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A Local Staple Celebrates 40 Years of Fun, Food and Live Music: AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

BY WILL ESTELL

If you're a local, it's safe to say you know about AJ's. And if you know AJ's, then you know a thing or two about its brand of great seafood, live music, majestic coastal views and big fun. From humble beginnings dating back to 1984, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar continues to operate with the philosophy that great seafood, raw oysters, coastal libations and live music are the keys to creating happy patrons who keep coming back year-after-year.

Now celebrating its 40th year in business, AJ's serves Northwest Florida's locals, and millions of annual tourists alike, from four locations along the Northwest Florida Gulf Coast: AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar on Destin Harbor (original location), AJ's Oyster Shanty on Okaloosa Island, AJ's On the Bayou at the foot of the Cinco Bayou Bridge in Fort Walton Beach and AJ's



Grayton Beach, smack dab in the middle of 30A.

Some locals might remember the now World-Famous AJ's Destin from way back in the day when they shucked

oysters off the deck behind a small trailer right on Destin Harbor. That's where the magic all began and has continued to flourish over the years. AJ's commitment

to consistently good food, attentive and friendly service, the best in live entertainment

AJ'S

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Fort Walton Beach's Liberty Bell Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary

CONTRIBUTED BY TOM RICE

On Sept. 11, 2014, the Freedom Bell that hangs in the Veterans Tribute Tower at Beal Memorial Cemetery was dedicated and rung for the first time by Navy Veteran, Governor Rick Scott. The three-day casting process was accomplished locally at Uptown Station by the Verdin Foundry from Cincinnati, Ohio. The date chosen for the bell casting was in recognition of those who were lost on Sept. 11, 2001.

On that day, al-Qaeda terrorists, an Islamist extremist group, hijacked four commercial airplanes en route from the East Coast. In coordinated attacks, the planes were turned into weapons. Two of the planes were intentionally flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, a global

LIBERTY BELL

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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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THURSDAYS



6:30pm-8:30pm

Community

LIBERTY BELL

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business complex in New York City, causing the towers to collapse. A third plane also hit the Pentagon, headquarters for the U.S. Department of Defense, in Arlington, Va. The fourth plane was headed toward Washington, D.C. But, brave passengers and crew banded together and forced the plane to crash into a field in Shanksville, Pa.

2,977 people died in the 9/11 attacks—441 of them first responders. It was the single largest loss of life resulting from a foreign attack on American soil and the greatest loss of emergency responders on a single day in American history.

Fort Walton Beach's Freedom Bell is a lasting tribute for us to remember...



Tim and the late Jim Verdin at the Verdin Foundry in Cincinnati, Ohio as the Veteran's Tribute Tower is prepared for its trip to Beal Memorial Cemetery and the newly cast Freedom Bell.



Dr. J. H. Beal (far right) and his Board of Directors of the American Druggist Fire Insurance Co. in Cincinnati, Ohio. Dr. Beal's resources made the Beal Memorial Cemetery possible. His 1928 American Building is just a few blocks from the offices of the Verdin Company and Foundry in Cincinnati.



Foundation preparations for the 30-foot-tall Veterans Tribute Tower 2014-2015 at Beal Memorial Cemetery.



The Veteran's Tribute Tower Committee members, the late Bill Zuppa and Bill Paterson, recording the flow of concrete.



The Rev. and Mrs. Cecil Williams after giving the Benediction at Beal Memorial Cemetery.



Tucker Gordon, great, great, great grandson of Dr. J.H. Beal, places flowers during the Veteran's Day Ceremony.



Governor Rick Scott dedicates the Freedom Bell

Casting and Concerts

The three-day casting process was accomplished locally at Uptown Station by the Verdin Foundry from Cincinnati, Ohio. During these three days, local composer and conductor, Dr. David Ott, freely shared his musical abilities culminating in the first Veterans Tribute Tower sponsored concert at St. Mary's Catholic Church. At this free concert, guests insisted on making donations. While it was not the intention to raise funds initially, the committee has continued the Love Offering tradition as the Memorial Day and Veterans Day "Salute To Those Who Serve" concerts occur each year.

In the past decade, over \$50,000 has been raised to benefit the Salvation Army of Okaloosa and Walton Coun-



ties, Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida and the Air Force Enlisted Village. At this year's 10th Anniversary of the Freedom Bell casting, Dr. Ott conducts the Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus in a special concert for the residents of the Air Force Enlisted Village and Hawthorn House Assisted Living Facility at their all Faiths DeLores Hope Chapel. And he's recognized for his generous contributions to the veteran community.



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AJ'S

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daily, and that unique atmosphere and vibe that is synonymous with the AJ's brand, have brought a longevity that few restaurants have experienced across our coastal paradise—and a popularity that shows no signs of slowing down any time soon.

During a recent conversation, I asked AJ's founder, Alan Laird, how he and his team have managed to maintain the modern coastal vibe, attention to great live music and consistency to great food over all these years. Laird simply answered, "My philosophy has always been, you've got to have enough to make people want to go there, to eat there, to stay there, to come back there and to tell their friends to go there."

I, for one, think he's certainly figured out that magical formula, and it shows with each visit to any of his four AJ's locations.

AJ'S Supports Destin's Unique History

Most locals would agree that no matter how much our area changes, the true culture of our area can still be found in its fishing community and the businesses that support that history. A longstanding staple of "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village," AJ's has gone to painstaking efforts to preserve Destin's culture and what it stands for. AJ's Destin is covered with buoys, antique outboards, nets, floats, paddles and hundreds of other pieces of local fishing memorabilia. AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar is also the headquarters, and forever home, of the famous weigh-ins for The Destin Fishing Rodeo each October. For an entire month, seven days a week, boats full of anglers from around the world pull up behind AJ's, for a chance to have their catch make it onto the leaderboard, grab a photo with Miss Destin, and relish in the culture that make AJ's and Destin icons of sportfishing. You can't love fishing in Destin and not love AJ's!

AJ's Brings Live Music All Year 'Round

I have been to my fair share of great restaurants and beach bars over my two plus decades writing about coastal tourism across this great country. I've seen everything from one-man



acoustic shows to duos to full out touring bands and national cover acts taking local stages in the Destin, Fort Walton Beach, PCB and 30A area, but I can't think of another place, anywhere in any state, where I've watched live entertainment of such unique variety and talent that it keeps me going back for 25 years. Somehow AJ's has managed to keep its finger on that often hard to define pulse of knowing what people want to see, hear and feel for longer than any single establishment I've personally visited.

Get Ready for National AJ's Day- September 27th

Mark your calendars for Friday, September 27, when Destin and Northwest Florida will celebrate "National AJ's Day" as part of AJ's BIG 40th anniversary month!

The festivities include live music throughout the day, featuring a fantastic lineup of artists and bands, both upstairs and downstairs of AJ's Destin location, including live acts on the outdoor Tiki Village, as well as AJ's large outdoor Jumbotron Stage.

Headlining the party will be multi-Grammy nominee, Fastball, who captured the spotlight with their platinum album, *All the Pain Money Can Buy*, dominating Billboard's charts for an entire year back in the nostalgic 90's. You likely remember their well-known hits "The Way" and "Out of My Head" and now you can party with them firsthand this September.

As part of the day of celebration, AJ's will also be introducing hourly .40-cent specials, enabling you to indulge in delectable offerings showcasing AJ's menu, while allowing you to savor the flavors that keep locals and vacationers alike coming back for decades.

Whether you're a local and longtime AJ's patron or seasonal or vacationing guest and new to the experience, this is the per-

fect opportunity to party where the locals know and go, and celebrate four decades of music, fun, community and incredible coastal cuisine.


To read about AJ's is one thing; to experience it is completely another. Do yourself a favor and get by AJ's Seafood & Oyster House in Destin, or any of the other three locations and you'll quickly understand why AJ's continues to be the place

to be on the Northwest Florida Gulf Coast.

For additional entertainment options, I encourage you to check out AJ's online calendar of events and follow them on Facebook to keep up with the live music and fun at all four locations.

Will Estell is a writer, multi-magazine founder and media consultant with over 600 published features on coastal tourism, real es-

tate, automobiles and numerous celebrity cover interviews. He is also the Co-founder and Editor-In-Chief of Navarre Beach Magazine, and Chief Creative Officer of Estell Hussey Media LLC. Over the past 27 years, Estell has founded 12 new magazines from concept to fruition, as well as served as editor for numerous others. Originally from the farmlands of Mississippi, Will is a father of three who, along with his wife, WEAR ABC 3 news anchor, Laura Hussey Estell, now calls Destin and Navarre Beach home.

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AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar **AJ's On the Bayou** **AJ's Oyster Shanty** **AJ's Grayton Beach**



The Smallest Vectors Can Cause Great Problems

BY CAROLYN KETCHEL

Did you know that mosquitoes kill more people than any other creature on Earth? It's been said that knowledge is power and in the case of mosquito-borne illnesses, this information can save your life. What do Dengue, Chikungunya, West Nile, Equine Encephalitis and Zika Viruses have in common? These are tropical mosquito born viruses, but it appears the Zika Virus is spreading globally. The Zika virus is so named, because it is believed to have originated in the Zika forest of Uganda in Africa and was first reported in the 1940's. There are currently one million cases worldwide with 29 confirmed cases in Florida; this

count rises daily. The most cases are in Miami-Dade (38%). In Northwest Florida, one case was reported in Santa Rosa County. None of these originated in the U.S. Those who have this disease were infected in another country while traveling. One case in Texas was sexually transmitted to the spouse of a missionary upon his return. Once a person is infected, they become a host for up to seven days; and if a mosquito bites them, the mosquito can transmit the disease to another person.

The leading spokesman and educator about Zika virus since 2017 is Dr. Anthony Fauci (yes, the same Fauci that we all know from COVID). Dr. Fauci is re-

covering currently from West Nile Virus that he believes he caught in his backyard, in the D.C. metropolitan area.

All the above-mentioned viruses, including Zika, are transmitted by the bite of a mosquito, or human saliva, blood transfusion or sexual transmission. Blood banks in the U.S. are safe and do not accept, per FDA guidelines, blood donations from people who have traveled to areas with active transmission of Zika in the last 28 days. There is currently no cure or vaccine. Antibiotics are ineffective, because it is a virus not a bacterial infection. Once infected with the Zika virus, the symptoms begin within 2-5

days. Some cases are mild and some people experience no symptoms. In the beginning, there is a fever, rash, joint pain and red in the white of the eyes. Treat with acetaminophen (Tylenol) only as this inflammatory disease is made worse by medications such as Aspirin. The second stage for the disease includes headaches, aching behind the eyes and vomiting. Bed rest and hydration are recommended. A diagnosis can be made by a physician with a blood titer.

Complications can arise for pregnant women, because the virus passes through the umbilical cord. There are currently nine pregnancy cases in the U.S. where the mother is infected with Zika. In Brazil, studies are underway to confirm that children born to infected mothers have birth defects such as microcephaly. The CDC is working to investigate the link in Brazil. In addition to pregnancy, it appears the virus can begin to ravage the nervous systems producing crippling diseases in adults. There have been cases of complications with Guillain-Barré Syndrome, a type of paralysis. In some adults, it causes a form of crippling arthritic symptoms.

The mosquito that carries this disease is a common one in Florida known as the Tiger mosquito. Once these mosquitoes become infected, they become aggressive daytime biters. They can also bite at night. This is uncommon for these vectors, because, as most of us know, they feed at dusk or dawn. They have no issues with following you inside of your home where other mosquitoes shun the temperature difference. The Okaloosa mosquito control program monitors 12 trap sites throughout the county in locations of known heavy mosquito activity. No Tiger mosquitoes have been trapped since last October. The Tiger mosquito is rare in the winter, but will begin to hatch this spring, all through the summer and into fall.

What can be done? Okaloosa County has an aggressive campaign to destroy mosquitoes through spray. If a case is detected in Okaloosa County, additional emergency state funds are available to combat

the spread. Government alone cannot keep us from a massive outbreak. All citizens must partner with the county in this fight. Mosquitos can breed in water as small as the amount found in fallen Magnolia leaves. This is important, because no leaf must be left unturned in your yards. Pots, gutters, birdbaths must be inspected for water which are prime breeding grounds. It only takes a few days for larvae to hatch once the eggs are laid in standing water. The Tiger mosquitos do not travel far in their lifespan; most hatch and live within a mile of your property. So, wear protective clothing and use an insect repellent product with an EPA-registered insect repellent. If you use sunscreen, apply sunscreen before applying insect repellent. Special clothing is made that has insect repellent as part of the fabric for outdoor protection. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants. Make sure your windows and door screens are in good repair. If you contact this disease, you can spread it to a loved one with an exchange of bodily fluid.

To date, in 2024, there have been only travel related cases of Dengue and Chikungunya. Those individuals isolated themselves until they were no longer capable of transmitting the disease.

Mosquitos are a year-round problem. In Florida, and especially in Okaloosa County, we are actually fortunate that we have such a well-managed Mosquito control program. Working together as a community, we can mitigate the inevitable spread of this disease with education and a willingness to understand the historical fight we are in against an insect that continues to reinvent misery under different names.

For more information about Okaloosa County's program, visit <https://myokaloosa.com/pw/environmental/mosquito-control>. Included on the website is the spray schedule, educational materials and links to additional information. The next time you see a spray truck on your street, give thanks that we have such a robust mosquito control program in our county.

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Bit-Wizards: Making It So

BY KELLY MURPHY-REDD

Vince Mayfield and Louis Erickson have been “making it so” for decades. This phrase, used by Captain Picard in Star Trek: The Next Generation, exemplifies the can-do, success-oriented and innovation-driven team at Bit-Wizards.

Bit-Wizards has been an ever-evolving company, but the constant is the friendship of Vince and Louis. Growing up in Okaloosa County, they attended Meigs Junior High and Choctawhatchee High School. They knew each other from ROTC and Civil Air Patrol. Though there was a two-grade level difference in their ages, they became best friends. Their friendship has spanned decades of change, challenges and family tragedies.

The friendship continued after high school when they roomed together in college. Louis majored in computer science, minoring in mathematics and physics. Vince majored in mathematics and minored in computer science, and aerospace science. He also earned a Master’s of Science Degree

in International Relations. Later, Vince earned a MBA from the University Of Notre Dame. Louis served in the U.S. Navy. Vince served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force.

Their civilian careers began with writing software for Department of Defense and defense contractor projects. Louis moved to Austin, Texas, to care for his late sister’s son. He procured a contract re-writing software for the power and light industry. He asked Vince to come to Austin. They decided it was the time to form a business together.

Vince brought his two dogs to join Louis’s two cats and slept on the floor of Louis’s house. Working like dogs for 18 months writing code, they worked 60 to 80 hours a week. They were going to call their new company Bit Wise, a play on words in the programming world, but the name was taken. Louis remembered an old teacher at the University of West Florida who joked about “stirring the smoke” and how people thought computers made things happen magically. The Bit-Wiz-



ards name is meant to be ironic, when behind the curtain, a lot of hard work is going on.

During the dotcom boom in Austin, the partners designed a logo and went to the mall to get shirts made. They wanted to operate like a big business. As they were winding down their project, the dotcom bust happened. Vince, worried about the economy, said they should move back to Fort Walton Beach where there was less traffic, a slower pace of life, and less competition. They paid off all personal debts, Vince moved back, and Louis stayed in Austin another six months.

Vince secured two new contracts and they reincorporated Bit-Wizards in Florida. Working out of Vince’s house until a new building was ready, more 60 to 80-hour weeks followed. While

Louis was resistant to moving back, he was soon glad he did. One of his cats got sick two months after returning. He met his wife, Tabitha, at the Veterinary clinic and asked her out. They’ve been married over 20 years.

Bit-Wizard’s first involvement in the economic and community development world was with Florida’s Great Northwest and then the Economic Development Council (EDC) and chambers of commerce. It was a challenge procuring commercial work in the middle of the DoD arena. Their work was primarily outside the local area. When September 11th happened, they lost several contracts and went through a time of struggle. Louis sold his house in Austin and Vince took out an SBA Loan against his house and got a personal loan from his dad. Additionally, they used savings and credit cards to make it through. The business had obligations including insurance and internet connection costs. They had enough money to support the business, but not enough to pay themselves. Thank God

they had paid off their debts earlier.

They had to back out of the EDC and the chambers to focus on getting customers. Most small businesses can’t afford custom software. While most of their customers are local, the largest share of dollars are out of the local area. Vince and Louis later reengaged with the EDC and chamber when they could sustain the costs. When they did re-join, they found relationships created were of inestimable value.

A new contract out of New Jersey created a need for employees. Their first employee, John Jackson, is still with them today. Employees mean as much to Vince and Louis as customers do. It’s who they are as human beings. They know de-stressing their employees, keeping them inspired, motivated, taken care of and happy makes for happy customers. Employees can do their best work when they feel valued. The Bit-Wizards mis-

Continued on next page

THE PLACE ON BEAL

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The advertisement includes a collage of photos showing various events: a wedding reception with a bride in a yellow dress, a social gathering with people talking, a bar area with a 'ROCKY WHISKEY' sign, and a long dining table set for a formal event.

 Community

The Power of Hope: Opportunity Place Provides a Sanctuary for Families

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

Fiona Devenney, the Executive Director of Opportunity Place, knows that one of the best sources of energy in a community is this: Hope. Her team, although small, is mighty, and includes Balon Loften (Associate Director), Felicia Waters (Eligibility Specialist), Gabrielle Loften (Shelter Coordinator), and Jean Day (Youth Services/Volunteer Coordinator). This dedicated group has positioned itself to receive families in Okaloosa and Walton Counties who need an injection of hope when life's circumstances make it hard to know what to do next, or where to go. Having a background in working at domestic violence shelters and caring for the homeless, Fiona has always been involved in social services. She knows a family doesn't have to be defined by their circumstances.

"I think that the most important thing to know is that the families we serve were once in their own homes. They were once an intact family unit, had jobs, had vehicles, and had the American dream. And then something happened, whether it was divorce, a death in the family, domestic violence, or they fell into an addiction, lots of reasons bring them here. Our families want to succeed. They want to get back to that hope. Children in our shelter, especially, didn't have a say about how life would go. That's why it's so important for us to give the whole family the dignity they deserve."

So, how does Fort Walton Beach-based Opportunity Place preserve dignity? By making it possible for families to become self-sufficient again. This means meeting them where they are



and taking care of foundational needs, so the family has a place to launch. When a parent knows their family is safe, fed and has shelter, they have the margin to address their challenges and get sustainable jobs, secure additional skills, find their housing and, when needed, address addiction.

"We're not just a shelter. For example, we offer classes on parenting skills and budgeting. We teach about health and nutrition, life skills, how to write a resume, and do a job interview. Many of our families have endured a lot and have never experienced group living so we also offer classes on coping with group living and trauma. When they're ready, we also help them with their housing."

We also have an amazing program for our children. Children are resilient, but they need hope, too. We want to help take their fear away so they can excel in education and life. At Opportunity Place, our Case Manager and Youth Services Coordinator partner with the parents to identify what areas might require expert intervention and get to the resources that best meet the needs of the child."

What is unique about Opportunity Place is that it allows the family to define what a family consists of, not just mother and child. They include men and grandparents who have custody of children. To keep everyone safe, there are cameras throughout the three buildings, except for the sleeping areas where each family stays together, that make up Opportunity Place. Two of the buildings serve as housing with laundry facilities

and bathrooms and the third includes a kitchen, dining and additional common areas. All in all, 43 beds throughout the different bedrooms can accommodate various sizes of families. Each room has bunk beds and/or full and twin-size beds, and can also include space for infants when needed. In the first 30 days, a family can reset. They work with staff to figure out what their unique needs are so resources can start being built. Employment must be secured in that first month if the family wants to continue to stay up to the 90 days allowed. In those 90 days, the goal is for the family to become independent enough to move into their own housing, and Opportunity Place is there every step along the way.

So, how can a community invest in its own health? By supporting organizations like Opportunity Place. In addition to donating supplies, funds and volunteer time, another fun and meaningful way is to join them at their fundraiser, the Harlem Nights Casino Affair, on October 4th, 2024. This marks 16 years of providing shelter to families and the event will be held from 6 - 10 p.m. at The Is-

land Resort in Ft. Walton Beach at 1500 Miracle Strip Parkway Southeast. This incredible night will consist of gaming tables, champagne and hors d'oeuvres, music by Boukou Groove, dancing, live and silent auctions, and a photo booth by Epic. Each ticket is \$100 and that provides you with \$500 worth of casino bucks to use at the event!

For those who want to stay the night, special room rates are also being offered. If you aren't able to make the event, consider becoming a sponsor of this fun night of hope-building and celebration. For event details, donation opportunities and sponsorship information contact fiona@opifwb.org, call 850-865-1950, or visit opifwb.org.

BIT-WIZARDS

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sion, values and culture are celebrated on their website: <https://bitwizards.com>. Vince and Louis credit their military careers, in large part, for developing the values of service-mindedness, ownership thinking, and empowering individuals to be part of a team. A team of "wizards." Vince and Louis also believe in doing the right thing for their community. Raised here, Vince has kids who go to school here. Bit-Wizards invested \$250,000 in the half-penny school tax designed to address the poor physical condition of local schools.

Personal responsibility is inseparable from business responsibility for Vince and Louis. Every year, Bit-Wizards pays a company \$100,000 to try and hack into Bit-Wizards from the outside and from the inside. Their rating has improved every time. Vince and Louis feel they owe this to their customers who are counting on them for security of their own businesses.

Bit-Wizards has evolved from a custom software and digital marketing company to solely a managed IT company. Their sweet spot is servicing small to medium size companies with 10

to 50 users. Updating and managing IT infrastructure is critical for businesses. Louis uses one example of a deadbolt. While it increases inconvenience because you have another step opening the door, your security is increased.

Vince and Louis have defined core values and created success. It hasn't always been easy. They have learned and are humble. They don't think they know everything, but think they have made more good decisions than bad ones.



Kelly
Murphy-
Redd

Writer/Marketing Consultant
Certified Economic Developer
Florida Real Estate Broker

*Official Storyteller of the
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Chamber of Commerce*

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Post-Acute Care and Long-Term Care – The Choice is Yours

By TERESA HALVERSON

Initiating discussions about long-term care is a vital step in ensuring the well-being and quality of life for your family members. We encourage families to consider the benefits of having these important conversations. It not only fosters understanding and collaboration among family members, but also empowers them to navigate the complexities of long-term care with confidence. Evaluating short term post-acute and long-term care facilities for yourself or a loved one can be a challenging and emotional process. Long Term Care Facilities (aka Nursing Homes) are licensed and regulated by the State of Florida. Most facilities are certified to accept both Medicare and Medicaid funding.

Did you know that long-term care facilities also offer post-acute short-term care rehabilitation services? After a hospital stay, an individual may be admitted for short term rehabilitation. Individualized therapy

plans are designed to cater specifically to the patient, ensuring that he/she regains mobility and independence as swiftly and effectively as possible, allowing them to return home to their daily activities and loved ones.

By discussing long-term care options early on, families can explore the various services available, including specialized therapy programs that enhance rehabilitation and recovery. Our trusted approach to therapy at The Manor at Blue Water Bay focuses on individualized attention, ensuring that each resident receives the support they deserve to thrive.

At The Manor at Blue Water Bay, we understand how important it is to find a place that feels like home, where compassionate care and personalized attention are at the forefront. Here are some steps to guide you in your search:

1. Assess Your Needs: Begin by identifying the specific needs of your loved one. Consider their medical require-



ments, mobility limitations and personal preferences. Understanding these factors will help you narrow down your options and find a facility that can meet their unique needs.

2. Research Facilities: Look for long-term care facilities in your area, focusing on their services, reputation and reviews. Websites, social media and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends or health-care providers can provide valuable insights.

3. Visit Potential Facilities: Schedule tours of the facilities you are considering. Pay attention to the environment, cleanliness and staff interactions with residents. Trust your instincts—if a place feels welcoming and compassionate, that's a positive sign.

4. Inquire About Personalized Care Options: At The Manor at Blue Water Bay, we pride ourselves on offering

specialized nursing and therapy services tailored to various conditions. Our dedicated clinical team is committed to assisting residents in their recovery and enhancing their overall quality of life. Ask about the types of therapy available and how they can be customized for your loved one.

5. Evaluate Staff Qualifications: It's essential to know that the staff is well-trained and compassionate. Ask about their qualifications, experi-

ence, longevity and the facility's staff-to-resident ratio to ensure your loved one will receive the attention they deserve.

6. Understand the Costs and Payment Options: Inquire about the costs associated with the facility and what payment options are available. Understanding the financial aspect will help you make an informed decision. Many may accept commercial insurance for post-acute care (short term Rehabilitation). Long term services are normally paid by Private Pay, LTC Insurance or Medicaid. Medicare does not cover long term care.

7. Get Feedback from Current Residents and Families: If possible, talk to current residents and their families to gather their perspectives on the quality of care and overall environment.

At The Manor at Blue Water Bay, we are here to support you in navigating this import-

Continued on page 13

the
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at Blue Water Bay



**Now Accepting
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The area's only locally-owned facility
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Selecting the right post-acute and long-term care facility is a critical decision that can significantly impact your recovery journey and overall well-being. At the Manor at Blue Water Bay, we understand the unique challenges faced by individuals recovering from illnesses or injuries, and we prioritize informed decision-making through individualized care and comprehensive patient support. Our compassionate and professional team is dedicated to ensuring that each resident feels valued and understood, addressing their specific needs and concerns.

If you or a loved one is seeking a compassionate and dedicated post-acute or long-term care solution, we invite you to reach out for a consultation or assessment. Together, we can navigate your recovery journey and ensure you receive the exceptional care you deserve.



www.manoratbwb.com
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wecare@manoratbwb.com
850-897-5592

Community

Events Around Town

4th Annual Burgers, Bourbon & Beer Festival Sept. 21 | 12-3 p.m. | Destin Harbor



The 4th Annual Burgers, Bourbon, and Beer Festival is back bigger and better than ever on September 21 at the Destin Harbor! Not only will you indulge in mouth-watering burgers, sip on smooth bourbon, and enjoy ice-cold beer, but you'll be supporting the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast.

-Food Only/Under 21: \$40 Includes (1) armband for unlimited food samples.

-General Admission: \$65 Includes (1) armband for unlimited food samples and (7) tickets for alcohol samples.

-VIP Ticket: \$100 Includes (1) armband/lanyard for unlimited food samples and unlimited beer/bourbon samples. PLUS: Exclusive early admission (11am-12pm) to the event, VIP lounge with a private bar, BBB t-shirt, and exclusive small-batch bourbon tastings. For tickets: <https://bit.ly/2024BBBFest>

2024 International Coastal Clean Up | Sept. 21 | 8-10 a.m.

Join others for the 2024 International Coastal Clean Up

event, Sat., Sept. 21, from 8-10 a.m. There will be clean-up contests with fun prizes, free event t-shirts and a free post clean up breakfast served at some of our favorite local restaurants. Locations: The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island; The Crab Trap/James Lee Park; The Surf Hut; June White Decker Park; and Henderson Beach State Park. Complimentary breakfast will be provided at The Boardwalk, The Crab Trap and The Surf Hut clean up locations. Bring your own bucket, mesh bag, gloves and trash grabbers! Don't forget your water bottle and sun protection! Sign up at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLS-di5GSvDq5LqPViCjTjHS-2jPof8mqKKISUF_NTLK8NHET3O7Hg/viewform

Alaqua's Animoré Weekend Features the Bluegrass Barn Jam | Sept. 21

Held at Alaqua Animal Refuge in Freeport, the Bluegrass Barn Jam features an outstanding lineup of nationally and regionally recognized Bluegrass acts, set to perform across multiple stages on the beautiful and expansive Alaqua property. Music enthusiasts and animal lovers alike are invited to enjoy Bluegrass's rich, soulful sounds in a picturesque outdoor setting. Gates open at 1 p.m.; Outdoor Music Festival begins at 1:30 p.m. Also enjoy a variety of

food trucks, beverages, a silent auction and plenty of opportunities to interact with animals. An exclusive VIP section will be available, offering prime seating and complimentary food and beverages during the evening performances on the Main Stage, which kicks off at 6:30 p.m. Bring your chairs for the daytime performances to ensure a comfortable experience; it's a rain-or-shine event.

General Admission Ticket: \$50; General Admission Kids Ticket: \$25; VIP Ticket: \$200

Purchase at <https://secure.givelively.org/event/alaqua-animal-refuge-inc/animore-week-end>.

Toast on the Coast | Sept. 27-28 | Henderson Beach Resort

The Junior League of the Emerald Coast (JLEC) hosts its second annual Toast on the Coast Friday and Saturday, September 27-28, at Henderson Beach Resort to benefit its mission and help support its community impact projects such as the Child Clothing Project, which annually clothes 300-400 children in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Every ticket purchased will help dress a local child in need with the Child Clothing Project.

Starting at 6 p.m. Friday night, Head Chef Tyler Simmons will curate an intimate, five-course meal with wine pairings hand-selected by Sommeli-

er, Christopher Matthew.

Main event: Saturday, 4 p.m.; 3 p.m. early VIP entry. Enjoy a variety of culinary treats, refreshing craft beers, wine, spirits and music.

Tickets: \$120 for Friday VIP dinner. Main Event General Admission tickets are \$50 early bird pricing; \$60 beginning Sept. 1st. Tickets include free parking at Village Church and shuttle service. Upgraded VIP experience \$100 per ticket early bird pricing; \$110 after Sept. 1st. For tickets: [toastonthe-coast2024.eventbrite.com](https://www.toastonthe-coast2024.eventbrite.com).

Lightwire Theatre's Dino Light! | Oct. 5 | 7:30 p.m. | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Join Destin Life Oct. 5 for Northwest Florida Ballet's kick-off to its 2024-2025 season with Lightwire Theater's Dino Light, 7:30 p.m., sponsored by Grand Boulevard's Coastal Culture Art, Entertainment and Events at Grand Boulevard in North Park. Free and open to the public, this original story features a famous scientist with magic

powers who brings a friendly dinosaur to life. Dino Light is brought to you by Season Production Sponsor, the Mattie Kelly Arts Center, and Season Signature Sponsors, Life Media and NFB's Official Sports Medicine and Orthopaedic Provider, NFBJS Foot & Ankle Surgeon Dr. Sonya Ahmed. Season subscriptions on sale now. Visit <https://www.nfballet.org/dino-light> to learn more.

The Market Shops 9th Annual Bloody Mary Festival Oct. 12 | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. | The Market Shops at Sandestin

Local bars and restaurants will be serving the finest Bloodys on the Emerald Coast, made with Distillery 98 Dune Laker Vodka. Along with plenty of delicious drinks, there will also be live music by Catalyst, football, cold beer, local food from merchants, shopping and so much more! Tickets \$60 in advance; \$75 at the door.

Continued on page 10

It's Almost Time! Emerald Coast Home and Boat Show

The longest running Home and Boat Show in Northwest Florida, the Emerald Coast Home and Boat Show, will be celebrating its 25th Annual Silver Anniversary event at the Destin-FWB Convention Center on Saturday and Sunday, September 21 and 22, 2024. This event offers FREE ADMISSION to the public and will have 110 vendor booths with vendors offering super discounted Home Show specials and giving away over \$20,000 in swag and door prizes. Also, Emerald Coast Marine and other Boat Show Vendors will be having a spectacular boat show and sale with awesome end-of-the-year DISCOUNTED BOAT SHOW SPECIALS. And, The Big Red Bus from One Blood will be onsite to take your blood donations. Plus, there will be an onsite Dog and Cat Rescue and Adoption area.

Don't be surprised to see some special surprise celebrity guests who will be there to meet and greet the public. This event will feature Home Show and general businesses offering information and discounts on Insurance, Roofing, AC, Plumbing, Mortgages, Homes, Interior Designs, Flooring, Pools and Spas, Shutters, Leaf Guards, Furniture, Generators, Vacations, Siding, Heating and AC, Restorations and Remodeling, Electric Bikes, Water, Closets, Bath Remodeling, Painting, Windows and Doors, Computers, Cell Phones, Solar, Lumber and Boat Lifts, Fencing and much more. Plus, we will have health care and general business vendors from Scentsy, Chiropractic, Hearing, Massage Therapy and other Health Fields. And Kitchencraft will have a live cooking show. More info at www.ParadisePromotionsFL.com

Don't be surprised to see



25th ANNUAL SILVER JUBILEE

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HOME & BOAT SHOW

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Saturday, September 21 • 10AM-5PM & Sunday, September 22 • 11AM-4PM

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more info at www.ParadisePromotionsFL.com

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ECOVIEW

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Happenings Around the Bay

2024
EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 10** | Life Studies Art Classes
9 am | Arts & Design Society (ADSO) | FWB
Live Music: Charlie Seagar
5 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
Pour & Sip: Candle Making Class
6 pm | Ivy & Ale | FWB
Beginning Wheel Throwing Pottery Classes
6:30 pm | Arts & Design Society (ADSO) | FWB
- 12** | Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Nothing But Networking
11:30 am | Bob Hope Village | Shalimar
Planetarium Special Feature: Women of the Stars
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Spill the Tea: Open Poetry Night
7:30 pm | The Sound Cafe + Enlightened Studios | FWB
- 13** | Emerald Coast Title Service's New Forms Review Class
2 pm | Emerald Coast Association of Realtors | FWB
8th Annual Emerald Coast Gala benefiting SOF Missions
6 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center | Okaloosa Island
Concerts at the Landing: Below Alabama
6 pm | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Live Music: Tribe Zion
7 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 14** | Hispanic Street Festival
1 pm | United Fidelity Bank | FWB
Big Scoop presented by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida
2 pm | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson | FWB
Live Music: Dizzy Juke
7 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 15** | Okinawa Festival
12 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
Oktoberfest
3 pm | Ivy & Ale | FWB
- 16** | Glock Sport Shooting Foundation (GSSF) Indoor League
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Paint Party: Rustic Sunflower Love
6:30 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
- 17** | Destin vs FWB Young Professionals Cornhole Tournament
5 pm | The Venue | FWB
Sinfonia Cabaret at Seagar's: An Evening with Alysha Umphress
5:30 pm | Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood | Miramar Beach
Home Defense Fundamentals Class
5:30 pm | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Women in Science Conference hosted by the Emerald Coast Science Center
5:30 pm | The Place on Beal | FWB
- 18** | **Live Music: Parker & Ivoree**
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
Paint Party: Red Wake
6:30 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB

- 19** | **Live Music: Rick Esguerra**
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
Planetarium Night
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Football Game: Fort Walton Beach High School vs Leon High School
7 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
- 20** | **Gems and Mineral Gallery Show**
6 pm | Arts & Design Society (ADSO) | FWB
Concerts at the Landing: One False Move
6 pm | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Football Game: Choctawhatchee High School vs Niceville High School
7 pm | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB
- 21** | **Concealed Carry Weapons Class**
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Par 4 Patriots Golf Tournament
10:30 am | Pines Course | FWB
Oktoberfest
11 am | Elks Lodge 1795 | FWB
4th Annual Burgers, Bourbon, and Beer Festival
12 pm | Destin Harbor behind Brotula's Seafood House
Bluegrass Barn Jam
1 pm | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport
Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show
10 am - 5 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center
- 22** | **Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show**
11 am - 4 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center
Live Music: Robbie Paynter
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 24** | **Life Studies Art Classes**
9 am | Arts & Design Society (ADSO) | FWB
Beginning Wheel Throwing Pottery Classes
6:30 pm | Arts & Design Society (ADSO) | FWB
- 25** | **Live Music: Michael Howard**
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 26** | **Planetarium Special Feature: Sordid Secrets of the Stars**
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Porch Leaner Workshop
6:30 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
- 27** | **Concerts at the Landing: Zack Miller Band**
6 pm | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Football Game: Fort Walton Beach High School vs Rickards High School
7 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
Football Game: Choctawhatchee High School vs Arnold High School
7 pm | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB
- 29** | **Oktoberfest**
7:15 am | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Sunday Market
11 am | DeFrance Antiques on Beal | FWB
Paint Party for All Ages benefiting SOCKS
1 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
Live Music: Robbie Paynter
5 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island

OCTOBER

- 01** | **Live Music: Charlie Seagar**
4 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 03** | **Members Only Halloween Planetarium**
5 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Movies on the Beach: Encanto
7 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 04** | **Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's First Friday Coffee**
7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | FWB
CVHN Benefit Concert in the Park featuring the Tip Tops
5:30 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach
Concerts at the Landing: Modern Eldorados
6 pm | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Football Game: Choctawhatchee High School vs South Walton High School
7 pm | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB
- 05** | **10th Annual CMSAF Binnicker Memorial Run presented by Eglin Federal Credit Union**
8 am | Bob Hope Village Commons | Shalimar
Dog Daze presented by Friendship Veterinary Hospital
9 am | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Discover Science Saturday
10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Dino Light - Northwest Florida Ballet
7:30 pm | Grand Boulevard North Park | Miramar Beach

ONGOING EVENTS

- VFW Post 7674 - Sunday Breakfasts**
8 am | Sun | 231 Carol Ave | FWB
- SINGO Music Bingo Nights**
6 pm | Tues | The Island Resort | FWB
- Open Mic Night**
7 pm | Weds | The Sound Cafe + Enlightened Studios | FWB
- Live Trivia Nights**
6 pm | Thurs | The Island Resort | FWB
- Live Trivia Nights**
6:30 pm | Thurs | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB

FARMERS MARKETS

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



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Community

Fight! Fight! Fight! Trump Boat Parade

Join the Fort Walton Beach Trump Flag-Waving Team and I'm a Florida Trump Girl, Saturday, October 12, for the "Fight! Fight! Fight! Trump Boat Parade."

Line-up will begin just east of the Mid Bay Bridge in Destin, between 9:30 and 9:55 a.m. Kick off at 10 a.m. sharp begins with a prayer and the National Anthem. The boat parade will travel up the sound and end at the Liza Jackson Park area in Fort Walton Beach.

This is the second Trump Boat Parade this group has hosted for the 2024 election sea-

son and the fourth since 2020, which included more than 2,200 boats in 2020! "After the previous boat parades, we have had numerous people contact us and say that they had not heard anything about the parades or they would have participated," said Anne Ziegenhorn, co-founder of the two groups along with Deidre Cannon and Shannon Hyder. "Getting the word out has been one of our biggest obstacles, since we are a FREE organization that does not collect dues or fees. This time, we have businesses and people willing to sponsor the event which will



help with advertising and other expenses," continued Anne.

There will be a \$5 registra-

tion fee to cover the cost of materials and printing of the boat bibs (boat numbers.).

In order to get registration information or if you are interested in sponsoring the event, please send an email to Trump-2024BoatParade@yahoo.com or text 850-376-5634. All sponsorship money and names are due by Monday, Oct. 7, in order to print the banners.

"We love making it a fun event for all who participate on the water and for those who watch from bridges, boats and land. We love seeing all the decorations on the vessels and

hanging from the bridges." The first 100 vessels to register will receive a gift bag with Trump swag.

The Fort Walton Beach Trump Flag Waving Team meets every Tuesday from 5 to 7 p.m. in front of AJ's on the Bayou in Fort Walton Beach. They wave flags, give out free Trump swag and connect with the community in support of President Trump. If you would like to become a part of the team, find out more at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fwbtrump-group>.

EVENTS

continued from page 8

16th Annual Baytowne Beer Fest!

Friday, Oct. 11 - Saturday, Oct. 12 | Tickets on sale now | BaytowneBeerFestival.com

American specialty beers from around the nation will be available for participants to sample and savor and, of course, live music!

The main event on Saturday, Oct. 12, will feature more than 200 domestic and international craft beers available for sampling. Brewery representatives

will be available at the event, offering an opportunity to learn about the different types of lagers and ales from a variety of styles.

Main Event: Saturday, Oct. 12 | 2-5 p.m. | Baytowne Wharf Events Plaza

\$50 general admission; Tickets include admission to the Saturday Beer Tasting event from 2-5 p.m. only. Enjoy live music

by Below Alabama from 2-5 p.m. Grand Craft Beer Tasting | VIP

Beer From Around Here: Friday, Oct. 11 | 6-8 p.m. | Baytowne Wharf Events Plaza

Local breweries feature their products for a more intimate night of learning about craft beer culture. Restaurants in The Village showcase their best dish-

es - combining unique lite bites with the many complimentary flavors of a good brew. Live music by Duchess from 6-8 p.m.

Limited tickets available. \$65 general admission. Tickets include admission to Friday's event from 6-8 p.m. only. Saturday VIP tickets: \$90.

2-Day Ticket: \$110 general admission for Friday and Saturday. Tickets include admission to Friday Night's Beer From Around Here Event from 6-8 p.m. and Saturday's Grand Tasting Event 2-5 p.m.

A portion of the proceeds benefit Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Sandestin Foundation for Kids.

DCWAF 8th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival
Oct. 17-20 | Grand Tasting - Cerulean Park - WaterColor | Santa Rosa Beach

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JAM SESSION * BRING YOUR INSTRUMENT!

GATES OPEN AT 1PM | OUTDOOR MUSIC FESTIVAL BEGINS AT 1:30PM | ARENA OPENS AT 6PM | EVENING ARENA PERFORMANCE BEGINS AT 6:30PM

Please Bring Your Own Chairs and/or Blankets!

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Thurs	10am-2pm	Thurs	10am-2pm
Fri	12pm-4pm	Fri	12pm-4pm
Sat	10am-2pm	Sat	10am-2pm

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Step into a world of culinary delight at the Harvest Wine & Food Festival, an annual event hosted in WaterColor by the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF), October 17-20. This four-day celebration features an array of exquisite wine dinners, the renowned Grand Tasting, a delightful cocktail brunch and much more. For tickets, visit dcwaf.org.

Around Town

Eight Inducted into Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame

The Commission on the Status of Women recently inducted eight, local women into the Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame: Sharon Allen – Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Inductee, Col. Allison Black – Military Inductee, Judge Lacey Powell Clark - Carolyn Spencer Humanitarian Inductee, Shawn Crist – Education Inductee, Sierra Elliot – Contemporary Inductee, Lori Kelley – Business-Professional Inductee, Joy Makela – Community Service Inductee and Barbara Henderson Slocumb – Pioneer Inductee. Since 1995, 140 women have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. This award was created to honor and recognize women who have made important contributions to Okaloosa County. For more information, visit ocsw.com or call Jeanne Rief at 850-685-8027.

Okaloosa Saves Wins Coveted National Award!

Okaloosa Saves has earned the 2024 America Saves Savings Champion award, an honor explicitly reserved for organizations who effectively and actively promote saving strategies during the annual America Saves Week campaign.

Okaloosa Saves is one of 18 organizations honored with this distinction out of more than 4,600 participating organizations of America Saves Week, which took place April 8–12, 2024, as part of Financial Capability Month.

During this one-week timeframe, Okaloosa Saves along with the other 17 financial institutions helped to encourage nearly \$354 million worth of deposits into new and existing accounts. Additionally, 231,000 new accounts were opened and 64,000 individuals increased their automatic saving transfers or deposits into existing savings accounts.

“Okaloosa Saves has been guiding people for 20 years in Northwest Florida to become savers,” said Board Chair Laura Coale. “We enjoy teaching the importance of reducing debt and building wealth by creating a plan to save money year-round. Financial wellness helps

promote overall wellness, and we appreciate our partnership with America Saves for years to come.”

DCWAF Donates \$3 Million To 17 Local Children's Charities

Currently ranked as the fifth largest charity wine auction in the country by Wine Spectator Magazine, Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation's mission is to connect wine enthusiasts to benefit children in need in Northwest Florida. Following another successful year of fundraising, the Foundation presented its 17 benefitting, local children's charities with funding to facilitate a variety of critical needs within the community. This check presentation brought the total amount donated by DCWAF to local children's charities to more than \$35 million. 2024 Benefiting Charities: AMIKids Emerald Coast, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast, Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, Caring and Sharing of South Walton, Children in Crisis, Children's Volunteer Health Network, Ellison McCraney Ingram Foundation, Emerald Coast Autism Center, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Habitat for Humanity of Walton County, Mental Health Association of Okaloosa/Walton Counties, Opportunity Place, Inc., Point Washington Medical Clinic, Shelter House, The Arc of the Emerald Coast, Westonwood Ranch and Youth Village.

Sport Clips FWB Receives National Awards



Left to right: Team members Rebecca, Alexandria, Lisa, Brianna, Tierra, Alyssa, Andrea, Alyssa Rae, Terry and Team Leader Mitzi Henley

Sport Clips leaders from throughout the U.S. and Canada (1800 stores) met in Nashville recently to celebrate the National Huddle 2024 Conference and National Awards. The Sport Clips teams met with industry favorites, educators and enjoyed celebrations with THE

LOOK and BATTLE OF THE HAIR contests. The Fort Walton Beach Sport Clips Store received the acclaimed President's Circle award for attaining top performance in all areas of performance, PRO Stylist metrics and client favorites surveys,

placing them in the top 10% of stores nationwide. Store leader, Tierra Barclay, represented the team at the Nashville awards, with Team Leader Mitzi Henley of the Henley Group, and received their award from Franchise founder Gordan Logan.

“Congratulations to all our great team members and thank you to our great clients for helping our store achieve these honors,” said Mitzi.



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 Community

Meet Our Hometown Hero: Zachary Woodard and Lightz of Hope

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

One of the greatest forces for good can be a child looking out for other children. Zachary Woodard was such a child and LightZ of Hope is his legacy through his parents, Brent and Susan, along with their team. Through this program, children who are hospitalized can receive fun lights that project color onto their walls and ceiling to create an atmosphere of fun and joy during a stay that might be hard and extended. The lights not only brighten their days, but also those of the staff and visitors as well.

Zachary was born on May 20, 2003, at 4 lbs., unable to breathe on his own or swallow. At one-month-old, he went through surgery for a tracheotomy and g-tube. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with Myotubular Myopathy, a disease that causes the muscles to stop developing. Needing a ventilator to help him breathe, he battled with numerous hospitalizations due to pneumonia or infection; however, even though his muscles were weak, he had a sharp mind.

Susan shares the day that Zachary planted the seed for their foundation. "Zachary was recovering from his spi-

nal surgery when a dear friend came to visit us at the hospital and brought a strand of color-changing Christmas lights to decorate his room. Our friend, Monica, hung the lights around the bedrails, and every morning I would get up and turn the lights on. These very simple, inexpensive lights changed this sterile uninviting environment into an uplifting welcoming space. When Zachary woke up, he told me how much he liked his lights. That sweet face looked up at me and asked, 'Do you think we could do this for other kids?' I had the biggest smile on my face and responded, 'Buddy! I love that idea! Let's talk more about that when we get home.' Well, Zachary went to be with Jesus not long after that conversation—very quickly and very unexpectedly he went to his eternal home.

Driving home from the hospital that day without Zachary was a total shock, but then it hit me. I said to my husband, Brent, 'I know what God wants us to do! Zachary told me! We are supposed to gift lights to other kids who are being hospitalized.' The idea for the foundation was born. After some collaboration with Zachary's friends and

family, we landed on LightZ of Hope. The capital Z is for Zachary. Hope is for all the medically fragile kids and their families. We all need hope to visualize a pathway towards something better. Our pastor used to say, 'We all need hope to cope.' And we do!"

Susan and her family know that the greatest relief from caring for a child with severe illness



or disability can come from a community that just lets you know you aren't walking it out alone. "Friends showed up at the hospital and prayed for us and with us. Sometimes, people did not know what to do, but they showed up. We call that the 'showing up ministry.' One of the ways we were supported

was through meals and groceries. There was one lady in our small group who brought us a meal every week for months. There was another lady who would show up just to bring us groceries."

Having felt that outpouring from her own circle, LightZ of Hope has grown in scope and opportunity into the CareZ program. "We also now provide financial assistance to families in a medical crisis. Families are identified through the social workers at the hospital and referred for a specific need like rental assistance due to loss of income. Other needs can include meals in the hospital, medications not covered by insurance, etc."

Even as they miss him every day, getting to be there for other families has been a great source of joy for Zachary's family. "Since we started our foundation, I have so many favorite stories, but this one in particular speaks to my heart. In December 2021, we had the privilege of providing financial support for many families in medical crisis. Brent and I had decided in advance that we would bless each family with \$1000 during the Christmas season and I got to call each family personally to notify them. After one family was notified, the mother began to cry and exclaimed, 'God

heard my prayers!' She said that the previous evening, she laid a bill on the table that they were unable to pay. The overdue bill was \$990. She cried out to God for a way to pay this bill. Of course, we had nothing to do with any of those details, but God knew, and He met their needs through our foundation. We were able to be a light in their dark circumstances and were used to meet this family's needs."

Since their first delivery, The Zachary Woodard Foundation has gifted almost 10,000 LightZ of Hope across the U.S. and Alaska and has provided over \$400,000 in financial assistance. Looking to grow their reach in Northwest Florida, they are hoping to find local partners who will help them develop the fundraising and outreach effort of their CareZ program by expanding their network of volunteers and donors. For information on how to become part of this incredible organization, email info@lightzofhope.org. You can also follow them on Instagram @LightZOfHope and Facebook, LightZ of Hope.

If you know a child with a medically complex condition or life-threatening diagnosis, nominate them to receive a gift from LightZ of Hope at lightzofhope.org/nominateachild.

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Changes for Homebuyers Due to NAR Settlement



BY MELISSA FORTE-LITSCHER,
NEXTHOME CORNERSTONE
REALTY

The National Association of Realtors' (NAR) settlement with the Department of Justice came into effect nationwide on August 17, 2024. Our local association, the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors, implemented the changes on August 12, 2024. This settlement introduced changes to how real estate agents' compensations are handled in the MLS (Multiple Listing Services) and in real estate transactions.

One of the main changes is that buyer's agent compensation will no longer be listed in the MLS. While there are some differences in how things are processed, an agent's compensation on both sides of a transaction is, and always has been, negotiable. Florida has been one of 11 states that didn't require a buyer to sign an agreement with an agent to enlist their services in purchasing a home. Now, nationwide, buyers will need to sign a brokerage agreement before an agent can show the buyer any property listed in the MLS.

As a buyer, you must sign a written agreement with a broker/agent before touring a home, whether in person or virtually. This agreement should in-

clude the services and value that will be provided to you, and the cost of those services, thus securing your agent to work solely on your behalf as a buyer. Once you have reached an agreement and begin your home search, your agent will be working with you to secure your dream home. After you find a home that you like and want to make an offer, your agent will negotiate the best offer which meets your financial situation. That can include asking the seller to pay some or all of the compensation due to your agent, which is permitted. But, the offer cannot be shared on a MLS. Also, the amount your agent receives cannot exceed the amount you agreed to in your brokerage agreement. You do not need a written agreement if you are just speaking to an agent at an open house or asking them about their services. You can still accept concessions from the seller, such as offers to pay your closing costs or buy down your interest rate. For more information, you can visit the consumer facing website at www.nar.realtor/the-facts.

Agents who are Realtors are here to help you navigate the process of buying a home and are ethically obligated to work in your best interest. Their compensation remains fully negotiable, they must abide by the REALTOR® Code of Ethics, and they must have clear and transparent discussions with you about compensation. At NextHome Cornerstone Realty, our brokerage has been closely following how these developments have unfolded over the past two years.

Because of this, our leadership is uniquely positioned to guide our agents to successfully

navigate these changes in the real estate industry.

You have a wide range of choices when it comes to one of the largest financial decisions in your life. Make sure to enlist the assistance of a trusted professional to help you understand

the full range of these choices when purchasing a home. As an experienced Accredited Buyer's Representative and a Certified Residential Specialist, I have the skills to help guide you through this process, and as always, I'm at your service.

Editors Note: Due to the importance of this industry change, we felt it valuable to re-run Melissa's informative and simple-to-understand article for our readers.





Melissa Forte-Litscher

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POST ACUTE

continued from page 7

ant decision. Our commitment to personalized care and specialized therapy services means that your loved one will receive the help they need to thrive. We invite you to reach out to us for guidance and to learn more about how we can assist you and your family through this journey. Our team provides compassionate support and expertise every step of the way.

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tion, we encourage you to reach out to us. With over 31 years of providing service to the community, The Manor at Blue Water Bay is here to serve as a trusted resource on your journey to wellness and recovery, ensuring you or your loved one receives the highest standard of care. For additional information, please call our Admissions Department at 850-897-5592 or email to wecare@manoratbwb.com. www.manoratbwb.com



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 Community

Miss Florida 2024: Inspiring Hope and Community Engagement in Fort Walton Beach

By SHERRY JONES

Miss Florida 2024, Casana Fink, from Ocala recently visited Fort Walton Beach, embodying the spirit of service and empowerment that defines her role within the Miss America Organization. Her visit was a testament to her commitment to enacting meaningful change in every community she touches, as she prepares for the upcoming Miss America Pageant on January 5, 2025.

During her time in Fort Walton Beach, one of the stand-out moments was her role as the master of ceremonies for the 2024 Official Community Choice Awards: Finest on the Emerald Coast. This prestigious event celebrates the best of the Emerald Coast, recognizing businesses, organizations and individuals for their exceptional contributions to the community. Casana's poise and professionalism as emcee highlighted the qualities that have defined her reign as Miss Florida.

Championing Organ and Tissue Donation

Since her crowning in June 2024, Casana has passionately advocated for organ and tissue donation through her platform, "CSI – Give to Live; Donate Life." This cause is deeply personal to her, driven by her father's experience as a liver transplant recipient. Her advocacy is not just a platform, but a mission to save lives by raising awareness and encouraging others to become donors.

In Fort Walton Beach, Casana made a meaningful visit to Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis Center. Here, she connected with healthcare professionals and patients, deepening her understanding of the challenges faced by those dealing with kidney disease and organ donation. This visit reinforced her commitment to raising awareness about the life-saving importance of organ and tissue donation, a cause that continues to gain momentum under her leadership.



Miss Florida 2024 Casana Fink

Engaging with One Hopeful Place

Another significant aspect of Casana's visit was her engagement with One Hopeful Place, an organization dedicated to helping individuals transition from crisis to stability. This visit stood out as one of the most profound moments of her time in Fort Walton Beach, highlighting her unwavering commitment

to supporting those in need and addressing the complex issues of homelessness and recovery.

At One Hopeful Place, Casana immersed herself in the organization's mission, connecting personally with staff, volunteers and residents. Her genuine interest in their lives, coupled with her compassionate approach, left a lasting impact on everyone she encountered. Casana's words of encouragement and support reflected the core of her service-oriented mission as Miss Florida, emphasizing her dedication to uplifting those often overlooked by society.

Strengthening Community Connections

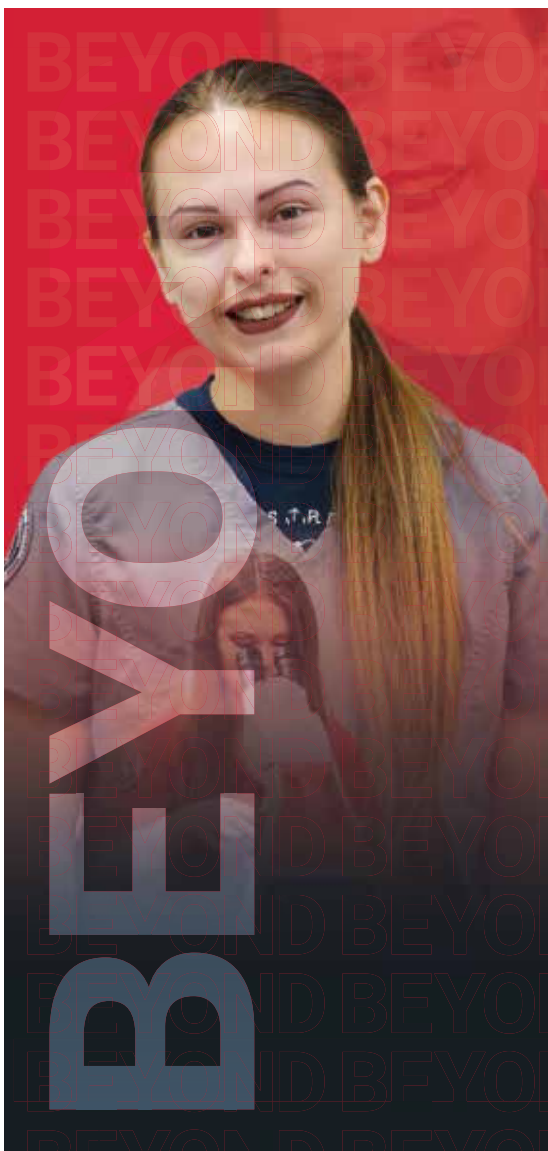
Following her visit to One Hopeful Place, Casana took a moment to recharge at Coastal Spa in Fort Walton Beach. The spa's serene environment provided her with a peaceful space for reflection on the meaningful connections she had made throughout the day. This moment of

respite allowed her to process the impact of her work and the importance of community engagement.

Casana's visit also included a stop at the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce. Here, she met with the dedicated staff and engaged in meaningful conversations with President Ted Corcoran and Mayor Dick Rynearson, both of whom have played pivotal roles in fostering economic growth and enhancing the quality of life in the area. Their involvement underscored the strong sense of community in Fort Walton Beach and the importance of collaboration among local leaders and organizations.

A particularly memorable moment occurred when Casana spent time with Ted Corcoran's seven granddaughters, engaging them in conversations that left a lasting impression. This warm and joyful encounter epitomized the close-knit communi-

Continued on page 31



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The Style Solution: **Fall Fashion Finesse**

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT,
BLUE BAY LIFESTYLE CO./
RUN WITH IT

When it comes to fall fashion, Floridians are latecomers to the game. As much as we may love getting to break out the boots and the chunky knits, we have to wait until the heat dies down before we get to bring our fave fall pieces out into the light of day. Still, as we transition into the crisp (read: less sweltering) autumn months, we can ease our way into wearing those cozy clothes we adore so much.

September in Florida means football, peak hurricane season, and temps that make you wonder if a cool-down will ever come. Summer dresses are still in heavy rotation, because of the heavy humidity and high heat index. Just stay away from anything that looks overly summery. Think darker colors and pair with a cute pair of sneakers or...you guessed it, boots! Boots could slide that dress right into late fall wear, if they're not lined. If and when (here's hoping) things get a little cool, toss on a cute denim jacket. We love



the dark wash from Liverpool, with just enough stretch to give it a chic shape.

With temps still hovering above what one would expect with the return of pumpkin spice everything, avoid tight-fitting clothes that trap heat. If you're pulling on jeans, look for flare legged, bootcut, and "dad" styles—all of which are

looser and help minimize sweating. Athleisure is also always a good choice for September, and we can't get enough of Vuori's line of Performance Joggers and buttery soft shirts for casual daily wear.

Layering is your friend during the transition to fall, and sleeveless shirts can walk right with you into autumn as a lay-

ering piece under lightweight button downs, denim jackets, or boyfriend cardigans. As cooler temperatures creep in, try a turtleneck under a slip dress for a classic look that'll also keep the chill out. Toss on a pair of booties, and you're ready for anything.


White after Labor Day? Toss out that old rule! Those white



jeans you love for summer can still come out and play, if you pair them with the right pieces. Three-quarter sleeved tops, sweaters (Liverpool's selection is a must-try), cardis, denim jackets...They all make a great pairing with slim silhouette white jeans. Layer up with neutrals and textures that usher your white bottoms into the new season.


Accessory-wise, crossbody bags are here to stay. We love the look of leather for fall, and Hobo has some sweet little bags you'll want to get your hands on. Hats are a yes as well, from cowboy to Newsboy and flat caps. Top it all off with layered necklaces (We have some you'll absolutely fall for, pun intended) and a great pair of earrings for a look worthy of a chef's kiss.

Find your fall clothing and accessories at Blue Bay Lifestyle Co., 27 Racetrack Rd NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547. Open Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Closed Sunday.

@bluebaylifestyle, Facebook.com/BlueBayLifestyleCo, bluebaylifestyle.com





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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
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It's Almost Time for the Annual Destin Seafood Festival!

BY CALI HLAVAC

One of the locals' favorite times of year is the Destin Seafood Festival, back for its 46th year! So popular is this exciting, delicious, delectable event that more than 60,000 locals and visitors are expected to walk through. The entire Destin Seafood Festival is a one-mile stretch, beginning at Harborwalk Village and stretching all the way to Heron Harbor with stages on each end. The 2023 Festival included more than 110 food and craft vendors, in addition to local restaurants.

Happening Friday through Sunday, September 27-29, the Festival kicks off October's month-long Destin Fishing Rodeo. As always, it is absolutely amazing to attend and you'll get the opportunity to take in some of the best local and coastal musicians at the beach with five stages beckoning you to a variety of live rock, reggae, country, tropical tunes and more. Local Destin restaurants and eateries will serve up their scrumptious seafood specialties on the docks and along the new, pedestri-

an-friendly Harbor Boardwalk. Cold drinks, including beer and wine, are available and will keep you cooled off while you take it all in. You can stroll along the Destin Harbor enjoying the arts and crafts where artists and vendors display their jewelry, clothing, sculpture, glass, watercolors, oil paintings, designs and more. And don't forget your seafood festival T-shirt!

Enjoy the festival that has always been free – or buy a VIP ticket and enjoy the VIP area! Destin Seafood Festival organizers have created a local seafood experience that brings back the flare of local seafood to our Destin Seafood Festival. Located inside the larger festival, the VIP area will require a paid ticket to browse the local restaurant and chef tents, sample their food flavors and vote for your favorites. For more information on participating as a chef or being a sponsor for this great event, visit www.destinseafoodfestival.com.

All the food and fun began in 1978 when the Destin Charter Boat Ladies Auxiliary decided to establish a festival



SAVVY LEIGH PHOTO

to celebrate local fishermen. Now a Destin tradition, it used to be only a one-day festival on "Kelly's Hill," where folks could overlook the Destin Harbor, the current site of HarborWalk Village. It has always been held in conjunction with the Destin Fishing Rodeo during October. Proceeds from the festival are donated back to the community, including the Destin Charter Boat Association who works to maintain the fishery our community was built on; the Miss Destin scholarships; Destin Fisherman's Fund to help those in need and more! The festival is hosted by area businesses in

conjunction with sponsors and countless volunteers.

This year's musical entertainment, with five different stages, will feature local bands playing throughout the festival. Harbor restaurants and bars will offer a full lineup of local favorites as well, performing throughout the day and evening. You can bring a chair and chill or don your dancing shoes! Bands and schedule TBA. Visit DestinSeafoodFestival.com.

This year the Kids Zone has expanded with multiple games for all ages. Sponsored by Fudpucker's, the Kids Zone will include painting oyster shells, sand

art, play area and more. The HarborWalk Kids Fun Zone has Hamster balls, a rock-climbing wall and a zip line. There is a seating tent nearby also. Kids will delight in face-painting and tattoos as well.

Parking will be available at Heron Harbor, the HarborWalk Village, the Marler public parking lots, the Destin Community Center and the Destin Fishing Museum. Shuttles will also be provided from the Morgan Sports Complex to the Harbor, free of charge.

Admission is totally free or you can go as a VIP with passes that include complimentary unlimited food with a variety of seafood, gumbos and catered treats and more. VIP Tickets also include private bathrooms, cash bar, additional vendors, TVs, live music and more. To purchase a VIP pass, visit the official Destin Seafood Festival website.

For a site map, to become a vendor and other information, visit DestinSeafoodFestival.com. Email info@destinseafoodfest.com.

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2024 Football Guide

Football. Food. Fun. Fans.
Let the Games Begin...



By SCOTT MILLER

I can still remember how the excitement felt every week, every game, every time.

The chills and tingling would come over me as the National Anthem played just before kick-off. Without fail, it was an experience I have always treasured.

Playing football is a very unique, one-of-a-kind thing. Although my playing days are now well in the rearview mirror, the sport we call football is still very special to me. It truly is the ultimate team sport.

Best Places to Watch Your Favorite Teams

The cool thing is just how many passionate, loyal, die-hard football fans there are and, as I've come to learn over these past nine years, especially here in the South. Yes, the game has evolved, the conferences have changed and the college football playoff structure has grown, but the passion is the same.

So, friends, now that September is here, it's time again to put that jersey back on and gather together at our favorite local sports bars and restaurants to celebrate the season—Football Season that is!

Here are a few of my favorite game day venues. I recommend you try them all!

AJ's on the Bayou

Located at the Base of Cinco Bayou Bridge in Fort Walton Beach. AJ's on the Bayou is in a

beautiful setting offering indoor as well as outdoor seating on the open-air deck overlooking the Cinco Bayou. AJ's on the Bayou serves brunch and bottomless mimosas with food purchase for \$10.95. Serving up daily weekday lunch specials for \$12.95 with ice tea, entertainment or live music everyday.

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

AJ's Oyster Shanty - Okaloosa Island

A dozen for me; a dozen for you! Located on Okaloosa Island, AJ's Oyster Shanty serves up fresh, cold oysters, fresh seafood and the best live music on the Island. Don't miss the Thursday Prime Rib Dinner Special - enjoy a 10oz cut of prime rib served with baked po-

tato and side salad, with au jus and horseradish cream sauce for \$22.95 every Thursday at 4 p.m. Key Lime Pie is available all day, every day! Join us for Karaoke every Wednesday night at 7 p.m. and live music all other nights! The most fun on the Island!

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

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

For 40 years, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From its humble beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trailer on

the Destin Harbor, it has grown to four locations along our Emerald Coast, serving fresh seafood, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all die hard football fans, AJ's boasts the one and only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor, where you can watch your favorite games on the BIG, BIG screen surrounded by the energy and beauty of the Destin Harbor. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month, too. Don't miss any of the action! Come on down to AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar all season long.

(850)837-1913
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ajsdestin.com

Continued on next page



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• 1285 Eglin Pkwy, Unit 23134

• 290 NE Eglin Pkwy

Crestview

• 297B James Lee Blvd

Panama City

• 1360 West 15th St

Callaway

• 809/807 N. Tyndall Pkwy

Pensacola

• 4600 Mobile Hwy, Unit 17



SEC Football Schedule

SEC	Aug 31	Sept 7	Sept 14	Sept 21	Sept 28	Oct 5	Oct 12	Oct 19	Oct 26	Nov 2	Nov 9	Nov 16	Nov 23	Nov 30
Alabama	W. Kent	S. FLA	@WISC	OPEN	UGA	@VANDY	S. CAR	@TENN	MIZZ	OPEN	@LSU	MERCER	@OU	AUB
Arkansas	PI BLUFF (29)	@OKLA ST	UAB	@AUB	TEX A&M	TENN	OPEN	LSU	MISS ST	OLE MISS	OPEN	TEXAS	LA TECH	@MIZZ
Auburn	ALA A&M	CALIF	N. MEX	ARK	OU	@UGA	OPEN	@MIZZ	@KEN	VANDY	OPEN	UL MONROE	TEX A&M	@BAMA
Florida	MIAMI	SAMFORD	TEX A&M	@MISS ST	OPEN	UCF	@TENN	UK	OPEN	UGA	@TEXAS	LSU	OLE MISS	@FL ST
Georgia	CLEMSON	TENN TECH	@UK	OPEN	@BAMA	AUB	MISS ST	@TEXAS	OPEN	FLA	@OLE MISS	TENN	U MASS	GA TECH
Kentucky	SO MISS	S CAR	UGA	OH	@OLE MISS	OPEN	VANDY	@FLA	AUB	@TENN	OPEN	MURRAY ST	@TEXAS	LOUISVILLE
LSU	USC	NICHOLLS	@S. CAR	UCLA	S. ALA	OPEN	OLE MISS	@ARK	@A&M	OPEN	BAMA	@FLA	VANDY	OU
MSU	E. KEN	@ARIZ ST	TOLEDO	FLA	@TEXAS	OPEN	@UGA	A&M	ARK	U MASS	@TENN	OPEN	MIZZOU	@OLE MISS
Missouri	MURR ST (29)	BUFFALO	BC	VANDY	OPEN	@A&M	@U MASS	AUB	@BAMA	OPEN	OU	@S. CAR	@MISS ST	ARK
Oklahoma	TEMPLE	HOUSTON	TULANE	TENN	@AUB	OPEN	TEXAS	S. CAR	@OLE MISS	MAINE	@MIZZOU	OPEN	BAMA	@LSU
Ole Miss	FURMAN	MTSU	WAKE FOR	GA. SOU	UK	@S. CAR	@LSU	OPEN	OU	@ARK	UGA	OPEN	@FLA	MISS ST
SC	OLD DOM	@UK	LSU	AKRON	OPEN	OLE MISS	@BAMA	@OU	OPEN	A&M	@VANDY	MIZZOU	WOFFORD	@CLEMSON
Tenn	CHATTA	NC ST	KENT ST	@OU	OPEN	@ARK	FLA	BAMA	OPEN	UK	MISS ST	@UGA	UTEP	@VANDY
Tex A&M	ND	McNEESE	@FLA	BOWLING GR	ARK	MIZZOU	OPEN	@MISS ST	LSU	@S. CAR	OPEN	N MEX ST	@AUB	TEXAS
Texas	COLO	@MICH	UTSA	UL MONROE	MISS ST	OPEN	OU	UGA	@VANDY	OPEN	FLA	@ARK	UK	@A&M
VANDY	VA TECH	ALCORN ST	@GA ST	@ MIZZOU	OPEN	BAMA	@UK	BALL ST	TEXAS	@AUB	S. CAR	OPEN	@LSU	TENN

2024 College Football Game Day Highlights

Week 3: September 14
 South Carolina vs LSU 11am ABC
 Wisconsin vs Alabama 11am FOX
 Florida vs Texas A&M 2:30pm ABC
 Wake Forest vs Ole Miss 5:30pm CW
 Kentucky vs Georgia 6:30pm ABC
 Auburn vs New Mexico 6:30pm TBA
 Miss. St. vs Toledo 6:30pm TBA

Week 4: September 21
 Miss. St. vs Florida 11am TBA
 Auburn vs Arkansas TBA
 LSU vs UCLA TBA
 Oklahoma vs Tennessee TBA
 Texas A&M vs Bowling Green TBA

Ole Miss vs Ga. Southern TBA
 Michigan vs USC 2:30pm CBS

Week 5: September 28
 Ole Miss vs Kentucky TBA
 Auburn vs Oklahoma TBA
 Texas vs Miss. St. TBA
 Penn St. vs Illinois TBA
 Clemson vs Stanford TBA
 Alabama vs Georgia 6:30pm ABC
 Michigan St. vs Ohio St. TBA

Week 6: October 5
 Penn St. vs UCLA TBA
 Florida St. vs Clemson TBA

Georgia vs Auburn TBA
 Ohio St. vs Iowa TBA
 Arkansas vs Tennessee TBA
 Vanderbilt vs Alabama TBA
 Washington vs Michigan TBA

Week 7: October 12
 USC vs Penn St. TBA
 Georgia vs Miss St. TBA
 Tennessee vs Florida TBA
 Alabama vs S. Carolina Noon TBA
 LSU vs Mississippi TBA
 Oregon vs Ohio St. TBA
 Oklahoma vs Texas TBA

High School Football Schedules

Fort Walton Beach District 2-4A
Head coach Bobby Clayton
 8/23 vs. Tate
 8/3 — South Walton
 9/6 — at West Florida
 9/12 — at Booker T. Washington
 9/19 — Leon
 *9/27 — Rickards
 *10/11 — at Arnold
 10/18 — Godby
 *10/25 — at Choctaw
 Nov. 1 — Crestview

Choctaw District 2-4A
Head coach Frank Beasley
 8/23 — at Gulf Shores (Alabama)
 8/30 — at Navarre, 7:30 p.m.
 9/6 — Crestview
 9/13 — at Pine Forest
 9/20 — Niceville
 *9/27 — Arnold
 10/4 — South Walton
 *10/10 — at Rickards
 *10/25 — Fort Walton Beach
 11/1 — at Enterprise (Alabama), TBA

Niceville (District 1-5A)
Head coach Grant Thompson
 8/23 — South Sumter (Bushnell)
 8/30 — Escambia (Pensacola)
 9/6 — Pine Forest (Pensacola)
 9/13 — at Crestview
 9/20 — at Choctawhatchee (Fort Walton Beach)
 9/27 — Gulf Breeze*
 10/4 — BYE WEEK
 10/11 — at Mosley (Lynn Haven)* at Tommy Oliver
 10/18 — Lincoln (Tallahassee)
 10/25 — at Milton,* 7:30 CT
 11/1 — at Navarre, 7:30 CT
 *District games

Destin Sharks
Head Coach E. Green
 8/23 at Northview L 26-7
 8/30 at Baker
 9/13 vs. Pensacola
 9/20 vs. Port St. Joe
 9/27 vs. Opp
 10/4 vs. Bozeman
 10/18 vs. Chipley
 10/25 at Booker T. Washington
 11/1 at Carrollwood Day

BEST PLACES

continued from previous page

FUBAR Pizza Bar

Looking for a sports bar to call home? Welcome to FUBAR pizza bar nestled on Okaloosa Island. Locally owned and family friendly, Fubar is known for its almost-famous pizza and wings and carries all sports games and live entertainment, along with impeccable service. You can enjoy all that while enjoying the

waterfront view.

FUBAR has plenty of games for the kids along with pool tables, corn hole, dart boards and more. When out on the water all day, come dock your boat on one of FUBAR'S boat slips and enjoy the incredible view. Feel free to bring along your furry friends to join you on the patio.

Need the perfect space to host a party or event? FUBAR is equipped with numerous private sections with the option of

having a private bar as well. The outside deck can hold up to 300 people comfortably and can be sectioned off to fit your needs. In addition to the pizza and wings, FUBAR can customize a menu for you from Italian food to Prime Rib and everything in between. Open 7 days from 11 a.m.-2 a.m.

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2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's
 Okaloosa County - Sunday, Oct. 27
 Panama City - Sunday, Nov. 3

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PANAMA CITY



OKALOOSA COUNTY



2024 PRO Schedule Weekly: Dates, Times, TV

Week 2
Thursday, Sept. 12
 Buffalo Bills at Miami Dolphins – 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Sept. 15
 Las Vegas Raiders at Baltimore Ravens – Noon, CBS
 Los Angeles Chargers at Carolina Panthers – Noon, CBS
 New Orleans Saints at Dallas Cowboys – Noon, Fox
 Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Detroit Lions – Noon, Fox
 Indianapolis Colts at Green Bay Packers – Noon, Fox
 Cleveland Browns at Jacksonville Jaguars – Noon, CBS
 San Francisco 49ers at Minnesota Vikings – Noon, CBS
 Seattle Seahawks at New England Patriots – Noon, Fox
 New York Jets at Tennessee Titans – Noon, CBS
 New York Giants at Washington Commanders – Noon, Fox
 Los Angeles Rams at Arizona Cardinals – 3:05 p.m., Fox
 Pittsburgh Steelers at Denver Broncos – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Cincinnati Bengals at Kansas City Chiefs – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Chicago Bears at Houston Texans – 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Sept. 16
 Atlanta Falcons at Philadelphia Eagles – 7:15 p.m., ESPN

Week 3
Thursday, Sept. 19
 New England Patriots at New York Jets – 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Sept. 22
 New York Giants at Cleveland Browns – Noon, Fox
 Chicago Bears at Indianapolis Colts – Noon, CBS
 Houston Texans at Minnesota Vikings – Noon, CBS
 Philadelphia Eagles at New Orleans Saints – Noon, Fox
 Los Angeles Chargers at Pittsburgh Steelers – Noon, CBS
 Denver Broncos at Tampa Bay Buccaneers – Noon, Fox
 Green Bay Packers at Tennessee Titans – Noon, Fox
 Carolina Panthers at Las Vegas Raiders – 3:05 p.m., CBS
 Miami Dolphins at Seattle Seahawks – 3:05 p.m., CBS
 Detroit Lions at Arizona Cardinals – 3:25 p.m., Fox
 Baltimore Ravens at Dallas Cowboys – 3:25 p.m., Fox
 San Francisco 49ers at Los Angeles Rams – 3:25 p.m., Fox
 Kansas City Chiefs at Atlanta Falcons – 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Sept. 23
 Jacksonville Jaguars at Buffalo Bills – 7:30 p.m., ESPN
 Washington Commanders at Cincinnati Bengals – 7:15 p.m., ABC

Week 4
Thursday, Sept. 26
 Dallas Cowboys at New York Giants – 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Sept. 29
 New Orleans Saints at Atlanta Falcons – Noon, Fox
 Cincinnati Bengals at Carolina Panthers – Noon, Fox
 Los Angeles Rams at Chicago Bears – Noon, Fox
 Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers – Noon, CBS
 Jacksonville Jaguars at Houston Texans – Noon, CBS
 Pittsburgh Steelers at Indianapolis Colts – Noon, CBS
 Denver Broncos at New York Jets – Noon, CBS
 Philadelphia Eagles at Tampa Bay Buccaneers – Noon, Fox
 Washington Commanders at Arizona Cardinals – 3:05 p.m., Fox
 New England Patriots at San Francisco 49ers – 3:05 p.m., Fox
 Kansas City Chiefs at Los Angeles Chargers – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Cleveland Browns at Las Vegas Raiders – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Buffalo Bills at Baltimore Ravens – 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Sept. 30
 Tennessee Titans at Miami Dolphins – 7:30 p.m., ESPN
 Seattle Seahawks at Detroit Lions – 7:15 p.m., ABC

Week 5
Thursday, Oct. 3
 Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Atlanta Falcons – 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 6
 New York Jets vs Minnesota Vikings (Tottenham) – 9:30 a.m., NFL Network
 Carolina Panthers at Chicago Bears – Noon, Fox
 Baltimore Ravens at Cincinnati Bengals – Noon, CBS
 Buffalo Bills at Houston Texans – Noon, CBS
 Indianapolis Colts at Jacksonville Jaguars – Noon, CBS
 Miami Dolphins at New England Patriots – Noon, Fox
 Cleveland Browns at Washington Commanders – Noon, Fox
 Las Vegas Raiders at Denver Broncos – Noon, Fox
 Arizona Cardinals at San Francisco 49ers – 3:05 p.m., Fox
 Green Bay Packers at Los Angeles Rams – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 New York Giants at Seattle Seahawks – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Dallas Cowboys at Pittsburgh Steelers – 7:20 p.m., NBC*
Monday, Oct. 7
 New Orleans Saints at Kansas City Chiefs – 7:15 p.m., ESPN

Sunday, Oct. 20
 New England Patriots at Jacksonville Jaguars (Wembley) – 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
 Seattle Seahawks at Atlanta Falcons – Noon, Fox
 Tennessee Titans at Buffalo Bills – Noon, CBS
 Cincinnati Bengals at Cleveland Browns – Noon, CBS
 Houston Texans at Green Bay Packers – Noon, CBS
 Miami Dolphins at Indianapolis Colts – Noon, Fox
 Detroit Lions at Minnesota Vikings – Noon, Fox
 Philadelphia Eagles at New York Giants – Noon, Fox
 Las Vegas Raiders at Los Angeles Rams – 3:05 p.m., CBS
 Carolina Panthers at Washington Commanders – 3:05 p.m., CBS
 Kansas City Chiefs at San Francisco 49ers – 3:25 p.m., Fox
 New York Jets at Pittsburgh Steelers – 7:20 p.m., NBC*
Monday, Oct. 21
 Baltimore Ravens at Tampa Bay Buccaneers – 7:15 p.m., ESPN
 Los Angeles Chargers at Arizona Cardinals – 8 p.m., ESPN+

Week 6
Thursday, Oct. 10
 San Francisco 49ers at Seattle Seahawks – 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 13
 Jacksonville Jaguars vs Chicago Bears (Tottenham) – 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
 Washington Commanders at Baltimore Ravens – Noon, CBS
 Arizona Cardinals at Green Bay Packers – Noon, Fox
 Houston Texans at New England Patriots – Noon, CBS
 Tampa Bay Buccaneers at New Orleans Saints – Noon, Fox
 Cleveland Browns at Philadelphia Eagles – Noon, Fox
 Indianapolis Colts at Tennessee Titans – Noon, CBS
 Los Angeles Chargers at Denver Broncos – 3:05 p.m., CBS
 Pittsburgh Steelers at Las Vegas Raiders – 3:05 p.m., CBS
 Atlanta Falcons at Carolina Panthers – 3:25 p.m., Fox
 Detroit Lions at Dallas Cowboys – 3:25 p.m., Fox
 Cincinnati Bengals at New York Giants – 7:20 p.m., NBC*
Monday, Oct. 14
 Buffalo Bills at New York Jets – 7:15 p.m., ESPN

Week 8
Thursday, Oct. 24
 Minnesota Vikings at Los Angeles Rams – 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 27
 Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns – Noon, CBS
 Tennessee Titans at Detroit Lions – Noon, Fox
 Indianapolis Colts at Houston Texans – Noon, CBS
 Green Bay Packers at Jacksonville Jaguars – Noon, Fox
 Arizona Cardinals at Miami Dolphins – Noon, Fox
 New York Jets at New England Patriots – Noon, CBS
 Atlanta Falcons at Tampa Bay Buccaneers – Noon, Fox
 Chicago Bears at Washington Commanders – Noon, CBS
 New Orleans Saints at Los Angeles Chargers – 3:05 p.m., Fox
 Buffalo Bills at Seattle Seahawks – 3:05 p.m., Fox
 Philadelphia Eagles at Cincinnati Bengals – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Carolina Panthers at Denver Broncos – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Kansas City Chiefs at Las Vegas Raiders – 3:25 p.m., CBS
 Dallas Cowboys at San Francisco 49ers – 7:20 p.m., NBC*
Monday, Oct. 28
 New York Giants at Pittsburgh Steelers – 7:15 p.m., ESPN/ABC

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2024 Destin Fishing Rodeo Calendar of Events

SEPTEMBER

Rodeo Judges Meeting (Monday, September 9th)

Volunteer Rodeo Judges will meet at 5 p.m. at the Destin Community Center for an informative meeting regarding the record-keeping of the Rodeo. If you are interested in participating as a Rodeo Judge, Contact the Rodeo office at 850.837.6734.

Meet Miss Destin (Thursday, September 19th)

Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 6 p.m., The Inn on Destin Harbor will host an Introduction party for Miss Reagan Magee, Miss Destin 2024. Captains, Crew, Anglers, volunteers and their families are invited to this 22nd Annual Destin Tradition.

Captain and Mate's Meeting (Thursday, September 26th)

Sponsored by Centennial Bank, and A.J.'s in the downstairs restaurant area. Thursday, September 26, 2024 – Registration begins at 4 p.m. The meeting will begin at 5 p.m.. Free food and beverages for Captains, Mates

and their guests. Boats can register and pick up captain's packages at the event. Rules changes will be announced and discussed at this very important, mandatory meeting. Centennial Bank will give away \$500 to a lucky registered boat captain! (must be present to win). Angler entry forms will be disbursed.

76th Annual Rodeo Reel Local Rodeo Kick-Off Party (Thursday, September 26th)

Immediately following the Captains and Mates Meeting on Thursday, September 26, 2024, at 6 p.m., A.J.'s will host the 76th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo Kick-Off Party! Family-fun gathering with Live Music! Join Us! Sponsored by Bud Light.

www.ajsdestin.com

46th Annual Destin Seafood Festival (September 27, 28, & 29)

Come join us along the harbor at the 46th Annual Destin Seafood Festival. Live music on multiple stages all three days of the event! Admission is FREE. Good times – Priceless!



Destin 5K Rodeo Run (Sunday, September 29th)

Starts at the picturesque Clement Taylor Park on the beautiful Choctawhatchee Bay. This run meanders through historic Destin neighborhoods and ends back at the park. Proceeds benefit the Miss Destin Scholarship Fund. Contact kimmymeyers@yahoo.com for more information or register online at destinfishingrodeo.org

OCTOBER

76th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo (October 1st - 31st)

Come join us at the 76th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo. Weigh-Ins are everyday behind A.J.'s from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Destin Fishing Rodeo 16th Annual Kid's Wagon Boat Parade (Sunday, October 6th)

The popular Annual Kid's

Wagon Boat Parade will roll at 6 p.m. at A.J.'s Seafood and Oyster Bar. Celebrate the Destin Fishing Rodeo with the Kids Wagon parade. A free family-friendly event on the Destin harbor. Decorate your wagon to look like a sailing sloop, charter boat, pirate ship or bathtub! Whatever your boat designer kid dreams up! Join AJ's and the Destin Fishing Rodeo as they bring you fun activities. There is no registration fee and is open for elementary school-aged children.

Kids Fall Movie Festival (Monday, October 7th)

School is out and A.J.'s has just the thing to keep the kids entertained! A.J.'s will be showing a FREE movie on the famous JumboTron! Kids will be treated to hot dogs, popcorn and snowcones! For more details please visit www.ajsdestin.com.

Bruce Cheves Day (Wednesday, October 16th)

Come to the docks and celebrate the day the City of Destin

Continued on next page

5

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Immaculate Gulf view 2/2 on the 11th floor of Palms of Destin Resort, in the heart of all the emerald coast has to offer! This remarkable unit overlooks the beautiful Gulf of Mexico, as well as the expansive pool area of this popular vacation destination -complete with three pools, huge hot tub, splash pad, in-door and out-door restaurant, two on-site bars, coffee shop, fitness center, playground, and covered parking garage. Sold furnished and currently used as a short-term income producing rental when owner isn't using.

Only \$499,000!



Wellness

J&B Medical Can Give You A Lift!

BY KELLY STALNAKER

Falls within the home are the leading cause of hospital visits for older adults. But, there are tools and products available to help prevent falls and fall related injuries.

For example, Golden lift chairs help individuals with mobility issues to safely sit down or rise from a seated position. They look like a regular recliner, but have a motorized feature that lifts the chair up and tilts it forward for assistance into a standing position. Some models of the chairs are offered with the capability for micro-adjustments in the reclined and seated positions. This feature can help improve posture and allows for optimal comfort for the user. And with the elevated leg rest, it can improve circulation and reduce swelling. They even offer the ability to recline into the Trendelenburg position (elevating the feet and legs of the patient above the level of the heart).

Golden lift chairs are luxurious, very practical and made by Americans in Philadelphia,



Pa. If you or your loved one has a difficult time sitting down or rising to a standing position, a Golden lift chair could be a game changer for them to allow for more independence. They are super comfortable to sleep in, too, especially for an individual that might need elevation while sleeping.

At J&B Medical, we have Golden lift chairs available for

sale and rent. A rental chair is perfect for someone just needing a little extra assistance during recovery from a surgery or injury. Stop by and check out all of the chairs we have in stock. We also carry Golden scooters that you can take with you anywhere you go! Currently, we have several in stock and on sale and we offer FREE local delivery!

RODEO CALENDAR

continued from previous page

has declared BRUCE CHEVES DAY! Our own weighmaster will be holding court (not in court!) and telling his best tales this day.

Ring of the Bell (Wednesday, October 16th)

Each year at 5 p.m. on Bruce Cheves Day, the Rodeo celebrates the lives and legends of those we lost this year.

Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation Day (Saturday, October 19th)

Each October, The Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation brings in children from foster situations to fish and learn about marine habitats and environmental awareness. Sponsored by The New Florida Girl's American Spirit, Fish Florida, A.J.'s Seafood & Oyster Bar, Pilot Company, Zup-Med Memphis and Destin Realty.

2nd Annual Miss Destin Mingle (Saturday, October 26th)

Miss Destin's from throughout the years come from near and far

to celebrate the newest member of their "club." The girls get together to reminisce and enjoy an afternoon harbor cruise, and photo opportunities at the weigh-in! Come celebrate these incredible women with us!

Halloween on the Harbor! (Thursday, October 31st)

Wear your costume and join Rodeo Captains, Anglers, Rodeo Judges, Miss Destin and volunteers to be a part of the largest Halloween Party in Destin.



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You Can't Know Until You Know



By STEPHENIE CRAIG

Our oldest son walked away from us and into his dorm just before we headed out of town after the first college move in. The symbolic moment of him walking away from his childhood and into his adulthood wasn't lost on me and brought some tears. Now we begin the redefining of a new version of life and relationship as we navigate simultaneous joy, gratitude, grief, pride and excitement.



Many parents have gone before us launching kids. We listened, cared and expressed compassion. However, without having walked the road ourselves, we didn't deeply understand that particular experience. We couldn't know until we knew. Now, we see this family transition with new eyes, fresh emotions and have a deeper empathy to offer those who come after us. We will send a thoughtful text, take a mom for lunch, tell a Dad he might feel sadder than he is expecting, give longer hugs, and check on people weeks after the move in.

While pain isn't unique to the human experience, we all walk through different brands of pain at different moments. Your pain is your own and needs its own space to be felt and processed.

And, your pain journey can also be an invitation to care for others with similar pain in

uniquely empathic ways. If you've walked through divorce, you understand what those walking through divorce might be feeling and needing. If you've walked through cancer diagnosis, you understand what those walking through cancer might be feeling and needing.

So, how do you use your experience to extend care and empathy to others walking a similar road to the one you've walked?

10 Ways to Care for Others from Your Experience:

Give your personal pain space. Take the time to understand your experience, feel your feelings, and reflect on what you're learning. Seek support as you process your pain.

Notice the pain of others. Be aware and curious about pain others might be experiencing. Extend compassion broadly to others while noticing when a person's pain might align more closely to something you've experienced.

Remember your experience. Remember how you felt in your body and thoughts in the midst of pain. What did you need? What would have helped you feel seen and cared for? Explore remembering your pain as a brainstorm while also being mindful that each person may have different needs.

Listen with validation. Ask curious, open ended questions. How are you feeling lately? What is this like for you on the inside? How are you navigating this transition emotionally? Then remind the person their feelings are normal. I understand why you're feeling sad, this is really sad.

Ask how you can support them. Sometimes people aren't quite sure what they need but other times they can tell you clearly. Remember to ask.

Offer encouraging words. Send a card, text or call letting them know you are thinking about them and care about their experience.

Offer practical gestures. Deliver dinner, take them to coffee, take them a basket of snacks, provide house cleaning services.

Offer kindness. Send flowers, a thoughtful item through the mail, leave something thoughtful on their porch.

Offer your presence. Offer a hug, to sit with someone and listen, invite them on a walk, or offer to do something they enjoy.

Follow up. Put reminders in

your calendar and/or reach out to check in when you think of the person consistently over time.

Your understanding and empathy can be a meaningful gift to someone else walking through hard things. Remember the care you offer is for the other person and not to fill a need in your-

self to provide care. And, at the same time, providing empathic care to others does often result in deeper healing within you.

Connect with us along your journey for counseling and coaching at Journeybravely.com.



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 Wellness


BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

Some of us have sedentary seasons, others have sedentary jobs and others have sedentary lifestyles. The definition of sedentary is settled as in non-migratory, not physically active or permanently attached like the barnacles on a boat or the couch showing visitors exactly where you sit most of the time.

Factors that add to physical inactivity include environmental factors including traffic congestion, air pollution, shortage of parks and walking paths as well as technology devices from phones to televisions. Sedentary jobs have increased 83% since 1950 versus physically active jobs which now make up less than 20% of the U.S. workforce, down by roughly half of jobs available in 1960.

No matter which of these categories we fall in, whether

seasonally or most of the time, the effects are the same. (Please note that this list does not cover the effects to circulation levels of sex hormones, circulation or body process changes.)

- Obesity Increased BP
- Higher blood sugar
- Excess body fat around waist (reduced metabolism impairs the body's ability to break down fat) Abnormal cholesterol level changes
- Increased risk of cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer due to elevated chronic inflammation
- Type 2 diabetes
- Muscle weakness
- Decreased flexibility

One study over a 15-year period tracked the negative effects a sedentary lifestyle had on mental wellbeing. A 2018 study of 1,237,194 people showed that those who exercised reported fewer mental health problems than those who did not. In another recent preliminary study scientists found sedentary lifestyles were linked to the thinning of the brain's amygdala in the temporal lobe which is the region critical to memory function.

In 2020, during the shut downs, many people experienced changes in their sleep

patterns. This caused mental fatigue fed by fear, stress and brain fog (sluggish, fuzzy, unable to focus).



patterns. This caused mental fatigue fed by fear, stress and brain fog (sluggish, fuzzy, unable to focus).

Movement has been replaced by remote controls, blue tooth phones and digital recorders. And let's not forget electric scooters, golf carts, etc. Why do we try so hard to do so little? It's time to change our mindsets and get our bodies moving! If you are currently active, it's also important to look at the percentage of active vs sedentary. The threshold where sedentary can increase your health risk is about 10 hours daily.

Movement burns calories, increases energy, can help maintain muscle tone, affects mental wellness and decreases our desire to snack between meals.

We all know we should be exercising. However, we don't need to start with 30 minutes 3 times per week which is the doctor recommended amount (more often, if you want to increase muscle tone as well as your cardio strength). With that said, let's think outside of the box to get you 'moving' in the right direction.

During your sedentary times, move! Raise your shoulders and let them drop 10x. Perform right and left leg raises (10 on each side), practice squats during commercial breaks; 5 squats before heading to the kitchen and 5 more before settling back in. Stand up using one leg without arm assistance. Exercise your ankles by writing the alphabet with each foot. If your legs are

stretched out, lean forward and touch your toes. Do head circles and stretch your neck by letting your head hang (front, back, left side, right side).

You can also go for a walk around the block after dinner before sitting down for the evening. Use commercials to do jumping jacks, push-ups, skaters, knee raises, etc. Compete with other family members or friends and mix things up. Have your favorite song ready on your phone and dance during commercials. However you choose to start moving be sure to do it well, not half heartedly, as that won't get you the results you're going after.

Lastly, get a standing desk if you spend a lot of time in front of your computer. You can be active whether sitting or standing. Use the alarm on your phone to help you remember to move. You can also take the stairs instead of the elevator, take a lap around the office every hour or have a walking meeting instead of a conference room with doughnuts on the table.

Be creative and have fun. Learn to love your body and your body will reward you.

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- Do you dislike your smile in photographs?
- When you look through magazines, do you envy the models' smiles?
- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
- Would you like to change the way your teeth or gums are shaped?
- Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

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



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Have an Accident? What You Should Do Right After



By JULIE A. MARTIN,
LICENSED AGENT FL

It can be scary to be driving along one minute, and the next, either you've been run off the road, or spun out into the intersection, or even into a ditch. You or your passenger might even be injured, and need medical attention. Here is the short version of how to handle auto accidents so that you know you handled everything correctly and your stress level can come down.

Pull over safely to the side of the road and call 911. Calling for help is the first

essential step in making sure that any injuries are treated in a timely fashion, as well as making sure the police arrive to do a full accident report.

Take photos of the other vehicle(s) involved including the drivers, as the position of the vehicles, for your insurance company, so that there is photo evidence of all damage as well as an accurate representation of who was in which car, as well who was driving.

Make sure you have your license, registration and insurance information on hand. I recommend keeping a copy of your declarations page, your auto id cards and your registration in your glove box.

If your vehicle is not drivable after the accident, you have two choices. If you have AAA, you can have them pick up your vehicle and drop it off at your preferred auto repair shop. If you have towing on your auto policy, and the site of your accident is less than five miles away from your repair shop, you can potentially use the towing coverage on your policy for this accident.

If you are injured, go to



the hospital to get checked out or your primary care physician, if your injuries are not serious. Personal Injury Protection in the state of Florida pays 80% of your \$10,000 coverage, minus the deductible. This includes hospital bills, medical bills relating to your accident injuries, physical therapy, casts, crutches, etc. If you have medical payments on your policy as well, they will start where the Personal Injury Protection ends. If the at fault driver is not you, and they either have no bodily injury liability coverage, or not enough to cover your injuries, this is where uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage comes in. You insure for those times that you get hit, you're hurt, but the person who causes the accident does not have enough coverage to cover your medical expenses.

If you have not already called your insurance company to put in the claim, do so now, calling your agent and explaining to them what happened. Answer their questions and do not guess if you do not know the answer. Let them know that the police have been on the scene. Give them the

case number the police give you and they will get the accident report when it becomes available. Write down the claim

number and any other instructions the claims representative, and your agent give you for the accident.

Dear reader, we all get into a scrape from time to time, and hopefully this list is helpful when you need to know what to do. Call 850-424-6979.

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BEST IN DESTIN 2019 BEST

Sean of the South: Becca at Sunrise



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Sunrise on Lake Martin. I'm usually the first one awake. I rarely have any company in the mornings. I wake up with the chickens. Most mornings, I sit on my porch alone. Just me and the feral cats.

This morning, however, I had company.

looks like?" She curled against me snuggly.

I looked at the pink sky of morning. Daylight had taken hold of the world.

"You've seen one sunrise you've seen them all," I said.

"Wish I could see it."

I squeezed her. "I have an idea. How about you tell me what the sunrise sounds like."

She yawned. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, I want you to tell me how a blind person experiences a sunrise."

Becca curled tighter against me. "You really want to know?"

"I do."

"Well, you have to close your eyes."

sound, but I feel like it does. Even when it's not blowing hard, wind still makes a hiss in the trees, and if you actually listen, you can tell the wind is always around you, all the time, even when you can't see it or feel it. The wind is always there."

"Sort of like the IRS."

She was breathing heavily, like she was falling into another world.

"Are your eyes still closed?" she said.

"Si. What else do you hear?"

"I hear your heart beating,"

she said in a sleepy voice. "Because my head is on your chest."

"What does my heart sound like?"

But she was already gone. Lightly snoring. Tucked against me tightly.

Best sunrise I've ever heard.



I heard small feet walking onto the screened porch, overlooking the lake. I turned to see a child with messy hair, staggering toward me. A 12-year-old girl in pajamas.

She used her hands to feel her way through the maze of patio furniture. She walks like this, feeling her way around, even when it's daylight.

My goddaughter sat beside me on the sofa. She sort of crawled into my lap, head resting against my chest.

"Morning," she said with a yawn. Her breath smelled like a billy goat's lower intestinal tract.

"Good morning, Dragon Breath," I said.

She cupped her hand to her mouth and attempted to smell her own breath. Birds fell out of the trees.

I picked crust from her eyes. "You're killing me," I said.

"What do you see?" she asked. "Sunrise," I replied.

"Can you describe what it

I did.

"No cheating," she said.

"Scouts' honor."

"First," she said, "I hear birds. But, I feel like when sighted people hear birds, they don't think about all the DIFFERENT birds they're actually hearing. They just hear one sound, birds. But if you listen you can hear millions of sounds."

I listened. We counted 28 different bird calls.

"What else do you hear?" My eyes were still closed.

"I hear screechy things," she said. "Crickets, maybe. Some high-pitched, some low, some go real fast, some go slow. And I hear the water."

"I don't hear any water."

"You have to listen," she said in a groggy tone. "It's a little slapping sound in the distance. Water everywhere."

She was drifting off.

"And the wind," she said lazily. "I hear the wind. A lot of people don't think wind has a



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BY PASTOR "DOC DOUG" STAUFFER

Labor Day is profoundly significant. It shows honor and respect for workers' contributions

A Pastor's Ponderings: Reflecting on Labor Day - Work as Worship

across our nation. It is a fitting time to delve into what the Bible teaches about work. From the beginning, work has been a part of God's design for humanity. In Genesis 2:15, we read, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Even in the perfection of Eden, before the Fall, God assigned Adam the responsibility of tending the gar-

den. Work was not a punishment but had a purpose—it served as an opportunity to fulfill God's plan and to glorify Him through diligent labor.

The Apostle Paul provided a powerful directive on HOW we are to approach our work: 'And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men' (Colossians 3:23). This verse reminds us that our work, whatever it may be, is ultimately for the Lord. Whether planting fields, working for a company, teaching children or guiding a household, we are to perform our tasks with the mindset that we are serving God, not merely human masters. This transformation of our work from mere duty to an act of worship is a profound way to connect with God daily and find joy and

fulfillment in our tasks.

Paul also addresses the issue of work and eating: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Here, the apostle emphasizes the importance of work in providing for oneself and others. This principle underscores the value of personal responsibility and the dignity of labor. By working, we provide for our own needs and contribute to the well-being of our families and communities—not for the welfare of those unwilling to work. (That's Socialism.)

Teaching the Next Generation the Value of Work

As we reflect on these biblical principles, we must consider how

we pass them on to the next generation. In years past, children often took on responsibilities like paper routes, bagging groceries or mowing lawns—tasks that taught them the value of work and the connection between effort and reward. Today, however, far too many parents seem hesitant to engage their children in work that requires a solid work ethic. Instead, screens—televi- sions, phones, or tablets—have become the babysitters of our time.

If we want to raise a generation that understands the dignity and necessity of labor, we must be intentional about teaching them from an early age. Encouraging children to take on responsibilities, complete chores and even earn their own money through simple jobs can instill in them a sense of accomplishment and a recognition of the rewards that come from hard work. Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Labor Day serves as a reminder to appreciate the work we do and the work of others. It is a time to reflect on the blessings that come from honest labor and to remember that every job, no matter how big or small, has value in the eyes of God. In a world that often measures worth by titles, salaries or social status, the Bible offers a distinct perspective: Our worth is found in our faithfulness to God's calling, and our work is an opportunity to reflect His character.

We celebrate Labor Day each year, so let us take the opportunity to renew our commitment to approach our work with a heart of worship. Let us remember that our ultimate boss is the Lord, and let that knowledge infuse our daily tasks with purpose and joy. Whether in the field, the office, the home or the church, may we work heartily, knowing that we are serving the Lord Jesus Christ in all we do.

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.



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Sinfonia Opens Registration for Music Education

Registration is now open for the 2024-2025 Music Education programs. As the only program affiliated with a professional orchestra in the Emerald Coast region, the Sinfonia Youth Orchestra (SYO) offers student musicians unparalleled opportunities to enhance their musical talents and perform in a variety of ensembles throughout the school year under the mentorship of professional musicians.

Programs include the Symphonic Orchestra, for intermediate to advanced (All-State level) middle and high school student musicians who play strings, winds, brass, and percussion; Sinfonietta Strings, open to beginning string students; and Intermediate Strings, open to intermediate string players.

Joining the SYO program comes with numerous benefits. As an established professional orchestra, we bring our extensive experience and knowledge to successfully guide young musicians. SYO is in partnership with the only professional orchestra in the area, offering students hands-on teaching

by experienced professionals. Members enjoy meaningful individual and small group mentoring by experienced sectional instructors, resident musicians lead by Sinfonia Gulf Coast's esteemed music director/conductor, Demetrius Fuller.

The program is led by professional, approachable, energetic, and highly educated musicians, making it an enriching experience for all. Performances at Sinfonia Gulf Coast events feature A-list performers such as Time For Three, Brubeck Brothers Quartet, Patti LaBelle, Kristin Chenoweth, Bernadette Peters and others providing high-caliber performance experiences.

High school students can earn Bright Futures volunteer hours at Sinfonia Gulf Coast and SYO events, adding another layer of benefit to their participation.

The program is designed to be accessible and affordable. Need-based scholarships are available by request. Rehearsals are scheduled on Sunday afternoons to accommodate busy

school-week schedules, and members receive free tickets to each Sinfonia Gulf Coast main season concert.

SYO seniors can apply for the Grace Fulcher Memorial Scholarship, created in honor of Grace Bernice Fulcher, a former SYO member.

"We believe our youth orchestra programs foster a strong sense of community, allowing members to connect with like-minded fellow musicians in a safe, collaborative, and welcoming environment," says Sinfonia Youth Orchestra director Margaret Gordon. "Plus, in addition to quality music education, we are known as 'Funfonia,' because we pack plenty of performance 'fun' into our education program, too!"

Since its establishment in 2007, Sinfonia Gulf Coast's music education programs have served over 200,000 children in Okaloosa and Walton Counties. As an SYO member, you join a well-respected organization making a significant impact in the local community.

For more information about

the Sinfonia Music Education programs, visit SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or contact Margaret

Gordon at mgordon@sinfoniagulfcoast.org.

Call for Student Artists!

Register now to participate in the 2024 Art Show at the Northwest Florida Fair!

The Arts & Design Society (ADSOS) is excited to announce the upcoming Student Art Show, open to high school, middle school and elementary school students from Northwest Florida—a fantastic opportunity for young artists to showcase their creativity and compete for cash prizes.

Registration is Friday, Sept. 20, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. or Saturday, Sept. 21, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. *No late entries accepted.

A reception and awards presentation will be held Sunday, Sept. 22, 2-4 p.m., Exhibit Hall. Cash prizes will be awarded to First, Second, and Third Places in each category: High School, Middle School, and Elementary School. Honorable Mentions will receive a

ribbon. Prize sponsors include the Okaloosa Arts Alliance (OAA) and C.H. "Bull" Rigdon Fairgrounds.

The art will be showcased Sept. 24-28 at C.H. "Bull" Rigdon Fairgrounds and Recreation Complex (formerly Northwest Florida Fairgrounds), 1958 Lewis Turner Blvd (Rt. 189), Fort Walton Beach.

For more information, visit <https://artsdesignsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CTAFAIR-STUDENTS2024.pdf> or <https://www.nwffair.com/fine-arts>.

For more information on the adult call to artists, visit <https://artsdesignsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CTAFAIRADULTS2024.pdf>.



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Arts & Music

Kelly Pierre's Nature-inspired Artwork is 'Transcendent'

Santa Rosa Beach Artist Named 2024 Festival of the Arts Poster Contest Winner

By ZANDRA WOLFGRAM

Artist Kelly Pierre hails from South Louisiana's vibrant culture, where his Cajun French-speaking family owned shrimp boats. Summers spent learning the shrimping business along the Gulf Coast deeply connected him to the seafood industry.

"I got to touch and hold all kinds of marine life. They are beautiful and amazing, and I wanted to save them all," Pierre says in his lilting Louisiana accent.

Pierre's winning artwork, titled Transcendent, is a soothing 24" x 30" acrylic painting featuring an elegant octopus carefully eyeing the viewer as it floats across the canvas in calming sea hues.

"People come here to experience the marine life. It is very inspiring to me," Pierre explains. "I hope my painting reminds people of all the beautiful creatures on this earth and that we recognize that this earth is something to preserve. We need to

preserve our existence."

Most of Pierre's art reflects the beauty, culture, and diversity of the coastal area. His passion for painting began in childhood after seeing an artist at a festival. Inspired by Alabama's "smiling fish" artist Don Sawyer and Louisiana's "blue dog" artist George Rodrigue, as well as his travels to the Caribbean, Pierre has found endless inspiration in both land and sea.

Pierre's Artistic Journey

Now, Pierre can paint almost anywhere, though he usually works from his studio by the sea at Harbor Walk Village in Destin, Florida. After more than 30 years as a professional artist, the 51-year-old still finds great enthusiasm in painting, believing that "a good place to paint is wherever I can."

A previous exhibitor at the Festival of the Arts, this is Pierre's second win in the MKAF Poster Art Contest. He first won in 2019, but severe weather hindered the Festival that year.



"This award means so much. Being an artist was just a dream, but now it's a reality. But it's not about me. I believe we're all artists ... and to everyone out there if you work hard and don't give up, you can achieve your dream."

Facts About the Festival

As the Poster Art Contest winner, Pierre will receive a cash prize of \$750. His winning artwork will be used to promote the 29th Annual Festival of the Arts, showcased on the official Festival poster, program guide, t-shirts, in the Festival

marketing campaign, on the MKAF website, and across MKAF's social media channels.

This year's 29th annual event begins on Friday, Oct. 25 at 6 p.m. with the Arty Kick Off Party at Henderson Beach Resort in Destin. The two-day Festival continues on Saturday, October 26, and Sunday, October 27, throughout The Dugas Pavilion green in Destin.

The much-anticipated event will feature more than 100 juried artists from across the United States, exhibiting original artwork in various mediums including oil, watercolor, acrylic paintings, photography, sculpture, pottery, glass, wood, paper, fiber, mixed media, and jewelry designs. Artists will compete for more than \$12,000 in cash prizes across 18 award categories, including the coveted Best in Show and People's Choice Award, selected by festival fans.

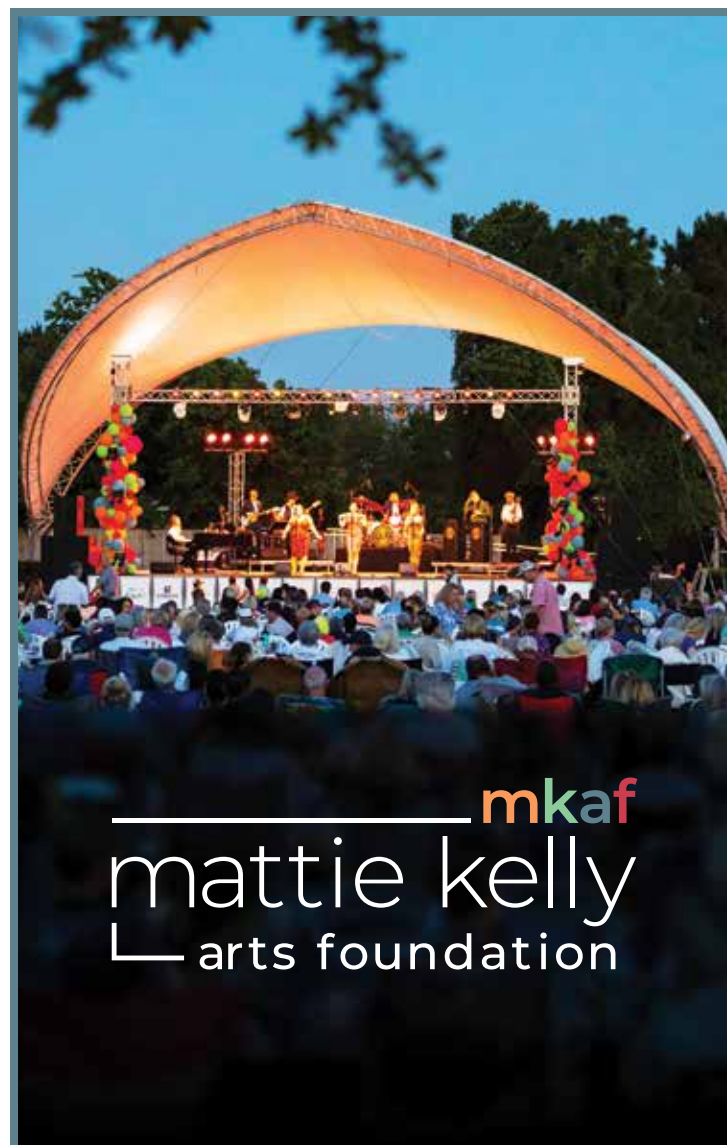
A highlight of the Festival is the Collaborative Art Exhibit,

showcasing select artwork by adult and student artists. This celebration of art, music, food, and family fun will include a live music lineup, hands on arts and crafts activities for children, an art raffle, and more. Visitors can enjoy a diverse menu from local food trucks, along with Wine & Beer Garden and a Bloody Mary bar. Convenient on-site parking and free shuttle service also will be available.

Admission to the Festival is free. Proceeds support MKAF and its community education outreach initiatives, including ArtsReach, which serves K-12 students, individuals with special needs, and active-duty military and veterans throughout Northwest Florida and the Southeast.

Join us in celebrating the arts and the vibrant community at the 2024 Festival of the Arts, and witness the beautiful artwork of Kelly Pierre and other talented artists.

For more information, visit MKAF.org.



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OCT 26 | 9 AM - 5 PM & OCT 27 | 10 AM - 4 PM | Dugas Pavilion Green in Destin

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Proceeds from all events benefit MKAF and its ArtsReach education and community engagement initiatives.



MISS FLORIDA

continued from page 14

ty ties that Fort Walton Beach is known for. The visit concluded with a delightful meal at Magnolia Grill, hosted by owner Tom Rice, providing an opportunity to further connect and reflect on the day's experiences.

Promoting the Miss West Florida Scholarship Competition

In addition to her other engagements, Casana's visit focused on promoting the Miss West Florida Scholarship Competition. Owned by pageant directors Sherry Jones and Jula Ruhland, this competition is scheduled to take place on March 9, 2025, at the Center for Fine and Performing Arts Theater at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. The Miss West Florida scholarship competition is an official preliminary to enter the Miss Florida America scholarship competition in May 2025, offering young women invaluable opportunities for personal growth, leadership development, and academic achievement.

As a former participant and current titleholder, Casana exemplifies how the competition empowers women to reach their full potential, both on stage and within their communities. Her involvement in promoting the Miss West Florida Scholarship Competition underscores her dedication to helping other young women achieve their



One Hopeful Place

dreams and make a difference in their own communities.

A Shared Mission for the Future

As Casana prepares to represent Florida on the national stage at the Miss America Pageant on January 5, 2025, her visit to Fort Walton Beach serves as a powerful reminder of the profound impact that community service can have. Her dedication to her platform, her involvement with the Miss West Florida Scholarship Competition, and, most notably, her time spent at One Hopeful Place illustrate the transformative power of collaboration and community support in creating lasting, positive change.

Casana's journey continues to inspire those around her as she carries the experiences and lessons from her visit into her future endeavors. Her commitment to service and community engagement is making a signifi-



Fort Walton Beach Mayor Ryneason, Miss Florida 2024 Casana Fink and Fort Walton Beach President & CEO Ted Corcoran

cant impact, not only in her local community but across the state of Florida.

As we cheer Casana on in the Miss America Pageant on January 5, 2025, we are reminded of the importance of supporting leaders who are dedicated to making a difference. With the backing of her community and the guidance of local leaders, Casana is well-equipped to continue her mission of empowering others and creating a brighter future for all.



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