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FWB Life

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Gulfarium is Making a Splash!

BY MEGAN TRAINER

You won't want to miss all the excitement at Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park this year! Located on Okaloosa Island, the Gulfarium recently unveiled its new Dolphin Oasis, an exciting new addition which sets a new benchmark for marine life experiences. Further, this announcement was accompanied by news of an upcoming renovation to welcome manatee rehabilitation and the launch of "C.A.R.E. on the Coast," an event championing sea turtle conservation. These developments represent significant strides in the park's ongoing commitment to the preservation and education of marine life, promising enriching encounters for all visitors.

Dolphin Oasis

Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park was excited to inaugurate its highly anticipated Dolphin Oasis during a momentous ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 8, 2024. The event marked a significant milestone for the renowned marine park and the region's



attractions, drawing esteemed guests including local dignitaries, politicians and business leaders.

Spanning 2.2 acres of sandy dunes and palms along the picturesque emerald waters of the Florida Gulf Coast, Dolphin Oasis reflects Gulfarium's commitment to animal welfare, conservation education and visitor experience. With a \$30 million investment, the ex-

pansion comprises three large interconnected habitats and three husbandry habitats, totaling over one million gallons of Gulf saltwater. The immersive, natural-themed experience embodies the beauty of the Emerald Coast.

The grandstand seating for 480 guests and a 27-foot acrylic split-level viewing area in the exhibit habitat offer unparalleled opportunities to wit-

ness the beauty of dolphins up close. Moreover, the habitat is designed to serve as a future nursery for dolphin calves, enriching the park's offerings. The new habitat also allows guests to get up close and personal with the dolphins during exclusive encounter opportunities.

GULFARIUM
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Forever Warriors Brings Help and Hope to NWFL Military Families and Veterans

BY WILL ESTELL

Forever Warriors is a Florida private charitable organization, established in 2021, and made possible by the generosity of Northwest Florida based Step One Automotive Group. The primary focus of Forever Warriors is to better equip current and past military members, and their family members, with an array of tools meant to aid them in their lives outside of, and beyond, their military roles.

WARRIORS
continued on page 3



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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Community

GULFARIUM

continued from page 1

Manatees, Coming This Fall

Patrick Berry, CEO of Gulfarium, announced during the ceremony a multi-million-dollar renovation of the original 300,000-gallon dolphin habitat to accommodate manatee rehabilitation patients as part of the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP). This initiative underscores Gulfarium's dedication to marine life conservation, with plans to welcome manatees in need beginning fall of 2024.



C.A.R.E. ON THE COAST: An Event for a Cause

Saturday, May 4 | 3:30 - 7 p.m. | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park, Okaloosa Island

Additionally, Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park is excited to introduce "C.A.R.E. on the Coast," a new event dedicated to supporting sea turtle conservation through the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center. Scheduled for May 4, 2024, at 3:30 p.m., the event promises an immersive experience into sea turtle rescue, rehabilitation and release efforts.

Highlights of "C.A.R.E. on the Coast" include a private dolphin presentation at the NEW Dolphin oasis, live music, an in-depth look at the C.A.R.E. Center and its current patients, food and beverage vendors, conservation-based vendors, silent

auctions and raffles. Early registration discounts of 25% are available until May 1 with code EARLYTURTLE, ensuring participation in this celebration of marine life conservation.

Tickets for C.A.R.E. on the Coast are on sale now at Gulfarium.com, with limited availability. Join others on the beautiful Emerald Coast for an evening filled with education, entertainment and a shared commitment to safeguarding our marine ecosystems.

For more information and ticket purchases, visit www.gulfarium.com/careonthecoast.

Follow Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park and Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center on Facebook and Instagram for event updates and marine conservation news.

C.A.R.E. on the COAST

SATURDAY MAY 4, 2024 3:30 PM | GULFARIUM MARINE ADVENTURE PARK

Help us save our local sea turtles at this exciting, family-friendly event!

- Live music
In-depth look at the C.A.R.E. Center
Dolphin presentation
Silent auction and raffles



Thank you to our sponsors!



SCAN TO BUY TICKETS NOW THIS EVENT WILL SELL OUT!



www.gulfarium.com/careonthecoast



WARRIORS

continued from page 1

Though most of us as residents of these beautiful coastal communities realize we have a large military population across our immediate five county area (which serves as home to numerous military families from every U.S. military branch), what we may not often consider is the hardships and trying times that many of these men, women and families go through—financially and otherwise—both during their time of service and especially when transitioning into civilian life afterward.

I spoke with Tiffany Orner, Military Engagement Manager of Forever Warriors, as well as Greg Lambert, the organization's Logistics Support Leader, to find out a little more about what makes this foundation tick and just how determined they both are to find and provide the help necessary for the men,

women and families they serve.

Tiffany is passionate about the organization's pillars. Transition, sustainment, mental health and community immersion are the reason Forever Warriors was born—brought into existence to fill a need to lighten these burdens and circumvent the stigma that often surrounds a military family having to seek help. "As an organization, Forever Warriors realizes that our military heroes often face post service challenges in obtaining the necessary requirements to transition into the civilian workforce," Tiffany said.

Tiffany says she felt a calling to make a difference for others because of her personal experience coming out of her past military service. "I had a ridiculously tough time, both during and after my service to our country. I am determined to ensure no service member ever feels the way I did. I am thankful for the opportunity to be the change that's so desperately needed in our local military community. I won't stop until EVERY veteran wants for nothing; and that starts with supporting those still serving in America's military," she said.

Forever Warriors works to multiply the awareness of the number of current community-based and military programs in place for this segment and to make navigating the road to help much more efficient. Additionally, Tiffany and Greg talked about the importance of making members of our coastal community more aware of deficits in the aide this segment of our population might need. All in



hopes of uniting to create new ways to best help this ever-growing group of Northwest Florida Gulf Coast families. "Less than 1% of Americans serve in the military. We have to set the standard and have each other's backs. We are Vets helping our brothers and sisters that have and continue to serve," said Greg.

Through their connection and close-knit work alongside other local, state and federal agencies, Tiffany, Greg and the volunteers and partner companies of Forever Warriors are often able to help secure resources from companies and private stakeholders, that are driven and dedicated to serving those who have served our country. In many instances these are companies who are owned or managed by prior service members; thus they see and understand the need they are helping to fill.

By bridging this gap to ci-

vilian life and introducing this population of our neighbors to resources and opportunities, Forever Warriors makes it possible for these families to experience a faster, smoother and less burdened transition to the world many of us live in yet take for granted.

As part of their mission statement, Forever Warriors states that their pillars of success are built on compassionate empathy, unyielding integrity, unwavering unity and shared humility and respect. These strong values are the determining strength behind the organization's support for the military community they serve, and through this service they hope to enlighten and educate all of us as to the importance of doing our part to support Forever Warriors' endeavor.

Remember, real compassionate empathy is more than a mere acknowledgement of what someone else might be expe-

riencing. It goes beyond walking in another's shoes; it entails walking beside them in order to lift their burden, help carry their load and best ready them to build a better tomorrow.

For those of you interested in being a part of the upcoming events of this life-changing organization, Forever Warriors, in conjunction with the generous support of Step One Automotive Group, invite you to come out and be a part of one of these events:

April 13: The Savage Loop: 42 Mile Ultra Marathon, Across five cities and one Air Force Base

Expectation: Conceived by local Green Berets to support terminally ill children and local Gold Star Families, this grueling challenge is anticipated to attract over 500 participants.

April 20: FWB Chamber

Continued on page 5



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Phased Improvements Suggested For Fairgrounds

By CAROLYN NEWCOMER KETCHEL

Background

The Okaloosa County Fairgrounds, located behind the Courthouse on Lewis Turner Boulevard, was originally owned and operated the City of Fort Walton Beach. In 2022, The Fort Walton Beach City Council declared it as surplus. Realizing that the land could be sold for real estate development, the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners (BCC) entered into negotiations to purchase the valuable parcel of public land. The BCC realized that, in addition to annual events such as gun shows, the Okaloosa Fair, Antique shows and Fish Fries for All Sports, to name a few, the county will have a continuing need for a staging area when natural disasters, such as hurricanes, occur. This space would continue to be available to provide for power trucks and to house the National Guard. As a result of these discussions with the city, Okaloosa County agreed to purchase the Fairgrounds “as is” for \$4.1 million with the understanding that the county would have greater resources to update and modernize the facilities, es-

pecially with access to Tourist Development dollars available through the bed tax on short-term rentals. The idea is to keep as much green space as possible for such a need.

Improvements

After the purchase of the property, there seemed to be broad consensus by the Okaloosa County BCC that the existing dilapidated structures need to be improved. A citizen committee was appointed, with one appointment by each commissioner, with the goal to develop specific recommendations for improvements to the Fairgrounds. Note: All improvements will be paid for from Tourism Development dollars. No money will be used from Ad Valorem tax dollars. The BCC will have the final vote on any improvements.

Committee Report

The Citizen Committee began meeting in September 2023, with an initial tour of the facilities. Deficiencies were noted. Event history was considered as well as possible future events after completion of much-needed improvements. I want to thank the Citizens Committee, who



served without compensation, for their many selfless hours of work on this project.

The suggested plan to improve the current site would be implemented in phases. Detailed below are the specific improvements suggested by the Citizen Committee. Although there is a general consensus as to the vast majority of the suggested improvements, I have outlined below in red several significant additions. Because this is such an important capital project for the county that would affect all residents, I need your input specifically as to the major additions outlined in **bold**.

General Improvements Suggested:

- Demolish the oldest and most dilapidated buildings;
- Remove trash and debris throughout the site and cleanup

overgrown vegetation;

- Remove the storage of unused and unnecessary equipment from the site;

- Relocate remaining storage items to outer remote buildings;

- Develop sections of **paved** and grass parking over time; and
- Work to ensure electricity and storm water issues are up to date and working.

Existing Building Space

- Ensure all roofs are weather tight with no leaks;

- Construct a new, attractive, uniform facade on outer existing buildings;

- Add new entrances at strategic points and demo existing entrances;

- Improve existing bathrooms;

- Add an 8-ft. covered walkway along the front of the existing buildings;

- Address parking needs and improve landscaping;

- Redo the 60-ft. area between Bldg. B and Bldg. C and the space between Bldg. D and Bldg. H by constructing a new addition that will include caterer’s kitchen and bathroom that could serve both buildings;

- Explore improving the internal lighting, wall and floor finishing, painting and similar cosmetic improvements for each space;

- Redevelop the functional event spaces with HVAC, insulation, floors, lighting and wall finishes; and

- Allow for longer corridor space into a more finished homogenous space capable of being used as one space or divided for each of the Building B, C, D and H.

Open Space Area Behind Buildings

- Eliminate safety holes in the open space area and remove antiquated infrastructure;

- Relocate current RV spaces elsewhere on site, perhaps to the periphery, and build new side with correct infrastructure, adjusting any necessary Eglin agreements;

- Build oversized bathroom for the field/outside use events;

- Reconstruct the area with new underground infrastructure that can be utilized when needed and hidden when not needed; and

- Add landscaping and turf to improve the overall appearance.

New Large Multi-Purpose Building

- **Construct a new minimum 30,000-sq.-ft. building on the east side of the existing building with approximately 10,000-sq.-ft of additional support space, e.g. bathrooms, kitchen, storage, mechanical, etc.;**

- **Build other new or replacement sections and parking over time as demand is determined and funding permits, as shown in the conventional plan;**

- **Ensure the new building is modern and multi-purpose with technology, high ceilings, sprinklers, etc. with the ability to function alone or together with the other venue spaces as part of a bigger event;**

- **Build other wing in Phase V over time.**

- **Estimates of cost for these improvements are north of \$10 million dollars.**

Commission Decision:

The BCC approved Phase I of a comprehensive plan in March to refurbish the existing buildings with a new façade, kitchens and bathrooms. Other phases will be addressed as needed. The Fairgrounds are a wonderful county asset that will serve the community well for years to come: Emergency staging area when needed by power trucks and National Guard; Nice event venue—an alternative to expensive venues such as the Destin-FWB Conference Center on Okaloosa Island.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your commissioner.

Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2.

She can be reached at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 850-651-7105.



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Sharing & Caring Needs Your Help

BY LORI LEATH SMITH,
PUBLISHER

An anonymous Fort Walton Beach donor has presented a challenge to Sharing & Caring Fort Walton Beach to raise \$25,000 by Nov. 1, 2024. If 25,000 is raised, it will be matched with a \$25,000 donation—a total of \$50,000 for this valuable organization!

“Inflation has been a challenge the last two to three years and we very much need help in securing this matching gift,” says board member Al Hudson. Donation Checks can be mailed or dropped off at 126 Eglin Parkway, Fort Walton Beach, 32548.

Al says the following are factors have caused the non-profit organization to need help:

- A food-cost increase of approximately 20% over the past three years;
- Increase in larger-size families;
- Increase in cost of other ex-

penses (insurance, utilities, personal care items, etc.);

- Helped feed more than 15,000 clients last year.

In September of 2023, Sharing & Caring Fort Walton Beach completed a 900-sq.-ft. building expansion more than doubling its food pantry space. The increased pantry space allowed the organization to buy more food in bulk, making donated dollars go further.

First opening its doors in 1985, Sharing & Caring was originally based in a building donated by the First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach, but relocated to its present location in 1992. The current building, leased from First Presbyterian Church, was renovated extensively by volunteer labor and generous donations from the community.

For decades, Sharing & Caring has served as an emergency food source for qualifying



clients, also providing personal care items and vouchers for prescription medications based on income. The facility’s food

bank is available to anyone who resides between Hurlburt Field in the west, Destin in the East and Eglin Air Force Base to the north. Its clients include families, children, seniors, the homeless and those who are unemployed. It’s estimated the pantry serves roughly 30 families a day and more than 15,000 clients per year. More than half of the pantry’s food provided comes from community donations, local churches and businesses. The rest is purchased by Sharing and Caring using financial donations.

Currently, the facility is staffed by approximately 50 volunteers who operate the of-

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

WARRIORS

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Military Appreciation Day, The Landing

Expectation: A celebration of local military members with free activities and services, expected to draw 4,000 attendees in a grand gesture of appreciation.

May 3: Commando Games, Hurlburt Field

Expectation: Focused on active duty military retention efforts, this event is projected to attract over 1,000 participants.

May 4: Operation Battle Laugh in partnership with Barracks Legend Foundation, The Island

Expectation: A night of laughter and camaraderie, supporting military and military family retention efforts with an expected attendance of approximately 350.

May 11: 6th RTB Open House, Onsite at 6th RTB

Expectation: Showcasing Army activities in the swamp, this open house aims to connect the community with military efforts, expecting 2,000 attendees.

June 21: Air Force/Space Force Silkies Swear In, DOD Beach

Expectation: Swearing in of Panhandle Future Air Force and Space Force Members followed by a day on the Gulf to include

Veteran Owned food trucks, VSO’s MSO’s and other Military Focused Partners with an expected attendance of approximately 200+ Airman, Guardians and their families.

June 28: Freedom Fest, Hurlburt Field

Expectation: A celebration of freedom and support for military and military family retention efforts, anticipating 3,000 attendees.

For more information about supporting Forever Warriors and attending these activities, visit <https://www.forever-warriors.org>.

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur and real estate professional with over 600 published magazine features in an array of publications from tourism, real estate, and automobile editorials to celebrity interview cover features. Will Estell is the chief creative officer of Estell Hussey Media, LLC, and over the past 26 years has been instrumental in co-founding 12 new magazine titles, as well as serving as editor in chief for numerous others, both locally and for nationally sold newsstand titles. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his wife, WEAR ABC 3 Pensacola news anchor, Laura Hussey-Estell. Will is a regular contributor and media consultant to Life Media’s family of publications.

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Events Around Town

MKAF Showcases A Range of Music at 2024 Concerts in The Village

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's (MKAF) Concerts in the Village, the area's first live concert series, is held each spring on Thursday evenings at the MKAF Dugas Pavilion in Destin. This year's 29th annual family-friendly series runs from April 4 to June 6. The 10-concert live music series features premier regional and national musicians and bands performing everything from rhythm & blues, classic and hard rock to disco to modern pop.

Upcoming Concerts:

April 11 features Wendy Moten from The Voice! Hailing from Memphis, Wendy Moten is an American R&B-infused pop singer based in Nashville. Best known for the UK hit Come In Out of the Rain, Moten has released major-label solo records, achieved international hits, and toured extensively. At 56, she took a bold step, entering The Voice and finishing as the runner-up. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military



in advance.

April 18 Black Jacket Symphony presents Prince's Purple Rain. Relive the awesome '80s and celebrate the 40th anniversary of Prince's most celebrated album from start to finish. Dance to hits like Purple Rain, When Dove's Cry, I Would Die 4 U while experiencing a visual feast of rock and roll magic. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts start at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military in advance.

April 25 get ready to chart your course to set sail for concert fun with Yacht Rock Revue. These top-notch musicians who have rocked onstage with John Oates, Eddie Money and now headline sold-out shows, personify the smooth sounds of West Coast '70s and '80s. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts

start at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military in advance.

May 2 The Mulligans perform everyone's rock 'n roll favorites. The diversified song list of this seasoned six-member Emerald Coast-based band founded by Edwin Watts includes The Beatles, Tom Petty, Eric Clapton, Elvis, the Eagles, Bee Gees, the Ventures, Rolling Stones, Buddy Holly, The Monkees, Roy Orbison, Moody Blues, Young Rascals, Billy Joel, The Outsiders and many others. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts start at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

May 9 Rumours ATL: A Fleetwood Mac Tribute takes the stage. Since 2014, Rumours ATL has set stages ablaze across the U.S. with their scorching Fleetwood Mac renditions. With meticulous attention to detail and infectious energy, Rumours sells out venues and leaves fans dancing, singing, and discovering new facets of Fleetwood Mac's magic at every performance. Believe in miracles

and join the unforgettable experience of Rumours. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts start at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military in advance.

May 16 Gotta Groove Band will put a fresh spin on popular cover tunes from the '60s to today. With outstanding vocals and top-shelf musicianship, they feature their own arrangements and mixing many popular tunes together to create a fun flow of entertaining energy. You will not want to miss the party this Land O Lakes, Florida, band throws down. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

May 23 Mitch Malloy will rock Destin. Former frontman of Great White, rocker Mitch Malloy is a studio veteran and award-winning songwriter. With a career spanning decades, he's navigated the music scene since the '80s, achieving chart success and even turning down a role as Van Halen's lead singer in the '90s. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts start at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military in advance.

May 30 Haley Reinhart's

timeless voice will transport you. With talent that transcends eras, blending pop, rock, and jazz in her 2019 album, Lo-Fi Soul. A finalist on American Idol, this Chicago-born singer is influenced by '50s music and enjoys playful lyrics. With a decade-long grind, platinum hits, and diverse collaborations, Reinhart's multifaceted artistry shines, promising a lasting connection with her audience. Doors open at 6 p.m. and concerts start at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military in advance.

June 6 Adam Ezra Group closes out the series. Fusing folk intimacy and rock energy with soul power and pop charm, the band first emerged from Boston in the early 2000s and quickly garnered widespread acclaim for their bold, insightful songwriting and interactive, euphoric performances. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

Gates open at 6 p.m. with concerts beginning at 7 p.m. for this come-as-you-are family-friendly outdoor concert series. Bring a lawn chair, picnic, wine, or purchase food and beverages on-site prepared by featured restaurants and food trucks. A drawing will be held at each concert to award valuable raffle prizes donated by local businesses.

Proceeds fund MKAF's community outreach mission to provide cultural outreach programs through ArtsReach serving K-12 students, adults and children with special needs, at-risk youth, and through MKAF's Warrior Arts program serving active/veteran military.

Purchase tickets online at MKAF.org/events—\$20 to \$35 for adults. Discounts offered for active-duty military (must show ID). Purchase tickets in advance of concert day and save \$5 per ticket at the door. Children (12 and under) are free. A limited number of VIP tables (reserved table for eight guests for the entire season) are available for \$2,250. Corporate VIP tables are \$2,750.

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

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10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
5K Run Starts at 8 a.m.

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For more information, call 850-678-2615.

Happenings Around FWB

2024 EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE! MAY 11
11th Annual Taco & Tequila Fest!
 1 -4 pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin

APRIL

04 Concerts in the Village: Postmodern Jukebox
 7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin



05 Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee
 7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | FWB
Live Music: Purple Monkey
 6 pm | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB

06 Pryor Pirates 5K Run
 8 am | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB
Kenwood Disc Golf Tournament benefiting Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast
 9 am | Ferry Park | FWB
Pet Adoption Day with Saving Soul Pet Rescue
 10 am | Subaru Fort Walton Beach | FWB
Discover Science Saturday
 10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Cars Against Cancer
 11 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso

07 Okaloosa's Got Talent
 5 pm | Enlightened Studios

08 Solar Eclipse Extravaganza with the Emerald Coast Science Center
 12:30 pm | Fort Walton Beach Public Library | FWB

09 All Ages Paint Party: Mystical Moon
 6:30 pm | Painting with A Twist | FWB

11 Mini Makers and Experimenters Lab
 10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking
 11:30 am | UWF - Emerald Coast Campus | FWB
Concerts in the Village: Wendy Moten
 7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin

12 The Young Dubliners Live
 8 pm | Docie's Dock | FWB
Union Civil War Blockade at East Pass
 Noon | Heritage Museum | Val'p

13 Spring Junk Fest and Flea Market Flip
 9 am | De'France Antiques | FWB
Florida Concealed Carry Weapons Class
 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso

13 CONT. Girls Empowered with Math and Science (GEMS) Workshop
 10:30 am | FWB Public Library | FWB
FWBHS Cheerleading 3rd Annual Food Truck Festival & Car Show
 11 am | FWB High School | FWB
Jacobe Turner Teen Center Bowling Tournament
 1 pm | Fort Walton Beach Bowl | FWB

My Chemical Cocktail
 6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Top Hats and Tails: A Space Odyssey benefiting SOCKS
 6 pm | Bob Hope Village Ballroom | FWB
ONE Run 5K benefiting Emerald Coast Autism Center
 8 am | Northwest Florida State College | Niceville

14 All Ages Paint Party: Choose Your Era (Taylor Swift)
 2 pm | Painting with A Twist | FWB

Mooba Fest
 2 pm | Mooba Cafe | FWB

15 GSFF Indoor League
 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso

18 Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours
 5:30 pm | The VRReality | FWB
Planetarium Night
 6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Painting with a Purpose: Impact100 Fundraiser
 6 pm | Painting with A Twist | FWB
Concerts in the Village: Black Jacket Symphony Presents Prince's Purple Rain
 7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin

19 Live Music: Duchess
 6 pm | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB
Mosaic Theatre Company presents Annie Jr.
 7 pm | FWB Civic Auditorium | FWB

Doolittle Raid-America Strikes Back
 Noon | Heritage Museum | Val'p

20 Introduction to Pistol Class
 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Greater FWB Chamber Military Family Appreciation Day
 11 am | The Landing | FWB



20 CONT. Mosaic Theatre Company presents Annie Jr.
 2 pm | FWB Civic Auditorium | FWB
Mosaic Theatre Company presents Annie Jr.
 7 pm | FWB Civic Auditorium | FWB

21 6th Annual International Festival
 11 am | The Landing | FWB
Mosaic Theatre Company presents Annie Jr.
 7 pm | FWB Civic Auditorium | FWB

23 Homeschool Science Fair
 4 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Chicago
 7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

25 Live Music: Derrick McLendon
 6 pm | Ivy & Ale | FWB
Concerts in the Village: Yacht Rock Revue
 2 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin

25-28 South Walton Beaches Food & Wine Festival
 Various Times | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach

26 Free Disaster Training
 8:30 am | The Salvation Army | FWB

27 Free Disaster Training
 9 am | The Salvation Army | FWB
Florida Concealed Carry Weapons Class
 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
48th Annual Saturday in the Park
 10 am - 4 pm/5K 8 am | Heritage Museum | Val'p

26-28 Destin Charity Wine Auction presented by the Jumonville Family
 Various Times & Locations

29 Paint Party: Sunset at the Lake
 6:30 pm | Painting with A Twist | FWB

ONGOING EVENTS

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

Pirate Show
 5 pm | AI's Beach Club & Burger Bar | FWB

SINGO Music Bingo Nights
 6 pm | Tuesdays | The Island Resort | FWB

Open Mic Night
 7 pm | Wednesdays | The Sound Cafe + Enlightened Studios | FWB

Live Trivia Nights
 6 pm | Thursdays | The Island Resort | FWB

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

FARMERS MARKETS	Okaloosa County	Downtown FWB	Grand Boulevard
	Saturdays 7 am - 2 pm	2nd & 4th Saturdays 8 am - 1 pm	Saturdays 9 am - 1 pm
	1954 Lewis Turner Blvd FWB	FWB Landing Park	Grand Boulevard Miramar Beach

Community

Lakeside Songwriters Concerts Underway!

Featuring a lineup of top-notch, popular talent, the Lakeside Songwriters Concert Series, Friday nights at Old Florida Fish House on 30A, continues with Michael Morgan on April 5th, Charles Esten on April 12th, Leslie Satcher and Kevin Mac on April 19th and Bryan White on May 3rd.

Captivating audiences with his authentic approach to sto-

rytelling through song, William Michael Morgan (April 5) is a country music singer with Warner Bros. Nashville. One of his notable breakthroughs was the release of his debut single "I Met a Girl" in 2015. The song, known for its traditional country sound and Morgan's sincere vocals, garnered widespread acclaim. In 2016, William Michael Morgan released his debut stu-



dio album, titled "Vinyl," highlighting Morgan's commitment to traditional country music.



Charles Esten (April 12) is an American actor, comedian and singer best known for his role as Deacon Claybourne in the popular TV series "Nashville." Esten's journey into the entertainment industry began with improvisational comedy as a regular performer on the British and American versions of the improv show "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" In "Nashville," Charles Esten's portrayal of Deacon Claybourne, a talented musician dealing with personal and professional challenges, earned him acclaim from both fans and critics, even with his musical abilities. Esten performed numerous songs on the show and has released several albums with a blend of country and rock influences.

Leslie Satcher (April 19) has penned numerous songs for prominent country artists that often delve into the complexities of human emotions, relationships and life experiences. She has collaborated with various country music stars, contributing her songwriting prowess to hit songs across the genre.

With Nashville as his home base, writing great songs and bringing them to the masses is Kevin Mac's calling. Whether he's playing solo, jamming in front of his band or teaming up with other songwriters as part of Southern Rounds and Songwriters in Paradise, Kevin Mac connects with fans across the nation. "Take a sandy beach, mix it with some blue water, add a Corona, a guitar, a good song, and a good singer! That's how you make Kevin Mac," quips Keith Stegal, his famous producer.

Purchase VIP (with dinner) and general admission tickets at www.oldfloridafishhouse.com/lakesidesongwritersconcert. Old Florida Fish House is located at 33 Heron's Watch Way in Santa Rosa Beach. Call (850) 534-3045 or visit OldFloridaFishHouse.com.

LAKESIDE CONCERT SERIES
On the shore of Eastern Lake and 30A

SPRING 2024



Featuring Charles Esten April 12th

March 22 Craig Campbell	March 29 Keith Stegall & Bradley Gasken
April 5 William Michael Morgan	April 19 Leslie Satcher & Kevin Mac
	<i>An intimate concert series featuring creators and performers of some of the best known music of our time.</i>
May 3 Bryan White	



Get Your Tickets

oldfloridafishhouse.com

850-534-3045

33 Heron's Watch Way
Santa Rosa Beach, FL



Scan for Tickets and Information

Wine Fests on Tap!

Sandestin Wine Festival April 11-14



The 37th Annual Sandestin Wine Festival at the Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort will take place April 11-14, 2024. Topping area polls as a must-experience event, this beloved festival offers four full days of unique events including wine dinners with celebrity chefs, yoga, live music, interactive experiences, culinary tents, and of course wine tastings.

The event is the most established and continuously running wine festival on the Gulf coast and known as the "Kentucky Derby of Wine Festivals." Always a picture perfect event complete with white tents, grand wine tastings, culinary experiences and live music.

Tickets, schedule and more information: www.sandestin-winefestival.com.

The Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction April 26-28

Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) presents the 19th Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction April 26-28 to benefit children in need in Northwest Florida through the Foundation's 17 partner children's charities. In 2023, DCWAF donated \$3.4 million to charity following one of its most successful auctions to date.

This year's auction will feature an impressive line-up of celebrity chefs and vintners from throughout the world, hosted by philanthropic couples within the local community.

Presented by the Jumonville Family, expect a weekend filled with exclusive wines and excellent food from a variety of celebrity chefs beginning Friday, April 26 with the patron dinner experience. Each dinner features a nationally recognized chef paired with world-class vintners.

The Destin Charity Wine

Auction is the main event of the weekend at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 27 held under an air-conditioned tent at Grand Boulevard Sandestin Town Center and will feature distinctive wines from internationally acclaimed vintners poured and paired with cuisine curated by a selection of the area's top restaurants. The event culminates with a high-energy, live auction boasting rare and distinctive wines, spectacular trips and other incredible one-of-a-kind items.

Hosted in conjunction with the South Walton Beaches Wine and Food Festival in Grand Boulevard Sandestin Town Center the same weekend, the Festival will showcase hundreds of premium wines along with a diverse selection of spirits and culinary creations. Auction attendees also have access to South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival's Grand Tasting on Sunday, April 30 at 1 p.m. Patron packages: dcwaf.org/tickets.

South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival April 25-28

A dazzling roster of celebri-



ty winemakers, mixologists, and chefs will converge April 25 - 28, 2024 for the South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival in Grand Boulevard Town Center to wine, dine, educate and entertain guests as part of the four-day celebration of wine, spirits, food, music, fun and goodwill.


South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival festival features a stunning showcase of some of the best wines in the world. Celebrity wine producers and chefs present fine wine and food pairings from the world's most famous appellations. The Willamette Valley Wineries Association will be featured in 2024 and more than a dozen of their noted winemakers and winery VIPs will participate in the festival. The Culinary Village of-



fers a sumptuous array of foods to taste, wines to pair, as well as wine and food tasting seminars.


For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.SoWalWine.com.

The event is a major fundraiser for Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, which benefits children in need in Northwest Florida. To learn more about this worthy foundation, visit DCWAF.org.



Concerts in the Village


mattie kelly arts foundation



SCAN ME


Every Thursday
April 4 - June 6, 2024

Thursday evening 10-concert live music series featuring family-friendly premier musicians and bands performing everything from classic rock, reggae and disco to modern pop.



Purchase Tickets at MKAF.org/Events


MKAF MEMBERS CONCERTS ARE FREE!
BECOME A MEMBER



Membership keeps art FUNded


mattie kelly arts foundation

Know that your membership fees impact students, veterans and students and adults of all abilities throughout Northwest Florida.



Become a Member - JOIN NOW!

MKAF.org



Community

EVENTS

continued from page 6

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

Top Hats & Tails April 13

Get your tickets for a stellar evening of food and fun – *Tops Hats & Tails: A Space Odyssey*. The universe will reward you for attending this gala benefiting *Save Our Cats & Kittens (SOCKS)* from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. April 13 at Bob Hope Village, 30 Holly Ave. Enjoy an out-of-this world delicious dinner by award-winning *Knife's Edge Catering*; music and cat trivia by the universally talented *ACE50 Media*; and silent auction items that eclipse expectations. Also honor someone special in your world by naming an elegantly inscribed star in the evening's decorative sky, then take your shining star home. General admission is \$75. A table of eight is \$500. Stars are \$10. Purchase tickets at www.saveourcatsandkittens.com/tickets.

[saveourcatsandkittens.com/tickets](http://www.saveourcatsandkittens.com/tickets). Stars can be purchased at <https://bit.ly/3uCiaQP>.

Taylor Swift Album Release Party April 19

Join City Food Hall at Destin Commons on April 19th from 6-10 p.m. for an unforgettable Taylor Swift Album Release Party of the highly anticipated release of Taylor's latest album, "The Tortured Poets Department." Get ready to test your Taylor Swift knowledge with Swiftie Trivia kicking off at 6 p.m. Show off your expertise and compete for fabulous prizes! Following the trivia, immerse yourself in the magic of Taylor's new album with a special Listening Party. But that's not all! Indulge in delicious special cocktails and mocktails inspired by Taylor's music as you mingle with fellow Swifties. Get crafty and make friendship bracelets to commemorate the occasion, and don't miss out on Taylor Swift-themed games and swag to keep the fun going all night long. Capture memories with friends at the Taylor Swift-themed photo booth and dress in your favorite Eras look to



truly embrace the Swiftie spirit! Free and open to the public. All ages welcome. Visit www.cityfoodhall.com or follow City Food Hall on social media for the latest updates and event details.

Navarre Sunset Stampede 5K April 20

Join Run With It for the 15th Annual Navarre Sunset Stampede 5K, April 20th, the largest race held in Navarre Beach. The 5k starts at 6 p.m. with a Kids, 1-mile fun run starting at 5 p.m. There will be an award's ceremony and beach party at Juana's Pagodas with live music, food and drinks right on the sand on beautiful Santa Rosa Sound. Registration is limited so SIGN UP EARLY! Stay for the After Party at Juana's Pagodas with complimentary food, beer, live music and rum punch! Juana's Pagodas will be hosting a registration party on Friday April 19th! All race participants MUST have a wrist band to be able to eat and drink free at the after party. Friends and families can purchase a wrist band for \$20 for food and drink at the af-

ter party or during packet pickup. Register at RunWithItfl.com.

It's Almost Here! The International Festival! April 21

You are invited to Conexion Media Group's (CMG) 6th Annual International Festival at the beautiful Landing Park in Fort Walton Beach, Sunday, April 21, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. More than 60 nations will present with music, food, folklore and art with attendees traveling from as far as Tallahassee, Panama City, Pensacola and the surrounding states of Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama!

This year's festival will benefit the local, non-profit, Advanced Sacred Hope Academy (ASHA). ASHA is a 501c3 nonprofit independent private school dedicated to the individualized learning of students with autism or other neurological disorders that prevent them from succeeding in a traditional school setting. Visit [ASHA at advancedsacredhopeacademy.org](http://advancedsacredhopeacademy.org).

Corporate sponsorships and

vendor opportunities are still available. Contact David at 850-368-3505 or via conexionflorida@gmail.com.

11th Annual Taco & Tequila Fest! May 10-12

So. Many. Tacos! Chicken, Pork, Beef, Steak, Shrimp, Barbacoa – you name it; we've had it at the wildly popular Tequila & Taco Festival! Find your favorite at this year's Tequila & Taco Festival where a variety of local restaurants and food trucks will be competing for the Best Taco on The Emerald Coast! May 10-12, 2024, at The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin.

Make plans now and purchase your tickets at <https://www.efestevents.com/tandt-fest2024/> "Guests from all over the Southeast come to celebrate this unique event on the Emerald Coast," says event founder, Carlos Shaffran. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Fisher House Foundation, Sandestin Foundation for Kids and Emerald Coast Boys & Girls Clubs. Don't miss out on the fun!

Fudpucker's GatorFest 2024 May 4

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is hosting GatorFest 2024, which promises an exhilarating blend of entertainment, education and gastronomic delights, May 4th, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. To benefit Alaqua Animal Refuge, thrilling Gator shows will offer an up-close look at these magnificent reptiles and a Gator Tail Cook Off Competition will showcase culinary creativity. The dedicated Kid's Zone includes face painting, airbrush art and Gator-themed games. Meanwhile, adults can savor

Continued on page 31

Visit us at the Shalimar Library & Thrift Shop!

Scan for more info @ ShalimarLibrary.org

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Volunteers needed! If you have 4 hours a week to spare, give us a call. Thanks, again!

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Thrift Shop (850) 651-3675

Sun	Closed
Mon	Closed
Tues	10am-2pm
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Fri	12pm-4pm
Sat	10am-2pm

Visit ShalimarLibrary.org • Facebook.com/ShalimarLibraryandThriftShop

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

TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING

VISIT ILOVEFWB.COM

I ♥ FWB

Will Billy Bowlegs Gain A Foothold Along Our Sands?

68th Annual Billy Bowlegs Festival | May 16-20

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

Ahoy, maties! Avast, ye! It's time to open your treasure chest, get your eyepatch on, take out your sword and get your pirate gear ready for 2024's 68th Annual Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival—May 16-20. Any landlubber knows Pirate Captain Billy Bowlegs has been setting his sights on our sandy white shores since the 1950s!

This year's new "Captain Billy," Bill Kilpatrick, takes the helm as Captain Billy Bowlegs LXVIII and is joined by the 68th Queen of Bowlegs Sharen Burt, First Mate and Mistress Brad and Krista Bowman along with their lackeys Christina Kilpatrick and John Burt and the Captain's Honor Guard krewe.

The 2024 festival kicks off with a Pre-Invasion on Thursday evening, May 16th, around 4:30 p.m., just off Main St. downtown, where Captain Billy Bowlegs and his Krewe will arrive aboard their pirate ship parade float, the Blackhawk, to greet children, take photos and hand out treasure.

The Skirmish will be held on Friday evening, May 17th, where Captain Billy and his Krewe of Bowlegs will arrive by water at the Fort Walton Beach Landing to scout the city prior to their invasion on Saturday. The mayor of Fort Walton Beach and his forces are prepared and have threatened to arrest Captain Billy if he tries to land, resulting in a skirmish. The city of Fort Walton Beach will also host its Concert in the Park (6 p.m.), Arts & Crafts Fest (3 p.m.) and a Fireworks show (8 p.m.) over Santa Rosa sound.

On Saturday afternoon, May 18th, Captain Billy will return with the entire Krewe of Bowlegs and his allies from visiting Krewes across the country, after his defeat the night prior. The mayor will try everything to stop him from landing. Will he be a match for the overwhelming presence of Captain Billy's pirates? Will the Captain prevail in taking over our city? The pirates and wenches will be full of merriment and mischief as they hand out treasures (3:30-4 p.m.). Festivities at the Landing throughout the day include live music (noon-6 p.m.), an



arts and crafts festival (10 a.m.), along with food, beverages and other vendor booths.

Finally, on Monday night, May 20th, the Torchlight Parade will start at 7 p.m. on Eglin Pkwy. from First Street to Hughes Avenue to conclude the festival. The parade will be anchored by Captain Billy, the entire Krewe of Bowlegs and more than 100 floats and participants marching down the street to celebrate Captain Billy Bowlegs' 68th annual capture of Fort Walton Beach. And, they'll be sharing their loot with those cheering them on!

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

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

Drawing both locals and visitors, the festival is produced in partnership with the William Augustus Bowles Foundation,



the Krewe of Bowlegs, the City of Fort Walton Beach, the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce and local businesses



and community organizations. FWB Life implores you to boldly stand guard to defend our piece of paradise at this year's festival. Want to play a part? For more information, visit billybowlegsfestival.com.

Captain Billy 68 is looking for a BIG 2024 turnout! So, join him and his Krewe for a swashbuckling good time as they, again, try to take over the city of Fort Walton Beach!

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 Community

100 Men Who Care Exceeds \$50,000 in Local Donations

100 Men Who Care – Emerald Coast recently exceeded \$50,000 in donations supporting the needs of Okaloosa and Walton County nonprofits with its 2024 first quarter donation and its presentation of more than \$7,800 to One Hopeful Place – a nonprofit meeting the

needs of homeless people in our community. “It’s exciting to meet this milestone with our energized and conscientious cadre of community members, meeting the needs of our Walton and Okaloosa County neighbors,” said Scott Rude, founding member. “From our initial contribution to The C.A.L.M. House of Niceville in November 2021 to our most recent gift to One Hopeful Place, our members have demonstrated a dedication to the betterment of our community. We hope to hit \$100,000 in 2025.”



Since its founding, 100 Men Who Care has additionally contributed to The Crossroads Center, A Bed 4 Me, Defenders of Freedom, Fresh Start for Children and Families, Healing Hoof Steps, Freedom Life Compass and Children in Crisis.

100 Men Who Care welcomes all community minded men wishing to make an impact on their neighbors of the Emerald Coast. “Our giving model is ideal for men who want to contribute to their community, but have limited time,” adds Scott.

Interested men can reach the chapter by emailing Scott at 100mwcec@gmail.com, visiting the website; 100mwcec.com or messaging the group’s Facebook Page. The next quarterly chapter meeting will be held at the 3rd Planet Brewery on April 22 at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome!

100 Men Who Care – Emerald Coast is a member of 100 Who Care Alliance with more than 700 chapters worldwide. Coining the phrase “The Power of 100,” each chapter meets quarterly, gathering its members at a local venue. Each member contributes \$100 quarterly to a giving pool. Local charities and non-profits then have an opportunity to describe their mission, needs and plans.

ECAR Celebrates NAR® RPAC Hall of Fame Inductees

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) is honoring three Emerald Coast Association of REALTORS® (ECAR) past Presidents with membership in the 2023 REALTOR® Party (RPAC) Hall of Fame. Past ECAR Presidents Robert “Bob” Hudgens (2001), Mary Anne Windes (2010) and Cathy Alley (2016) will be inducted into the NAR 2023 RPAC Hall of Fame at the REALTORS® Legislative Meetings in Washington D.C. this May. The RPAC Hall of Fame recognizes dedicated members who have made a significant commitment to RPAC over the years by in-

vesting an aggregate lifetime amount of at least \$25,000. Among the Hall of Fame benefits are name plaques on the RPAC Hall of Fame wall located on NAR’s Washington, D.C. building rooftop. “Cathy, Mary Anne, and Bob’s unwavering commitment to RPAC underscores the vital role REALTORS® play in shaping policies that safeguard property interests and promote thriving communities,” commented 2024 ECAR President Keith Wood. He continued, “This honor is a testament to their dedication and service to our industry and the communities we serve.” RPAC is a volun-

tary political action committee whose membership consists of REALTORS® interested in actively and effectively protecting the real estate industry and the dream of homeownership by participating in government affairs at the local, state and federal levels. RPAC advances public policies and candidates that build strong communities, protect property interests, and promote a vibrant business environment—the only political action committee in the country that is organized by REALTORS® to promote and protect the dream of home-ownership in America.



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Preparing Your Yard for Summer



BY MELISSA FORTE-LITSCHER, NEXTHOME

OP ED: The news has been reporting on the National Association of Realtors' proposed settlement, and I want to address it quickly before diving into this month's tips on getting your yard ready for summer fun! This is a proposed settlement that is expected to be approved by the courts early this summer. As I understand it, there will be some changes that we will have to adapt to, some forms and documents updated, and a few procedures will be modified. Most of our local agents work hard, honestly, and with the utmost professionalism and integrity for their customers on both sides of a real estate transaction. The biggest changes will be with buyer customers needing to sign an agreement with their agent prior to viewing a property that has been listed in the Multiple Listing Service, and the buyer's agent compensation will not be advertised in the MLS. There are many nuances still to be worked out and a great source of information is the emeraldcoastrealtors.com/nar-settlement.com website. There you will find up-to-date information directly from the source. As always, feel free to contact me or your favorite trusted realtor to discuss these issues and how it may factor into your next real estate transaction.

As the sun begins to shine brighter and the temperatures climb higher, it's time to shift our attention to outdoor living and prepare our yards for the joys of summertime. To ensure your outdoor sanctuary is ready for the season ahead, here's a guide to help you through the process of getting your yard summer ready.

Start your summer yard preparations by conducting a thorough inspection of your outdoor space. Begin with your fencing, which serves as both a boundary and a backdrop for

your yard. Check for signs of wear and tear, such as rot, loose boards or rusty hardware. For wooden fences, probe the posts for soft spots or decay. Promptly address any damage to maintain privacy and security.

Next, turn your attention to your decking or patio area. Look for loose or damaged boards, protruding nails or indications of water damage. Repairing these issues promptly ensures a safe and enjoyable outdoor environment for summer gatherings.

Don't forget about your irrigation system. Inspect it for leaks, clogged sprinkler heads or damaged pipes. Proper functioning of your irrigation system is essential for keeping your lawn and plants adequately hydrated throughout the summer months.

A lush, green lawn is the cornerstone of a beautiful outdoor space. Start by mowing your lawn to the appropriate height, ensuring you don't cut it too short, which can stress the grass. Different grass varieties have different ideal mowing heights, so research the specific requirements for your lawn.

Consider aerating your lawn to alleviate soil compaction and promote healthy root growth. Aerating involves perforating the soil with small holes to allow air, water, and nutrients to penetrate deeply. This enhances the overall health of your lawn and encourages thicker turf.

After aerating, it's time to fertilize. Choose a high-quality fertilizer formulated for your grass type and apply it according to the manufacturer's instructions. Proper fertilization provides essential nutrients for your lawn to thrive during the summer heat and drought.

Summer offers the perfect opportunity to infuse your yard with vibrant colors and lush foliage. Choose a mix of annuals and perennials to ensure continuous blooms throughout the season. Popular summer annuals include petunias, marigolds, and zinnias, while perennials like coneflowers, daylilies, and black-eyed Susans provide long-lasting color.

To enrich the soil and provide a healthy foundation for your plants, loosen it with a garden fork or tiller and incorporate compost or aged manure. After planting, water your new additions regularly, especially during



hot, dry spells. Consider using a drip irrigation system or soaker hoses to deliver water directly to the roots, minimizing waste and promoting efficient growth.

In addition to planting, summer is an ideal time to prune any overgrown shrubs or trees. Remove dead or diseased branches and shape the plants to maintain a neat

appearance. Proper pruning encourages healthy growth and improves air circulation, reducing the risk of pest and disease issues.

By following these comprehensive steps, you'll be well on your way to transforming your yard into a summer paradise. From repairing fences to fertilizing lawns and planting flowers, investing time in preparing your outdoor space ensures countless hours of enjoyment in the warm summer sun.



Melissa Forte-Litscher

Realtor® ABR, RSPS, MRP, PSA

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Community

Impact100: Aid Multiplied by Collective Giving

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

When Joni Wallace, the current President of Impact100 of Northwest Florida, thinks about the hope this organization can bring to our community, it comes down to this: Multiply success by collective giving.

The goal in 2024 is for Impact100 NWF to have 500 members by April 30th, all paying a \$1000 membership, to change the trajectory of a non-profit in each of these five key areas:

- Arts and Culture
- Education
- Environment, Recreation, and Preservation
- Family
- Health and Wellness

With 500 members, it means that a \$100,000 grant can be given to five non-profit organizations that will multiply the health of the community it serves in ways that will have generational impact. As Joni points out, "You could certainly write a check for \$1000 and give it to a non-profit who would certainly appreciate it and use it. But when you give \$100,000 as a collective gift, that is what takes a nonprofit to the

next level. It's transformational, no matter how transformational is defined. \$100,000 is a big investment."

The local chapter started in 2012 with 12 women from both Okaloosa and Walton counties. They dreamed about the changes that could happen when this level of generosity is given to local nonprofits and decided they wanted to be part of this international movement. Its mission: To be a collective force for good; uniting and empowering women to give together, creating transformational impact, locally and globally.

One such recipient in 2023 was the EOD Warrior Foundation under the Health and Wellness category. They strive to support the quality of life and reduce the challenges that come from volunteering to take on one of the most dangerous jobs in the military, the safe disarming and disposal of bombs and other explosives. EODWF recognizes that members of the Special Forces have the highest rate of suicide and mental health struggles that can lead to phys-



ical and familial instability. The grant from Impact100 NWF allowed them to expand their care by directly affecting two critical parts: Updating and renovating the EODWF building and expanding existing support as well as creating new programmatic support.

It's not just locally started non-profits who benefit. Even more well-known international organizations who want to serve locally, such as The Salvation Army, applied to Impact100 under the "Family" category. With its grant, The Salvation Army

bought a disaster response vehicle and went to Northern Florida after Hurricane Idalia, serving 500 meals per sitting. The truck was equipped with Starlink, and it gave those who were affected a chance to reach out to family, offering some peace of mind during a devastating time. The truck doesn't just operate during natural disasters. Every week, the truck goes to Crestview on Tuesdays to feed the hungry, a day when meals aren't so readily available.

Both of these programs would have been impossible to

grow with a single \$1000 donation, and it would have delayed critical services as funds were gathered. However, with 100 people linking arms in each of these categories, members of our military and those who face food insecurity are already feeling the benefits of these grants.

Impact100 is also designed to vet those who are seeking a grant to ensure the money is used as outlined in the proposal. "Any organization has to be a 501c3 for at least two years upon appli-

Continued on next page

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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

IMPACT 100

continued from previous page

caution. So, there's some financial history that can be reviewed. We also need them to be registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture which provides the license to solicit contributions. They also have to be registered with the Florida Division of Corporations and file their reports regularly with SunBiz. We also ask that they have directors' and officers' insurance as well as general liability. We don't want to fund someone who could get sued and then lose it. If it's a religious organization, they can't require that recipients of their

services prescribe to their particular faith even if they identify to one in particular. Forcing that would disqualify them from applying for our grant. Same with mandatory political affiliation."

If you are an organization ready to make a massive headway for the people you serve, then note that the Letter of Intent deadline is May 15, 2024, and the application deadline is July 15, 2024. Interested nonprofits must submit the letter of intent and meet those qualifications before being given the grant application.

How does membership work for those who want to be part of Impact100 NWF? "Many of

our members will write a check and that is the extent of their involvement. That contribution, however, allows them a vote for the organization they want to offer a grant to. For those who want to get more involved, there are committees under each category and it's those people who will have a more intimate knowledge of each applicant as they get to know the founders and tour facilities.

"We want members to be able to participate in the nonprofits and activities where they want to see change. Many women join us because they want to make a difference in specific areas like education or environ-

mental preservation. The reason we are promoting membership is each person has one vote for every \$100,000 that's available. This means if we don't have the full amount in each category, members have to vote for the categories they feel most passionate about. With less money available, critical areas will go unserved. Last year we only had four grants to give, so members had to choose the four categories that they wanted to vote in. This is why five grants is so important. We want every category to have a chance to grow."

With all 500 membership slots filled, exponential good could be injected into Okaloosa

and Walton County. Join by April 30th and, together, positive change will be inevitable.

For additional information on applying for a grant or joining as a member, visit impactnwf.org.

Impact100 has become an international organization since its start in 2001. Its founder, Wendy Steele, launched the organization to activate women through large grants that would make a massive impact. In February of this year, Wendy was named Florida's honoree for USA TODAY's Woman of the Year.



Sunset Shrimp Boil

LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
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- April 6: Jody Lucas 6-9pm
- April 12: Alston Weeks 6-10pm
- April 13: Parker & Ivory Willingham 6-10pm
- April 16: The Traveling Painter 5:30pm
- April 19: The Aces Band 6-10pm
- April 20: Dive Cleanup Day and Rockers for Life & Hippie Party
- April 26: Delta Current Band 6-10pm
- April 27: Dismystic 6-10pm
- April 28: Shrimp Boil & Ronny Dean Garrett 4-8pm
- Every Wednesday: Sailboat Race 6pm
- Every Thursday: Paddle Board Race 6pm

Oyster Bar Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 3pm-10pm, Fri.-Sat. 11am to midnight, Sun. 9am to 9pm

Restaurant Hours: Mon.-Tues. Closed, Weds.-Sat. 11am to 9pm, Sun. 9am to 9pm, Sunday Brunch 9am to 1pm



Seascape Golf Course Awaits Big Changes



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

Words from a famous poem Sea-Fever by John Masefield echoed in my ear as I ap-

proached the Seascape Golf Course.

"I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky. And all I ask is a tall ship and the sky."

I have always been drawn to the beautiful seas that are our Emerald Coast. And when I hear the nearby surf as I leave my car to interview Ryan Hillstrom, I smile and know that this special golf course is changing soon. Changing so there is an even more exciting reason for golfing families to visit the Emerald Coast again. Visit not just for the ocean, but for the new golfing amenities that await.

Last year, the Seascape Golf Course at Seaside Resort, one



of the oldest courses along the Emerald Coast, was an 18-hole golf course. The Osborn Investment Group made a decision to change it to an 18-hole Par 3 course within the next two years. The back nine is still open for play today while the front nine is being turned into land to support condominiums, leaving the driving range for concerts and festivals. With several 18-hole courses nearby, this unique new Par 3 will be the only one in Walton County.

This venue will challenge golfers who prefer a short hole golf game or don't have time for a long day on an 18-hole course. I remember with fondness the

Executive Par 3 on Okaloosa Island, enjoyed before land was needed for the county convention center. What isn't going to change is the presence of Ryan Hillstrom, golf manager for Seascape Golf for more than seven years.

Ryan serves as golf manager and golf instructor. He bravely takes on the challenge of helping new or novice golfers eliminate bad habits and create a better swing and golf game. Of course, golfers of all ages and skills who need help with some aspect of the game, well, they can call Ryan too. On-course instruction with group and family lessons are available as well as post lesson video analysis. Ryan has been teaching golf for over 20 years. So, he developed a series of solid instructional tips.

Ryan always loved golf and knew he would spend his life playing or teaching golf. On the college team at Virginia Tech, Ryan played golf on several mini-tours after college. He told me Seascape Golf is busy

right now offering tee times for nine holes of the back nine. The price is a reasonable \$39 for play with a cart included. Morning tee times are popular during the summer.

This new creation of golf, entertainment and beautiful condos should add to the attraction that is a mecca for Destin and our surrounding area. I'm sure tourists will be echoing these words,

"I must go down to that sea again, the Seaside Golf and Resort. And all I ask is the perfect swing to help me hit this drive."

I must go down to that sea again, the Seaside Golf and Resort. And all I ask is the perfect putt to help me lower my score."

Of course, the lovely beach is calling with outlet malls nearby, but I must go down to that golf course again near azure seas and sky."

I congratulate the developers and the golf staff as they begin this new chapter that will change and enhance golf for our area.



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Lionfish Festival: A Dive into Conservation Efforts



BY CALI HLAVAC,
TO DO IN DESTIN

The Emerald Coast is not just a picturesque backdrop for tourists; it is also a battleground against an invasive species - the lionfish. On May 18-19, 2024, the Lionfish Festival returns to Fort Walton Beach, rallying the community in an ongoing effort to combat this threat to the local marine ecosystem.

First, what is a lionfish? Lionfish, with their striking red and white stripes, are not native to the waters of northwest Florida. Originating from the Indo-Pacific region, they were introduced to the Atlantic Ocean and have since become a formidable invasive species. Their rapid reproduction rate and lack of natural predators have led to a surge in population, wreaking havoc on native fish populations and coral reefs.

The Lionfish Festival is more than just a celebration; it's a call to action. It aims to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of lionfish on the marine environment and promote sustainable solutions. One such solution is lionfish removal through fishing derbies and dives, which are central to the festival's activities.

In 2023, 144 divers in Destin and Fort Walton Beach captured over 24,000 lionfish during the Emerald Coast Open tournament, demonstrating the community's commitment to conservation efforts. This year's pre-tournament is already underway lasting through May 16, and sets the stage for two days of conservation-focused activities—the main tournament May 17-18. Divers have the opportunity to compete for prize money totaling nearly \$100,000 in categories like most lionfish caught and largest and smallest lionfish.



Participants in the Lionfish Festival can expect a diverse range of events, including lionfish hunting tournaments, educational seminars, cooking demonstrations featuring lionfish cuisine, and live music. Local marine biologists and conservationists will lead discussions on the ecological im-

part of lionfish and strategies for their management. Emerald Coast Open Restaurant Week offers the public unique lionfish dishes prepared by chefs at local restaurants. Each evening, a local restaurant serves a unique lionfish dish on their menu. The fish caught pre-tournament are provided to the participating

restaurants to serve. Each dish is also judged and the winning chef crowned at the end of the week.

Moreover, the festival provides an opportunity for the community to come together and support local businesses involved in sustainable fishing practices. By promoting the consumption of lionfish as a delicacy, the festival encourages a market-driven approach to control their population while providing economic opportunities for fishermen.

As visitors immerse themselves in the festivities, they

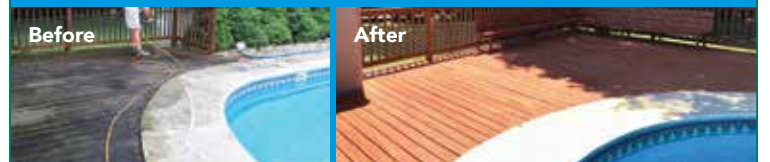
also contribute to a larger conservation effort. Proceeds from the festival support ongoing research and conservation initiatives aimed at mitigating the impact of lionfish on the delicate balance of marine ecosystems.

The Lionfish Festival is more than just an event; it's a testament to the power of community-driven conservation. By joining forces to combat the invasive lionfish, residents and visitors alike are making a tangible difference in preserving the natural beauty of the Emerald Coast for generations to come.

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Another Year of Favor: Celebrating the 67th Annual Blessing of the Fleet

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

We all have reasons why we live here. But, I believe, many are drawn here, because our city is so blessed...After all, Destin IS known as the “World’s Luckiest Fishing Village.”

Not only a beach destination, our town was founded on fishing! But despite the legendary stories of big catches and heroic fishing, there are also horrendous ones where hope was dim and times were tough. And through it all, we prevail and are still the World’s Luckiest Fishing Village, with the largest fishing fleet in North America.

As I’ve said before, could it be that because we bless our city, its citizens, our Harbor, businesses, residents, youth and many more each year, that it results in favor for our little paradise? You can ask captains in the fishing fleet and many will tell you their success rides on prayer. Fisherman, locals and area professionals alike will tell you they believe their success rides on blessings.

That brings us to Destin’s Week of Blessings held each year and is what makes continuing the yearly “blessing of the fleet” tradition so important. Despite having grown and prospered from a fleet of four to five boats more

than half a century ago into more than 125 charter-fishing boats today, this one event begun by Destin’s Immanuel Anglican Church will always make it feel like Old Destin, and our lucky fishing village it is best known for.

To further expand the “blessings,” over twenty years ago, several pastors got together to form the ‘Church of Destin’ as a symbol of unity, crossing denominational barriers and also igniting Destin’s Week of Blessings. As the Blessing of the Fleet grew, so did the hundreds of people, families and businesses in the area who also wanted to be blessed. And before you knew it, the vision expanded into a full “Week of Blessings” with faith-focused family-oriented activities to bless and support the Destin community. That’s how the Blessing of the Marketplace was born, enabling the “blessing” to impact further to other locals, professionals and visitors, too.

Hundreds of business owners, first responders, industry leaders and representatives gather during the Blessing of the Marketplace at Destin United Methodist Church. Local pastors from various churches representing the collective



“Church of Destin” pray over professionals in our community.

Destin’s 67th Annual Blessing of the Fleet will be held on Ascension Day, Thursday, May 9th, at the docks behind Brotula’s Seafood House and Steamer Restaurant on the Destin Harbor. The event begins at 4 p.m. with a Captains’ Worship and Prayer Service. The public is encouraged to attend. Following the service, around 5:15 p.m., local clergy will process to the dock to begin blessing those ves-

sels which have pre-registered followed by Brotula’s Fish Feast for all. (Donations requested.) All commercial fishing, safety and recreational vessels that make their living on the sea are invited to participate. Several local area pastors will gather at the dock and the bless the boats one by one as they proceed in a line down the harbor—praying for safe passage and bountiful catches for the 2024 season.

In 2023, more than 150 fishing boats and vessels were blessed! So, a lot has changed since Destin was a quaint fishing village. And, that’s what makes continuing this unique tradition so special. It serves to remind us of the significant role

that fishermen have played and continue to play in our beloved Destin community. As always, Thursday’s Blessing of the Fleet is hosted by Immanuel Anglican Church. Immanuel is excited to team with other area churches who share the vision of preserving Destin’s character as a faith-and-family-oriented community.

To Pre-Register Your Vessel: If you and your vessel make your living on the sea and would like to receive a blessing, please register your watercraft by emailing immanuel@iacdestin.org, or by calling the church at 850-837-6324 with your vessel’s name, captain’s name, mailing address, email address and phone number.

For more information on the Blessing of the Fleet, visit iacdestin.org/special-events/blessing-of-the-fleet, contact Immanuel Anglican Church at immanuel@iacdestin.org or 850-837-6324. Immanuel Anglican Church is located at 250 Indian Bayou Trail in Destin, just north of the Nancy Weidenhamer Dog Park in Destin.

Never doubt that your prayers on behalf of our coveted city are to no avail. We have and continue to witness the blessing of favor in our small paradise. Could it be that Destin has been dubbed the “World’s Luckiest Fishing Village” because, simply, it is SO “blessed?”

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6 Ways to Improve Your Heart Health

MARIA LAHTI, M.D., AND LAUREN STIPP, M.D., SACRED HEART EMERALD COAST

Every year, we set great resolutions for our health. Unfortunately, we usually forget them quickly. This year, don't miss the opportunity to reprioritize your heart health. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women according to the CDC, but many cardiac events are preventable. There are no quick fixes, but there are some easy steps you can take to make a difference.

Follow these tips to take control of your heart health in 2024.

Tip 1: See Your Doctor for Annual Screening

Your risk of developing heart disease increases as you age. According to research published by the Journal of the American Heart Association, people over age 40 have a 1-in-4 lifetime risk of developing AFib, or atrial fibrillation, a common heart rhythm condition. Scheduling regular visits with your primary care doctor and any specialists you see can help catch problems sooner rather than later, which can be lifesaving in some cases.

Especially if you experience high blood pressure or high cholesterol, make doctor's visits

a priority to keep a close eye on your heart health. At Ascension St. Vincent's, our teams of primary care doctors and cardiologists, including those at our hospital in St. Johns County, can provide you with the most effective screening methods to check for heart disease and other conditions.

Tip 2: Monitor Your Heart Health

Many of our patients use personal technology, like portable medical-grade EKG devices, to help monitor their hearts from home. These devices can help doctors detect heart rhythm irregularities sooner, which can sometimes help make a diagnosis or even prevent a stroke. But not all technology is created equal. For example, a less complex heart rate monitor and one that is built to be an EKG-grade device may show differing results.

Tip 3: Avoid Excessive Stress

We all experience stress, but excessive and prolonged stress can contribute to heart issues like blood vessel constriction and high blood pressure, elevating the risk of a heart attack and stroke. Regular exercise is a key stress reducer. Whether



it's a brisk walk, yoga, or a fitness class, physical activity benefits both the heart and mental health.

Tip 4: Focus on Moderation

Alcohol is often linked to heart problems, notably increasing the risk of AFib. An observational study in the European Heart Journal found that even one daily glass of wine or beer led to a 16 percent higher risk

of developing AFib (compared to not drinking). AFib, in turn, increases the risk of stroke, heart failure, and cardiac arrest. While enjoying a glass of wine is fine, moderation is key. Exceeding two drinks in a day is never heart-healthy.

Tip 5: Stick to Healthy Eating Habits

Try to limit salty foods, such as canned or processed foods. Also limit high-fat foods, such

as red meat, cheese, and baked goods. When it comes to a heart-healthy diet, the important thing is to maintain balance. A Mediterranean-style diet high in vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and whole grains has been shown to promote weight loss and reduce heart disease risk.

Tip 6: Know the Signs of Stroke and Don't Delay Treatment

Recognizing the warning signs of stroke can protect both yourself and your loved ones. The important acronym to remember for identifying a stroke is B.E. F.A.S.T. That stands for balance, eyes/vision loss, face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty, and time to call 911. It's common to mistake or minimize the signs of stroke, but don't delay treatment. Call 911.

Dr. Maria Lathi is a cardiologist at Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. Dr. Lauren Stipp is a cardiologist specializing in cardiac imaging at Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. For more information, visit Healthcare.ascension.org

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By KELLY STALNAKER,
J&B MEDICAL

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human on the other end of the line. Every Monday through Friday from 9-5, you'll be greet-

ed in the store or on the phone by Amber, Kim, Jimmy, Brandon, Kenn or Kelly.

Our team of professionals is incredibly knowledgeable about CPAP usage, therapy and products; as well as insurance and provider issues. Proudly serving Niceville for the last 22 years, we



know the area well regarding all of the surrounding doctors and medical resources. The owners and most of the staff have lived in Niceville for most of their lives. You have probably seen us around town and might have even gone to school with some of us! And thanks to our valued customers and patients, we are able to give back to the community and support local youth sports, school events and charitable organizations.

We are authorized providers for Medicare and Tricare, and strive to be a reliable CPAP provider for our local communi-

ty. We offer dozens of styles of masks with hundreds of size/option combinations. We also carry CPAP supplies and accessories from chin straps, to mats, to cleaners and so much more! And we stock everything on site! If you're a new Medicare or Tricare CPAP patient, or you're unhappy with your current supplier, stop by to say hello and get to know more about J&B Medical. Find out why so many of your neighbors prefer us over the nationwide providers. We think you'll find that we'll be a good fit for you, too!



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Back to Basics



BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

What sparked this month's topic? I ran a report for our grocery expenditures for February; what a shock!

As we maneuver through the times we're in, creating new habits around how we shop and consume can improve our health and wallets. Below are nine health tips with thoughts to help reduce spending at checkout:

- Focus on eating more fruits and veggies. A salad with every meal will usually create more leftovers which creates another meal at no added cost. Also, buying fresh vegetables offers multiple lunches and side dishes.

Non-processed foods will always offer health benefits. Salads don't always have to be served with lettuce. Consider brown rice, quinoa or gluten free noodles. Change up the veggies for variety. Serve the salad warm vs. cold.

- Who doesn't love a delicious plate of spaghetti or lasagna? Dishes like this are filling and can be stretched. A big pot of sauce can give you several dishes: spaghetti, lasagna, or dinner-in-a-dish (seashell noodles, veggies, sauce and cheese). Be sure to par-boil (not quite done) noodles. Doing this slows down how quickly the sugar in the noodles is absorbed.

- Scratch baking can also save money. Replace white sugar with Turbinado (cane sugar), honey, date sugar or pure maple syrup. Check the prices on these. Raw honey and pure maple syrup can be pricey, but they also require a much smaller amount due to their sweetness which also makes it last longer. On the health side, the body recognizes



these natural sweeteners as real food which allows it to be broken down easier.

- Cut your white flour in half with almond flour, oat flour (You can make this by grinding whole rolled oats.) or another less processed flour. This cuts down on the sugar impact on the body.

- If you're a yogurt person, switch up to plain low-fat Greek or regular yogurt. It should have only two-three ingredients. Add your own fruit (frozen fruit works well) and add nuts, seeds, and a touch of honey or maple syrup. This is cost effective and makes a great breakfast or lunch.

- Supplement with a

high-quality vitamin. The company should be able to guarantee that the ingredients on the label are in each and every tablet. Consumer Lab tested 74 products and found defects in 40% of them. Taking control of our health includes becoming more informed with what we are putting in our bodies.

- Soup! I love soup. It's filled with all kinds of good stuff, from chili to veggie to chicken tortilla soup. I've found with soup that by cutting the chicken up in smaller bites I can stretch my chicken breasts for more meals. And, soup usually always allows for left overs. Tacos are another way to stretch out ingredients.

- Make your own beans. You can make a big pot and freeze them. Soak them over night. Rinse and fill the pot with fresh water and cook until done. An Insta-Pot cooks them quickly. You can also crockpot them on high for a few hours. This is a great savings and offers us the benefit of less salt in our diet.

- Replace cereal with oat-

meal. Soak it in the bowl overnight in milk or water. Serve hot or cold. add nuts, seeds, fruit, nut butters, natural sweeteners, etc. You can also add a few chocolate chips (dark chocolate) for a little treat. The benefits of this one is huge. You're cutting back on starches and a high amount of sugar.

- Lastly, consider a garden. If you're like us, growing a garden has it challenges. To make this less overwhelming, grab some neighbors and friends. One can grow tomatoes, another peppers, another squash, another lettuce and so on. Then you can share with each other. You can use containers, growing bags, etc. If you have a green thumb the ground works too :-). You can even grow flowers for sharing.

Have an amazing spring. I hope the above thoughts spark you to think outside the box. Here's to Health!

HealthyDay HealthyLife succeed. hdlh@gmail.com

ECCAC Opens CARES Center in Fort Walton Beach

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) has announced a new pro-

gram, CARES—Community Awareness, Advocacy, Resources, Education and Support. It is

a community-based initiative to reach a wider demographic of children who are subject to ne-

glect and lack of resources.

Friday, April 19, at 9:30 a.m. will mark the official opening of ECCAC's CARE Center and the public is invited! Located in Ft. Walton Beach at the Emily Odom Institute, 320 Racetrack Road, the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce will do a ribbon cutting, and a Proclamation reading will be given by Ft. Walton Beach Mayor Dick Rynearson.


CARES is headed up by Program Manager, Debra Riley-Broadnax, along with ECCAC staff. For years now, Riley-Broadnax has worked diligently in the local community advocating for families with educational, social, economic,

health and welfare, and affordable housing issues. She is also a member of the National Association of Social Workers, and was one of the founding members of the Emerald Coast Local Black Social Workers Chapter.

This family-centric initiative provides a myriad of preventive-based services to include resources to support children remaining in safe homes, parenting and child development education and a number of other direct support services.

In this newly established position, the highly experienced Riley-Broadnax will be responsible for managing and sustain-

Continued on next page




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Dealing With Difficult People



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

When did you last interact with a difficult person? Maybe the difficult person has anger problems, behaves with superiority, doesn't treat others the way they expect to be treated or is generally unkind, mean or rude. Sometimes you might label people as difficult when they have different values, opinions, religious views, political leanings or personalities than you. When are differences just different rather than difficult? When do you invest energy in making space for different ways of moving through the world vs. investing energy in addressing boundary crossings by people who seem to disrespect you or others?

While easy to overlook, sometimes you might be the difficult person. Self-awareness is a skill developed through uncomfortable practice. Noticing when you may tend towards being judgmental, short-fused, selfish or unkind can go a long way in helping you sort interactions with others. Noticing your capability of being difficult and your need for grace when you aren't your best self can inspire increased humility when ad-

ressing difficulty in others.

A common way to deal with difficult people is to become difficult yourself. When someone is rude, you may feel the invitation to match the rudeness. When someone is mean, you may spend time brainstorming ways to inflict vengeance. While these approaches can bring short term satisfaction and a false sense of justice, you end up giving up healthy emotional control and compromising your character. Over time, matching others' difficult behavior leads to bitterness, resentment, drama, shame and poor character habits. So, how do you address difficult behavior in healthy ways?

7 Ways to Navigate Interactions with Difficult People

1. Evaluate. Determine what is happening in a situation. What is bothering you and why? What is tough or feels like a boundary crossing?

2. Sort past emotion from present. Notice if something about this situation is bringing up feelings from past events/relationships that may be intensifying your emotions in the present. If so, take time to process past feelings separately to give you an accurate perspective in the current situation.

3. Sort differences from difficulty. Ask yourself if the other person is showing poor character vs. has different opinions, values, perspective than you. Make space for difference. Address poor character.



4. Set boundaries. Use kind, direct words and tone to clearly state how the other party is crossing a boundary, how it impacts the relationship, what you will do differently and what you would like for them to do differently. "When you belittle me in front of others, I feel disrespected and emotionally unsafe in our relationship. I won't participate in conversations where I am belittled and disrespected. When talking to me, please use respect." If the other party respects your boundary and makes a change, that is an indicator of movement toward health. If the other party continues to cross boundaries or responds poorly to your boundary setting, that is information you need to understand the low value the other party places on the relationship.

5. Speak up for those whose voices are hard to hear. Sometimes difficult people cross boundaries resulting in negativity, abuse, or injustice for those who are vulnerable. Try using your voice and boundary setting for the sake of others.

6. Distance. Once a person has established an ongoing pat-

tern of crossing boundaries and poor character they are unwilling to address, it's appropriate to create various forms of distance including limiting conversational topics, time, space, emotional energy/investment, and financial involvement. You have power to give your energy and resources

to life-giving relationships and to withhold energy from life-draining relationships.

7. Disengage. Try practicing forgiveness toward difficult people for the sake of your own peace and character. Release

your right to vengeance and let the relationship go. You have the power to discern when relationships need to end. Disengaging is not defeat. In fact, you win by sustaining good character and recapturing energy to invest in pursuits that bring positive meaning to your life and those around you.

Navigating relationships with difficult people is challenging but inevitable. Practicing boundaries will grow your confidence. As you seek support along your journey, connect with us at Journeybravely.com for counseling and coaching.



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ECCAC OPENS

continued from previous page

ing the CARES Program which is state funded and is being established because of the need for elevating ECCAC's community abuse prevention education in Okaloosa and Walton Counties. With 95% of child abuse preventable through education, ECCAC's successful Prevention and Safety Matters programs, already in the schools, will also be overseen by the CARES Program Manager. Last year, ECCAC's Child and Teen Safety Matters programs in Okaloosa and Walton County schools educated 14,878 students in the classrooms.



CARES aims to be the bridge to keeping children in safe and supported homes and out of the judicial child welfare

system with preventative methods to try and end child abuse. It will provide families with a myriad of preventive-based services, including resources to support children remaining in safe homes, parenting and child development education, job and household budgeting support, and a number of other direct services.

For further information about the CARES Program, call 850-610-7404, or email debra@eccac.org. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.



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- Do you dislike your smile in photographs?
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- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
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 Education

First High School Health Academy on HCA Healthcare Campus Now Open in Fort Walton Beach

HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital and the Okaloosa County School District (OCSD) have partnered to open the Health Academy of Northwest Florida on the hospital's campus. The Health Academy of Northwest Florida is the first high school health academy to be housed on an HCA Healthcare hospital campus anywhere in the country. A joint partnership between HCA Florida Fort-Walton Destin Hospital and OCSD, the Health Academy of Northwest Florida provides high school students interested in healthcare careers the opportunity to earn industry certifications, providing them with the skills they need to directly enter the workforce or continue their post-graduate studies.

"Our team is honored and excited to have the Health Academy of Northwest Florida open and teaching the next generation of healthcare providers," said Zach McCluskey, CEO of HCA Florida Fort Walton-Des-

tin Hospital. "The health and wellbeing of our community is our top priority, and this partnership allows us to address growing healthcare needs while helping students connect with a rewarding career path."

Students enrolled in the two-year practical nursing program learn the foundational principles of basic nursing and medical skills needed to provide care to patients.

"We extend our sincere gratitude to HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital for their continuous support in bringing the Health Academy of Northwest Florida to fruition," said Marcus Chambers, Superintendent of the Okaloosa County School District. This facility will provide our students with practical nursing training, enabling them to earn industry-recognized certifications and creating a direct path from high school to employment in leading local hospitals or other medical facilities.

Students at Choctawhatchee



High School, Fort Walton Beach High School and Niceville High School are eligible to participate in the practical nursing program through the Career and Technical Education Department of OCSD. Students receive hands-on clinical training at HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital during their senior year. Upon completion of the two-year program, students will be eligible to earn a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), a Certified Patient Care Technician (CPCT), and/or Electrocardiogram Technician (EKG) certification. Juniors who complete the program will have the opportunity for dual enrollment in the LPN program at Okaloosa Technical College



during their senior year, and get a head start on earning their required course hours toward an LPN license.

"We are grateful for this pioneering collaboration, alongside the invaluable support and funding provided by Triumph Gulf Coast for this program," said April Branscome, OCSD Career and Technical Education Program Director. "This marks a historic milestone as the first initiative of its kind nationwide, ushering in a transformative era in healthcare education. Together, we embark on this journey of innovation, poised to redefine the future of healthcare

education."

As part of the partnership, HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital provided a 6,375-square-foot-space to OCSD for the Health Academy of Northwest Florida, which includes two classrooms and two practical labs. Students who successfully complete the practical nursing program will have job placement opportunities throughout HCA Florida Healthcare. In addition, if employed by an HCA Florida Healthcare facility, tuition reimbursement will be available for students wishing to continue their education.

OCHS Senior? Apply for an \$8,000 Scholarship

Superintendent Marcus Chambers is offering two \$8,000 Florida Prepaid College Scholarships to a current Okaloosa

County School District Student!
Who qualifies?
• Student must be a Senior.
• Student must attend a pub-

lic high school in the Okaloosa County School District.
• Student is going to pursue a career in education.

• Student must meet the basic requirements to hold a Florida Prepaid College Plan.

Application Deadline:

Applications will be available beginning Friday, March 15, 2024, and are due no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday, April 21, 2024.

How to Apply:

• Please only submit one application. You will need the following items to submit your application:

• Fill out the digital application in its entirety.

• Submit a current transcript (You will upload a digital copy on the application).

• Submit SAT/ACT/PSAT Scores (You will need to provide a digital copy of test score documentation on the application).

• Submit a completed District form MIS 4217 with Community Service Hours (You will need to provide a digital copy on the application).

• Submit a video essay in .MP4, .M4V, .MOV, or .WMV file format. (You will upload this

on the application.) The video can be no longer than two minutes (02:00) and should explain why you have chosen to pursue a career in education.

Please have these items collected and accessible while completing the application. You will be unable to save and come back to your application. It will need to be completed and submitted in the same session. All required documentation and application elements (video essay) must be submitted as outlined in the instructions provided by the deadline or the application will be disqualified.

The Florida Prepaid Superintendent Scholarship Recipient will be notified Monday, April 29, 2024.

Visit www.okaloosaschools.com or the link <https://forms.gle/dKTVtXS6M1dRY88M6> to fill out the application.

For questions, contact Hilary DeMers: hilary.demers@okaloosaschools.com.

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Covering Your Assets



By JULIE A. MARTIN

Insurance is everywhere, and there are so many different kinds, it gets confusing. What kind of coverage are you supposed to have to cover your homes, cars, boats and other fun things that you and your family use? Is it Property Insurance or Casualty Insurance?

The answer is both. **Property Insurance** covers your homes, your condos, your furniture, electronics and all the things you use in your home that is not permanently attached to your home. **Casualty Insur-**

ance usually refers to the items that move, such as your cars, motorcycles, boats and jet skis.

Both Property insurance and Casualty insurance include coverage for your covered items as well as liability. The liability coverage levels may go as high as 500K on a single policy. When you feel it isn't enough to protect you and your family, there is the Umbrella policy.

Umbrella policies include coverage for liability losses over and above what your primary underlying policies would pay. For instance, if you are playing golf and you accidentally hit someone in the head with a golf ball, that person can sue you if they are hurt, even if you yelled "Fore." The incident would need to be sudden and accidental in nature, as no intentional acts are covered.

The umbrella policy covers in levels from \$1M to 5M, with requirements to maintain a minimum level of liability on the underlying policies for auto, boat, etc. of 250/500 Bodily Injury Liability and 100K Property Damage Liability. The minimum underlying liability requirement for home insurance



or any property policies the umbrella covers would be 300K.

It is a common misconception that if someone has an umbrella policy, that its primary function is to pay out what is demanded. That is not how this works. The umbrella policy acts to defend its policyholder and attempt to keep the client from financial ruin. Many standard carriers offer umbrella coverage, and it is even possible to bundle

your auto insurance with your umbrella in many cases for an extra multi-policy discount.

If you have more than one home, two cars and even one toy, whether it's a motorcycle, boat or wave runner, it would be a good idea for you to have an umbrella to cover excess liability over all of your assets. Speaking with an independent agent to find out what kind of coverage

is right for you will give you the peace of mind in knowing that there are no coverage gaps. And you can live your life not worrying about your insurance!

Covering your assets is only a phone call away. For more, contact me, Client Advocate at Abora Insurance Group, at 1-800-494-1333, Julie@GetAbora.com or visit www.GetAbora.com.

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 Musing


BY SEAN DIETRICH

A small town. The kind of American hamlet that causes you to start looking around for the Norman Rockwell signature. Hanging begonias. Storefronts with colorful awnings. A cute downtown.

There was a loud party happening on Main Street.

I followed the sound of distant music and many voices. I suddenly realized I was still wearing my pajamas. I shuffled into town barefoot, with sleep crusted in my eyes.

The sun was shining. Birds were cackling. People were everywhere. It was a veritable town-wide hoedown.

I saw women positioning casseroles on card tables. I saw children playing tag. Old men in aprons were deep frying hunks of fish.

There was music playing at the hardware store. Good music. The kind with twin fiddles. People were dancing before a plywood stage. Each front porch was crowded with people drinking lemonade and sugary tea.

Everyone was there, the whole gang. I saw them all. All my loved ones who died and left me behind. All my friends who met untimely ends. All my relatives who were called home too early. All my kin.

They were all right here, holding plates of hot food, mingling with one another. Everybody was smiling, throwing their heads back, laughing until they couldn't breathe.

I saw grandparents, deceased uncles, departed aunts, and cousins who died before they were old enough to know what life was about.

I saw multitudes of unfamiliar children, dancing while the musicians played "Turkey in the Straw." I asked an old woman nearby who all these children were.

"Those are the babies who died in the womb," the woman said. "Aren't they precious?"

We were interrupted when

Sean of the South: On That Day



a large pack of dogs came running through the town, careening up Main Street. They came stampeding like a herd of bison. Among them, I saw six of my own dogs.

I saw Lady, the cocker spaniel who died in my arms when I was a teenager. I saw Joe, who was hit by an SUV in a hit and run. I saw Boone, the collie-mix who died in a veterinary office while gazing into my eyes. I saw Ellie Mae, the bloodhound I'll never get over.

In a nearby park, I watched old friends play baseball. Mister Reginald was pitching—the retired Methodist minister who once lived on my street.

I saw my grandmother, standing at home plate, holding a hickory bat in her hands. Lord have mercy. She was a teenager, long and beautiful, with raven

hair and Hershey's Kiss eyes.

After the ball game, I was hungry. So I found a paper plate and stood in line at one of the food tables. A guy in line said, "Sean! Don't you remember me?"

I stared at him, but didn't recognize his face.

"It's me!" he finally said. "James!"

"JAMES!" I screamed. James and I were friends as kids. He died driving home from his very first job. He wrecked his car on the interstate. I sat on the front row at his funeral and wept alongside his sisters.

Mid-hug, I saw someone else familiar. She was standing behind a food table, serving people. I knew those two fiery eyes, flecked with tinges of playfulness. It was my mother-in-law.

She was behind a crockpot,

wielding a long spoon, wearing an apron that said "KISS ME, I'M METHODIST."

When she recognized me, she shouted my name and came running around the table to hug me. It was a colossal embrace that made my ribs squeak.

"You have no idea how much we all miss you back home," I told her.

Next, I saw Aunt Judith, Uncle Tommy Lee, the Williams boy, my old Little League coach, Cousin Elroy, Cousin Rose, Cousin Ray, and dear Mrs. Betty Lamb, who taught me in elementary school. I saw hundreds more familiar faces. Maybe thousands.

Then an old woman grabbed my arm and said, "There's one more person you need to meet, sweetie."

She led me to the edge of town, to a meandering river. There, on a shallow wooden bridge sat a young man, feet dangling over the edge, trousers rolled up to his knees. He was holding a long fishing rod like a grown-up version of Huck Finn.

He saw me.

He stood.

My God, he was so young. He was so very young and so very lean. He had a mess of red hair atop his head, and his patient pending matinee smile was unchanged. He was wearing the same shirt he died in.

We embraced and I heard myself say his name. A word I've been waiting to use for a long time.

"Daddy."

I could smell his deodorant, a scent I haven't known in years. I could feel his lean trunk beneath my arms, and his beating heart only inches from my own.

"What is this wonderful place?" I asked my father.

"Does it matter?" he said

"Yes, it matters. Because I don't ever want to leave."

He smiled. "Neither do any of us."

Then I woke up.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, novelist and podcast host known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Life Media publications, Newsweek, Reader's Digest, Southern Living, Garden and Gun and in newspapers from Savannah to San Diego.

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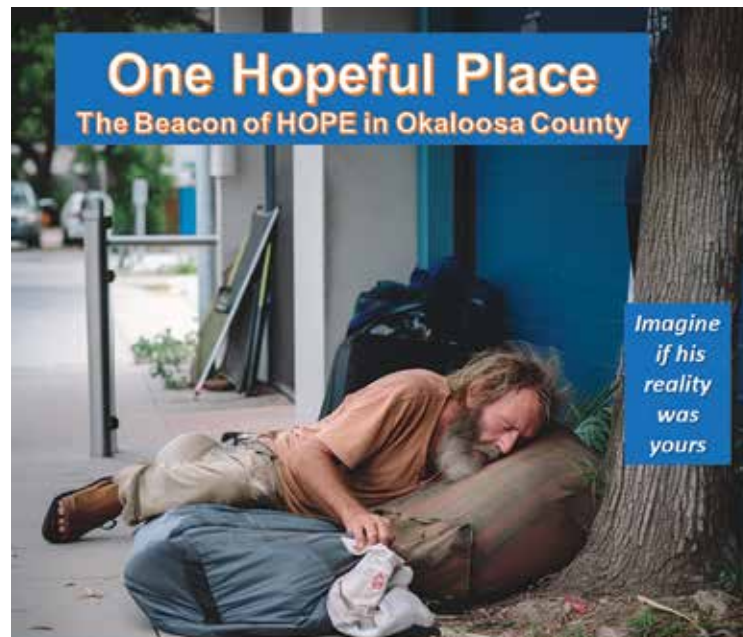
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A Pastor's Ponderings: Remembering a Time When Your Word Was Your Bond

BY DOUG STAUFFER, PASTOR FAITH INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH

In a world where dependability seems to be waning, the stories of biblical figures such as Abraham, Moses, Peter and Mary Magdalene stand out as examples of biblical faithfulness. Their lives offer profound lessons on its importance. These accounts illuminate the past and offer timeless wisdom for life today.

Abraham exemplifies faithfulness by obeying God's call to leave his homeland without knowing his destination. His journey from Ur of the Chaldees symbolizes a leap of faith grounded in trust and commitment to God's promise. This act of faithfulness is not just about Abraham's departure, but his steadfast belief in God's promise to make of him a great nation. His story teaches us that faithfulness involves trust AND ACTION, even when the path ahead is completely unknown.

Moses, another model of faithfulness, led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage and received the Ten Commandments, foundational to the Judeo-Christian faith. Despite significant challenges and setbacks, Moses' perseverance teaches us the importance of steadfastness in pursuing a greater purpose, even when the journey is fraught with extreme difficulties. His persistence in leading his people, despite their disobedience, demonstrates the power of enduring faith in leadership.

One of the 12 apostles, Peter, exhibits a different dimension of faithfulness. Despite his initial denial of Jesus, repentance and subsequent role as an early Church leader, his life highlights the themes of forgiveness and redemption. Peter's journey

from denial to devotion underscores that faithfulness can involve growth, learning from past failures and embracing a blessed transformation. This example reminds us that faithfulness is not about perfection, but learning from past failures and moving forward with renewed commitment.

Mary Magdalene's unwavering loyalty to Jesus, especially during the crucifixion and as the first witness to His resurrection, exemplifies faithfulness in the face of utter despair. Her story is a testament to the power of steadfast love and loyalty, even when days for her were darkest. It reminds us that true faithfulness often shines brightest against trials and tribulations.

At the core of these narratives is a profound understanding of

evaluate our reliability and integrity in every aspect of life.

The biblical narratives of faithfulness teach us valuable lessons about trust, perseverance, redemption and loyalty. As we navigate life's complexities, these

stories should inspire us to cultivate a deeper sense of faithfulness in our relationships, pursuits, and spiritual journey. Doing so enriches our lives and all those within our sphere of influence.

Dr. Doug Stauffer is pastor of Faith Independent Baptist Church. He was saved July 6, 1980, in Niceville, while stationed at the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base and has now been in the ministry for over 35 years.



faithfulness, not just as a religious virtue, but as a guiding principle throughout life. The Proverb, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint," vividly illustrates the pain and dysfunction unfaithfulness brings, further emphasizing the value of being dependable and true to one's word and commitments. Some of us are old enough to remember the meaning of a "Gentleman's Agreement" and "when a handshake sealed the deal." A man's word was his bond, but, today, talk seems cheap, and bonds are easily broken when a more lucrative deal passes by.

In an era where commitments can be fleeting and reliability is often in short supply, these stories beckon us to consider the depth of OUR faithfulness. The biblical emphasis on faithfulness as a virtue essential for a fulfilling and righteous life encourages us to

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Arts & Music

It's Time for Auditions at Northwest Florida Ballet

The Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) Académie is now taking audition appointment reservations for the 2024-2025 academic year. All auditions will take place at the NFB Studios, the Sybil Leber Center for Dance Education, located at 310 Perry Avenue SE in Fort Walton Beach. Incoming third-grade students will audition on April 20 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and April 21 from 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Incoming fourth-grade students will audition on April 20 from 2:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

Appointment reservations are required for all auditions and must be made online at <http://www.nfballet.org/auditions> by Noon on April 18. Upon registration, incoming third-grade applicants will be assigned a 20-minute time slot, and incoming fourth-grade applicants will be assigned a 30-minute time slot. Parents will be allowed to wait in the lobby, where representatives of the NFB will be available to discuss this unique program. Results and orienta-



CEO Todd Eric Allen on April 17 at 6 p.m. to learn more about this nationally recognized program. To RSVP for one of the informational tours, please email jelpedes@nfballet.org with the preferred date. For all requirements, the audition reservation form and additional details, please visit www.NFBallet.org/Auditions or call Joy Elpedes at (850) 664-7787. Spanish translations of

tion details will be mailed after the completion of all auditions.

Prospective Académie students and their parents can attend a tour event at the NFB studios on April 16 or 18 from 10:15-11:15 a.m. to observe a typical school day. An evening Q&A session is also available with NFB Artistic Director/

all related materials are also available online.

Celebrating more than 20 years of excellence, the NFB Académie is a free, integrated arts and academic program for third through eighth-grade boys and girls who demonstrate the potential to excel in dance.

Stage Crafters Community Theatre Announces Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap"!

Synopsis: For almost 70 years, Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap" has kept millions of people from every corner of the globe on the edge of their seats. As news spreads of a murder in London, a group of seven strangers find themselves snowed in at a remote countryside guesthouse. When a police sergeant arrives, the guests discover – to their horror – that a killer is in their midst! One by one, the suspicious characters reveal their sordid pasts.



Auditions:

Stage Crafters Rehearsal Hall, 40 Robinwood Dr. SW, Fort Walton Beach

April 1st & 2nd, 2024

- Script perusal at 6 p.m.
- Auditions begin at 6:30 p.m.

For questions or other information, you may contact the director, Gail Hurley, at ghurley2175@gmail.com or visit our website at: <https://www.stagecraftersfwb.com/join-the-cast>

Performances:

June 7, 8, 9 & 14, 15, 16
Fridays & Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday matinees at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 and available at the door before the show or online at: <https://www.stagecraftersfwb.com/buy-tickets>



*A+ School Since Inception
In Partnership with the Okaloosa County School District*

2024-2025 Academic Year Auditions

Incoming 3rd Grade Student Auditions:

April 20 - 10am to 2pm

April 21 - 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Incoming 4th Grade Student Auditions:

April 20 - 2:30 pm to 4:00pm

NFBallet.org/Auditions
All auditions are by appointment only.

ECTC Summer Camp Registration is Open

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is offering many summer camp options for children this summer. Dance, singing, acting or being behind the scenes in one (or more) of these fantastic summer camps. Many are being held at ECTC in Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach, but there are a few options in Seaside, Panama City and DeFuniak Springs. Payment plans are always available. More information on the camps and registration is available at emeraldcoasttheatre.org/summer-camps.

The Mini Player Camps (Ages 5 - 7, rising Kindergarteners) are designed specifically for the youngest performers. These one-week camps are held Monday-Friday (with the exception of the Disney Dreams Camp which is Tuesday-Friday) from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. with a final performance on the last day of camp. Tuition is \$250. Mini Player Camps are held at ECTC in Grand boulevard.

May 28 - May 31 - Disney Dreams
June 3-7 - Treasure Island

June 10-14 - Trolls
June 17-21 - Aladdin's Lamp

June 24 - 28 - Cinderella's Slipper

There are four Summer Camps at ECTC in Grand Boulevard for 2nd - 5th graders. Tuition varies depending on camp. Payment plans are always available.

Camp Showtime: Disney Dreams

Let the rhythm get you! Come act, sing, and dance your heart out to popular Broadway Disney show tunes as we learn simple choreography to some of the most popular musical numbers ever recorded. Parents, this is the perfect camp for your first time performer!

Tuition \$325
MAY 28-31 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Treasure Island - Non Musical

This is a great opportunity for young performers to learn



stage directions, the language of the theatre, and how to work together to bring a story to life! There will be treasure maps, gold, plunder, and plenty of mischief! Jim, Long John Silver, and a colorful cast of pirates set sail this summer! Will you join their crew?!

Monday-Friday with final performance on the last Friday of camp at 2 PM.

Tuition \$375
JUNE 3-7 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Camp Showtime: Rock and Pop!

Come act, sing, and dance your heart out to popular rock and pop songs as we learn simple choreography as an ensemble. We'll also play theatre games and work on our improv skills!

Monday-Friday; Tuition \$375
JUNE 10-14 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Little Mermaid (two week camp)

Join us for this classic underwater adventure featuring all the characters you know and love—Ariel, Flounder, Sebastian and more! Everyone gets to sing, dance!

Monday-Friday for two weeks (skipping Saturday and Sunday) with final performance on the last Friday of camp.

Tuition \$675
JUNE 17-28 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
The Final Performances will be held at ECTC - Friday, June 28 at 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.

There are five summer camp options for middle and high

schoolers (Grades 6th - 12th) at ECTC in Grand Boulevard. Tuition varies depending on camp. Payment plans are always available.

Camp Broadway: Beetlejuice, Hamilton, & Hadestown

Sing, dance, and act the songs and scenes that are hot on Broadway right now! Come ready to move as you learn choreography. Join in group numbers or step up and take a solo. Camp ends in a sensational showcase for parents!

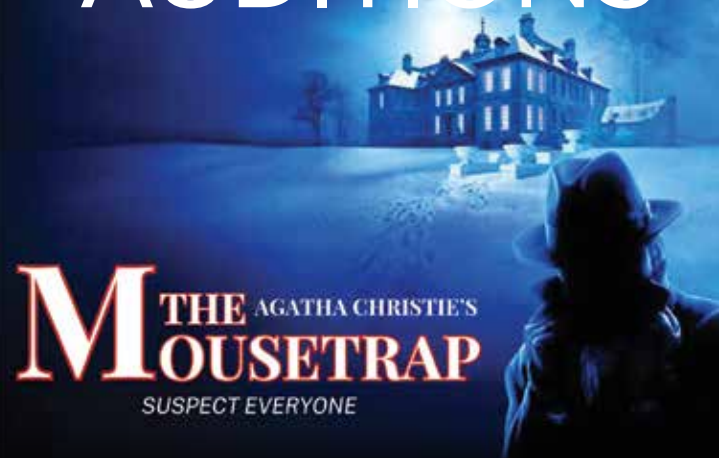
Tuesday-Friday; Tuition \$325
MAY 28-31 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Comedy Camp: Sketch, Stand-up, and Improv

We're going to fill our time with sketch comedy scenes, stand-up comedy sets, and good ol' improv games. It's going to be abstract. It's going to be absurd. Some might go so far as to say... It's going to be funny! Bring your talent, sharpen those comedy skills, and show off in our showcase on the final day of camp!

Continued on page 31

AUDITIONS



M THE AGATHA CHRISTIE'S
MOUSETRAP
SUSPECT EVERYONE

APRIL 1-2, 2024

Doors open at 6:00pm for script perusal
Auditions begin at 6:30pm

At Stage Crafters Rehearsal Hall
40 Robinwood Dr. SW
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548

PERFORMANCES: June 7-9 & 14-16

www.StageCraftersFWB.com

ON STAGE

APRIL 4TH - 7TH

ON STAGE

MAY 3RD - 19TH



MOTHER GOOSE
ON THE LOOSE!

Join her children as they try to find their beloved Mother Goose, and sing and dance along the way. Big fun for the very little!



MARY POPPINS

This show is "practically perfect in every way" for all ages and feels like a "jolly holiday" with friends and family. Don't miss this supercalifragilisticexpialidocious show that will lift your spirits and leave you feeling like you want to go "fly a kite!"

SOUTH WALTON FLORIDA
 GRAND BOULEVARD TOWN CENTER
 STAGE
 G
 FLORIDA ARTS & CULTURE

emerald coast theatre company

Tickets or Info, call 850.684.0323 or visit EMERALDCOASTTHEATRE.ORG

Arts & Music

Sinfonia Becomes Orchestra of Nearly 3,000 Students During Link Up: The Orchestra Rocks

On March 6, the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach was transformed into an electrifying concert hall when Sinfonia Gulf Coast — the only fully professional non-profit orchestra on the Emerald Coast founded in 2005 by music and artistic director Demetrius Fuller — presented its 12th live Link Up concert performance “The Orchestra Rocks,” a national program it presented in partnership with New York’s Carnegie Hall Weill Institute of Music.

This year’s Link Up program showcased the talents of nearly 3,000 local 3rd-5th grade students from Okaloosa and Walton Counties performing on recorder and singing. The concert was conducted by Sinfonia Gulf Coast Maestro Fuller.

With recorders in hand, the students performed from their seats when given their cue by Maestro Fuller to join the Sinfonia Gulf Coast orchestra for a range of pieces from Come

to Play by Thomas Cabanis, La Follia by Antonio Vivaldi, excerpts from Igor Stravinsky’s The Rite of Spring, O Fortuna from Carmina Burana and others. But these inspired kids didn’t stay in their seats at this spirited performance which ended with a celebration of Chuck Berry’s Johnny B. Goode they were up out of their chairs singing, dancing moves and parts they have been practicing for months.

This curriculum is geared towards 3rd-5th grade students, and in many cases locally, is the only music education that they receive during the school year. The theme of this year’s Link Up program was centered around discovering how elements of rhythm and time can unite musicians, singers and audiences.

Sinfonia’s Link Up program is funded in part by the St. Joe Community Foundation, the Dugas Family Foundation and the Emeril Lagasse Family Foundation. Additional fund-



ing from Sinfonia Gulf Coast’s Crescendo! annual fundraiser, Treble Makers, an honorary membership committee of Crescendo! and community donors,

has helped Link Up steadily grow to the Sinfonia’s largest education initiative.

For more information on Sinfonia Gulf Coast visit Sin-

foniaGulfCoast.org, call (850) 460-8800 or e-mail info@sinfoniagulfcoast.org.



SINFONIA GULF COAST FILM IN CONCERT



SATURDAY, MAY 18 | 7:30 PM
Destin-FWB Convention Center

Sheer movie magic 65 million years in the making, bring the entire family to experience Jurassic Park in Concert as never before: projected in HD with Sinfonia Gulf Coast performing John Williams’ iconic score live to picture. Welcome... to Jurassic Park in Concert!



PRESENTING SEASON SPONSOR:

PRESENTING CONCERTS SPONSOR:

PRESENTING MEDIA SPONSOR:

CLASSICAL CONNECTIONS PRESENTING SPONSOR:



SCAN HERE TO BUY TICKETS

Box Office:
SinfoniaGulfCoast.org
850.460.8800



EVENTS

continued from page 10

Cocktail Tastings, indulge in Hot Sauce Tasting and live music. 20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin. FudsGatorFest.com

ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival! May 4-5

In its 36th year, ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival will be held May 4th-5th! Produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and presented by Grand Boulevard Town Center, ArtsQuest provides an opportunity to view and purchase original art from over 100 artists from throughout the country. ArtsQuest is a juried show that includes artists in the categories of Ceramics, Fiber, Glass, Jewelry, Metal, Mixed Media, Oils & Acrylics, Original Digital Art, Photography, Sculpture, Wood and Works on Paper (Watercolor, Printmaking, Pastels, Pencils,



Ink). ArtsQuest awards \$10,000 in cash prizes. The rain or shine event also features live performances, artist demonstrations, hands-on learning opportunities, student exhibits, ImagiNation: where kids rule, food, beverages and more! Join us in the Town Center of Grand Boulevard, from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 4th and again on Sunday, May 5th, 10am - 5pm. A \$5 donation will be accepted at the entrance gate.

ECTC

continued from page 29

Monday-Friday; Tuition \$375

JUNE 3-7 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The (One Act) Play that Goes Wrong

It's been called one of the funniest shows on Broadway—a true laugh a minute production! Come be a part of the Cornely Drama Society's unforgettable rendition of The Murder at Haversham Manor. What could possibly go wrong?!

Monday-Friday for two weeks (skipping Saturday and Sunday) with final performance on the last Friday of camp.

Tuition \$675

JUNE 10-22 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Final Performances

will be held at ECTC - Friday, June 21 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, June 22 at 7 p.m.

Combat Camp: The Art of Stage Combat

Throw a punch! Throw a bottle! Swashbuckle and sword fight! But—safely! There is an art to stage combat. How do actors make fights look believable onstage? The secret is all in the choreography! Come learn those skills that will help to make you an efficient and marketable actor, and have no fear for physicality. Onstage it's always: Safety first!

Monday-Friday; Tuition \$375 (payment plans available)

JUNE 24-28 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

There is one summer camp option exclusively for Grades 8th - 12th. Tuition varies depending on camp. Payment plans are always available.

High School Musical! Musical Theatre Intensive

(Grades 6th - 12th)

This three week camp will stretch your students' theatre skills and grow them as performers. Get the full Musical Theatre Experience with this Intensive. We'll work on our acting, voice, makeup, and dance in the compact structure and schedule of the professionals. Students will also have the opportunity to work with some of ECTC's theatre professionals! This camp is offered July 8 - 28, Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at ECTC. Tuition is \$1,125 (payment plans available)

The Final Performances will be Friday, July 26 at 7 p.m., Saturday, July 27 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, July 28 at 2 p.m.

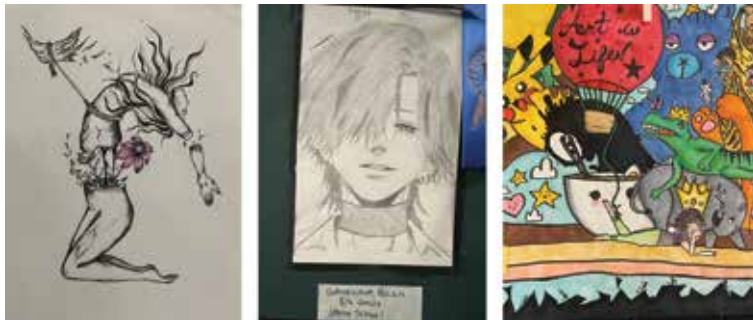


Calling Young Artists: Okaloosa Arts Alliance Announces 15th Annual Poster Contest!

Unleash your creativity and explore the meaning of art in the universe! The Okaloosa Arts Alliance (OAA) invites all Okaloosa County School students from kindergarten through 12th grade to participate in the 15th Annual OAA Okaloosa County School Poster Contest.

This year's theme is "Art in Outer Space." Let your imagination soar and interpret the theme in any way that inspires you. The contest is open to all Okaloosa County School students, kindergarten through 12th grade. Entries can be submitted by an Okaloosa County School or by an individual student.

First, Second and Third place winners will be chosen in three categories: Elementary School (K-4th), Middle School (5th-8th), and High School (9th-12th). Each winner in each category will receive a cash prize sponsored by the Eglin Federal Credit Union. First place winners' artwork will be featured in the OAA newsletter and website. Winners will be awarded a gift certificate for a free music lesson



at Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music.

Submission Guidelines:

Only one entry per student is allowed.

Include the artist's name, grade, and school name on the front of the poster or attached below.

Entries can be submitted in two ways:

In person: Drop off your entry at Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music (105B Lewis St, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547) during business hours (9 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday). The venue is in the rear of the complex.

Mail entries to: Okaloosa Arts

Alliance-Poster Contest, P.O. Box 4426, FWB, FL 32549.

Deadline is April 18, 2024.

Winners will be announced at a reception on Friday, April 19th, at 6:00 pm at Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music. Viewers' Choice Award will also be determined at the Reception.

There will be an instrument

petting zoo at 5 pm and live performances by Grow Your Gift students starting at 6 pm

For More Information, visit: <https://www.okaloosaarts.org/annual-oaa-poster-contest-2024.html>. Contact Amy at amybaty1@gmail.com or Grow Your Gift Music at 850-483-0800.

Local Coupons

TAILFINS
FREE SHRIMP CEVICHE APPETIZER
WITH PURCHASE OF ENTREE (LIMIT ONE PER TABLE)
 Offer expires 5/15/24
 172 Harbor Boulevard, Destin
 850-650-1200

SAVVY LEIGH PHOTO
\$25 OFF
FAMILY PHOTO SESSION
MENTION COUPON UPON BOOKING
 Offer expires 5/15/24
 www.SavvyLeighPhoto.com | (205) 567-2779
 Instagram.com/SavvyLeighPhoto

OVERHEAD DOOR
\$100 OFF A NEW WI-FI DOOR OPERATOR AND FREE DECORATIVE DOOR HARDWARE
WITH EACH DOOR PURCHASE. (NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY.) FINANCING AS LOW AS \$79/MO. W.A.C.
 Offer expires 5/15/24
 850-269-3246
 destinoverheaddoor.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC
\$25 OFF SLIDING DOOR TRACK REPAIR WITH ROLLER REPLACEMENT
FREE ESTIMATES
 Offer expires 5/15/24
 BeachsideSlide.com
 850-98-SLIDE (850-987-5433)

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Sunday
BRUNCH
10AM-3PM

PRIME RIB THURSDAYS
STARTING 4PM

KIDS EAT FREE
4PM-6PM
TUESDAY-FRIDAY

KARAOKE
5PM TUESDAY

trivia night
6:30-8:30 THURSDAY

Ladies'
NIGHT
6PM WEDNESDAY
9PM FRIDAY & SATURDAY

CRAW FISH BOIL
SATURDAYS 12PM