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Local Signs of Fall: An Array of Art and Music that Heals

By WILL ESTELL

If you're a fan of the arts whether visually, musically or through their power of healing, and if you live anywhere in Okaloosa, Walton or Bay Counties, then you're likely already familiar with Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF)—the outreach and events this organization has been bringing to Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast for almost three decades.

MKAF has grown from its humble beginnings to becoming one of the largest champions of the arts in our beautiful communities that dot this piece of paradise. MKAF is a mission-driven, membership based, not-for-profit organization, with all MKAF event proceeds going to support ArtsReach, the organization's outreach mission.

MKAF events do more than entertain the tens of thousands who attend them each year; they elevate the quality of the people, schools, groups and communities they



impact. MKAF events, such as the annual Festival of the Arts, various concerts, wine tastings and culinary gatherings might be thought of simply as entertainment or something fun to do, but the true mission and impact of the organization is about so much more than providing a good time for attendees and members. It's about making a measurable difference—a real and lasting impact for the betterment of our communities and the people MKAF serves.

Since its inception in 1995, MKAF has enlightened, empowered and educated more than 400,000 children in more than 100 schools and partner agencies throughout Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast. These exciting "Arts Empower" programs provide arts in our children's schools where, as you know if you have a student, much of the arts funding had been stopped. MKAF saw the need and is producing dynamic arts learning opportunities through its ArtsReach education initiative serving local K-12 students, at-risk youth and even those with disabilities through "Arts for All

Abilities." A newer program,

Paint the Music, is a collab-

oration between MKAF and

MKAF continued on page 2

Sharing & Caring of Okaloosa County Expands Food Bank

On Sept. 6, Sharing & Caring of Okaloosa County, Inc. commemorated the completion of its recent building expansion project with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house to show off Fort Walton Beach food bank's new facilities. The project included a 900-squarefoot addition to the east end of the building at 126 Beal Parkway and saw the complete renovation of the structure's interior. The expansion was made possible by grants from Impact100 of Northwest Florida and the John Pettengill Trust.

"We more than doubled our food pantry space," said Sharing & Caring President Ken Winzeler. The expansion also includes a larger lobby, three private offices for interviewing clients, more office space and more

CARING & SHARING *continued on page 2*



The Community

SHARING & CARING

continued from page 1

room for storing the food and personal care items that are distributed to those in need. The pantry remained open for almost all of the approximately year-long construction period.

"We're very proud that in the entire year that we did this, we were only closed for three weeks," said Winzeler. "So, we were able to keep distributing food to our clients."

Sharing & Caring first opened its doors in 1985, based in a building donated by the First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach. They relocated to their present location in

1992. The current building, leased from First Presbyterian Church, was renovated extensively by volunteer labor and generous donations from the community. Over the intervening decades, they've served as an emergency food source for qualifying clients, also providing personal care items and vouchers for prescription medications based on income. The facility's food bank is available to anyone who resides between Hurlburt Field in the west, Destin in the East, and Eglin Air Force Base to the north. Their clients include families, children, seniors, the homeless, and those who are unemployed. Winzeler estimates that the pantry serves about 30





families a day and more than 15,000 clients in the past year alone. Over half of the food



provided at the pantry comes from donations brought in by the community, local churches and businesses. The rest is purchased by Sharing & Caring using financial donations. The increased food pantry space allows the non-profit organization to buy more food in bulk, making their donated dollars go further.

Currently, the facility is

staffed entirely by 41 volunteers who operate the offices and food pantry Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. For those interested in helping out, Sharing & Caring volunteers are available during business hours to accept food and monetary donations as well as personal care items. Tax-deductible monetary donations can also be made on the organization's website: https://www.sharing-n-caring. org. They are always looking for volunteers to help staff the office and food pantry. For more information on volunteering or the food bank, email support. sncfwb@gccoxmail.com or call (850) 244-0778.

MKAF

continued from page 1

Sinfonia Gulf Coast (SGC), and explores the musical classics while channeling students' inner Picasso-students paint to musical selections and are invited to a live SGC concert performance. If you have a child participating in one or more of these school programs, you know how effective they are and crucial the arts are toward molding our upcoming generations.

Through "Warrior Arts," MKAF, too, serves our military population suffering with both physical injuries and invisible traumas and hardships, bring-



PHOTO BY KURT LISCHKA MOON CREEK STUDIO

ing therapeutic benefits to active duty and veteran military service



members. This unique and healing program features Zentangle drawing for mindfulness and there are numerous testimonies to the program's effectiveness.

MKAF's spring and summer Concerts in the Village series showcases some of the most entertaining and talented touring artists in the entire country, bringing thousands of both local and vacationing music and arts lovers to MKAF's Arts Village in the heart of Destin. This fun, musical series raises both awareness and funding, so that MKAF can impact more and more people in our community with each coming year.

As for the upcoming fall and winter events that you can take part in while also knowing you're making a positive difference just by being there, MKAF has quite a few just around the corner:

Festival Of The Arts

Now in its 28th year, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's Annual Festival of the Arts is the place to be Oct. 28-29. The largest and most celebrated art fair

in all of Okaloosa and Walton counties, the annual art fair brings in top-tier artists in an array of media from throughout the country. This October, the growing event will feature more than 100 artists, some with multiple display spaces, all ready to show, talk about and sell their pieces, while competing for various accolades in their respective categories as part of this juried festival. "This year, we enjoyed overwhelming interest and after the blind jury scored more than 200 applicants, we are proud to present more than 100 artists hailing from 17 states across the U.S. and Europe," said Festival of the Arts Producer, Deb Nissley.

In addition to all the unique and creative pieces on display, MKAF's Festival of the Arts also features live music, food trucks, beverages, comedian Jason Hedden as emcee for the festivities and even a VIP Lounge Experience. There's also an available cash bar featuring locally sourced craft beer, including Mattie Light from Destin Brewery, and MKAF's famous Bloody Mary bar to accompany your fun in perusing the festival, seeing friends and finding those perfect pieces to call your own... ones you'll treasure for years and perhaps even hand down.

This year's festival will include a new edition, MKAF's Arty Kick Off Party, October 27th at 6 p.m. at Destin's Henderson Beach Resort-an exciting way to usher in the festival while also partaking in great food, drinks and entertainment. This year's Festival will also

Continued on page 22

bring additional entertainment with Stage Crafters performing scenes from the Broadway musical "Something Rotten," along with local Gulf Coast artist and MKAF Board Member. Maxine



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Avenging 9/11: Courage to Accept a One-Way Mission of Unknowns



By Kelly Murphy-Redd

On September 11, 2001, 2,977 people were killed by Islamic terrorists on our own soil. Thousands more were injured. By the end of the day our government was in motion. The administration, state department, DOD and the intelligence agencies were working to find out who the perpetrators were and to plan a response. Al Qaeda, from their training camps in Afghanistan, were responsible. The Taliban were providing safe haven for their leader, Osama Bin Laden.

Joint Special Forces and CIA teams planned to take tribal leaders, ousted by the Taliban, back into Afghanistan to help start insurgencies against the Taliban. Then Special Forces teams augmented with U.S. Air Force tactical air controllers would work with the Northern Alliance tribes in order to locate and destroy the Taliban. While the Afghan insurgents would directly engage the Taliban, Special Forces and the Air Force tactical controllers would call in air strikes on Taliban targets.

The mission for the CIA and the Special Forces teams was the same: defeat and destroy the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Alex Hernandez, a CIA paramilitary and case officer, who was the deputy chief of CIA Team Alpha, describes the operation as a potential one-way mission filled with unknowns. He says the U.S. doesn't send its soldiers or agency officers on suicide missions but this was close. Alex likes to cite a rule of thumb he used during his military and agency careers: don't do anything stupid. He said this mission required an adjustment to that red line: don't do anything incredibly stupid.

Prior to Team Alpha's insertion, there was no ability to verify information from sources in Afghanistan. There would be no safety net, no rescue, and no medivac ability. The eight-man CIA Team Alpha was given the choice to say no. All said yes. They were mentally and emo-



tionally committed to avenging 9/11. Alex told them to get one-million-dollar life insurance policies immediately.

Tribal warlord, General Dostum popped up on the radar through friendly Uzbekistan intelligence, as a leader who was fighting the Taliban and needed help. The CIA wanted to find Dostum. Uzbek intelligence had his phone number. They talked via satellite used by ship to shore communication.

Team Alpha needed to validate the information they had received. Was Dostum for real? Or was he already captured and the Taliban was using him to lure the CIA in. Alpha needed to validate Dostum welcomed the US Government, he had a viable fighting

force, he was willing to fight the Taliban, confirm where he was, and determine his near-term needs. Dostum said he needed horse feed.

Dostum had no vehicles, only horses. Alex turned to his team and asked if anyone knew how to ride a horse. No one did. This would be on-the-job training.

The insertion plan was brief. Team Alpha would arrive on two Blackhawk helicopters. The pilots were told not to take off right away. They were to remain for 20 to 30 seconds. If no one was shooting at the team when they got off, they would stay.

Team Alpha found themselves in a primitive and high threat environment. They met up with General Dostum who had approximately 300 to 600 fighters. The Taliban had 5000 to 7000 fighters. Team Alpha moved north with Dostum and his men. They were cold, tired, hungry, and didn't know what the outcome would be. The battlefield was perpetually fluid. You only owned the ground you stood on. The team did get uniforms for the fighters, so they could tell the good guys from the bad guvs.

Dostum didn't speak any English though he understood some. He always had an "engineer" by his side. Engineers in Afghanistan were men who were better educated and spoke English. Team Alpha relied on

Continued on page 21



The Community

Happenings Around FWB



The 3rd Annual Wentz Brothers' Festival of Fears Continues to Become Bigger & Better

The Wentz Brothers invite one and all to their third annual Festival of Fears haunted attraction in Fort Walton Beach. This year's event promises to be bigger and better than the last, opening in a new facility at the Santa Rosa Mall. The new location boasts over 80,000 square feet, leaving the Wentz Brothers, Alex and Andrew, with plenty of room to continue growing the Festival of Fears into "the Gulf Coast's premier haunted attraction.'

The 2023 haunt season will introduce guests to a number of new characters, offerings and attractions you won't want to miss. The Festival of Fears will host three all-new, original haunted houses alongside new and im-



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mand Special Tactics Airmen 15-minute escape rooms, a spooky gift shop, food trucks and aircrews who were the first and an expanded bar serving a Airmen to step foot into Afghanvariety of drinks from alcohol istan less than a month after the to event-exclusive Fear Potions. terrorist attacks. Also hear from The Wentz Brothers also plan the first female gunship navigato host a number of new events tor to open fire in combat opheld throughout the season such erations. Lieutenant General Marshall "Brad" Webb, USAF as the inaugural Drop Dead Dis-(retired); Col. Allison Black, and co costume party, two Family Day events, and a special sur-

proved horror-themed midway

games, two haunted,

prise for Friday the 13th.

The Festival of Fears is lo-

building at Santa Rosa Mall and

is open select nights from Sep-

tember 15th to November 4th.

Haunting hours start at 6 p.m. sharp with a special pre-show to

kick things off — so don't be late.

Guests who book their tickets

for any night in September will

receive \$5 off general admission

or \$10 off express entry or VIP

passes using the promo code:

SEPTEMBER at checkout.

Tickets can be purchased at the

door or online at www.wbfesti-

Announced for Honoring

The Greater Fort Walton

Beach Chamber of Commerce

will host "Honoring Our He-

roes: 9/11 America's Response,"

a tribute event dedicated to the

U.S. Military's Task Force Dag-

ger, at 5:30 p.m. on Oct. 21 at

the Northwest Florida Fair-

grounds. This year's event aims

valoffears.com.

Featured Speakers

Our Heroes Banquet

Col. Kurt Buller, USAF (Retired), are set to speak. The event Keeping with the Festival will conclude with a toast includof Fears' tradition of changing the US Army Green Berets ing haunted house themes each of Operational Detachment Alseason, 2023 will boast three pha (ODA) 595, who were the spotlight of last year's event, returning as part of the Chamber's the Bayou, will transport guests tribute to America's Heroes. into a backwoods marsh never Tickets are \$75.00 per person

to spotlight the heroism of Air

Force Special Operations Com-

and include dinner, beer, and wine. Corporate tables are also available, but limited in quantity. Tickets can be purchased at FWBchamber.org or by calling 850-244-8191.

"Celebrating and honoring the bravery of Task Force Dagger is not only vital for paying homage to our military heroes, but it also serves as a poignant reminder of the values we hold dear in our community and as a nation. The Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce is proud to host this event because it underscores the unity, resilience, and indomitable spirit that make America great. We believe it's an essential opportunity for our community to come together, reflect, and express our deepest gratitude for the sacrifices made on our behalf," said Maureen Bierman, 2023 Chairman of the Board, Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce.

"It's not just an event, but a historical reunion, bringing together 13 members of Task Force Dagger who played an instrumental role in the aftermath of 9/11. The evening's toast, inspired by the legacy of the Doolittle Raiders, promises to be a momentous experience that will indelibly imprint on all those present. It is an occasion to celebrate not just military valor but also the spirit of unity and resilience that defines our community and our nation" said Ted Corcoran, President/CEO, Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce.

DESIGN

MEDIA

STRATEGY

Page 5

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Community
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DIGITAL

Page 6

Five Inducted into 2023 Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame

At a recent ceremony, five exemplary women were inducted in the 2023 Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame. Sponsored by the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women, the annual induction ceremony is held in conjunction with Women's Equality Day and is the Commission's oldest and most prestigious award. Women inducted are honored in permanent displays at the Okaloosa County Administration Annex, the Crestview Court House and the Niceville City Council Chambers-monuments to some of the exceptional women in our county's history, as well as tributes that grow annually with each induction ceremony. To date, 130 women have been inducted since the Women's Hall of Fame was established in 1995. The Hall of Fame was created to honor women of Okaloosa County - past and present - whose contributions have been of great value to our community's development. Congratulations to the following exceptional women:

Bonnie R. Barlow -Carolyn Spencer Humanitarian Inductee

She's served as the Alcohol

Edward Jones



Center secretary, teaching Driver Improvement and managing the DUI school at Bridgeway Center for 38 years and has led Bridgeway since 2018. Serving on several local boards including Opportunity Place and the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, Bonnie is also an honorary commander for Eglin's 33 fighter wing and helped establish the thriving One Hopeful Place.

Cindy Frakes — Com**munity Service Inductee**

As a military spouse, Cindy has supported endless women new to that challenging lifestyle. A list of her significant contributions includes: an Okaloosa resident and professional real estate agent for over 40 years; Okaloosa County School Board elected position for 16 years; Guardian ad litem volunteer representing abused and neglected children; Northwest Florida State College Foundation member raising scholarship funds; Opportunity

Place past chair providing housing for homeless families; Taylor Haugen Foundation board member promoting sports safety and protection; Honorary Commander of the 505th Command & Control; former active member of the Junior League; member Daughters of the American Revolution Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter and Past Chair Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County (One Okaloosa).

Judge Patricia Grinsted Professional Leader Inductee

Honorable Judge Patricia Grinsted is the first woman to serve on the bench in Okaloosa County. She was an appointed County Judge from 2004-2021, when she retired. She is currently a Senior Judge appointed by the Florida Supreme Court to sit in all Florida courts. Patricia was actively involved with Okaloosa-Walton Child Care Services, president of the Zonta

Club, served on the Board of Directors for the Okaloosa Guidance Clinic (now Bridgeway Center), was a Child Support Hearing Officer, a member of the Mental Health Association of Okaloosa County and later served as presiding Judge over Okaloosa County Mental Health Court. She also served on the First Judicial Circuit Bench & Bar Professionalism Committee. She was Chair of the Canvassing Board of Okaloosa County overseeing local, state and national elections and an active member of the Florida Bar and Okaloosa Florida Association for Women Lawyers.

Col Teresa W. Ryan -**Military Inductee**

Colonel (Retired) Teresa Ryan DNS served our nation with distinction as an obstetrics nurse, flight nurse, research team nurse, Staff Development Officer, Assistant Chief Nurse, Sexual Assault Responder and Chief Nurse. Her service

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spanned from Langley AFB to **Operation Desert Storm**, **Duke** Field Eglin AFB, to Medical Education and Combat Casualty Reserve during Operation Iraqi Freedom. She left active duty and joined the Air Force Reserve's 919th Medical Squadron at Duke Field and served as the OIC of the Immunizations Clinic. Dr. Ryan is currently Assistant Professor, School of Nursing at NWFSC. She served as an Intelligence Specialist in the U.S. Navy Reserve from 1983 to 1987, holding a TOP SECRET Security Clearance. She's provided leadership and counsel to Healthy Start Coalition, preparing the Pathway for Military Combat Medics legislation, and designing curriculum for NWFSC Nursing Program. She is a published author in the Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing and received many awards including the Military Order of the Purple Heart Special Recognition Award and Meritorious Service Medals with the USAF Nurse Corps.

Lt. Betty Jo Hunter - Pioneer Inductee

Lt. Betty Jo Hunter was known as Momma Jo at the Sheriff's Department. Nominated by Sheriff Eric Aden, Betty Jo was the wife of an active military person and has one son. She has worked in the administration of five Sheriffs, beginning her career as the first lady law enforcement officer for the Okaloosa County Sheriff's office in 1967. She broke boundaries as she was promoted through the ranks becoming the first woman investigator, sergeant and lieutenant. In the mid 1980's, Lt. Hunter became a regional expert on the investigation of crimes against women and children. She spearheaded efforts to bring justice to victims of sexual violence. She was constantly called upon to travel and assist with sex crimes investigations throughout the area. Her 27-year career left a legacy of service and leadership and made her an encouragement to women considering a career in law enforcement.

For more information, and to see the past winners, visit the website at www.occsw.com.



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A Funeral Like No Other November 2 (All Souls Day) | 10am | Beal Memorial Cemetery

By Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel, Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2

Florida Statute 497.005(43) requires that each county ensure the proper final disposition of indigent and unclaimed deceased persons in the respective counties. Each year, Okaloosa County receives an average of 30-40 individuals who die without family support or financial means to cover the cost of interment.

Over the past 17 years, Okaloosa County has contracted with various private funeral homes to provide cremation services for these indigent and unclaimed persons. When I first became a commissioner, I asked the question, "What happens to the individuals once cremated?" No one knew. So, a quick search of local funeral homes that had contracted with Okaloosa County over the years yielded approximately 450 sets of cremains that had collected in storage at the various vendor funeral homes.

In 2016, local pastors were invited to plan a service like no other to bury these forgotten individuals in a dignified, but joyful ecumenical service. The Okaloosa County Lazarus Memorial Service has become a cherished ceremony. The name is taken from the recorded words of Jesus about the poor man named Lazarus who went to Paradise after death, after struggling on earth (Luke 16:19-21). This ceremony has buried about 800 individuals. You are invited to attend this beautiful event

That same year a coordinated effort was developed to purchase seven burial plots at Beal Memorial Cemetery in the heart of Okaloosa County. The county initially agreed to pay \$7,530. Area churches took up a collection to defray the cost, which resulted in a contribution of \$5,000 to the cost of the plots. Further, the clergy were able to contribute \$1,481 to purchase and place two benches, one at either end of the burial plots.

On Thursday, Nov. 2, 2023, at 10 a.m. at the Beal Memorial Cemetery, the local faith community will gather to remember and say goodbye to the invisible members of our local community. The Lazarus Memorial Service is an ecumenical ceremony to bury individuals in our community who have died without means to provide for their own burial. The ceremony provides a dignified manner to memorialize the cremains of those who otherwise would not have funeral services. It is our community's outpouring of respect and community spirit to provide the unclaimed deceased a dignified resting place.

The ceremony has become a much-celebrated event within the faith community and in the life of our county as a dignified way to memorialize those we have lost, many of whom are senior citizens who have outlived their relatives as well as infants and children whose parents and families are without financial means, and those members of our community who have become estranged from their families due to mental illness. This year we have 38 individuals from a stillborn baby boy to a woman who lived to be 104 years old and died in a nursing home with no known next of kin. Though you might think these are homeless individuals, and sometimes that's the case, most were simply without family and many died alone in their home.

Funeral Home Director Mr. Bass and the wonderful staff at Emerald Coast Funeral Home have graciously stepped up each year to host this formal ceremony to place each person at rest. Each set of cremains is held in a box bearing the individual's name. Prior to the ceremony, the boxes are placed inside green velvet bags for display. Those attending the outdoor ceremony can pay their final respects before the ceremony begins. A printed program is provided which includes the order of worship, music to be shared and a list of the individuals to be interred. The service includes ringing the cemetery bells, offering prayers, reading scripture, singing hymns and music, a message of faith and hope, and the recitation of each person's name. The name and date of death of each interred individual is entered in The Book of Remembrance. This book is stored on site at Beal Cemetery for use by relatives and friends of the deceased.

County The Okaloosa Lazarus Memorial Service Project has benefited the county and the public by providing a solution regarding a final disposition of the extensive number of unclaimed and indigent decedents in Okaloosa County, which includes infants to aged centenarians. Okaloosa County was recognized by the Florida Association of Counties for Best Practices and other counties have become inspired to create their own ceremonies.

As a compassionate and dignified way to bury these invisible members of our society, area clergy from every denomination come together throughout the year to plan for an ecumenical service to provide a dignified burial in Beal Cemetery. The group chose November 2 as the Lazarus Memorial Burial date since many faith communities mark it as All Souls Day.

I know it sounds odd, but you will leave the ceremony with a quiet feeling of having done something "right" that cannot be repaid in this world. Come and join us as we say goodbye to individuals who may have died alone, but are remembered by our community. Trust me, you will be glad you made the time to say goodbye to those who have no one else to mourn for them.

Beal Cemetery is located at 316 Beal Pkwy N.W., Fort Walton Beach, 32548. Please bring a lawn chair to sit in.

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



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The community

Medicare Open Enrollment is Here! Now What?

By Greg Durette, Florida Health Connector

It's finally here again: Medicare Open Enrollment or more precisely, the Annual Election Period (AEP). Every year, from October 15th to December 7th, Medicare eligible folks are able to do pretty much anything they want with their coverage. Some of my previous columns have addressed many of the details of those options but, simply put, you can add, drop or change virtually any plan and change to or from any insurance company. Piece of cake right? Wrong! The reason is, many folks do not want to relive the information overload they experienced when first becoming eligible. Remembering the volume of phone calls, emails and mountains of regular mail would understandably send anyone running for cover!

Please know, this time will be different. First of all, you now have had some time to experience what the plan you originally selected, can or cannot do for you. Were you happy with the premium? Were all your doctors in the network? Were all your prescriptions covered at a reasonable cost? Did you get any of the extra benefits like Dental, Vision, Hearing, Tele-Health,





At Home Care, Caregiver Support or Over-the-Counter cash allowances?

If the answer to any of these is no, then now is the time for you to get answers, so you can make the correct choices for 2024.

The problem for many folks becomes, where can they get this information without re-igniting the aforementioned onslaught? The answer - YOU need to initiate contact. That means calling your current agent or broker and/or finding other sources of information.

Calling Joe Namath will likely cause that onslaught to re-ignite as the company he represents simply gets you to call so they can SELL your information to any and all agents around the country willing to pay to get access to you. In fact, many of these types of advertisements do exactly the same thing. Call them all and get ready to buy the jumbo size mailbox and voicemail box!

Instead, look for advertising from local folks you know will be able to get you what you are looking for. They WON'T SELL your information to strangers. This simple tip will allow you to rest assured that you will not be overwhelmed again.

Once you have decided which person or place to call, do it. But, be ready to answer a few questions about what you currently have, what you are paying (some plans can be as little as \$0 per month!) and what it is you would like to improve or change with a new plan. Also, make sure you are ready to answer questions about your doctors and prescriptions, so you can make sure what you are considering changing to will provide you with all you expect. You are looking for no surprises; so, also have a few questions of your own!

The bottom-line message is this; be not afraid. This time of year (AEP) is designed to help you make improvements, not make you relive the trials and tribulations of your initial enrollment.

Reach out and look to how you can possibly make things better for you. Your health may change from year to year, but your need for excellent health insurance remains a constant.

Follow these simple steps and make 2023 your best health insurance year yet!

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector, based in Niceville, and providing Medicare throughout the state. He has been in the insurance industry for over 40 years and can be reached at his office at (850) 842-2400 or his mobile at (978) 509-2941.



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NWFSC Raider Village A New Era for Campus Housing

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Decades ago, Jay Odom started his academic journey at what was then called Okaloosa Walton Junior College in a Volkswagen with no reverse. Fast forward to today, and he is helping to pave the way for a state-of-the-art student housing facility named Raider Village at Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC). This addition will not only change the landscape, but also will impact the student body in unimaginable ways.

In a groundbreaking ceremony teeming with anticipation and enthusiasm, NWFSC commemorated the commencement of construction for Raider Village. This marks a transformative moment in the college's history as it embarks on providing its first-ever on-campus student housing.

Dr. Devin Stephenson, NWFSC President, led the ceremony, echoing gratitude for the collaborations that have made the project possible. "This college has been incredibly blessed with opportunity, funding, great leadership and passionate students," he said. "Today, we're building for the decades to come."

Jay and The Jay Odom Group deserve special mention among the contributors. Not only did they design the buildings, but they will also build, own and manage Raider Village. Dr. Stephenson highlighted Jay's deep roots in the institution and immense contributions to the Niceville community. "It's unbelievable how this [campus] has evolved and grown since I was here," Jay reflected.

The residential facility will be a game-changer for NWFSC. It bolsters academic performance and retention, infusing an engaging campus life. The college anticipates Raider Village as a significant draw for potential athletes, setting the highest standards for sporting excellence even higher.

The first phase of Raider



Village will provide 192 beds equipped with modern amenities to cater to students' needs. Plans reveal that each unit will comprise four bedrooms, each with its own bathroom, complemented by a kitchen, living area and laundry facilities. Common areas designed for community building will be prevalent throughout.

Expected to be operational by Spring 2025, the three-story building will proudly stand at the front of the 264-acre campus, seamlessly aligning with the existing brick architectural theme.

Beyond the brick-and-mortar, the project stands as a testament to the spirit of collaboration. The combined efforts of The Jay Odom Group, the NWFSC Foundation and Community Bank of Mississippi have been instrumental. Dr. Stephenson highlighted the unwavering commitment and financial support of the NWFSC Foundation and recognized Jonathan Ochs, Vice-Chair of the Foundation Board, for his indispensable role as the liaison.

Reflecting on his journey, Jay mused about the past, "From where I sat then in the 1970s to now, I did not have the vision at that time to know that I'd be here today being able to contribute to the community." But he has, and Raider Village stands as a beacon of progress and promise, ensuring that future generations will benefit from a world-class facility.

In the words of Dr. Stephenson, this groundbreaking event is not just about laying the foun-



dation for a building. It's about laying the foundation for the future of NWFSC and the thousands of students it will nurture.

May I add one last caveat? I am another one of the many proud alumni of Okaloosa Walton Junior College—now, Northwest Florida State College.

Okaloosa STEMM Academy Recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School

Academy has achieved a remarkable milestone by being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School. In January, the U.S. Florida Department of Education (FDOE) nominated STEMM Academy to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) due to exemplary high performance based on the 2021-2022 performance data. In September, USDOE recognized STEMM as one of 353 schools nationwide and one of 13 from Florida as a National Blue Ribbon School for 2023. The recognition is based on all student scores, subgroup student scores and graduation rates.

"This recognition not only highlights the hard work and dedication of our students but also acknowledges the outstanding efforts put forth by our incredible teachers and

The Okaloosa STEMM staff," stated Principal Scheree Martin. "It is a reflection of the strong partnerships we have formed with parents and the support we receive from our community stakeholders and district team."

> This achievement is a testament to the unwavering dedication of STEMM's students, educators, families and the broader community where it is the school's mission to create an environment where students are intellectually curious, critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. Superintendent Marcus Chambers stated, "This is one of the most prestigious awards a school can earn, and I am very proud! Congratulations to each and every student, teacher, staff, administrator and family member of STEMM."



OLD DECK BUILDERS RULE BRADLEY DUKE DAUM



The community

Around Town



Okaloosa County Recognized with Prestigious Award by the Daughters of the American Revolution

The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners was recently honored as the recipient of the 1776-2026 Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) America 250! Commendation Certificate and Medal. The award was presented to the Board during regular Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution September meeting."I am thankful and humbled that the DAR would recognize the entire County with this distinction," said Okaloosa County Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel. "As a DAR member, I am aware of how prestigious and rare it is to be awarded with this honor. The County has achieved so much in its efforts to recognize service members and we will continue this tradition long into the future."

The medal and certificate recognize non-DAR members and groups that have demonstrated extraordinary efforts to not only honor the men and women who achieved American Independence, but also to educate others about their service and sacrifice. Examples of meritorious service may include



erecting, rediscovering, restoring, and/or rededicating Revolutionary War-related monuments, plaques, gravesites and other memorials in communities through publicly celebrated projects or events.

In 2019, the Board approved creating the Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans Park currently located on Okaloosa Island. The park was opened to the public in 2021 and features eight life-sized bronze statues of women who fought in United States military conflicts dating back to the American Revolution.

The Board approved expanding the park at Tuesday's meeting with additional walking paths and four more bronze statues. Both phases of the park are funded with tourism bed tax revenue. Donations have also been accepted for the second phase.

Learn more about the DAR's participation in the 250th anniversary of the United States at https://www.dar.org/.

Learn more about the



Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans Park at https:// myokaloosa.com/bcc/women-veterans-memorial.

Senior Prom Delivers Evening of Dancing and Delight

Bob Hope Village residents dressed up to the nines and attended the first ever "senior" prom in June. The evening's theme, Once Upon A Time, was displayed on a photo backdrop where residents lined up to have their prom pictures taken. The ballroom was decorated with greenery, balloons and twinkling lights which transcended prom goers to a story-book forest. Members of the local community donated evening wear and accessories such as sparkling handbags and satin shoes, so residents could select their prom attire from the activities closet. A local florist donated corsages for every resident attending the prom.

The highlight of the prom

was the ballroom dancing performance by Fred Astaire Dance Studios. The dancers stayed and enjoyed the prom with the residents and made sure everyone took a twirl on the dance floor. To round out the evening, a prom king and queen were crowned.

"It was one of the best nights of my life," resident Charlene declared.

Dr. Hollingsworth Inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame

The Governor and Florida Cabinet have confirmed Vietnam Veteran, Dr. Gerald M. Hollingsworth for induction into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will take place at the FSU Alumni Center Hall, 1030 W Tennessee Street, Tallahassee on Tuesday, Nov. 14 at 10 a.m.

Nominated by local restaurant owner and Vice President Florida Veterans Hall of Fame Society Tom Rice and Dr. Dave

Goetsch, Dr. Gerald Hollingsworth is a successful businessman, physician, was a Vietnam Medical Officer as a Navy Lieutenant and more recently Air Force 919th Special Operations Wing Medical Officer retiring as a Colonel. Dr. Hollingsworth's local recognitions include being selected by the Northwest Florida Daily News as Person of the Year in 2019, and recently honored at the local Salvation Army Corps Facility Rededication Ceremony and Ribbon Cutting in its naming as "Hollingsworth Hall." Among his many accomplishments was his support of One Hopeful Place Medical Care Center and his past service with the Special Olympics in its inaugural events which began first in Okaloosa County in 1970 and then spread throughout Florida. Dr. Hollingsworth was tasked by Okaloosa County Schools Special Needs Instructor, Dr. Charlie McFarland, for the numerous medical requirements needed for the program. From his early days as a youth in Mississippi to his graduation from Harvard Medical School, Dr. Hollingsworth exemplifies the intention of the state's Veterans Hall of Fame purpose of serving fellow citizens and by what individuals have accomplished after military service in that manner.

He joins other locals for this honor including past inductees, Dr. David Goetsch, First Sergeant Tom Rice, State Representative and Brigadier General Retired Patt Maney, Dr. Eddie Zant, Dr. Chuck Merkel, Lt. Gen. Retired Gordon Fornell and the late Brigadier General Mike Ferguson and Col. Mike Flynt.

There's a lot to LOVE about Fort Walton Beach!

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Should You Hire A Real Estate Professional?



By Melissa Forte-Litscher

If you're thinking about selling your home in the Fort Walton Beach area, you may be contemplating whether to go it alone or enlist the help of a seller's agents. Allow me to show you that in today's unique real estate market, the expertise of a local agent can be a game-changer when it comes to selling your home.

This is a special place with its own real estate dynamics and you need local market insights. While you undoubtedly know your home well, realtors are experts in the local market. We have in-depth knowledge of Fort Walton Beach's real estate trends, helping you set the right price for your home. This ensures your property is priced competitively, optimizing your chances of a successful sale.

Determining the correct asking price is critical in our area, especially during these uncertain times. An agent can perform a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) tailored to our area, giving you an accurate assessment of your home's value based on recent local sales. This data-driven approach helps you avoid pricing pitfalls and ensures your property attracts potential buyers without leaving money on the table.

To properly expose your home to the widest possible audience, you need expert marketing. While you might be familiar with some marketing techniques, seller's agents are seasoned marketing professionals. We employ strategies like professional photography, virtual tours, and specialized local advertising to showcase your home's unique features. Our marketing expertise ensures your property reaches a broader and more qualified audience, increasing your chances of finding the perfect buyer quickly.

Connections are important in selling real estate. A local realtor

has extensive networks within the real estate community and related industry professionals. We have access to a pool of potential buyers and connections with additional area professionals. This can give your home an advantage in terms of visibility and potentially lead to a quicker sale. Having connections with service providers is key in getting your home ready for the market whether it needs repairs, expert cleaning, or proper staging.

An additional element an agent brings to the table is skilled negotiations. Navigating negotiations in real estate can be tricky, especially when emotions run high. Realtors are adept negotiators, representing your interests while maintaining professionalism throughout the process. This experience can lead to a more favorable deal and terms that work for you in our unique real estate environment.

Real estate transactions can involve complex paperwork. Realtors are well-versed in the documentation aspects of Florida real estate and can guide you through every step, ensuring all contracts, disclosures and inspections are handled correctly.

Selling your home can be overwhelming and particularly stressful. Your local agent can take on the responsibility of managing the entire process, from marketing and showings to negotiations and paperwork. And while it's natural to be emotionally attached to your home, emotions can sometimes cloud your judgment. Your realtor can offer unbiased guidance, assisting you in making well-considered decisions during the process, which helps you avoid hasty choices that might not align with your best interests. This assistance saves you time and reduces the stress associated with selling your property.

Your relationship with your agent doesn't have to end at closing. We continue to provide support and guidance, referrals to other areas, or simply address any post-sale concerns or questions you may have. Our objective is to assist you with a smooth transition as you move forward, whether you stay in the Fort Walton Beach area or move elsewhere.

Ultimately, the goal is to get the most out of selling your property. Realtors are committed to helping you achieve the best possible outcome, both financially and logistically. Our comprehensive knowledge, skills, and local connections are all geared towards that end goal.

Before deciding to sell your Fort Walton Beach home on your own, seriously consider the benefits a local realtor provides. We bring knowledge of the local market, pricing precision, marketing prowess, negotiation skills, community networks, and



ongoing support. This makes the selling process smoother and more profitable, ensuring that your piece of paradise finds its perfect next owner in this wonderful Florida community. When you choose to hire a professional, call me at (850) 496-7444. I'm at your service.





NextHome Cornerstone Realty 321 John Sims Parkway E Niceville, FL 32578

Each office is independently owned and operated.



The community

Local Author Bookshelf: A Flicker in the Water

One of the most memorable lines in the classic novel *The Old Man & the Sea* is "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated." Written in 1952, this memorable book won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954.

In 2023, local author Bob Gonzalez is making waves with

his best-selling book, *A Flick-er In The Water.* Inside the tales, Bob writes, "Neither fisherman or fish go through a full season undefeated, unless you are the 1972 Miami Dolphins."



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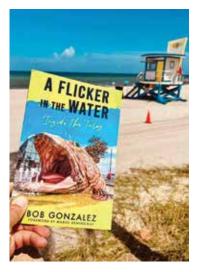
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BOB HOPE VILLAGE 850-612-8684 bobhopevillage.us



HAWTHORN HOUSE 850-517-4323 hawthornhouse.us



A Flicker In The Water debuted as the #13 best seller in the sportfishing category and shot its way to #1 on Kindle Amazon. This work of mostly non-fiction sea adventure stories brings readers aboard the Twister, a fishing vessel in the Gulf of Mexico, to show the dramatic ups and downs of ocean fishing, a glimpse at a fisherman's lifestyle and the valuable life lessons they gain at sea.

Told in a fun, engaging style, this book combines elements of drama, heroism and skill with humor making it a delightful read for the experienced seaman or landlubber alike. One reviewer said, "The stories are unique and original" and "Apart from being entertaining, the stories provide insightful messages and teachings. I really enjoyed sharing some of these tales with my children."

Bob Gonzalez grew up in Pennsylvania before moving to the Destin area in the early 1990's where he began to indulge in his passion for the deep sea and its inhabitants. Bob said, "After spending the better part of 20 years out on the water, I had a collection of stories I thought both tourists and locals could enjoy and hopefully learn a little bit from right from the comfort of their own home or under a beach umbrella." Mariel Hemingway, the granddaughter of Ernest Hemingway,

word. *A Flicker In The Water* can be purchased on Amazon, at Barnes & Noble or wherever books are sold. Or order directly through Bob's website: https:// flickerinthewater.com. Bob also has autographed copies for sale at The Pretzel Twister at the Santa Rosa Mall in Mary Esther.

liked "A Flicker in the Water" so

much she wrote the book's fore-

Bob is a frequent guest on Podcasts and is available for book signing and speaking engagements. You can reach him through his website https:// flickerinthewater.com or at (813)-966-9885.



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

A dozen for me; a dozen for you! Located on Okaloosa Island, AJ's Oyster Shanty serves up fresh, cold oysters, fresh seafood 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. And Key Lime Pie is available all day, every day! Combine with live music nightly at 7 p.m. on the outdoor stage and it's a combination you can't resist!

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

Magnolia Grill

In 2001, Magnolia Grill in Fort Walton Beach opened its doors after a renovation that took 18 months—and it's been thriving since. A local's favorite dubbed "The Museum That Serves Food," you'll find equal parts museum and dining establishment. Its second floor contains artifacts from World War II, Vietnam and other segments of American history. And downstairs—is where you'll find lunch favorites such as Meatloaf with Mashed Potatoes, Crab Cake 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. 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

An elegant, culinary adventure, Ovide brings together classic Gulf Coast flavors and southern culinary traditions. Every dish is fueled by a passion for sustainability and seasonality that gives each bite incredible flavor unlike anything you've tasted before-you will want to savor every bite, from an intimate meal for two to a get-together for 10 or more. Ovide embraces the local food and cherished flavors of the Gulf Coast and presents them with a sophisticated, refreshing French influence and southern flair. Have you tried the Seasonal Special at Ovide at Hotel Effie? Mondays, 5 p.m., choose one starter, one entrée and one dessert for \$50. Ask your server about the wine pairing option. Hours: Breakfast 7 - 11 a.m. Mon-Fri. Lunch Closed. Dinner: 5 - 9 p.m., Sunday-Thursday; 5 - 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Brunch: 7 a.m. - 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

(833) 873-3343 Hoteleffie.com Grand Sandestin Blvd., Miramar Beach

Parrot Heads Flock Together to Remember

By JOSHUA COWSERT

On September 1st, 2023, the sunshine on the seas got a little bit dimmer as we said Goodbye to a legend, Jimmy Buffett. According to a press release, the beloved singer-songwriter passed away at his home in Sag Harbor, Long Island, surrounded by family and friends. Jimmy, 76, had been fighting Merkel Cell Skin Cancer for four years.

With a recording career that spanned more than 50 years and included hits such as "Margaritaville," "Come Monday" and "It's Five O'Clock Somewhere," Jimmy was one of the most successful performers in popular music. He filled arenas with fans who called themselves "Parrot Heads," and popularized a signature blend of folk,



country and Caribbean music with lyrics that often reflected Buffett's world travels.

Having spent part of his childhood in Mobile and nearby Fairhope, Ala., his name, brand and music mean a lot of things



to a lot of people, but to me it means friendship and charity. As a late arrival to the "Margaritaville lifestyle" that called so many to associate with his name, I've seen so much more than what it seems from the outside looking in!

As a local and at my first run in with his fan club, the Emerald Coast Parrot Head Club, I was floored at how much more there was to find! Of course,

Continued on next page





by celebrity Chef Hugh Acheson.

Voted Best Restaurant in Walton County by Emerald Coast Magazine, send your taste buds on a culinary adventure at Ovide. Led by James Beard award-winning Chef Hugh Acheson, indulge in delectable dishes inspired by the Gulf Coast. Reservations accepted (844) 422-2923.

Located at Hotel Effie Sandestin

Page 13

🏇 Off the Hook

Celebrating 75 Years of the Destin Fishing Rodeo!

2023 will mark the 75th Annual Fishing Rodeo in Destin, and each year it gets better and better. Created back in 1948, the Destin Fishing Rodeo had one simple goal: to extend the tourist season another month. Destin has always been a popular tourist spot for fishing, and keeping those extra vacationers here helped our town thrive.

The Destin Fishing Rodeo has expanded into one of the largest fishing tournaments along the Emerald Coast. The rodeo is a month long, spanning October 1-31st and roughly 30,000 anglers compete each year.

The weigh-ins happen on the docks behind AJ's Seafood and Oyster bar, located on the Destin Harbor. They are free to the public and are open daily from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. For boats to participate, charter and private boats must be registered at least



24 hours prior to weighing in a fish. There is no fee for anglers fishing on a registered vessel (private or charter) and shore fisherman can participate by simply bringing their catch to the scales. Fish by kayak, paddle board, pier, bridge, jetty, shoreline and surf – whichever you prefer. If you're planning to make a trip down to the docks, expect to see a broad spectrum of fish being weighed in. From Sharks to Amberjacks, Grouper to King Mackerel, Tunas to Marlin, the rodeo has it all. Anglers are competing for over \$100,000 in cash and prizes, awarded for both daily and overall catches. 2022 was the first year that the Extended Voyage Division added five extra species of fish for a total of ten eligible fish.

The Destin Fishing Rodeo leaderboard includes grouper, amberjack, scamp, yellowfin and big eye tuna, dolphin, wahoo, Almaco Jack, snowy grouper and yellowedge grouper. There was also a Ladies, Seniors and Junior Divisions added in 2022 for wahoo, alongside king mackerel, grouper, amberjack and blackfin tuna.

Even if you're not a fisherman, the energy level and excitement that comes from being at the docks for weigh ins is like nothing else we've ever experienced. Boats back into the scales, pull the fish from their boat while the announcer hypes up the crowd. Fish are strung up on the scale while the crowds cheer and applaud the boat and their team. For the best seat in the house, get there early, grab a few beers and snag a seat on the bleachers by the leaderboard or above on AJ's upper deck.

Halloween on the Harbor will signify the end of weigh-ins on Wednesday, Oct. 31, when the captains, anglers, volunteers, and even Miss Destin, will be dressed in their favorite costumes. Everyone is invited to partake in the fun!

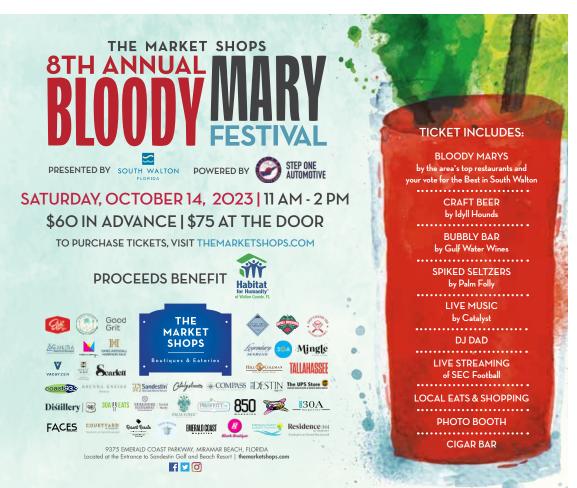
October kicks off with the Destin Seafood Festival, in conjunction with the Destin Fishing Rodeo! Make your plans to visit the Harbor all month long!

PARROT HEADS

continued from previous page

there was fun to be had, but the primary saying of each and every encounter was, "Yes, we like to party, BUT with a purpose." Time and again at each meeting, this concept was reinforced by the charitable donations of the fan club. Ranging from children's homes, to shelters for pets or people who are otherwise unable to find help, there is never a party without a close-to-home charity in mind!

In September, shortly after his passing, there was an exceptional party. However, as the purpose was a final send off for Jimmy, including the reading of a poem from one of the club members written to commemorate his passing, top rock tunes and memories of treasured times were passed all around among friends! From concerts attended, to tailgate and after parties dearly remembered, each and every Parrot Head







had something to share. We had all come together to honor and remember one of our own, and the very reason for our attendance!

According to Jimmy, "I'd rather die living, than live while I'm dead." He certainly lived life to the absolute fullest. Though he travelled all over the world for his music, at its heart, there was always that longing for closeness to the sea and sandy beaches that he came from right here on the Emerald Coast. Come Monday, he could always walk back in those doors to boiling shrimp and a margarita; but come last Friday, he set out with toes in the water for his very own Key West in the sky.

Sail on, Skipper! We'll see you again for our very own 5 o'clock watch!

Emerald Coast Classic Tickets on Sale

Tickets for the 9th annual Emerald Coast Classic college basketball tournament, presented by Global Sports, are on sale on the official tournament website www.emeraldcoastclassic.com. Tickets start at \$20 per session with each session having two games.

The Emerald Coast Classic will be played Thanksgiving weekend Nov. 24-25 at Raider Arena on the campus of Northwest Florida State College.

Alabama will face Ohio State in a semifinal round game at 6 p.m. central time on Friday, Nov. 24, while Oregon will play Santa Clara at 8:30 p.m. The third-place game will be played at 3 p.m. on Saturday Nov. 25 with the championship game scheduled for a 6 p.m. tip off on that Saturday.

Alabama was ranked No. 1 in the final Associated Press basketball poll, posting a 31-6 record while winning both the SEC regular-season and postseason tournament titles. Under the guidance of coach Nate Oats, Alabama was the top overall seed in the 2023 NCAA



Tournament, while advancing to its ninth Sweet 16 Tournament appearance in school history.

Oregon advanced to the quarterfinal round of the 2023 NIT en route to a 21-16 record. The Ducks have won 20 or more games in each of Dana Altman's 13 seasons as head coach, advancing to the 2017 NCAA Final Four.

Ohio State went 16-19 in

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2022-23 and was ranked No. 52 in the final NET rankings.

Santa Clara had a 23-10 record last year — the most regular season wins at the school since the 1968-69 season while advancing to the NIT.

Other games at Northwest Florida State College on Friday Nov. 24 have Mercer playing Tennessee State at 11 a.m., while Southeastern Louisiana meets Western Michigan at 1:30 p.m. These teams will play their second game Nov. 25 with tip offs at 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

"We're excited about the rich tradition of this year's tournament field," said tournament director Maury Hanks, chief executive officer of Global Sports. "We continue to strive to bring the best college basketball teams possible to the Emerald Coast of Florida."

Global Sports has produced 52 multi-team college basketball tournaments since 2007.

Fort Walton Beach High School Varsity Football

Aug. 18Kick Off Classic @ Walton.

- Aug. 25@ Godby
- Sept. 1@ South Walton
- Sept. 8Rutherford (Teacher Appreciation)
- Sept. 15....Escambia (Military Night)
- Sept. 22Arnold (Homecoming)
- Sept. 29 ...@ *Pine Forest
- Oct. 13Booker T. Washington (Hall Of Fame)
- Oct. 20.....@ Bay
- Oct. 27 Choctawhatchee (Senior Night)
- Nov. 2@ Crestview
- FHSAA State Playoffs TBD

Choctawhatchee High School Varsity Football

Aug. 18Gulf Breeze High School Dolphins	
Aug. 25@Pace High School Patriots (7:30 p.m.)	
Sept. 1Fairhope High School Pirates	X
Sept. 8@Crestview High School Bulldogs	ζ
Sept. 15 Pine Forest High School Eagles	_
Sept. 22@Niceville High School Eagles	
Oct. 6South Walton High School Seahawks	
Oct. 13Escambia High School Gators	
Oct. 20@Booker T. Washington High School Wildca	ats
Oct. 27 @Eart Walton Beach High School Vikings	

Oct. 27.....@Fort Walton Beach High School Vikings Nov. 2A. Crawford Mosley High School Dolphins

All games at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted



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Page 16

Detox (Cleanse), 'Internal Shower'



BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE In gathering information to

share I discovered a few rabbit

holes which I will attempt to avoid. These words offer opinions that truly oppose each other. The words detox and cleanse are used interchangeably, but they basically have the same definition. They are often used to replace the word 'diet.' It implies a short-term solution with quick results such as weight loss; but quick is not necessarily a good thing. An important point to note is that detoxes and cleanses are meant to deep clean our organs, remove toxic buildup, support them and rejuvenate them, so they continue to

Dr. William Stiles, who has



practiced traditional medicine and surgery for the last 20 years, is also certified in functional medicine and offers a wide range of virtual services geared toward optimizing health and creating personalized health solutions for clients all over the world, states:

"Our world is wrought with harmful pollutants that can be transferred, stored and cause harm within our bodies. The list of these toxicities range from pathogens (viruses, bacteria, yeast/fungus, mold, parasites), chemicals, plastics, pesticides/ herbicides, radiation, heavy metals, etc. We are exposed to these harmful toxicants in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the products we put in and on our bodies. When the body can't up, injure our body organs, tissues and cells, and be a root cause of countless chronic diseases and bothersome symptoms."

Let's begin with answering these two questions:

Why do I want to detox?

What results are the results I want to see?

Next is the decision of which detox is actually needed. Though not an exhaustive list, below are a few from which to choose.

Fasting Detox (food restriction usually for 2-3 weeks) • Liver Cleanse • Juice Cleanse, Master Cleanse • Supplement and herbal Cleanse • Colon Cleanse • Parasite Cleanse • Foot detox • Nasal Irrigation • Oxygen Detox • Mental • Spiritual.

Many of these cleanses detox various systems of the body. The liver, being the second largest organ in the body (skin is #1) is impacted by all of these due to its major role from filtering the blood to signaling the stomach to stop digesting food to eliminating toxins, in addition to 500+ other functions. If the liver has to divert its major functions to take care of other

tasks, it won't have the time or energy to focus on keeping the body clean. Stress, toxins, nutritional deficiencies, too many calories, too little sleep and other imbalances aid in gumming up the liver. Think of it like an oil filter. What would happen to your vehicle engine if you never changed the oil?

There are also eating programs that can aid in detoxing and/or cleansing. A few of these plans are the Elimination Diet, Low-FODMAP, Core Food, Detox Food, Cardio Metabolic Food, Renew Food and Phytonutrient. These plans were developed to accomplish specific outcomes. They were created by specialists and are safe when followed.

Some pros of these programs: Benefits from an increased intake of vitamins and minerals, identifying food sensitivities, giving the system a period of rest from toxicity, etc.

Many detoxes/cleanses on the market offer products to assist you through the program. This is where research and learning the right questions to ask can ensure safety and increase your understanding of what is happening on the inside of your body.

Detoxes/cleanses can also introduce healthy habits such as:

• Drinking pure, clean water • Reducing sugar intake, salt,

- caffeine, alcohol • Eliminating processed
- foods, smoking • Consuming more organic
- and whole foods that are fiber and anti-oxidant rich, etc. • Regular exercise
 - Dr. Stiles also notes that

Continued on next page

Get the Smile You Deserve Smile with Confidence Again

serve us well.

- · Are you embarrassed about smiling in front of people?
- · Do you ever put your hand up to cover your smile?
- · Do you dislike your smile in photographs?
- When you look through magazines, do you envy the models' smiles?
- · Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when vou smile?
- Would you like to change the way your teeth or gums are shaped? Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

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



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ican Heart Association changes blood pressure treatment guidelines every couple of years. It's unfortunate because when doctors disagree it causes confusion and fear in patients.

We do have patients in their 20s but I always say if you are over forty you should have already seen me. That's when I got treated and it was a life-changing event that has made me happier and healthier than I have ever been in my life.

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DETOX

continued from previous page

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functional testing is a good next step."

Detoxes and cleanses date back thousands of years such as fasting, saunas (I saw the ruins of a public sauna in Israel. It was amazing!), dry brushing, smudging, herbal medicine, water, crystals, meditation and exercise. If it had benefits for them, why not take the next step and reap the benefits yourself? Reach out to Dr. William Stiles at drwilliamstiles.com if you'd like to schedule a complimentary 15-minute consultation.

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Business

5 Tips to Lower Your Insurance Costs in a Rough Market

BY JULIE A. MARTIN

1. Update your home. In this property insurance market, most of the standard carriers are imposing strict age guide-lines on Roof, Heating, Wiring, and Plumbing. If your home is 20 years old or older, keep in mind that the older your roof is, the harder it will be to move your insurance to a different carrier. The same holds true for your hot water heater, which most carriers regard as too old once it has been in your home for at least 15 years.

2. Confirm with your agent that your insurance has all applicable discounts. Wind Mitigation dis-

counts weigh heavily on your premium. Roof credits such as FBC, or Florida Building Code Equivalent, Hip roof, for roofs that slope on all four sides like a pyramid, and single wraps, may vastly decrease your premium from what it is now. If you have recently replaced your roof, it is best to order a new mitigation inspection directly afterwards, and submit it to your agent. Carriers acknowledge new inspections as of the date they are received by the underwriting department, rather than the date they are performed.

3. Check your Total Insurable Replacement Cost. Ask your agent to update your replacement cost estimator. Most standard carriers have some form of inflation guard on their policies, which is designed to keep your dwelling coverage at or above the level required in order to fulfill the Florida Valued Policy Law. Due to the recent burst of inflation in materials and the costs of hiring a licensed contractor, some policies may experience a bigger jump in dwelling coverage from policy term to policy term. It is best to check with your agent to be sure your home is not over-insured.

4. Smart Water Protection System. Some newer homes have a Smart Water Protection system which automatically shuts off the water in the event of accidental leakage, and many carriers offer a good discount to policyholders for having this device installed in their homes.

5. Increase Deductibles. This is a valid way to reduce your overall property insurance premium. However, there is a downside. For one thing, if raising your deductible significantly increases your potential out of pocket expenses in the event of a claim, you have to decide if you are prepared for that risk. Secondly, some deductibles can only be changed at renewal. If you change your wind deductible from 2% to 5%, you will have to wait another year before changing it back, so be sure to calculate your potential out of pocket exposure before making this decision.

In this rough market, it is difficult to shop rates between carriers, but the best time to do that is after hurricane season ends, which is in December.

The guidelines are always the toughest in high summer, so that by December, many of the carriers have relaxed their rules enough for people to move from carrier to carrier with much less fuss and expense, and that, dear reader, is what we all want peace of mind with less expense.



Sean of the South

Page 19

By Sean Dietrich

I am a dropout.

I grew up pretty hard. I am an educational failure. I had few academic opportunities. As a result, I am a very slow reader, and an even wurse speler.

This is because, after my father died, my family hit rock bottom. My mother cleaned houses for a living, and worked in fast food. I, my ownself, dropped out of school and got my first job at age 14, hanging drywall.

Later, I would install tile and wood floors. I hung commercial roofing and seamless gutter. I had other ignoble occupations, too. I scooped ice cream. I was a telemarketer for exactly 13 hours.

In the evenings, for extra cash, I played music at local bars where overserved people two-stepped and showed their appreciation by lobbing bottles at the piano player.

I wasn't particularly talented. I owned a guitar. I had a cheap piano my father bought from the classified section. I had long hair. Nobody wanted their daughter to date me.

But something about the communal glow of a beer joint changed me. I've had some powerfully good memories in dim rooms with clinking glassware.

When I was 16, I spent my birthday playing "Faded Love" in a joint on the Alabama state line. The bartender, Wanda, asked if I wanted a beer. Wanda was five foot, even, and had a voice like a pack of filtered menthols.

I told Wanda, without hesitation, yes, I did want a beer. So Wanda opened a PBR and poured three fingers of the golden nectar into a tumbler.

"Happy birthday," she said. "You'll have to wait until you're 21 to get the rest."

Whereupon she ceremoniously finished the bottle.

I also played piano in church, and at every Baptist function including fifth-Sunday sings, Decoration Day potlucks, and VBS. Most Baptists turned a blind eye to my nocturnal habits.

I attended community college as a 30-year-old man. I rectified my high-school misgivings. And I learned how to spel prety good.

And somehow, here I am.

I have an overbite, red hair, and a list of bad habits which



causes fundamentalists to send me emails with subject lines that read: "Will I spend eternity without you, Sean?"

But there were a few people who have consistently believed in me. Namely, my wife. And my mother. My sister. My friends, who are too numerous to list.

And in a few days, the Grand Ole Opry will be releasing my first album. In a few days, I will be performing selections from this album on the Opry stage, on the air.

I'm not even sure what this means, since none of this feels real. But I'm telling you about all this because, I suppose, I still can't believe it.

Even so, my first Opry album single "dropped" yesterday, on

my father's birthday. I don't know what "dropped" means. But I know that this is something my old man would have loved

My father was an avid Opry listener, and often swore that if he ever met Minnie Pearl in person, he would either propose marriage or, at the very least, a scandalous love affair.

I can also tell you that my first album was not recorded in a fancy studio with world-famous sound engineers named "Pootie Tang" running the mixing board. This album was recorded by me, in a rustic cabin, on Lake Martin, with cheap equipment.

There were quilts on the walls, to deaden the sound. The

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way all the professionals do it. My best good friend, Aaron Peters, played fiddle. We played antique music. There were empty Ovaltine bottles strewn around the cabin.

And a blue heron visited the lakeside dock every night after recording, to flap its wings and say hello.

Sometimes at night, after recording, I would lie in bed and wonder if prayers can travel backward in time. If they can, I continue to pray that a young 14-year-old, redheaded, construction-working musician will just hold on.

Because one day, in the year 2023, even though he is much older than most Opry walk-ons; even though he feels like a consummate failure; even though he can't spell worth a shuck; that little boy will not be able to believe what I just wrote.

I know I can't.



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Page 20

🌸 Musing



By Doug Stauffer, Pastor, Faith Independent Baptist Church

With the 2023-2024 school year in full swing, parents and teachers have bought their supplies, arranged schedules and attended orientation sessions. Amidst all the bustle, focusing on some deeper life lessons is crucial as they serve as a moral compass for children. In a recent sermon, I explored seven pivotal spiritual principles rooted in the rich soil of Judeo-Christianity. These principles not only bolster character, but also provide a compass that can guide children in school and throughout their lives.

1. The Importance of Divine Creation: School curriculums may teach theories of evolution and the Big Bang, but it's

A Pastor's Ponderings: **Back to School 7 Spiritual Truths to Instill in Your Children**

important to counterbalance this by instilling in your children that they are God's special creation, created with purpose and talents (Daniel 1:17; Genesis 1:27). This foundation not only strengthens self-worth, but also infuses life with a sense of divine purpose that scientific theories such as abiogenesis and survival of the fittest fail to deliver.

2. Understanding God and America's Heritage: Teach your children about the Judeo-Christian heritage that shaped America. In a world that often sees the concept of a Creator as old-fashioned, children must know that they are purposefully made (Daniel 6:10; Psalm 139:14). By grounding their identity in faith, they will be better prepared to defend their beliefs and answer questions about their hope (1 Peter 3:15).

3. Learning to Trust in God: As your children navigate life's challenges, remind them that God is involved in human endeavors (Daniel 2:21; Proverbs 3:5). Several scriptures assure that trusting in God will guide them through all of life's circumstances (Isaiah 41:10, Jeremiah 29:11). Encouraging a balanced spiritual life can impart to them an unshakeable peace, even in the face of adversity.

4. Choosing Friends Wisely: The company your children keep can either uplift or undermine their moral fabric (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33). The Psalmist pointed out that he surrounded himself with those who share his faith. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Psalm 119:63). The right relationships offer mutual spiritual support and enrichment.

5. The Virtue of Diligence: Encourage your children to give their best in all they do, not for worldly acclaim but to glorify God (Colossians 3:23; Ecclesiastes 9:10). The principle of doing one's best "as unto the Lord" can serve as a guiding framework throughout their lives, in academics, relationships, or career choices.

6. The Courage to Stand Alone: Life will present situations where your children must stand alone in their convictions, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:14-18). This courage to uphold their beliefs, even under peer pressure or threats, is an invaluable life skill. Scriptures reiterate that God will fight their battles when they stand alone in their faith (Exodus 14:14). Teach them that standing alone with God is not solitude it's spiritual fortitude.

7. The Path Back from the Pit: Lastly, remind your children that making mistakes is a universal human experience, but the gifts of repentance and forgiveness are ever-present (Luke 15:18-19). The moving narrative of the Prodigal Son illustrates the transformative power of family reunification. This story shows that even when we lose our way, a loving reunion with God and family remains our best option. Imparting these spiritual principles is more than just instilling a religious edification; they are tools for forging resilient, thoughtful individuals who can gracefully handle the world's complexities. So, as we continue the back-to-school season, let's not overlook these foundational teachings that will fortify your children for a lifetime. Invest now to insure a profitable reaping in the future.

Dr. Doug Stauffer is pastor of Faith Independent Baptist Church. He was saved July 6, 1980, in Niceville, while stationed at the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base and has now been in the ministry for over 35 years. He has written 20 books including the best selling "One Book" trilogy ("One Book Rightly Divided, One Book Stands Alone, One Book One Authority"); along with several devotionals ("Daily Strength" series); and prophecy books ("Reviving the Blessed Hope, When the End Begins").

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We Hope You Get Butterflies

BY ANNA FISHER, EMERALD COAST THEATRE CO.

My Dad took me to see Camelot when I was around 12 years old. It was my very first experience seeing a live performance, and I remember walking up the steps at the Fort Walton Beach Civic Auditorium with such excitement that I had butterflies. We had the honor of escorting none other than Mrs. Mattie Kelly herself that day, as she was one of my Dad's clients at his brokerage firm.

Oh, the music, the lights, the

voices, the costumes! Guinevere was so beautiful with her long flowing locks and shimmery gowns and I was in awe of the spectacle of everything. My only other experience with a musical was catching a rerun of Grease 2 on TV whenever I got really lucky. But this live performance feeling was different. It had texture and weight; it was fully immersive and glowing, like an intense sunset that washes over everything in its path.

The power of that live performance never left me. I still feel the magic of it every time I watch a new cast thrill our audience with everything they've got. The most rewarding moments of all happen when I get to watch children experience that magic for the first time at ECTC.

We are bringing Junie B. Jones the Musical to life on stage this October and I am so excited to have multiple schools attending on field trips, as well as our offerings to the general community. Aside from the boost that live theatre gives students in every area of education, it gives space

for kids to imagine and dream, just like I did so many years ago.

We have something inspiring for the adults in October as well. Me and My Gal: A Musical Tribute to Judy and Gene is a joyous walk down memory lane with such songs as "Singin'in the Rain" and "Get Happy." Like putting your toes in the sugar white sand, attending a live performance is one of the best reset buttons we can employ in this technology age. I turn off my phone, take a deep breath, and just feel all of the music, dance

and life that is being played out before me.

Whether you're attending Junie B. Jones, Me and My Gal, or any of the multiple productions we offer throughout the year, I hope you get those same butterflies of excitement and anticipation as you walk up the steps to ECTC. Come join us in real life and real time to experience the magic of that reset for yourself.



AVENGING 9/11

continued from page 3

Dostum for the next day's plans. He knew the men and the lay of the land.

Dostum talked with the enemy every day on unsecure walkie- talkies. Team Alpha helped Dostum "orchestrate" defections from the Taliban. The Taliban fighters were conscripted and were told their villages would be destroyed if they didn't fight. So, they had no loyalties. Dostum knew the fighters weren't being paid and told them he had friends here who would take care of them. There were 300 to 500 fighters defecting at one time. How did Team Alpha know these defectors wouldn't turn on them? After all, the defectors were a larger force than Dostum's men. Dostum positioned the defectors ahead of his men. When it was time for another attack on a Taliban force, the defectors were the ones leading the attack. Willingness to lead the charge demonstrated their reliability.

ODA 595 was the first Special Forces group inserted into a denied area in Afghanistan

to topple the Taliban. The Joint Special Operations Command in northern Afghanistan was called Task Force Dagger. ODA 595 also had to learn to ride horses. The horses were not trained, saddles were made of cows' pelvic bones, and they had to jerry-rig the short stirrups with parachute cords. ODA 595 first headed to Uzbekistan on Oct. 5, 2001, then crossed into Afghanistan on Oct. 19 in an MH-47 Chinook helicopter.

Able to travel day or night, the horses allowed them to get around and behind the enemy, cutting them off from reinforcements or retreat. The horses allowed them to find the enemy's position in the primitive and rugged terrain and call in air strikes on Taliban targets.

higher While occupying ground in order to have the best view of the land, trucks, machine guns, trenches, bunkers, and artillery, these Horse Soldiers of Afghanistan were not far from the fluid battlefield or the threat. ODA 595 executed offensive operations using the might of U.S. air power. The CIA was there to support ODA 595 and Dostum, and report back to the U.S.

On Nov. 10, ODA 595 and militia allies liberated the city of Mazar-e-Sharif from the Taliban. Weeks later, the Taliban surrendered in other areas of Afghanistan.

In November, 300 to 400 Taliban had surrendered to Dostum's men. They were taken to a 19th century fortress. Mike Spann and Dave Tyson, members of Team Alpha, began initial interviews. Spann and Tyson suspected there might be foreign fighters in the group who might know of a future attack planned against the U.S. Tragically, this was a "Trojan Horse" plan. The defectors turned out to be Al Qaeda. They attempted to break out and killed Mike Spann. Dave Tyson fought his way out. It took

three days to suppress the fighters. John Walker Lindh ("The American Taliban") was there, though Team Alpha didn't know this at the time. If the fighters had not been suppressed, they would have killed everyone and undone the successful mission of defeating the Taliban.

Alex Hernandez says the collaboration between Team Alpha and ODA 595 was wonderful. He also credits the Air force, its B52 Bombers, the Navy and Marine fighter pilots along with the rest of the Special Forces, a British team similar to our Navy Seals, and, of course, General Dostum and his men with the successful mission.



Writer/Marketing Consultant Certified Economic Developer Florida Real Estate Broker

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Concerts at the Landing!

Concerts at the Landing has been extended this year and will run every Friday through Oct. 27 at the Fort Walton Beach Landing. Because of ongoing construction, the stage has been moved to the west side of the park, next to the Indianola Condominiums. There are signs marking a designated golf cart parking area inside

The Landing between the restrooms and the playground equipment.

Oct. 6: Jonboy Storey (country variety)

- Oct. 13: Autumn Poultry (classic rock)
- Oct. 20: Mind Plays (rock/ pop variety)
- Oct. 27: Flow Tribe (New Orleans funk party)

Arts & Music

MKAF

continued from page 2

Orange and her Splatter Studio, which allows children to suit up and exercise their artistic inspiration while creating their own personal art to take home from the festival. It's never too early to instill a love of the arts in the future of our communities. What better place than MKAF's Festival of the Arts to introduce the younger members of your family to a love of arts, music and community?

It doesn't stop there! MKAF members and the community are invited to join in on more amazing entertainment and fun from small intimate concerts in area listening rooms to MKAF's annual Wine Walkabout at Destin's Ruth's Chris Steakhouse, to the coming inaugural Salt Water Music Fest, bringing three days of music and fun to MKAF's Arts Village October 12-14th.

Salt Water Music Fest

If you're a fan of live music and lots of fun, you will certainly want to grab your three-day tickets or VIP table for the inaugural Salt Water Music Fest, presented by MKAF and Salt Water Vacations.

The spectacular festival takes place at MKAF's Arts Village in the heart of Destin, and brings internationally renowned headliners: Grammy winning R&B sensation Macy Gray and CMA nominated country hitmakers LOCASH, as well as six other hit Nashville songwriters to MKAF's Dugas Pavilion stage for what is sure to be a fun-filled celebration of music across multiple genres.

With hits like "I Try," "Sweet Baby," "Beauty in the World," "Still," and "Why Don't You Call Me," you're sure to enjoy a night of reminiscent musical fun, moving to the tunes of Macy Gray, just as country fans are sure to sing along to LO-CASH staples like "I Love This Life," "I Know Somebody," the band's remarkably popular 2023 patriotic hit, "Three Favorite Colors," and the chart-topping, "You Gonna Fly" written by LOCASH'S Chris Lucas and Preston Brust for Keith Urban.

The festival and ticket proceeds will further support and grow awareness for MKAF's outreach to our communities, schools, veterans and residents of these coastal communities.

(Read more about the festival from my one-on-one interview with LOCASH on page 34 in this issue.)

As if that's not enough music, MKAF has also added to its 2023 fall season two, new MKAF Unplugged live concerts! These popular listening-room style concerts will showcase singer-songwriters, solo artists, musicians, duos and small bands performing for limited numbers of attendees in intimate acoustic sets. The two upcoming fall concerts include American country music singer-songwriter Erin Enderlin on Sunday, Oct. 25, and the country rock duo, Capps & Hughes on Sunday, Nov. 1st. Both limited availability events take place on Henderson Beach Resort's Sunset Terrace in Destin. These particular concerts are a remarkable value, as they are offered as a bundle for only \$75. Tickets also include complimentary valet service, light bites and a cash bar.

MKAF's CEO, fearless leader, and champion of the arts Demetrius Fuller, had this to say about the addition of the new Unplugged Series: "Our first Unplugged benefit concert last June featuring Adam Ezra



Will Estell, his wife, ABC 3 news anchor, Laura Hussey, and Tommy Shaw of Styx

and Corrina Smith was so well received that we partnered with our friends at the Henderson to add these acoustic sets. With limited seats on a terrace, overlooking beautiful Henderson Beach State Park and the Gulf at sunset, this is a wonderful way to gather with friends to experience live music, a cocktail and delicious food. It's literally the magic memorable evenings are made from."

Whichever MKAF events you choose to attend and support this fall, one thing is for sure: By being a member of, or simply an attending supporter of Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's growing number of artful community events, you will be doing so much more than enriching your own life through contact

with the organization's art, music, and outreach programs. You will quite literally be making a lifelong difference in the lives of others. How's that for having your proverbial cake and eating it too?

For more information, including tickets to any of the array of MKAF events, Salt Water Music Fest, and to become a MKAF member and take advantage of their corporate sponsorship opportunities, visit MKAF.org

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur and coastal real estate professional with more than 600 published magazine features in an array of genres, from celebrity interviews to travel and tourism to automobiles and real estate. During the past 25 years, Will has been instrumental in founding and co-founding 12 new magazines from concept to fruition, as well as serving as editor in chief for numerous others. Originally from the backwoods of rural Ripley, 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. Will is a regular contributor to Life Media and numerous other publications, as well as a member of the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's board of directors.



mattie kelly benefiting

Grammy-award winning pop songstress Macy Gray and country music's "feel-good duo" LOCASH plus 5 top Nashville Singer-Songwriters hit the Dugas Pavilion in Destin. Food Trucks, Beverage Stations and Cash Bars on site.

Proceeds benefit MKAF ArtsReach initiatives including the ground-breaking arts therapy program Warrior Arts, Arts for All Abilities and arts education outreach throughout Okaloosa, Walton and Bay Counties.



MACY GRAY



THURSDAY, OCT. 12 **Dugas Pavilion in Destin**

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FRIDAY, OCT. 13 Dugas Pavilion in Destin

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OCTOBER 28 & 29

ARTY KICK OFF PARTY

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Stage Crafters Community Theatre Celebrates Milestone 200th Show with Something Rotten! the Musical

By Bobby Parker

Stage Crafters Community Theatre closes out its 51st Season with Something Rotten! the Musical opening November 10th at the Fort Walton Beach Civic Auditorium in Downtown Fort Walton Beach. Celebrating its 200th show, Something Rotten! the Musical is a remarkable achievement and a testament to the dedication and passion of the theatre community in Northwest Florida.

Something Rotten! the Musical marks a significant milestone in Stage Crafters Community Theatre's history, capping off its 51st season. This uproarious comedic production promises to entertain audiences with its hilarious wit and outstanding performances. The show will run on two consecutive weekends, from November 10th to 12th and November 17th to 19th, with performances on Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m.

Pam Strecker, the president of Stage Crafters Community Theatre, expressed her excitement about this historic moment, saying, "Reaching our 200th show is an incredible accomplishment for Stage Crafters Community Theatre. This milestone reflects the enduring commitment of our dedicated volunteers and the unwavering support of our community. Something Rotten! the Musical is a fitting celebration of our journey."

Something Rotten! the Musical is a hilarious, irreverent homage to the world of theatre, set in the Renaissance era. The show, directed by Craig Ewing and Nancy Kruzek, promises to deliver side-splitting laughter and musical numbers that will have audiences tapping their toes. Ewing shared his enthusi-



asm for the production, stating, "I am honored to be a part of this special milestone for Stage Crafters. Something Rotten! the Musical is a comedic masterpiece, and I can't wait for our audiences to experience the joy it brings."

Nancy Kruzek, who has been with Stage Crafters Community Theatre since its inception, serves as the co-director of Something Rotten! the Musical. Kruzek remarked, "Stage Crafters has been a second home for so many of us, and it's heartwarming to see how our theatre family has grown over the years. We're ready to make this show a memorable one for our community."

Stage Crafters Community Theatre is proud to be the oldest, continuously running, all-volunteer, not-for-profit community theatre in the state of Florida. Over the past 50+ years, more than 12,000 volunteers have learned and honed their skills, enriching their marketable life skills while bringing live theatre to the local community. The theatre has already reached over 350,000 audience members, making a lasting impact on the cultural landscape of Fort Walton Beach.

Don't miss this milestone production of Something Rotten! the Musical as Stage Crafters Community Theatre celebrates its 200th show. Tickets are available now and can be purchased at StageCraftersFWB.com.

SOMETHING ROTTEN! is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.mtishows.com



