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Postal Customer Local

Get Your Pirate On at the 67th Annual Billy Bowlegs Festival!

By Lori Leath Smith

Ahoy, maties! Avast, ye! It's time to open your treasure chest, get your eyepatch on, take out your sword and get your pirate gear ready for 2023's 67th Annual Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival—May 18-22.

This is the second year the festival has been established on its new dates (the weekend after Mother's Day), but Pirate Captain Billy Bowlegs has been setting his sights on our sandy white shores since the 1950s! As all you landlubbers know, it's been Captain Billy's mission to take control of the fair seas near Fort Walton Beach since then. Will we prevail in keeping the dastardly pirate crew from gaining a foothold along our sands?

Produced in partnership with the William Augustus Bowles Foundation, the Krewe of Bowlegs, the City of Fort Walton Beach, the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses and community



Queen's Lackey Bill Wendel, Captain's Lackey Diane Baughman, Captain Billy Bowlegs LXVII James Baughman, Queen of Bowlegs LXVII Amy Wendel, First Mistress Amy McBride, and First Mate Bobby McBride

organizations, since 1954, the festival's purpose has been to promote business and tourism, and showcase our beautiful Emerald Coast community.

join us for

200 EGLIN PKWY NE

FT. WALTON BEACH

Each year, a new "Captain Billy" plays the part of the fun and not-so-horrible pirate hoodlum. This year, Fort Walton Beach native

others Day Brunc

Show mom how much you love her with brunch & bottomless mimosas! Sunday, May 14

On the

ayou







James Baughman takes the helm as Captain Billy Bowlegs LXVII. He and his wife, Diane Wyman Baughman, also born and raised in the Fort Walton Beach area, were high school sweethearts. "We

> BILLY BOWLEGS continued on page 2

> > 850-226-7579

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World's Largest Lionfish Tournament to be held in Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Okaloosa County Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is celebrating the 5th Annual Lionfish Removal & Awareness Festival on May 20-21 at the Destin Harbor. Lionfish are an invasive species that prey on native fish with no known predators due to their venomous spines. The Emerald Coast Open (ECO) tournament is a key component that helps mitigate the growing lionfish threat in the Gulf of Mexico. "We are fortunate to have a Coastal Resources Division in our community, focused on awareness and reducing the population of this invasive species," said Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners Chairman Mel Ponder. FWB Life is looking forward to an exciting 2023 tournament!

"The success of this annual event

LIONFISH continued on page 18





The community

BILLY BOWLEGS

continued from page 1

always looked forward to the Bowlegs treasure hunt clues that would appear in what was then the Playground Daily News, and to the Torchlight Parade," they recall. "As someone who grew up in Fort Walton Beach with the Billy Bowlegs Festival, I never imagined I would one day be Captain Billy. I am humbled and honored to have this opportunity to serve the Krewe and the community," James said.



Captain Billy Bowlegs LXVII James Baughman and Queen of Bowlegs LXVII Amy Wendel

James is joined this year by the 67th Queen of Bowlegs, Amy Wendel and her husband, Bill. Also on board are the 67th First Mate and First Mistress of Bowlegs, Bobby and Amy Mc-Bride. Ten additional couples form Captain Billy's Honor Guard and round out the group known this year as the 'Krewe in Black.'

James, along with his 'Krewe in Black,' was "unveiled" as this year's new Captain Billy back in June '22 at the 67th Krewe of Bowlegs Coronation Pageant held at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center at Northwest Florida State College. He feels being a new "Captain Billy" is an honor and a responsibility to reflect and promote the festival that draws locals and visitors alike. "We have to look back to the founding of the Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival and the Krewe of Bowlegs for guidance in preserving its traditions," said the new captain. "In 1953, local business and community leaders hosted a Labor Day weekend water ski

show as a way of attracting tourists for one last business push before the long, slow winter season. Building upon the success of the water ski show, the idea of a pirate festival was put forth based on the legend of Captain Billy Bowlegs, a pirate of questionable authenticity who operated in nearby waters, and who was thought to be historical figure William Augustus Bowles. Recognizing that a pirate festival would need pirates, local businessmen stepped up and hired local seamstresses to create pirate costumes, and that is how the Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival, and shortly thereafter the Krewe of Bowlegs, was born," said James. The festival was then organized by the Jaycees. "We are proud to carry on the tradition and the original purpose of the festival." he said.

New each year, the festival's theme reflects the personality of the new captain. 'Loud & Proud' represents Captain Billy 67's love of loud music and loud motorcycles. But, he said, "It also symbolizes American freedom, independence and the power embodied by the military capabilities in our local area that defend this nation." His 'Krewe in Black' are ready to rumble.

Contrary to what some may believe, "Private funds pay for all of the custom-made costumes, the beads, cups and coins that are thrown in parades (16 throughout the year), as well as the locally-chartered landing boats," James said. "The Krewe of Bowlegs receives no direct funding from the City of Fort Walton Beach, the county or the TDD. And while the Krewe of Bowlegs itself is not a charitable organization, our tradition is to support the community and we make several public appearances throughout the year in support of educational and charitable causes." The Krewe of Bowlegs also works with the William Augustus Bowles Museum & Historical Foundation which helps



Billy Bowlegs in the early 1960s. Photos courtesy William Augustus Bowles Historical Foundation.

underwrite fireworks, the treasure hunt and other expenses. The City of Fort Walton Beach also underwrites festival expenses and provides critical police, fire, EMS and other support.

The festival kicks off this year with a Pre-Invasion on Thursday evening, May 18th, just off Main St. downtown, where Captain Billy Bowlegs and his 'Krewe in Black' will arrive aboard their pirate ship parade float, the Blackhawk, to greet area children, take photos and hand out treasure. The Skirmish will be held on Friday evening, May 19th, where Captain Billy and his Krewe will arrive by water at the Fort Walton Landing. The mayor of Fort Walton Beach and his forces are prepared and have threatened to arrest Captain Billy if he tries to land. The city of Fort Walton Beach will also host its Concert in the Park, and the evening will end with a Fireworks show over the sound. On Saturday afternoon, May 20th, Captain Billy will return with the entire Krewe of Bowlegs and his allies from visiting Krewes from across the country, after his defeat the night prior. The mayor will try everything to stop him from landing. Will he be a match for the overwhelming presence of Captain Billy's pirates? Will the Captain prevail in taking over our city?

Finally, on Monday night, May 22nd, the Torchlight Parade will start at 7 p.m. on Eglin Pkwy. from First St. to Hughes Ave. The parade will be anchored by Captain Billy and the entire Krewe of Bowlegs marching down the street to celebrate Captain Billy Bowlegs' 67th annual capture of Fort Walton Beach.

Any local who has been around long enough looks forward to the famed treasure hunt. Captain Billy says there are fewer than 100, limited-edition, two-inch treasure coins, each having an individually engraved serial number. Some coins are being hidden with published clues, some are being given away on the radio and on social media, and some by Captain Billy personally at public appearances. The winning coin will be chosen by a live drawing on May 20th at the Fort Walton Landing with the Grand Prize valued at \$1,000.

In between the Skirmish and Torchlight Parade, there's all sorts of grub and grog, from ice cream to seafood. There will be live music and entertainment, fireworks a plenty and vendors showcasing lots of pirate booty and the like. For scallywags young and old, there's arts and crafts booths, food, refreshments and bouncy houses. Our high seas are filled with hundreds of boats lining the mile-long sandbar off the Fort Walton Landing, where a melting pot of people will make their way to pillage, plunder and drink rum.

FWB Life implores you to be 'Loud & Proud' and boldly stand guard to defend our piece of paradise at this year's festival. Want to play a part? To enter the parade, download the entry form at fwbchamber.org. Captain Billy 67 is looking for a BIG 2023 turnout! So, join him and his 'Krewe in Black' as they 'Turn it up to 11!' and take over the city of Fort Walton Beach!

Schedule

Thursday Evening, May 18 Pre-Invasion, Downtown Fort Walton Beach

Friday Evening, May 19

Skirmish & Fireworks, Fort Walton Landing

Saturday, May 20

Invasion, Fort Walton Landing, Downtown Street Party, Fireworks

Monday, May 22, 7 p.m.

Torchlight Parade, Downtown Fort Walton Beach



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Walter Arrington: A Shelter in the Storm

By Kelly Murphy-Redd, CEcd

It's hard to imagine what it's like to be homeless. We don't want to imagine it. Most of us probably don't know any homeless people. But, it can happen to anvone.

The Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce is the only chamber of commerce to run a homeless shelter. One Hopeful Place lives up to its name. It provides hope for many who have fallen on hard times and need a hand up, not a handout.

Walter Arrington is a "graduate" of One Hopeful Place.

At 26 years old, Walter came out of the Marine Corps with hidden wounds. He then had back surgery. He spiraled downward very quickly. He divorced his wife and gained custody of his son. He couldn't stop drinking and one day he called his exwife and told her to come to get their son.

Walter lived in an apartment in Niceville, worked at Dockside, and attended classes at Northwest Florida State College. He lost his job, stopped going to class



and got behind on his rent. He slipped out of his apartment before he could be evicted and lived in his car before it broke down.

Okaloosa Island beach parks offered a nighttime refuge. He would use the public bathroom and shower wearing a bathing suit and carrying his bottle of shampoo. A friend's couch would sometimes be a bed for the night. Walking everywhere or riding a bike, he got to know where to find a place to stay. A night's lodging might be an abandoned commercial building or a tarp strung up on a wooded lot. He could camp a short distance from the day labor location. Walking around and getting to know the other homeless people helped Walter get the lay of the land. It always helped to bring a bottle.

Shame was the overriding emotion during this time. Walter's mother, who has a Doctorate in Nursing Science wrote her doctoral thesis on healthcare for the homeless. She would take him to lunch or buy him a pair of pants, but would not enable his alcohol addiction and resulting homelessness. He had to hit rock bottom where the pain of continuing this existence was more painful than making the decision to change his life. Walter says he had forgotten how to live. The homeless are so busy trying to meet basic needs.

A Pensacola program didn't work out and Walter tried One Hopeful Place. He came and went a few times. Building relationships is the first order of business for One Hopeful Place after providing someone with shelter, food, water and safety. They offer services when asked. Then they will find the specific services needed for each individual case. The person can cycle in and out. There are three rules: 1. Respect your fellow. 2. No drugs or alcohol. 3. No violence. This is called the low-barrier model. People who come to a shelter have trouble with trust.

When Walter was ready to make a change and ask for help, a community member would pick him up and take him to a 12-step program. He was encouraged to get treatment. The staff helped make a plan to get treatment, come back and transition into a sober living environment.

After hurting his back again, Walter received Worker's Comp benefits. A mentor convinced him to go back to school to finish his Associate's Degree in general studies. He obtained scholarships and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from UWF in 2022. An internship with the Alfred Washburn Center in Pensacola was a pivotal step in his career path. The Director, Michael Kimberl became a dear friend and taught Walter how to interact with the homeless population. He learned you have to see, acknowledge and listen before you can offer services.

In late 2020, a homeless encampment appeared under



Cervantes. Michael Kimberl asked Walter if he would volunteer to help manage the camp. The city wanted to allow for a period of time to offer services and shelter to those willing to accept the help. Around the same time, the Homelessness Task

sacola

Continued on next page



Florida Real Estate Broker Official Storyteller of the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce



(Community

Thunder Beach Celebrates 25 Years!

BY PAUL BONNETTE

Panama City Beach may be quiet now, but soon the sounds of thunder begin rolling in; locals and visitors alike know it is once again time for the Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally. This five day event returns to Panama City Beach May 3-7 and they're celebrating its 25th anniversary by pulling out all the stops.

Known throughout the Southeast as the "most biker friendly free rally in the United States," Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally pulls crowds from all over for numerous arts and crafts vendors, bike shows and contests, and of course, legendary rock concerts. For their anniversary, Thunder Beach is going all out with some of the biggest names in rock including Rob Zombie, Buckcherry, Jasmine Cain, Pantera, Candlebox, Big Engine, Drowning Pool, Jackyl, Lynyrd Skynyrd and more.



Chase Michael took over as owner of Thunder Beach Productions last year with the desire to make Thunder Beach into an even bigger event by adding more headliner concerts. For Michael, as Thunder Beach was already a household name in the Southeast, it was an easy transition.

"Thunder Beach is a wellknown name that has been around a long time," he explains. "That is kind of what drives the ability for us to bring in these concerts and really dictate where the event is going. Honestly that's what appealed most to me to get involved in Thunder Beach is it had the crowd there already, so it just needed to elevate it and bring it to the next level and that was bringing the concerts in."

For motorcycle enthusiasts of all ages, Thunder Beach of-

fers something for everyone, from numerous vendors, bike shows, and plenty of daytime entertainment to parades and the aforementioned block-buster concerts. In terms of overall experience, it doesn't hurt that Frank Brown Park, the event's host, is such an easily accessible venue. "I have been to at least five hundred rallies all over the country and there is not a motorcycle venue like Frank Brown Park," Michaels says. "There is nowhere as big as that. To have all of those vendors and concerts all in one venue, it just doesn't exist anywhere else. To be five blocks from the beach and to have this beautiful venue... Frank Brown Park is quite the spectacle because they will have everything from corporate displays from Harley, Indian, Yamaha and BMW and the concerts as well as a ton of vendors that everybody can shop. It's pretty amazing in my opinion.

As thousands of riders and spectators descend into Bay County for the Thunder Beach Spring Rally, Michael plans to keep the momentum going to make Thunder Beach part of our area's tourist season. "I'm really focusing on the spring and fall rally, the two bookends to the Panama City Beach summer season. I'd like to make it make sense to where every business in the town benefits from it whether they are a grocery store, bar, restaurant or a hotel. It's just an opportunity to showcase the town and what it has to offer,' he says.

Whether you are a rider, motorcycle enthusiast or just looking to shop at the numerous vendors and enjoy some exciting concerts, Thunder Beach clearly has something that draws visitors and locals to this event and the 25th anniversary promises to be even bigger. For more information or to buy tickets, visit www.thunderbeach.com.

WALTER ARRINGTON

continued from previous page

Force Florida was created. Wal-

eventually became the Substance Abuse and Case Management Committee. The goal was to get

ter joined the committee that

BAY/ife Stowal life DESTIN/16 FWB/#G FCB/ife Seven editions monthly reaching 80,000 homes and businesses by U.S. mail! Serving Destin • Miramar Beach • Fort Walton Beach • South Walton Panama City Beach • Bluewater Bay & Hammock Bay • Niceville & Valparaiso Contact Scott Miller (850) 688-9886 Advertise with us! Scott@LifeMediaGrp.con digital ive new users to your website. 22 Marks the 74th Reach your target audience. Promote your brand. Increase sales Full suite of targeted digital and m contextual, keyword search retargeting, site Our business is to promote your business!

medical services to the homeless. Walter's position came out of the committee. His mission was to get the mobile medical unit up and running. The unit is a 40-foot U-Haul truck with two exam rooms, a wheelchair lift, and air conditioning. The unit is deployed each week to encampments with a Nurse Practitioner or Physician's Assistant and nurse. He currently serves as the Unhoused Care Navigator for Community Health Northwest Florida.

Walter talks a lot about the Spain and Portugal model of helping the homeless. He says there must be accountability and consequences for bad behavior.



Sixty percent of the homeless are on Social Security or disability. The "big three" reasons for homelessness are mental health issues, substance abuse, and medical issues. The longer someone is homeless the worse the mental health issues become. In a shelter, a person is allowed to decompress and meet the basic needs of shelter, food, water, and safety.

Sometimes the victories are preventing overdoses or death. Other times the victories are people getting sober, medical help, jobs, and independent living – getting their lives back.

Walter is so grateful for the help he received from One Hopeful Place, Michael Kimberl, and others and wants to pay it forward. There can be failure after failure but there can also be transformation and success. He likes the harder cases that others have given up on. The hard ones have the most potential.

Walter receives his Master's Degree in Social Work from UWF on May 6th of this year. He will also be giving the commencement speech. His mother is very proud of her son.



What Landlords Look For in a Good Tenant



By Melissa Forte-Litscher

Many people in our area choose to be renters, because it just isn't time for them to purchase their own home. When renting a home, it is important to be a good tenant and develop a good relationship with the landlord or manager. Finding a good tenant is critical for landlords and property managers as they are trusting the care of a property to someone else. A good tenant is someone who pays rent on time, takes care of the property, follows the rules and maintains good communication with the landlord.

One of the most important

qualities landlords look for in a good tenant is financial stability. They want tenants who have a stable source of income and can afford to pay rent on time. Most landlords ask for proof of income or employment, and many run a credit and background check before leasing the property. This ensures that the tenant is financially sound, can pay the rent regularly, has good financial history and no previous bankruptcies, evictions or late payments.

Another quality that landlords look for is responsibility. They want tenants who take care of the property and keep it clean and tidy. Managers look for tenants who follow the rules of the lease agreement and follow any association rules that may apply. The terms of the lease must be adhered to, such as paying rent on time, following pet and visitor policies, and not damaging or subleasing the property to someone else. A tenant who fails to comply with these terms is more likely to face legal action, such as eviction, and no one wants that.

Good communication is also



an essential quality that landlords look for in tenants; those who are easy to communicate with and respond promptly to messages or calls. Following the expected method of communication such as text, emails or tenant portal helps the landlord address maintenance issues, inspections or needed repairs in a timely manner. Having renters who are responsive and cooperative means the landlord can resolve any disputes or problems quickly and efficiently.

If a tenant has a good rental history, this makes them more appealing to a landlord. A previous landlord can provide a valuable reference that helps the new one make a more informed decision. If this is the tenant's first rental, additional references or a cosigner may be necessary to get into the first lease. Once good rental history is created, it can be used for future rental properties and be helpful when it comes time to purchase a home.

As a property manager myself, I can say that qualities such as financial stability, responsibility, good communication and a good rental history are important when looking at a prospective tenant. The main goals are to ensure that the property is in good hands and create a good working relationship. Maintaining these qualities will help most tenants find a decent rental property and have a hassle-free rental experience. If you are looking for a place to rent or purchase, I am at your service.



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(Community

Brooks Bridge and Santa Rosa Boulevard Improvements



By Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel

The FDOT Brooks Bridge Replacement Project Development and Environmental Study have been completed and aesthetics workshops have taken place. The design has been carefully vetted and replacement with a state-of-the-art bridge is underway. The careful design of the bridge and upcoming proposed bike path makes this the right time to improve Santa Rosa Boulevard. To see planned improvements to traffic flow, safety standards and aesthetics, type the address below into

your browser to view the computer-generated animation of the Brooks Bridge replacement. https://bit.ly/BrooksBridgeReplacement. NOTE – this address is case sensitive.

As the Brooks Bridge Replacement project moves forward, there are many unfounded truths regarding buildings that will be demolished. Everything that needed to be removed for the construction of the Brooks Bridge has been removed. Nothing else is scheduled to be moved, removed or demolished, other than the bridges themselves.

The north side of the bridge will be constructed first. When the north side is finished, the south side will begin after which we will finally have our new Brooks Bridge. The new sixlane bridge will be completed by 2027. The bridge will be 10 feet higher than the existing bridge, and will begin on the Fort Walton Beach side immediately east of the Perry Ave. intersection with U.S. 98.

The great news is that it will bypass the existing intersection of Santa Rosa Boulevard with a new landing point just west the convention center. Traffic on Santa Rosa Boulevard will go under the new bridge with access to either a dedicated lane to get to Fort Walton Beach or an access road before the bridge to go to Destin. With additional lane capacity on the bridge, and the removal of the current intersection at Santa Rosa Boulevard, traffic in the area will flow more freely.

This new configuration will minimize traffic delays on Santa Rosa Boulevard, even during times of heavy traffic. After almost two years of reviews by year-round residents, we are pleased with the overwhelming support of the proposed Okaloosa Island improvements for Santa Rosa Boulevard. Through analysis of traffic patterns, input from residents and community partners, and expert advice of county engineers on the improvement concepts, the Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously in support of the changes for Okaloosa Island.

Motor vehicle lanes will range from five lanes at the heaviest

point of entry, down to two lanes headed west, approaching the end of public access at the Eglin Airforce Base access. Please view the attached videos to see how the lane changes make for a better traffic flow with the new intersections at the Brooks Bridge.

Pedestrian-friendly features will be integrated into the design, such as sidewalks and a multiuse path, in addition to aesthetic landscape features. Type the following address into your browser to view renderings of improvement concepts. https://bit.ly/ SantaRosaBlvd NOTE – this address is case sensitive.

Okaloosa Island will have storm water and infrastructure improvements, including a multimodal path and bicycle lanes, for enhanced safety of motorists and pedestrians. The county also considered input from Eglin Air Force Base in the concepts by implementing a gradual decrease of lanes at the Cest end of Santa Rosa Boulevard rather than the abrupt four-lane stop at the Eglin gate. While the majority of the audience was in favor of the improvements proposed, a few expressed resistances to change.

We continue to work with Florida Power and Light to identify ways to bury the power lines on the Island. We know at some point we will have a hurricane, or significant weather event, and underground lines would reduce the time needed to return power to our citizens.

Design drawings are being developed now. Once detailed topographic, soil and utility information has been analyzed, the many details required to properly design the improvements will be established and a construction schedule can be developed.

Finally, a proposed Bridgeto-Bridge Bike Path is in final stage of improvement with Eglin AFB. If built from Brooks Bridge to Destin (Marler) Bridge, this 12-foot-wide bike path, on the Gulf side, will save countless lives and injuries.

Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2. She can be reached at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 860-651-7105.



appenings Around

MAY 2023

- Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner 04 6 pm | Rosemary Beach Town Hall Concerts in the Village: Ozomatli 7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin 05 Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee
- 7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | Fort Walton Beach Niceville Chamber of Commerce's Golf Classic 12:30 pm | Rocky Bayou Country Club | Niceville
- Paddle at the Park 06 9 am | The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island Third Annual Hats & Horses 3 pm - 6:30 pm | Capt. Anderson's Event Center
- Women United Brunch & Bubbly 07 11:30 am | The Venue by Beach Weekend | Fort Walton Beach
- Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking 11 11:30 am | The Place on Beal | Fort Walton Beach Concerts in the Village: Lucky Chops 7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin
 - **Rock Fest** 6 pm | Outdoor Recreation Marina | Hulburt Field
- **10th Annual Tequila and Taco Fest** 12-Village of Baytowne Wharf 14
- **Restaurant Week** 12-

12

- Various Restaurants are Participating 20
- Women's Climbing Circle 13 9 am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin **30A Foam Fest** my chemica cocktail 2 pm - 6 pm | 30Avenue 127 1 4 204 - 0 14 My Chemical Cocktail 6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | Fort Walton Beach
- 35th Annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival 13-10 am | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach 14
- 15 **GSSF Indoor League** 9 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Niceville
- Young Professionals of Northwest Florida Leadership Conference 16 11:30 am | Northwest Florida State College | Niceville
- FARMER'S S MARKET

Downtown FWB Farmers Market 2nd & 4th Saturdays 8 am - 1 pm | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park 7 am - 2 pm | 1954 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB

Okaloosa County Farmers' Market Saturdays

18 Concerts in the Village: Yacht Rock Revue 7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin



- 11th Annual Destin Rotary Cajun Crawfish Bash 19 5:30 pm | Seascape Towne Centre | Miramar Beach
- Emerald Coast Parrot Head Club Presents Escape to the Island 19-FWB Elks Lodge 20

20th Annual Bob Hope Memorial Charity Golf Classic 10:30 am | Fort Walton Beach Golf Club | Fort Walton Beach **Emerald Coast Open** Lionfish Tournament

- Bay Area Health & Wellness Expo 20 10 am | Hammock Bay General Store | Freeport
- **Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Festival** 20-HarborWalk Village Destin 21

25



7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

Concerts in the Village: Sinfonia Gulf Coast

feat. Morgan James and Symphonic Soul

- Gate to Gate Memorial Run/Walk 27 7 am | Unity Park | Eglin Air Force Base
- **Sinfonia Goes Pops** 28 7:30 pm | Alys Beach Amphitheatre | Alys Beach
 - 67TH ANNUAL BILLY BOWLEGS PIRATE FESTIVAL 2023 Pre-Invasion 18 6 pm | Pub Crawl | Downtown Fort Walton Beach 19 Skirmish & Fireworks
 - 6 pm | Fort Walton Landing
 - Invasion | Downtown Street Party | Fireworks 20 11 am | Fort Walton Landing
 - 22 Torchlight Parade powered by Step One Automotive Group 7 pm | Downtown Fort Walton Beach
 - VFW Post 7674 Sunday Breakfasts 8 - 11:30 am | Sundays | 231 Carol Ave. FWB HarborWalk Village: Rock the Docks Spring on the Harbor 7 - 9 pm | Saturdays | HarborWalk Village Destin HarborWalk Village: Silent Disco Party 7 - 9 pm | Wednesdays | HarborWalk Village Destin
- LISTEN. VISIT. Hello Frances Podcast FrancesRoy.com SAY HELLO. CONNECT. FRANCES ROY STRATEGY DESIGN DIGITAL MEDIA hello@francesroy.com 💿 🎔 in

ONGOING EVENTS

Sommunity

Page 8

Around Town



EC Children's Advocacy Center Reopens in Niceville

The public is invited to attend and celebrate the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center's (ECCAC) grand re-opening of its center in Okaloosa County with a ribbon cutting and the official re-naming to the Julie Sacco Porterfield Children's Advocacy Center, 401 McEwen Drive, Niceville, at 10 a.m. Friday, May 5. This center experienced a fire and significant water damage last summer that flooded both floors of the 13,000-sq.-ft. building. The center had to be completely vacated with staff and services continuing to provide services for kids in various other donated locations in the area. With the help of many, the center has since undergone a recently completed major renovation and restoration. Guests can tour the center, meet the team and learn more about the programs and services offered to the children and families it helps. It will be a celebration with music, food and beverages.

Paddle at the Park

Grab your paddle board and head to the 11th Annual Paddle at the Park, sponsored by HCA Florida Destin Emergency. With a new location and date, this standup paddle board race will take place in the Gulf of Mexico behind The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island on Saturday, May 6. It features 1- and 3-mile recreational races, a 6-mile elite race and a kids' fun out-andback paddle, to be followed by awards. Kayaks and inflatables are welcome too. Registration is now open on Paddleguru. com. For details: destinchamber. com/paddle-at-the-porch.



Tequila and Tacos Anyone?

May 12-14, the Village of Baytowne Wharf will come alive with local restaurants and food trucks competing for the Best Taco on The Emerald Coast with a first-place prize of \$2,500 – and you will have a say in the People's Choice Award! Sample many types of Tequilas and Margaritas from Blancos, Resposados, Anjieos and even Mezcals while indulging in some of the area's best tacos. For tickets: www.efestevents.com

Jeff Peters Becomes the new City of Fort Walton Beach City Manager

In a 4:3 vote, the Fort Walton Beach City Council voted in the recent April city council meeting to approve Peters as the new City Manager. He previously served as director of the Parks and Recreation Department for the last 17 years, and stepped into the role of Acting



City Manager for the last five months after the departure of Michael Beedie, the former city manager.

Okaloosa County Breaks Ground on New FWB Recycling Plant

Waste Management (WM) recently held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new, roughly 45,000 sq. ft. materials recovery facility in Fort Walton Beach. The \$30 million investment will be equipped with state-of-theart technology and machinery. Currently, recyclables have been sent to Montgomery, Ala. So, this will allow for more Okaloosa County recycling options, create more jobs, help recycling the region's recycling programs to expand and allow the processing of 120,000 tons per year of single-stream, source-separated recyclables with all plastics staying in North America. The facility is scheduled to be in operation in about one year.

Mosquito Spray Schedule

The Okaloosa County Mosquito Control division operates a county-wide program, excluding the Air Force Bases and



all state parks, which provides surveillance and spraying services to control mosquitoes in both the larval and adult stages. Educational and abatement activities are also performed to control domestic mosquitoes to protect citizens from nuisance and health problems associated with large populations of mosquitoes. Broadcast treatment is conducted in the evening and is required by State Law to be justified. Justification is based on mosquito population surveillance data and other methods. Treatments will begin 1 hour before sunset. The schedule for the Fort Walton Beach area basically includes Tuesdays in Fort Walton Beach, Wednesdays in Fort Walton Beach from Brooks Bridge to Memorial Pkwy. and Thursdays in Shalimar and Ocean City.

Brooks Bridge Replacement Project Road Closure

The Business Access Road, located beneath Brooks Bridge on Okaloosa Island, is temporarily closed between the Adventure Marina and the Brooks Bridge Marina. This segment of the road will become part of the dedicated work zone for construction of the new Brooks Bridge and will remain closed for the duration of the project. U.S. 98 eastbound drivers will be detoured for access to the Brooks Bridge Marina and Alvin's Island, located on the Business Access Road (north side of U.S. 98). These drivers will continue through the Santa Rosa Blvd. intersection, turn left onto the Convention Center Access Road (located to the west of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center), proceed to the roundabout to exit onto Santa Rosa Blvd., then to the Business Access Road. Detour signage will be in place to help direct drivers.







Signature treatments designed to rejuvenate, restore and relax. Spa Lilliana at Hotel Effie is the only spa on the Emerald Coast to offer exclusive treatments by Biologique Recherche. Call (833)-718-1941 to book your appointment and experience the luxury.

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Stage Crafters Community Theatre Presents Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None"

A Stageside Chat with Director Holly Moore

By Bobby Parker

Stage Crafters Community Theatre is currently in rehearsal for Agatha Christie's And Then There Were None. We recently sat down with the director, Birmingham native and Niceville resident, Holly Moore, to learn a little more about the upcoming production.

BP: When did you first discover theatre and how did you get involved with Stage Crafters?

HM: I have been involved in theatre since I was three years old and have always loved being in the limelight. My first show with Stage Crafters was in 2011, Murder Can Be Habit Forming, for which I will always be grateful since I showed up as an unknown to them. Since then, I have loved all aspects of working with Stage Crafters from working backstage, being a part of the production team, or being on stage. What I love most, though, is being involved with a volunteer community of people and getting to know each one in the process.

BP: Why did you choose the Agatha Christie classic, And Then There Were None?

HM: I chose this show for several reasons. Agatha Christie still remains the best-selling novelist of all time, and I believe there is an entire generation that has no idea who she is that needs to experience her work. It is also personal to me because I played Judge Wargrave with NWFSC many years ago. I owe a lot of inspiration to Clint Mahle at NWFSC. He was my director many years ago and many of the things he taught me have stuck with me. And, I also believe murder mysteries are intriguing across all generations.

BP: Who is this show meant for and what can audiences expect?



HM: Everyone! And, I mean that will all sincerity. I am 60, so like me, the older generation who knew and loved Agatha Christie will enjoy it along with people who have never heard of it.

Audiences will soon learn that our Judge is female; this is quite rare for this show. We are also setting the story in 1939, as Christie originally wrote it. Many theatres tend to modernize the show, but I don't particularly prefer that. For those who are not familiar with the show, I hope the suspense will be palpable until the very end! It is intrigue and suspense at its finest. BP: What does the cast bring to the show and to their characters? HM: Depth

of character. Our

goal is to show this in each character no matter how long they are on stage - from the way they move, talk, and walk, to the way they express themselves. I'm thrilled to have many veterans of Stage Crafters as well as "newbies" in the show. This mix will bring great intrigue and suspense to the stage with each actor.

BP: What is the most challenging part of direct-ing?

HM: This is my first time directing for Stage Crafters, so it is all challenging! I am thankful to Nancy Kruzak who is my

mentor along the way. She is an iconic director, and I could not imagine doing this show without her by my side.

BP: What advice would you give someone who is wanting to get involved with Stage Crafters?

HM: Why are you waiting?! There are so many ways for you to be involved and it starts now! Join our Facebook Page to learn about workdays, backstage needs, auditions, and so much more. We are a family, a community of slightly crazy people that really love live theatre. It is alive and well in our area and you need to be a part of our family.

And Then There Were None opens June 2, 2023 and runs for two weekends at the Fort Walton Beach Civic Auditorium. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit Stage-CraftersFWB.com.



Community

Page 10

A New Twist for Mother's Day

Painting with a Twist is fun art, not fine art! Connect with your friends in a warm, supportive and positive environment. Wine, art and fun combine, whether you're hanging out with Mom, friends, a date or the entire family.

Mommy & Me events

All ages, paint colorful giraffes Saturday, May 13, 1-3 p.m.

On Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14, 2-4 p.m., it's Sippin' Sunday. For \$62-\$72 per person, paint a beautiful bouquet of colorful flowers on canvas with your mom while sipping on a complimentary mimosa.

From 1:30 to 4 p.m., enjoy the painting and candle bundle for Mother's Day.

At 5 p.m., it's still Sippin' Sunday when you and your mom paint a beautiful sunset on canvas or wood pallet, again with complimentary mimosa! Price varies \$42-\$52 per person. You can also upgrade to a wood pallet, too. All Sippin' Sunday events are ages 18 and up.

NEW! Add a candle to any event

Make your own soy wax candle that burns for 40 hours. Candles are soy and paraben free and scented with essential oils. There





COMOM'S DAY!

We have so many ways to celebrate Mom

GIVE A GIFT SHE'LL LOVE THIS MOTHER'S DAY



PaintingwithaTwist.com/studio/fort-walton-beach

255 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, Suite B - 8, Fort Walton Beach (850) 226-7218



ed to any event for \$20. Just show up 30 minutes before painting class. There are also pre-made candles that can be purchased any time when you need or want an extra gift for someone.

Date Night Each Weekend (Friday and **Saturday Nights)**

Never stuffy or routine, you can include everything you love about regular dates your favorite BYOB beverages and finger foods, plus the fun that comes with trying something new. You'll take home a great painting and even better memories. You and your partner will create a complementary set of masterpieces together. See calendar online for upcoming date nights.

Girls' Night Out Every Night

Just when you thought you were out of girls' night out ideas, you found the most creative one yet! BYOW (bring your own wine - ages 18-plus) to a paint party that's a toast to your girl gang. Reserve your fun party time now online.

You can also book Private Parties-birthday, bachelorette, reunion, work events, get togethers, reunions and more. You focus on quality time and we'll handle the rest!

Set your kiddo's creativity free with a new twist on fun. Book a birthday party, kids camp or Mommy & Me for ages 8 and up. And there's all-age classes each Saturday from 1-3 p.m.

The April and May calendars offer a variety of paintings - from seasonally-inspired landscapes to decorative DIY wood board signs, funny self-portraits, Seaside sunsets, paint pour and more.

Find a paint night theme that fits you, then reserve your spot online at paintingwithatwist.com/studio/fortwalton-beach/calendar.

NFSO at Resurrection **Catholic Church:** Duruflé Requiem

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, Todd Craven, Music Director/Conductor Featuring the Northwest Florida Symphony Chorale, Darrin Scott Isaac, Music Director Soloists:

Stephanie Riegle, flute and Katie Ott, harp Works by W.A. Mozart, Matthew Fossa and Maurice Duruflé

Experience the beauty of

the famous Requiem by French composer Maurice Duruflé performed in the perfect spiritual and ambient setting of the Resurrection Catholic Church with a full 65- piece chorale and orchestra.

The first half of the program highlights principal musicians from the NFSO: the premiere of a new work by principal oboist Matthew Fossa and a performance of the magical Concerto for Flute and Harp by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, featuring Stephanie Riegle and Katie Ott.

Saturday, May 13, 2023 The performance is at

7:00 p.m. Tickets: \$25



Call the Mattie Kelly Arts Center box office at (850) 729-6000 or visit mattiekellyartscenter.org.

Tickets also available for purchase the day of the performance at Resurrection Catholic Church, Miramar Beach, FL



Know Your Local Pro: Window Hero and Owner Ryan Jackson

There are three hallmarks of a great business: a trustworthy brand, a hard-working business owner dedicated to customer service and a team of highly trained professionals. When you choose businesses to work with, you deserve the best. Introducing Ryan Jackson, owner of Window Hero Pensacola-Destin – the only name you need when you're looking for professional, reliable exterior cleaning for your home or business.

Founder Tyler Kirk started the business in Charlotte, NC, in 2006 under the name Labor Panes, offering window and pressure washing. In 2022, the company rebranded as Window Hero and expanded to serve even more customers with a franchise model. Since then, it has achieved rapid growth, and there are now 24 locations across six states. Window Hero's meteoric success comes from building strong relationships, responding to customer needs and adding value to their lives. It has extended the selection of services to better serve its customers, adding full-home and building exterior washing, window cleaning, gutter cleaning, gutter guard installation, roof washing, and solar panel cleaning. Window Hero has become the go-to company for quality exterior cleaning, earning a fivestar rating on Google and thousands of satisfied customers.

Ryan Jackson is proud to serve the community as your local Window Hero owner. He graduated from the United



States Naval Academy, followed by Naval Flight Officer training. Ryan served 24 years in the Navy flying combat operations during his deployment in Operation Enduring Freedom. After retiring from the military, he returned to the Emerald Coast to be a permanent part of the community he fell in love with while at NAS Pensacola for flight school from 2004-2006.

Window Hero allows Ryan to achieve a longtime goal: to own a business that supports initiatives to get involved in the community and create jobs that will enable employees to achieve personal and professional growth. Ryan knew he wanted to be a part of the Window Hero family when he read the core values of its parent company, HomeFront Brands: "Community – We make a difference in the community one person, friend, or neighbor at a time. Accountability – We do more than expected, by our own choice and our own will. Respect – We treat others as we would like to be treated. Excellence – We set high standards and rise to meet them. Service – We meet others' needs with a servant's heart."

Window Hero Pensacola-Destin has it all. It's a trusted brand with 17 years of experience, a local veteran business owner focused on giving back to the community, and a team of friendly, skilled technicians.

Make your home or business shine. Call your local pro, Ryan Jackson, at (850) 601-9609 for your free quote. Visit Windowhero.com/locations/pensacola-destin/ to find out more.



Military

SOF Missons and the Unseen Wounds of War

By Doug Stauffer

Almost every hour, one U.S. veteran commits suicide!

SOF Missions is a non-profit organization that assists and supports active duty and veteran Special Operations Forces (SOF) and their families. Dr. Damon Friedman, a former Special Forces operator, founded the organization when he recognized the need for a support system within the SOF community.

Damon served on active duty for twenty years—five in the Marine Corps and 15 in the Air Force's special warfare. Damon tells his story of almost becoming a statistic, but some incredible people stepped in to help him. He believed it was his turn to help others. So, his wife, Dayna, and he started SOF Missions in Bagram, Afghanistan, in 2011. SOF Missions aims to empower America's warriors to find purpose and be resilient.

SOF Missions helps the battle brother, America's true heroes, find freedom through post-traumatic growth. Many veterans feel hopeless and without purpose, with an inability to reconnect. Damon said, "We are trying to help them to not only get to a better state mentality but to be the best version of themselves." The program focuses on a whole health, interdisciplinary model. They treat mild traumatic brain injury, chronic pain, insomnia, post-traumatic stress and chronic stress. He continued, "Helping our warriors is a completely systematic approach."

The Resiliency Project is a four-pillar methodology project: psychological, physical, spiritual and social wellness. "We be-



lieve that humans are made up of mind, body, and soul, and our Creator is the designer of the universe. One of the biggest challenges in America is that people do not really know their purpose." SOF Missions purposes to help those in the program to find their purpose in life. "Our veterans are the treasure of America called upon to change the world for good, to make this world a better place."

The keynote speaker for this year's banquet was 37-year veteran Marine Corps Major General James S. "Hammer" Hartsell, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs. General Hartsell pointed out that since 9-11, nearly four million Americans have raised their right hand to defend our Constitution and country against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Half of those went to war-two million. He stated, "Those who went to war were exposed to moral injury. They were exposed to things they would not have been exposed to in a normal life."

He quoted, "In war, there are no unwounded soldiers," which emphasizes that all soldiers are wounded in some way, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. The unseen wounds are the least treated but still have a lasting impact on their lives.

Gen. Hartsell talked passionately about everyone's "life load" and the need to balance military, family and employment life. SOF Missions helps warriors carry the burdens of life load. Everyone has these burdens, and getting out of balance creates trouble. SOF Missions helps veterans balance the psychological, social, physical and spiritual domains. He learned through experience that psychological trauma is the hardest to keep in balance.

Bob Conrad is a 25-year Army Veteran and a local representative with SOF Missions. Bob says, "Attitude-Behavior-Results! It starts with the choice of commitment to impact the lives of our extended Veteran Community, to reduce suicide, increase resiliency and guide others to thriving, not just surviving! In a purpose-driven organization, that's called commitment!" Bob has been with SOF for six years in Donor and Strategy Development with a team led by Sherrie Hayes, Kristi Beckman and Annette Beard. The Tampa-based HQ worked hard to increase the passion and participation from 180 in 2022 to 240 supporters in 2023! The Gala is a premier event along the Emerald Coast.

The Gala pays tribute to the brave men and women who fight and sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy. We must emphasize the importance of acknowledging and honoring our heroes, recognizing the responsibility that comes with freedom, and understanding the true meaning of courage. We must never forget or minimize the sacrifices made by our soldiers in service to this country. Their sacrifices should inspire future generations to strive for greatness. We owe it to our heroes to remember and honor their legacy, to appreciate the liberties they

secured for us, and to continue to protect and defend those freedoms for future generations.

SOF Missions relies on the support of donors and volunteers to carry out its mission. A local Regional Support Team can meet with individuals, organizations, and potential sponsors to expand the SOF MISSION passion, commitment and service to our warrior community. Bob Conrad would be happy to meet with anyone wanting to know more about SOF Missions, the RST, and how they might be a part of a fantastic mission and purpose-driven team. For more information, check out www.sofmissions.org

Memorial Day: A Tribute to Our Fallen Heroes

Doug Stauffer, pastor, chaplain, veteran (father, son and brother to veterans)

From every branch of service, every walk of life,

America's soldiers are faced with peril and strife.

Bravery and sacrifice we continually recognize,

Never forget those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Memorial Day: a reminder to pay respect

To those who served, freedoms to protect.

On this solemn day, their legacy lives on,

Honored and remembered, even after they're gone.

Let us guide our children to look up high

To heroes who serve and fight, and some die.

Not to those in sports or Hollywood's fame,

But those who defend our country's name.

Remember the Gold Star families still here.

Show them our gratitude for losing those dear.

They deserve our love, honor, and care,

For their loss is beyond compare.

Take a moment right now to remember and reflect

Of the fallen soldiers we must never forget.

Let us pay our respects to these heroes today

And honor their memory in every possible way.



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The Vietnam POWs 50 Years Later Home Sweet Home

BY DOUG STAUFFER

The "Welcome Home" ceremony at the Air Force Armament Museum honored those who were captured in the Vietnam War and returned home 50 years ago. The date was March 4, 1973, when the North Vietnamese released nearly 600 U.S. POWs from their prisons.

On Feb. 12, 1973, the first of 591 U.S. prisoners began the trip home, with more flights returning until late March. The festivities hosted a reception and program to honor the POWs now calling Okaloosa County home. The honored include:

Brig. Gen. George "Bud" Day, USAF, Ret.

Col. Keith Hall, USAF, Ret. Col. Howard Hill, USAF, Ret. Col. Ed Hubbard, USAF, Ret. Col. Ron Webb, USAF, Ret. Lt. Col. Dave Gray, USAF, Ret.

"We hope this brings a feeling of strong patriotism and respect for what these men endured in those days," said Tricia Flaherty, Director of Operations at the Air Force Armament Museum. The words "You are not forgotten" are a constant



reminder that we should always remember the sacrifices of these veterans who paid so dearly in defense of freedom and our nation.

The United States fought in the Vietnam War for 10 years, from 1965 to the fall of Saigon in 1975. On Jan. 27, 1973, the U.S. signed the withdrawal agreement of American troops from South Vietnam. The agreement included the negotiated release of the nearly 600 prisoners of war held by North Vietnam in various prisons and camps, including the infamous Hoa Lò prison in Hanoi, dubbed by many as the "Hanoi Hilton."

Hundreds of American POWs, primarily Air Force airmen, endured months of isolation and squalid conditions at Hỏa Lò. From the beginning, U.S. POWs at Hoa Lò endured miserable, unsanitary conditions, including meager food rations and the ever-present threat of starvation. The captors subjected American prisoners of war to extreme torture and malnutrition. Although North Vietnam signed the Third Geneva Convention of 1949, which demanded "decent and humane treatment" of prisoners of war, they employed severe torture methods, including sleep deprivation, malnutrition, beatings, hanging by ropes, locking in irons, and prolonged solitary confinement.

POWs were repeatedly interrogated and tortured at the



The deal would come to be known as Operation Homecoming and began with three C-141 transports landing in Hanoi on Feb. 12, 1973, to bring the first released prisoners home. From Feb. 12 to April 4, 54 flights took place, returning 591 POWs home.

Many of the flagpoles in America fly the POW/MIA flag with the American flag. The POW/MIA symbol has flown since 1973 to honor those who suffered through years of captivity and torture and those who never came home. Almost every day Okaloosa County residents can find something going on that shows appreciation for the military, and especially our POWs and MIAs.





hands of their captors and

suffered enormous levels of

physical and mental abuse.

The North Vietnamese guards

strictly enforced no communi-

cation within the prison, but

POWs found ways to commu-

nicate, including a tap code that

could be heard through walls

from one cell to another and

a "Deaf Mute" code of hand

signals, used when guards were

not looking. Despite this limit-

ed communication, prisoners

developed a code within their

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You've dedicated your life to service but, in retirement, it's time for us to serve you. After years of short- and long-distance moves, settle down in a place you chose for yourself. With a close proximity to military bases and a like-minded community all around, living at Air Force Enlisted Village feels just like coming home. With our neighbors at Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field, you can still start each morning with the sound of "Reveille" and end your day with the sound of "Retreat."

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🔅 Education

The Velcro Pygmies Reach and Teach Impact Our Students From Stages to Schools

By WILL ESTELL

If you've experienced The Velcro Pygmies live, then they need no introduction. They've performed for years locally at Tailfins, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's Concerts in the Village, Club L.A. and recently at Seaside School's Taste of the Race. If you're a fan of 80s and 90s rock, and moreover, the showmanship that goes along with it, you're probably going to become a Pygmies fan around the third or fourth song of your first show. The world-famous Velcro Pygmies specialize in taking their fans on a journey to a place and space in time when hair was big, pants were tight, screaming

was singing, and in the illustrious words of KISS's Gene Simmons, "If it's too loud. You're too old" rang true.

The Pygmies formed in Louisville, Ky., in the 90s, playing night clubs, college campuses and frat parties, primarily across the Southeast. The band whose four members consist of founder and frontman, Cameron Flener, guitarist, Chase West, bassist, Max War, and drummer, Chris Eddins - reside across two states, but tour together for three to five shows each week. They've managed to not only maintain a strong fan base, especially here in Destin, but also to drastically build upon it over



the decades.

Whether you go to a Velcro Pygmies show here in Destin,





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Residential and Commercial





Auburn or Tuscaloosa, Ala., Atlanta, Houston or Cleveland, you will see a crowd made up of 35 to 50 somethings who became fans in their own college days, as well as 19 and 25 year old fans that have more recently started following the Pygmies and their brand of big hair, glitter bombs and long guitar solos. Somehow, they've managed to capture that almost magical magnetism that entices and entertains beyond any particular barriers. That, in a nutshell, is what makes Reach and Teach work too.

Giving Back Through Reach & Teach

In an effort to follow a passion of positively impacting future generations, five years ago Cameron Flener (affectionately referred to as Cam by his friends and Pygmie fans) made the leap from the clubs to the classrooms, in a remarkable endeavor called Reach and Teach.

Reach and Teach is a unique program. The free program

is facilitated through individual school systems and is built upon a nine-week curriculum, whereby students are given the opportunity to orchestrate, plan and execute a concert that takes place at their school. The Reach and Teach program is the brainchild of April Clark, a high school business teacher in Alabama, who originated the concept. The forward-thinking teacher was in the beginning stages of facilitating her vision of such an opportunity for students, and teamed with Pygmies founder, Flener, after the singer related to Clark how impressed he was with the program she was working on, and how much he would like to be a part of it full time.

I sat down with Cam, over lunch, to talk a little more about this program firsthand. Though Flener has made a living through rock music, he is as much an entrepreneur and great thinker as a great performer. He's extremely well spoken, intuitive and insightful, and as such was quick to point out that Reach and Teach isn't about rock and roll music as much as it is about truly giving something back, creating a legacy of sorts and being involved in something that is much larger than himself or his band.

"We're not creating rock promoters, we are helping to create good, productive human beings," he said. "The vision that April and I have created for Reach and Teach is to take this program all over the entire

Continued on next page



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VELCRO PYGMIES

continued from previous page

country. We want to help these students in realizing what the utilization of real-world life skills are about. These are soft skills we are teaching. The things that we all need to know: How to budget, how to present or pitch potential sponsors, how to sell their vision to others. Reach and Teach is about empowering these young people to believe in themselves and their abilities to make things happen."

Clark explained it this way: "A rock concert provides the perfect vehicle for condensing all the aspects of operating a business into a limited time frame. Students learn about budgeting, marketing, public relations, web design, audio visual, logistics, and, most importantly, are able to analyze the results of their event once it's over."

Cam went on to say, "Reach and Teach students are handson in doing everything from deciding on the venue (normally on the school grounds, and during regular school hours) to helping the band set up and tear down the stage. They truly learn what it takes to plan an event from concept to fruition, including how to make money for their school or school related fundraiser along the way. All with something that excites and interests them."

As a magazine editor and writer, I first became familiar with Reach and Teach during its infancy, around 2018. Since then I have had the opportunity to hear from educators, school administrators, and parents about the merits of this remarkable free program which has now impacted students in over 20 states. And now it's coming to our area. The program will be presented during the 2023 and 2024 school years at a growing number of high schools in Northwest Florida. Because of its popularity, Reach and Teach has quickly become sustained by sponsorship monies from a growing number of companies who want to insure Reach and Teach continues to be free for the schools and students who benefit from it.

Some of the stories are remarkable in their positive impacts and life-changing alterations—students discovered and honed their skills as photographers, sound engineers and sponsorship salespeople. Some even became musicians, writers and singers after taking part in Reach and Teach through their own high school.

Beyond the life skills the students learn from the program, Cam said, "Our program provides institutions a new and exciting opportunity for fundraising, or as we call it 'FUN raising.' Because the program is provided free of charge to qualifying institutions, it allows many school systems to raise a significantly greater amount of money than your average runof-the-mill, plastic spirit cups, cookie dough or discount cards fundraiser could ever accomplish. As a result, schools are encouraged to sell tickets to the event and even allow outside guests to attend the subsequent performance. We don't ask for money. Reach and Teach simply asks that we are able to present our sponsorship portfolio to the students during the period the program is running.'

This works out well for companies like Rock 'n Roll Sushi, Buc-ee's, Chord Buddy, OWA and other sponsors who feel strongly about using their successes to give back and help



make this program possible for the thousands of students that are benefitting from this generosity and remarkable effort. The students win. The schools win. The sponsors win. Even the local community and concert attendees win. Everyone involved leaves every show, at every school just a little better than they were before those nine weeks leading to the culmination of that big show.

The Velcro Pygmies certainly rock. However, Reach and Teach isn't as much about music as it is about preparing the future leaders of our great country for a much larger and more important stage: Adulthood.

Find The Velcro Pygmies on Facebook or IG. To learn more about Reach and Teach, visit ReachandTeach.rocks and follow on Facebook at Reachand-Teach.

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur, occasional actor, and coastal real estate professional with more than 600 published magazine features in an array of genres. Over the past 25 years, he has been instrumental in shepherding 12 new magazines from concept to fruition, 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, WEAR ABC 3 news anchor, Laura Hussey. Will is a regular contributor to Life Media's publications, as well as many other magazines, papers, and websites. He also happens to be a Velcro Pygmies fan, himself, and has even been known to join them on stage for a song or two.



Education

Page 16

Fort Walton Beach Nining, Entertainment, Specials

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 Pkwy., 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!

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

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 con-



tains artifacts from World 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, savor divine Italian dishes such as Italian Sausage and Peppers with Marinara Sauce and Filet Tips Florentina.

ACURA

But there's also steaks, seafood "Camp Walton style" and even a kids' menu.

Hours: Lunch M-F 11-2; Dinner M-Th 5-8; F-Sat 5-9; Closed Sundays.

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

Ovide at Hotel Effie

Have you tried the Seasonal Special at Ovide at Hotel Effie? Mondays at 5 p.m., enjoy some of Chef Hugh Acheson's favorite dishes with a seasonal prix fixe menu. Choose one starter, one entrée and one dessert for just \$50. Ask your server about the wine pairing option. Visit Hoteleffie.com for more information

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of Bottomless Mimosas. Watch Tailfins' sushi chef create right in front of your eyes. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, including sushi rolls and sake bombs. Scrumptious Early Bird Dinner Specials Monday to Thursday, 4-6 p.m. Happy hour from 4-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, featuring \$20 domestic bottle buckets, \$5 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs. Be sure to check out the new Video Wall upstairs, possibly the largest indoor TV on the harbor.

DAILY CRUISES: Introducing Tailfins Island Adventure. Departures seven days a week aboard "Always Workin'," Tailfins' 45-foot-long cruiser. Enjoy the Destin Harbor and Crab Island like never before. Choose between the three-hour tour, sunset cruise or Thursday night's spectacular fireworks cruise. Book online, tailfinsislandadventure.com.

(850) 842-3333 On the Harbor in Destin, 172 Harbor Blvd. tailfinsdestin.com

Join Women United for Brunch and Bubbly May 7

Join the ladies of Women United for its 2nd Annual Brunch and Bubbly presented by Cox. Sunday, May 7, at 11:30 a.m. at 109 Brooks St SE in Fort Walton Beach. Wear your favorite pink dress (or blouse) and hear from passionate female leaders discussing the work of United Way Emerald Coast and Women United in providing women and girls access to mental health resources and educa-



tion in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Tickets are on sale now at www.united-way.org/ womenunited. General admission starts at \$65, Bottomless Bubbly VIP is \$75 and a Table of 8 is \$550.



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Bitterroot





Page 17

Get Hook'd Academy Creates Lifelong Anglers

By Kenneth Books

Surrounded by the Gulf of Mexico and Choctawhatchee Bay, it's natural for local residents to take to the water and try to land that trophy fish. But there's more to fishing than baiting a hook and casting a line. No one is born with fishing skills. And, as the saying goes, give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and you feed him for life.

they can take home and review. "We give them as much information as possible to make them successful and confident," Rob savs

Rob is no stranger to the water or to fishing. Since 2018, he has run L4K Charters in the waters off Bluewater Bay. "The skills I learned in the Marine Corps help me to manage my business," he says.

But he's not the only author-

Academy.

kids run into me at Walmart, run across the aisle and hug my legs," he says. "I get emails with pictures of fish and captions that say, 'Look what I caught.""

> Rob started the Academy after he spied a couple of little boys with big reels. They were

casting but obviously didn't know what they were doing. "I talked to their mom and asked if I could take them fishing," Rob says. "We went four times. I didn't charge them anything. And they caught something every time.'

While the emphasis is on fishing, Rob says the Academy has other long-reaching effects. "We're creating good environmental stewards and environmental protectors," he says. "They become responsible kids and leaders of the future."





Into the breach steps Capt. Rob Hansill, an engineer who retired from the Marine Corps after 22 years, with a penchant for teaching.

Four times a year, Rob runs the Get Hook'd Academy at Bluewater Bay Marina, providing young people with techniques that will serve them for the rest of their lives on the water. The four-session classes take place in early spring, May, August and September. This will be the fourth year the Academy has operated. So far, there are 94 graduates of the Academy.

"We base it on school holidays, so we can get four consecutive Mondays in a row," Rob, 51, says.

Each class runs three hours, from 4 to 7 p.m., which Rob admits is "kind of a stretch for a kid who goes to school all day, but it works."

Rob's teaching method includes quick demonstrations followed by hands-on training. For example, he'll show a knot, then the students will work toward mastering it.

The students are provided videos of the classwork, which the kids top-of-the-line equipment," Rob says. "You can't go to Walmart and buy a little kit; it won't do."

another

at cost. "We

The next class, which meets May 1, 8, 15 and 22, will include 16 students, Rob says, which is a larger number than he prefers. "I try to keep it at 12," he says, "but it's hard to keep up with demand." Students range in age from 7 to 12, all recruited through word of mouth.

The most difficulty the Academy runs into is bad weather. "We pray for the best weather and calm water," Rob says.

The fourth class is an actual fishing tournament, letting the students practice their newfound skills. And the tourneys sometimes have interesting aspects.

"The first tournament, we had two girls on the boat," Rob says. "One caught a fish, accidentally stepped off the boat and went into the water. She handed me her rod and real and said, 'Don't lose my fish!' Then she went on to win the tournament."

Former students often stav in touch with Rob. "I've had

Sports 🔅

LIONFISH

continued from page 1

is undeniable," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. "It not only helps to remove this invasive species, but it brings so many different local industries together within a family-friendly atmosphere that's accessible to the public. This event grows each year and it could not happen without the hard work of the Coastal Resource Team within our Tourism Development Department."

The festival includes the Emerald Coast Open Tournament May 19-20. The tournament gives divers the opportunity to compete for prize money totaling nearly \$100,000 in categories like most lionfish caught and largest and smallest lionfish. In 2019, ECO had 189 participants and removed 19,167 lionfish throughout the tournament 14,119 in three days. ECO gave away \$48,000 in cash prizes and more than \$10,000 in gear prizes. Last year's tournament was a great success and removed 13,835 lionfish from local waters. The record for the smallest lionfish was broken at 39 millimeters during the main tournament by Alabama Jammin. Diver Tim Shivers collected 604 lionfish during the pre-tournament which surpassed the 2019 record. Tournament weigh-ins will be held behind AJ's Seafood





& Oyster Bar on May 21.

Leading up to the tournament, Emerald Coast Open Restaurant Week offers the public unique lionfish dishes prepared by chefs at local restaurants. Each evening, a local restaurant serves a unique lionfish dish on their menu. The fish caught pre-tournament are provided to the participating restaurants to serve. Each dish is also judged and the winning chef crowned at the end of the week. Last year, the lionfish dishes were scored by a host of judges including a New Yorker Magazine journalist and Chief Scientist for NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries. A scoring system was used and Chef Al Massa took the highest marks with Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer creation. They presented a Lionfish Pan-Seared dish with Black Forbidden Rice, Melting Zucchini Ribbons, with a Chardonnay Shellfish butter.

The festivities also include Lionfish & Libations on May 20 at the Harbor Walk Village, where you can try samplings of various local brews paired with food provided by participating vendors and learn more about lionfish.

"Emerald Coast Open and the Lionfish Removal & Awareness Day Festival continues to grow and provide awareness of lionfish removal which lessens the threat to our native wildlife in Destin-Fort Walton Beach. Our community sponsors make it possible for us to host an event that is not only educational but an enjoyable experience for families to attend on the Destin Harbor," said Alex Fogg, Coastal Resource Manager, Des-

tin-Fort Walton Beach.

For official tournament rules, registration and more information, please visit: www.emeraldcoastopen.com.

For more information on Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida, please visit: www.destinfwb. com.

Step One Motorsports Shines with Quadruple Header and Wins for Ambassadors

Step One Motorambassadors sports experienced a historic weekend recently as there was a quadruple header for the first time Representing ever. drivers Juan Manuel Correa, Chris Walsh, Chandler Smith and Romain Grosjean all competed in different races and categories. Juan Manuel Cor-

rea represented the team in F2 and placed 10th in Australia, claiming points for the team. Chris Walsh drove in GT4 America, while Chandler Smith competed in Xfinity and won his first race of the season at Richmond Raceway. Romain Grosjean drove in INDYCAR racing and made a great showing for the team. "We are thrilled to



have such a talented group of drivers representing Step One Motorsports, and we can't wait to see them excel on the racetrack. We invite all our fans to stay tuned for more updates and exciting news from Step One Motorsports," said Maureen Bierman, Director of Marketing, Step One Automotive Group.





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NWFSC National Championship Three-peat

By Doug Stauffer

Champs again! Crowning National Champions in Northwest Florida is becoming habit forming with the NWFSC basketball programs. The college's women's basketball team did it again, winning the 2023 National Junior College Athletic Association Division I Women's Basketball Championship. This is the second national championship for the Lady Raiders, having been crowned two years ago. The men's basketball team filled in the 2022 gap by winning the championship. That's the threepeat: Lady Raiders (2021), Raiders (2022), Lady Raiders (2023). Be sure to get your season tickets for 2024.

The Lady Raiders' two national titles are the first in program history. President Devin Stephenson congratulated the team and their coach, saying, "I couldn't be prouder of the Lady Raiders and coach Bart Walker. It is an outstanding achievement



team led by more than five points in the second half. Keeping the game within reach helped Mya Pierfax ice the game by making two free throws with 5.5 seconds in overtime.

The action took place at the Rip Griffin Center in Lubbock Christian University, Texas. The Raiders spotted their opponent



Photos courtesy NWFSC



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and a testament to our commitment to excellence at Northwest Florida State College. The best truly is our standard."

The Lady Raiders defeated the dynasty-driven Trinity Valley Community College Lady Cardinals in a 66-63 nail-biter. The game started with Trinity Valley jumping out to a 9-0 lead in the first four minutes of the contest, but the Lady Raiders remained poised, resilient, and determined.

"We matured a lot and we had to match their physicality," Burt said. "That was the biggest thing was we got tougher as the season came on. We found our team's heart this week and that's why we won this."

In a game with nine lead changes and eight ties, neither

10 points in the first quarter before mounting a furious comeback. Their dominating defense along with an exceptional execution on offense made the winning difference.

Sophomore Sakima Walker was named the Most Valuable Player of the 2023 NJCAA DI Women's Basketball Championship. Her 23 points led the Raiders with Destiney McPhaul, Zayla Tinner adding 11 points each. Sakima recorded 80 points and 42 rebounds throughout the national tournament.

Fans can follow NWFSC's athletics on Twitter by following @NWFRaiders or by visiting NWFRaiders.com for more information.

Part 1: Pre Owned Sports Cars Under \$50,000 That Make Great Daily Drivers

By WILL ESTELL

If you consider yourself an automobile connoisseur of any depth, it's almost certain you could probably guess the cars that would make up a list of this title, simply based on common knowledge of what is and isn't a real sportscar and what does and doesn't make economic sense for the average person to daily drive.

You wouldn't, for example, populate a sports car list such as this with the likes of modern-day Camaros, Mustangs, BMW 4 series coupes or Audi A5 Cabriolets—though all of those are great vehicles in their own right, and some I've even owned and appreciate. However, those all fall into the GT (Grand Touring) category, and even with brute power and only two doors, they aren't really sports cars.

At the other end of the spectrum, as much as I can appreciate the more exotic makes, you can't include anything made by Ferrari, Lamborghini, McLaren, Lotus or a host of other makes on this list. Mostly because even as true sports cars they can't be had for the \$50,000 ceiling here, and even if they could I couldn't—with good conscious— suggest anyone try to daily drive anything that has \$25,000, 15,000- mile service requirements or (insert used \$30,000 Maserati's here) has a high probability of developing a new problem on the roundtrip to Fresh Market or Starbucks.

In Part 1, we take a look at three tried and true sports cars that are both priced accordingly and have a reliability record that leads to the makings of a great daily driver that won't break the bank or live at the shop.

Chevrolet Corvette

Since its introduction in 1953, the Corvette has been known as America's sequential sportscar. For the purpose of this list we'll talk about the C7 iteration of the Corvette, which ran from 2014 to 2019, first rolling off the Bowling Green assembly line in September of 2013. The C7 (for 7th generation) boasts a sports car chassis, a drivetrain that provides supercar performance, and offers a standard of reliability that allows for it to be driven daily, with very basic routine maintenance.

The C7 came standard with a 6.2-liter V8 and either a 7-speed manual, or 6 (2014) then 8-speed automatic trans-



mission. At just 3,347 lbs., the C7 has a great power to weight ratio that trumps many way more expensive, and less reliable, sports cars, while still being relatively easy to find for under our \$50,000 limit here—usually with relatively low miles too, as many original owners didn't buy them as their only car.

Porsche Boxster and Cayman Those who know sports cars are well aware of what you get with most any of the sportier ventures from Porsche. Sure, they're not a bargain to buy new, and the maintenance cost can be quite extravagant for some of the more problematic years. However, a Boxster or Cayman handles like a dream, drives like a sports car should, and, if you buy the right car, can give years of dependable daily service.

Having owned several vintage Porsches from 70's and 80's Targa's to four 914's, to a 924S and 944S, I'm more of a fan of the classic, air-cooled cars. However, for this list we're going to be going a little newer-and more affordable-than those classic 911's and 914's. I believe the third generation (981) of the Boxster/Cayman twins (the Boxster a drop top, the Cayman a fixed roof), gives the most bang for the buck for everyday driving in a Porsche that can be had under our \$50,000 price range.

The 981 version was available new from 2012-2016 and features the then newly improved 2.7 liter flat 6, with your choice of the 6-speed manual, or Porsche's 7-speed PDK au-

LisaTurpinFitness

tomatic. The hotter S variant carries a 3.4-liter powerplant. There were other hot editions, too, including a GTS derivative, but those are likely to still be outside our price ceiling given here.

The 981 cars brought new 911 derived styling, a 40% more rigid chassis, and the same great handling and precision that we've all come to expect from mid-engine engineering and weight distribution. These cars are relatively dependable and can rack up past 150,000 miles easily when maintained correctly. There is a downside though, as most any in-depth engine repair (more than oil changes, basically) that any Boxster or Cayman could ever need, requires actually dropping the engine from the bottom side in order to access for repairs. This means vou want to buy a really good, mechanically sound car that's been driven and maintained.

Come back next month for Part 2 as we look at five more great sports cars under \$50,000 to drive daily.

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur, occasional actor, and coastal real estate professional with over 600 published magazine features in an array of genres. Over the past 25 years Will has been instrumental in founding 12 new magazines from concept to fruition, while also serving as editor 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. Will is a regular contributor to Life Media's publications, and in his free time likes to play with cars—real ones.



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🐞 Wellness

Important Cholesterol Management Update



BY LEE DAVIS, RPH

Important changes in blood cholesterol management have been put into place recently. Statin drug therapy is still the mainstay of treatment. However, the threshold at which to begin statin therapy has been lowered. Familiar medications such as Rosuvastatin (Crestor), Atorvastatin (Lipitor), Pravastatin (Pravachol), Simvastatin (Zocor) and other statins have been around for years. These medications have proven to have beneficial effects in reducing the bad cholesterol, known as LDL-C, and thus reducing the threat of cardiovascular disease including heart attack and stroke. The new change in the management of LDL-C is a lower threshold in which to begin the statin therapy for certain patient groups.

In the past, the rule of thumb to begin statin therapy was an LDL-C greater than 100mg/ dl. This is still the case when there are primary risk factors only such as high blood pressure or a history of cardiovascular disease. However, according to the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association, when there are secondary risk factors involved as well, then a tighter LDL-C control is required. When secondary risk factors are present along with primary risk factors, the new threshold to begin statin therapy is an LDL-C of 70mg/dl and above. Secondary risk factors include age (40-75), diabetes and nicotine status.

An ASCVD (AtheroSclerotic CardioVascular Disease) Risk Calculator is available online to predict the potential 10-year risk of a major ASCVD event. After entering the required information, If the ASCVD Risk Calculator gives a value between 7.5% to 20%, then you fall into the new treatment category of LDL-C of 70mg/dl. The web address for the Risk Calculator is tools.acc.org/ ASCVD-Risk-Estimator-Plus. Blood pressure and cholesterol measurements will be needed as part of the calculations.

Statin drugs have received a bad reputation over the years due to troublesome side effects as well as perceived ineffectiveness. Research has shown that approximately 50% of statin prescriptions have either not been filled or were discontinued within the first six months of therapy. The staff at Specialty Pharmacy Services hope to reverse this trend. We want to bring the importance of statin therapy to the forefront in the fight against heart disease. Please reach out with questions using the Risk Calculator tool, minimizing statin drug side effects, or questions you should discuss with your physician.

Simplify your Meds. Simplify your Life. Make an appointment today and let us discuss your medication profile. Call us at (850)226-8162 or email rxstrip@ivstatinc.com. You can also visit us on the web at www.WeManageMeds.com for more information. Our office is conveniently located at 533 Eglin Parkway NE, Fort Walton Beach, in Paradise Plaza next to Denny's.

References:

Khera, A., (2019), The New 2018 Cholesterol Guidelines, Circulation Journal.

Grundy,S.M., et al, (2019), 2018 AHA/ACC/MultiSociety Guideline on Management of Blood Cholesterol, Circulation Journal.





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Wellness

Regret Avoidance vs. Living and Learning



By Stephenie Craig, JOURNEY BRAVELY

I was a high school senior deciding between college in my home town or five hours away. I meticulously weighed the pros and cons and spun up scenarios of different directions my life might take if I didn't choose the exact right university. The back and forth had a deadline and I eventually decided to leave my home town. Five years later, I

was 1 year into a job, married, and moving forward in life when it hit me...it didn't really matter which school I chose. Either way, I would have chosen the same career path, likely married the same person (since he was a childhood friend), and my life would have been good. Some things would have been different, but it all would have turned out okav.

Do you ever find yourself immobilized in decision making because you fear regret? Maybe you feel that every decision needs to be made perfectly in order for your life to progress well. Fear of regret can make it hard to choose a school, take a job, commit to a relationship, make a move, or plan a trip. Worrying that every decision might be the wrong decision can keep you from enjoying your life and creates a stuck feeling of anxiety.

What if there was a way to flip the script in your head about every decision being a chance for failure and regret? What if every decision is an opportunity to live and learn, to grow and become wiser?

I talk with hundreds of humans each year about various life decisions. Over time, I have observed and embraced the reality that most decisions don't have one right path. Most decisions have some flexibility and you could choose one of various options and still experience a positive outcome. Of course there are poor, unwise decisions and we all want to avoid those. But outside of that, most decisions aren't permanent, can be adjusted if needed, and produce growth and learning. It's possible to define a life well lived as one characterized by growth and learning rather than by a list of specific accomplishments. So, how do you shift from a regret avoidance approach to a living and learning approach to life?

5 Ways to Shift from Regret Avoidance to Living and Learning

1. Identify the decision at hand and notice any fear of regret thoughts surfacing in



your mind and body. Name the fear of regret to yourself and gently release the thought rather than obsessing about worst case scenarios.

2. Brainstorm decision options. Notice that most of the time, multiple healthy decision options exist. Narrow your brainstorm down to the top 2 or 3 decision options that seem wise and in line with your values.

3. Remember your decision history. Remind yourself of times when decisions have been flexible and could be adjusted over time. Remind yourself of times when decisions have produced growth and learning that resulted in positive change in your life. Remind yourself of times when even decisions you would make differently now taught you something important

you might not otherwise have learned. Try journaling using the above reminders as prompts. 4. Watch for life's lessons.

As you make decisions, watch for opportunities to learn, to pivot, to embrace a new skill or character quality. When something doesn't go like you planned, reach for the learning, notice the discomfort, then be open to growing. Our greatest times of personal growth tend to result from unexpected and hard circumstances.

5. Embrace the resulting freedom from letting go of fear of regret. Lean into the joy of knowing the vast majority of your decisions are able to shape you into a more mature and whole person if you don't resist the process. Try creating an internal message like, "I'm going to make a wise decision based on the information I currently have. I will make adjustments as needed. I will embrace all the growth and learning from the decision I'm making and choose not to regret it." It's okay if regret emerges from time to time. Gently dismiss it and move forward with your new approach.

As you seek to release fear of regret and incorporate joyful living and learning into your journey, you can connect with us at journeybravely.com.





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If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, you may be a good candidate for A Smile Makeover.





Wellness



By Dr. RICHARD CHERN, M.D. If you haven't heard already there is a new weight loss medication available at a reasonable cost. semaglutide is a GLP-1 receptor agonist which means it activates the GLP-1 receptor. Still confused? It doesn't matter. It has several important actions in the body.

Semaglutide ultimately helps

BY KAY LEAMAN,

HealthyLife

Health Architect, HealthyDay

Gout is a painful form of

arthritis that occurs when high

levels of uric acid in the blood

form crystals and accumulate in

and around the joint. However,

gout can still occur without high

your body lose weight by improving the regulation of sugar levels and insulin levels in the body. If this sounds like a medication for diabetes instead of weight loss then you would be correct. This class of medications was developed to improve diabetes. Astonishingly, in studies, many of my patients lost significant weight. In fact, up to 30% of their body weight. And, much of the weight stayed off after stopping the medication.

This medication also slows the stomach. Food stays in the stomach longer so you feel full longer. And your stomach gets full faster so you eat less. These medications help people lose significant weight and you lose weight without feeling hungry! Sounds like magic, right?

I have been seeing patients for over 30 years. I have seen so many weight loss drugs come on and go. This is the first time I have ever been excited to tell people about a weight loss medication.

So how is it possible this medication is available? Well, this medication was initially Ozempic. The FDA allows a new medication to have a patent, or monopoly, on the medication for many years. They say this gives the company enough time to recoup their cost of development. This medication was being sold for over \$1500/ month and was only available to patients with diabetes.

Fortunately for us the drug company had no idea that the medication was going to be so popular and they essentially could not keep up with demand. They ran out of medication! So how is the medication available? The two ways branded medication can be manufactured by other companies is if the medication's patent has expired OR if the medication is no longer available from the manufacturer. So as soon as the company ran out, the other companies jumped in and started production of the generic equivalent

semaglutide. It's possible this price break might end once the drug company gets production online but we just don't know.

If you're interested in losing significant amounts of weight and keeping it off, without feeling hungry you should give us a call at 850-837-1271. We still have appointments open.

Dr Richard Chern MD and Sue Griffin ARNP specialize in hormone therapy for both men and women and have been seeing patients in Miramar Beach for 10 years. Dr Chern also teaches hormone therapy to physicians across the county. Give them a call today at 850-837-1271 for your appointment.

Preventing and Dealing with Gout

UA levels. The onset of gout is sudden with severe joint pain, redness (feels like the joint is on fire) and is tender to the touch. It often occurs at the base of the big toe, but can affect other joints as well. It is a type of arthritis which creates inflammation in the affected area. Men are more prone than women to have gout. The chances for women increase after menopause. Areas affected are the joints, bursae (sac between bones in joints), tendon sheaths and kidneys.

Gout arthritis increases bone fracture risk notably due to low vitamin D levels but also oxidative stress and inflammatory cytokines induced by hyperuricemia. Inflammatory cytokines and oxidative stress can increase bone resorption and decrease bone formation increasing the risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures.

Uric acid is produced when purines (a naturally occurring chemical in the body and some foods) are broken down during digestion. UA normally passes through the kidneys and exits through urine without issue. Higher levels due to excess production of UA or failure to eliminate properly triggers the condition.

- **Risk Factors:**
- Family history
- Age and sex
- Diet

• Obesity (UA levels higher primarily due to lowered elimination)

• Medical Conditions: HBP, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, heart disease, kidney disease, kidney stones, heart attacks, congestive heart failure, psoria-

• Any disease that increases UA levels

• Certain medications: Diuretics (helps body to eliminate fluid), low-dose aspirin, Cyclosporine (immunosuppressant), niacin-B vitamin (if taken in large amounts).

A healthy diet (fruit, veggies, whole grains) can help alleviate

Continued on next page





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Shaping Up with Workout Music

Did you know listening to music while you work out can boost your athletic performance and make your hard-earned hours in the gym even more effective?

The Benefits of **Music with Exercise**

More Optimism: The larg-

est (and possibly most rewarding) benefit is that it promotes a positive attitude. In February 2020, a team of researchers published an article in Psychological Bulletin which reviewed different studies on music and exercise. They found that people who listened to music while exercising

felt more positive no matter how intense the workout or their experience level.

Push Harder: Listening to your playlist of workout motivation music has also been shown to reduce what gym-goers call "RPE" or "rate of perceived exertion" and discomfort. This is a



Discover for yourself what Stem Cell Activation Therapy can do. Meet Dr. Jeffrey Hubbard, M.D., M.S.



Dr. Jeffrey Hubbard, M.D., M.S. is a concierge medical doctor, researcher, and entrepreneur on a quest to enlighten people about the long-term effects of poor diet, stress, and unhealthy lifestyle habits on the body. Through provision of personalized proactive wellness solutions and technologies, he believes these potential health problems can be prevented. In addition to his love for the core sciences and genuine empathy for the sick, Dr. Hubbard sought a career in medicine because the urban areas of Houston, TX where he grew up were underserved and lacked access to quality healthcare providers.

In 2014, Dr. Hubbard's career shifted from the traditional practice of medicine towards integrated functional approaches to wellness, the delivery of care, and medical entrepreneurship. His pursuit of the latest advancement in products and services led to the biotechnology patch company called Lifewave and their Stem Cell X39 Patch. Dr. Hubbard says "This patch is the future of stem cell therapy."

Practitioners Tuesday, June 13:

On Tuesday, June 13th, Dr. Hubbard will share the science, testimonials and how you can find relief from acute pain, inflammation, chronic fatigue, restless sleep and much more.. while focusing on the science he will show you how to expand your practice with this leading edge, revolutionary (all natural) technology! Register Here: https://bit.ly/DrJeffEventJune13

General Public Wednesday, June 14:

We invite you to see how you can find natural relief from pain, inflammation, fatigue, sleeplessness, as well as age related issues. Register Here: https://bit.ly/DrJeffEventJune14

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scale from 1-10 which rates how difficult you found the exercise, and how many more repetitions you have left in yourself at the end. A study found that listening to your preferred music genre created improvements in maximum strength, endurance, and a reduced RPE rating. Exercise feels easier with music!

In the Mood to Groove: The more rhythmic and groovy the music, the more we want to move, nod our heads, tap our feet, or break out into dance. A study in Brain Cognition found that "high groove" music activates the "motor system", or the area of our brain which makes us move. Workout music is like nature's motivation to get moving, combined with some motivational "eye of the tiger" style lyrics and you're unstoppable!

Designing Your Perfect Workout Playlist

You might think that the ideal workout music is something hard-hitting and fast-paced, like a thumping EDM bassline or some gritty rock tunes. But there are many other factors to consider when constructing your perfect playlist.

Find the right pace: Have you tried matching the tempo of your workout songs to the

tempo of your movement? One study found that the ideal tempo (speed) for cycling is between 124 and 140 beats per minute, whereas, the ideal tempo for running on a treadmill is a narrower range of 123 to 131 bpm. These ranges are the easiest to move your feet in time to the beat or maintain energy during strength training. You can use tools like songbpm.com to help find your best tempos.

Music isn't just for high-intensity workouts either - a slower tempo can suit lighter or slower workouts such as walking, yoga or pilates.

Create a musical journey: It's a good idea to start and end your workout with some calmer music to ease you in. SoulCycle instructor Parker Radcliffe likes to build his playlists with the first song to "establish strength," second song to "get the oxygen moving through the body," then reach full intensity by the third song.

Is Workout Music for You?

By using music, you can get more of what you need from your exercise experience, whether it's some motivation, a steady beat to run to or just something to make the experience more enjovable.

GOUT

continued from previous page

or prevent this painful disease. Cherries have been shown to reduce symptoms. Foods to avoid due to their sugar content or purine levels are:

• Steak and organ meats

· Sweetbreads and other sugary food and sodas

· Seafood such as anchovies, shellfish, sardines and tuna are higher in purine than other types but the health benefits of of fish may outweigh the risks

· Alcohol and beer (avoid during gout attacks), wine doesn't appear to increase risk

High quality supplements can play a positive role in treating gout. They can also improve metabolism, reduce inflammation, improve kidney function and filtration, and may help keep UA levels normal. Certain antioxidants also help to reduce inflammation as well as reduce frequency and severity of attack.

Vitamin D: High levels of UA inhibit vitamin D production. D deficiencies are common with gout.

Grape Seed extract with Vitamin C: Best supplement Dr. Ladd has seen to reduce symptoms of gout. Patients had great success reducing pain and recurrence of gout flare ups. Doses varied with patients.

Joint support with curcumin (turmeric extract) mixed with vitamin C and several other important supporting ingredients creates a synergistic safe anti-inflammatory response that reduces pain effectively, while at the same time helps heal the tissues.

If you feel you may be at risk it may be time to take steps toward a healthier lifestyle. As we used to say in the olden days,"'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Here's to Health.

succeed.hdhl@gmail.com



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL Advisor and Branch Manager

Should investing be about fear or should it be about optimism? And which is the greater motivator of behavior and action? We have often heard that perception without any confirmation indeed becomes reality. Investors are bombarded almost daily with messages of fear. As a result some may give up hope at the worst possible time and change their course of action or their plan. We are reminded of the coach and his or her team sticking to their game plan even if they are down early on in the game. What if however it is not early in the game, rather its midway or towards the end? We think, once an investor reviews objective, risk tolerance and time frame, then they compare that with their current strategy and make changes as needed or wanted.

Investors can become overly worried when one talking head after another speaks about capitulation and that things will go from bad to worse. We think it fair to point out that often the talking head may be the type of professional investor, a hedge fund manager for example, that often can profit in up and down markets and that it is the very volatility they speak to that creates opportunity (with extraordinary risk) for them.

We believe that the individual investor should focus on the greater picture, the entire game, not just a particular slice of it. We look at the long-term returns and see that stocks are one of the higher returning investments, over time. Over time.

Diversification is critical as well. Bonds can play a part in diversifying a portfolio or perhaps generating income. It is challenging for many to find a timing strategy that outperforms a well thought out buy, hold and adjust as needed strategy.

Many in the media speak of anything but optimism. Some

Insights for Investors May 2023 might easily draw the conclusion that it is over and that it is reconciliation time with the financial history of this nation. We don't understand how you can explain away that there is an entire generation (much greater in size) that is following the baby boomers. They are growing their careers, their family, and their lives and consuming. That might help explain why despite 9 straight interest rate hikes that there is still a housing shortage. And there is a worker shortage. Demand is growing or is resilient. Affluence and standard of living have never been greater. Innovation and competitiveness continue to fuel the engine for America and the world.

If a more optimistic, longterm view makes sense, we think investors can build toward and achieve their goals.

As investors contemplate their needs and objectives, we add that we believe that a portfolio should be diversified by security selection as well as asset class and that time frame, risk tolerance, tax status and ultimate objective should be the guiding light in a well-balanced portfolio.

There are special risks associated with investing with bonds such as interest rate risk, market risk, call risk, prepayment risk, credit risk, reinvestment risk, and unique tax consequences. Investments in municipal securities may not be appropriate for all investors, particularly those who do not stand to benefit from the tax status of the investment. Municipal bond interest is not subject to federal income tax but may be subject to AMT, state or local taxes. U.S. government bonds and Treasuries are guaranteed by the U.S. government and, if held to maturity, offer a fixed rate of return and guaranteed principal value. CDs are insured by the FDIC and offer a fixed rate of return, whereas the return and principal value of investment securities fluctuate with changes in market conditions. An investment in a money market fund is neither insured nor guaranteed by the FDIC or any other government agency. Although the fund seeks to preserve the value of your investment at \$1.00 per share, it is possible to lose money by investing in the fund. A fixed annuity is a long-term,

tax-deferred insurance contract designed for retirement. Fixed annuities have limitations. If you decide to take your money out early, you may face fees called surrender charges. Plus, if you're not yet 591/2, you may also have to pay an additional 10% tax penalty on top of ordinary income taxes. You should also know that a fixed annuity contains guarantees and protections that are subject to the issuing insurance company's ability to pay for them. The S&P 500 is an unmanaged index of 500 widely held stocks that is generally considered representative of

the U.S. stock market. Inclusion of this index is for illustrative purposes only. Keep in mind that individuals cannot invest directly in any index, and index performance does not include transactions costs or other fees, which will affect actual investment performance. Investing involves risk and you may incur a profit or loss regardless of strategy selected. Diversification and asset allocation does not ensure a profit or protect against a loss. Holding investments for the long term does not ensure a profitable outcome.

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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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Business



By JOE CAPERS

With Spring Break and Summer around the corner, a lot of us locals (and our guests) will be out in our golf carts. You might even want to purchase one. Just remember, as there are different kinds of golf carts, which you'll discover when you go to the dealership and start looking at them, there's also different types of insurance coverage depending on your vehicle.

Let's shed some light on the differences, coverages and when you need what.

To begin with, there are two main 'uses' for golf carts/LSVs. Either personal or business/ commercial. When your golf cart or LSV is used by you and your direct family members only, that's considered personal use. If you have a rental condo, for instance, and include a golf cart for your renter's use, that makes it business/commercial.

So, you're wondering, what's the big deal? Let's start with personal use and the two types – golf carts and LSVs. Golf carts are usually electric and have a maximum speed of about 15 mph and are designed to be used on your property or within the community your home is located, and back and forth to the

It's Golf Cart Season! Make Sure You Have the Correct Coverage for Yours

golf course. They aren't tagged or registered for driving on the street like your car. Some home or condo policies might include minimal golf cart coverage with an endorsement, but this won't give you everything you need and is not recommended. A separate golf cart policy would give you the best coverage.

Next, there are $\overline{L}SVs$, or low speed vehicles. These are a type of golf cart with a maximum speed of around 25 mph and are manufactured with safety features such as rear-view mirrors. seat belts, brake lights, and turn signals, among other features. When tagged and registered, they are allowed on public roads with posted speeds of a maximum 35 mph.

There are differences in both coverage and premium. Essential golf cart coverages for any Personal Insurance Program should include: Liability to Others (Bodily Injury and Property Damage), Medical Payments, Guest Limits Liability, Uninsured Motorist Limits, and, if you need coverage to protect for damage to your cart, Comprehensive and Collision. BUT, once it's tagged and registered for street use, you will also need (personal injury protec-PIP tion) coverage Florida requires of every vehicle on the road. This one coverage, in insurance speak, changes the product from golf cart coverage to LSV coverage and must be written on an auto policy platform. LSVs are more expensive to insure (with the mandatory PIP coverage) than golf carts, since LSVs are allowed on the road with cars, trucks and semis which increases the risk/exposure substantially.

As an example, your chances of being involved in a severe accident in your complex is much lower than if you were driving your golf cart on a public road. A Mercedes colliding with a golf cart going 35 mph would probably cause more damage than two golf carts bumping heads.

When you allow your renter to use your golf cart, you now need different coverage. If you have a personal use golf cart policy, it will not protect you or your renters if they cause Liability to Others from their negligence. This is where a policy designed for rental exposure is necessary. Because your renter is using your golf cart, this falls under the purview of a commercial product. So, you need a type of Commercial General Liability insurance. This insurance is designed to give you, typically, \$1 million in liability coverage and some physical damage (Inland Marine) coverage for the golf cart. Keep in mind, this product may not have the same coverages as a properly structured personal use golf cart policy as described above. And this policy does not provide the PIP coverage that would be required if the cart is tagged and registered with the state. And it is nearly impossible to find an auto carrier that



will write a policy with PIP if it falls under a rental situation.

Here in Okaloosa and Walton counties, as well as Bay and Escambia counties, we have many beachfront, gated and golf course communities with a plethora of golf carts being used every day.

Talk to your agent to ensure you have the correct coverage for your use as there are many different scenarios that will determine the right coverage for your golf cart.

Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is now Abora Insurance Group. Voted Top in the Market for 10 years in a row, Abora is a full-service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, Freeport, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Abora can find solutions from a wide variety of the best insurance carriers in the market for Home, Auto and Life insurance on your terms. Call (850) 424.6979 or visit Getabora.com.







BY SEAN DIETRICH

It was our place. That's what it was. I grew up in a little fishing village, nestled in the Florida Panhandle.

This was long before the tattoo parlors, before the T-shirt shops, before Whole Foods and Bass Pro.

Today our little town is not even a shadow of its former glory. On any given month, Destin is inundated with 8 million tourists wearing thong bikinis. And those are just the men.

But once upon a time, we had Pepito's. It was your quintessential Mexican dive restaurant. It was clean. The staff was friendly. They had ugly orange walls. The joint was always packed.

They served good food. The chips were always hot. The salsa was fresh from an actual tin can.

They had ice-cold Tecate.

You could order a "King Burrito," and you wouldn't be hungry again for the next three or four presidential administrations.

My first kiss happened outside Pepito's. It was late. Her name was Teresa. She had red hair and she smelled like Head and Shoulders.

Do people name their kids Teresa anymore?

As a young man, all my friends went to Pepito's because it was where you went. We spent entire evenings in those booths, discussing who we were going to grow up to become.

For a few bucks, you could fill your belly on queso dip that would turn your bowels into stone. If you had enough cash left over, you could take in a movie across the street.

Years later, I worked at the restaurant next door to Pepito's. We served cheap sirloins. I was a line cook. I worked in a dank kitchen until 1AM every weeknight, doing dishes.

They were long nights. Pepito's shared our same dumpster. So, whenever I took out the

For your life's

special moments

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Sean of the South



trash, there were always a few Latino guys out there smoking cigarettes, speaking in rapid-fire Español, drinking longneck Pacificos.

I learned to speak Spanish in that alley. I had no idea they were teaching me dirty words.

Before I married, I would take my future-wife to Pepito's. On weekends, they had a mariachi trio. Three portly men played vihuelas, guitaelas and violínos, strolling between tables. If you didn't put money into their guitar soundholes, they would play louder.

One night, I requested the trio play "Besame Mucho" for my fiance. They actually let me sing a song with them. My musical performance was so impressive, all the people in the restaurant sprang to their feet and rushed for the exits.

After we married, my wife

and I lived in a cheap apartment behind Waffle House. It was a horrible place. I got fleas. Twice. We were flat broke, so eating out was a luxury. Whenever we treated ourselves,

we went to Pepito's.

But then, that was a long time ago. Somehow I grew up. And so did our fishing village.

One by one, the mom-andpop shops disappeared and became real estate offices or vape outlets. The post-war block houses were demolished so that homes shaped like the Sears Towers could be built in their places. They tore down the fishing rodeo docks and built Six Flags over Avarice.

But Pepito's was a mainstay. You could always count on Pepito's. You could walk inside, order an immobilizingly cold beer, eat lukewarm guacamole, and play the memory game with old friends.

"Remember when we used to...?" "Remember when we were kids...?" "Whatever happened to what's-her-name...?" For a few bucks, you could

eat mediocre Mexican that tasted the same as it did a lifetime
ago. And you could remember
things.

Such as the night, long ago, when you brought your widowed mother here and broke the news that you were getting married. She cried. And so did you.

Or the night your best friend brought you here and told you he was leaving for Afghanistan in the morning.

Today, they're vacating Pepito's. The property was owned by investors in Canada. But the good ole days are gone. It's been purchased. The new investors want to build a Publix. Tourists got to have their groceries.

Even so, I'll always remember the balmy evenings from the summers of my Florida youth. I'll remember the dim-lit booths of an average Mexican-American eatery, where the promise of my entire future hung in the air.

I'll forever remember how young we were. How smooth our faces looked. And how good it felt when, in that corner booth, a young woman once took my hand and said, "Yes, I'll be your wife."

You can tear down Pepito's. But keep your hands off my memories.

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🔅 Musing

A Pastor's Ponderings: GOAT or GMOAT?



By Rick Moore

After traveling to the far south-east of the Caribbean, we flew to the island of Tobago to see the GOAT. Some say Michael Jordan is the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time). Some say Tom Brady is the GOAT. Some say Elvis Presley is the GOAT. However, we didn't go to see the "Greatest Of All Time" in sports or entertainment. We went to see a real goat race. I had heard of horse racing and dog racing, but I had never heard of goat racing. Several times a year, the island of Tobago features a goat racing festival. Tobago proudly calls itself, "The Goat Racing Capital of the World." When we arrived for one of these events, our host asked us if we would like to enjoy some boiled chicken feet on a stick. Oddly enough, eating chicken feet was not the weirdest part of the day. I had assumed the goats would be pulling a cart behind them, but instead, they pulled humans behind them. The fastest young men and women on the island are selected to race with the goats. There are usually eight teams per race; one human and one goat per team. Each racer stands behind their goat holding on to a rope for dear life. The lanes on the grass track are about one-hundred yards long. When the gates open, it's off to the races.

While pedigree is part of the selection process in choosing a goat that can run fast, the secret is finding goats that can swim. Yes, the race takes place on ground, but the training takes place in the beautiful Caribbean waters surrounding the island. The goats who swim have much more strength in their legs, allowing them to run faster. Unfortunately, goats are much less tolerant of wet conditions than sheep and cattle, and goats will naturally seek shelter from the rain when it is available. Trainers select healthy goats to carry into the water one at a time. If a goat takes to the water and gets accustomed to it in a short time, it is selected to be a member of the racing team. There are many myths surrounding the advantages of swimming in the beautiful Caribbean waters of Tobago, but it is true that the mineral rich waters have several health benefits, even for goats.

Not only are many of the goats in Tobago extremely healthy, but so are the people. I asked our host why? He said it's the chicken feet. I thought he was joking. However, like the health benefits of homemade bone broth, chicken feet have vitamins, minerals and calcium in abundance. Bone marrow carries oxygen to our cells. It is, truly, a natural super-supplement. Self-improvement often requires a willingness to try something you have never tried before. I must confess, that was the first and last time I have eaten chicken feet, but it did inspire me to eat healthier foods.

As I reflect on my life, it seems doubtful I will ever be considered the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) at anything. But I can still become the GMOAT... the "Greatest Me Of All Time." The question is, am I willing to be thrown into the water? Will I allow myself to be placed in "sink or swim" moments that lead to the "Greatest Me Of All Time?" Getting out of our comfort zone isn't comfortable. If you ever feel like a fish out of water, or a goat in water, remember, there is a purpose to every challenge in life. You may not understand the purpose of what you are going through, but there is a purpose. That purpose may not lead you to becoming the greatest entertainer or the greatest athlete, but if it leads to becoming a better you, embrace it.

Rick Moore is Communications Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.



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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.



Tower Committee

MKAF Showcases A Range of Music At 2023 Concerts in The Village

From Classic Rock, Reggae and Disco to Modern Pop, Live Music Series Features Premier Regional and National Musicians and Bands

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation to rock Destin. Tickets are (MKAF) kicked off its highly-anticipated 2023 Concerts in the Village on Thursday, April 20. The area's first live concert series is held each spring on Thursday evenings at the MKAF Dugas Pavilion in Destin. This year's 28th annual family-friendly series runs from April 20 to June 22. The 10-concert live music series will feature premier regional and national musicians and bands performing everything from classic rock, reggae, and disco to modern pop.

May concerts include the following:

Ozomatli takes the stage May 4. A cacophony of sounds melding salsa, jazz, funk, reggae, and hip hop is Ozomatli. This social-minded ensemble rock band formed in Los Angeles in 1995 to give voice to Latinos, fight for workers' rights, and promote a global unity. After performing around the world, this Latin-pop infusion is ready

\$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

May 11 will feature Lucky Chops – New Day, New Tour. Lucky Chops has been unleashing high-energy brassy funk on the world since forming in NYC in 2006.

The intensity of the band's energy is fueled by their desire to share the healing and inspirational power of music with others. It's your lucky day to see Lucky Chops live in concert. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

May 18 get ready to chill with Yacht Rock Revue: Reverse Sunset Tour. This top-notch group of musicians, presented by SiriusXM, trademarked the term "yacht rock," both metaphorically and literally (U.S. Registration Number 3834195). From humble beginnings in a basement, they've rocked onstage with John Oates, Eddie



Money, and now headline soldout shows across the country. Come chill to the smooth sounds of West coast-inspired '70s and '80s rock. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military.

May 25 don't miss Sinfonia Gulf Coast Feat. Morgan James in Symphonic Soul with special guest Ryan Shaw. Morgan James brings the classic sounds of Memphis accompanied by Sinfonia Gulf Coast. This program is a love letter to one of the great American birthplaces of soul, featuring brand-new arrangements of Memphis classics by Al Green,

Otis Redding, Ann Peebles, Sam, and Dave, and, of course, Elvis. James rounds out the evening with her own Memphis soul originals and storytelling. Hear your favorite soul tunes come to life in a brand-new way that will have you dancing and singing along! Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military.

Gates open at 6 p.m. with concerts beginning at 7 p.m. for this come-as-you-are family-friendly outdoor concert series. Bring a lawn chair, picnic, wine, or purchase food and beverages on-site prepared by featured restaurants and food trucks.

General admission varies per concert. Prices range from \$20 to \$35 for adults. Discounts offered for active-duty military (must show ID). New this year, patrons purchasing tickets in advance of concert day will save \$5 per ticket. Children (12 and under) are free. A limited number

of VIP tables (reserved table for eight guests for the entire season) are available for \$2,250. Corporate VIP tables are \$2,750.

Proceeds will fund the MKAF's community outreach mission to provide cultural outreach programs serving K-12 students, adults and children with special needs, at-risk youth, and active/veteran military suffering from visible and invisible injuries in our community.

Purchase tickets online at MKAF.org/events. For more information, call (850) 650-2226.

MKAF members enjoy early entry and free admission to every concert as well as discounted pricing to other MKAF events. For more information on MKAF membership, visit MKAF.org.

Concert lineup is subject to change. All sales are final; sorry, no refunds. Pets, tables larger than two feet, and drones are not permitted. Children 17 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.



Sinfonia Gulf Coast feat. Morgan James MAY 25 | 7 PM





Big Ba

Voodoo Daddy



THURSDAY NIGHTS | APRIL 20 - JUNE 22

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- May 11 | Lucky Chops
- May 18 | Yacht Rock Revue: Reverse Sunset Tour
- May 25 | Sinfonia Gulf Coast feat. Morgan James

June 1 | Gotta Groove Band

June 8 | Adam Ezra Group

June 15 | Journeyman: A Tribute to Eric Clapton

June 22 | Big Bad Voodoo Daddy





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Arts & Music

Get Your Art On with CAA in May

By Christopher Manson

Celebrating its 35th year this month, the Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA) of Walton County's ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival is one of the organization's signature – and biggest – events. In recent years, the CAA has expanded this into Art Month, with visual, performing, and literary arts programming in diverse formats at various venues throughout Walton County.

Additional Art Month events and programs include Under the Sea, a fundraiser for the CAA's Underwater Museum of Art; the Longleaf Writers Conference, formerly the Seaside Writers Conference, a gathering of creative writers from across the nation, featuring award-winning scribes from the worlds of poetry, fiction and screenwriting offering workshops and seminars; Digital Graffiti at Alys Beach, a unique "projection art" festival employing digital technologies; "Sinfonia Goes Pop!," a free concert at the Alys Beach Amphitheatre; performances by the Emerald Coast Theatre Company; and, of course, gallery events.



Find the complete Art Month schedule at culturalartsalliance. com.

CAA Events Director Allie Anderson says patrons can expect new twists for May 13 and 14's ArtsQuest festival at Grand Boulevard Town Center. "Things are different with the layout," she says. "We're expecting around 5,000 people over the weekend." This year's festival includes adult art classes with the likes of Justin Gaffrey, nonstop live entertainment and new sponsors. events are happening almost every day throughout May," says Ms. Anderson. "We support and promote them all and want people to go to as many as they can."

"The

other

Ms. Anderson handles all of the huge CAA events, including the 30A Songwriters Festival and the Flutterby Festival. "Anything involving

500 or more people," she says. She came onboard in September 2022. Prior to that, Ms. Anderson ran her own business designing custom apparel

t-shirts, tote bags and the like
for sororities all over the country. Originally from Panama City, she has also lived in Dallas and California.

Now she's back in Panama City with her two daughters and couldn't be happier. "It's nice to be back with friends and family," says Ms. Anderson. "I appreciate the growth that's going on. There's so much to do here now. I just love the community and how much everyone supports each other."

Her connection to the arts began at a young age. "I was an artist growing up, and my mom is a glass artist," she says. "We used to do paint classes together. We were always around the arts, and I really found an appreciation for it at a young age. My mom is the one who told me about the CAA position."

ArtsQuest officially kicks off Thursday, May 11, at 6 p.m. with the Underwater Museum of Art fundraiser at Grand Boulevard Town Center. The event celebrates the museum's fifth installation with art, dancing, cocktails, food and more. "We'll have two sculptures by Allison Wickey and Zachary Long – about six feet tall each – at Under the Sea for people to view before they go underwater," says Ms. Anderson.

Dallas Primavera, this year's ArtsQuest featured artist, is a longtime CAA member. His work will be featured on posters

and t-shirts. Mr. Primavera is based out of Jacksonville Beach and has been painting for over 20 years. "I'm traveling around the state of Florida to do art shows and trying to get my name out there," he says.

The Florida State alum says he's always been a vivid dreamer. "I have developed a skill that I will try to put into words," the official bio reads. "As I close my eyes, every night I relive the same dream – long halls filled with paintings on both sides, in every color, shape and size.

"At first, I would wake up with a feeling of jealousy, like what I saw was exactly where I was going. A warm wave of understanding washed over me as I realized everything I saw was mine to come. Best part, I remembered everything I dreamt about. To this day, the process is the source of my inspiration, and it keeps getting stronger.

"He does beautiful work," says Ms. Anderson. "The posters are amazing." Discover more at artbydallas.com.



SINFONIA GULF COAST FEATURING MORGAN JAMES

PRESENTS

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Concerts

in the Village

THURS. MAY 25		
7 PM (DOORS OPEN AT 6 PM)	MKAF CULTURAL ARTS VILLAGE DESTIN, FL	
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Sinfonia Gulf Coast featuring powerhouse Broadway vocalist Morgan James in Symphonic Soul accompanied with special guest Ryan Shaw brings the classic sounds of Memphis alive. This special concert is a love letter to one of the great American birthplaces of soul, featuring brand-new arrangements of Memphis classics by Al Green, Otis Redding, Ann Peebles, Sam and Dave, and, of course, Elvis. Morgan James rounds out the evening with her own Memphis soul originals and storytelling. Hear your favorite soul tunes come to life in a brand-new way that will have you dancing and singing along.

Bring a blanket or chair and enjoy dinner al fresco from local restaurants and food trucks.



Proceeds benefit Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and its art education community outreach initiatives.

🐞 Arts & Music

Spring and Summer at ECTC

By Anna Fisher, Associate Artistic and Education Director

Spring is here and summer is right around the corner at Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC). I've already started humming along to all of my favorite Sound of Music songs in preparation for our May 5th-14th production. The hardest part for me is not humming along during the show! The excitement from our young cast members is palpable, not just for this production but for all of our upcoming summer camps as well. We're excited too because that means a whole lot of energetic students dancing, singing, acting, and bringing life to our space. We love providing a place where students can participate in creative, team-based activities that don't involve a screen. There are so many great skills that these kids build while having fun- like teamwork, literacy, confidence, communication, and voice and movement.

Our summer camps start at age 5 (rising Kindergarteners) and go through 12th grade. We offer week-long mini player camps throughout the summer for our youngest students

to act, dance, sing, and create art while learning how to put on a production. Our elementary aged children have their choice of singing and dancing in our week-long Camp Showtime camps, or show their spots in our two-week musical theatre camp 101 Dalmatians. We also offer the one week, non-musical camp for our elementary aged students Alice in Wonderland at three different locations including ECTC, Defuniak Springs, and Gulf Coast State College in Panama City.

Our teens have a variety of choices as well with our oneweek Cabaret Comedy camp, Playwriting camp, and Film camp. We also offer a twoweek, non-musical production camp Puffs, a hilarious Harry Potter-esque play. We round out our summer with a fantastic three-week musical theatre intensive offering for the teens-Grease! Students sharpen their skills while working on a super fun musical that culminates in a fantastic full-length production. Whether you have a student or friend in the show, or you were just "born to hand jive baby," this show is a fun way to end the summer



If that isn't enough theatre for you, our Broadway on the Boulevard summer spectacular is featured every Thursday night at 8:00pm in Grand Boulevard starting May 25th. You can also stay tuned for summer pop up shows in our air-conditioned space at 560 Grand Boulevard, upstairs. There's something for everyone at Emerald Coast Theatre Company this summer so be sure to check out our website and sign up for our newsletter at www.emeraldcoasttheatre. org. See you at the theatre!





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