sponsors & Moments: United Way Emerald Coast, Fore Her, Discover Freedom; Passport Sponsor: All In Credit

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Arts

A Comedically Fun Murder Mystery Hits the ECTC Stage This October

By Cameron Hughes

October is the perfect time for a murder mystery, and Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is bringing plenty of intrigue to the stage with The 39 Steps, running October 15–25 at Grand Boulevard.

Based on Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller, The 39 Steps combines murder, espionage and romance in an adventure filled with rapid-fire comedy. Four actors take on more than 150 characters as one ordinary man finds himself caught in an extraordinary chase filled with twists, turns and laughs, making for a fun night out this fall.

Lovers of last season's Murder on the Orient Express will find plenty to enjoy in this fast-paced thriller, including the return of audience favorite Hayes Mercure. After keeping audiences guessing as American businessman Samuel Ratchett, Hayes returns to the ECTC stage in The 39 Steps for another suspenseful adventure, this time on a deadly pursuit through the Northern European countryside.

Following The 39 Steps, ECTC heads into the holidays with its third production of Season 14, Million Dollar Quartet Christmas, running December 3–20. Featuring the music of Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley, this high-energy holiday celebration combines rock 'n' roll classics with Christmas favorites for a festive night of live music, nostalgia and holiday spirit.

Performances of The 39 Steps run October 15–25 at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, located at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach. Tickets and more information are available at emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

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HAPPENINGS AROUND THE BEACH OCTOBER 2026

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.

Guided Nature Hikes

Topsail Hill Preserve State Park offers a Guided Plant Stroll on the third Monday each month beginning at 9 a.m.

Camp Helen State Park offers a Guided History Tour on the first Saturday of each month, and Ranger-Guided Nature Hike on the first Thursday of each month. Both begin at 10 a.m.

Walton County Fair Oct. 12-17

The fair prides itself on continuing to update the areas for exhibits and entertainment. Exhibits at the fair still include animal, art, agriculture, handicrafts, potted plants, photography, and canned foods divisions. Children also have the opportunity to showcase their skills and talents with animals, speeches and educational posters.

Entertainment is a big deal at the fair. Each year the building is filled with music - from gospel to country and western performers. The gospel sing on Saturday night has become a great hit and much-anticipated event. Visit waltoncountyfair.com for more details.

10th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival Oct. 15-18

Sip, savor and celebrate during four unforgettable days of exceptional wine and cuisine at the Harvest Wine & Food Festival, produced by the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.

The festivities begin Thursday with intimate Harvest Wine Dinners at restaurants and venues throughout South Walton. Friday's Harvest After Dark brings elevated wines, unexpected pairings and culinary creations to Cerulean Park. Saturday features the signature Grand Tasting, followed by a spirited Jazz Cocktail Brunch on Sunday. Proceeds benefit the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation and its mission to help children in need throughout Northwest Florida. Visit dcwaf.org/harvest-festival for the complete schedule and ticket information.

18th Annual Baytowne Wharf Beer Festival Oct. 16-17

Join in for samplings of local brews and merchants, and live music on the lawn! Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort presents the 18th Annual Baytowne Wharf Beer Fest. Sample and savor American specialty brews from around the nation. The event will feature over 150 domestic and international craft beers, offering an opportunity to learn about the

different types of lagers and ales from a variety of styles. It's the best Beer Fest on the coast! Visit www.baytownebeerfestival.com.

Kids' Night Out at Watersound Town Center Oct. 20

Kids' Night Out is back at The Pavilion at Watersound Town Center! Join from 6-8 p.m. for evenings of family fun featuring activities, music and plenty of entertainment for the kids. From games and creative activities to music and more, there's something to keep little ones smiling while parents relax and enjoy the evening. Free & open to the public!

Eden Gardens Fall Film Series Oct. 22

It's become a fun neighborhood tradition leading up to Halloween each year: Watch Frogs once again in the very place where it was filmed in 1972. Come out to relax under the live oaks at Eden Gardens State Park and enjoy the movie Frogs (Filmed at Eden in 1972) starting at 6:30 p.m.

Destin Songwriter Festival Oct. 24-25

This year's festival features intimate acoustic, songwriter-round-style performances and unforgettable headliner sets across five stages over two days, offering music lovers a firsthand glimpse into the stories behind the songs. Saturday's venue is directly in front of SkyBar at The Edge. For Sunday, the festival moves to the remarkable grounds of The Alice, where lucky ticket holders will relish an intimate VIP experience

The most notable headliner, Jeffrey Steele, is a six-time Grammy nominee with more than 65 million airplays for hits penned for many famous artists. Other artists on hand to share their songwriting and performance talents include: Terri Jo Box, Carolyn Dawn Johnson, Bridgette Tatum and more.

Visit destinsongwriterfestival.com for the latest updates,

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE BEACH OCTOBER 2026

ticket information and artist announcements.

The Next BIG Thing Oct. 26

Registration is open for the Walton Area Chamber of Commerce's The Next BIG Thing 2026 at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Presented by Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast and Eglin Federal Credit Union, the premier one-day conference will feature three professional development tracks: Leadership Development, Entrepreneurship and Women in Business.

Attendees can expect inspiring keynote speakers, TED-style breakout sessions and valuable networking opportunities designed to provide practical insights, fresh perspectives and meaningful connections to help elevate careers and businesses. Questions: Gabrielle@waltonareachamber.com. For registration information, visit WaltonAreaChamber.com.

Treat-Or-Treating at Alys Beach Oct. 23

Bring the whole family out to Alys Beach's Town Center on Friday, October 23rd for festive music and treats from The Merchants of Alys Beach from 4-6 p.m. Costumes are encouraged, but not required. Trick-or-Treating is complimentary.

Run Watersound Oct. 24

Choose between a 5K or 10K and enjoy a flat, scenic course through the paths and sidewalks of the Watersound Origins community. Both races will begin and end at The Pavilion at Watersound Town Center. Details and registration at https://watersound.itsyourrace.com/event.aspx.

Seaside Halloweener Derby & Costume Contest Oct. 24

Join fellow dog lovers from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. for the 16th Annual Halloweener Derby and Dog Costume Contest in the Seaside Amphitheater.

Rosemary Beach Monstrous Halloween Bash Oct. 24

Gather your ghouls for the Monstrous Halloween Bash in Rosemary Beach at East Long Green Park! Beginning at 10 a.m., this family-fun event features Treat or Treating, pumpkin decorating, a costume contest & MORE! Trick-or-Treating: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Halloween Bash: 2 p.m.-5 p.m.

Queens of the Tiles: Mahjong at Ovide Oct. 26

Brunch, bubbles, and a little friendly competition! Join Ovide, Hotel Effie's signature restaurant for Queens of the Tiles, a lively Mahjong social where guests can sip, shuffle, and socialize over brunch favorites and wine. Get in the game every other Monday through December 21.

Pumpkin Carving & Costume Contest at Scratch Biscuit Kitchen Oct. 30

Join Scratch Biscuit Kitchen in the Watercolor Town Center for a festive fall afternoon of family fun! Beginning at noon, show off your creativity (pumpkins provided), strut your style in the costume contest — or take on both! Adults, kids, and even pets are welcome to participate, with prizes awarded for "Best in Show. Sign up by October 27th by emailing ScratchBK@stjoe.com to reserve your spot.

Barktoberfest at Grand Boulevard Oct. 30

Dog-Harmony's Barktoberfest, a doggie social with beer for humans, will be held from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in Grand Park at Grand Boulevard. This event is free and open to the public. Guests will enjoy light bites, libations, live music, incredible raffle prizes and the Emerald Coast's most beloved doggie costume contest and canine-only trick-or-treat celebration. With a $15 donation (or $20 the day of), you and your costumed pup can strut your stuff and compete for fun prizes. Tickets at dog-harmony.org/events/11th-annual-barktoberfest.

Baytowne Trick or Treat Street Oct. 31

Calling all ghouls, ghosts, and goblins to the Village of Baytowne Wharf for a spooktacular extravaganza! Trick or Treat through the Village streets and visit merchants for your favorite treat from 6-8 p.m. Steve Hall will play frighteningly good tunes on the main stage. End the night with a spooky fireworks display at 8 p.m.

Halloween Extravaganza at Hotel Effie Ara Rooftop Oct. 31

This Halloween, Hotel Effie is throwing it back to the decades that gave us mixtapes, music videos, arcade games, blockbuster movies and unforgettable pop culture. Breaking Through the Decades takes over Ara Rooftop Pool & Lounge from 6-11 p.m. for one totally rad night celebrating the best of the '80s and '90s. Tickets at www.hoteleffie.com/events/breaking-through-decades-halloween-extravaganza-ara.

Seeing Red Wine Festival Nov. 5-8

Seeing Red Wine Festival in Seaside brings four days of wine and culinary events to South Walton for a timeless tradition. Grand and reserve tastings, live music, local cuisines, a themed brunch, vintners dinner, and more! Seeing Red offers a fun-filled weekend, whether you choose to experience every event or just one. Customize your weekend experience by purchasing curated packages or individual tickets and reservations. To find out more, visit seasideseeingred.com!

30A BBQ Festival Nov. 6

The 30A BBQ Festival returns to Grand Boulevard from 5:30-8 p.m. to celebrate The Sonder Project! A rain-or-shine event, enjoy all-you-can-eat barbecue, served up by the best grill masters along the Emerald Coast as they compete for the trophy for '30A's Best BBQ' voted by you! In between bites, enjoy live music by River Dan, a photo booth, a SILENT AUCTION, and a variety of refreshments from local purveyors including craft brews from Grayton Beer Company, wine, and water. Details and tickets at https://www.bigtickets.com/events/the-sonder-project/30a-bbq-festival.

Mountainfilm on Tour Nov. 6-7

This 2-night outdoor film festival is dedicated to educating, inspiring, and motivating audiences about issues that matter. Gates open at 5:45 p.m. and films begin at 7 p.m. Find more info and purchase tickets at www.watercolorresort.com/mountainfilm-on-tour.

Music Bingo at Stinky's Mondays

Stinky's Bait Shack to host free Music Bingo on Mondays from 6-9 p.m. Play 5 rounds of this family-friendly game while kicking back at one of South Walton's most beloved hangouts.

Bingo at Hotel Effie Thursdays

Hotel Effie invites you to join them every Thursday at Ara Rooftop Pool & Lounge from 5-7 p.m. for Bingo with a view! Enjoy free games, tasty cocktails, delicious bites, and breathtaking rooftop vibes.

Trivia Night at North Beach Social Thursdays

Grab your brainy buds and head to North Beach Social for Trivia Night, hosted by Super Good Trivia, on Thursdays from 6-8 p.m. North Beach Social hosts live music in the spacious outside deck throughout the week! Spend the afternoon or evening with friends and family on the bayside with cold drinks, delicious eats and live entertainment.

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Arts

The Art of Healing

Ten years after its founding, MKAF's groundbreaking Warrior Arts program continues to create connection, calm and community through creativity.

By Zandra Wolfgram

A pen touches paper. A line becomes a curve, the curve becomes a pattern, and before long, a small square of paper has become something intricate, personal and entirely unexpected.

For participants in Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's Warrior Arts program, however, what happens while creating the art can matter as much as the finished piece.

This year, MKAF celebrates the 10th anniversary of Warrior Arts, a groundbreaking component of its ArtsReach program founded in 2016 by Melanie Moore, MKAF's director of education and community engagement. Warrior Arts connects active-duty military service members, veterans and their families with the transformative power of art, particularly those living with traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress and other visible and invisible injuries.

Through tailored workshops and art experiences, Warrior Arts uses creative expression as a therapeutic tool to promote mindfulness, resilience and connection while addressing some of the unique challenges military personnel and their families face. At its heart is a simple but powerful idea: Art can offer a pathway to communication, creative expression and recovery.

A Legacy of Access

The idea is deeply rooted in MKAF's history. Founded in 1995, the nonprofit organization carries the name and spirit of Destin matriarch Mattie Kelly, a lifelong patron of the arts who wrote poetry, played piano and organ, composed music and supported cultural organizations. Kelly and her husband, Coleman, moved to Destin in 1935 and became prominent business owners and philanthropists in the growing fishing community.

Today, MKAF carries that legacy forward with a mission "to champion access to the arts for all in Northwest Florida." Its concerts, Festival of the Arts and other public programs help support ArtsReach, the foundation's community education umbrella serving K-12 students, children and adults with special needs, and the military community.

The numbers tell part of the story: ArtsReach now presents more than 150 programs annually, reaches more than 25,000 participants each year and has served more than 420,000 people through more than 100 schools and partner agencies since 1995.

Moore joined MKAF in 2015 and created Warrior Arts the following year. Under her leadership, ArtsReach has grown from a handful of outreach programs into a robust initiative reaching communities throughout Northwest Florida.

MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller credits Moore with helping make outreach central to the foundation's identity. "We're so fortunate to have somebody of Melanie's education and arts pedigree to lead the charge for us on outreach, which is essentially the product of Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation," Fuller said.

When You "Tangle Up," You Power Down

Warrior Arts has grown to more than 100 programs annually, incorporating visual art, painting, improv and other creative practices. One of its most successful offerings is Zentangle, an easy-to-learn method of creating images from structured patterns, or "tangles."

Moore, a Certified Zentangle Teacher, describes the focused drawing process as an active form of meditation. "When you tangle up, you power down," she said. "The act of focused drawing becomes a form of meditation and mindfulness that supports recovery and relaxation." There are no mistakes — only "mis-tangles." There is no prescribed finished product. Participants simply begin drawing, one line at a time. That low-pressure approach can be especially meaningful for people accustomed to high-stakes environments demanding precision and control. Moore has seen participants leave sessions calmer, carrying not only a finished piece of original art but a sense of accomplishment.

Few people understand that transformation better than retired Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Charles Burkett. A 2004 helicopter crash left Burkett with a traumatic brain injury, extensive nerve damage and severely limited fine motor skills on his dominant right side. He incorporated Zentangle into his physical rehabilitation, first learning to write with his left hand and eventually retraining his right. Within months, he had regained 80% of his fine motor skills; by year's end, he had regained full control of his right arm, hand and fingers. In 2022, MKAF sponsored Burkett's training to become a Certified Zentangle Teacher, allowing a veteran who experienced its benefits firsthand to teach other military members as a peer.

See Warrior Arts in Action

The public can experience that spirit of creativity and connection during MKAF's 31st annual Festival of the Arts, Oct. 24-25 at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin. Throughout the weekend, visitors can stop by the Warrior Arts Tent, meet participants and instructors, view artwork created by veterans and service members and try tangling themselves. On Saturday at 2 p.m., Moore and Burkett will take the Dugas Pavilion Stage for "Tangle Time with Melanie & Chief," a live Zentangle demonstration.

The free festival features more than 100 artists, live entertainment, demonstrations, children's activities, food and more. Proceeds support ArtsReach. For MKAF, that creates a fitting circle: Come for the art. Discover what art can do. Then help make it accessible to someone else. Attend the Festival, become a member, volunteer or make a gift. After all, your support keeps the Arts FUNded.

Experience Warrior Arts

Warrior Arts Tent

Saturday, Oct. 24, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 25, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Meet Warrior Arts participants and instructors, explore artwork created by veterans and service members, and try your hand at Zentangle during interactive lessons.

Tangle Time with Melanie & Chief

Saturday, Oct. 24 | 2 p.m.

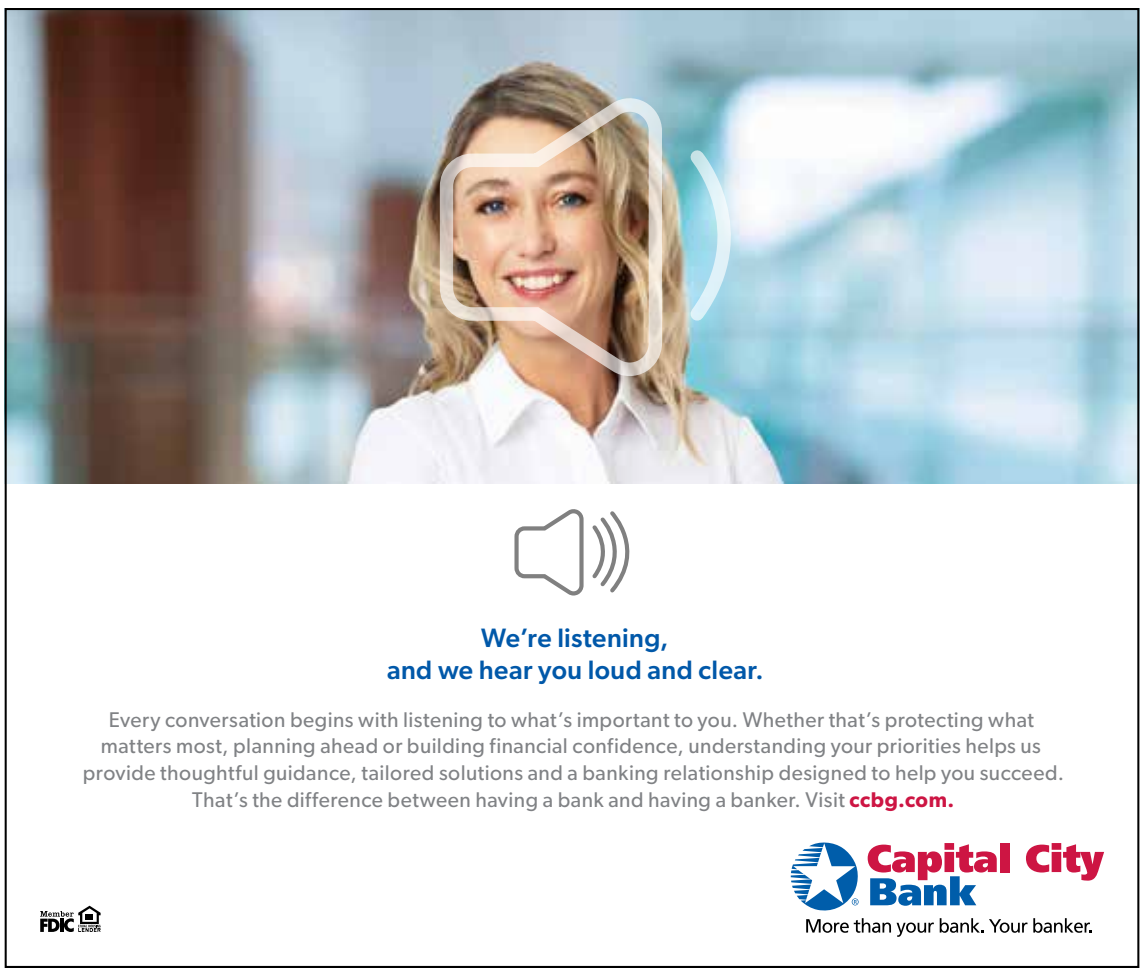
Dugas Pavilion Stage

Certified Zentangle Teachers Melanie Moore and Chief Charles Burkett demonstrate how simple lines and patterns can become an engaging mindfulness practice.

31st Annual Festival of the Arts

Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village, Destin

Admission and parking are free. Learn more at MKAF.org.



Wellness

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Encourages Women to Take Advantage of Free Annual Mammogram Screenings during Breast Cancer Awareness Month

This Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Ascension Sacred Heart is reminding women of their free mammogram program to provide critical breast cancer screenings to uninsured women 40 and older. Funding for the program comes from generous Sacred Heart Foundation donors. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in Florida.

More than 50% of women living in Walton and Okaloosa Counties did not get an annual screening as recommended. In Walton County, nearly 40% of breast cancer cases are diagnosed in advanced stages, and in Okaloosa County, that number is just over 30%. According to the American Cancer Society, the 5-year relative survival rate for breast cancer is 99% when it's detected early and remains localized.

"Offering mammograms for women who can't pay for screening is a significant step to helping eliminate barriers and start treatment sooner to improve outcomes," said Trey Abshier, President and CEO of Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. "We can provide the care women need close to home with clinically appropriate screening and diagnostic tools for breast cancer, including 3D mammography, breast ultrasound, and biopsy."

Eligibility and Scheduling

The free mammogram program is available to women who:

- Reside in Walton or Okaloosa County
- Are 40 years of age or older
- Are uninsured
- Are seeking a preventive care screening and have no current breast health symptoms
- Have seen a primary care clinician within the last year

Women who meet the above requirements can schedule an appointment by calling the breast navigator at 850-278-3063.

To support this program with your generous donations to the Sacred Heart Foundation, visit givesacredheart.org.

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast offers two convenient locations to get your annual mammogram screening with Women's Centers in Santa Rosa Beach and Watersound. To make an appointment, visit ascension.org/SacredHeartMammogram.

10 Reasons to Become a Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Member

From free concerts under the stars to a milestone year for Warrior Arts, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) membership makes supporting the arts rewarding—and fun. Since 1995, MKAF has championed arts access in Northwest Florida through presenting programs and ArtsReach initiatives. Membership supports that mission while connecting you to the Emerald Coast's favorite cultural events. Here are 10 reasons to join.

1. You keep the arts FUN-ded.

Membership supports MKAF's year-round programming, helping bring art, music and creative experiences to more people throughout Northwest Florida.

2. Warrior Arts celebrates 10 years.

In 2026, this ArtsReach initiative marks a decade of connecting active-duty military members, veterans and their families with art's transformative power. Creative experiences, including popular Zentangle classes, encourage expression, connection and healing.

3. Festival of the Arts offers a masterpiece of a weekend.

The 31st annual festival returns Oct. 24–25 to the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village with more than 100 artists, original artwork, live entertainment, artist demonstrations, children's activities and food. Admission is free.

4. Wine Walkabout is back.

Returning by popular demand Nov. 5, 2026, Wine Walkabout is another reason to gather friends and celebrate the arts. Members enjoy preferred rates on select MKAF events throughout the year.

5. 10,000 Maniacs kicks off the 2027 concert season.

Concerts in the Village opens April 8, 2027, with 10,000 Maniacs. The eight-week series runs through May 27 at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin.

6. All eight concerts are FREE for members.

Pack a picnic, bring a blanket or lawn chair and enjoy eight Thursday nights of live music under the stars with complimentary admission to the entire 2027 series.

7. You get a head start on the fun.

Members receive early concert admission, allowing extra time to set up their VIP table or claim a favorite lawn spot.

8. There's a membership for everyone.

Four membership categories start at just $75, with benefits lasting one full year from the date you join.

9. You help inspire the next generation.

ArtsReach serves K–12 students, people with special needs and the military community. Since its inception, MKAF has inspired more than 424,000 children across more than 100 schools and partner agencies.

10. You belong to a creative community.

Join members, volunteers, artists, patrons and sponsors who make live music, visual arts and community outreach possible year after year.

Ready to join? Visit MKAF.org for current membership levels, benefits and pricing, or call (850) 650-2226.

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Wellness

Big 2027 Medicare Changes Are Coming

By Christian Regalado

It's that time of year again! If you get your healthcare through a Medicare Advantage plan, AEP is the Annual Enrollment Period (Oct 15 - Dec 7) during which enrollees are able to change Advantage and Prescription Drug plans for 2027. If you are enrolled in one of these plans, you've probably received your Annual Notice of Change by now where your carrier informs you about changes being made to your plan, or if the plan you have will remain available next year. If your current plan is set to be discontinued next year, you have the opportunity to enroll in another Advantage plan or, if you prefer, you may go back to original Medicare and enroll in a Supplement plan without facing underwriting since your plan is being discontinued.

A lot of changes are happening in 2027! Much of the post-covid Medicare funding has been reduced and the cost of healthcare, including prescriptions, has increased. Insurance carriers are reducing benefits or no longer offering plans that are unprofitable. There will also be network changes, meaning which doctors and hospitals accept Advantage Plans. No one likes change, especially as we get older, but at times we have no other choice. The plan you're on may have had benefits reduced, yet still may offer you the best value available. You can only know by comparing all of your options. This is not a year to assume you still have the best Medicare Advantage plan. I highly recommend comparing plans for 2027. This is where a certified broker can assist you.

In the past, I haven't put a lot of emphasis with my Medicare Advantage clients on Hospital Indemnity plans and/or Dental plans as Medicare Advantage had decent coverage. With the changes in medical deductibles, higher out-of-pocket costs, and lower dental benefits, these ancillary plans will provide you much more comprehensive coverage. I have spent a lot of time over the last few months reviewing carriers in our area to find low cost options. Give me a call or visit my website www.30ahealthins.com to review affordable extra coverage.

If you have a Medicare Supplement plan, you don't need to do anything since these plans don't change. Your prescription drug plan, however, may change next year. Brokers are still not able to enroll you in a prescription drug plan, but as a courtesy if you are a client they can help guide you. Medicare.gov is also a great resource to compare PDP plans.

Individual insurance through the Marketplace open enrollment starts November 1. For individuals with income below 400% of the federal poverty level, premium tax credits will still be available in 2027. If finding a low deductible plan is overpriced for you, consider opting for a high deductible plan along with a low cost indemnity plan. This combination can be a great option for comprehensive coverage at a lower cost. I work with many carriers and can help guide you.

Also, for those with household income just over that 400% FPL, it may be worth contributing to a Health Savings Account. HSA contributions will lower your Modified Adjusted Gross Income which may help qualify you for a premium tax credit.

If you have not done so already, call a broker and set up an appointment. My office is in Santa Rosa Beach, and I enjoy meeting personally with clients. Having someone you can trust to navigate through next year's healthcare policy changes and choices will be truly valuable. Call me, I will be happy to be that person. I'm local and always available.

Call or text me, Christian Regalado, at (850) 687-7606 or drop me an email at christian@30ahealthins.com

Tee Up for a Purpose: 24th Annual Charity Golf Classic

For 24 years, the Charity Golf Classic has brought together community leaders, friends and generous partners for a shared purpose: advancing exceptional healthcare at Sacred Heart Emerald Coast.

This year's Classic carries a special purpose as we work to raise funds for a new ECHO machine, giving physicians important cardiac imaging technology to care for patients across our community, from our tiniest babies in the NICU to those undergoing chemotherapy and so many others.

As our community continues to grow, so does the need for exceptional care close to home. Join us on the course and help us tee up a healthier future for our community. Your participation is more than a day of golf; it is an investment in hope, healing and the future of healthcare for the families who call the Emerald Coast home.

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Wellness

Sprinkle Genuine, Heartfelt Apologies

By Stephenie Craig

Think of a time when someone hurt you. Maybe they did not show up for you when you needed them or they took their anger out on you. Maybe they said something mean or did something careless that made more work for you. Now, think about what you needed from them to feel restored to a place of connection in the relationship. Did you need them to acknowledge what happened, the role they played, and how it negatively impacted you? Did you need to hear that they cared about your feelings and would make an effort to change? Did you need an apology?

Apologizing is directly acknowledging with words intentional or unintentional hurt caused by your behavior and committing to make genuine efforts to reduce or eradicate the hurtful behavior in future interactions without blaming the other person. Good apologies include genuine remorse, clear taking of responsibility, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, validation of feelings, and do not make qualifications or excuses for the behavior. Genuine apologies differ from unnecessary apologizing about things that don't warrant an apology like sneezing, asking for help, getting bumped into by someone, or saying no. Genuine apologies are not insincere or falling on the sword to avoid conflict. Genuine apologies are the acknowledgement of your real behavior that caused problems or hurt for another.

It's often easier to notice times you need someone else to take responsibility for their hurtful behavior than it is to notice times you need to take responsibility for your hurtful behavior. Though important, genuine apologies are difficult for many people. About a quarter of Americans surveyed found it difficult to offer a genuine apology. Close to half of Americans surveyed reported their apologies "rarely" or "sometimes" being genuine. Avoiding apologies reflects difficulty embracing your human fallibility. Despite your best efforts, you will hurt someone else whether you mean to or not. In light of this reality, you have an opportunity to embrace the emotionally mature skill of humble self evaluation. Try asking questions like: Is it possible I was accidentally hurtful even if my intentions were not hurtful? Can I give someone else the space to have an emotional experience that might be different from mine? Is insisting I am right more important than how the other person is experiencing me in the relationship?

Apologies can make or break a relationship. One in five people report having lost a relationship because they refused to apologize. You can be self-righteous, "right," and have disconnection in your relationships. Or, you can master genuine apologizing and experience deeper connection and higher self-awareness. I often say to my clients, "Don't be stingy with genuine apology, instead sprinkle authentic apologies generously like sprinkles on ice cream." Sprinkling genuine apologies helps marriages, friendships, parent/child relationships, sibling relationships, work relationships…all relationships. So, how do you improve at making genuine apologies?

Seven ways to Become Skilled at Sprinkling Genuine Apologies

1. Listen humbly. When someone tells you your behavior has been hurtful or problematic, try listening to them. Give others space to have an emotional experience that does not match your intentions.

2. Step away from defensiveness. Notice your urge to immediately interrupt, defend, or explain your intention and behavior. Instead, try reminding yourself that you will have time to clarify your intentions at a later moment if needed.

3. Validate. Genuinely try to understand how the other person experienced your behavior. Use words that indicate you can see how they might have experienced your behavior differently than you intended. Validation is not agreement. It is making space for someone to have a valid, different experience from your own.

4. Reflect. Is it possible I was hurtful either intentionally or unintentionally? Is there some responsibility I need to take? Am I prioritizing being right over connection?

5. Map your apology using the following template: I apologize for _____. I should not have done that. I can see that my behavior hurt you and your feelings matter to me. I will work on handling this differently in the future. An example might be, "I apologize for using mean words and taking my anger out on you. That wasn't okay. I can understand why you felt hurt and our relationship is important to me. I will work on using more kindness and patience in the future."

6. Refrain from saying, "I'm sorry, but…." For example, "I'm sorry I yelled at you, but if you had listened to me the first three times I asked you, I would not have had to yell at you." Try remembering that you are ultimately in charge of how you behave and respond. Blaming the other person for your poor response negates the apology.

7. Change the behavior. Put effort into actually working on what you said you would do differently in the future. Apologies lose their effectiveness when hurtful behavior is repetitive without change.

While embracing the skill of genuine apologizing can feel uncomfortable, it is also very freeing to take responsibility for your behavior. No one needs to be perfect, however, we do all need connection. And, connection feels safer in the presence of authentic, heartfelt apology. Connect with us along your journey for counseling and coaching at Journeybravley.com.

Wellness

Dermatology Tips to Remember this Fall

By Bridget Sullivan, PA-C, Coastal Skin Surgery and Dermatology PCB

As we enter the fall months and the weather gets cooler, it is important to take into account skin changes that can occur. Fall is an excellent time to reset your skin-care routine and address common concerns before winter arrives. This article will review tips to help with your skin health and appearance during the cooler months.

· Dry Skin - colder weather can mean dry skin, make sure to moisturize your skin twice daily. The best time to apply moisturizer is right after a bath or shower.

· Avoid hot water - on a cold day we typically like to take a hot bath or shower. Hot water temperatures can dry out our skin. Opt for lukewarm water instead.

· Dry cracked lips - don't forget to moisturize your lips. Vaseline or Cerave healing lip balm are both great products for dry lips.

· Don't forget your sunscreen - Even though it's cold outside, sunscreen application is still important to combat skin cancer and aging.

· Flare up of skin conditions - changes in the weather can flare up inflammatory skin conditions like eczema or psoriasis. Be aware of this and prepare ahead of time.

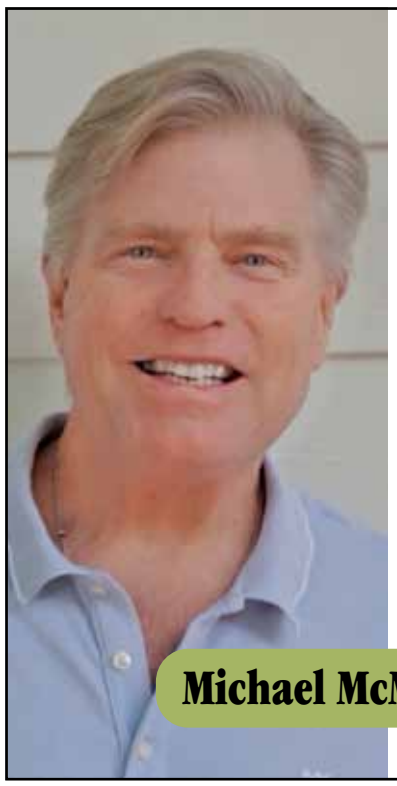
· Ideal time for cosmetic procedures - the fall and winter months are an ideal time for cosmetic procedures like chemical peels, micro needling facials, and laser treatments. After these treatments, there is typically a recovery period where sunlight should be avoided.

· Flaky Scalp - colder weather can sometimes cause our dandruff and dry scalp to flare. Anti-dandruff shampoos containing ingredients such as ketoconazole, zinc pyrithione or selenium sulfide may help.

· Dry rough heels and feet - apply creams containing urea to help soften thick, rough skin.

· Get a skin exam and skin cancer screening - fall and winter months are the perfect time to get a skin cancer screening after all the fun in the sun had during the summer.

Fall is the perfect season to give your skin some extra attention and establish habits that will keep it healthy throughout the year. I hope these simple takeaways and tips are helpful to you and your family during the fall and winter months. As always, please consult your dermatology provider for any skin health issues or concerns.



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Wellness

What the TV show “Shrinking" Gets Right About Being a Therapist

By Michael McManus, LCSW

I've spent several decades in this profession, so when a show about psychotherapists starts trending, I watch it with a mix of curiosity and mild dread. Most portrayals of therapists on screen are either cartoonishly wise or cartoonishly broken. "Shrinking" surprised me. It leans into something closer to the truth: therapists are not oracles. We are people who happen to be trained to sit with pain, and we carry our own.

The premise — Jimmy a grieving therapist who starts breaking the rules, telling clients exactly what he thinks, blurring the professional distance he was taught to maintain — is dramatized for television, obviously. Nobody should actually run their practice that way. But underneath the exaggeration is something real: the character is visibly human. He grieves badly. He makes mistakes with his daughter. He gets things wrong with his clients and has to repair it. That imperfection is the point, and it's the part of the job most people never get to see.

Therapy has always had an unspoken mythology around it — the composed clinician behind the desk, unreadable, unaffected, dispensing insight from a place of total stability. When I started out, that was more or less the model I was trained in. Keep the frame rigid. Keep your own life out of the room. Stay behind what we used to call the "therapeutic wall" — the idea that revealing too much of yourself would somehow contaminate the work.

I don't work that way anymore, and I haven't for a long time. Somewhere over the years, I stopped believing that distance was the same thing as professionalism. I got more transparent. More willing to let a client see that I'm a person who has struggled, who doesn't have every answer sitting in a drawer, who is genuinely moved by what they bring into the room. That shift wasn't comfortable at first — it went against everything I'd been taught about maintaining the "expert" posture. But it changed the work. Clients don't need a blank screen to project onto nearly as much as they need to feel like they're sitting across from someone real.

That's why a show like this resonates, messy plot lines aside. It gives people permission to see therapists as flawed, evolving humans rather than emotionally sealed professionals — and honestly, I think that's closer to what actually makes the work effective. Connection doesn't come from perfection. It comes from two people being willing to be real with each other, one of whom happens to have some training in how to hold that space well.

Michael McManus LCSW and his wife Angela are Therapists in Santa Rosa Beach Florida. To set up an appointment Michael can be reached by text or phone at (850)-837-0123 are at the website: psychotherapy30A.com.

Bioidentical Hormone Pellet Therapy Can Help Improve Sleep in Men and Women

By Dr. Richard Chern

Getting enough quality sleep is essential for physical health, emotional well-being, memory, and daily energy. Yet sleep problems become increasingly common as men and women age, particularly when natural hormone levels begin to change. Bioidentical hormone therapy (BHRT) helps improve sleep by addressing hormonal imbalances and symptoms that interfere with restful sleep.

Bioidentical hormones are designed to have a molecular structure identical or very similar to hormones naturally produced by the body. Depending on an individual's needs, hormone therapy may involve estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, or a combination of hormones. Treatment should be individualized based on symptoms, medical history, laboratory blood testing, and an assessment of potential risks and benefits.

How Hormones Affect Sleep

Hormones play an important role in regulating the body's sleep-wake cycle. Changes in hormone levels can contribute to nighttime awakenings, difficulty falling asleep, reduced sleep quality, and daytime fatigue.

For women, declining estrogen and progesterone during perimenopause and menopause can contribute to hot flashes, night sweats, anxiety, and other symptoms that disrupt sleep. Estrogen therapy reduces hot flashes and night sweats, potentially allowing women to sleep more consistently. Progesterone may also have calming effects on the nervous system and has been studied for its potential influence on sleep.

Men can experience changes in testosterone levels as they age. Low testosterone may be associated with fatigue, changes in mood, reduced energy, and other symptoms that can affect overall sleep and quality of life. For men with clinically confirmed testosterone deficiency, testosterone replacement therapy improves certain symptoms and, in some cases, sleep-related quality of life.

An Individualized Approach

For individuals whose sleep difficulties are related to changing hormone levels, properly managed hormone therapy may be one part of a comprehensive approach to better sleep. Combining appropriate medical treatment with healthy sleep habits, regular physical activity, stress management, and evaluation for sleep disorders can provide a more complete strategy for improving restorative sleep.

If you're ready to stop feeling like you're just getting by and start feeling like yourself again, schedule a consultation with The Hormone Restoration Center and call (850) 837-1271 to schedule a consultation. Together, we'll determine whether bioidentical hormone pellet therapy is the right solution to help you look, feel, and live your best.

Community

BARKTOBERFEST

continued from cover

contest and canine-only trick-or-treat celebration, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30, at Grand Park in Grand Boulevard at Sandestin.

Admission is free, but to enter the costume contest, participants can make a $15 donation in advance or $20 on the day of the event on Dog-Harmony's website: https://dog-harmony.org/events/11th-annual-barktoberfest. Entry is per family group, not per dog.

Attendees and their costumed dogs can expect:

- **Oktoberfest-inspired drinks sponsored by Tito's Vodka for Dog People**
- **Light bites from JC's Gourmet**
- **Curated beats from DJ Diamond Dan**
- **A silent auction featuring goods, services, and experiences donated by local businesses**
- **Sponsor swag and giveaways**
- **The Barktoberfest Halloween Costume Contest, with winners announced and prizes awarded at 6:15 p.m.**

Founder Nancy Bown, CPDT-KA, says, "After more than 10 years, Barktoberfest remains one of our most popular signature events at Grand Boulevard, drawing families from all over the Emerald Coast each year. This fundraiser directly supports our community programs: youth mental health and crisis intervention; literacy advancement and educational enrichment; adult wellness and health care support; and Keeping Dogs in Homes. The first three programs incorporate our invaluable volunteer therapy dog teams."

Furry Friends sponsors of the event include Tito's Vodka for Dog People, JC's Gourmet, Barry Veterinary Hospital, Eglin Federal Credit Union, Paws Sitting Service, Elevate Next, Davis Dog Treats, Realtor Theresa Felton, and Destin Flooring America. Schooley Mitchell Gulf Coast, owned by Christman Morgan, and Mosquito Joe of Northwest Florida are Bar and Water Station sponsors, respectively.

In keeping with Dog-Harmony's positive-reinforcement training philosophy, the nonprofit requests that prong, choke, and shock collars not be used on dogs attending the event.

Barktoberfest is free and open to the public as part of Grand Boulevard's Coastal Culture Series, an initiative of its Arts & Entertainment Program. To learn more about the event, register for the costume contest, or become a sponsor, visit https://dog-harmony.org/events/11th-annual-barktoberfest.

Gathering in the Garden is a Night of Purpose

By Heather Bennett Eye

On November 14, 2026, BeGenerous will host their 9th Annual Gathering in the Garden from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at Drive the Coast located at 342 S County Hwy 393, Santa Rosa Beach. Doors will open at 5:00 p.m. for a social hour and silent auction.

BeGenerous is a Christ centered 501©3 non-profit organization created to rescue, restore and provide safe housing for women overcoming substance abuse disorder and/or sexual exploitation. They have been serving our community for 16 years, offering faith-based healing and renewal.

This annual fundraiser is a beautiful way for our community to contribute to the success of the women and families BeGenerous serves. At Gathering in the Garden, you'll enjoy a dinner catered by a local chef, a live and silent auction, hear testimonies and experience live worship. Every ticket, sponsorship and donation received helps BeGenerous to continue their mission.

If you are interested in donating, sponsorship or volunteering, please reach out to Casey Lynn Draughn at CDraughn@BeGenerousInc.org. Be sure to scan the QR code to secure your tickets. Your generosity is greatly appreciated and directly contributes to restoring and rebuilding lives here in our community.

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Musing

How Do You Make Decisions?

By Kirk McCarley

In another day I served on an interviewing panel that evaluated and made recommendations for police officer selection. A fellow panelist was a Police Lieutenant. A question he often asked candidates was "how do you make a decision?"

The Lieutenant evaluated responses on several factors. First, could the applicant think "on their feet," and under pressure? Second, was there in fact a step-by-step thought process that went into the decision? Third, were the steps logical and sensible? Finally, did the process indicate an internal or external influence? In other words, was the decision predicated upon what would represent popular sentiment or more based on personal and organizational values and ethics?"

How do you make your decisions, and what factors go into your process? How are you influenced? Is there a model you follow?

Morton Thiokol was a company with two primary missions. Morton was salt and chemicals and Thiokol focused on aerospace and rockets.

Thiokol contracted with NASA to produce rubberized O-rings, a component of the solid rocket booster, a key element to propelling rocket ships into space.

Prior to launch day in early 1986, an uncharacteristically chilly morning prevailed at the Space Shuttle Challenger site in Cape Kennedy, FL. Weather forecasts predicted sub-freezing temperatures. Thiokol engineers debated the efficacy of the launch. It was unknown how the O-rings would perform in the cold. Delaying the launch, though, would not only result in inconvenience and financial setback, but disappoint those anxious to witness it.

Strong protests were voiced, especially by one engineer, Roger Boisjolly, until ultimately the pro-launch now decision was reached. On the morning of January 28, 1986, the Challenger exploded shortly after takeoff, taking the lives of seven passengers, including one teacher.

The 1984 Orange Bowl featured the undefeated and #1 ranked Nebraska Cornhuskers and the one loss and fourth-ranked Miami Hurricanes. A win for Miami would result in a likely National Championship due to the outcome of earlier bowl games that same day.

Late in the fourth quarter Miami was nursing a seven-point lead with less than a minute to play. A daring quarterback scramble by Nebraska on fourth down resulted in a touchdown and brought the Cornhuskers to within a point with seconds remaining on the clock. A near certain extra point kick would tie the score and result in Nebraska preserving an undefeated season and the college football championship.

Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne decided to go for the win via two-point conversion. When the conversion pass was batted down, the Cornhuskers were defeated and the Hurricanes crowned as champions.

Questioned later about his decision, Osborne, remarked, "We were trying to win the game. I don't think you go for a tie in that case. You try to win the game."

A week later a reporter asked the coach again about his decision. "I don't think any of our players would be satisfied with a tie. I don't think that's the way to do it."

In the 1957 movie "Twelve Angry Men," Henry Fonda plays a juror in what appears to be a "slam dunk" case of a "slum" kid murdering his abusive father. Before rendering a 12-0 decision Fonda first wants more discussion, testing the patience of the other 11 jurors, ready and anxious to "move on with their days." Eventually another juror acknowledges there are more questions to be asked, followed by another until finally the jury reverses to a 12-0 "not guilty" verdict.

Consider a couple other instances of high-stake decisions with costs.

- John McCain, son of a Navy Admiral, declined preferential treatment in North Vietnam, accepting five and a half years of beatings and torture rather than choosing a release ahead of his troops.
- Rosa Parks, a seamstress in Montgomery, AL, defied segregation laws in 1955 by refusing to give up her bus seat to white passengers. Her arrest led to the Montgomery bus boycott, a significant event in the civil rights movement.

How do you make a decision? Would you have launched or grounded the Challenger? Gone for a tie and a championship or insist on a win? Been the hesitant juror?

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCarley is a Certified Professional Coach as well as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM-CP Certified. He is also a Production Assistant for both college football and basketball for ESPN and leads group cycling classes as a Certified Spinning instructor. Contact kirk@theseedsowercoach.com, theseedsowercoach.com, or call (314) 677-8779.

Music

SOWAL Jazz Fest Returns October 22-24 with Iconic Tributes, Jazz Legends and Three Distinct Nights of Live Music

Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Amy Winehouse tributes anchor Obscure at 30Avenue, jazz greats Bobby Watson and Curtis Lundy take the stage at SOWAL House, and high energy showstoppers light up Distillery 98

The music of Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Amy Winehouse, a quartet led by acclaimed jazz legends Bobby Watson and Curtis Lundy, and a lineup of high energy showstoppers will converge across South Walton when SOWAL Jazz Fest returns October 22 through 24, 2026.

Presented by the nonprofit SOWAL Foundation, this year's festival features 18 unique performances across three nights, with each venue offering its own distinct musical experience.

At Obscure 30Avenue, the spotlight turns to three of music's most iconic voices, with dedicated tribute performances celebrating Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Amy Winehouse.

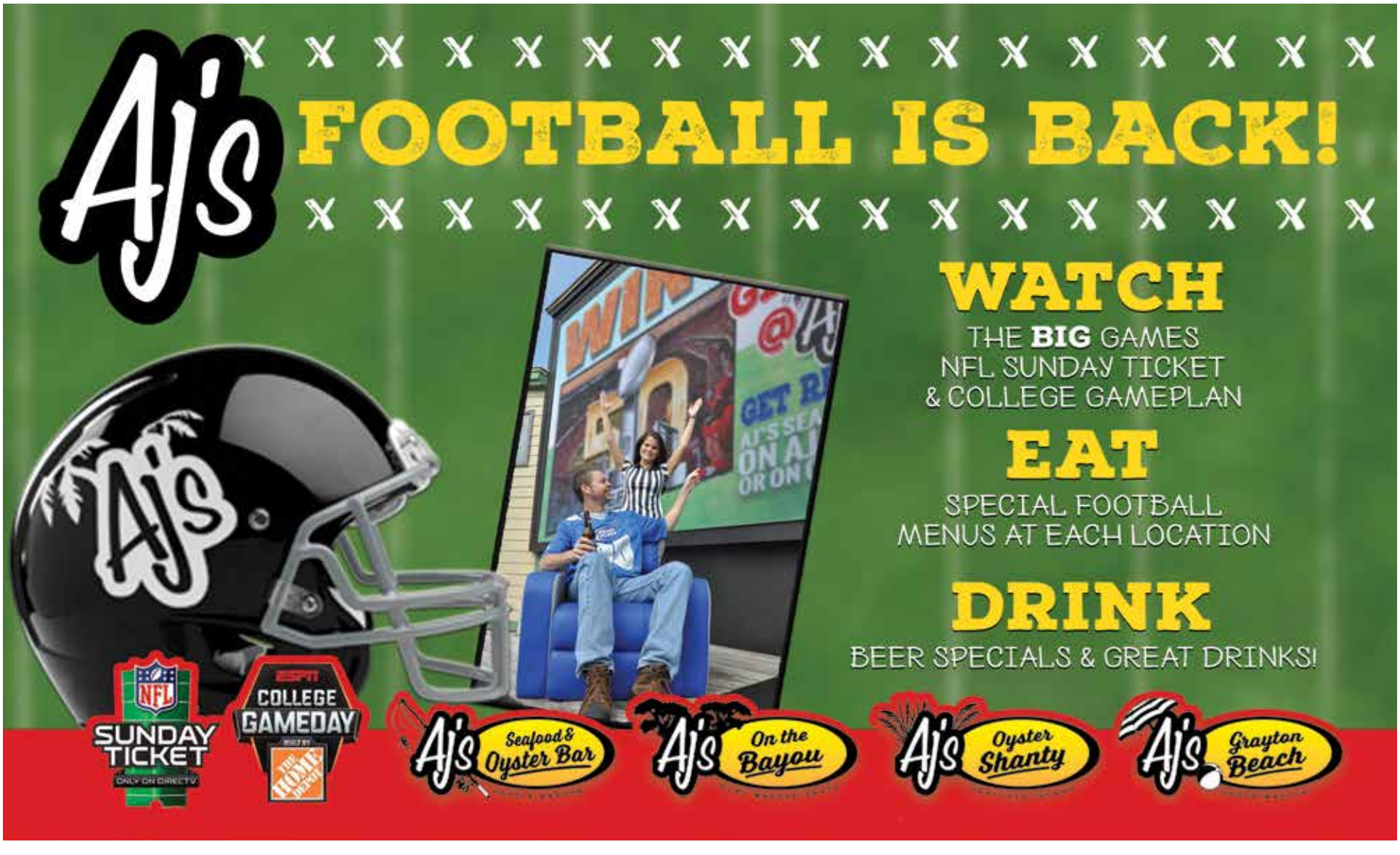
At SOWAL House in Rosemary Beach, the festival dives deep into the jazz tradition with Bobby Watson and Curtis Lundy, two internationally respected artists whose careers span some of the most important names and institutions in modern jazz. Their quartet brings world class jazz into the intimate setting of SOWAL House.

At Distillery 98 in Santa Rosa Beach, the energy rises with a rotating lineup of high energy showstoppers, creating the festival's most electric live music experience.

Every SOWAL Jazz Fest show is its own performance. Audiences can choose the artists, venues and nights they want to experience, moving between iconic songbooks, straight ahead jazz and high energy live performances throughout the weekend.

"This is really three different festival experiences happening at once," said Dave King, President of SOWAL Foundation. "You can spend one night immersed in the music of an iconic vocalist, hear legitimate jazz legends in an intimate room, or go to Distillery 98 for a show that gets the whole place moving. Every venue has its own personality and every show is unique."

For tickets and information visit SOWALJazzFest.com



Musing

Sean of the South: AI

By Sean Dietrich

Right now, the news media is in an uproar over AI. The headlines are bleak. Experts are saying our cherished way of life is in danger. Pretty soon, if things keep going this direction, they say we will lose basic human abilities, such as empathy, sustained focus, and the ability to spel withot autocorrek.

And while I know I'm supposed to be terrified of AI, I'm not worried. Namely, because right now, I'm busy watching "The Dog House."

"The Dog House" is a TV series about people who adopt pets in Godmanchester, England. The show documents stories of animal rescues from the Wood Green Pets Charity, and it is crack for dog lovers.

After a few moments of watching, you're rooting for families, for rescues, for the rescue staff, and you've finished two bags of Chili Cheese Fritos.

This show is nearly perfect. On the "International Sean Dietrich Adorable-TV Scale," a scale ranging from 1 to 10 (with 10 being, say, "Lilo & Stitch," and one being "A Clockwork Orange"), "The Dog House" receives a score of 632,348.

This is because the show is positive.

Have you ever tried practicing positivity? Have you ever actively been positive for a full 24 hours?

Yes. I know. Some see positivity as willful ignorance. Others see positivity as pure stupidity. But personally, I have always seen positivity as a five-syllable word.

Even so, positivity is not just ANY five-syllable word such as "geometrical," "vegetarian," or "Lithuania." Those are regular five-syllable words. No, positivity is real.

Everything in this world is made of energy. If you were to magnify any object to the atomic level, you'd see only waves or particles. Many particles carry an electrical charge.

That chair in the corner is really just energy. The phone you're holding: Energy. The crumpled Frito-Lay bag lying next to you on the sofa: Also energy.

So, in electrical terms, "positivity" actually means something different than you might think.

Let's go back to high-school physics class for a moment. Quit doodling in your history textbook and altering that image of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, you pervert. Let's talk about electrical circuits.

Recall that an electrical circuit won't work if each point carries the same voltage. Take your house. Light and power only happen in your home when there is a potential difference between high points (positives) and low points (negatives).

Now apply this to life in general.

Daily life is filled with high and low points. A high point in your day might be finding $50 in your coat pocket, whereas a low point would be, for example, undergoing an IRS audit that lasts about as long as dental school—not that this has ever happened to me.

Positive thinking isn't about pretending low points don't exist. Hardship, frustration, grief, disaster—those things happen. But in electrical terms, these low points offer low electrical potential.

You CAN'T get an electrical current flowing if you're not positively charging your circuit.

So, once again, sticking with electrical jargon:

If you deal with the low points, but actively aim for the high points, you will generate a current. The current will start small. But it will build. Because that's what energy does. It grows.

The more positivity you build, the more positive the people around you will become. One electrical current can spread across the world. Across the universe. Across time and space. Touching nearly every human on the planet.

If, however, you only focus on low points, you're—electrically speaking—dead. Like a dead electrical outlet. Or a dead toaster oven.

Over time, your body and mind will become so lethargic you'll require energy from external sources to survive. Other people in your life can feed you positive energy for a little while, but not forever.

Ultimately, you'll drain your loved ones until their batteries are almost dead, too. Pretty soon, THEY'LL become negatively charged. Your negativity will alter them. Their negativity will alter THEIR loved ones. And the negativity loop will get bigger and bigger, affecting more and more people, until there's nothing left on this Earth but AI.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Southern Living, The Tallahassee Democrat, Good Grit, South Magazine, Alabama Living, the Birmingham News, Thom Magazine, The Mobile Press Register and Life Media publications, and he has authored seven books.

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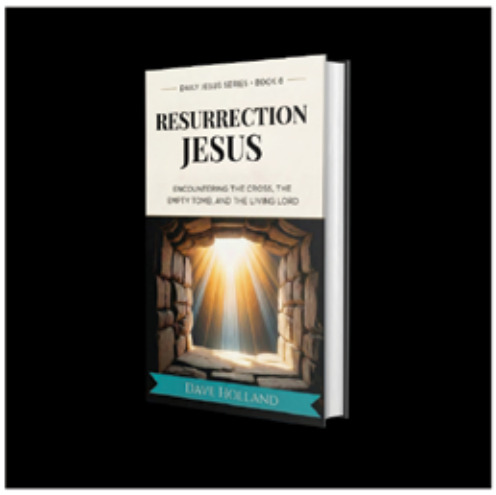

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Musing

Travis Kring: Faith, Family, Fitness and Finance

By Rich Sanders

The Christian Capitalist movement is based on hard work and generous giving to the poor needy in the name of Jesus Christ. Travis Kring, in his recent appearance on our podcast, reminds us all that any one of us can become needy in the blink of an eye.

At Phoenix Restoration Services, Travis finds that his daily routine involves meeting with people who may have just experienced a once-in-a-lifetime crisis. Whether it is through flood, fire or wind, when people have damage or destruction to their homes or businesses, they often have their worlds turned upside down and become needy in a matter of minutes. Travis meets them where they are to provide logistical, and often (more importantly) spiritual support after a disaster. He has found that people are often most in need of spiritual encouragement during these times of crisis, and he takes those opportunities to shine the light of Christ to people who are often in their darkest hours.

Travis has only been in this business for a few years, but this vocation allows him to develop ties in the community and bonds of trust, so that people know they can call him when they are most in need. That includes active work in church, building ties in business through various networking events, and a strong commitment to physical fitness activities.

Travis has started a new exercise group that meets on the beach off 30A, and it has become literally an overnight success! Simply by getting people together to work out on the beach at their maximum effort, often as the sun is rising, he's helping them recognize that, if they can handle that heavy lift that early in the morning, then the rest of the day (and its challenges) often seem much lighter. "Every Wednesday morning, we meet on the beach to train our bodies, strengthen our Faith, and sharpen one another as men. We sweat. We pray. We push. We encourage. We become better Fathers, Husbands, Leaders, and Followers of Jesus!"

Whether it's in church, in a business meeting, or in the gym, Travis is quick to tell folks about his philosophy of what he describes as the Four F's – faith, family, fitness and finances. When each one of those four areas of life is focused on God and in balance, people find peace in their lives and are in a better position to do God's will. As a strong Christian Capitalist, Travis recognizes that means serving others with the blessings that God has given him. Through his servant leadership to others all around the Emerald coast, Travis has built a foundation to for spreading the Gospel through for the Four F's!

Travis 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 Travis Kring!

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.

Musing

Pastor's Ponderings: Change

By Rev. Pete Hyde

I recently bumped into some folks at Walmart northwest Arkansas. This is my old stomping ground from my high school days. "What's the best BBQ restaurant?" Hobo Joe's in Lowell. "Where do you get the best family style fried chicken served family style with all the fixin's?" The Monte Ne Inn sits on the shore of Beaver Lake. Just a little way from there is an old amphitheater the lake covered when it filled in the late 60s. When the lake level is down, the old amphitheater makes an appearance and then disappears again when the level rises. It is like an old haunting reminder of the way things used to be. The past and the memories are just below the surface.

I was back in Rogers, Ark., where I graduated from High school, a couple of years ago. Yes, it has changed. It was the first time I had been back in six or seven years. When we moved there after Dad retired from the Air Force in 1970, the population of Rogers was just a little over five thousand. Today the highway sign says about 55,000. Some of the "old spots" where still there, but the surroundings were so changed that if you didn't know what you were looking for you would miss it.

Dirt country roads are now paved, and the pastures are covered with subdivisions and strip malls. Where my high school girlfriend and I used to go horseback riding probably would not let horses in the gated communities. The soda fountain/drug store downtown is now an antique and craft shop. Just like the lake had covered the amphitheater, the new had covered the old.

A bit of nostalgia took over. I almost wish I could make it all the "way it was." I wish I could dust off the streets and walk through the familiar neighborhood, visit the familiar faces. I wish I could...but I can't. I must accept the change - like it or not. I cannot live in the past no matter how comfortable and wonderful I have convinced myself it was. Would I really want to go back and live those turbulent teenage years over again? Honestly, No! Some days, maybe.

The Apostle Paul writes, "Hope that is seen is not hope, why does one still hope for what he sees?" (Romans 8:24) My hope, our hope is not in the past - what we have seen or can see. Our hope is in the new creation, new life, new direction that comes to us through the saving power of Christ and the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. Our hope is in what lays ahead, not the idealized images of the past.

Change is the only constant in our lives. Change is never easy. We usually don't change until the pain of functioning in the "same old" way is greater than the pain of making the necessary changes. I believe this is true for each of us, for our churches, for our nation, for our world, for humanity.

Renewal and restoration are constant themes of the Bible. The shepherd writes "He restores my soul." He doesn't bring back the past. He doesn't camouflage the old. He restores and makes new. He will restore the calling. He will restore the mission. HE WILL RESTORE THE HOPE. HE WILL RESTORE THE SOUL.

No matter what our age, no matter what our stage or circumstance in life, we cannot live without hope. We cannot hold so tightly to the "old ways" that they become an immovable anchor keeping us from our true potential. We are being shaped daily by the Master Sculptor. He chisels, chips, sands and shapes to bring out what he has in mind for us. He rounds and smooths the rough corners of our character.

Sometimes this chiseling, chipping, sanding and rounding is painful and uncomfortable. But when we allow the Master Sculptor to have his way with our lives, then we become all that he has intended for us to be. And when the final shine is placed on the sculpture of our lives, the life of our church, our nation, our world, we will stand brilliantly in His presence, having achieved all he has sought for us to achieve.

"O Lord, chisel me, chip me, sand me, polish me, shape me, mold me into what you would have me be and yes, Lord, comfort me in the pain and discomfort of the process. For you are making all things "NEW" and that includes me. My HOPE is in you." Amen.

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

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Dining

Pirates + Food + Booze = Fun, Pirate Brew Fest 2026

Brew Fest Returns to Destin

Ahoy, mateys! Pirate Brew Fest is returning to Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill in Destin on Saturday, November 7, 2026, for five hours of pirate-themed fun, live entertainment, local shopping, food, and cold drinks. The festival runs from 11 AM to 4 PM, and admission is completely free.

This year's event brings together everything needed for a proper coastal celebration: live music, food trucks, artists, vendors, beer memorabilia, drinks, and games for kids. Families can explore the festival, browse one-of-a-kind finds, grab something delicious to eat, and enjoy a lively afternoon at one of Destin's best-known family attractions. Guests are strongly encouraged to arrive in pirate attire - whether that means a full captain's coat and tricorn hat or simply an eye patch and a convincing 'Arrr!'

Dress Like a Pirate and Claim Some Booty

The first 100 guests who arrive dressed like pirates will receive a free gift. Pirate attire is encouraged throughout the event, giving visitors of every age a chance to become part of the spectacle. Break out the bandanas, striped shirts, boots, hats, sashes, and other seaworthy accessories. The goal is simple: help turn Fudpucker's into the most colorfully crewed pirate port on the Emerald Coast.

Families can also look forward to games for kids and plenty of room to enjoy the atmosphere. With free admission, Pirate Brew Fest makes it easy to bring the whole crew, spend the afternoon together, and choose the food, shopping, and ticketed experiences that suit your group.

Brews, Bites, Music, and More

For adults ready to raise a glass, VIP drink tickets start at just $10. Admission to the festival remains free, so guests can enjoy the entertainment and explore the event without purchasing a ticket. Those who want to take part in the featured drink experience can select the VIP ticket option that works for them.

A lineup of food trucks will be serving festival favorites throughout the day, giving guests plenty of choices when hunger strikes. Live music will provide the soundtrack, while artists and vendors offer handcrafted goods, local creations, collectibles, and other treasures worth taking home.

Beer fans can browse displays of beer memorabilia and collectibles - a fitting addition to a festival that celebrates brewing culture alongside Destin's playful pirate spirit. Whether you come to discover a rare piece, support a local artist, sample the food-truck fare, or simply enjoy the music with friends, there will be plenty to explore between 11 AM and 4 PM.

A Pirate Festival at a Destin Landmark

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill has been a Destin landmark since 1982, known for family dining, colorful coastal character, and memorable experiences. The restaurant is also home to Gator Beach, where visitors can see live alligators and learn more about the animals that have become part of the Fudpucker's story.

That mix of family fun, local flavor, and larger-than-life personality makes Fudpucker's a natural home port for Pirate Brew Fest. The festival adds vendors, artists, music, games, food trucks, drinks, and pirate pageantry to the venue's already unmistakable Destin atmosphere.

Make Plans to Join the Crew

Pirate Brew Fest 2026 takes place Saturday, November 7, from 11 AM to 4 PM at Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill, located at 20001 Emerald Coast Parkway in Destin, Florida. Admission is free, and VIP drink tickets start at $10.

SO, STOP BY AND HAVE A SOME FUN AT PIRATE BREW FEST – YA SCALAWAGS!

More information at: www.PirateBrewFest.com.

Dining

Dinner, a Show and a Little Elton John Magic at Old Florida Fish House

By Lori Miller

I've experienced this dinner and show at Old Florida Fish House, and let me tell you—it is an awesome night out! Amazing food, the music of Elton John and an evening that makes you want to sing along…what more could you ask for?

Still Standing: A Tribute to Elton John takes the restaurant's main stage Nov. 8 and Dec. 6, with each performance running from 6:30 to 9 p.m. If you're looking for a fun date night or an excuse to get your friends together, this is it!

My recommendation? Make it the full dinner-and-show experience. Dinner ticket holders receive preferred seating closer to the stage and should arrive at 5 p.m. Start with Gulf Coast she-crab soup or a red romaine Caesar salad, then choose from three delicious-sounding entrées: prawn risotto with roasted acorn squash, fava beans and citrus beurre blanc; herb-and-garlic-roasted tri-tip with dauphinoise potatoes and pink peppercorn cognac cream; or chicken Florentine with creamy Pernod spinach, saffron capellini and balsamic-glazed asparagus. And save room for dessert—Key lime pie and a black-and-white petit four! The menu is subject to change.

Coming for the show only? Plan to arrive between 6 and 6:30 p.m. If you'd like to enjoy dinner from the restaurant's regular menu first, reserve a table between 4:30 and 5 p.m. so you have plenty of time before the music starts. Dining reservations are available through Resy.

I had such an amazing time, and I'm excited for you to experience it, too! Tickets are limited and nonrefundable, so visit oldfloridafishhouse.com to get yours before they're gone. You'll also find schedules for other upcoming events and more information—all in one place

Music

South Walton Live Music Scene October 2026

FOOW Live Music Mondays

Enjoy live music on Monday nights at FOOW - Fish Out of Water. The Gulf front restaurant invites you to delicious dining paired with live music. Visit www.dinefish30a.com.

October 19 & 26: Brett Smith

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!

October 21: TBA

October 28: Forrest Williams

Shinedown's Lunatic Ball Beach Weekend Oct. 23-25

Topeka presents Shinedown's Lunatic Ball Beach Weekend at Seascape Resort. Shinedown, Flyleaf with Lacey Sturm, Bush, Living Colour, Hanson, From Ashes To New, Guardians of the Jukebox, and Neon Mooers are among the acts on the lineup for the 2026 event. Artists perform from 5-10 p.m. each evening. Learn more at topeka.live.

Baytowne Tribute Weekend Nov. 6-7

Rock out the weekend and enjoy live music from great tribute bands. Friday, November 6th: Dream On... as Pandora's Box brings the iconic hits, electrifying energy, and rock 'n' roll spirit of Aerosmith to Baytowne Wharf! Saturday, November 7th: Step back in time with The 77 Experience! Relive the unforgettable music, iconic moments, and pop culture of 1977 as this high-energy tribute brings the soundtrack of a generation to life.

Sounds of Seaside Wednesday Night Concert Series

Sounds of Seaside returns to the Seaside Amphitheatre Wednesdays from 5-7 p.m. A free to attend and open to all ages event, bring blankets and chairs and enjoy an evening of live music from local musicians.

October 21: TBD

October 28: Boukou Groove

November 4: Max McCann

November 11: Flow Tribe

November 18: Roman Street

Watersound First Friday Concert Series Oct. 2

The First Friday Concert Series returns to The Pavilion at Watersound Town Center monthly through December with live music 6-8 p.m. Join for free, family-friendly evenings of music, community and fun.

Nov. 6: Webb Wilder Band

Dec. 4: Michelle Malone & The Hot Toddies

Old Florida Fish House Weekdays

For over a decade, Old Florida Fish House has proudly featured local live music. Throughout the week, catch artists playing inside the coveted bar and lounge as well as in the large outdoor dining space situated among the palm and oak tress under the twinkling lights next to Eastern Lake. Saturday and Sunday Brunch with live music 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Alex Napier performs Tuesday and Wednesday. Dueling pianos Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Visit www.oldfloridafishhouse.com for more info.

AJ's Grayton Brunch and Live Music

AJ's is the place to be to celebrate all things Sunday Funday in Grayton Beach! Come for brunch, stay for the music and dancing. AJ's brunch with bottomless Mimosas from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. is not to be missed. Or, go all in with their famous Build Your Own Bloody Mary bar. The talented Christon Birge Duo plays live music at noon. Then enjoy The Pickled Pickers 5-8 p.m. Check ajsgrayton.com for live music throughout the week.

Music

The Sound of the Shofar:
A Call to Remember, Reflect and Return

As October arrives, many people think of the changing season. But for the Jewish people, this time of year brings a much deeper spiritual meaning. It is a season of reflection, repentance and renewal—marked by the feast of trumpets celebrated in September with the ancient sound of the Shofar, a trumpet traditionally made from a ram's horn or a triple twist Yemenite horn from an African antelope known as a Kudu.

The shofar is one of the oldest musical instruments known to humanity. Unlike a modern trumpet, it has no valves, keys or complicated mechanisms. A person sounds into the hollowed-out horn, producing a powerful, unmistakable tone that can be heard from a great distance.

Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons has nine years of experience teaching the sounding of the Shofar playing on one or two at the same time using the same breath to reach 5 to 7 notes depending on the quality of the horn or the experience of the sounder. He also provides the horn for purchase.

The use of the shofar reaches back to biblical times, when it served both practical and spiritual purposes. It was used to:

• call people together for a gathering or sacred assembly;

• signal an important moment in the life of the community;

• proclaim a warning or call for attention; and

• celebrate victory, deliverance or other significant events.

One of the most famous biblical associations with the shofar occurs in the story of Abraham and Isaac, where a ram becomes the substitute sacrifice. Because the ram's horn comes from this animal, the shofar eventually became strongly associated with remembrance, sacrifice and God's provision. 1Corinthians 15, Exodus 19, Isaiah 27, Leviticus 25.

The shofar has a particularly important role in the Feast of Trumpets, known in Hebrew as Yom Teruah. The biblical book of Leviticus describes this day as a memorial marked by the blowing of trumpets. In Jewish tradition, it became associated with Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the Jewish civil year.

The sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is much more than a musical performance. It is considered a spiritual wake-up call: a reminder to stop, listen and examine one's life. Its piercing sound calls people to remember God, turn away from wrongdoing and begin the new year with a renewed heart.

The shofar's message continues into the Ten Days of Repentance, which culminate in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. While the Feast of Trumpets begins the season, Yom Kippur brings it to its solemn conclusion.

Yom Kippur is traditionally observed as a day of fasting, prayer, repentance and seeking forgiveness. It is a time to consider relationships with God and with other people, to acknowledge mistakes and to seek reconciliation.

At the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the shofar is traditionally sounded one final time. That single, long blast represents the end of the sacred day and the closing of this period of repentance.

For Christians, these biblical traditions can also provide an opportunity for reflection. The themes of repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and spiritual renewal are found throughout Scripture. The shofar's ancient call can serve as a reminder that every person has moments when it is necessary to pause, listen and consider the direction of his or her life.

Perhaps that is one reason the sound of the shofar remains so powerful after thousands of years. It is not merely the sound of an ancient instrument; it is a call.

• A call to wake up.

• A call to remember.

• A call to examine our hearts.

• A call to make peace where peace is needed.

• And ultimately, a call to return.

As October brings the Jewish season of the Feast of Trumpets and Yom Kippur into our awareness, the ancient sound of the shofar offers a timeless message: sometimes the most important thing we can do is stop, amid the noise of everyday life, listen carefully, and allow ourselves to be called toward renewal.

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

Music

Sinfonia Gulf Coast Presents The Wizard Of Oz:

Film In Concert Oct. 17 to Open 2026-2027 Season of Main Events

Beloved cinematic classic comes to life on the big screen with Sinfonia Gulf Coast performing live under the stars

Follow the Yellow Brick Road as Sinfonia Gulf Coast launches the Main Event concert series of its 21st annual season with The Wizard of Oz: Film in Concert on Saturday, Oct. 17, at 7 p.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Dugas Pavilion in Destin.

One of the most beloved films of all time comes to life in a magical new way as the full Sinfonia Gulf Coast orchestra performs live with the brilliantly restored classic on the big screen. The production features new orchestral transcriptions of Harold Arlen's score, accompanying Judy Garland's original 1939 studio recordings and transporting audiences of all ages to Oz.

Presented outdoors on the Dugas Pavilion green, the evening offers a distinctly different way to experience both a symphony concert and a timeless movie — exactly the kind of unexpected programming that has become a hallmark of Sinfonia Gulf Coast and Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller.

As the area's only fully professional orchestra, Sinfonia continues to push beyond the traditional concert hall, and The Wizard of Oz: Film in Concert is a fitting example of how Fuller brings the organization's mantra, "Your symphony … redefined," to life.

"Film in concert is such an exciting way to experience a symphony orchestra because it brings together two art forms audiences already love and allows them to hear and see them in an entirely new way," Fuller says. "And presenting The Wizard of Oz outdoors makes the experience even more special. You have this extraordinary film on the big screen, our full orchestra performing live and an audience gathered under the stars. It really embodies what we mean by 'Your symphony … redefined.'"

The production was created by Emmy Award-winning producer John Goberman, producer of Live From Lincoln Center and creator of the acclaimed A Symphonic Night at the Movies. It premiered in summer 2005 to sold-out crowds at Wolf Trap and the Ravinia Festival.

From Over the Rainbow and Dorothy's first steps along the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City and beyond, audiences can rediscover the music, characters and unforgettable moments that have enchanted generations.

Released in 1939, The Wizard of Oz earned six Academy Award nominations, including best picture. Over the Rainbow, composed by Harold Arlen with lyrics by E.Y. Harburg, won the Academy Award for best original song.

The concert marks the first Main Event of Sinfonia Gulf Coast's 2026-2027 season and continues the orchestra's tradition of pairing world-class musicianship with innovative programming designed to make symphonic music accessible, relevant and engaging.

Lawn seating is $25 per person, $15 for students and $20 for military. Table seating is $45 per person.

Tickets are available at SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or by calling (850) 460-8800.

Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its music education and community engagement initiatives through-out Northwest Florida.

About Sinfonia Gulf Coast

Sinfonia Gulf Coast was founded in 2005 on Florida's Northwest Gulf Coast with the mission of redefining the symphony experience. Under the guidance of founder and Music Director Demetrius Fuller and a dedicated board of directors, the

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Music

Why So Complicated?

By Rick Moore

The Million Dollar Marching Band for the Alabama Crimson Tide was given its name back in 1922. A million dollars then would be worth over 20 million today. There are rumors that Mark Wahlberg is trying to reboot the "Six-million Dollar Man" into the Six-billion Dollar Man." Even Dr. Evil had to recalculate from one million to a hundred billion after being frozen for a few years. Keeping up with the times isn't easy and it can be expensive. Try listening to an hour long podcast about artificial intelligence and smart homes and it can make you feel like your head will explode. Technology does constantly evolve, and that includes the audio/video market. Flagship amplifiers and speaker systems from top brands routinely cost ten times (or more) of what top-tier systems cost 30 years ago, even after adjusting for inflation. Not only has it become more expensive, it seems that technology has made our life more complicated instead of less complicated.

Although I have been involved with high-end professional technology for decades in television and radio, my home audio/video system has remained modest through the years. However, I do like good sounding speakers in my house. Catrina and I had quit listening to the speakers on our TV a long time ago because the audio quality is less than half of what it used to be before video monitors had to be so flat. We also like listening to albums on our turntable. Although we enjoyed the benefits of having a separate sound system, it was too complicated. We had several remote controls in our living room. If we're listening to music and wanted to watch our TV, we turn off the stereo first, then turn on the Apple TV and then turn on the Samsung TV. That is unless we are watching an app that is only on the Samsung TV and not the Apple TV 4K. Oh, I forgot to mention, if we want to watch a program that is on cable TV, we reach behind the Samsung box and select the "B" button instead of the "A" button. Sound familiar? Does it have to be so complicated?

My wife is patient, but she did threaten to throw the remote controls through the window if I didn't come up with a simpler system. That's where Branded International came in. Branded International specializes in high-end audio systems for home and business, but they also make playing movies and music simple. Now we just speak into the remote control and say "Play James Taylor" and a song from James Taylor begins to play. Or we can say "Play You've Got A Friend" and that specific song will begin playing (Yes, my wife is still a huge James Taylor fan).

Hit a button that says patio and the music is now playing on the patio. It just works. We can have one remote control and enjoy great sound. It doesn't have to be complicated and it can sound great. Yes, custom installs can get very expensive, but that is why we went with Branded International. They use name brands from France, England, and Italy, for the best value for cutting edge technology when it comes to audio & video. Now, my wife Catrina is part of the custom installation industry representing Branded International on the Emerald Coast. Catrina is like the guy on the TV commercial who said, "I like it so much I bought the company." I'm just glad she no longer wants to throw the remote controls out the window. Peace at last! Now, if I can only get one of those robotic lawnmowers to mow the lawn.

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nonprofit orchestra is celebrating its 21st season of innovative musical programming, designed to entertain, educate, and inspire the community. Since its founding, Sinfonia Gulf Coast has presented more than 800 concerts and events that have reached over 600,000 patrons, has collaborated with numerous nonprofits and businesses throughout the community, and has reached more than 275,000 children through its Sinfonia Guest Artists in the Schools program/music education outreach initiatives. For more information on Sinfonia Gulf Coast, visit SinfoniaGulfCoast.org, call (850) 460-8800 or e-mail info@sinfoniagulfcoast.org.

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Business

Season of Giving Fundraisers Support Walton County Scholarships and Charities

By Kathleen Edge, Publicity & Website Chair

September brought the first day of Fall 2026 and a great start to Green Thumb Garden Club's 2026/2027 year. We reunited with friends, welcomed new members and learned about ferns and shade gardening. Member Kathy Bilello's Island Green home received the September Yard of Distinction Award. GTGC is now ready to go with a calendar full of education, fun and fundraising events in the next few months.

If you missed the Fall Festival & Farmer's Market at Grand Boulevard, Saturday, October 10, make sure to catch the next member meeting on October 21, 2026, at Westwinds Conference Center. The day is very busy with a presentation on how to extend the life of those special holiday plant gifts, a pre-sale of holiday bazaar merchandise and collecting donations for Caring & Sharing's Thanksgiving food drive for families in need in Walton County. The check-in time is 9:30 a.m., and lunch will be served. More information is available on Green Thumb's website.

"Where Every Day is a Celebration" is the theme of the Club's largest scholarship and charity fundraiser. The sixth annual Holiday Bazaar will showcase unique seasonal décor, original artwork, jewelry, handmade greeting cards, gift baskets and much, much more. There is something for everyone! Special thanks to Cantina Laredo for allowing the Club to have the event on November 14, 2026, at their Grand Boulevard location.

Fundraising net proceeds support scholarships awarded to deserving Walton County horticulture college students, Timpoochee 4H Youth Camp, E.O. Wilson Biophilia Naturalists Outdoor Program and Westonwood Ranch programs. GTGC assists over a dozen organizations in Walton County.

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

The Green Thumb Garden Club, Inc., located in Walton County, Florida, is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its mission is to stimulate interest in the beautification of Walton County, furthering the education of its members and the public in gardening ~ horticulture ~ botany ~ floral design ~ environmental awareness ~ conservation ~ civic beautification ~ nature studies and instill in our youth the love of gardening and respect for the environment.

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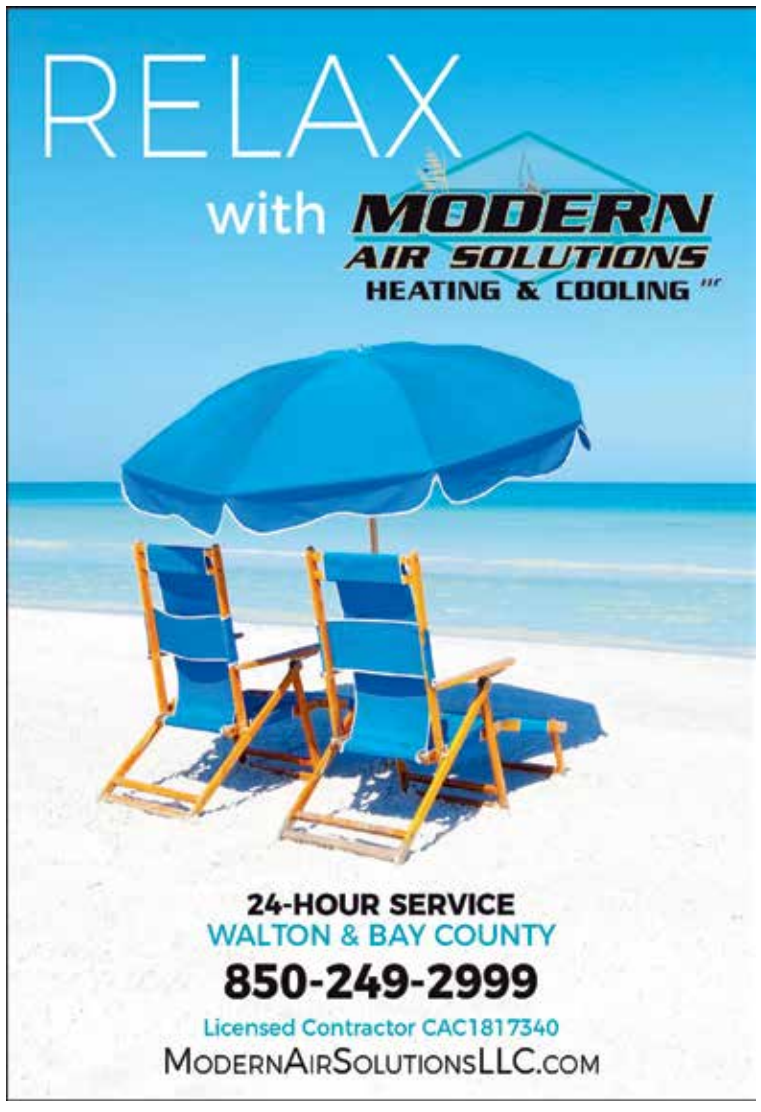

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