### FORT WALTON BEACH - OKALOOSA ISLAND - OCEAN CITY - SHALIMAR - CINCO BAYOU





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## 2023: The Year of Intention

### By TODD CRAIG, JOURNEY BRAVELY

As we come to the end of one year and the beginning of another, quotes from two of pop-culture's great philosophers come to mind. Yogi Berra famously said, "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up somewhere else." The other comes from the great fictional mind of Ferris Bueller who said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." Our lives do move fast and it is easy to move from one day to another and one year to another passively watching the calendar days disappear. But, what if 2023 could look different for you? What might it look like to live the next 365 days with intention? The end of a year offers an opportunity for reflection on growth and lessons learned. And, the beginning of a new year invites us to look ahead, to take next steps with intentionality and create our best year yet.

Here are some questions to help guide you as you reflect on the last year and launch



into the next year along with some instructions on how to best use them

**Create space** – Set aside at least a couple of hours of undistracted time to work through these questions. Put the phone away!

Write it down - Get honest and vulnerable with yourself as you answer the questions. And, write them

down so you can refer back to them throughout the year and review them at the end of next year (I save mine on my desktop to review from time to time).

Share it - Share your responses with one or two trusted people. Sharing your intentions with others helps solidify them internally and increases the likelihood of fol-

low-through.

Live from it – Use the responses to these questions as a daily compass directing your next steps.

#### The Past Year

What did you accomplish personally and professionally

> **INTENTION** continued on page 2

## Hometown Heroes: Still Teammates After All **These Years**

BY KENNETH BOOKS

In the late 1990s, three teenagers ran their hearts out as members of the Fort Walton Beach High School cross-country team. Today, all three - Mike Lowe, Ken Dwyer and Austin White – are colonels in the armed forces. Lowe and White are in the Air Force, while Dwyer is in the Army.

"Austin was the fastest by far," said Dwyer. "Mike was the smartest. I was average."

Lowe, 45, the oldest of the trio as a 1994 graduate, works in special operations, flying various aircraft, including the Talon 2, which is his current ride. He's served tan, Iraq, the Philippines and South America. "I deeply love to fly around Asia," he said. Born to a military family, and growing up in the area, serving in the military seemed almost a no-brainer, so he joined shortly after earning a bachelor's degree in business from

> **HEROES** continued on page 2





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### Community

### **HEROES**

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the University of Florida. He now serves as the Vice Wing Commander of the 919th Special Operations Wing.

He and his wife, Rebeca, have been married for 17 years and have a daughter, Sarah, a junior soccer player at Niceville High School.

White, 45, also comes from an Air Force family, although he didn't enlist right away. After his graduation from the University of Alabama, he spent a year as a stockbroker before he realized that life wasn't for him. So, in 2001, he joined the Air Force Reserve and says his favorite station is right here at Duke Field. "My family is here; my son is here," he said. His son, Roland, 14, is a freshman at Fort Walton Beach High School.

Dwyer, 46, joined the Army as an infantry officer in 1999. But after four or five years, he said, he switched to Special Op-



From left: Cols. Mike Lower, Austin White and Ken Dwyer.

erations. He spent four tours in Afghanistan, where, on his third tour, he was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade, costing him his left arm and left eye. The Special Operations crest is embedded in his artificial left

eve to remind him that it's all about the team. He married Jennie in 2000, and has a son, Tim, 19, at Appalachian State, and a daughter, Julia, who is a sophomore at Niceville High School.

What is one thing that if you accomplished it next year would make all your other goals easier or unnecessary?

What do you want to start in the next year?

What do you want to stop in the next year?

How will you make a positive difference in the world around you next year?

If this next year was a chapter in a book, what would you title it?

As you create space and reflect on these questions, I hope you have much to celebrate and be thankful for in 2022 even if it was a challenging year. And, I hope you are filled with the excitement of possibility as you look ahead to 2023! For support along your journey, connect with us at www.journeybravely. com.

tire from the Air Force early next year, while Dwyer said he's in it for the long haul, although he has no plans to try to get a general's star. Currently, he speaks to soldiers on building resiliency through adversity. "All of us in our lives are going to suffer speed bumps and obstacles," he said. "How you handle it shows what kind of character you have."

Don Henderson would agree.



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Advertising Sales Scott Miller Scott@LifeMediaGrp.com

**Production & Layout** Kim Harper

**Contributing Writers** Kenneth Books Lisa Woodrum Michelle Ruschman Kelly Murphy-Redd Doug Stauffer

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DISCOVE



### INTENTION

continued from page 1

that you feel really good about? What challenges, struggles

and fears did you have to work through?

What did you hope to accomplish or change but weren't able to? What kept you from doing so?

How are you different from 12 months ago? What did you learn? How did you grow?

How did you make a positive difference in the world around you?

What and who brought you the most joy?

What and who were the greatest stressors?

What did you tolerate this year?

What are you thankful for from the past year?

What are your top three insights?



### **The Present**

Life is made up of multiple domains. Take time to check in with yourself by rating each of the following areas on a scale of 1 - 10:

**Personal** – How do you feel about yourself?

Physical - How are you taking care of your body (diet, exercise, rest, etc.)?

Financial – How is your financial situation (income, budget, spending, savings, giving, etc.)?

Spiritual – How satisfied are you with the way faith is integrated into your life?

Vocational – How do you feel about your work/career?

Friends – How do you feel

Fun – How well are you creating time for enjoyment and

What two or three areas of improvements?

### **The Upcoming Year**

If it were two years from now and you were living your best life, how would you know?

If it were two years from now and vou weren't living your best life, what got in the way?

Who do you want to be by the end of the year? In what areas would you like to grow?

What two to three things if completed would generate feelings of pride and fulfillment at the end of the year?

## Family - How are you doing as a partner and/or parent?

about your social relationships?

recreation?

life do you most want to improve in the next year? What steps will you take to make those

But the tie that bind these

three colonels comes largely from their high school cross-country coach, Don Henderson, who instilled many values in them, along with Assistant Coach Keith Jowers.

Every physical event, he'd tell anyone who's cutting corners, "You're only cheating yourself," Dwyer said. "He definitely influenced all our lives."

Henderson died last year. Many cross-country runners from many classes attended his memorial.

"He taught teamwork," said Lowe. "He was almost a father figure.

While their military careers have taken each colonel to a variety of places, some enjoyable and others merely tolerable, growing up in Fort Walton Beach was a major factor in their military service.

"Growing up in a community that supports the military, seeing kids whose parents are military, you could just tell," Lowe said.

Lowe and White plan to re-

P.O. Box 1424

**Executive Editor** Lori@LifeMediaGrp.com

Director,

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### Sommunity

## **30A Songwriters Festival January 13-16**

For 13 years, the 30A Songwriters Festival has attracted thousands of dedicated live music fans from around the country to hear original songwriters spanning many genres of music perform their songs. The beach resort towns along Highway 30A in Santa Rosa Beach feature 30 venues presenting more than 200 songwriters and 300-plus solo, band and in-the-round performances throughout the weekend.

Grand Boulevard's Town Center main stage will host headline performances by Lyle Lovett, Gin Blossoms, Rickie Lee Jones, Steve Earle, Yola and Morgan Wade Jan. 13-16.

The festival welcomes for the first time to 30A Amy Grant, Tom

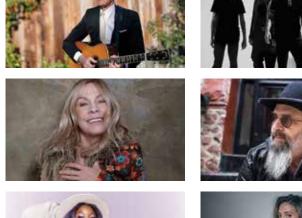
Rush, Brian Vander Ark (The Verve Pipe), The Black Opry Revue, Beth Nielsen Chapman and John Craigie.

Returning to perform two shows each throughout the weekend are songwriting legends John Paul White (The Civil Wars), Shawn Mullins, Kathleen Edwards, Tinsley Ellis, Darrell Scott, Adia Victoria, Chuck Prophet, Livingston Taylor, Abe Partridge, Lilly Hiatt, John Fullbright, Sarah Lee Guthrie, Paul Thorn and James Mcmurtry.

View the lineup of confirmed artists at 30asongwritersfestival. com. An additional 100-plus artists will be announced over the next few weeks – stay tuned! Listen to the Top 50 on Spotify at 2023 30a Songwriter's PLAY-LIST.

Festival weekend passes are available at www.30asongwritersfestival.com. VIP tickets that include premium seating on the lawn at Grand Boulevard for the headline shows on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, along with access to the VIP tent serving complimentary food, beer, wine and cocktails are also available. For a full description of each ticket package including VIP mainstage and transportation packages for groups of two up to 12, visit www.30asongwritersfestival.com.

ounced over – stay tuned! 0 on Spotify







For information contact tammy@tammysjourneys.com or 850-243-3809

### ( Community

## **New Munitions Technology Complex Revealed**

By Aleah M. Castrejon

The Air Force Research Laboratory hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony in December for the lab's new Advanced Munitions Technology Complex, or AMTC, here.

AFRL constructed the AMTC, a state-of-the-art complex, to ensure war-winning capabilities and support technologies today and into the future. In the end, the cost was approximately \$165 million, not including the equipment that will later fill the buildings. The project provides unparalleled test capability and modernizes the 1960s high explosive infrastructure.

AFRL designed the critical National Defense facility as a modern, collaborative research space that allows scientists and engineers to experiment with new explosive materials and integrate them into complex munition designs more efficiently.

"[With this facility], research-



The winners of the 35th Annual John Leatherwood Concerto Competition will perform at the Stars of Tomorrow 'An Invitation to Dance' Concert on Jan. 21, 2023, at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center Main Stage in Niceville. They will be accompanied by the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Todd Craven. For tickets visit www.matiekellyartscenter. org or the box office 850-7296000, M-F, 10-4. The Junior Division winner is Leila Warren, 13. She will play Carmen Fantasy, Op. 25, by Pablo de Sarasata. Leila began her violin studies at age three. Leila is the 2022-23 Florida Winner for the MTNA Junior Strings Competition for the third consecutive year. Last season she was named a National Finalist in this competition. In 2020 she was the youngest ever finalist to perform in the final round of the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra Youth Concerto Competition and in 2022, won Second Prize in their live broadcast finals. Leila has also been the Grand Prize Winner of the Gulf Coast Steinway Society Music Competition, the Junior Strings FMTA Concerto Competition and the Young Artist Competition for the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra ers will now be able to conduct additional experiments," said Segrid Harris, deputy director, Munitions Directorate, AFRL. "We'll be able to enhance our science and our technology even further. Things that we did not have the capacity to do before; we will have the capacity to do now. And capacity is the key. Capacity allows you to go further, capacity allows you to accelerate, capacity allows you to change."

Before construction could begin, a design team began to view other state-of-the-art facilities and look at lessons learned. After composing the right design, Tim Tobik, interim chief, Ordnance Division, Munitions Directorate, said the team had to begin construction that would meet "explosive approval for intentional detonation."

Tobik asked the audience to remember the Star-Span-

gled Banner lyrics, specifically the words "the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air."

"How cool is it that our national anthem has the exact item that these buildings are doing research for and making sure that we can continue to deliver that to the nation?" he asked.

Even though those words were written in 1814, Tobik said this facility will allow the nation to continue "to make sure those bombs do burst in air and that they deliver the right effects on the right targets at the right time, so that we all can enjoy the freedoms that we do."



## **Financial Resolutions for 2023**



By Melissa Forte-Litscher

If your next New Year's Resolutions are more about fiscal fitness than physical fitness, you aren't alone! While it is common to want to lose weight, drink more water and eat better to look and feel good, most of us would greatly benefit by improving our finances. It's important to get financially healthy and it's possible, even in these uncertain times. Take a look at some of these financial resolutions and see which one(s) will help you achieve your short- and longterm financial goals.

Almost anyone could use a goal to put away more savings. So, number one is Save More.

Some ways to do this include increasing your monthly contribution to your 401K or IRA, or beginning an automatic transfer into a savings account. Cut back on unnecessary spending; one less coffee shop trip per week could be the start of saving \$20 per month! Consider saving a portion (or all of it!) of your tax refund to give your savings a boost. Check out Okaloosasaves.org, a chapter of America Saves, a campaign coordinated by the nonprofit Consumer Federation of America (CFA) which is dedicated to helping individuals save money, reduce debt and build wealth. You can find a lot of resources to help you get started on a savings plan.

Secondly, create a personal budget. Although most of us feel like "being on a budget" is like being on restriction, tracking spending will help you understand where your money is going each month. Setting a plan will actually free up some time and allow you to decide where your money will be spent. Start by listing your fixed expenses, like mortgage/rent, car and insurance payments, utilities, food and phone costs, and then see what you have left for flexible expenses like clothing, eating out and entertainment. Use your bank and credit card statements to get an idea of where the money is going. There are many budget plans available online, as well as some great apps like Mint and PocketGuard.

Improving your credit score is another great goal for improving your financial situation. Several key ways to improve your credit score are making your credit card payments on time, paying off loan and credit debt completely, and limiting how many new accounts you open. Check your credit score through a current account holder, or try Credit Journey or CreditWise, which are free. Be sure to check your credit report for errors at least once a year. The credit bureaus, Experian, Equifax and TransUnion allow you to receive your credit report for free once a year each from annualcreditreport.com and they provide a way to dispute any errors you find.



An additional resolution to add is to set a goal to invest in real estate. Real estate investment offers multiple ways to increase your financial health, such as increasing your net income, tax savings, principal paydown, home price appreciation, and according to a recent article in Financial News and Daily Record, a hedge against inflation. "When inflation goes up, the prices of goods and services also increase. But since your mortgage payments remain the same, your purchasing power actually goes up! This makes

real estate a great hedge against inflationary pressures."

Here in Okaloosa County, we have seen an average home price appreciation of approximately 8.4% over the last five years, based upon statistics from Florida Realtors Sunstats. That far exceeds the last five years of CDs yielding less than 1% per year. When you are ready to invest in a home of your own or begin your real estate investment portfolio, I'm at your service. We can meet in the office and save that coffee shop money towards a down payment!

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## Hope Medical Clinic Keeping Our Community Healthy

By Lori Leath Smith

It's a Tuesday morning, and I find myself in a morning staff huddle at the Hope Medical Clinic. The Clinic's director, Tim Roberts, listens intently and compassionately, gives directions and perhaps courses of action, so all staff know what to expect and are ready for their patients' care. No one is a number; they have a name. It's personal. Private. Caring.

A vital part of keeping our community healthy, Hope Medical Clinic offers just what its name infers-Hope. Hope for the hurting-mentally, physically and emotionally. We all know healthcare can be complex and expensive even for those with insurance. For those without insurance, it can mean the difference between living healthy and productive lives and suffering from, or even dying of, highly treatable conditions. Serving the people that make our communities possible, Hope Medical Clinic opened its doors in 2009 to provide free, quality, accessible healthcare to the working uninsured and medically underserved residents of Okaloosa and Walton counties.

In partnership with our communities, it continues its goal to serve in this capacity. "We do this in a respectful environment in which patients, health care professionals, students and the community learn from one another," says Tim. "The experience is that each patient is respected, cared for and welcomed when they walk through the door."

The clinic believes that health





is more than the absence of disease, and can be achieved by addressing the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs of its patients. "From the first appointment, we assess a person's physical, but also mental and emotional background to try to find out what's happened in their lives, where they're coming from and the resources they need to get well. Then we strive to provide those resources," says Tim. This is done initially through an ACE (Adverse Child Experiences) survey. "As a patient, we want to know who you are, what you've experienced and how that affects your health," he says. "It's not necessarily traditional, but gives us insight. We're very serious about it and what we can do about your situation."

Tim says some results show major issues, while others simply mean a patient is at risk for certain issues. "As a nonprofit, we believe that we can create a better future through innovation such as the ACE survey. This leads us to this creative approach and a model that works. We're a healthcare home, not a walk-in clinic," he continues. "We have a program that patients can be admitted into if they qualify. If admitted, they're scheduled with a provider we feel best matches their needs. We're going to get our patients the help they need or get them where they need to go. We can

connect them, supply options, help them navigate, whether it's mental health integration or primary care, etc.," says Tim.

Doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and licensed mental health counselors donate their time as their schedules allow as well as volunteer nurses and clinic volunteers, all a vital part of the clinic's backbone.

Hope Medical Clinic also provides students pursuing careers in medicine and healthcare to intern and help address the immediate and long-term needs of our community, and in doing so, equip them with skillsets that will serve them throughout their careers. "We strive to create an environment in which our team feels heard, safe, respected and supported, carefully managing their time and talents and spending wisely the funds invested in us," says Tim.

Hope Clinic's range of services include women's health, mental health, counseling, diabetes, prescription assistance, basic lab work and blood work, referrals and more.

Tim's passion, compassion and devotion to his patients and the community shines. He's made this community and work his life's mission. "I packed everything I owned into the back of truck, and through someone who knew someone who knew someone, ended up here."

To make an appointment at one of the clinic's two locations, Freeport and Destin, call (850) 837-8424 or email destin@ hopemedclinic.org. Visit www. hopemedclinic.org.







## Make a Holiday Visit a Health Visit, Too

By Teresa Halverson

The holidays are a time for family gatherings, visiting those we haven't seen in a while and looking to the future. As we enter into 2023, many of us may have had the opportunity to visit our family members who we haven't seen in months or perhaps even a year. While our community is blessed to have such a growing retiree population, it is unfortunate that often these individuals are not able to be visited by family members on a regular basis due to location. Family visits are most important as they provide us a time to reconnect and share the joys of the holiday season. It also provides us with a valuable opportunity to check on our parent's status.

If you had the opportunity to check in on your loved ones,



did you notice changes in anv their status? As we age, there are certain signs that our loved ones may need help but are either too proud to ask or actually do not realize they need support. some As we visit our loved ones, it is important to look for signs that indicate they possibly need help.

First of all, did you notice any health or hygiene concerns that were different from your last visit? Any unexplained bruises, weight loss or change in behaviors observed? Weight loss could possibly be related to an underlying illness. Do they display any concerns or needs with grocery shopping, or attending physician appointments?

How did the home look? While no-one expects a spotless home all the time, did you notice that their housekeeping and maintenance has slipped? Are things in disarray? Check the refrigerator for spoiled food. Are they dressed and performing their activities of daily living (bathing, etc)?. Did you notice any signs of depression?

Memory lapses are normal as we age, but if you notice your parent's forgetfulness is interfering with daily life and activities, it may be time to step in. Missed medication doses and doctor appointments, getting lost, failing to pay bills, and falling victim to a scam are all common warning signs. If you notice any of these, talk to your parent about getting a memory screening after the holidays.

Our area is blessed with great health care providers. Skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, home health, companion support, and senior independent living facilities are available for help and support and referrals. It takes a great community to help make a difference in the lives of others, especially those who cared for us.



# First Surgery Performed with New Robotics System

BY SAMUEL KING JR.

Physicians with the 96th Medical Group completed the first robotic-assisted surgery here Nov. 2. Using the unit's new DaVinci Robotics System, the team performed a successful hernia repair operation. The unit has plans to use the quadarmed robot for most general and even complex procedures in the future. "This capability allows us to accomplish so much more for the patient and in a less invasive manner," said Maj. (Dr.) George Fulghum, the 96th MDS medical director of general surgery.

During the surgical procedure the robot is placed above the patient and the arms, which have interchangeable tools on them to perform different tasks, are moved into position. The doctor makes the required patient incisions manually. Then the arms are inserted into the body. The physicians sit approximately five feet away in the system console where they can view the inside of the body via the robot's 3D cameras and manipulate the arms with hand and foot controls.

Some of the benefits the ro-

bot provides are better vision, precision and ergonomics for the physicians. The smaller robotic hands provide much more dexterity in a smaller opening within the patient compared to performing the same function manually. This provides a less invasive incision on the body during the surgery. This has the potential for minimized patient pain and length of hospital stay, according to Fulghum.

Hospital physicians can already use the robot to perform general surgical procedures on the colon, gallbladder, hernias among others. They plan to move on to more complex surgeries like the hiatal hernia repairs, thoracic, and urologic procedures like prostate, bladder, kidney and adrenal operations in the coming months.

Many of the physicians and support staff have extensive training in robotic-assisted surgery through courses, simulations, and residences. They are now able to use that training here. Also, with the robotic system at the hospital now, new Airmen, medics and staff can begin training in-house.



### Community

# FWB Happpenings JANUARY 2023

••• New Years' Eve •••• **New Year's Eve Fireworks** | 8 pm | Okaloosa Island Boardwalk | FWB New Year's Eve Bash at Rick's | 4 pm-1 am | Okaloosa Island | FWB Ringin' in the New Year | 7 pm Entertainment Begins | 8 p.m. Fireworks; Midnight Fireworks and Ball Drop Harborwalk Village | Destin Baytowne Countdown | 6 pm-1 am | Baytowne Wharf | Miramar Beach Round The Bay Relay/Ultra 5 am-11 pm | Fort Walton Elks Lodge | FWB Blinging In the New Year Family Fun Run | Noon | Fort Walton Beach Landing | FWB

### ••••• 1-30 •

**Downtown FWB Farmers' Market** 8am-1pm | 2nd & 4th Saturdays | Fort Walton Beach

Landing Park **Okaloosa County** Farmers' Market 7am-2pm | Saturdays | 1954

Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB Baytowne on Ice Hours vary daily | Baytowne Wharf Sandestin

VFW Post 7674 Sunday Breakfast 8-11:30am Sundays |. 231 Carol Ave. | FWB

### ••••• 3 ••••

**Oils and Acrylics with** Rosalyn O'Grady 10 am | Artful Things | Niceville

•••••• 4 ••••••• **SINGO Music Bingo Night** 5:30-7:30 pm | LuLu's Destin ••••• 5 ••

Horse Camp 8:30 am - 11:30 am | The Equestrian Center | 208 Vicki Leigh Rd.



# Melodies & Mimosas

••••••

**Greater FWB Chamber** 

**Installation and Awards** 

First Baptist Church | FWB

9 am | Village of Baytowne

••••• 7 ••••

with Marcy Eady

KidSafe Workshop

Niceville

FWB

Destin

Chamber

Winter Wonderland

Wharf | Miramar Beach

**SNOW BIRDS in clay!** 

10:30 am | Artful Things |

7-8 pm | 75 Eglin Pkwy NE |

•••••••• 10 •••••••

**Melodies & Mimosas** 

**ECPRO Networking** 

11:30 am – 1 pm | FWB

Lunch & Learn

7 am | Christian Life Center at

Breakfast

#### Wine Tasting &

Prime Rib Night 5 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Wine Tasting 5:30 pm | Toast Wine Bar | Niceville

Legally Blonde 7:30 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville •••••• 12 ••••••

Winter Guest Fest 8 am – 12 pm l Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church I FWB

#### • 13-16 ••••••

2023 30A Songwriters 2-4 pm | HarborWalk Village | Festival Santa Rosa Beach •• 14 Women's Climbing Circle 9 am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin **MLKJ March** 

9 am | Main Street | Crestview **Birds & Brews** 11 am - 3 pm | E. O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport

Melodies & Mimosas 2-4 pm | HarborWalk Village | Destin • 17 •••••••

### Youth Village's Playground **Ribbon Cutting**

11 am | 644 Anchors St. N.W. | FWB

Watercolor Techniques with Theresia McInnis 12:45 pm | Artful Things |

Niceville •••••••• 19 ••••••

### **Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours** 5:30 pm | Emerald Coast

Science Center | Fort Walton Beach ••••••• 20 ••••••

### The Odd Couple

7:30 pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. | Grand Blvd. Miramar Beach

**Coastal Fashion Week** 6:am-8:30 pm | The Island Resort | FWB

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Get Happy: A Judy Garland **Centennial Celebration** 7:30 pm | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center | FWB

**Northwest Florida** Symphony Orchestra presents Stars of Tomorrow: 'An Invitation to Dance" 7:30 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Center | Niceville Best of the West Jazz Competition

11 am – 3 pm | HarborWalk Village •••••••• 22 •••••••

**Melodies & Mimosas** 2-4 pm | HarborWalk Village | Destin

#### • 23 ••••••• **Grace for President** 9:45 am | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

•••••••• 25 ••• **Bryan Bludworth Live Music** 5-9 pm | AJ's on the Bayou

### Wine Tasting

5:30 pm | Toast Wine Bar | Niceville

•••••••• 26 ••••••

Crescendo Kick Off Lunch 11 a.m. | Bijoux Destin Emo Night Karaoke LIVE 8 pm | Downtown Music Hall İFWB

Bryan Bludworth Live Music 5-9 pm | AJ's on the Bayou ••• 27 •••

Figure Paintings by Dr. Nan Liu Opening Reception 6 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

### •••• 28 •••

Panhandle Travel Show 2023 1-4 pm | Santa Rosa Mall | Mary Esther Fort Walton Beach Gun

Show 9 am - 5 pm | Northwest Florida Fairgrounds

**Gumbo Tasting** 

4-6 pm | LJ Schooners | . Bluewater Bay

10th Annual GrasFest 8 am | Lake DeFuniak |

DeFuniak Springs CALM Chili Cook Off

5 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Sip & Science: Mardi Gras 6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

#### ••••••• 29 •••••• Fort Walton Beach

**Gun Show** 10 am - 4 pm | Northwest Florida Fairgrounds Gala 2023 - Mardi Gras on the Coast with FWB

Woman's Club 6-10 pm | Hilton Garden Inn |

Okaloosa Island **Melodies & Mimosas** 2-4 pm | HarborWalk Village | Destin

Annual Liturgical Mass 2 pm | Christ Our Redeemer Church | Niceville

### VISIT MYFWBLIFE.COM TO READ THIS ISSUE ONLINE



## NWFSC Joins AWS Academy to Equip Students with In-Demand Cloud Computing Skills

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) is pleased to announce its participation in AWS Academy, an Amazon Web Services (AWS) program that provides higher education institutions with a ready-to-teach cloud computing curriculum.

NWFSC's AWS Academy Cloud Foundations is intended for students who seek an overall understanding of cloud computing concepts to include AWS core services, security, architecture, pricing, and support. This free, non-credit, 20-hour course is entirely online and self-paced. Funding is provided to cover certification testing fees for qualifying students.

The AWS Academy curriculum is developed and maintained by AWS subject matter experts, ensuring that it reflects current services and up-to-date best practices. Courses are taught by AWS Academy-ac-



credited educators who are trained to help students become proficient in AWS technology.

"We are pleased to make the AWS Academy curriculum available to our students as we continue to provide them with the resources and training they need to meet current industry demands," said NWFSC President Dr. Devin Stephenson. "The computer and information technology industry has created a growing number of high-qual-



ity jobs throughout our region and is expected to have a 15% growth within the next year according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This program will ensure that students graduate with the industry skills and knowledge that employers value and will give them a competitive edge as they pursue new oppor-

tunities."

For more information about the AWS program at Northwest Florida State.

### VISIT MYFWBLIFE.COM TO READ THIS ISSUE ONLINE



### ( Community

## Around Town

FWB Chamber Announces Limited Release of "Brave Bomber to Heroic Horse Soldier" Historic Print Sets



The Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce has had the distinction of hosting the 71st (Final) Reunion of the Doolittle Raiders in 2013; and the Inaugural (First) Reunion of the ODA 595 5th Special Forces team in 2022. For each event, a limited-edition reunion print was created.

The **Doolittle Raiders** and **ODA 595 Horse soldiers** are historically connected as 'The Firsts' to defend our Country after enemy attacks on our American homeland. Doolittle Raiders April 18, 1942, the first retaliation after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the Horse Soldiers ODA 595, the first American

es soldiers into Afghanistan after the attacks on September 11, 2001. "After the Final Doolittle

> Raider reunion in 2013-we saved 25 signed posters waiting for the right time to make them available as historic remembrances of our Raider friends. Having just completed the First ODA 595 reunion-it seemed the perfect time to share with the world the connection between the two," states Ted Corcoran, President/CEO. "We only have the 25 Signed Raider printsand only produced 100 of the ODA 595 prints-thus this is a very exclusive opportunity for a fan to own these two connected pieces of American history. "

> Print Details: The Raiders print (22" x 28") is autographed by the last 3 surviving Raiders: Richard Cole, David Thatcher,and Ed Saylor; The ODA 595 Horse Soldiers print (20" x 24") is autographed by 10 of the attending Twelve Strong.

Cost: \$249 (unframed) plus \$19.99 postage (outside of Okaloosa County area).

Only 25 print sets are available—first come first served,

with a limit of two sets per person.

To purchase, visit the chamber (34 Miracle Strip Parkway, SE, Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or call (850) 244-8191. Credit Card orders accepted. www.fwbchamber.org.

The Exceptional Student **Education** (ESE) department at Meigs Middle School will be hosting its first annual Heart For Art Auction & Drawing event this year. Funds raised during this event will help us cover the cost of supplies needed to help our students be successful as well as furnishing the tools needed in the Calming Room, which teaches students with exceptionalities successful strategies to deal with big emotions. A tentative date is set for Friday, March 3rd from 4 - 7 p.m. Donations will accepted from now until February 15th and will be used for art creations, basket creations and concession supplies. If you'd like to donate, contact christy.little@ okaloosaschools.com.

Florida Education Office of Safe Schools Recognizes Bruner Middle School's School Resource Officer for the FortifyFL QR Code



Danny Dean, Okaloosa County School District Safety Program Director, Deputy Sheriff Jeramy Dobkins, SRO Bruner Middle School and Debbie Cutchen, FL-DOE Office of Safe Schools

In November, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer Deputy Jeramy Dobkins, received a certificate of appreciation from the Florida Department of Education's Office of Safe Schools for developing a QR code for the FortifyFL Suspicious Activity Reporting App. In 2018, the Florida Legislature created and funded FortifyFL as part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act. The QR code has been adopted throughout the State of Florida and is posted in every school across the state for students to have rapid access in

submitting tips regarding threats in their schools. Students can provide a description of the threat, share pictures and videos anonymously or may choose to submit their contact information. All information is instantly relayed to the appropriate law enforcement agency as well as school officials. Superintendent Marcus Chambers stated, "The partnership between the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and the school district has been used as a model for districts across the state and nothing is more important than the safety of our students and employees." In November of 2021, Dobkins, received a Certificate of Commendation on behalf of Superintendent Marcus Chambers recognizing him for his "profound innovation" and "exceptional dedication to the safety and security" of the district. The FortifyFL app is available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play. Tips can also be submitted online at GetFortifyFL.com.

### Be the Magic Foundation Brings Christmas Spirit to Families in Need

Several years ago, the team at **Bit-Wizards** in Fort Walton Beach decided that in lieu of client gifts and holiday cards, the company would donate Christmas gifts to families in need.

For 2022, Bit-Wizards' Be the Magic Foundation chose to donate to 14 families, including 25 kids, that reside at Fresh Start for Children and Families. Fresh Start's mission is to share love and compassion through a comprehensive educational, vocational and economic housing program to help homeless families achieve self-sufficiency. Each child at Fresh Start was encouraged to write their "Wish List."

"These marvelous Wizards and this company are what Christmas is all about. We deal with children in trauma here at Fresh Start, often leaving all their personal belongings behind and not knowing if they will get to eat or sleep in a bed each day. Each year, Bit-Wizards takes their little lists and fills them exactly as the children requested. The joy, the hope, and the belief that things can get better; that is what this wonderful company brings to our kids. My heart soars as they pull in each year. My only wish is

that there were more Wizards in this world. THANK YOU," said Donna Tashik, Executive Director at Fresh Start.

### HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital Awards Scholarship to OTC

HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital awarded a \$15,000 scholarship to Okaloosa Technical College to support efforts to strengthen and expand the state's healthcare workforce. The funding is part of HCA Healthcare's ongoing commitment to partnering with organizations to help develop a diverse pool of future healthcare leaders, and is designed to ensure that every student has the same opportunity to graduate and attain a high-quality degree or industry certification.

### More high-speed Internet options coming soon

Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners have made a considerable step forward to bring high-speed Internet to Okaloosa County residents. The County has entered into an agreement with LiveOak Fiber to use a portion of available County fiber to expand high-speed Internet county wide. For the past decade, Okaloosa County's Information Technology Department has anticipated greater demand for high-speed Internet and in that time, has developed the physical infrastructure to meet the Internet demands of the County government and other local agencies. The effort has yielded a surplus of unused "dark" fiber and the County has made it available to companies like LiveOak Fiber.

LiveOak will be constructing their own infrastructure and using County fiber junctions to expand service to their customers. They are currently installing fiber in Shalimar and will be expanding their service county-wide of the coming months and years.

### Okaloosa Airports bring \$2.9 billion economic impact to the area

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) recently published its Florida Aviation Economic Impact Study, which



## Let's Ring in 2023!



To kick off your new year, get your "Glitter and Glam" on with Diamond Dan at **LJ Schooners' New Year's Eve** party! Dinner specials will run from 5-10 p.m.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf will host **Baytowne Countdown**, Saturday, Dec. 31, 6 p.m.-1 a.m., with two breathtaking fireworks displays at 8 p.m. and midnight. Enjoy a family-friendly evening from 6-8 p.m. Dance the night away with live music from Bay Kings Band 7 p.m-1 a.m. End the night with a spectacular midnight fireworks show.

Ring in 2023 at Hotel Effie's Rocking New Year's Eve Spectacular! Enjoy an evening full of dining, dancing and entertainment with family and friends at any one of Hotel Effie's renowned venues: Ovide, Ara and The Lobby Bar. Ovide's Dinner and Entertainment Package includes Ovide's exclusive four-course dinner menu, access to all entertainment throughout the evening, complimentary valet parking, champagne upon arrival, and NYE party accessories. Two seating times: 5-7 p.m. \$250 per person and 8 p.m.-1 a.m. \$350 per person. Rooftop Access is

\$100 per person. Book at www. hoteleffie.com/new-years-evedinner-ovide.

**Noon Year's Eve** is just for kids at **LuLu's** Destin. It's the 7th annual Noon Year's Eve celebration Tuesday, Dec. 31, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. with non-stop, free kid-friendly fun. There will be arts and crafts, inflatables, face painting, live music and more. Kids can have their fun by counting down to Noon with kid-safe "fireworks" and a huge Beach Ball Drop. Visit Lulus-FunFoodMusic.com/destin or call (850) 710-5858.

Ring in the New Year from 5 p.m through midnight at **Harborwalk Village** with free live entertainment happening on the main stage beginning at 7 p.m. with Shenanigans followed by The New Royals at 9:30 p.m. Then turn your eyes to the skies for a dazzling fireworks display over the Harbor and shout along as we countdown the Ball Drop, welcoming a New Year! 8 p.m. fireworks; Midnight fireworks and Ball Drop!

Join **Seaside's New Year's Eve celebration** in Central Square including arts and crafts, face painting, a live performance by Monsters of Yacht and fireworks! Enjoy arts and crafts/face painting in Central Square From 4-9 p.m. Monsters of Yacht at the Amphitheater Stage from 5-9 p.m. Fireworks at 9 p.m. at the Seaside Amphitheater.

Old Florida Fish House will host a **New Year's Eve Celebration.** Choose between an early dinner followed by live music or its epic New Year's Eve Extravaganza.

Still Standing: A Tribute to Elton John, 5-7:30 p.m. Dec. 31. Some of Elton John's most popular songs will be performed by Ben Fry and band. Ticket includes the show and reservation for dinner but does not include food or drinks. Visit www.oldfloridafishhouse.com for details.

New Year's Eve Extravaganza | 8 - 1 a.m. Enjoy live entertainment, including a live band, midnight toast, delectable food and drink options, and more! Ticket does not include the cost of food and drinks. Visit www.oldfloridafishhouse.com for details.

The **New Year's Eve Bash at Rick's** on Okaloosa Island will be held from 4 p.m. – 1 a.m. Join the Rick's family for an afternoon and evening of fun! There will be activities, food and beverages for all ages including live music. A bouncy house and the arcade kicks off the afternoon, pizza by the slice, drink and food specials (TBA) and an amazing lineup of music. A champagne toast at midnight and fellowship into the New Year will wrap up 2022.

Freezin' for a Reason New Year's Day: Plunge into the Gulf at The Boardwalk's 7th Annual Pelican Plunge! Saturday, Jan. 1, 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Warm-up with hot cocoa and coffee, secure raffle tickets for a chance to win amazing prizes, partake in the costume contest and enjoy live music before taking an exhilarating dip into the Gulf. At 11:30 a.m., participants line up near the water for the official countdown to dash into the Gulf of Mexico. Plunge ticket \$23 at Eventbrite. com. 100 percent of proceeds directly support the children of The Emerald Coast Foundation. The Board- walk, Okaloosa Island; 1450 Miracle Strip Parkway SE; Fort Walton Beach.

**Baytowne on Ice** continues as a favorite holiday tradition! The Ice rink is open through Feb. 5. Hours vary daily. \$13 for 90-minute skate; \$3 skate rentals. Rent the rink for private functions. Call (850) 428- 2736 or visit baytownewharf.com.

Beach's **The** Rosemary Courtyard at Pescado (downstairs) will hold a New Year's Eve Times Square **Party** from 7 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Tickets are \$15 plus 7 percent tax and 22 percent gratuity and includes live music by Cam Ray and Marlene Johnson from 8 p.m. until late, 360 photo booth, cash bar, small bites menu and much more. For 18 years and older only. Ticket Link: http:// sevn.ly/xPKVq0XN

Nick's Seafood Restaurant will kick off 2023 with its 14th Annual Community Bonfire Friday, Jan. 13, from 6-11:55 p.m. DJ Viper will be kicking off the entertainment followed by The Velcro Pygmies! Free to the public, you and your whole family are invited to attend and enjoy a fun night together on the Choctawhatchee Bay. There will be food service inside the restaurant, an ATM, and a cash bar located on premises. Additional parking will be located west of the restaurant.







Luxury treatments designed to rejuvenate, restore and relax. Featuring products and services from Biologique Recherche and OSEA. Locals receive 10% off all other treatments not listed on the exclusive menu, retail items and complimentary valet parking.

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SPA Villiana

Expires 2/28/23. Cannot be used with any other discounts or specials FWB

### The community

## Walk Aims at Alzheimer's Cure

By MATTHEW EATON

In October, more than 350 gathered at Northwest Florida State College for the Walk to End Alzheimer's. Participants raised more than \$65,000 to fund care and support programs and critical research to, ultimately, find a cure.Melody Wood traveled from Alaska to walk in honor of her mother, Jean Marshall, who died from Alzheimer's in October 2021. For Wood, the walk being on the one-year anniversary of her passing feels like fate.

"The walks are great for me because they give me something to work toward, they give me a goal outside of what's happened," said Wood.

Wood's mother was 93 when she passed and for her family, the walk allows her legacy as a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to live on.

Her support for the walk is also to show solidarity with others in the community who are caregivers for the one in nine Floridians aged 65 and older living with Alzheimer's.

"As a caregiver, you think you're supposed to be able to do it all and it shouldn't be like that. I want them to know they're not alone in this," said Wood.

During the last six weeks of her mother's life, Lisa LeClere, of Okaloosa, spent every day by her side. It was the sorrowful culmination of Jeanne Le-Clere's 10-year fight against Alzheimer's.

Now, six months after her passing, LeClere joined the Emerald Coast the Walk to End Alzheimer's in her honor. Her hope is that other families in the community no longer feel like



it's taboo to speak about their experience with the disease.

"Making it a taboo subject makes it so that it doesn't allow you to acknowledge and recognize what's actually happening," said LeClere. "We need to be able to talk about this openly, so that we find the right support, resources and the proper ways to prepare."

Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research. On Walk day, participants honor those affected by Alzheimer's with



the poignant Promise Garden ceremony – a mission-focused experience that signifies their solidarity in the fight against the disease. The colors of the Promise Garden flowers represent participants' connections to Alzheimer's disease and their personal reasons for walking.

The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline is available for questions and support at (800) 272-3900.

### AROUND TOWN

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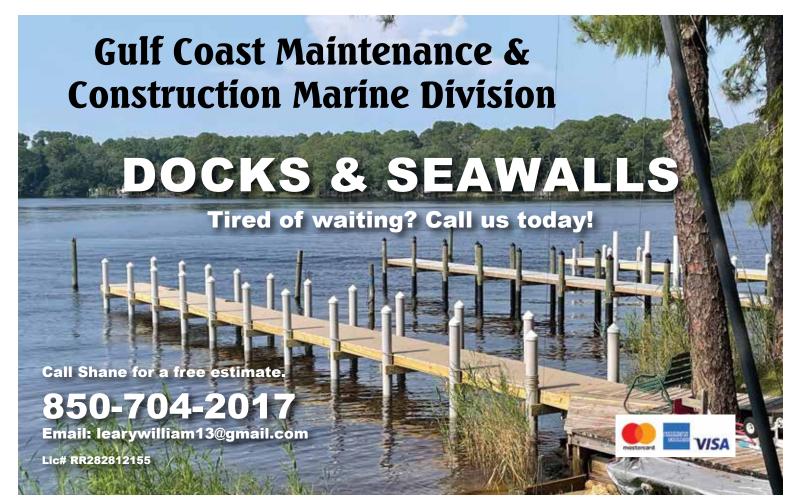
highlights aviation as an economic engine and determined the industry is responsible for a total economic impact statewide of \$336 billion. The three combined airports in Okaloosa County bring over \$2.9 billion of economic impact annually to the area. This represents a 67% increase over the estimated \$1.7 billion reported in FDOT's 2019 study. Airport activities in Okaloosa County are responsible for the creation of over 18,500 jobs and \$785 million in payroll annually that largely flows back into the local economy.

### All Sports Association Donates \$50,000 to Support Okaloosa Student-Athletes

Since 1970, the All Sports Association (ASA) has supported and honored the "best of the best" High School, Collegiate, Amateur, Professional, and Special Olympic athletes and recognized individuals who



have fostered youth activities in Northwest Florida. The ASA, made up of dues-paying vol-



unteers, has donated their time and raised money for non-profit organizations emphasizing local youth sports programs. This year, the ASA has made a generous donation of \$50,000 to the Okaloosa County Public Schools Foundation to improve school-sanctioned sports activities for high school and middle school athletic programs in Okaloosa County. "On behalf of the members of the All Sports Association and its many sponsors it is our pleasure to be able to provide funding to help the many sports programs in the Okaloosa County School District. We look forward to continuing this support in the years to come," stated Gary McCoy, All Sports President. In partnership with the ASA, the Public Schools Foundation has been able to secure \$15,000 in additional matching funds to support health and fitness among our student athletes.

As a result of these generous donations, each of the district's middle and high school athletic programs will receive \$4,642.86 to use in areas of greatest need as determined by the leadership at each school. "We are grateful for the continued support of the All Sports Association who continually make a difference and positively impact the lives of our student-athletes, our community, and beyond," stated Superintendent Marcus Chambers.

The community

## **Children's Neighborhood Provides Shelter and Hope**

By Michelle Ruschman

In 2008, The Children's Neighborhood in Fort Walton Beach opened its doors to provide additional shelter for foster children. Ken Hair, president and CEO of Children in Crisis, Inc spoke of how the neighborhood came to be.

Darnell, "Sharilyn our founder, was a retired schoolteacher who was involved in the foster program and she noticed there weren't enough foster homes for the kids," Hair said. "She said, 'Well, why don't we just build a neighborhood and our own foster homes? That will increase the population and the number of foster homes we have.' She got together with some of the civic leaders, had a big banquet at the convention center, and by the end of the night, had raised enough funds to build five homes."

Now, The Children's Neighborhood has grown in significant ways. In addition to the five homes, the families have a private playground, a pavilion, and an on-site food and clothing pantry. There is also a recreational building containing several computer stations, a reading nook with age-appropriate reading material and an area where tutoring is provided and group activities can take place. The neighborhood also has added to its housing. For children who aren't able to get placed into a home right away, there is an emergency shelter large enough to keep sibling groups together, which is one of Children's Neighborhood's main goals. There are also studio apartments for adults, ages 18 to 22, who have aged out of the system and would otherwise be homeless. The latest addition to the neighborhood is the King Whitmire Therapy Center. Now, instead of families having to drive their kids to different therapy sessions, a steady lifestyle can be better maintained with the therapy center just walking distance away.

Since covid, however, even with all these resources available, The Children's Neighborhood finds two of its homes without the live-in foster parents that are needed. The foster parents live in the homes provided and receive children who need shelter. Without these couples, however, the rooms are unable to be





filled. Are you the family they're looking for? The ideal candidates are organized individuals, who have a heart for taking care of children, and can move into one of the homes. Empty nesters, couples who don't have children, or a small family with just one or two siblings could do very well. Each home can house up to seven children, including the biological children of the house parents, but the parents will not receive that many to start.

Before move-in day there is an extensive background check which can take several weeks. Once approved, only then is the family or couple moved into the house. For the first few months, even before the first foster child arrives, the family goes through comprehensive response training, shadows current foster parents and gets to know the neighborhood. This is the period to build confidence in the foster parents' abilities but to also ensure that the program is a good fit, and these parents are all-in for the kids.

Danna Franks, Vice President of Children in Crisis, describes a typical day.

"You start the morning making sure everyone is awake, has breakfast and then our children are walked to the bus stop. The parents typically stay at the bus stop and see the children get on the bus. During the day, parents may have appointments they need to go to or they're making sure the children are getting to medical or dental appointments. Typically, they are getting some well-deserved free time.

In the afternoons, it's planning dinner, getting the kids off the bus, and getting them to tutoring or assistance with homework, before going home. It's also common to see the kids on the playground until dinnertime. Depending on their age, the kids can also help to prepare dinner. With up to seven kids in the house, it takes someone who has excellent organizational skills."

In addition to providing a home, paying for utilities, and receiving food, each house has two dedicated SUVs and a gas card to be able to transport their large families. The foster parents also receive \$17 a day for each foster child they care for and Children in Crisis also pays an additional stipend.

"We have situations where we have house parents that don't work at all and just take care of the kids," said Hair. "We also have some in which one parent will work and the other will stay home. Sometimes both house parents will work but it's part-time or they work from home. Ultimately, though, they have to be available to take care of the kids."

The parents are never without immediate support. Monday through Friday from 8 to 5, not only are Ken and Danna available but on-site staff includes Sarah Traver, Operations Director, Melissa Parsons, Education Liaison, Kaylee Rodgers, Wrap-Around Services Coordinator and Tammy Middleton, Programs Coordinator. At night and on weekends, someone is always on-call and, of course, there are the other foster parents in the neighborhood. Sarah and her team can also coordinate respite parents who can go into the home when the house parents need a break. The homes have a room for these respite parents so the full-time parents can maintain the privacy of their master bedrooms.

Feeling drawn to becoming a new foster parent or wanting to tour the neighborhood? Maybe you'd like to donate to these efforts? Go to www.childrenincrisisfl.org, call (850) 864-4242, or mail a check made out to Children in Crisis to Children in Crisis, Inc, 1000 Luke's Way, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547.



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### The Community

## Mark your Calendars for ECCAC's Signature Gala in the Garden and Golf Weekend

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (EC-CAC) is putting on their annual signature Gala in the Garden and Golf Weekend, this year presented by George and Janice Hendricks. The Gala features a cocktail hour starting at 5:30 p.m., with dinner being served at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 10, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Guests will enjoy dinner and live entertainment by popular local musicians, The Will Thompson Band, live auction, as well as a featured guest speaker. The Gala is an energetic, yet import-



ECCAC's 23rd Annual Gala in the Garden and Golf weekend will be on March 10, at the Hilton Sandestin for the Gala, and March 12, for the golf tournament at Kelly Plantation.

ant ECCAC fundraiser to bene- at no cost to help identify, treat abusive situations. fit children by providing services and support child victims in

to benefit ECCAC, will take place on Sunday, March 12, at Kelly Plantation Golf Club with registration and a cookout meal from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. for a tournament shot gun start at  $12\,$ p.m. Tournament cost is \$400, which includes two tickets to the Gala. Gala tickets only are \$250 per couple. Please make reservations on-line at eccac.org. Sponsorships are still available. Contact Lee Curtis at at 850-684-4422, or email her at Lee@ eccac.org.



# Junior League of the Emerald Coast and HSU **Educational Foundation Partner to Support Students**

In November, the Junior League of the Emerald Coast (JLEC) held its annual Child Clothing Project - a two-day event to distribute a new wardrobe of clothing to over 300 local elementary school age children in Walton and Okaloosa counties. The event also included enrichment activities provided by the HSU Educational Foundation and other local community partners to broaden the learning experience for the children through hands-on exploration of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

"Since the pandemic, our organization has adapted to a variety of challenges, finding creative ways to take our traditions, modernize them and come back even stronger. This forward-looking approach was reflected in this year's Child Clothing Project. Through our new community-based approach, we are building partnerships that will enhance our ability to serve local children and our community as a whole," said Hilary DeMers, President of the Junior League of the Emerald Coast.

This year's Child Clothing Project featured several novel highlights, including a new popup boutique designed and built by Junior League members to create an authentic shopping experience for the children, and a new partnership with the HSU Educational Foundation, which hosted the event and provided STEM activities for the children. Amanda Negron, CEO of the HSU Educational Foundation, described the importance of early exposure to STEM learning.

"Future workforce demands will call for a good foundation in STEM subjects, but performance often begins by developing an interest by discovery through fun activities and awareness of the careers that exist in our community. The HSU Educational Foundation provides these types of youth camps and training programs at no cost to participants," explained Negron. Visit hsu-foundation.org to learn more.

The Child Clothing Project

is the Junior League's premier community outreach event, offering eligible children a field trip to "shop" at no cost to receive new clothing items, including pants, shirts, shoes, a jacket, a bag, a book, underwear, socks, and toiletries. The Child Clothing Project is made possible by JLEC fundraising events, individual sponsors, and charitable donations from local businesses. This year, Publix, Winn Dixie, Helen Back Pizza, Crumbl Cookies, Under Armour, the Carter Building Company, LLC, Island Time Mobile Detailing, LLC, Panhandle Pediatric Dentistry, Southern Living, and High Socks for Hope supported the event.

The Golf Tournament, also

variety of community partners that provided interactive exhibits for the children to explore. The Fort Walton Beach Fire Department, Fort Walton Police Department, Okaloosa County Libraries, Florida Department of Health, Okaloosa County, Eglin Air Force Base, Emerald Coast Science Center, and the Indian Temple Mound Museum participated in the event. Additionally, students from Niceville, Choctaw and Destin High Schools, and representatives from Sundance Rental Management, the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors, and ERA Real Estate provided volunteer support for the event.

The event also featured a



## Why is the Medicare Open **Enrollment Period Important?**

certain changes to the plan they selected in the AEP.

These allowed changes are: Cancel your stand-alone Part D prescription drug plan

• Drop your Medicare Advantage Plan and return to Original Medicare (A & B only) • Enroll in a stand-alone

Medicare Part D prescription drug plan • Elect to change from one Medicare Advantage Plan to

another Let's look at each option a bit deeper. First, why would someone elect to cancel their standalone Part D prescription plan? The only reason one could have would be it was being replaced by other qualifying coverage. If you cancel without replacing, penalties will accrue and be waiting for you when you do put this coverage back in place at a later date. Plus, those penalties will be with you for life!

Second, there are a few rare circumstances when it makes sense for someone to cancel an Advantage plan and return to Original Medicare known as Part A and Part B. Usually this would have something to do

with provider networks which are insufficient for the beneficiary. Again, this rare circumstance would require you to also enroll in a stand-alone Part D pre-

> scription drug plan in order to avoid accruing the future penalties I just mentioned. Again, enrolling in a standalone Part D prescription drug plan is a requirement if you do not have qualifying coverage elsewhere and want to avoid those penalties. If you neglected to get that done during the AEP, now is the time to take care of

> this. Last, some folks have a change of heart once they see the detailed materials of the Advantage plan they enrolled in during the AEP. Perhaps you

find your HMO plan does not have the providers you need but a PPO plan does. Or, perhaps the terms of coverage are better in a plan different from your current plan. Maybe, another plan costs less (or even \$0!).

You don't need any reason to switch plans, provided you do so before the OEP expires on March 31. Just remember, you only get one chance to make this change. Once you do, you will have to keep that plan until the next AEP, which begins on Oct. 15 of each year.

The best options for your particular situation should be thoroughly discussed with your insurance agent/broker to make sure you have all the facts about the choices you may be thinking about and get all your questions answered.

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State of Florida and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 39 years and can be reached at his office at 850-842-2400 or his mobile at 978-509-2941.



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**Medicare Questions?** We've Got Answers. GREG DURETTE 842.2400 Your local agency for *Florida Blue* 



By Greg Durette

Now that the Medicare Annual Election Period (AEP) is over, you can finally take a breather from all those ads, phone calls and mailers. Come Jan. 1, you will have a chance to try out your new Medicare Advantage, Supplement and/or Prescription plan.

If you suddenly discover the plan you selected during the AEP is not right for you, all is not lost. You will get one more bite at the apple to make changes to your plan.

As with many situations, in order to get a good outcome, you first have to ask the right questions. In this case, the questions you should ask first are:

Did you sign up for a new Advantage Plan or a standalone Part D prescription drug plan during the last Annual Enrollment Period?

Do you have an existing Advantage Plan or a stand-alone Part D prescription drug plan that renewed with a Jan. 1 effective date?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then the Medicare Open Enrollment Period (OEP) is very important to you.

The OEP runs annually from Jan. 1 to March 31. During this time, Advantage plan holders are given the option to make

### **Wreaths** Across America Snowden-Horne

Society, Children of the American Revolution played an active role in the Fort Walton Beach Wreaths Across America ceremonies on Saturday, December 17, 2022.





### Community

## The Gift of a Sound Personal Insurance Portfolio?



By Joe Capers, Insurance Zone

In a recent edition we focused on the details of a sound Business Insurance Program. Similar parallels can be established for your equally important Personal Insurance Program. Personal lines insurance is designed to offer protection for individuals and families rather than organizations and businesses. The most common types of personal insurance are property and casualty insurance which includes homeowners, condo, renters and auto insurance. The rates of insurance vary depending on geographic locations and the level of risk that an individual may have.

In our state of Florida, some types of personal lines insurance are required while others are strongly recommended. All Florida residences must have auto insurance which covers drivers while commuting to work, running errands and for other personal reasons and while used in business pursuits. On the other hand, homeowners, condo unit owners and renters insur-



ance protect against damage to residences and personal assets.

Ultimately, insurance is about safeguarding one's family from life's uncertainties – and life does indeed have uncertain and unexpected events. Personal insurance adds that extra layer of protection that can give you peace of mind in today's world.

Below is a sampling of personal insurance coverage that are recommended for you and your family:

Homeowners & Homes Under Renovation or Construction – Protects your home the way it protects you by choosing the proper coverage that meets your needs.

**Condo Unit Owners** -Your condo association may have insurance, but your individual unit has its own coverage needs. Condo insurance protects your dwelling elements, personal property and liability.

**Renters Insurance** – Can be structured to cover more than just your personal property, and personal liability is just one example.

**Rental Property or Landlord Insurance** – Protects your property investment for you as a rental property owner.

**Auto Insurance** – Protection that gives peace of mind when on the road.

**Flood Insurance** – Homeowners does not cover flooding so flood insurance will protect against floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact our area.

**Boat and Yacht Insurance** – Know that you, your guests and vessel are protected so you can enjoy your time on the water.

**Umbrella** – This high limit coverage goes above your personal and auto liability policies to protect you from unexpected and catastrophic events.

Jewelry and Collections

 For those special items and valuables that your homeowners coverage will have severe limitations.

**Motorcycle and RV Insurance** – Provides liability protection for you and your machine.

**Home Office Liability** – As more individuals are now working from home, make sure you have protection for this often-overlooked exposure.

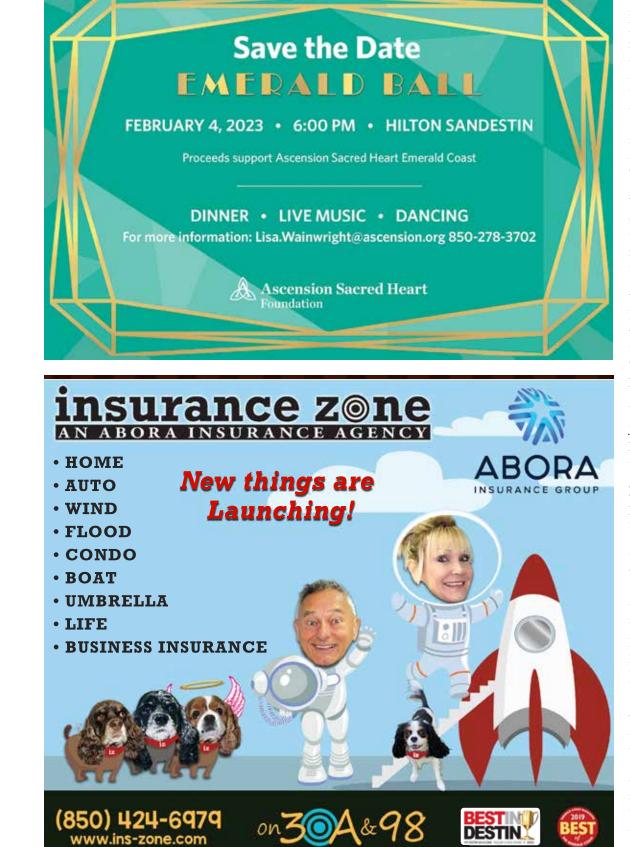
**Life Insurance** – Whether term or permanent, life insurance can provide income, final expenses, transfer an inheritance and business continuation.

**Pet Insurance** – You know I would not leave off this vital protection to cover the health for our precious animals.

There are many choices in the marketplace when it comes to your personal insurance program – especially automobile and homeowner coverage. We recommend you work with an agent and agency that will take the time to get to know you, your family, and your insurance needs. One that can search the marketplace for the correct combination of coverage and price to meet the insurance requirements of you and your family.

You've worked hard to attain your assets and this is a great time of the year. Let a personal lines specialist provide you with the gift of a Personal Insurance Program that will protect you with sound insurance products.

Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is a full service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Visit their Video Library on www.ins-zone.com and watch several informative videos on 'Homeowners, Condo and Umbrella Liability', or call 850.424.6979.



## Fore Her Announces Expanded Annual Pink Walk & 5k

The Pink Walk Benefiting Fore Her is back and better than ever! The event, which takes place on Saturday, Jan. 28, at The Village of Baytowne Wharf, will introduce a timed 5k race in addition to the Survivor Stroll and annual Walk.

The community is invited to walk or run with friends and family, wear pink and have fun while raising funds for breast cancer patients in financial need. Attendees will enjoy an after party with music, a photo booth, prizes and food samples. All registered breast cancer survivors can enjoy the VIP Survivors' Lounge featuring special treats including hand massages, and more.

"For the first time, this will be an actual 5k along with our annual Survivor Stroll," said Jennifer Crawford, vice president of Fore Her Board of Directors. Registration for the Piple

Registration for the Pink Walk & 5K is now open online at ForeHer.org/PinkWalk5k.

Early Bird 5k registration starts at \$50 through Dec. 31 and then increases to \$60 in the new year. Those who register through Dec. 31 will receive a free Pink Walk T-shirt. Fore Her offers a discounted rate of \$45 to register for breast cancer survivors and the Survivor Stroll is free to participate for survivors.

Packet pickup will be at The Village of Baytowne Wharf on Friday, Jan. 27, from 3 to 5 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 28, starting at 7 a.m. Day of registration will also be available from 7 to 8 a.m. The 5k will start on Saturday at 8:30 a.m.

"To our local community, we need YOU!," adds Crawford. "We are looking for sponsors, donors, walkers, and runners looking to have fun and raise funds to help breast cancer patients along the Emerald Coast."

For more information, and available sponsorship opportunities, visit pinkwalk5k.org or email ali@weilhousecreative.com.

Founded by Amy Walsh after her mother and aunt lost their battle with breast cancer, Fore Her was initially conceived as an annual golf benefit to assist local women battling breast cancer with the financial burden of the disease, but as the need grew, the nonprofit expanded to host three annual events to raise funds to continue to support those affected in Northwest Florida. Funds raised are used to provide temporary assistance with bills





SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2023 VILLAGE OF BAYTOWNE WHARF, SANDESTIN TIMED RACE • AFTER PARTY • PRIZES

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utilities or helping pay for auto repairs so patients can get to treatments. Fore Her offers resources, hope, compassion and education for all who are affected by breast cancer. Find additional information about volunteer-

ing, available resources, and how you

can help, visit www.ForeHer.org.





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### () Off The Hook

## FWC to Study Long-Term Stored Vessel Impact

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has retained Atkins Global to conduct a study in Florida to better understand the impacts of long-term stored vessels. Feedback from residents, business owners, visitors and others who use and enjoy Florida's waters is a crucial part of the research. The intent of the project is to:

Investigate whether, and to what extent, long-term stored vessels contribute to the number of derelict and abandoned vessels on Florida's waters.

Investigate the impacts of long-term stored vessels, those anchored or moored outside of public mooring fields for more than 30 days, and those moored within public mooring fields on local and state economies, public safety, public boat ramps, staging docks, and public marinas during and after significant tropical storm and hurricane events.

Provide recommendations for appropriate management options for long-term stored

**Fishing News** 

vessels to mitigate any identified negative impacts to local communities and the state.

For the purposes of this study, a "long-term stored vessel" is a boat on state waters that is not under the supervision of a person capable of operating, maintaining or moving it from one location to another and that has remained anchored or moored outside of a public mooring field for at least 30 days out of a 60-day period.

To participate in the study, visit VesselStudy.com. Stakeholder input will be collected through Feb. 10, 2023.



#### Flounder Recreational Harvest Reopens

The recreational harvest of flounder in all Florida state and

federal waters reopened Dec. 1. The minimum size limit for flounder is 14 inches total length and the daily recreational bag



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limit is five fish per person. Learn more about flounder regulations at MyFWC.com/Marine by clicking "Recreational Regulations" and "Flounder" or download the Fish Rules Appat Instagram.com/FishRulesApp or Facebook.com/ FishRulesApp.

### Tired of Your Boat? FWC Can Help

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is now accepting applications for a recently approved and newly created Vessel Turn-In Program, a key component of Florida's derelict vessel prevention program.

VTIP is a voluntary program designed to help owners dispose of their unwanted at-risk vessels before they become derelict. Upon approval of an application, VTIP will take a surren-

dered vessel and dispose of it at no cost to the boat owner. Re-

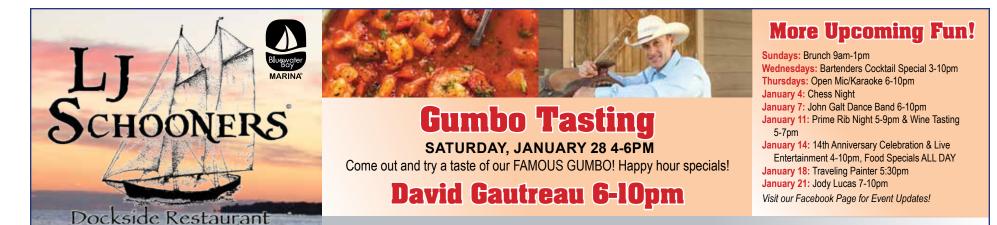


moving the vessel before it deteriorates into a derelict condition will prevent legal ramifications for the vessel owner and will protect Florida's valuable seagrass resources, marine life and human life, safety, and property.

A derelict vessel upon waters of the state is a criminal offense and can carry serious penalties and fines or possible jail time. "Acting now is the best way to prevent legal action from occurring if the vessel becomes derelict," said Phil Horning, VTIP Administrator.

To qualify for VTIP, a vessel must be floating upon waters of the state of Florida and cannot be determined derelict by law enforcement. The owner must have at least one written at-risk warning or citation and possess a clear title to the vessel.

To apply for or view program guidelines, call the FWC Boating and Waterways Division at (850) 488-5600 for more information.



Oyster Bar Hours: Mon.-Tues. Closed, Wed.-Thurs. 3pm-10pm, Fri.-Sat. 11am to midnight, Sun. 9am to 9pm Restaurant Hours: Mon.-Tues. Closed, Weds.-Sat. 11am to 9pm, Sun. 9am to 4pm, Sunday Brunch 9am to 1pm

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## Fort Walton Beach Nining, Entertainment, Specials

Since 1984, AJ's has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" not only on the Destin Harbor, but also in Fort Walton Beach. Two locations serve the freshest seafood, best live music and most exciting water activities in the area.

### AJ's on the Bayou



Located at the base of the Cinco Bayou Bridge in Fort Walton Beach, AJ's on the Bayou is in a beautiful setting offering indoor as well as outdoor seating on the open-air deck overlooking the Cinco Bayou. AJ's on the Bayou serves brunch and bottomless Mimosas with food purchase and weekday lunch specials for \$10.95. Serving up delicious daily specials and entertaining live music all month.

ajsonthebayou.com 200 NE Eglin Pkæy., FWB (850) 226-7579

AJ's Oyster Shanty -Okaloosa Island



Located on Okaloosa Island, AJ's Oyster Shanty serves up fresh seafood, cold oysters and the best live music on the Island. Don't miss the Thursday Prime Dinner Special—enjoy a 10 oz. cut of prime rib served with baked potato and choice of side salad or cup of French onion soup every Thursday at 4 p.m. Combine with live music nightly at 7 p.m. on the outdoor stage and it's a combination you can't resist!

ajsoystershanty.com 108 Santa Rosa Blvd., FWB (850) 226-8108

### HOLI - A Taste of India

Holi is a unique combination of Indian Cuisine and Indian heritage bringing you a variety of dishes from different regions of India. The menu contains both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. For those with pure food indulgence in mind, sate your desires with Holi's ever changing, internationally and



seasonally inspired small plates. Holi not only uses authentic Indian spices, but also customizes the spice level for greater experience. The menu is available online with orders available for takeout or pickup.

holirestaurants.com 280 Eglin Pkwy. NE, FWB (850) 362-6077

### Magnolia Grill

In 2001, Magnolia Grill in

Fort Walton Beach opened its doors after a renovation that took 18 months—and it's been thriving since. A local's favorite dubbed "The Museum That Serves Food," you'll find equal parts museum and dining establishment. Its second floor contains artifacts from World

Continued on next page



Sports

## Velcro Pygmies Headline Seaside School's Taste of the Race February 17

As the familiar sounds of rock and roll from decades past begin to seep from the speakers and the lights slowly rise to bring to life four rock gods that command the stage with a prowess uncommon in today's music industry that leaves the crowd begging for more.

Hailing from Louisville, Ky., the world-famous Velcro Pygmies travel the country from the Emerald Coast to the Great Lakes to share the sights, sounds and stain-washed denim and big hair that's synonymous with the '80s while schooling audiences of all ages on the difference between a rock band and rock show. Simply put, the Velcro Pygmies treat audiences to a genuine, undiluted rock and roll energy that unites every race, creed, age and gender.

Having grown weary of seeing nearly identical bands just staring at their shoes and boring



audiences, the Pygmies - comprised of Cam Flener (Vocals), Chris Eddins (Drums), Chase West (Guitar), and Max War (Bass) - decided to bring back the performance elements of rock music that have since been forgotten. From an energetic frontman, pounding drums and loud guitars, to audience participation complete with glitter and blow pops, the Velcro Pygmies deliver a one-of-a-kind show that could be considered the old Van Halen for a new generation.

As the lead vocalist, Flener is the face of the Pygmies who's adored and revered for his onstage presence. His personality captures and captivates while his ability to take audiences back to their youth keeps bringing them back time after time for a dip in his rock and roll fountain of youth. Eddins also keeps fans enthralled with his unique ever entertaining wit, style, and antics, and wields the drumsticks like a samurai wields a sword. He cuts through the heart and soul of a song with gifted precision and emotion that can be felt throughout the house. West is known as a guitar god, but he's also known to melt hearts with his charming smile and hunger for a cool buzz, fine women, and tasty licks. He will definitely have you screaming your heart out all night long. And finally, War brings a unique look and feel to the Pygmies, rounding out the foursome.

In addition to the high-energy rock show that only the Pygmies could deliver, they also bring a sense of patriotism that's rarely found in today's rock arena. For nearly a decade, the Pygmies have honored military veterans at each show by displaying flags from those wounded in Afghanistan.

Many may say that the Velcro Pygmies are more than just a band, they are a way of life. With well over a thousand shows under their belt and an army of adoring fans, the Pygmies have set the stage to be one of the most sought-after rock and roll cover bands in the country. Their combination of four-part harmonies, catchy songs, and musical skill and talent is something that can't be missed.

The Velcro Pygmies take the stage at Seaside School's Taste of the Race on Friday, Feb. 17, 2023, on the Seaside Lyceum to kick off the Seaside School Half Marathon & 5K Race Weekend. This year's race is themed "Rockstar Run," and the Pygmies' performance is sure to get everyone in the spirit. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit runseasidefl.com.

### DINING

continued from previous page

War II, Vietnam and other segments of American history. And downstairs—is where you'll find lunch favorites such as Meatloaf with Mashed Potatoes, Crabcake with Fettuccine and Shrimp Alfredo Sauce, Red Beans and Rice and many types of burgers, sandwiches, soups and salads. For dinner, we've been told the Italian dishes such



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magnoliagrillfwb.com 157 Brooks Street SE, FWB (850) 812-5761



🐲 Auto

## Is it Time to Purchase for the New Year?

Why this holiday season may be an ideal time to buy that preowned vehicle you've been dreaming about

### By WILL ESTELL

Whether you consider yourself a well versed auto aficionado, or someone who simply desires a dependable and presentable automobile to get around in, it's certainly no secret that both the new and preowned automobile market have been immensely inflated over the past two years. Some of this overvaluation has been due to issues related to the ongoing semiconductor chip shortage, while some - particularly in the used car segment - has been driven by a need for auto dealers with too little inventory to make similar profits while selling fewer cars. This isn't dissimilar to the perils of many other types of businesses in the past three years. However, this is changing, thankfully.

From 2020 to 2022 we quite literally saw used car prices skyrocket more than ever in automobile history, with the average consumer price of a new vehicle in our country increasing by 6.3 percent from the beginning of 2021 to the beginning of 2022 alone. This, in turn, caused the retail price that most consumers were paying for used vehicles to escalate by 7.2 percent during that same one-year period, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's latest consumer price index

All of this means many of us - from dealers to end consumers - have been paying prices that were above previous book value over the past two years. Remember, in simple terms, if the dealer had to buy it high, the dealer had to sell it high – and the truth is, for a while, cars, trucks and SUVs were all trading for well over what their book values could substantiate. There's no reason to feel bad about being one of those people if you did this yourself. However, I hope vou like vour car a lot, because unless you paid for it or decide to toss a wad of money with it in a future trade, you're likely to be stuck with it until it's paid off, something that will most likely haunt the automobile industry by negatively impacting new car sales a few years down the road.

Jump ahead to the third quarter of 2022, and a lot has changed in the auto industry, and much of that is to your fa-

vor, thus, making it a better time to buy than over the past two years. Think of this: only a short year ago people were buying an already depreciating asset, for up to 40 percent above its value, then lenders were actually financing those purchases, based on those inflated numbers. I personally think that's a recipe for disaster that we won't see the impact of for

two to three years, when people attempting to trade in those vehicles find that they still owe 25 percent to 50 percent more than any dealer or private party would be willing to pay for it. But that's a discussion for an entirely different article, and one not quite as upbeat and positive as gifting yourself or your loved one with a new car this holiday season.

In the short term, those inflated sales prices of the past two years, combined with supply and demand issues, began to push the actual book values up, too – not to the amount the cars were being sold for, but some. This was because many valuation analysis tools such as NADA and KBB (National Auto Dealers Association, and Kelley Blue Book) are at least partially built upon the averages of current sales transactions, as reported by consumer reporting agencies and automobile dealers around the country. However, it is now a fact that prices have been coming down at the major auctions for close to six months as of this writing, and though it takes a while for the dealer pricing to catch up to the auction and wholesale trends (in terms of what they paid for their current inventory) we are now seeing the results of substantially lower prices (which also affect real book values that are also trending downward from what they were for the same vehicles six months or a year ago) at the retail level.

Over the last four months of 2022, we've seen wholesale pricing of almost all pre-owned cars drop considerably around the country. This means that consumers should see those 10-15 percent reductions passed on,



with retail pricing already showing signs of tremendously trending downward in major metropolitan markets where more people want more cars, along with more dealerships needing to sell cars, often keeps the prices most competitive. This is exactly why this holiday season may be a much better time to negotiate that 'best price deal' than any time in the past two years would have been.

As of this October used vehicle prices were down 10.3 percent from a year ago, according to The Manheim Used Vehicle Index. The wholesale price of used luxury brands is getting hit the hardest and is down 13.5 percent from this same time last year. This is exactly why buying

a three- to five-year old Audi, BMW or Mercedes - even at a good price - is often less expensive than even buying a preowned Tovota, Honda or Genesis of the same year, class size and mileage. Preowned SUV prices are down 12.3 percent for the same period, and pickup trucks have now dropped in price by almost 9 percent over the past 12 months.

All of this represents what I see as a definite bright light at the end of the proverbial car buying tunnel, if you're in the market to buy this holiday season or going into the new year. Having the knowledge of these industry pricing trends can positively affect your ability to close your best deal possible on your

next automobile purchase. Remember, car buying isn't like buying clothing, furniture or the food you eat. Almost everything is somewhat negotiable in the world of used automobiles. Whether you're buying a F250 King Ranch, a 911 GT3, or a 4Runner, do your homework. Know the real value of the vehicle you're considering buying. Check the prices for the same vehicle in other markets. And if you have a vehicle to trade, know what the NADA and KBB average dealer trade in is, and ask for that price for your trade. The only thing better than putting that perfect vehicle under your tree, is knowing you also gifted yourself with a smart buy while doing it.

Will Estell is a writer, editor, producer and entrepreneur with more than 500 published features and numerous online articles in an array of genres. Over the past 25 years, Will has been instrumental in founding 12 new magazine titles, as well as serving as editor in chief for numerous others. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his wife, ABC 3 news anchor Laura Hussey Estell



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### > Wellness



By Lisa Turpin, Health & Wellness Coach

Hard to believe 2022 is coming to an end. But, "(musical notes?) It's - THE - most - wonderful time of the year (musical notes?) There'll be parties for hosting, marshmallows for toasting... and...be of good cheer... (musical notes?) It's the most WONDERFUL time of the year..." This means a very good possibility for weight gain and unhealthy habits. Sorry for the negative spin.

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you smile?

you don't have to throw in the towel. If you add more cheer, get in high gear, you can be active and burn calories into the New Year! Decide and commit to movement of any kind. Burning off calories will make you feel less guilt, but will help with your mood, energy, and stamina also to get through the parties and shopping and anything your family or friends throw your way.

Hydrate: As we enjoy more "cheer," we also have a potential to become dehydrated. Drinking water will make you feel less hungry and content, so a glass before you head to the cocktail dinner will help, and can prevent a hangover. It's never a good idea to withhold yourself from enjoying Christmas; just be smart. When you are able, drink water and eat veggies and lean meat to counterbalance the negative ef-



fects of the holiday. Focus on the higher percentage of your intake from healthy food.

Get moving, preferably daily, but at least two to three days a week. Our area has plenty of choices to be active. If outside activities become too chilly, pick a gym (join me @ Destin Health and Fitness), small group or individual personal training. If you want to stay home, here are eight in-home bodyweight exercises you can do whenever you have time. (3 sets/20 reps) It's actually easy to be active; you just have to decide to. Toodle-oo 2022.

Be Active, Stay, Active! **Wide Squats:** Knees and toes turned out, lower down sitting back with weight in the heals, keeping your shoulders back, head and chest up. When coming back up engage the glutes for extra benefit.

**Push-ups:** If you can't perform a full pushup on your hands and toes, then put your knees down and see if you can get your chest all the way to the floor. You can also do them at the kitchen counter.

**Lunges:** Either walking (moving across the room) or stationary (staying in one position and lowering down and up).

**Tricep Dips:** Find a coffee table or sturdy chair, facing out, sit with your hands on each side of your hips, slide your hips off the table, using your arms, lower your body down and up, bending elbows to about 90 degree angle.

**Prone Hyperextensions** 

LisaTurpinFitness

with Back Fly: Lying face down, arms making a T, lift only upper body off the floor while flying your arms back, pinching your shoulder blades together. Exhale as you lift.

**Double Leg Lifts:** (for abs) Lie on your back with your hands under your glutes so that it tilts your hips and helps anchor your lower back. Bend your knees to your chest, then straighten legs pointing your toes to the ceiling. Lower your legs about 45° and back up.

**Plank Series:** 1) Windmills: start in regular plank and open to side plank and switch to the other side plank and alternate side to side. 2) Elbow Plank to Pike: (i.e. yoga dolphin) from an elbow plank, push hips up as high as you can. 3) Plank hold: hands or elbows – hold for as long as you can or set a timer.

**Hip Bridges:** Lying on back knees bent feet flat on the floor, lift your hips off the floor as high as you can and lower back down slowly, barely brushing the floor between reps.

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fitness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/ Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation. Have a fitness question for Lisa? Email BeActive850@gmail.com.



850-974-2005

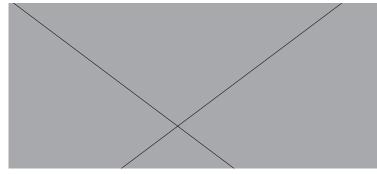
## White-Wilson Community Foundation Provides Special Olympics Athletes With Free Sports Physicals

The White-Wilson Community Foundation partnered with Special Olympics Florida to provide free sports physicals to local athletes throughout Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties recently at White-Wilson Medical Center's main campus in Fort Walton Beach.

Volunteers from White-Wilson Medical Center conducted the routine physicals for nearly 30 athletes in need of renewal to ensure they may continue to benefit from Special Olympics training and competition. "The Foundation is thrilled for this opportunity to provide support to members of our community with intellectual disabilities," said Teresa Halverson, Chair of the Board of Directors. "By providing these physicals, we're ensuring that Special Olympic athletes in our area can share their talents and practice active, healthy lifestyles."

Halverson continued, "We strive to provide meaningful opportunities to bolster the health and wellness of everyone in our community. Thanks to Special Olympics Florida and White-Wilson Medical Center, we were able to make that happen today."

Cydnee Parsley, Director of Health, Fitness and Inclusive



White-Wilson Medical Center health care providers Kathy Stuart, APRN, Dr. Melissa Chrites, Paul Tartarilla, APRN, Gary Mousseau, PA-C, and Jared Hobbs, PA-C conducted sports physicals for Special Olympics Florida.

Strategies at Special Olympics Florida said, "Special Olympics serves children and adults with intellectual and developmental

disabilities. We offer more than 20 different Olympic-type sports that athletes are able to train and compete in year-round." Parsley continued, "This is an incredible service to the community, and we're very grateful for the support of The White-Wilson Community Foundation."

This was the first partnership between Special Olympics Florida and The White-Wilson Community Foundation, but the Foundation aims to offer similar events moving forward.

For more information about The White-Wilson Community Foundation and to stay up to date on future events, visit whitewilsoncommunityfoundtion.org or call 850-863-8204.

## White-Wilson Grants Promote Health, Fitness

The White-Wilson Community Foundation works to build partnerships that improve access to health services and care for underserved individuals in the community. Through its community health grant program, it presented Fresh Start for Children and Families Inc. and Mental Health Association of Okaloosa Walton Inc. with grants on Nov. 9 at their facilities.

"Our grant program is de-

signed to help nonprofit health organizations make unique and powerful programs like these possible, and bringing groups together to bridge gaps in health care is at the core of what we do," said Teresa Halverson, The White-Wilson Community Foundation Chair.

With the grant, Fresh Start plans to provide a one-time Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) training for its team and the teams of other homeless agencies in the area including Children in Crisis, Opportunity Place and One Hopeful Place.

"Our goal is to give staff the

Continued on page 26



## The Origins of Hormone Restoration



#### BY RICHARD CHERN, M.D.

Hormone therapy can be traced back over 2000 years when the Chinese isolated pituitary and sex hormones for medicinal purposes. The hormones had not been identified, but the benefits were already known. Of course, many discoveries have occurred since then and today we are not only treating symptoms but also using hormones to improve our overall health.

Health problems associated with hormonal imbalances can go on for years, often undetected by both patients and their physicians. Increased risk of cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and osteoporosis are only some of the problems associated with hormonal imbalances. And, like high cholesterol, you can't "feel" any of these to know you have a problem. Instead, you must get tested.

To make things more difficult, the symptoms of andropause, menopause, and hypothyroidism are often so slow to occur that we discard them as part of the aging process. Fortunately, at The Hormone Restoration Center, we know what most of these symptoms are and can screen for them to see if there is a potential hormonal imbalance.

There are a number of symptoms associated with hormone imbalances to help identify those at higher risk. Symptoms can include fatigue, depression, weight gain, decreased libido, joint pain, poor memory, mood swings, low stamina, and sexual dysfunction

are just a few.

If you have ANY of the above symptoms, you should complete a symptom checklist and get tested. These symptoms are an indication that you may need treatment.

After identifying an imbalance, physicians and non-physicians may use pills, creams, supplements, tonics, and much more.

At The Hormone Restoration Center we use what we consider to be the best of the best. We use bioidentical BioTE hormones which means the hormones are identical to what our body produces. That way the key fits the lock exactly as it should

The BioTE method uses hormone optimization created from hundreds of studies using hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide to successfully optimize the hormone levels of women and men once their body's production is no longer sufficient. Surprisingly, our bodies can stop producing sufficient hormones in our early thirties or before.

As shown in different studies, Hormone replacement therapy has been shown to reduce fatigue, improve sleep, improve libido in women and sexual performance in men, decrease muscle loss, reduce body fat, and reduce irritability, anxiety and depression. Also, the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are significantly reduced.

Long term, men and women will have a reduced incidence of Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Also, multiple studies show a long term reduction in breast cancer. Testosterone and estradiol also improve lipid profiles, reduce triglycerides, and increase HDL cholesterol which can have positive benefits on the cardiovascular system. Therapeutic testosterone levels can also protect the body from diabetes, prostate cancer, and all-cause mortality.

Hormone replacement therapy by pellet implantation has been used with success in the United States, Europe and Australia since 1938, and has been found to be superior to other methods of hormone delivery.

All the practitioners at The Hormone Restoration Center are BioTE certified and have had extensive clinical and didactic training specific to the treatment of hormonal imbalances. This is to ensure the highest safety, efficacy, and results for our patients. More than 96% of patients are satisfied with treatment when using BioTE.

Dr Richard Chern, MD is a Certified BioTE provider in Miramar Beach at The Hormone Restoration Center. He has been seeing patients for over 25 years and treating patients using hormones for nearly as long. Dr Chern is currently accepting new patients and you can call for an appointment at 850-837-1271.

For more info on BioTE and The Hormone Restoration Center please contact visit www.TheHormoneRestorationCenter.com

# **Enjoying This Holiday Season**

BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT

We all know that the word 'healthy' gets rescheduled to Jan. 1 during this season. We're not

ready to relinquish our favorite recipes for a healthier option. My recommendation in the arena of food and sweets during this season: Be present and aware of

how much you eat and savor every bite.

Now, let's take a different look at having a healthy holiday season. Health does not only consist

Remember

of physical sustenance. It also includes our emotional state, and the holiday season tends to run our feelings and emotions through the obstacle course.

In my research for this article I discovered that I have been living with sadness and the physical effects are surfacing. Joy, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, happiness, frustration, apprehension, etc., can all be experienced during the holidays. Whatever you experience during this special season of hope and giving, being mindful of our emotional state can improve our health and our holiday season.

Sadness can involve feelings of despair, loss, anger, sorrow or

Continued on page 26





**Three Years In A Row!** Thank you Destin!

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**Insights for Investors** 

Page 25

By Maurice Stouse, Financial Advisor and Branch Manager

As one year closes out and another one begins, we have some thoughts for our clients on things to review and consider.

#### First: Know What you Own

We suggest it is a good idea to review your assets, stocks, bonds, cash, real estate, business interests and family interests, among others.

### Second: Know Where you Own It

It is a good idea to conduct an inventory of all your assets and where they are held.

#### Third: Know How You Own It

Is the account taxable or tax deferred? Is it a retirement asset (401k, IRA, pension or other retirement asset)?

Also, do all your assets have a beneficiary?

Many people want their families to avoid the probate process if possible. Having a beneficiary on as many assets as possible is a common practice. Some might find that using a living or revocable trust is an effective way to ensure that assets pass directly and avoid probate. Single people, be they widows or widowers, might want to review how their home is titled and to give some thought to how that asset will pass upon their death.

Next, we suggest you think about what your estate plan is. Whether you have a formal plan or not, you do have an estate plan. Formalizing it might make sense:

Chief among these is to have a will. It usually makes sense to at the very least have a will. It is often a good idea to also have a power of attorney in place (we suggest a durable power of attorney, which takes effect if you are physically or mentally incapacitated. Note, those cease at passing). Also, an advanced medical directive for family, friends and loved ones to carry out your wishes if necessary. That would include things such as a do not resuscitate order for your caretakers.

Next, what is your long-term care plan?

Whether formalized or not, everyone has a long-term care plan. Will it be workable for you and your family is the question. Long-term care can come in the form of insurance (be it a term policy for pay as you go, or the increasingly popular asset based long term care insurance). Many people want to be able to rely upon family so it is a good idea to perhaps formalize that and to learn what support and benefits might be available to them (for example, some states are allowing family members to apply for payment, through Medicaid, for providing in-home care for a family member). Most people will need some form of longterm care and the need grows for most people in their last two or three years of life.

Also consider if you have a permanent source of income at retirement

It is a good practice to go to ssa.gov and get updated on what your Social Security benefits are scheduled to be. Also, do you have a pension (most estimates are that fewer than 15 percent of private sector workers have these anymore)? Perhaps you have deferred annuities that can pay you and or a beneficiary income for a lifetime.

Do you have a protected or conservative source of cash on which to draw for emergencies and opportunities?

Is that cash in the bank, a money market mutual fund, or CDs? For some it might be cash value life insurance which we feel is best left as a strategic reserve particularly if you are taking an income stream from your investments. That way you can shield yourself from the effects of the sequence of returns (which means you are taking more of your principal in down years and might run out of that source sooner than expected). We feel most retirees, or those needing a consistent source of income should not ever tap into principal.

It is considered a good practice to review and perhaps update all things as they pertain



to your wealth and your health periodically or at the very least to go through this exercise on a yearly basis. Here at The First Wealth Management, we look forward to helping you review and discuss and perhaps help you find solutions.

Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management and Raymond James. Main office located at First Florida Bank, a division of The First, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32451, with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City; 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com.

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### Your usual?

Familiarity bias means sticking with what you know – but there may be a lot that you don't. Familiarity might be playing a role in some of your decisions.

### Think Before You Act

To help you keep familiarity from overly influencing your financial plan: • Don't confuse awareness with understanding or expertise. Rely on objective research. • Take the time to consider your motivations for selecting certain investments or strategies. • Don't rule out an investment or financial strategy because it's foreign to you.

Call us to schedule a meeting anytime to receive the objective insight you need to make important decisions surrounding your wealth.



Maurice Stouse

**Financial Advisor** 

The First Wealth Management A Division of The First Bank, NA 2000 Ninety Eight Palms Blvd. Destin, FL 32541

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Amy Parrish Financial Advisor

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## Step One Automotive Group Receives Florida DOE Commissioner's Business Recognition Award

Step One Automotive Group has been named a recipient of the Florida Department of Education's 2022 Commissioner's Business Recognition Award. The award recognizes Florida's business leaders and partners that have shown the most commitment to bringing positive change and implementing bold, innovative approaches to improve the academic performance of students in Florida's education system and communities. These educational connections help Florida school districts gain a competitive edge in providing enhanced services to the students they serve.

"It is such an honor for us to receive this recognition. At Step One, giving back is in our DNA. Especially when it comes to children and education. Because the truth is one of those children could change the world one day. And if we can help them find that path even in the smallest way then that's all that matters to us." said Maureen Bierman, Step One Automotive Group Director of Marketing and Communications.

Each school district is encouraged to nominate a worthy business that provides educational support in areas of civics, literacy, career & technical education, school safety, STEM/ STEAM education, college readiness, and family involvement to students and educators within their community. Step One Automotive Group is recognized along with Lakewood Ranch Rotary Books for Kids in Manatee County and Ocean Bank in Miami-Dade County. Step One Automotive Group is the only Okaloosa County recipient of the award this year.

Step One Automotive Group recently celebrated its first five years in business. Prioritizing local community initiatives and fostering a service-oriented company culture in its dealerships remain at the forefront of the company's mission. Step One partners with charitable organizations including the HSU Foundation, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, Saving with Soul Pet Rescue, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, local military groups, and many more.

For more information about this year's winners visit https:// www.floridaeducationfoundation.org/cbra2020

### WHITE-WILSON

continued from page 23

tools needed to handle the mental and emotional health effects our clients are experiencing," said Donna Tashik, executive director of Fresh Start. "This learning solution will benefit those in our community in a holistic and practical way, and we're thrilled to deliver it."

Additionally, Mental Health Association plans to use the



grant to continue its Psychiatric Prescription Purchase Program (PPPP), which will provide mental health consults and emergency medications to over 300 people throughout Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton counties.

The White-Wilson Community Foundation is a 501(C)(3) organization established in 2012 and dedicated to making a difference through passion, dedication and teamwork. The group believes it is essential to find and fund creative solutions that can provide services with health and wellness needs.

For more information on The White-Wilson Community Foundation and its grant program, visit whitewilsoncommunityfoundation.org or visit its Facebook page.

### **ENJOYING**

continued from page 24

defeat. It can make us outspoken and highly sensitive to any situation. The negative effects on overall health can include constipation, diarrhea, chest pain, dry mouth, back pain, fatigue, headache, HBP or heart palpitations. It can also affect our appetite, sex drive, and lead to anxiety.

JOY on the other hand promotes a healthier lifestyle, boosts the immune system, fights stress and pain and supports longevity. Joy releases serotonin and dopamine in the brain (two types of neurotransmitters and heavily associated with happiness), helps us to solve problems, think more clearly and aids in fighting disease.

Laughing can bring on joy. It decreases pain, improves the heart and lungs and helps muscles relax. So, when your feel-



ings and emotions begin to go a bit wacky, stop and take time to write down what you are grateful for. And if it's the "other person" who's experiencing these emotions, take time to remember why you love and care about them.

A few things I am grateful for: the sunshine on my face, a comfy bed, ocean waves and the privilege I have for being able to share with all of you each month information that can help you live a healthier and grateful life.

Have a fabulous New Year. Our community is better because you're here. To Happiness and Health

~ Kay Leaman, Health Architect, succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

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For over a decade, Matthew Vanderford has worked in the Construction, Restoration and Insurance Industries as an Insurance Company Preferred Vendor, Insurance Industry Continuing Education Instructor, Public Adjuster/ Policy Holder Advocate and Licensed Contractor. He's proud to call Destin his home, with his wife Candice and four children: Matthew, Blake, Jordan and Scarlett.

Have Questions about Property Damage or Insurance Policies? Call Us: (850) 684-4794 You could have it answered in one our columns.

## **SimpleHR Celebrates a Milestone**

Local employee management solution company, SimpleHR, celebrates a milestone with 20 years in business. Wellknown as a "Best in Class" provider of payroll, human resources, benefits administration and workers' compensation, SimpleHR is a five-time earner of the annual Best Companies To Work For In Florida list by Florida Trend magazine. The people-centric business is driven by a team of committed and certified professionals.

"At our deepest core, our people differentiate us from other companies. While other competitors have shifted their service model primarily toward I.T. utilization, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to having our team of humans deliver service to our clients. We are so very thankful for their efforts and for their experience," said Bill Lindsley, president of SimpleHR

The numbers back it up with more than 47 percent of the SimpleHR team having more than five years of service; 35 percent have 10 years and 27 percent have 15. The company is led by the original founding members, and continues to focus on client service and community support. SimpleHR has evolved over the last two decades in response to customers' changing business needs and industry demands. The company was instrumental to clients' survival during the COVID-19 crisis.

Plans for the next 20 years are underway with the expansion of SimpleHR's business campus, technology infrastructure advancement, enhanced service offerings, and continued team development.

For more information about SimpleHR visit SimpleHR. com.

wanted to be a guitar player

once upon a time, but he was



BY SEAN DIETRICH

10:40 P.M.-New Year's Eve. Hank Williams is on my radio. My wife is sleeping in the passenger seat. My coonhound is in the backseat.

To bring in the year, we've gone for a drive on county roads that weave along the Choctawhatchee Bay.

There are no cars out. The highway is vacant-except for police cruisers. I've never welcomed in a year like this.

As a boy, my father and I brought in holidays with shotguns. We'd march to the edge of creation and fire twelve gauges at the moon. Then, I'd sip Coca-Cola; he'd sip something clear.

Another year goes by without him.

11:02 P.M.—my tank is on E. I stop at a gas station. The pump card-reader is broken. My wife is still out cold.

I go inside to pay. The clerk is a young girl with purple hair. She wanted to be with her kids tonight, but someone called in with a sinus infection.

I buy a Coca-Cola in a plastic bottle.

I also buy a scratch-off lotto ticket. The last few minutes of the year, I'm feeling lucky. I use my keys to scratch the ticket. I win five bucks. So, I buy another two. I win another dollar.

"Lucky you," the cashier says. "Wish I could buy one, but it's against store policy."

To hell with policy. It's New Year's Eve.

I buy her one.

She swipes a coin from the take-a-penny tray. She scratches. She wins ten bucks. We highfive.

It's only ten bucks, but seeing her win makes my year.

11:28 P.M.-I'm driving. My wife is still sawing pinelogs. I'm riding though the North Florida woods, sipping Coke. Trees grow so high you can't see the moon. It's almost like poetry.

Long ago, my college professor told us to choose a poem to recite in class. Students chose lofty selections from the greats. Whitman, Dickinson, Frost.

I consulted Daddy's Hank Williams songbook. He'd given it to me before he died. He'd

## Sean of the South

god-awful. He gave the instrument to me.

I recited, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and made a D. I wasn't doing it for the teach-

er. 11:40 P.M.-my Coke is almost empty. I'm parked on the edge of the bay to watch fireworks. My coonhound is looking at me with red eyes. And I'm writing you, just like I do every day.

Listen, I don't remember

how I started writing, or why. I have nothing valuable to say, I don't know any big words, and I'm as plain as they come. But I won't lie to you, it has been precious to me. And so have you.

These are my last words of the old year, my first words of the new:

I love you. Happy New Year.



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I Wish By Sean Dietrich

I wish I understood more.

But sometimes, I wish I understood less,

I wish I had more,

I don't; thank goodness.

I wish more people said, "I'm sorry,"

That's a weakness, I know.

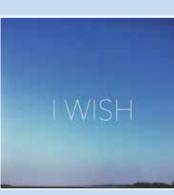
But I wish that they said it, just the same,

Instead of, "I told you so." Above all, I wish love,

To you, your family, friends, and life,

I pray you kiss your kids, and your dogs,

And hopefully even your wife.



Friend, I'm a lot like you, And we're a lot like every woman and man.

We got a hell of a lot wrong last year, God knows,

But tomorrow, we start over again.

Happy New Year.

## A Pastor's Ponderings: Imagination



#### By Rick Moore

Albert Einstein said, "The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination." He also said, "If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales." He added, "Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere. It is hard to force young people to excel in math and science. Yet, if you inspire them to make a rocket that takes people back and forth to Mars, suddenly, those same young people have a desire to learn math and science.

My wife used to work in the theme park industry. We lived in Orlando for eleven years, and enjoyed learning how many of the creative projects were produced. In Orlando you can find magical kingdoms that make fairy tales seem real, and walk through real worlds that are transformed into fairy tales. Engineers are often referred to as imagineers because they do more than construct. They bring new worlds to life, and transport visitors to dreamlands and utopias. Guests are willing to enter a mindset where suspension of disbelief is the norm. Through the use of forced perception, costume characters, music, special effects, and state of the art technology, theme parks become incubators for our imagination. Unfortunately, we can not always live as guests in a theme park. We have to find ways to spark our imagination, even when our environments are not always conducive to such thinking.

Before television was invented, families used to gather around the radio. Listeners



could not see what was happening, so they used their imagination. They couldn't see the football player score a touchdown. They didn't see the batter hit the home run. They couldn't see the alien that was destroying the city. These events may have looked a bit different in the mind of each listener, but no visual effects were needed. In many ways, because they were forced to use their imagination, the visualizations in their minds were bigger and better than any special effects film could possibly be.

Not only does imagination foster inspiration, but inspiration fosters hope. We are not talking about hype. We are talking about hope. We must be much more concerned about squashing the dreams of others than we are about injecting a dose of realism into a situation. If a young lady tells you she wants to become President of the United States one day, please do not let your first response be to tell her the odds are about one out of three hundred million she can win. By its very definition, hope is an optimistic state of mind, not a realistic one. Hope is based on the expectation of a positive outcome.

One of the most inspirational stories I've ever known is that of football player Shaquem Griffin. Even though Shaquem only had one hand, he played Division I NCAA Football at UCF, led his team to an undefeated season, and then went on to play in the NFL for the Seattle Seahawks. The coolest part of his story is he now spends his time assisting retired players, providing guidance and support for whatever they might be going through. Who would have ever imagined a person with only one hand could make it to the NFL? He did. What an imagination!

Perhaps the most inspirational story of this year is that of Jane "Nightbirde" Marczewski. Jane inspired millions while singing her original song "It's OK" on America's Got Talent. It is one of the most viewed videos of the year. I can't watch it without crying. Jane died of cancer shortly after her Golden Buzzer performance. Here is what her family said: "Her lasting legacy will be the gift of hope she gave to so many through her music and the strength she found in Jesus." Imagination is needed to discover new worlds. Imagination is needed to invent the latest gadget. But sometimes, imagination is needed most, just to be able to say, "It's OK."

Rick Moore is Communication Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.



By Anna Fisher, Associate ARTISTIC & EDUCATION DIRECTOR, EMERALD COAST THEATRE COMPANY

Shoulder pads, Aqua Net bangs, and neon blazers only came in large and extra large, and President Ronald Reagan dominated the media. Anytime you turned on the radio, you either got rick rolled or serenaded by Whitney Houston. It was also the year that playwright Robert Harling gifted the world with the timeless story of "Steel Magnolias" in a successful three-year off Broadway run from 1987-1990.

Harling wrote the play as a tribute to his late sister Susan, who died in 1985 of complications due to diabetes. The playwright based the small town and its inhabitants on his own home town of Natchitoches, La., and insisted that the 1989 film version be produced there as well.

Some of the best one liners ever spoken originated with this play. Eternally grumpy Oiuser

quips, "Don't try to get on my good side ... I no longer have one" and "I'm not crazy...I've just been in a very bad mood for 40 years."

Then there's Clairee, our southern magnolia with a razor sharp wit who observes, "The only thing that separates us from the animals is our ability to

accessorize." You will have a chance to experience all of this southern sass, humor and heartache on February 24-March 5th when Steel Magnolias opens at Emerald Coast Theatre Company.

We are very excited to welcome back UWF professor, playwright and steel magnolia Marci Duncan as director for this classic girl's-night-out show.

But don't wait until February to visit ECTC! You can catch Marci on stage in January in Dissonance, a new work she



has written and produced in collaboration with Kerry Sandell. Other great January shows include Odd Couple with Jason Hedden and Nathanael Fisher making another appearance on stage together, The Last Five Years featuring Rebeca Lake and Carl Hendin, and our very own Shirley Simpson as funny gal Minnie Pearl. Other storyteller events in February and March include The Flight of Jackie Cochran performed

by local playwright and actress Nancy Hasty, and Bruce Collier is back with his spot on one man show Winston Churchill: Through the Storm. Winter at

ECTC stays warm with The Golden Age of Hollywood Valentine's Day cabaret fundraiser as well. We have everything you need to fight the two (maybe three) months of cold winter blues we have here on the Emerald Coast.

As Clairee says, "If you can't say anything nice about anybody, come sit by me." There's no better place than Emerald Coast Theatre Company to catch a show and catch up with friends. If you don't make time for that, well, bless your heart.

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## Paradise Promotions of The Emerald Coast and Life Media Present the Paradise **Music Festival**

greatest EAGLES tribute bands in America is coming to the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center February 18, 2023. The concert event will feature four hours of fantastic, nostalgic, classic music from two of the best bands in America. Doors open at 2 p.m. with the first band, PAR-ADISE BAYOU playing your favorite Classic Country, Rock and Roll and Motown dance tunes from 4:30 to 6 p.m. as they bring The ISLAND DANCE PARTY to Fort Walton Beach. From 7 to 9 p.m., the 7 BRIDGES Eagles Tribute Band will take the stage and thrill the fans with one of the absolute best ultimate Eagles experiences in America. This event will also have 12 to 15 vendors offering T-shirts, and other collectibles, as

7 BRIDGES, one of the well as Corporate Business Vendors with information and special offers on all their products and services. After you check in before the bands start, and during breaks, you will have time to browse the vendor and food sections and get some great bargains, food and beverages featuring festival food such as snow cones, cotton candy, specialty popcorn, sandwiches, chips, desserts, sodas, water, tea and alcoholic beverages.

More Information and TICKETS ON SALE NOW at www.ParadisePromotions-FL.com. General Admission seats: \$25 in advance and \$30 at the door. Reserved Table Seats are \$40 to \$50, VIP, upfront seats with a meal and a T-Shirt are \$75. We expect this event to be sold out. So, get your tickets early.



### Arts & Music

## Sinfonia Gulf Coast Presents Get Happy

Sinfonia Gulf Coast welcomes back two Broadway stars, Morgan James and Nicholas Rodriguez, for "Get Happy: A Judy Garland Centennial Celebration" Saturday, Jan. 21. at 7:30 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center in Destin.

James replaces Jessica Vosk who was originally cast in the lead role.

The exciting multimedia component showcases rare interviews and vintage footage of "The Judy Garland Show," with some never-before-seen outtakes featuring Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra.

Judy Garland (1922-1969) was an American actress widely known for playing Dorothy Gale in "The Wizard of Oz" (1939). She attained international stardom as an actress in both musical and dramatic roles, as a recording artist and on the concert stage. Renowned for her versatility, she received an Academy Juvenile Award, a Golden Globe Award, and a Special Tony Award. Garland was the first woman to win the



Grammy Award for Album of the Year, which she won for her 1961 live recording titled "Judy at Carnegie Hall."

"Who doesn't like a legend like Judy Garland?" asks Sinfonia Gulf Coast Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller. "This is a great production because it showcases the string section of the orchestra and a jazz band along with superstar vocalist Morgan James with a bonus of Nicholas Rodriguez in a supporting role. You will feel as though you are seeing Judy Garland singing live with the orchestra."

Morgan James is a Juilliard-trained singer, actress, songwriter, and recording artist in New York City. On Broadway, James was in five back-toback original companies: "The



Addams Family," "Wonderland," "Godspell," and "Motown: The Musical," and as a guest at Kristin Chenoweth's "For The Girls." She recently co-produced and starred in an all-female concept recording of Jesus Christ Superstar entitled "She Is Risen."

Nicholas Rodriguez has had an extensive career on Broadway ("Tarzan"), Off Broadway

"The Toxic Avenger: The Musical," "Almost Heaven: Songs of John Denver," Death for Five Voices) and film ("Sex and the City 2"). He recently toured the U.S. as Captain Georg Von Trapp in "The Sound of Music" and traveled the world on tours of "Jesus Christ Superstar" (Jesus), "Evita" (Che) and "Hair" (Claude) among others.

Both performers have appeared live on stage in original solo performances to raise funds for Sinfonia Gulf Coast.

Tickets range from \$30-\$55 for adults. Active-duty military are from \$20-\$30 and student tickets are \$15-\$20. Premier Preferred seats (\$55 per person) at a table of 10 in a club-inspired dinner theater atmosphere. Preferred regular seating starts at \$45 per person. Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its education and community engagement initiatives throughout Northwest Florida. Purchase tickets online at SinfoniaGulf-Coast.org or by calling the box office at (850) 460-8800.



### Arts & Music

## Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Awards 29 Artists in the **27th Annual Festival of the Arts**

The 27th Annual Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) Festival of the Arts, held Oct. 29 and 30 in the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin, featured exhibits of more than 100 artists from across the United States showcasing a diverse palette of artistic styles in nearly 20 different art mediums.

"Marking 27 years is a testament to how important the arts are to our community and a direct reflection of the talented participating artists, musicians, food vendors, board members and volunteers — all beautifully managed by our incredible festival producer Deb Nissley," said MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller.

Guest judges Anna Killian Cavnar, artist and adjunct faculty member at Pensacola State College, and Dan Taylor, artist and art advocate of Tallahassee, awarded 29 ribbons and cash prizes. Recognizing artists whose work reflected exceptional talent and craftsmanship, the judges awarded "Best in Show," three Awards of Excellence, five Awards of Merit and 10 Judges' Recognition Awards.

Best in Show artist Curtis Whitwam was born and raised in Tampa. A two-time Festival of the Arts winner, Whitman expresses his love for waterways and wildlife. "I love to share the feeling of deep connection to nature through watercolor paintings and underwater videos that I create to inspire everyone to get outside and appreciate the beauty and abundance of wild Florida," he said.

The Best in Show adult winner of the Collaborative Art

Exhibit was Julie Miles Gaffney of Santa Rosa Beach for her patriotic mixed media piece. The Best in Show student winner was Rayna Lowery from Fort Walton Beach High School. The Collaborative Art Exhibit features adults and students competing for the Special McIlroy Awards in honor of the late Patricia McIlroy, Destin's First Lady, and an MKAF advocate and patron.



LUNCH WITH SPECIAL GUEST: WENDY RODRIGUE MAGNUS

Step into the magical and colorful world of George Rodrigue's "Loup-garou" or Blue Dog, featuring original artwork from Wendy's private collection, paired with the culinary masterpieces of Chef Jack McGuckin of Bijoux Restaurant + Spirits in Miramar Beach. Laissez le bons temps roulez!

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