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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 WOLFGAM

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,

WARRIOR ARTS

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

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 vision-

BIG THING

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ELECTRIC CART COMPANY

Community

BIG THING

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aries, 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 Em-

bracing 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 Chamber 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

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WARRIOR ARTS

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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 pow-

er 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

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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.

Events Around the Beach

Farmers Markets

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

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.

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, ticket information and artist announcements.

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 Halloween Derby & Costume Contest Oct. 24

Join fellow dog lovers from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. for the 16th Annual Halloween 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.

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

Join Scratch Biscuit Kitchen in the Watercolor Town Cen-

ter 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-

Continued on next page

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Community

EVENTS

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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.

Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast @ Grand Boulevard Nov. 7

This year's Emerald Coast Walk will be held for the first time in Walton County at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach. 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. Register today at alz.org/emeraldcoastwalk.

Still Standing: A Tribute to Elton John Nov. 8 & Dec. 6

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!

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. 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. Tickets are limited and nonrefundable, so visit oldfloridafishhouse.com to get yours before they're gone.

Emerald Coast Wrestling Club Fall Festival Nov. 14

Emerald Coast Wrestling Club will host a Fall Festival and Chili Cook-Off 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. 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.

Gathering in the Garden Nov. 14

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 p.m. for a social hour and silent auction. BeGenerous is a Christ centered 501(c)(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. Details and tickets at www.begenerousinc.org.

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Fire Up the Flavor at Eggs on the Beach Nov. 7

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 at Seascape Resort, 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.

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. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

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



Animore Weekend 2026! Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest Nov. 14

There are fall events — and then there are those special days you look forward to year after year. Presented by Cafe Thirty-A, 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.

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 differ-

ence. It's one of those uniquely local experiences you really don't want to miss!



For more information & tickets: alaqua.org

Gulf Coast Jam Announces Star-Packed 2027 Lineup for June 3-6, 2027

Bailey Zimmerman is the opening-night headliner (Thursday) for the 15th Annual Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam at Frank Brown Park. He joins country superstars Jason Aldean (Friday), Luke Bryan (Saturday) and Zach Top (Sunday) for four days of live music and beachside fun. A fourth and final headliner will be announced in the coming weeks.

Four-day passes are currently available for General Admission, College, First Responder and Military levels. Elevated experiences include Caymus Premium Standing, Caymus VIP, Overlook Club and Side Stage. Ticket-and-hotel packages and payment plans are also available.

Billboard Magazine called

Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam one of "The 10 Best Country Music Festivals," drawing over 25,000 fans nightly to the four-day event in May. Ticketmaster listed Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam as one of the Best Country Music Festivals to See in 2026. Music Festival Wizard named it the number one festival in their Top 50 Most Popular Fests in the World 2024 – Voter's Choice poll and their Best Beach Music Festivals This Summer in 2025.

Jammers are encouraged to follow Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam at www.GulfCoastJam.com and on Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat for special announcements about the Festival.

To purchase discounted tickets through Life Media, scan the QR code and enter LM27!

Stay tuned to Life Media papers for lineup announcements and festival updates leading up to the event. GulfCoastJam.com



WCSD 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 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.



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.waltoncountytourism.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@WCFLT.com
www.waltoncountytourism.com



 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 ly-

ing 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 an-

ticipation. 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.



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

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.



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Brian Hughes: 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

Continued on page 10

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Countywide 911 Coordination Expands Walton County's Simultaneous 911 System

FROM PIO COREY DOBRIDNIA,
WALTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S
OFFICE

Emergency response in Walton County is now faster, smarter, and more connected. The Walton County Sheriff's Office is thrilled to announce the formal integration of the South Walton Fire District and the DeFuniak Springs Police Department into the county's Simultaneous 911 Ringing System. The expansion aims to strengthen countywide emergency response coordina-

tion and enhance service for residents and visitors in Walton County.

So, how does this technology work? The Simultaneous 911 Ringing System routes emergency calls to multiple agencies at the same time based on where the call originates from. This allows for faster information sharing and streamlined dispatching, so emergency response is unified. The Walton County Sheriff's Office serves as the county's primary Public Safety Answering Point

(PSAP), meaning all 911 calls first enter through our agency. Under the simultaneous ringing model, calls will now ring to multiple agencies at once when appropriate, depending on the caller's location. This collaborative approach improves situational awareness for responding agencies and reduces delays caused by transferring calls between dispatch centers.

"The project represents a significant step in modernizing emergency communications in

Walton County," said Walton County Sheriff Michael Adkinson. "By bringing SWFD and DFSPD fully into the simultaneous 911 environment, we're ensuring that every second counts and that first responders have the information they need as quickly as possible."

But this couldn't have been accomplished without the help of multiple partners. Walton County Geographic Information Systems (GIS) supported this initiative by developing new mapping layers essential for determining which calls should ring to which agencies simultaneously. Over three months, extensive testing was done with dispatchers from all three agencies, along with technical partners such as Motorola and C1, formerly ConvergeOne. Although the system went live in July, officials from all involved agencies continue to refine processes to maximize efficiency and coordination.

South Walton Fire District and DeFuniak Springs Police Department officials echoed the importance of the integration and emphasized the benefits of enhanced coordination and reduced response times. "Developing this system included careful planning and forecasting to bolster Emergency Communications staffing levels specifically in South Walton Fire District's jurisdiction," said SWFD Fire Chief Ryan Crawford. "We prepared for the increase in our inbound 911 call volume while fostering collaborative operating procedures to reflect 'Walton

County 911' as a team.

Ultimately, the agencies involved did the work to make this possible, but the true beneficiaries are the taxpayers who receive critical redundancy in their local 911 system." "We're a small community, and when someone calls 911, they deserve quick help from folks who know this area and care about the people in it," said DeFuniak Springs Police Chief James Hurley. "Joining this system means we're working shoulder to shoulder with our partners across the county to make sure no call gets delayed. It's another way we're looking out for our neighbors and doing everything we can to keep them safe."

This unified system reflects ongoing efforts across Walton County to leverage technology and interagency partnerships to deliver the highest standard of emergency service. The implementation of simultaneous ringing aligns with broader countywide initiatives to strengthen public safety infrastructure and provide first responders with reliable, efficient communication tools. The Walton County Sheriff's Office extends its appreciation to the dispatchers from all three agencies whose patience, dedication, and countless hours of hard work made this launch possible.



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HUGHES

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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.

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, pri-

marily 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 pro-

grams 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.

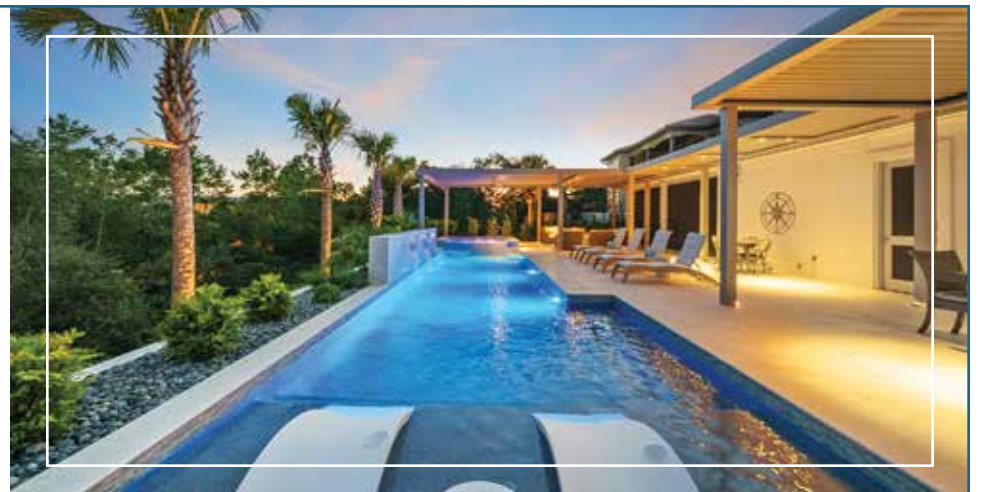
Residents with large, non-circulating water vessels or ponds may also request free mosquito fish through the District's service

Continued on page 14



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 Community

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Want your best game-day look—or simply a touch of fall flair? Pure & Couture's certified IBE stylists specialize in prettied-up ponytails, braids and Invisible Bead Extensions to add volume, length and versatility.

And believe me, I know! Owner Adrienne Brackett recommended extensions and refreshed color for my recent wedding, and I am simply in love. I've discovered that extensions make my hair behave, give me so much versatility and are just plain fun!

Fall is also a great time for a color refresh. Think bronzed curls, rich reds, chocolate tones, caramel dimension or balayage highlights for a softer seasonal change. Pure & Couture also offers airbrush makeup, lash extensions, blowouts, spray tanning and full hair services, from cuts and trims to root touch-ups and corrective color.

Gift cards and beauty products are also available.

(850) 424-3935 | pureandcouture.com (City Market Beachside) | purecollectivesalon.com (Grand Boulevard at Sandestin)

Holiday Cheer Starts Here

Frill Seekers Gifts

The holidays are near, and personalized gifts are always worth planning ahead! Fine stationery makes an especially thoughtful gift, from monogrammed fold-over notes to

classic flat correspondence cards. Choose from beautiful printing styles, including thermography, letterpress and engraving, and order early to beat the December rush.

Frill Seekers also offers custom monogrammed necklaces, bracelets, earrings and monogrammed gifts. Their current collection includes everything from pavé and turquoise monogram pendants to pearl necklaces and personalized jewelry pieces. Frill Seekers also offers exquisite gift tags, notecards and notepads. And with holiday entertaining just around the corner, Frill Seekers can personalize cups, napkins, favors and other party details to make your gatherings uniquely yours. Personalized presents take time to design and craft, so start now.

Not sure what gifts your loved ones would choose? A gift card lets your recipient have the fun of designing or selecting something themselves. Shop online or visit Frill Seekers in City Market Bayside.

(850) 460-2700 | FrillSeekers-Gifts.com

Fall for a Little Sparkle

Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Diamonds never go out of season, and Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry has a sparkling new arrival worth a closer look: a 14-karat yellow- and white-gold hinged bangle featuring 1.52 total carats of diamonds. Currently highlighted as a best

seller, it's the kind of statement piece that can move effortlessly from everyday elegance to holiday celebrations.

Looking for something truly one of a kind? Owner Ashleigh Woolly specializes in custom design, helping clients turn their ideas into jewelry created especially for them. Beyond Measure offers natural and lab-grown diamonds, engagement rings, wedding bands, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and its distinctive Sea Life Collection.

Whether you're beginning your holiday wish list, searching for a meaningful gift or finally treating yourself to that special piece, stop by the Destin showroom and discover a little sparkle "beyond measure."

(850) 424-7011 | beyondmeasurejewelry.com

NOW OPEN! Great Coffee and Community Come to Destin

Lucky Goat Coffee Destin

Lucky Goat Coffee Destin recently celebrated its ribbon cutting with the Destin and Walton Area chambers of commerce, bringing expertly roasted coffee, handcrafted drinks and warm hospitality to the Emerald Coast.

Husband-and-wife team Tom and Koley Houle are bringing Lucky Goat's simple philosophy—make great coffee—to Destin while creating a welcoming gathering place for the community. The café serves classic espresso drinks, drip coffee,

single-origin roasts and cold brew, along with the fan-favorite Luckyccino. Guests can also enjoy chai, matcha, pastries and rotating seasonal favorites. More than a coffee stop, Lucky Goat offers a comfortable place to meet friends, catch up, work or simply recharge. And with fall here, it might just become your new favorite place for that morning cup or afternoon pick-me-up.

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Fall Into a Winning Home Sale

Brian K. Locicero,
REALTOR® |
BeOnTheCoast.com

Want to know the strategies successful sellers use to maximize their home sale? REALTOR® Brian K. Locicero shares them in his book, packed with practical guidance designed to help homeowners prepare for a successful transaction. "I've provided an effective guide to ensure the most successful transaction possible," Brian shares. His expertise and negotiating skills have already made a difference for clients. One Destin seller noted, "Because of Brian's efforts, we quickly sold our home and purchased a 30A beachfront property below asking price."

Thinking about selling? Fall might be the perfect time to

pick up a few proven strategies before putting that "For Sale" sign in the yard.

(850) 739-3800 | BeOnTheCoast.com

Touchdown Treats & Sweet Wins

Smallcakes of Destin

Cupcakes and football? Now that's a winning combination! And Smallcakes Destin has another reason to celebrate this fall—it was recently named Best of Florida 2026 for Cupcake Bakeries.

Smallcakes bakes gourmet cupcakes with 13 signature flavors available daily, along with rotating monthly specialties and holiday-themed creations. Favorites range from Red Velvet and Wedding Cake to Lemon Drop, Strawberry, Cookies-n-Cream and Peanut Butter Cup. Brownies, cookies, cookie sandwiches and Pupcakes for furry fans add even more ways to satisfy a sweet tooth. Planning a tailgate, birthday, wedding or fall gathering? Smallcakes also creates custom cakes and cupcakes, and October is one of its busiest times for fall vacations, weddings, birthdays and special events—so ordering early is a good idea. Grab cupcakes for the football crowd or have the team create something custom for your next celebration.

Open Monday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; closed Sunday.

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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



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 Community

10-Year-Old Launches "The Post Room," A Happy-Mail Club Inspired by a Lifelong Love of Real Mail

Since she was little, local resident Hunter Grace Bakker, known as HG, has been obsessed with checking the mail. Almost every day, she would head to the mailbox hoping there might be something interesting waiting inside. Most of the time, there wasn't. Instead, there were stacks of junk mail, advertisements and bills. For HG, that was always a little disappointing. So, at age 10, she decided to do something about it.

This month, she is launching The Post Room at House of Blueprint, a monthly happy-mail club built around one simple idea: there should be something in the mailbox people are actually excited to open. "I think getting real mail is exciting," HG says. "I want people to open their mailbox and find something that makes them happy."

The idea began taking shape this summer during art camp with Santa Rosa Beach artist Liza Snyder. Snyder's colorful, joyful approach to art made an impression on HG and got her thinking about how much fun it would be to send art, notes and little surprises through the mail.

That idea became The Post Room. Each month, subscribers

receive an envelope mailed from the Emerald Coast filled with art, paper goods and creative surprises. The inaugural October mailing includes a 5-by-7 art print from an artist, sticker, bookmark, postcard or recipe, along with a letter from HG. Every month will be different, and fittingly, the artist who helped inspire the idea will be the first featured.

Liza Snyder Art is the featured artist for the inaugural October mailing. Information about Snyder and her work will accompany her print, giving subscribers another way to discover and connect with a local artist. HG hopes future envelopes will introduce people near and far to artists, makers and creative people from the Emerald Coast while evolving around monthly themes, local inspiration, art and activities.

The October collection draws inspiration from monarch butterflies, honoring and remembering the people who came before us, zinnias and beautiful fall beach days along the Emerald Coast. November will turn toward togetherness, gratitude and family traditions, while December will focus on light, sparkle and

simple ways to spread joy. HG is also getting a little help from her four-legged business partner, Barkley, the family's white Labrador and "Head of House" at House of Blueprint, who will make regular appearances in the monthly mailings.

While the concept is playful, HG has some very real goals for her business. She wants The Post Room to remind people to slow down, make things, write to one another and think about who in their life might need a little extra happy.

A Post Room subscription does not have to be for yourself. HG hopes people will send the club to grandparents, grandchildren, college students away from home, friends going through a difficult season, children who love receiving their own mail or simply someone who deserves a reason to smile when they walk to the mailbox. For \$12.99 per month, subscribers can join or cancel at any time, making it an easy gift for a month, a season or longer.

HG also hopes her business can show other children that they do not have to wait until they are grown up to turn an idea into something real. The

Post Room is supported by the team at House of Blueprint, the South Walton-based creative and media house founded by HG's mother, Erin Bakker. "She has always loved checking the mail, and also been consistently disappointed by the fact that most of what shows up is junk mail and bills,"

said Erin. "This summer, after spending time at art camp with local artist Liza Snyder, she became completely taken with the idea of 'happy mail' and decided she wanted to create something that would give people that feeling every single month."

HG is involved in the actual work of the business, from developing monthly ideas and choosing creative elements to helping prepare the envelopes that go out to members. "What I love most is that this really is HG's business," Erin said. "The House of Blueprint team is helping her with the grown-up parts, but she is involved in the ideas, themes, contents, artist collaborations and the overall direction."

For HG, it is part business, part creative project and part mission to make the mailbox a little less disappointing. There is also a give-back component built into the club from the beginning. Ten percent of The Post Room



proceeds will be donated to Caring & Sharing of South Walton, allowing each subscription to send a little happiness beyond the mailbox, too.

The first Post Room envelopes are scheduled to head out this month, and because membership is ongoing, subscribers can join at any time throughout the year. HG hopes eventually those envelopes travel far beyond South Walton. But, no matter where they land, each one will carry a little piece of the Emerald Coast with it. "I want people everywhere to get happy mail from the Emerald Coast," she says.

For the little girl who spent years checking the mailbox hoping to find something special, The Post Room is her way of making sure somebody else does.

To join and for more information, visit www.houseofblueprint.com/thepostroom.

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MOSQUITO

continued from page 11

request system.

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- 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.

on 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@swmcd.org

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

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Pirate Brew Fest 2026

Brew Fest Returns to Our Area

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 a.m. to 4 p.m., 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-

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 music with friends, there will be plenty to explore between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

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 atmosphere.

Make Plans to Join the Crew

Pirate Brew Fest 2026 takes place Saturday, November 7, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. 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!



of-a-kind finds, grab something delicious to eat, and enjoy a lively afternoon at one of the area's best-known family attractions. Guests are strongly encouraged to arrive in pirate attire - whether that means a full captain's coat and tricorne 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 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 hand-crafted 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 the area's playful pirate spirit. Whether you come to discover a rare piece, support a local artist, sample the food-truck fare, or simply enjoy

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www.PirateBrewFest.com

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Inshore Redfish in Choctawhatchee Bay



By HELEN PETRE
Choctawhatchee Bay is open to fishing for redfish all year, but

the best season is fall, and the best time is early morning. The bay is probably the best place in Florida to catch them, and once you have caught one, you will more than likely be hooked.
As the water cools in autumn, the bay fills with redfish. You can even see them in the shallows. The bay offers 130,000 acres of

prime habitat, stretching more than 30 miles from east to west — prime fishing for our favorite inshore fish.
Inshore fishing has several advantages over offshore fishing. The water is calmer, boats are smaller and the experience is quieter and more technical, especially if you are sight fishing.



Bailey Lee, of Lee Boatworks, caught this redfish with his own homemade fly on a fly rod. Most redfish have one characteristic tail spot, but some have two, like this one. Some even have three or more spots. Bailey's redfish is about 30 inches and ten pounds. While not quite a trophy, which would be larger than 35 inches, this one is over the slot limit and should be released. It is certainly possible to catch more than one redfish, but the bag limit is one.

You are not battling the open gulf with 20 other people on a charter boat.
Redfish are hard-fighting fish that like structure and edges, especially grass flats. They are not picky. The most reliable baits are pinfish, mullet, crab or shrimp, fished on the bottom or under a popping cork. Artificial baits, like gold spoons and plastic worms, work as well. Or try flies.



Bailey Lee with his homemade fly used to catch redfish in the Choctawhatchee Bay.

Eating

Although this fish was released because of its large size, redfish in the 18- to 22-inch range are excellent eating fish. The flesh is firm, white and mild, similar to snapper but sweeter. While the slot limit is 18 to 27 inches, any fish over 22 inches is probably better released. Larger, older redfish have coarser flesh, and releasing larger fish protects the breeding population.
Now is the best time for redfish fishing in Choctawhatchee

Bay. Go out and enjoy a day, or a few, in the sun and on the water. Whether you eat them or release them, the experience is sure to be a memory worth keeping. Get hooked! I will see you out there!

Helen Petre is a retired biologist enjoying the wild things of the Florida Panhandle. If you have science questions or suggestions for articles, email petrehelen@gmail.com.

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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

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

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.



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

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

Join us in the Garden to usher in the holiday season!



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Psalm 9:1*



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More Than a Smile: **Why Oral Health Matters**



BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH
ARCHITECT, CERTIFIED
NUTRITION AND SKIN ADVISOR

The oral cavity, aka the mouth, is a crucial part of the body's health system. Most of us enjoy going to the dentist (a white lie). It is recommended to go every six months for a cleaning and checkup. The results of these checkups reveal how well we have done our part in keeping our mouths healthy.

Let's look at some facts:

We swallow about 140 billion bacteria daily, which seeds our gastrointestinal tract.

We carry around trillions of microscopic bugs that live in and on our bodies, including the skin, gastrointestinal tract and mouth.

The mouth is the primary entrance to the digestive system.

Our oral microbiome in-

fluences health and disease in many other body systems.

The mouth is home to the second most diverse population of microbes in the body, and the health of these microbes is linked to heart disease, joint health, diabetes and digestive disorders. Because of the world we live in and what we eat, our mouths are exposed to potentially harmful bacteria every day. If our mouths are healthy (microbes in good balance), they help us form a strong defense against infection and illness.

When our mouths aren't up to par, they can allow potentially harmful bacteria into the bloodstream and are commonly associated with cavities, bad breath, gingivitis and periodontal disease. Note: Oral pathogens can colonize for life, leak into blood vessels and circulate throughout the body. This can result in many systemic diseases elsewhere in the body. Back in the day (way back), I was a Certified Dental Assistant with expanded duties. We would see patients who had been sent to us by their doctors to bring their oral cavities back to a healthy state. However, unless the patient takes responsibility for their part, their results will be short-lived.

Most of us know what we should be doing, but do we



know what we should be avoiding? Let's take a look:

- I recommend avoiding antibacterial toothpaste as well as those containing fluoride, as I believe these can disrupt the balance of our microbiome system.
- Mouthwashes can destroy our beneficial microbes.
- Work on not breathing through your mouth. Many of us unconsciously breathe through our mouths when we are winded, stressed, etc.
- Begin moving to natural oral health products.
- Consume probiotic-rich foods: plain yogurt (unsweetened), sauerkraut, pickles that are

naturally fermented, etc.

A healthy lifestyle also contributes to oral health. This includes avoiding processed sugars, fast food, etc. Include a diet rich in fiber and veggies, as they are high in prebiotics (food for your beneficial microbes). Yes, we need to feed the good bacteria, and our guts are not the only area that needs our attention.

Lastly, take time to floss and brush (soft bristles) properly each morning and evening. Be sure to brush your gums as well as your teeth. Don't use a

lot of pressure, as this can harm your gums and wear the tooth enamel. If you see blood when you floss, this is a sign that your gums need extra attention. Did you know that your teeth are not attached to bone but are attached via ligaments? If your gums remain in an unhealthy state, these ligaments can be destroyed, causing the need for extractions. AND, if you don't own a tongue scraper, you can pick one up at Walmart. You will be amazed at what hides in the spaces of your tongue. That is why dentists check your tongue, as it gives them clues into the health of your oral cavity. Start from the back of your tongue and scrape toward the tip. Another thing you can add during the day is a G-U-M brush. This will help remove food between the teeth and aid in keeping your gums clean between brushings.

We normally think of our smiles when it comes to our mouths. It's time to work at making your gut smile, too.

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Better Sleep with Bioidentical Hormone Pellets



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.

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 clin-

ically 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 Water-sound. To make an appointment, visit ascension.org/SacredHeartMammogram.

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BEST IN DESTIN

Sprinkle Genuine, Heartfelt Apologies



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

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 1/4 of Americans surveyed found it difficult to offer a genuine apology. Close to 1/2 of Americans surveyed reported their apologies "rarely" or "sometimes" being genuine. Avoiding apologies re-

flects 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. 1 in 5 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?



siveness. 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 import-

ant 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 3 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 Journeybravely.com.





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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 defen-

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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

ACUPUNCTURE

continued from page 6

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, 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.

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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 without 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, En-

gland. 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 & Stutch," 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.

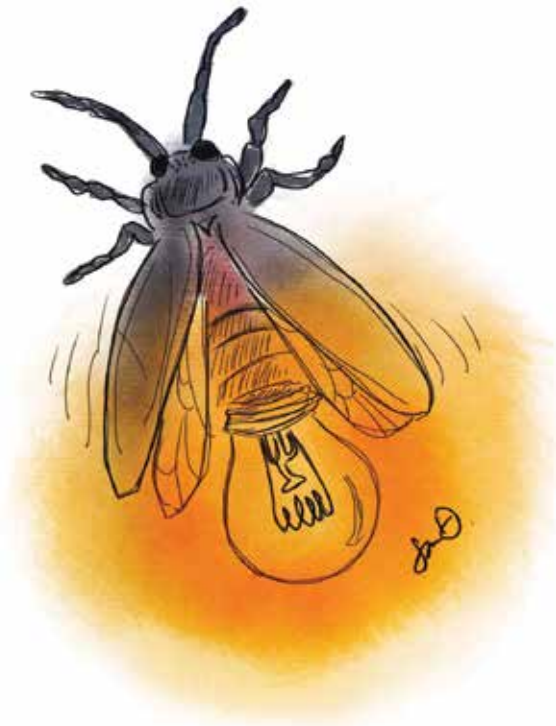
Even so, positivity is not just ANY five-syllable word such as "geometrical," "vegetarian," or

"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.



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.

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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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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.

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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 pod-

Continued on next page

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SOWAL Jazz Fest Returns October 22-24

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 nonprof-

it 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 in-

stitutions 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.

COMPLICATED

continued from previous page

cast 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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 Arts & Music

A Comedically Fun Murder Mystery Hits ECTC Stage



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.

Follow the Yellow Brick Road with Sinfonia Gulf Coast

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

For generations, *The Wizard of Oz* has been more than a movie. For many, it brings back childhood memories of gathering around the family television — perhaps even a black-and-white set — waiting for Dorothy, Toto, the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion to make their way down the Yellow Brick Road. There was the wonder of Munchkinland, the mystery of the Emerald City, the frightening Wicked Witch and, of course, the first unforgettable notes of “Over the Rainbow.” Now, those memories can be shared with children and grandchildren in an entirely new way.

The beloved 1939 classic will unfold on the big screen as Sinfonia's full professional orchestra performs the score live. Featuring new orchestral transcriptions of Harold Arlen's music alongside Judy Garland's original studio recordings, the outdoor concert offers audiences a chance to experience *Oz* in an entirely new way.

“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,” Music & Artistic Director Demetrius 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 ... re-defined.’”

Created by Emmy Award-winning producer John Goberman, producer of *Live From Lincoln Center* and creator of *A Symphonic Night at the Movies*, the production premiered in 2005 to sold-out audiences 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, the evening revisits the music and moments that have enchanted generations. *The Wizard of Oz* received six Academy Award nominations, including best picture, while “Over the Rainbow,” composed by Arlen with lyrics by E.Y. Harburg, won the Oscar for best original song.

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 throughout Northwest Florida.



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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

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

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.



heard from a great distance.

Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons has nine years' 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. 1 Corinthians 15, Exodus 19, Isaiah 27, Leviticus 25,

The shofar has a particularly

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

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Arts & Music

WARRIOR ARTS

continued from page 2

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.

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 FUNded.

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.

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Don't Let Your Guard Down Yet: Is Your Community's Internet Storm-Ready?



BY DON CARTER, SECURE VISION
Along the Emerald Coast, October brings a welcome change. The summer crowds begin to thin, temperatures become more comfortable, and many of our communities set-

tle into a quieter rhythm. But, there is one thing we shouldn't pack away just yet: hurricane preparedness.
Hurricane season officially continues through November 30, and Northwest Florida residents know storms don't always follow the calendar we would prefer. For condominium and HOA boards, this is a good time to take another look at something that has become essential infrastructure: reliable internet connectivity.
Years ago, losing internet service might have been considered an inconvenience. Today, residents rely on it to work from home, communicate with fami-

ly, receive weather updates, operate security and smart-home systems, and access important information. During severe weather, staying connected becomes even more important.
A good place for boards to begin is understanding how the community network is designed and where vulnerabilities may exist. What happens if power is interrupted? Is critical network equipment protected by backup power? Does your provider have a plan for restoring service after a major weather event? And does management know exactly whom to contact when something goes wrong?
These questions are much

easier to answer before a storm approaches.
October is also a good time to look back at the busy summer season. Did residents experience slowdowns during high occupancy? Were there areas where WiFi coverage was inconsistent? Did management receive recurring complaints? Those experiences can help identify where improvements may be needed.
For many coastal communities, fall is also budget-planning season. Internet infrastructure deserves a place in those discussions. Planning ahead gives boards time to understand costs, compare solutions and make thoughtful decisions rather than

reacting when equipment fails or residents become frustrated.
At Secure Vision, we work with condominium and HOA communities throughout Northwest Florida to help boards understand their connectivity needs and develop solutions appropriate for their properties.
October may feel like the beginning of our quieter season, but hurricane season isn't over yet. A little preparation now can help keep your community connected when staying informed matters most.

Call 251.216.9434; Visit secvision.com.

BIG THING

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