





Postal Customer Local

You Are a Holiday Hero When You Help Those In Need

By Lori Leath Smith

Anyone can be a Holiday Hero when they help those in need in our community. As always during the holiday season, there is an ongoing need for giving or volunteering. Many children don't have enough food to eat over a weekend, much less over the holidays this time of year. Some just want Santa to visit them. Some have no beds or gifts. Many homeless veterans go without a warm meal all year long.

Okaloosa County has a food insecurity rate of 12.3 percent among children younger than 18 (source: Feeding America), slightly lower than last year, but still too high. Though many families in our area are struggling to get by, we can bless them with an extra boost this holiday season. Fortunately, we are a generous and compassionate community that pulls together for its own. Below are ways you, too, can be a Holiday Hero this season:



One Hopeful Place needs your help. Providing shelter and "hope" for those in dire need—single men, women and veterans with no shelter, medical supplies transportation or basic necessities, One Hopeful Place depends on people in our community. Your support can create a significant ripple effect on the

lives of the homeless. Donations to One Hopeful Place do more than provide shelter and meals; they instill hope and open doors to new beginnings. Even a small monthly pledge can significantly impact, helping to keep the lights on and doors open. Visit www.onehopefulplace.org or call 850-586-7879 to help.

It's that time of year for **The Salvation Army.** Ready to help you help others with its popular Angel Trees, Angels (children 0-12 years old) are available for adoption beginning November 18th at all the Walmart Stores in

HOLIDAY HERO continued on page 2

Missing Christmas

By Gueary Clendenning

Christmas is just around the corner. After Thanksgiving, the pace quickens toward the big day! We'll find ourselves in a big rush, always pursuing one more thing we need to get accomplished. We look for the nearest parking spot in the crowded mall, searching for the perfect gift. Expectations heighten as we look for family members to arrive. What's Christmas without Mom's chocolate chip cookies! And yes, when Christmas is finally over, we look forward to getting some rest. Ha!

Isn't it easy, with all the flurry of Christmas to miss the real meaning of Christmas?

The night Christ was born, the inn-keeper was busy with a full house of customers, thanks to the new taxation decreed by Caesar Augustus. The people of Bethlehem were unaware that the couple entering their town were about to give birth to the Son of God! Perhaps even Joseph and Mary wondered how this could be God-directed when the only place they could find shelter was in a smelly stable. But this night would change everything! Micah, a prophet of the Old Testa-

MISSING continued on page 2





Magnolia Grill

Equal parts museum and dining establishment, the walls of this 1910 catalog house are covered with pieces of local history

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MISSING

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ment had prophesied hundreds of years before, that a ruler was to be born in Bethlehem, whose origins were from Eternity. "But you, oh Bethlehem...though you are a small village in Judah, a ruler of Israel shall come from you, one whose origins are from the ancient past."

Another Old Testament prophet declared "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Immanuel means "God with us."

That night near Bethlehem, shepherds were working their usual routine of herding sheep into a cave, where, at the entrance, they would keep watch. Just another, long, boring night!

But, out of nowhere, a mighty angel appears in the blackened sky. In a flash, the darkness was expelled with a brilliant light. The shepherds are paralyzed with a gripping fear. The angel said to them, "don't be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy for everyone. The Savior, yes, the Messiah, has been born tonight in Bethlehem. And this is how you will recognize him: you will find him in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven, praising God, saying "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all of whom God favors." Luke 2:10-14.

Time and space will not permit me to tell you about a devout



man who was told by God that he will not see death until his eyes had seen the Messiah. His story is found in Luke 2:25-33. Nor do I have the space to tell you about the men from the East, who in studying the scriptures were led to follow a star to where Jesus was born. Their story is in Matthew 2:1-12.

The shepherds and the wise men did not miss the meaning of Christmas. God's gift to the world was His Son, Jesus Christ. Why? The scriptures give us the answer: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16.

The truth is that all have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standards. Yet, now, God in His gracious kindness declares us not guilty. Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God's justice is satisfied. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed His blood, sacrificing his life for us

Such a great gift! Our sins are forgiven and our standing before God made right. So please, don't miss the true meaning of Christmas. May you have a beautiful and Christ centered Christmas.

HOLIDAY HERO

continued from page 1

Okaloosa and Walton Counties as well as Bass Pro Shop Destin, Ashley Home Furniture Crestview and Ft. Walton, AJ's on the Bayou in Fort Walton Beach and Chick-fil-a Niceville. Simply pick a tag off a tree and return



From the FWB Life and Life Media family to yours...

We wish you a very, Merry Christmas And a Happy New Year!

Visit mybaylifenwfl.com | Scott@LifeMediaGrp.com | (850) 688-9886

your Angel's gifts to any of the above locations or drop off at the Thrift Store, 425 Mary Esther Cutoff, Fort Walton Beach, by December 9th. If your business would like to adopt some Angels, please call Laura Beeman, (850) 243-4531 x20.

Have you ever had to sleep without a bed? Some in our community do. Why not put some sparkle into a child's holiday this year? A Bed 4 Me invites you to help provide beds for children in Okaloosa and Walton counties this season. \$10-\$25 Walmart gift cards can purchase pillows, bedding go towards the purchase of a bed. \$300 sponsors a full bed kit and helps with operational expenses. A Bed 4 Me has provided beds to thousands of children in our community since 2016. To help, visit abed4me.org where you can donate in any amount.

 $\textbf{Food For Thought} \ (FFT)$ provides year-round programs to bridge the meal gap in the lives of the food-insecure children they serve, but it's especially needed during the holidays. You can help by sponsoring a family for the holidays. Food for Thought will provide holiday services during Thanksgiving and Christmas school holiday breaks, feeding over 700 families during each holiday, distributing 30,000 pantry staples and more than 11,000 lbs. of produce. Families supported by Food for Thought programs throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties



Published Monthly Mailed FREE to the communities of Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa Island, Ocean City, Shalimar & Cinco Bayou (32547, 32548 and 32549)

P.O. Box 1424 Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

Executive Editor & Publisher

Lori Leath Smith Lori@LifeMediaGrp.com

Director, Advertising Sales Scott Miller

Scott@LifeMediaGrp.com

Production & Layout Kim Harper

Contributing Writers

Doug Stauffer Kelly Murphy-Redd Gueary Clendenning Heather Bennett Eye Barbara Palmgren David Triana Zandra Wolfgram

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Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport

Getting Heroes "Home for the Holidays" for Eight Years

By Kelly Murphy-Redd

The Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport eighth annual "Operation Home for the Holidays" campaign helped a "hero." Every year the airport draws the name of one lucky entrant and pays for them to spend the holidays with their loved ones.

The campaign ran through December 5th and is open to active duty enlisted personnel (E4 and below) from any military base located in the 850 or 448 area codes. Each year, one lucky service member is randomly selected to receive round trip air fare to be used during December 2023 or January 2024.

Past recipients have expressed their gratitude. Many service members haven't seen family members for months or even years. There are over 100,000 service members deployed around the world, many of whom won't spend the holidays with their families. Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport can make sure one of them will.

This wonderful idea was

born years ago when Airports Director, Tracy Stage and his wife were talking about their military sons coming home for the holidays. Operation Home for the Holidays is a way for the airport to give back to the military community.

"The Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport is the world's only Joint Use-Commercial Service Schedule Facilitated Airport and the entire team looks forward each year to honor the servicemen and servicewomen in our local military community by offering them a chance to win a roundtrip back home during the Holiday season," says Stage.

The Eglin-Hurlburt Community was designated A Great American Defense Community in 2016. One of the criteria is community building and integration whereby the community provides an environment in which service members, their families and veterans are welcomed and integrated into the community fabric.

The Destin-Fort Walton



Beach Airport lives up to the spirit of this designation every day. The entire airport is filled with tributes to our military. This annual promotion is just one of the many ways the airport strives to connect with and serve its community.

"We take great pride in our heritage and our strong military community. It is important to show our support and gratitude, especially during the holidays when so many young service members are far from family," added Stage.

The Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) provides scheduled airline service to over 2.2M passengers annually, with five airlines flying to 48 destinations resulting in an economic impact that exceeds \$2.9B annually. Okaloosa County has an enhanced use lease and joint-use agreement partnership with Eglin Air Force Base that has been secured to 2063.

The Okaloosa County Airports Department which operates Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS), Destin Executive Airport (DTS) and Bob Sikes Airport (CEW) is 100% debt free and the only three-airport system in the country that can make that claim.

President and CEO of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce Ted Corcoran says, "The incredible success of the Destin - Fort Walton Beach Airport expansion and record-breaking travelers visiting our community can be credited to just one man. Mr. Tracy Stage, in his leadership tenure, has empowered his great staff to surpass the bar, time and

time again. He has transformed not only the Airport, but all of Okaloosa County. "

For more information about Operation Home for the Holidays round-trip airfare, go to https://www.getthecoast.com/operationflyvps.



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Community

HOLIDAY HERO

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will be provided food to prepare a traditional Thanksgiving meal along with food to support their students' needs while they are out of school for a week, which is about 10 meals they will miss. To enroll, email support@fftfl. org. To volunteer or donate, please visit www.fftfl.org.

At Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC), 1,585 kids were assisted in 2022. This giving season, you can make a child's Christmas by helping to stock ECCAC's toy room for families and agency partners to "shop!" Purchase items from ECCAC "wish lists" or shop for items yourself. Contact Hailey@eccac.org to schedule your drop-off and drop off at one of

ECCAC's locations: Niceville Chamber Office, 1055 John Sims Pkwy E, Niceville or Pierce Family ECCAC, 336 College Ave, DeFuniak Springs. eccac.

Children in Crisis, our community non-profit charity committed to providing homes and keeping brothers and sisters together, is asking all of the wonderful local Christmas elves



to help with their kiddo's Christmas lists. Simply visit https://a. co/0UDgndl to shop from the Amazon Wish List or scan the QR code! Please deliver your gifts by noon on Dec. 22 to 1000 Luke's Way, Fort Walton Beach. Call 850-864-4242 or email Info@childrenincrisisFL.org for more information. childrenincrisisfl.org

Each year this season, leadership students from Fort Walton Beach High School (FWBHS) become "heroes" for many parents in our community who have no way to provide a joyful Christmas for their children—10 days of meals, holiday gifts and any other necessities such as utilities and maintenance for families in Okaloosa County. In December, students shop at Walmart to select gifts such as bikes for the children. Donations are also spent on necessities such as bread, butter, milk, eggs and turkeys and even family bills. Through Christmas Connection, you can join these amazing hometown heroes by making a monetary donation for gifts and bills or contributing canned goods and boxed food. \$100 provides a holiday package for one child. Simply send your check to FWBHS with "Christmas Connection" written in the memo section. A tax receipt by request can be provided.

The Angel Tree Program, a collaborative effort of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officers (SROs) and the OCSO Sheriff's Star Charity, is in full gear! SROs provide a list of names of children within their schools whose families may be experiencing financial hardship and could benefit from the program. Children fill out a wish list with their SRO and guidance counselor asking for things sucha as bikes, video games, new pajamas or socks. OCSO employees purchase gifts, but you can help by making a monetary donation to help fulfill the wish lists. Since the program began in 2010, more than 1,000 Okaloosa County children have received special deliveries from their SRO before Christmas. To donate, contact Brian Muhlbach, PIO for the Sheriff's Star Charity, at charity@sheriff-okaloosa. org or visit ocsostarcharity.com.

Fatboys and Holi Indian Restaurant has launched a month-long non-perishable food drive spanning all of its locations, benefitting different local hunger relief organizations throughout the area. The campaign runs now through December 23, 2023. Fatboy's Miramar Beach and Destin locations as well as Holi's Miramar Beach location will support Destin Harvest. Patrons are invited to participate in Fatboy's efforts this holiday season by bringing nonperishable and canned food items to receive 20% off their meal. To make the donation process as convenient as possible, labeled boxes will be placed in each Fatboy's location for the collection of donated items.





Live and Local! Download the FREE app!



Alberto Romero **Destin's Only Local Forecast**

Billy Surf Surf's Up In The Morning

Dan Collins Crab Island Throw Down Sat 12n

Ellie Adair Weekends

@The850Foodie Joanna Davis Foodie Friday 7a, 8a, 9a



tappenings Around T

DECEMBER 2023

01 | Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee 7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | FWB **Holiday Open House** 5 pm | Dragonfly Yoga | FWB Blue Christmas: A Night with Ron Adams 6 pm | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport

Bikes or Bust for Emerald Coast Toys for Tots

05 | 10 am | Uptown Station | FWB **45th Special Forces Association** 02 Jingle Bell Jog

8 am | The Island Resort | FWB

Repticon

9 am | Fort Walton Beach Fairgrounds | FWB

Christmas Market and Open House

9 am | DeFrance Indoor Flea Market Antiques | FWB

Discover Science Saturday

10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

2023 Winterfest

11 am | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB

Photos with Santa

12 pm | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson | FWB

Beachy Little Christmas: A Sandcastle Spectacular

12 pm | The Island Resort | FWB

City of Mary Esther's Christmas Tree Lighting 4 pm | 100 Hollywood Blvd | Mary Esther

Art Walk Downtown

5 pm | Downtown Fort Walton Beach | FWB

Arts and Design Society's Christmas Market 02-Various Times | Arts and Design Society Gallery | FWB 15

03 | Repticon 9 am | Fort Walton Beach Fairgrounds | FWB Toast 'n Jam feat. Time for Three (Tf3) 10:30 am | Henderson Beach Resort | Destin

04 | NWF Chapter of FRLA Golf Classic 7:30 am | Blackstone Golf Club | DeFuniak Springs Fort Walton Beach Christmas Parade 6:30 pm | Eglin Parkway | FWB

04- | Homeschool Week

9 am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park | FWB 80

ECPRO Christmas Jingle & PR Mingle 05 5:30 pm | Bob Hope Village Welcome Center | Shalimar

Christmas Workshop: Holiday Llamas 06 6:30 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB

07 Wine Tasting 5 pm | TASTE | FWB

Planetarium Special Feature: Sordid Secrets 07 6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

Bike Night

6 pm | Helen Back Pizza | FWB

Live Music: Autumn Poultry 08 6 pm | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB Holiday Pops feat. Brian Stokes Mitchell 7:30 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center | FWB

FWB Police Department's Winter Wonderland -80 6 pm | Northwest Florida Fairgrounds | FWB 09 **FWB Community Chorus Christmas Memories** 7 pm | FWB Civic Auditorium

Reindeer Dash 5K/10K 09 8 am | Fort Walton Beach Landing | FWB

Women's Climbing Circle

9 am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin

Girls Empowered with Math and Science (GEMS) Workshop

10:30 am | Fort Walton Beach Public Library | FWB

Christmas Craft and "Elf" Movie Screening 10 am | The Island Resort | FWB

Silent Night Holiday Dance Party 7 pm | Stage Crafters Community Theatre | FWB

10 | Holiday Bazaar

11 am | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport

Winter Mooba Land

2 pm | Mooba Cafe | FWB

FWB Community Chorus Christmas Memories 3 pm | FWB Civic Auditorium

Behold Emmanuel - Christmas Concert 5 pm | First Baptist Church | FWB

Center for Lifelong Learning Student Orientation 3 pm | UWF - Emerald Coast Campus, BLDG 1 | FWB

> All Ages Holiday Workshop: Peekaboo Santa or Reindeer 6:30 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB

Center for Lifelong Learning Winter Semester 13 | Online Registration Begins Visit CLL-FWB.org for Class Schedule and Registration

Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking 11:30 am | The Bavarian's Wirtshaus | FWB

Date Night: Destin Bridge at Night Painting 15 7 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB

Creation Station 16 11 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB Cookies and Crafts with the Grump 12 pm | The Island Resort | FWB

17 **Backpack Food Program Sunday** 7:15 am | Holy Trinity Lutheran Church | FWB Cookies and Crafts with the Grump 12 pm | The Island Resort | FWB

Greater FWB Chamber's Holiday Party 20 5:30 pm | The Harvey F. Eckhoff VFW Post 7674 | FWB

Planetarium Night 21 6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

Ugly Christmas Sweater Party 23 12 pm | The Sound Cafe + Enlightened Studios | FWB All Ages Blacklight Workshop:

Snowflake Magic 1 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB

United Cruise-In 28 5 pm | Poppy C's BBQ | FWB

All Ages Painting Workshop: Tie Dye Narwhal 1 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB

New Year's Eve Party

8:30 pm | The Venue at Beach Weekend | FWB

DEC. 01 - JAN. 09

A Victorian Christmas Tours Daily | Wesley House at Eden State Gardens

ONGOING EVENTS

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

Open Mic Night

7 pm | Wednesdays | The Sound Cafe + Enlightened Studios | FWB

Live Trivia

6:30 pm | Thursdays | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB

Music Bingo

7 - 9 pm | Mondays | Pallet Bar and Grill | FWB

Photos with Santa & Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides

5 - 9 pm | Fridays & Saturdays | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach

FARMER'S MARKETS

Downtown FWB Farmers Market 2nd & 4th Saturdays - December 9, 23 8 am - 1 pm | FWB Landing Park | FWB

Okaloosa County Farmers' Market Saturdays - December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 7 am - 2 pm | 1954 Lewis Turner Blvd | FWB











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A Fort Walton Beach Holiday

By Lori Leath Smith

For many years, our piece of Paradise has ignited the holiday spirit in each of us and allowed the season to come to life for the young and young at heart. With a unique blend of theatrical storytelling, musical notes, hot Christmas flavored-coffee and cocoa, and beautiful and whimsical Christmas lights, we are welcomed into a world of yuletide nostalgia and local flavor and personalities where reindeer fly, sugarplums dance in our heads and Christmas comes alive in our own beach area, coastal style.

I invite you to explore the vast, unique holiday traditions, some many years in the making and new ones to delight our senses and usher in the "reason for the season" - the celebrated birth of Jesus, our Savior. Join FWB Life and the Life Media family in some of these holiday celebrations where you can create some new family traditions of your own while rekindling your favorites.

Visit Santa at The Village

of Baytowne Wharf at his sleigh Dec. 6, 13 and 20 during the holiday concerts from 6-8 p.m. and during the Tuba Christmas event from 5-7 p.m. Dec. 9. www.baytownewharf.

Visit Santa at Bass Pro **Shop** at Destin Commons now through Dec. 24 (book at basspro.com) and at HarborWalk Village weekends until Dec. 17 from 1-4 p.m.

Baytowne on Ice Now-Feb. 4 | Village of **Baytowne Wharf**

Dust off those skates and get ready for the holidays at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Baytowne on Ice. Ice rink is open Now - Sunday, Feb. 4. Hours vary daily. Visit BaytowneWharf.com.

Festival of Trees | Now-Dec. 25 | Grand Boulevard

The Festival of Trees at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin runs Nov. 21 through Christmas Day 2023. Participating non-profit organizations compete to win cash prizes totaling \$7,000. Cast your vote for the People's Choice award. Festival of Trees is an annual event in the park at Grand Boulevard shopping center showcasing uniquely decorated Christmas trees from 12 local non-profit organizations.

Christmas Reflection Displays | Now-Dec. 31 | **Defuniak Springs**

The City of Defuniak Springs lights up Chipley Park lights with its annual Christmas Reflection Displays, a light display like no other in our area with more than 10 million lights reflecting on the lake and throughout the park. You can view the lights by walking, driving or even taking a horsedrawn carriage ride. A variety of Victorian, animal and toy soldier cutouts, Santa's workshop, and the grandfather clock ticking away are among the thousands of decorations that adorn these historic grounds. Admission is \$5 per person and children 5 and under are free. (850) 978-2999.



Merry Main Street | Now-**Dec. 23 | Defuniak Springs**

Free to attend, Merry Main Street boasts live music and theatrical performances, an outdoor market, food trucks, rides on the Choctaw Express Train, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, kids character appearances by The Character Clubhouse and more. Baldwin Ave. in downtown DeFuniak Springs. 5 p.m. Fridays and 3 p.m. Saturdays until Christmas. MainStreetDFS.org. (850) 296-

Jolly Jubilee | Now-Dec. 24 | Destin Commons

Embrace the festive spirit at Destin Commons with the annual Jolly Jubilee! This holiday celebration, featuring musical performances on the new lawn area at Center Plaza, comes alive every Friday, Saturday and Sunday now through Dec. 24. Wander through the festive decor, hear the sweet sounds of Christmas carolers and enjoy live performances, all while standing beneath the glow of a majestic, 50-foot tree. Or take pictures with family and friends in a life-size Santa's Sleigh.

Wesley House Holiday Guided Tours | Now-Jan. 9 | Eden State Gardens | Santa Rosa Beach

The Wesley House at Eden State Gardens will be open for holiday guided tours Thursday-Monday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on an hourly basis. This year's theme is "A Victorian Christmas and all are invited to attend.

Photos with Santa & Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides | Dec. 1-30 | 5-8 p.m. | Grand Boulevard

Complimentary horse-drawn carriage rides around the Town

Center every Friday and Saturday night, 5-8 p.m. Take in the Coastal White Christmas lights and the Festival of Trees display. Get a professional photo with Santa while listening to the seasonal sounds of "Rock Around the Christmas Tree" Musical Revue from Emerald Coast Theatre Co. grandboulevard.

Nights of Lights | Dec. 1-31 | 6, 7 & 8 p.m. | **Events Plaza Lawn**

Enjoy a free, festive light show every night of December in The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin and featured during the special holiday edition of the Wednesday Night Concert Series. The tree lights in the events plaza will dance and blink to music at 6, 7 and 8 p.m. Visit BaytowneWharf.com.

7th Annual Troon Goon Christmas Lightshow | Dec. 2 - Jan. 5 | 6-9:30 p.m. | Bluewater Bay area

A free, residential graphic light show that combines classic Christmas songs with modern versions for a fun and energetic twist of entertainment. The hi-tech light animations dance to the music and feature the house, mega tree, arches and other standalone features for an unlimited amount of pixel combinations. The 30-minute show starts every hour and half-hour. It's a different show every year and you can vote online for your favorite song versions while you watch. View from your vehicle while listening on your car stereo at 101.3 FM. The lightshow will run nightly from Visit http://www.troongoonchristmas.com or Facebook for the latest news.

"Geek Lights on the Corner" | 6-9:30 p.m.-Sun.-Thurs. | 10:30 p.m. Fri., Sat. & holiday eves

Located at the corner of Bluewater Blvd. and Antiqua Way in Bluewater Bay, the shows loop every 30 minutes starting at 6 p.m., with the last show starting at 9:30 p.m. Sun.-Thurs., and 10:30 p.m. Fri., Sat. and holiday eves. Now in its 16th year, the free show consists of Christmas lights and other themed display elements,



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New Center of Excellence Provides Needed Automotive Industry Training

By Lori Leath Smith

The doors have opened at a new Training Center for students pursuing careers in the automotive industry. The Center of Excellence, a state-of-the-art facility, is a milestone achievement made possible through the unique and valuable partnership of Step One Automotive Group and Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC).

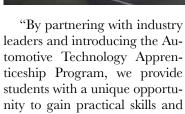
Located in Fort Walton Beach's Commerce and Technology Park, the Center of Excellence not only offers the best in innovative automotive training and services, but is also a hub for automotive education. From a dedicated used car reconditioning center, excelling in oil changes and brake work, the 39,722 sq. ft. center is fully equipped to cater to the diverse needs of the automotive world, including a heavy-duty commercial truck bay, advanced window tinting facilities and a specialized spray-in bed liner bav.

The comprehensive Center includes a fully renovated 30,000-sq.-ft main building, equipped with 17 lifts capable of servicing vehicles up to class 2,500, a 7,000-sq.-ft. detail shop and a 2,200-sq.-ft. paint and dent repair center, built from the ground up. It's also equipped with the latest eco-friendly technology for fluid and tire disposal and features the most advanced equipment and safety standards available

In addition to automotive services, at the heart of the initiative is the launch of the Automotive Technology Apprenticeship Program, a groundbreaking collaboration between Step One and NWFSC. This unique program offers students invaluable on-the-job training (OJT)—a real shop environment with master certified technicians which aligns education and industry practices seamlessly. Enrolled students stand to benefit from a comprehensive 720 clock, hour-free tuition, complimentary books and essential tools of the trade. On successful completion of the apprenticeship, graduates will be awarded a certified portable credential, gaining recognition and acceptance from industries and em-



to turn his vision into reality," said Maureen. "Today, we stand together, proud to be a part of a program that will shape the next generation of automotive professionals.'



knowledge while working alongside experienced professionals,' remarked Dr. Stephenson. "At NWFSC, our goal is to produce

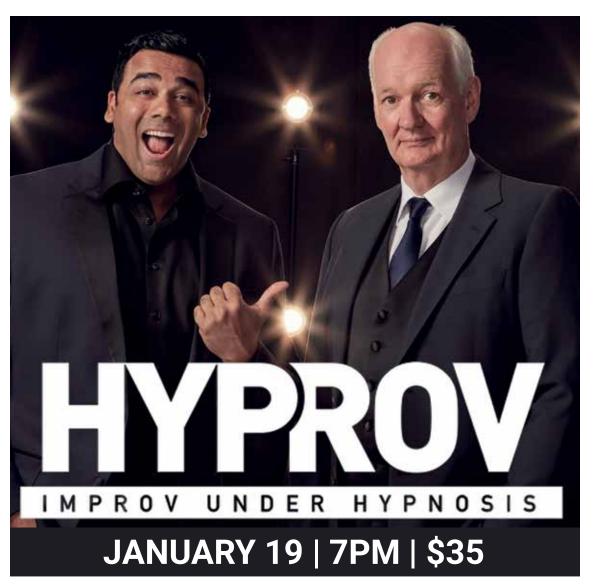


ployers nationwide.

At the recent grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new center, Maureen Bierman, Step One Automotive Group Marketing Director said the idea emerged a year ago when Dr. Devin Stephenson, the president of Northwest Florida State College, reached out to her. "I have an idea and Step One Automotive Group is the only organization that can help us make that a reality," he

"When we met, he shared with me his desire to stand up an automotive technology training program at the college and was looking for a partner where the students could do handson apprentice training in a real shop with master certified technicians," said Maureen.

A year later, after extensive renovations to an old factory and with the help of a \$2.8 million grant from the governor's job growth fund, the Center of Excellence is in operation. "When Dr. Stephenson approached us over a year ago, we knew we had the opportunity

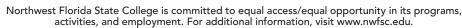




For more information and ticket sales Visit MattieKellyArtsCenter.org Call the Box Office at 850.729.6000 or Scan Here













Active Compassion for the Homeless

By Doug Stauffer

Imagine a world where every night brings the uncertainty of finding a safe place to sleep, where danger can be right around any corner, and feelings of fear, demoralization and alienation are constant companions. This isn't a hypothetical scenario for many; it's the everyday reality for those living without the basic security of a home. Addressing this need doesn't always require grand gestures; sometimes, the smallest acts of kindness can make the biggest difference.

At the forefront of this compassionate response is One Hopeful Place, a beacon of hope in Okaloosa County dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness for people living in our communities. My journey in understanding this crisis began three decades ago, as the President of a city rescue mission. A heart-rending moment happened when a homeless couple, strug-

gling with addiction and caring for two small children, stayed at our shelter. Months after they left, they contacted my wife and me with a life-changing request: would we adopt their young son and daughter? They were aware of our loss and wished for their children to have the stability they couldn't provide. This poignant episode not only highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by the homeless, but also the critical need for community support and intervention. We said "yes."

The Growing Need

In today's world, the challenges faced by the homeless have intensified, with fewer resources and increasing societal apathy. In this bleak landscape, One Hopeful Place emerges as a sanctuary, providing critical services such as a day program, cold night shelter, health screenings and transportation for medical needs. These services, as simple as a hot meal or a safe place to sleep, are often lifesaving, offering a glimmer of hope in the lives of many.

The Day Program: A Life-

The Day Program at One Hopeful Place transcends the definition of service; it is, indeed, a lifeline. For those on the streets, basic necessities like nutritious food, clean water and access to hygiene and laundry facilities ONE HOPEFUL PLACE

are luxuries. Here, the program bridges this gap, often marking the thin line between survival and despair. The stories of those who have found solace and support here are a testament to its

How Can YOU Help?

Your support can create a significant ripple effect on the lives of the homeless. Donations to One Hopeful Place do more than provide shelter and meals; they instill hope and open doors to new beginnings. As a 501(C)(3) organization, One Hopeful Place relies entirely on grants, donations, and community support. Even a small monthly pledge can significantly impact, helping to keep the lights on and doors open. Every church could budget funds to contribute their part. Reflecting on our Christian duty, as outlined in Matthew 25:35-40, we are reminded that serving the needy is akin to serving Christ Himself.

This scripture is not just a call to action; it's a moral imperative, urging us, especially religious and community leaders, to heed

the words of Jesus and actively engage in caring for the hungry and homeless. Jesus concluded with these words: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). Jesus was directly referring to our responsibility to care for the hungry and the homeless! No one, especially religious and community leaders, should turn a blind eye to such an appeal from the Son of God Himself.

Our Mission and Goals

One Hopeful Place's mission is to provide shelter and support for single men, women, with priority given the veterans experiencing homelessness. Our goal is not just to offer a handout but a hand-up, helping individuals rebuild their lives. The shelter, which opened in 2016, has expanded to accommodate more individuals, including a separate shelter for homeless women.

The Community's Role

Community engagement is crucial. The story of One Hopeful Place is one of collective effort and shared responsibility. It began with community leaders recognizing a need and taking decisive action. Today, it continues to grow with the support of local businesses, nonprofits, churches, and volunteers.

Making a Difference

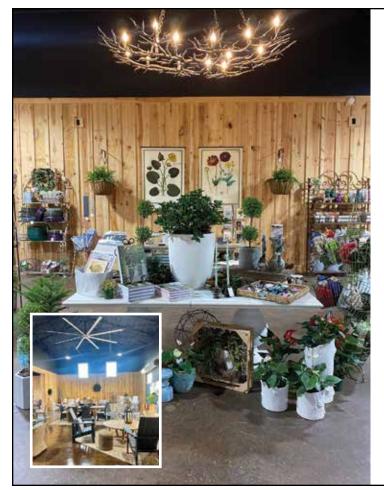
Small acts by individuals can transform many lives. Whether it's volunteering, donating supplies, or simply spreading awareness, every contribution counts. One Hopeful Place exemplifies how community-driven initiatives can create significant change, providing a haven for those in need.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my experience from three decades ago, the plight of the homeless remains a pressing issue. However, with organizations like One Hopeful Place and the collective effort of our community, there is hope. Together, we can make a difference, offering not just shelter, but dignity, support, and a path to a better future. Let us unite in this call to action with active compassion for the homeless.

Check out the website: www. onehopefulplace.org or call 850-586-7879. Please help as the need is real and the time is now.







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First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach Presents 35th Live Nativity

First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach will present its 35th Live Nativity celebration from Thursday, December 14th through Wednesday, December 20th. The Live Nativity is open from 6 – 8:30 p.m. each night. It is the second time only in several years that this free, Live Nativity will be open on a Sunday evening, a gift to the community from First Baptist Church.

As there is no drive-through option, by walking through, you can have your photo taken with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, as well as the three Wise Men. Your photo will be waiting for you to pick up as you depart the area. In the Shepherd's Field, you can pet and feed the miniature donkeys, sheep and Naomi the Camel!

The entrance to the nativity field is at the corner of 2nd St. and Church Ave., right next to the First Baptist Church sanctuary. Parking is available in the church parking lot.

This celebration of the birth of Jesus includes Angels, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, the three Magi and Shepherds. To illustrate the complete salvation story from Jesus' miraculous birth, to his crucifixion and resurrection, there are Roman Soldiers at the Cross and Angels at the Empty Tomb.

As visitors depart the shepherd's field, children receive a candy cane and learn the Christian story behind its invention.

The church provides cookies, coffee or hot chocolate! If the weather turns cold, there are fire pits to gather around to keep warm. Each night there will be live singing and music courtesy of the First Baptist Church music ministry.

This depiction of the birth of Christ has become a special part of the Christmas celebration in Fort Walton Beach. The family photo in the nativity is a keepsake that now stretches back through three decades. Last year, more than 800 family portraits were taken in the nativity scene.

First Baptist Church was blessed to have Dr. Bill Buckelew and his wife, Jane, in the congregation 35 years ago when the church started the Live Nativity. Although Dr. B has passed on,





all the animals still come from the Rockin' BAB Ranch in De-Funiak Springs. Josh Nelson, Dr. B's former ranch manager and now the Rockin' BAB owner, has continued Dr. B's legacy of providing the animals for the Live Nativity.

For more information on First Baptist's free gift to the community, visit fbcfwb.org.







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City Council Discusses Increasing Density in Downtown FWB, Future Development

By Jared Williams, GetTheCoast.com

Before the regularly scheduled Fort Walton Beach City Council meeting in November, Growth Management Director Chris Frassetti presented a 'Downtown Master Plan Density & Zoning Presentation' to the council in a workshop.

Frassetti gave an overview of options related to potential downtown density increases and the creation of a new MX-3 zoning district, as recommended in the Downtown Master Plan. The city currently has MX-1 and MX-2 mixed-use zoning districts downtown.

The presentation outlined what was being proposed for increased density to allow for more mixed-use developments downtown.

Frassetti explained the process to date on implementing the Downtown Master Plan, including expansion of the downtown design overlay district,



a library study, infrastructure master plan, and development of new downtown design guidelines.

He summarized the recommendations from a July town hall meeting and an August stakeholder meeting with downtown property and business

owners to gather feedback on density increase options.

The proposed Downtown Master Plan envisions higher-density than what the current MX-2 zoning allows. For the presentation, Frassetti was only discussing higher density in the red area below:

Frassetti presented 3 options for increasing the MX-2 zoning density of 45 dwelling units per acre:

Option 1: Base density of 40, max of 60 with bonuses

Option 2: Base of 60, max of 90 with bonuses

Option 3: Base of 100, max of 150 with bonuses

A highlight of the workshop was an unexpected conceptual rendering shown from a developer for the vacant corner lot at Perry Ave and Highway 98, site of the old Landmark Center.

The renderings depicted a mixed-use building with commercial space, a 90-100 unit hotel, and market-rate apartments, with attainable housing, according to developer Manoj Chauhan and attorney John Dowd who discussed the very preliminary plans. There is also a parking garage that has been tucked away, but still very much part of the design of the complex.

They said this type of de-

velopment could drive demand downtown by adding a residential component with all the existing amenities nearby.

While nothing is concrete at the moment, Chauhan told the council that they are potentially targeting residents who can afford \$1,700-2,000 per month in rent.

In discussing the density options, Dowd estimated this proposed project would need around 135 units per acre. So it would likely require Option 3, which allows up to 150 units per acre with bonuses.

They noted the renderings were purely conceptual and no formal application had been submitted yet. It was shown as an example of what could be built if density allowances were increased.

The council took no formal action, as it was an informational workshop to gather feedback on the density proposals.

Brooks Street Realignment Underway in Downtown FWB as Part of Bridge Construction

By Jared Williams, GetTheCoast.com

A segment of Brooks Street in downtown Fort Walton Beach is being realigned as part of the ongoing \$171 million Brooks Bridge Replacement Project, according to the Florida Department of Transportation. Construction crews are shifting part of Brooks Street slightly south to make space for the future foundation of the new

Brooks Bridge, according to FDOT. The realignment of the road is occurring between Florida Blanca Place and Perry Avenue

The new stretch of Brooks Street is expected to open later this month for one-way traffic. The realignment is necessary to accommodate the parallel bridges that will expand capacity on the thoroughfare from four lanes to six when the work



is completed.

The current Brooks Bridge opened in 1966. The replacement project broke ground last year and is estimated to be finished by summer 2027.

Eventually two new bridges will be built side-by-side, increasing the traffic capacity from the existing bridge.



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

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New Agriculture Building Coming to Okaloosa County

By Carolyn Newcomer KETCHEL, OKALOOSA COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 2

Okaloosa County is fortunate to have a University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (UF IFAS) in Crestview. There was an office in the south end of the county on Hollywood Blvd. in Fort Walton Beach until Hurricane Sally finished an already outdated and dilapidated building. It became a priority to replace it and the legislature and Gov. De-Santis allowed the expenditure in 2021. We are looking forward to enhancing the many services offered to our citizens.

The new Okaloosa UF IFAS Extension Office will be located close to the Okaloosa County "Miss Ruth's" Farmers Market at the Fort Walton Beach Fairground. It is important to point out that this is not part of the newly acquired property of the Fairground, but property that the county owned prior. The



cost to build is \$1.5 million with the county providing the match in real estate.

The wonderful team of the Okaloosa UF IFAS Extension Office anticipates offering a variety of courses, programs, workshops, and meetings. These courses will feature agriculture, family and consumer sciences, commercial and residential horticulture, natural resources and 4-H Youth Development program areas. Some of the examples include Master Gardener programs, food preparation and safety workshops, Master Naturalist programs, drone training, 4-H development clubs and after school programs.

The building will feature accommodation for large groups, teaching kitchen, small lab-

oratory, storage, office space and plenty of room for teaching classes. The surrounding area of the building will be used for gardening both flowers and vegetables by the Extension Office for their students. The building with be one floor with 3,000 sq.

The plans include a greenhouse on the grounds. "Miss Ruth's" Farmer Market will have additional outdoor bathrooms built to accommodate vendors and customers. An existing well on the property will allow for irrigations of flower and vegetable gardens. The ground-breaking is planned for the spring of 2024.

As one who comes from a long family history of farming and gardening, I am excited to see this state-of-the-art building provided for our community. I have taken numerous classes over the years through our extension office with one

of the most memorable being "Antique Roses." I serve as the commissioner liaison to the UF ISAS Extension Office. It is one of my favorite parts of being a commissioner. There is something special about those who want to grow flowers and food and care for the earth. I invite you to consider signing up for the classes as they open this new building. It will make you and your family healthier and it is a great way to make new friends.

Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2. She can be reached at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 850-651-7105.

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Which Medicare Enrollment Period is Right for You?



By Greg Durette

Eventually, if you are lucky, you will find yourself needing to make the transition from traditional insurance to Medicare. Knowing when you qualify to first enroll and when to make changes later on can prove a bit confusing. But, it is critical to make sure you make the right moves at the right time. Missed opportunities, and sometimes even monetary penalties which could last a lifetime, might otherwise result.

So, let's get right after it, shall we?

There are four types of enrollment periods for Medicare. For the purposes of this article, I will use the term "Medicare" to apply to Advantage Plans, Supplement Plans and Stand-Alone Prescription Plans, unless otherwise noted. Those Enrollment Periods are:

- Initial Enrollment Period
- Special Election Period
- Annual Election Period
- Open Enrollment Period

The first Enrollment Period you will encounter is called the Initial Enrollment Period, or IEP for short. As the name indicates, this is when you are aging into eligibility for Medicare. The IEP is different for everyone as it starts three months before the month in which you turn age 65 and runs until three months after the month in which you turn age 65.

The IEP does expose you to a potential lifelong penalty if you fail to enroll in Part B and a Prescription Plan. Those penalties would apply after you eventually did enroll late and accrue every month after your IEP ended. The penalties will stop accumulating after you get the proper coverage arrangement. Important note: These penalties will not apply to you if you have other Qualifying coverage through work or a spouse.

The second Enrollment Period you may encounter is a
Special Election Period, or SEP
for short. This Enrollment Period is for certain types of special
events such as moving to a different coverage area or losing
your employer or union coverage. The SEP timing is, again,

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unique to everyone as every situation is unique to the person. This Enrollment Period lasts for three months after the month in which the qualifying special event occurred.

The third Enrollment Period you will encounter is the Annual Election Period, or AEP. Every year, from October 15th through December 7th, you can switch plans, drop coverage or change companies for your Medicare coverage. You can also join a Medicare plan if you missed the window for the IEP or SEP described earlier.

It is important to note, any Medicare plan elections you make during the AEP will become effective on January 1st of the following year.

The fourth and final Enrollment Period you will en-



counter is the Open Enrollment Period, or OEP. Depending on the type of Medicare plan you have (or don't have), you may be allowed to make a one-time election to switch a plan (Advantage Plan) or purchase a plan (Supplement Plan and/or Stand-Alone Prescription Plan. The OEP runs from January 1st through March 31st every year.

Deciphering all this can be somewhat confusing. Using a broker with experience in such matters will be your best bet. If you have been using a broker that worked with you on your under-age-65 plan, that person would be your best first telephone call, provided they also work in the Medicare field as I

do. Often times, folks will look to move that under age 65 policy to a broker that works with Medicare at least three to four years prior to becoming eligible for Medicare just to help make the transition as smooth as possible.

Know your Enrollment Periods or get someone that does and your transition will be as easy as Key Lime pie!

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



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The Season of GENEROSITY!

"It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." ~ Mother Theresa

By David Triana

I recently watched a Tedx Talk by Dr. Lynda Shaw, PhD on Cognitive Neuroscience. Dr. Shaw spoke about the effects that being generous has on the brain. The link to that video is at the end of this article. She starts by talking about greed and how, because greed tends to become addictive, greediness normally leads to negative things physically for the greedy person and worse yet, the nasty things that greed can cause people to do to others and exemplified by corporate and political corruption, tyrannical leaders, etc.

She then goes on to explain the effects that being a generous person has on our brain and body—how a simple act of kindness that you do can make you feel FANTASTIC as neuro transmitters like dopamine and serotonin are stimulated and result in beneficial things like feeling better emotionally, sleeping better and eating better. She mentions the positive effects as neuro peptides, such as endorphins (our body's natural pain killers) and oxytocin (which helps lower inflammation, blood pressure and stress), are also ac-

It is no wonder that the Christmas season is so popular throughout the world, though most of us do not associate it with neuro-transmitters and hormone responses. It must be true that we as human beings are hard-wired to GIVE! Generosity is good for your health and good for your happiness!

During this time of the year, my spirit is always refreshed and especially when I think about my friend Ramon Gonzales. Of all the people I have met in my lifetime, Ramon exemplified GENEROSITY throughout the year, and during the Christmas season especially, he indeed became Santa Claus!

Three years ago, Santa Ramon succumbed to complications from COVID, but I have no doubt in my mind that he is in Heaven watching over his family. Ramon is also watching over every needy little girl and boy that, if it was not for the generous people throughout the world, would otherwise not have even a little toy for Christmas.

Christmas is described in many different ways; but, to me, it primarily represents generosity. The spirit of generosity is powerful, whether giving a special gift to a loved one, and even more so, giving it to others we don't even know.

Ramón Gonzales lived in South Tucson, Ariz. In 1970, when the parents of the children where he lived did not have money to buy gifts at Christmas, it occurred to Ramón that he could do something about it.

Ramón didn't have much money either. But, with what he had, he bought hot dogs and other things and organized a Christmas party and invited all the families in his neighborhood. In addition to food, he made sure to buy some toys for each child. This is how Santa Ramon founded what is now known as "Ramon's Miracle on 31st Street" also known as Christmas in the Barrio.

For many years now, Ramon's party has been attended by more than 10,000 children each



December and Santa Ramón and his small family have been the force that motivates that area of Arizona to UNITE to ensure that children of scarce resources receive something at Christmas. Although Ramon is no longer physically with them, his children, his wife and the true friends of Santa Ramon

and his sponsors and donors, have made sure to continue his party and thus continue the legacy he left behind.

In 2005, together with several kind-hearted Hispanics and non-Hispanics, we founded what we originally called "LUC-ES NAVIDENAS" and that became the Emerald Coast Christmas Miracle Fiesta here in Fort Walton Beach. I still remember when Ramon told me the FWB Fiesta is "the daughter of his Tucson one."

This coming December 17, United for a Good Cause Inc., composed of a diverse and multicultural group of individuals, will host the 19th Annual Emerald Coast Christmas Miracle Fiesta at the NWF Fairgrounds from 1–6 p.m. We invite you to visit—unitedforagoodcause.org for more details. We also invite families experiencing financial difficulties this Christmas to register via the website.

Our Christmas Miracle Fiesta was inspired by Ramón's

powerful example of generosity. There are thousands of children in our area who could use the help from people with generous hearts, families who simply do not have the means to give their children gifts during Christmas. Our organization, through the party, offers all of us the opportunity to make sure that the Spirit of Christmas is alive, an opportunity for you to be SAN-TA CLAUS, too!

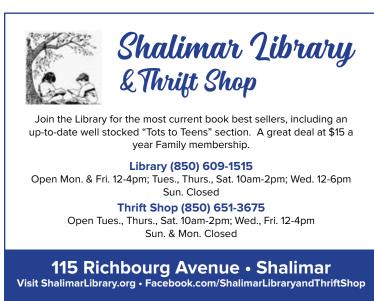
We invite you to be part of this great event and join us as a volunteer or by donating a toy or making a monetary contribution for it. Visit Facebook or unitedforagoodcause.org for more information.

God bless you and have a very Merry Christmas!

Tedx Talk Link:

Dr. Lynda Shaw, PhD, Cognitive Neuroscience – Generosity, Greed and Grey Matter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoSwfve369I&t=73s









Year-End Strategies for Buyers and Sellers



By Melissa Forte-Litscher

As the year draws to a close, the real estate market experiences a unique landscape that savvy realtors can help their buyers and sellers leverage to their advantage. Whether you're contemplating buying your dream home or considering selling a property, the end of the year presents opportunities to maximize financial benefits. With all that the real estate market is going through, there are still opportunities for both sides to reach their goals.

Let's look into some smart financial strategies for both buyers and sellers in the real estate game.

For buyers, purchasing a home before the year concludes can open the door to various tax advantages. Mortgage interest, property taxes and closing costs may be eligible for deductions on your annual tax return. Consult with a tax professional to understand how homeownership could positively impact your financial picture. Even with





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today's interest rates, purchasing before year's end could get you into a home with a manageable monthly payment and set you up for a stronger financial future. You also may experience less competition when the holiday season unfolds as the real estate market typically sees a dip in activity. Many real estate professionals, title companies, lenders and inspectors might have lighter schedules during the holiday season, allowing for quicker turnaround times in the home buying process. This can work to your advantage as a buyer, providing you with more negotiating power and potentially leading to better deals on the home of your dreams. By making a purchase in December, buyers can avoid the rush of the spring market, gaining a head start of settling into their new homes before the busier season kicks in. For many, the holiday season is a time of reflection, renewal and new beginnings. Purchasing a home in December can carry special significance, symbolizing a fresh start and a place to create lasting memories with family and friends. The emotional value of homeownership during the holidays can be immeasurable.

Selling a property at year's end can be financially freeing. However, just as buyers may qualify for a tax advantage by purchasing at the end of the year, selling a property before the year concludes can have tax implications. Consult with a tax professional to understand the potential tax consequences and

explore strategies to optimize your financial position. When selling during the holiday season be sure to have your agent research local market trends and consider pricing your property strategically. With potentially fewer competitors, you might have the flexibility to negotiate favorable terms while ensuring your property stands out in a less crowded market. Consider assisting with closing costs or with mortgage rate buy downs to incentivize buyers. Don't forget to capitalize on the holiday spirit to market your property. Decorate intentionally, emphasizing the cozy warmth and charm of your home during the festive season. This can create an emotional connection with potential buyers and make your property more memorable. Everyone likes to feel at home for the holidays!

In conclusion, the end of the year presents a window of opportunity for both buyers and sellers in the real estate market. By carefully navigating tax benefits, market dynamics and the festive atmosphere, you can position yourself for financial success. If you're looking to make a significant purchase or sell a property, these year-end strategies can help you make the most of the opportunities December offers in real estate. Whether or not you are buying or selling this holiday season, I wish you blessings and peace and, as always, I'm at your service. Call (850) 496-7444 or email Melissa@NextHomeCornerstone.com.





Area Local Awarded Quilt of Valor

By Barbara Palmgren

There are times when I am humbled. There are times when I am awe struck. October 30, 2023, was one of those times. I watched Constance Newhouse being awarded a special honor that comes once in a lifetime: The Quilt of Valor. This event was held at the Fort Walton Beach Library to a round of applause by her community and especially members of the Flying Needles Quilt Guild.

Barbara Ouellette, Guild Coordinator and presenter for the Northwest Florida area, representing the Quilt of Valor Foundation, submitted the application for this honor after receiving a nomination for Constance from her friend, Sandy Stinson. The award can only be given to someone who is living and is a veteran or active-duty personnel with certain requisite criteria. The application



is submitted and reviewed at a state level. When approved, the award must be given at an award presentation ceremony. The Florida State Coordinator appoints a representative from the nominees' area of residence which in this case was the Flying Needles Quilt Guild. The nominee is contacted by the Quilt of Valor representative and arrangements are made to include a date, time and location of where the nominee would



like to be awarded the Quilt of Valor.

The recipient is awarded a special quilt that is hand or machine stitched. Sandy saw a Quilt of Valor on exhibit at the library a few months ago and contacted members of the Flying Needles Quilt Guild and asked that this quilt be the one awarded to Constance. This quilt was pieced by two members of the guild, Peggy Murrel and Shirley Carter and quilted

by Rainbow Quilting of Niceville. Constance is a veteran of the United States Air Force and served during the Korean Conflict from 1952-1954. She proudly comes from a strong military background with generations of over 145 years combined family members who served in various branches of the service. Constance shared photos of several of her relatives at the awards ceremony.

The Flying Needles Quilt Guild is non-profit organization. Its mission statement is as follows: The purpose of this organization is to preserve and continue the traditions, culture and history of quilting. The organization serves the general public by donations to other community service organizations. The organization will serve as a source of information and inspiration in quilting and related arts through the edu-

cation of its members and the public in general by means of exhibitions, lectures, demonstrations, and workshops. The organization will encourage the heritage of quilt making and quilt collecting. The organization will be a gathering for people with this shared interest.

The guild's focus on charity work is evident in the handiwork available for purchase: quilts, stockings, bags and pillowcases. They also donate items to various charities.

The Flying Needles Quilting Guild was personally thanked on the presentation plaque given to Constance in addition to the lovely Quilt of Valor itself.

It's all about giving and caring for the community through a labor of love and talent by this special non-profit. Congratulations Constance Newhouse for your work for our military.

Heritage Museum of NW Florida Receives Impact 100 Grant

After seven years of applying for this grant, on Sunday, November 5, 2023, the Heritage Museum of NW Florida was one of four non-profits to receive the Impact 100 grant of \$100,000. For seven years the museum applied for a room addition to the overcrowded museum that houses historical artifacts from the entire Northwest Florida region. This seventh year was the charm!

The museum has collected and will continue to collect contributions to help fund the remaining costs of \$75,000 for the construction of the building. Businesses and individuals who would like to be part of this lifelong dream can phone the museum and make a contribution between \$200 to \$5,000. The phone number for the museum is 850-678-2615. Contributions are tax deductible because the museum is a 501C3 non-profit. All contributors will be recognized in a permanent placard or art work. Once ground breaks for the project, it should take less than 12 months to complete.

The museum has a warehouse full of artifacts dating back to early Native Indian tribes. The museum plans to



organize the Vietnam Refugee Camp Exhibit as the first exhibit in the Impact 100 Exhibit Hall. This area was one of four in the nation to house refugees after the end of the Vietnam War in the mid-1970's.

Museum trustee, Dr. Barbara Palmgren, has been involved over seven years with the application process for this grant. In particular, she credits this year's trustee Susan Page and volunteer Jean Schlitt for their work with writing and collecting data for the 2023 application. She also thanks all the trustees and museum management who con-

tinue to work tirelessly on behalf of presenting local history to the public.

They say "all good things come to those who wait." The

Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida has certainly waited patiently, spending hours each year writing a grant to expand the museum and share its treasures. This effort will now benefit the community of Northwest Florida as well as the museum itself.



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Taking Stock of Changes in Insurance



By Julie A. Martin

2023 has been a strange year for insurance in the state of Florida. We have seen some massive increases in premiums across the board. Home, Auto and Flood insurance premiums have risen above levels seen last in 2005. Between 2022 and 2023, nearly 20 carriers either went into receivership or left the Sunshine State entirely due to the high incidence of claims and litigation.

Now that it has been nearly a year since litigation passed, changing the way property damage attorneys are paid in the event of a disagreement, from carrier-paid to contingency paid, what does this mean for insureds whose claims were either denied or underpaid? Does the litigation help? Will there be re-

These are all good questions. When an attorney takes a case on a contingency basis, it generally means that in return for their help in resolving a case, they will take a percentage of the case value. If you had a \$100,000 property damage claim that should have been covered, and the attorney recovered the entire \$100,000, whatever set percentage you agreed to at the outset of the lawsuit will belong to the law firm. Generally, the percentage is 33% or roughly 1/3 of the total claim payment.

Some of the rates are starting to decrease. Citizens Prop-

Email: CLL@uwf.edu



erty Corp. Depopulation program has two types, voluntary and forced, in which it contracts other private market insurance companies to take on Citizens' policies at rates that are within 20% of the Citizens premium. Many of the premiums in those assumption notices are lower than Citizens premiums. Many. Not all, and not enough.

Flood insurance as well has seen historic highs in premiums this year in the wake of last year's shocking storm surge during Hurricane Ian, and it may be another year until flood premiums go down. Many of those affected by the worst of the storm surge waters either did not have any flood insurance, or they didn't have enough.

Many of those who did not have any flood insurance said they didn't think they needed to have flood insurance. Flooding in their area caused genuine shock and awe, and ruined their homes. Many of them are still trying to recoup their losses, even after help from FEMA.

Florida is a flood zone, all of it. What we need to recognize moving forward is that the best thing we can do for ourselves and our wallets is to do everything we can to document what we have through taking photos of the inside and outside of our homes and emailing our receipts for big ticket items to ourselves to date and time stamp them. In addition, purchase flood insurance for your home, knowing you might never need it, or you might need it, but you can't get it once you need it.

Speak with a local independent Insurance agent about making sure you have the right kind of coverage, neither too high or too low, which may involve your agent performing a new Replacement Cost estimator for your home, with you on the phone, to make sure it's correct. The only person who knows what you have in your

home is you. The property appraiser network for your county may or may not keep updated records, so that you, dear reader, are the best source of information about any changes you have made to your home, to update your coverage accordingly.

There are three basic home incidents that are some of the most frequent causes of water damage claims in Florida:

1-Rubber supply/drain lines that either leaked or burst. Steel braided supply and drain lines are much more durable, and go a long way towards prevention of these types of leaks.

2-Air Conditioning leaks that happened because the AC lines have not been flushed and no anti-algae treatments were deposited into the AC line. Having your AC line flushed every three months and putting anti-algae tablets into the AC line, as well as changing out your air filter every couple of months will help to reduce the chances of loss.

3-Old hot water heaters that have rust and/or corrosion are much more likely to burst or even to explode. If a hot water tank has orange and or green corrosion on it and/or has a manufacture date older than 15 years, replacing the hot water tank with a properly fitted TPR or pressure release valve, is a less expensive option than dealing with a large-scale water claim.

Preventative maintenance is much less expensive and stressful than the kind of insurance atmosphere in which we find ourselves currently. Insurance is there in case something happens, yes, but there are two caveats to this. 1) Not everything is covered and 2) the claims process can take several months to complete.

In short, relief is coming slowly, but we need to do all we can to protect ourselves and our homes and vehicles now, before we have an issue.





Website: www.cll-fwb.org Phone: (850) 863-6548





FWB HOLIDAY

continued from page 6

all under computer control and synchronized to music and usually is lighted and available to the public through the first week of January. All donations this year will support Healing Paws for Warriors. The show is the technical and creative wizardry of Jeff Werner, the "Northwest Florida Geek" and Wendy Werner, his "spouse peripheral." FaceBook.com/GeekLightsOnTheCorner. geeklights@gmail.com

Holiday Pops | Fri., Dec. 8 | 7:30 p.m. | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

Features Brian Stokes Mitchell, dubbed "the last leading man" by The New York Times, Sinfonia's main event of the season featuring this A-list star will perform holiday classics, Broadway tunes and classic favorites with the Sinfonia Gulf Coast orchestra.

Stokes is a two-time Tony Award winner with a versatile career spanning Broadway, television, film and concerts.



Enjoy carols, food vendors, craft vendors, Walton guard reenactors, school choir groups, bake sale, raffle ticket prizes, letters to Santa and more! 115 Westview Ave., Perrine Park, Valparaiso.

Alaqua Holiday Bazaar | Dec. 10 | 11 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Find something special for everyone on your list including handcrafted gifts from the finest local artists and craftsmen. Enjoy festive music and delicious brunch-style treats. Contact Lauren Gall at lauren@lgallandco.com to participate. Proceeds go directly towards the

care and protection of animals in need. Visit https://www.facebook.com/AlaquaAnimalRefuge.

35th Annual Destin Boat Parade | Dec. 10 | 6 p.m. | Destin Harbor

The Destin Harbor will be dancing with lights and cheer

Continued on page 31



Holiday Concert Series + Visits with Santa | Dec. 6, 13 & 20 | 6-8 p.m.

Tap your feet to some of your favorite sing-a-long classics every Wednesday in December at the Holiday edition of The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Wednesday Night Concert Series. Each concert features visits with Santa.

December 6 | Fort Walton Beach High School Choir

December 13 | Alissa Steffens Vocal Studios

December 20 | Matt McCarty Band

A Christmas Carol | Dec. 8 - Dec. 22

From the first "Bah humbug" to the final "Wassail," this timeless classic is sure to rekindle your holiday spirit. Join all your favorite Dickens characters—Tiny Tim and the Cratchit family, the Fezziwigs, the Ghosts of Christmas past, present and yet-to-come, and of course, everyone's favorite curmudgeon, Ebenezer Scrooge.

560 Grand Boulevard, 2nd Floor, Miramar Beach. Purchase tickets: emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

Receiving critical acclaim and awards for his performances in Kiss Me, Kate, Man of La Mancha, and Ragtime, Stokes has collaborated with renowned conductors like John Williams and Gustavo Dudamel performing at Carnegie Hall and the White House. Some of you might remember him as Trevor in The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. Tickets range from \$30-\$75 for adults. Seats at tables of 10 are from \$55 per person.

The Nutcracker! | Dec. 9-5 p.m. | Dec. 10-2 p.m. | Destin Community Center

Studio6twenty5 presents The Nutcracker featuring the dancers of studio6twenty5's children's program and introducing local Shaye Smith and guest dancer Fredrick Davis as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier. Prepare to be transported into Clara's magical world of sugarplum fairies, toy soldiers and enchanting adventures. Saturday doors open at 4 p.m. Sunday doors open at 1 p.m. Tickets \$16 on sale now at studio6twenty5.com.



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Community

The Spirit of Giving

By Heather Bennett Eye

Charity and compassion, central to the holiday spirit, run deep in our community, and our Emerald Coast Toys for Tots is gearing up to spread the message of giving and sharing this holiday season. Each year they bring countless smiles to children's faces with their toy drive. As we start our holiday shopping, we can see the familiar logo of the Toys for Tots red train appearing in our favorite stores. It's time to ask ourselves, how can we help?

Toys for Tots began as a charitable effort by the Marines in 1947, and their foundation was authorized as a nonprofit organization in 1991. Our Emerald Coast Toys for Tots Coordinator, Nicole Armantrout, works with Fort Walton Beach Marine Corps League Detachment 915, Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501, Marine Detachment EOD Students and many valuable volunteers every holiday season. They collect and distribute toys to local charities, such as United for a Good Cause, Catholic Charities, and

Guardian ad Litem, to benefit less fortunate children in our community.

Nicole started in 2009 as a volunteer when she worked with a former coordinator. "I wound up just loving it to pieces and wanted to be involved, to be at every event," she explained. "You're in over your head, you love it, you can't imagine how you ever had life without this in it." Nicole stays busy year-round to bring joy to children along the coast. In addition to the Toys for Tots holiday campaigns, they also assist families during natural disasters. "We don't just use toys for Christmas," Nicole explained. "They're also there for emergency situations. If we hear

of a family that's fallen on hard times, like a house fire or natural disaster, like a flood, we respond ting involved with Toys for Tots,



to that as well."

If you are interested in get-

there are many opportunities to donate, volunteer or attend an event. For more information on how to get involved by becoming a donation center, volunteering or becoming a sponsor, please visit toysfortots.org. If you would like more information on how to sign up with a local charity to register for assistance, please email fort.walton.beach.fl@ toysfortots.org.

Donation locations across the Emerald Coast include Barnes and Noble, Eglin Federal Credit Union locations, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Emerald Coast in Destin, and Disney Store Outlet at Silver Sands, and many others. Please continue to check the website for

upcoming events where you can donate, meet the Marines and volunteers, and take home Toys

for Tots promotional items.

Drop Point Locations:

Eglin AFB, 96 Maintenance Group QA, 107 Barrancas

Hurlburt Field, 5th Special Operations Squadron, 160 Brims St Bldg 91255 1st Special Operations Medical Group, 113 Leimanis Ave, Mary Esther Eglin Federal Credit Union, 321 Hollywood Blvd E

Brandon Lewis State Farm, 425 Hollywood Blvd E Ste A Fort Walton beach Scuba, 130 W Miracle Strip Pkwy., UnitC

Sonic, 471 Mary Esther Blvd VFW, 3050 W Hwy 98 Navy Federal Credit Union. 251 Mary Esther Blvd C1 Gene's Grooming Lounge 217 Page Bacon Rd. Suite 2

Shalimar

Sierra Navada Corporation, 1150 Eglin Pkwy N Sonic, 1166 Eglin Pkwy Clean Eats, 1191 Eglin Pkwy



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Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024 | 7:30 PM **Destin-FWB Convention Center**

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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. Celebrate the arrival of the New Year in style at Poppin' New Year's Eve Dinner at Ovide, 5-9 p.m. Reserve your spot at Ovide's exclusive New Year's Eve dinner experience and immerse yourself in the enchanting ambiance and savor a

culinary journey with a specially curated 4-course prix fixe menu priced at \$250 per person and, as a special touch, each guest will be treated to a complimentary glass of champagne to toast to the festivities. Indulge in a night of exquisite flavors and sophistication as you bid farewell to the year in the heart of Ovide's culinary excellence.

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 Hoteleffie.com







Magnolia Grill

Equal parts museum and dining establishment, the walls of this 1910 catalog house are covered with pieces of local history

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Nana's Black Chocolate Coffee Cake for Christmas!

From Venice Irene Cleckler Leath

By Lori Leath Smith

For many, this time of year evokes childhood memories of holiday smells, tastes and favorite "eats." So, I want to offer one of my own—Nana's Chocolate Coffee Cake. Whenever I think of this cake, it reminds me of exciting holiday vacations with my Nana and Papa John in Rome, Ga. Nana always prepared this cake, a tradition at Thanksgiving

and Christmas and it is, seemingly, very different from any cake I've ever had.

One of the fondest memories surrounding this cake is my cousin, Leta (a year younger than me), and I sneaking down the stairs and into the kitchen during the night to snatch another piece! We gave Nana fits over this (and other things, too!). After many, many years, I decided to make it



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this Thanksgiving. Many of the smells and sweet memories rolled back into my being and it was delightful. I want to pass this along to my children and grandchildren as well.

Keep in mind, this is an antique recipe with real old-fashioned ingredients—amateur cook tested with success; but, to my knowledge, not Southern Living tested. I use the exact amounts below. But, for example, you can add more confectioner's sugar for the icing, my favorite part, if desired. It might be fun to double the icing recipe for more!)

I hope you enjoy this delight as much as we did and still do. Merry Christmas!

Cake

8 tablespoons Cocoa ½ cup Butter unsalted 2 cups Granulated Sugar 2 cups All-Purpose Flour 1 ½ teaspoon Baking Soda 1 cup Buttermilk 1 cup Boiling Water ½ teaspoon Salt 2 Eggs

Melt chocolate in boiling water. Add ½ cup of butter. Mix 2 cups of sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, 2 cups of flour and baking soda, and sift together. Beat chocolate mixture and flour mixture together. Add milk and beat. Lastly, add the eggs, beating without separating.

Bake for 25 minutes at 375°. (I use two round cake pans, but you could make a sheet cake, too.)

Icing:

3 cups Confectioner's Sugar ½ cup Unsalted Softened Butter 2 teaspoons Vanilla 2 tablespoons strong brewed or instant Hot Coffee

Cream butter and sugar together. Add vanilla and coffee.

Note: Your icing can cover the entire cake solidly or you can be creative (as shown in the photo). I've even added toppings such as edible coffee beans or chocolate sprinkles for a festive flair!

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Off the Hook

Winter Fishing

By Cali Hlavac, To Do In Destin

As colder temps roll in, we start to target more inshore species – specifically Flounder, Redfish and Trout. The cooler weather means the fish will school up in one area, making them easier to catch once you track them down.

Flounder will be in the Bay and Gulf this month, as November and December feature some of the best flounder action of the year. The move here allows them to settle on natural and artificial reefs to spawn at this time.

Because of their shape, flounder are typically always found on the bottom, where they can burrow into sand to await prey. They hang within 200 yards off the beach, typically at depths of 20 to 60 feet. Common flounder species in the Gulf of Mexico are the Gulf Flounder and the Southern Flounder, and odds are the latter will be a much larger fish — with the female

Southern Flounder maxing out around 28 inches. One of the best things about targeting flounder is that they like to come back for your bait if they miss it the first time. So, just hold out and wait on them!

As for Trout, find them deeper water this time of year, specifically around deep water boat docks, bridges, deep holes in the bayous and channels. Fish for these using live shrimp, pinfish, and croakers on a Carolina rig or under a popping cork. Try a slow troll to find the fish, with a shrimp soft tail plastic jig, and then once you get a hit, switch to live bait to maximize your chances at a bite.

Another favorite to catch are Bull Redfish, which show up in droves during winter months. Find them in the passes, deep channels, deep-water bridges and schooled up on the beaches. These bull reds are fun to catch and release as the bigger size means they put up a bigger fight. Use lures or live bait, as what they prefer will vary day to day. The larger size also means they're spawning. So, handle these fish with care. Use circle hooks and a net to control the fish and release them safely.

Winter fishing rivals warm weather fishing here. So, if you



can handle the cooler weather, on the water! you're sure to have a great time

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Sports

Golf Series: Indian Bayou Golf & Country Club, A Historic Treasure

By Barbara Palmgren

Before there was Regatta Bay, before there was Kelly Plantation, before there was Emerald Bay, there was iconic Indian Bayou.

As one of four Destin courses in Okaloosa County, Indian Bayou Golf & Country Club is recognized as the first course to invite tourists to play golf as well as enjoy the pristine waters and sugar sand beaches of Destin.

The beautiful Indian Bayou Golf & Country Club course, located in the heart of Destin, is an 18-hole semi-private challenge suited for all skill levels. This 72 Par challenge is visited by tourists and enjoyed by over 150 members as their home course. Members include faithful snowbirds who appreciate the comradery that membership brings. Several golf tournaments are also offered throughout the year for special groups and charities.

Indian Bayou was built in 1978 by local families. They recognized the need for a golf course in the upscale community of Indian Bayou. In 199,2 another nine holes were added to the original 18 holes. Each nine holes is named for an historic Indian nation: Seminole, Choctaw and Creek. In 2018, however, the nine holes of Creek were closed and sold for other development.

Golf manager and Direc-



tor of Golf, Jim Carpenter, has served Indian Bayou Golf Club since 1984. Like the course itself, Jim follows the present golf course Indian heritage lineage. Graduating from Choctawhatchee High School (Choctaw) and attending Florida State University (Seminole) Jim is definitely "Mr. Indian Bayou." Jim's pride in the course is evident as he shares credit for the course success with a talented golf course superintendent and devoted staff. Jim talked about the well-conditioned course and the signature putting greens that are among the reasons visitors return to play golf along the Destin corridor.

Morning rates with carts included are \$159 with the lowest afternoon rates of \$105. With 7,038 yards of challenging holes, Jim chooses hole number 15 as his favorite. It is a short dog leg left. For those who know how to make a golf drive obey, they can draw the ball slightly left in order to place a second shot on the green. The striking landscape throughout 18 golf holes contains water, sand traps and bunkers ready for errant golf shots that miss the perfectly manicured fairways.

Prior to a round, golfers can practice at the driving range or practice putting green. There are also golf items for purchase



from the well-stocked pro shop. Shoes, shirts, golf clubs and hats, no problem! Golf memorabilia for home or for gifts is available as well. Lunch is served seven days a week beginning from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and a lounge invites golfers to relax and enjoy a variety of drinks. Indian Bayou provides all amenities to go with a daily round of golf.

So, as the sun sets on the Florida Panhandle and golfers head home after a round of golf, you can almost hear the approval of those who once shared this special space:

On this Indian Bayou
Once lived tribes who knew it well.

Apalachee and Miccosukee, Seminole, Creek and Choctaw, too.

A way of life with food and water River trade routes to connect. For years we lived together, For years we worked and shared.

Today, golfers tee up golf shots, See green fairways, waters blue, View wildlife, spans of marshland, Know what our forefather always knew.

That this paradise is precious and eternal,

A place for all who stay and play, A place to honor for the future, Indian Bayou on Choctawhatchee Bay.



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Wellness

Can You Digest the Holidays? **Gut, Constipation and Colon Health**



By Kay Leaman, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

What a great topic for the holidays! This is the time of year we escape from the disciplines we've created. The family recipes, the cookies, pies and beverages flow. And, depending on our emotional state during all the busyness and possible drama is what can move us to over indulge.

Our gut system can take a beating this time of the year. So, read on and I'll offer some thoughts for making this season a bit more digestive (pun intend-

There are two types of constipation: **Periodic**, which is mostly due to dietary or activity fluctuations; and Chronic, which can frustrate both doctor and patient.

Let's take a look at each:

Periodic constipation can be resolved with minor changes. Causes can be dietary intake, reduced fiber consumption, dehydration, change in schedule or holding or ignoring the urge to go for too long.

14% of people suffer with

recurrent episodic or Chronic constipation and there is no known cure. It, many times, also requires medication to help alleviate the symptoms. A medical diagnosis requires two or more of the following symptoms for at least three months:

- Straining 25% of time
- Hard stools 25% of time
- Incomplete elimination more than 25% of time
- Two or less bowel movements per week

Causes for chronic constipation include pregnancy, hypothyroidism, Diabetes, IBS, depression/anxiety, MS, Parkinson's, stroke, cancer, spinal cord injury and medications. Some of these medications include:

- Narcotics
- HBP
- Anti-cholinergic for muscle spasms, such as Benadryl, etc.
- Anti-Parkinson's and seizure medications
- Tricyclic antidepressants (adrenal, etc.)
 - Iron supplements
 - Anti-diarrhea and laxatives

Caffeine can cause constipation. But, in general, it helps to alleviate it. Coffee stimulates muscles in the bowel to help evacuate the sigmoid colon. Decaf can do the same, but caffeinated is best. It is also a holistic treatment for constipation.

Substances that can also cause constipation are dairy products which are high in calcium and low in magnesium, calcium intake without magnesium. iron, excess caffeine, alcohol and artificial sweeteners such as aspartame which affect the nerves needed for elimination.



The process of moving food and then stools through the digestive system requires nerve stimulation and these muscles require micronutrients to contract and relax, notably calcium (contract) and magnesium (relax). Diets high in calcium should supplement with a minimum of 250 mg. per day or 400 mg. and should be consumed with fiber. The average fiber intake is 15 grams per day. The optimal amount should be 35 grams per day. We can supplement our fiber intake with 20 grams of a high-quality fiber that contains both soluble and insoluble fiber.

Implementing fiber into our diets should be done gradually, allowing the bowels to adjust. The ratio is 6 grams of soluble and 4 grams of insoluble 2x daily. Begin with 1/2 serving in the evening. After several days add a second dose in the a.m. Then

graduate to the full dose after several more days. Be sure to take a probiotic daily to aid in reducing gas and bloating.

Increasing water consumption is also key. Start here. Track your intake and choose water over sodas or tea.

Now let's get back to the tips for the holidays:

- Choose healthy snack before sitting down for the main meal.
- Consider substituting the sugar

in your recipes with honey. You can also cut back on the amount it neutralizes the stomach acids.

- · Set out a small plate of cookies and sweets each day. Once the plate is empty, no more sweets until tomorrow.
- When you sit down to eat have everyone take a few deep breaths and offer what they are grateful for.
- Put your fork down between
- Go for a walk after eating.

All of these can help our digestive system "do its thing" without overload.

Remember to take time to de-stress. Several deep breaths can take our body from stressed to calm. The best part is that this can be done anywhere at any time.

Enjoy this very special time of year and have a very blessed and healthy Christmas and New

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Just One Good Night of Sleep



By Dr. Richard Chern M.D.

Sleeping through the night seems like an impossible task for many of us. Waking up at three or four in the morning can be an everyday ordeal for many as we age. You should already know sleep is one of the most important tools to heal our bodies, maintain the immune system, keep our mind invigorated and our memory healthy. So, you would think we would sleep better as we age.

The effects of sleep deprivation are more than just a day of feeling tired and fighting to make it through. Sleep deprivation has been well studied and has catastrophic long-term results. Besides daytime sleepiness, irritability and a shortened attention span, sleep deprivation causes obesity, hypertension, di-

abetes, anxiety, heart attacks, reduced sex drive, impaired memory, and depression. That's not, might cause, that's does cause.

Did you know that the rate of heart attacks increases with daylight savings? A New England Journal of Medicine study by getting adequate sleep.

Sleep is also a primary way to reduce cortisol levels. Cortisol is responsible for increasing blood pressure, stress, and anxiety.

Hormones are a primary driver in our body's ability to stay asleep. When was the last might not remember reading this article when you wake up sleepy tomorrow.

Dr Richard Chern MD and Sue Griffin ARNP specialize in hormone therapy and have the largest and longest-running bioidentical hormone therapy practice in the Southeast. Dr Richard Chern is also part of the teaching staff for Biote and has taught new providers in our area and across the country how to properly treat patients. There is a lifetime of learning in the treatment of hormones and treatments, and results are

not the same everywhere. Don't make the mistake of seeing a provider who dabbles in everything and think you are getting the best treatment. At a minimum, make sure you are seeing a Platinum Provider. Getting your labs and having a consultation is easy and affordable.

Dr. Richard Chern M.D. and Sue Griffin ARNP are currently accepting new patients so don't miss out on this opportunity. Call (850) 837-1271 today and make an appointment.



showed a 24% increased risk of heart attack on the Monday morning after daylight savings. Waking up just one hour earlier can put at risk people over the edge.

A lack of sleep decreases your ability to make new memories by up to 40%. Sleep impairs the hippocampus which is the key player in memory formation. This can only be reversed

time you woke up feeling refreshed in the morning? If you can't remember a time you slept well. If you drink more than one serving of caffeine daily. If you have hypertension, diabetes, irritability, or other symptoms described above then you need to call us at (850) 837-1271 for an appointment. You should probably call right now because if you are not sleeping well you

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Tips to Stay Fit and Fine During the Holidays

We all know the destruction overindulging can do to our bodies, both visibly and silently. However, the holidays can be challenging. Bay Life's Fitness and Wellness Coach, Lisa Leath Turpin, offers tips on how to not over-indulge too much, but instead being able to enjoy the fun, holiday season. It doesn't have to be all or nothing—there are ways to boost your ability to become a more efficient calorie burning machine:

• Keep portions smaller. Spread them out throughout the day so that your body has enough time to "catch up" with the amounts you put in. The higher the calories, the smaller the portion should be. Your body can only process only so much at a time. If it can't process the amount of calories you consume, it will have no choice but to store them. Sugars process fast, while fats and protein process slowly. You will absorb and burn sugars almost immediately, which will raise your blood sugar, and leave your fat cells vulnerable to suck up the excess calories—predominantly from fats. Therefore, if you eat sugary, fatty foods, you're most likely going to max out how much you can burn at that one meal—and the rest will be stored! If this cycle happens over and over again for several meals, you will gain weight like lightning.

- Move! Exercise requires your body to use energy. Anything you can do to get yourself moving will help use those extra calories your body can't burn on its own. Walk after a meal to keep blood sugar balanced and utilize some calories before they get stored. Do intense workouts, such as interval training, before a meal, as you'll continue to burn calories for hours after you stop exercising
- Keep your muscle tone. Use it or lose it! Having and keeping muscle will raise your resting metabolism which will burn more calories at rest. Even daily activities such as shopping, cooking, playing with the kids are beneficial anytime—just move. The more muscle you have the more calories you burn.



Hormone Imbalance?

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Wellness



By Stephenie Craig

This time of year can bring uncomfortable feelings and can exacerbate pre-existing mental health struggles. While some people are decorating and celebrating, others are experiencing loss, depression, loneliness, anxiety and even suicidal thoughts. When someone you care about is struggling, it can feel difficult to move toward them in support. At times, we might avoid people, because we aren't sure how to be helpful and have fears we will say or do the wrong thing.

While mental health challenges aren't new, we are living in a post pandemic, social media driven world that has seen a significant and non-discriminating rise in mental health struggles over the last several years. Now, everyone knows someone coping with emotional discomfort that creates significant life disruption. We can all benefit from basic tools for providing healthy support to those around us.

Things NOT to do when supporting others:

Don't avoid. People who are struggling want to feel seen and understood. When we avoid engaging, we unintentionally send a message that people are only acceptable when they aren't struggling. Those strug-

Supporting Others' Mental Health During the Holidays

gling with mental health often feel a sense of shame regarding their struggles and isolation isn't helpful.

Don't try to fix the person or the struggle. Mental health struggles are legitimate and complex. It is not as simple as thinking more positively, worrying less, or getting more exercise. The suffering of others can be uncomfortable and can stir up our problem solving instincts because we want things to be better. However, those struggling need to know you care, you see them, and you value them regardless of their struggles.

Don't take emotional responsibility for the person's struggle. We want to be present and encouraging while also recognizing the person struggling has authority over how they want to manage their struggle. No one can be responsible for changing another's emotional state or keeping another person from harming themself. We can take steps to be caring but if we are beginning to feel like the person's struggle is our struggle, it's time to increase emotional boundaries.

Don't judge. It's easy to assume that we might do something different, however, each person navigates struggles with their available tools and energy. Judgment and shame typically produce more of whatever exists rather than bringing about change.

Things TO do when supporting others:

Reach out consistently.

People struggling with mental health often find it difficult to keep up relationships when they are spending significant energy managing their emotional/physical state. Often, this is not about a lack of value for relationships but about a state of overwhelm. Call, text, send a note in the mail, send a care package, bring a meal, invite the person for coffee, ask if you can come by for a visit, offer to do a load of laundry, babysit, sit with the person, ask questions about their experience and be present.

Encourage seeking additional support. A support system needs to have multiple people and components to be effective. It is not healthy to be someone's only support person. Be supportive while encouraging the person to also seek counseling, a support group, faith support or medical support. You can encourage, however, it is the person's choice to follow through on seeking additional support.

Use words of affirmation. Try reminding the person what positive traits you see in them. Tell them about ways they have been a good friend, ways you see they make a contribution, ways they matter in the world, ways they matter to

Provide empathy and validation. Try reaching for how it might feel to be in their shoes. Communicate with words and actions that you see they are having a hard time, you care about them, and you are seeking to understand their experience. "It makes sense that

you're feeling overwhelmed." "It seems like you're working really hard to feel better and not sensing progress and that is really frustrating."

Involve others **needed.** When someone is talking about suicide whether directly or indirectly, it is important to help connect the struggling person with helpful resources such as the suicide hotline (dial or text 988) and the ER for additional support for staying physically safe. If the struggling person is a minor, it is

important to involve safe adults in the process.

These tips are a beginning. Continuing to educate ourselves about healthy ways to support others makes a difference in the lives of individuals and in communities. As you move through the holidays, intentionally be aware of others who might be struggling and extend some love and support where possible. Connect with us along your journey at journeybravely.com.



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Smile with Confidence Again

- · Are you embarrassed about smiling in front of people?
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- 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
- · 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.





f 😈 🔯



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Business



By BILL MASON, ROCKET FUEL COACH

As a seasoned leader and coach, I firmly believe in the power of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) as a vital tool to drive personal growth and success. No matter our age, the pursuit of self-improvement should never end—it is a lifelong journey, one that I commit myself to every day.

At age 57, my experiences have taught me the immense value of aiming for that 1% daily improvement. Through these incremental steps, we truly transform, shaping ourselves into the best version possible. Age is merely a number; your Emotional Age is determined by your willingness to learn, evolve and grow.

Are You An Adult Child?

A few years ago, I was reading through the book, RARE Leadership in the Workplace and stumbled upon a set of questions that help you to know not your PHYSICAL maturity, but rather your EMOTIONAL maturity

I was so excited to see how mature I was! This was going to be great! So, I started reading through the list and checking them off!

I read through the self-evaluation questions:

- Do I blow up easily and expect others to change their behavior simply because I am upset? YEP!
- Do I expect others to anticipate my needs and act without being asked? NOPE!
- Do I pout easily or sulk when I don't get my way? YEP!
- Do I get stuck in negative emotions for days at a time with no idea how to recover? YEP!

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, it means you have a hole in your maturity at the infant level that needs to be addressed!

This means you need to fo-



taught me how to handle these emotional outbursts when I was age 3 to 5 years. No one ever did. The cool thing is, that in the last five years, I've had people around me who care enough to help me learn how to handle these challenging emotions without getting triggered by them.

I can finally act my age, both physically as well as emotionally.

How do I do that? Contact me if you have any questions or need further assistance with getting started. I'm always here to help in any way I can. (850) 855-3430; Bill@RocketFuelCoach. com.



cus, especially on the skills of quiet and appreciation.

Physically I am an adult! In many of the ways I interact with others, I was an Emotional In-

I often stop seeing people as people, and only see them as problems I have to fix or solve, often in very negative ways.

Someone could've actually

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Sean of the South: Small Gifts



By Sean Dietrich

Birmingham, Alabama—the 1970's. The hairstyles are ridiculous. Fashions are even worse. It's Christmastime in the Magic City.

Early evening. A young couple arrives in town to visit family. They are working-class poor. He is overworked and underpaid. She is too.

Still, things are looking up. Even though it's hard making make ends meet, they have each other.

It hasn't been a great day. But it's going to be. They just coasted into a Magic City on magic gasoline fumes. They have enough magic cash for the return-trip home, but that's about all the magic they have left. They wander into Bruno's supermarket. They are shopping on a shoestring budget.

The music overhead is Bing Crosby. "Silver Bells" is the tune.

She pushes a cart. He follows. They are only buying necessities. No fancy stuff.

He listens to the music on the intercom. He lets his mind wander while Bing sings:

"Strings of street lights,

"Even stop lights,

"Blinkin' red and bright green,

"As the shoppers rush home with their treasures..."

He sees something that interrupts his daydream. It's a five-dollar bill, lying in the aisle. Crumpled. Nobody is around. He looks both ways.

He bends to pick it up. This is the '70's, five bucks can do a lot. It can buy six gallons of gas, or canned goods for a few suppers.

"Honey look!" he says.

And just like that, a bad day has become a good day. He unfolds the bill. He looks at Abe Lincoln's stoic face. Even old Abe seems happy about this particular holiday blessing.

"Wow," she says. "Aren't you lucky?"



Luck isn't the word. It's a blessing from On High. Magic, even. It's a sign that things are going to get better. That's what it is.

But it's short lived. Something's wrong. There's a pang in his stomach. He can't keep this five dollars. He doesn't know why. It just doesn't feel right. So he takes the money to the store manager, even though he'd rather not.

"I found this on aisle twelve," he says. "Maybe someone lost it." The manager thanks him.

The couple checks out. Their cashier is wearing a Santa hat, punching buttons on the register. She's about as cheery as a bucket of room-temperature coleslaw.

Bing sings: City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, Dressed in holiday style, In the air there's a feeling of Christmas..."

The cashier places the items into paper bags. The young couple nearly empties their wallets to pay the bill. "Merry Christmas," the man says to the cashier.

"If you say so," the cashier says.

His wife rolls the cart toward the door. He is noticing how lovely she looks tonight. If it weren't for the low balance in their bank account, nobody would know the difference between this woman

and royalty.

They are about to exit when they hear hurried footsteps behind

"Sir!" a voice yells. "Wait!"

It is the manager. He is accompanied by a young black boy. They are jogging after the couple.

"This kid wants to thank you," the manager explains.

"Thank me?"

Then boy starts to cry. "My mama sent me to the store for bread and milk, and I lost the money she give me.

"I thought we was gonna hafta skip dinner again, and I was gonna be in trouble. I looked everywhere for that five bucks." The boy wipes his eyes with his sleeve, then shoots his hand outward. "Thank you, sir," the boy tells the man. "And merry Christmas."

They embrace. They part ways. The couple leaves the supermarket. Before they crawl into their car, the man looks into the night sky.

He could've kept that money. But he didn't. He wonders why this is. What made him do it?

Maybe there is something up there in that sky. Something big, just beyond the stars. Maybe it's in the trees, the ground, the air, and on aisle twelve.

Maybe it's in everything. Inside young couples, little boys, grumpy clerks in Santa hats, and store managers. Perhaps it's bigger than the Milky Way, but so small you might miss it.

A handshake, a hug, or five bucks. Something found in department stores, beer joints, sanctuaries, beneath bridges, on city busses, or baseball games. In the YWCA Family Violence Center, the nursing homes, the prisons, or Children's hospital.

I don't know what you call it. I don't care what you call it. It's magnificent. It's real. It's what the twenty-fifth of December is all about.

And there's plenty of it here in the Magic City.

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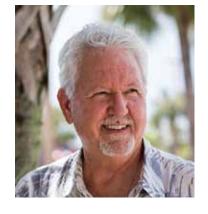
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By PASTOR DAVID HOLLAND

"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before I had conceived him." -Luke 2:21

John Lennon mistakenly believed the Beatles were more famous than Christ. While the dead Beatle lies in the grave, Jesus' Name is the most recognized Name in the world.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire railed against the authenticity of the Bible. He said Christianity would be extinct within a hundred years. Ironically, within a hundred years of his death, Voltaire is all but forgotten. His home now belongs to the Geneva Bible Society, and that group distributes millions of Bibles from there.

Over two billion people on this planet believe the Bible and trust the Name of Jesus for salvation, hope, and healing. His is

A Pastor's Ponderings: The Ultimate Gift of **Christmas** - His Name is Jesus

the Name that makes demons flee and believers rejoice.

Luke records the endowment of Christ's Name at the Temple in our passage today. The Name of Jesus derives from the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning The Lord is Salvation. It is the Name world religions hate because Christians will not bow to Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna or secular humanism.

The Name of Jesus represents the man above all men-God of every God, Light of every Light. It is the Name that sometimes divides families, communities, and nations, dividing between unbelievers and believers. It is the Name above all names, the Name to whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confesses, "HE IS LORD."

There is power in Jesus' Name to break every chain of addiction and unclean habit. The resurrection power exerted by the Name robs the grave, strikes the devil dumb, and sends demons scurrying like lizards on hot rocks. It is the Name by which every sickness must submit, and every affliction must bow.

Jesus demolishes evil kingdoms and causes dictators to tremble. Satan shakes with ter-



ror as heaven populates with new believers. Heaven's armies engage the hordes of Hades in battle, reducing that dark dominion to rubble. At the very whisper of the Name of Jesus, Lucifer's power evaporates.

It's been said that Satan no longer recruits on Saturday nights at the local bars, but he goes to church on Sunday mornings. He employs demons of gossip, strife, and condemna-

tion to tempt the faithful. Those fellowships that lift and worship the Name of Jesus cause the devil to flee.

A multitude of biblical metaphors tries to define the Name, but it transcends reduction to letters on a page. His Name is Creator God, Mighty Deliverer, and Silent Sacrifice. He is the Captain of Angel armies, the Dayspring, Desire of the Ages, Lily of the Valley and the Bright

and Morning Star. Jesus is the Suffering Messiah and the Conquering Hero. He is our Healer, our Comforter, and our Mighty Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, our Burden Bearer, and our High Priest. Christ became sin for us that we might put on His righteousness like a royal robe.

Mary and Joseph were simply giving their little boy a name-Jesus. But one day, when the trumpet of God shall sound, the King with that Name will raise the dead and catch us up in the air to be with Him. He will parade us as trophies of His grace into the very throne room of God.

Do you intimately know the power of the Name of Jesus? Does your heart swell with the white-hot heat of His presence? Do you filter your life decisions through the Name of Jesus? Mary and Joseph showed us how to welcome the newborn King—name Him Jesus!

This article is an excerpt from Dave Holland's devotional, "Christmas Jesus." Start your new year in the word of God with Dave Holland and his daily devotional, "Every Day Jesus." This devotional-Bible study is based on the Gospel of Luke. You can get a copy of his books from the website, DaveHolland.org or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences.



Arts & Music

Top 10 Quotes from A Christmas Carol

As the holiday season approaches we are getting ready for three heartwarming experiences for our community to come enjoy, connect and feel the magic of the season. A Jingle Jangle Christmas Music Revue, Yes Virginia there is a Santa Claus and the beautiful Charles Dickens classic, A Christmas

Multiple adaptations of A Christmas Carol have been a part of ECTC history since the very beginning. Our first professional production was a three-person adaptation written by Nathanael called A Dickens Christmas. We can still hear the incomparable Darla Briganti bellowing the lines as Marley's Ghost, vibrating the verbiage in an eerie, ghostly cadence. Some years later that same adaptation was done with four actors including an accomplished violinist. Fast forward to Christmas 2020 and ECTC presents Barlow's version of the classic with the inimitable Bruce Collier at the helm as Scrooge. Some of the things we love about this version is that 5 actors play all the characters in the story. Barlow does a beautiful job of highlighting the personal trauma that Scrooge experienced as a child which explains his hardened heart. There is also an incredibly touching scene where he faces his past and his hard heart melts, as does ours as we experience it anew alongside him. It's



the turning point, the character arc, the part of the story we long for in all humanity.

Marci Duncan is our guest director for this production so although the story may be famil-

there are new actors and a new director telling it from a different perspective. It's going to be everything we need and want out of a traditional holiday offering. So, don't "Bah, Humbug" this opportunity to experience live theatre, even if you have seen the production before!

In celebration of this show, we thought we'd share with you our top 10 most recognizable and descriptive quotes from the story to get you in the spirit before coming to the show.

10. "You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

9."If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."



8."Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!'

7."Reflect upon your present blessings—of which every man has many—not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some."

6."But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time...as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shutup hearts freely"

5."I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year...'

4."While there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is

nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour."

3."No space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused!"

2."For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself."

So much of the Christmas spirit is captured in some of these lines and reflected in this redemptive story come to life on stage. We hope you will join us this season as we "honour Christmas" in our hearts and in our community. With all the jov we have this season we wish you the happiest of holidays and leave you with our number one, and what we know is Tiny Tim's number one quote:

1."God bless us every one!"

ANNA AND THANAEL FISHER, EM-ERALD COAST THEATRE **COMPANY**

Call to Artists-Holiday Arts Gallery

ance (OAA) invites all Okaloosa County artists, art and culture organizations to participate in the Holiday Arts Gallery being held on Saturday, December 9, Noon to 3 p.m. The event is being hosted by HH Arts which is located at 100 Beal Parkway SW, FWB. Spaces can be reserved by local artists and art or cultural organizations for \$15 for OAA/ADSO members and \$30 for non-members. Artists are encouraged to sell their artwork as well as provide live demonstrations. For more information about the Holi- sa Arts Alliance.

The Okaloosa Arts Alli- day Arts Gallery, please visit https://www.okaloosaarts. org/holiday-arts-gallery.html or text (850) 218-2155 or email okaloosaarts@outlook.

> The Holiday Arts Gallery is free and open to the public. Shop from local artists and learn about art classes/ events happening in Okaloosa County. While you're holiday shopping, enjoy live holiday music by local artists and refreshments. You can also enter the drawings to win tickets and donated artwork. This event will benefit the Okaloo-





Arts & Music

MKAF Awards \$12,100 in Festival of the Arts

By Zandra Wolfgram

The 28th Annual Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) Festival of the Arts held October 28-29 in Destin featured exhibits of more than 100 artists from across the United States showcasing a diverse palette of artistic styles in 16 different art mediums.

Highlights of the cultural weekend celebrating art, music, food, and family fun featured seven live music appearances, a kid's creative station, pop-up photo booths, street performers plus six local favorite food trucks and beverage bars.

"Marking 28 years is a testament to how important the arts are to our community and a direct reflection of the talented participating artists, musicians, vendors, board members, and volunteers — all beautifully managed by our incredible festival producer Deb Nissley," said MKAF CEO & Artistic Officer Demetrius Fuller.

Guest judges Carrie Ann Baade, an award-winning artist and art professor at Florida State University, and Dale Castellucci,

a mixed media artist and adjunct instructor at the University of West Florida, awarded 29 ribbons and cash prizes. Recognizing artists whose work reflected exceptional talent and craftsmanship, the judges awarded "Best in Show," three Awards of Excellence, five Awards of Merit, 10 Judges' Recognition Awards, and eight Collaborative Exhibit awards.

Of the honor bestowed on him, Best in Show glass artist Tony Cray of New Melle, Missouri, said, "It's always nice to be recognized. I'm amongst a pool of really talented people. I'm very appreciative." Cray, who has been creating art for 40 years, said of his glass art, "It is all handmade start to finish. I'm responsible for every aspect of it. I'm a designer and maker. I like things that are well-made and finely crafted. I appreciate work that's very organic in nature, but my aesthetic is in the vein of Italian and Scandinavian designs it's about craftsmanship.'

The Best in Show adult winner of the Collaborative Art Exhibit was awarded to Ian Fagan of Pensacola, Florida, for his photography. The Best in Show student winner was Eliana Batarao from Fort Walton Beach High School for her oil entitled "Sick." The Collaborative Art Exhibit features adults and students competing for the Special McIlroy Awards in honor of the late Patricia McIlroy, Destin's First Lady, and an MKAF advocate and patron.

Freeport artist Estelle Grengs won the "People's Choice" Award. This is her third win in this award category. "It's amazing. I was not expecting it," Grengs said. "For me, it means a lot, because it means that I'm touching people with my art and so if there's any award, this is probably my favorite thing to

Best in Show Winner (\$2,000)

Tony Cray, New Melle, Mo.

People's Choice Award (\$1,000)

Estelle Grengs, Freeport, Fla. Acrylic

Poster Art Contest Winner (\$750)



Roger van Lieshout, Cape Coral, Fla. – Oil

Award of Excellence Winners (\$850)

Katherine Meade, Brookhaven, Ga. – Oil

John Townsend, Sanford, Fla. – Sculpture

Robin Renee Hix, Wimberley, TX – Mixed Media

Collaborative Exhibit Winners (\$850)

Best in Show (Adult) – Ian Fagan, Pensacola, Fla. - Photography

First Place (Adult) - Karen Stein, Niceville, Fla. – Watercolor/Batik

Second Place (Adult) -Bojana Grujovska, Destin, Fla. Acrylic/Mixed Media

Third Place (Adult) - Don David, Destin, Fla.- Pen & Ink/ Watercolor

Best in Show (Student) -Eliana Batarao - Fort Walton Beach High School - Oil

First Place (Student) -Aileen Lu – Crestview High School - Acrylic

Second Place (Student) -Chloe Aldrich – Niceville High School - Mixed Media

Third Place (Student) - Lily King - Crestview High School - Collage

"After unprecedented interest, this year's festival included a wide array of amazing artists from all over the United States (and even Estonia!) including many new artists. We were truly honored to be able to present them and they were absolutely thrilled at the incredible support from our community," said MKAF director of operations and Festival producer Deb Niss-

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





FWB HOLIDAY

continued from page 17

during the 35th Annual Destin Boat Parade, Sun. Dec. 10 from 6–6:30 p.m. followed by a Fireworks Finale! Watch from many places along the Destin Harbor Boardwalk such as AJ's, Boathouse, Brotula's and The Edge Restaurant & Skybar (where this year's judging will take place.)

Live Nativity | Thurs., Dec. 14 – Wed., Dec. 20 | 6-8:30 p.m. each night |corner of 2nd St., and Church Ave.

First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach will present the FREE, 35th Live Nativity celebration next to the First Baptist Church sanctuary. Parking is available in the church parking lot. When you walk through, you can have your picture taken with Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, as well as the three wise men. Your photo will be waiting for you as you depart. In the Shepherd's Field, the visitors can pet and feed the miniature donkeys, sheep and Naomi the Camel!

A Jingle Jangle Christmas Musical Revue | Sat., Dec. 16-2.30 p.m. | Tues., Dec. 19-7.30 p.m. | Thurs., Dec. 21 -7.30 p.m.

Enjoy classic holiday songs from some of your favorite Christmas musicals like "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," "Snow" and, of course, "White Christmas." The cast will invite you to join in some beloved Christmas carols as well.

560 Grand Boulevard, Grand Boulevard Town Center, 2nd Floor, Miramar Beach. Purchase tickets: emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

A Victorian Christmas Tea | Sat., Dec. 16 | 1-3 p.m. | The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida

Members \$20; Non-members \$25. 115 Westview Ave., Valparaiso.

LuLu's Annual Billy Claus and The LuLuBelles | Sat., Dec. 16 | 3 to 5 p.m.

Free photos with Billy Claus and the LuLuBelles as well as crafts and treats. Billy Claus is Santa's warm weather-loving brother who lives in the Caribbean, but comes this way every year to help Santa during the



holiday season. The LuLuBelles are Billy's version of Santa's elves. The children's book written by LuLu's owner, Lucy Buffett, "Billy Claus and the Spirit of Christmas Island" is available in the gift shop or on-line. From 5 to 7 p.m., enjoy the movie, Dr. Suess' The Grinch. Come back on Dec. 20 for the Christmas movie, The Polar Express at 6 p.m. with free crafts and treats. 850-710-5858.

Christmas Miracle Fiesta| Sun., Dec. 17 | 1-6 p.m. | NWF Fairgrounds

United for a Good Cause Inc., composed of a diverse and multicultural group of individuals, will host the 19th Annual Emerald Coast Christmas Miracle Fiesta at the NWF Fairgrounds from 1–6 p.m. The Christmas Miracle Fiesta is an EVERYTHING IS FREE to all that attend party, in keeping with our organization's mission and objectives, it aims to provide local area youth an opportunity to serve their community and at the same time benefit civilian and military families in our area. Thanks to Toys for Tots, local businesses and individual donors, new toys are donated for all the children that attend. In addition, there will be food basket donations, free food and performances by local area entertainers. For more details and to register, visit unitedforagoodcause.org.

Cookies and Crafts with the Grump | Dec. 16-17 | 12-4 p.m. | The Island Resort

Everyone's favorite green and grouchy holiday character, The Grump, along with his holiday-loving friend, Miss Cindy, will be at The Island Resort, Dec. 16 and 17, 12 to 4 p.m. Guests can visit The Grump,

known for his "stink, stank, stunk" charm, and snap memorable photos, enjoy a cup of apple cider or hot chocolate and listen to live music. Following the music, engage in a fun and creative craft session, face painting and a Whoville hair station. Free and open to the public.

LJ Schooners' 7th Annual Santa Paddle Parade | Sat., Dec. 16, | Noon | Bluewater Bay Marina

All paddlers welcome; if you can paddle it, bring it! Paddle on a stand-up paddle board, canoe, kayak, paddle boat or surf skis. Group photo is at noon with paddle starting at 12:10 p.m. Santa Clauses leave Blue-Water Bay Marina and paddle east to Rocky Bayou Bridge, north to North Shore of Rocky Bayou and back to the marina. Registration \$10 or 15 canned goods. Must paddle in Santa suit and provide your own suit.

Proceeds benefit Sharing and Caring of Niceville. To register, call Bluewater Bay Marina Ship Store at (850) 897-2821 or visit bluewaterbaymarina.com.

Annual Christmas Boat Parade | Sat., Dec. 16 | 5:30 p.m. | Bluewater Bay Marina

Skippers meeting at 4 p.m.; pa-

rade staging at 5 p.m. The parade course exits Bluewater Bay Marina north to Nelson's Cove, around Rocky Bayou, south to the Rocky One marker and then returns to Bluewater Bay Marina. Boats must pre-register. After the Boat Parade, LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant will host a Christmas party with DJ Christ Saylor, 6-10 p.m.; ugly sweater contest at 9 p.m. Call 850-897-2821 or visit bluewaterbaymarina.com to register.

2023 Niceville Valparaiso Rotary Club Christmas Boat Parade | Sun., Dec. 17 | 5:30 p.m. | Emerald Coast Marine

The boat parade will feature a traditional display of fun onboard holiday-themed lights and decorations. Festivities include complimentary hot cocoa, a visit from Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus and the elves, provided by the Rotary. The parade route travels southwest from Emerald Coast Marine to Tom's Bayou, past Lincoln Park, then east toward Lions Park, returning back to Emerald Coast Marine. All proceeds raised benefit Sharing and Caring Niceville. For more information, visit nicevilleval-paraisorotary.org.

Noon Year's Eve | Dec. 31 | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. | LuLu's Restaurant

Noon Year's Eve is just for kids at LuLu's Destin. It's the 8th annual Noon Year's Eve celebration Tues., Dec. 31, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with non-stop, free kid-friendly fun. There will be arts and crafts, inflatables, face painting, live music and more. Kids can have their fun by counting down to Noon with kid-safe "fireworks" and a huge Beach Ball Drop. Visit Lulus-FunFoodMusic.com/destin or call (850) 710-5858.

Baytowne Countdown | Sun., Dec. 31 | The Village of Baytowne Wharf

Two breathtaking fireworks displays at 8 p.m. and midnight. Enjoy a family-friendly evening from 6-8 p.m. with face painting, kids' activities and LIVE music on the Baytowne LIVE stage. Dance the night away with LIVE music from DJ Q\$, 7 p.m. until 1 a.m. at the Events Plaza Stage! End the night with spectacular fireworks. *21 & over after 10 p.m. 20 & under must be accompanied by a legal guardian after 10 p.m.

Local Coupons

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WITH PURCHASE OF ENTREE (LIMIT ONE PER TABLE)

Offer expires 12/31/23 172 Harbor Boulevard, Destin 850-650-1200

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