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# FWB Life

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## Anything Can Happen at ECTC!

BY NATHANAEL FISHER,  
ECTC PRODUCING ARTISTIC  
DIRECTOR/COFOUNDER

Last year, Season 11 ended with a beautiful and magical show - Mary Poppins. Hillary Marshall Anthony and Vincent Pelligrino, along with 20 other cast members and a spectacular creative team co-created a wealth of magical, heartwarming and inspirational moments on our stage for you, our ECTC community. My favorite moment of the show was during Act II when every cast member took the stage and the full company sang with full hearts "Anything Can Happen." Here are just a few of the impactful lyrics:

*If you reach for the stars  
All you get are the stars.  
But we've found a whole new spin!  
If you reach for the heavens  
You get the stars thrown in -  
Anything can happen if you let it!*

While we were in tech rehearsals for Mary Poppins, I asked the cast to put themselves and their dreams into the number as they sang, and



A Midsummers Night's Dream, Theatre Thursdays,  
Grand Boulevard - 2015

to really imagine and believe that anything could happen for them—and we would believe right along with them. This idea of dreams coming true is personal for me. If you read my article in last year's program, you learned about "How ECTC Came to Be" (you can find this article on our website under "Theatre Thoughts"). As I consider the history of ECTC since its beginning in October of 2012, it is clear to us...Anything CAN Happen.

We launched our first program in January of 2013 with an after-school theatre class of 10 students at Destin Elementary School. The following summer we produced a theatre camp at Destin Elementary with 30 students in a non-musical production of Aladdin. Anna had our 6-month old daughter, Zoe, as well as our 6-year-old twins, Mia and Bella, in tow as she gathered props and designed costumes for 30 students! Ora Wolfgram, a bright eyed

11-year-old girl, played Aladdin's cat. The playwright took liberties in creating many roles for kids — hence Aladdin had a cat. Her only text was "meow," and she delivered that meow with so much subtext each time that the audience knew exactly what that cat was saying. Ora is a professional artist now, and in a beautiful twist of fate, she is serving as ECTC's resident Props Artisan and Stage Manager. We were blown away at the time that our 10 students had grown to 30 (and a cat)... anything can happen!

Summer of 2013, we launched the Family Theatre programs at HarborWalk Village and the Village of Baytowne Wharf. I wrote energetic, three-actor plays, with engaging audience interaction for these sites. I pitched Jamie Hall, Marketing Director for Harborwalk Village at the time, the idea of a Family Theatre show, and she said, "I'll pay you for two performances, and provide tech

**ECTC**

*continued on page 2*

## Membership Keeps Arts FUN-ded

### Will YOU Join Us?

BY ZANDRA WOLFGRAM

Looking for fun? You have arrived. As a member of Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF), you are already aboard the "bus to fun town."

Take it from the MKAF's CEO of Fun, Demetrius Fuller.

"We really want to up our fun factor in all we do—including raising awareness and funding. Our tagline is Membership Keeps Arts FUN-ded," Fuller explains.

To realize our vision to "enhance and inspire every life through arts and culture," it takes community support. As Fuller explains, individual giving has always been the rock bed of MKAF.

"Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation was initially started from the Arts Guild Lunch attended by local art lovers and evolved into the huge support system of volunteers, patrons and sponsors we have today. Membership is the backbone of MKAF and a direct tie to the com-

**MKAF**

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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
**ECTC***continued from page 1*

support. If I like it, I'll book you for the summer." After watching more than 100 people engage in "Pirate Pete and the Case of the Missing Fisherman" while dancing, laughing and having a great time, I asked her, "Well, what's the schedule? Your audience loved that show!" We were

booked with our first gig.

While getting to know this community again (Anna grew up here), we were aware of the wonderful work that StageCrafters was doing in Fort Walton Beach, the great programming at Seaside REP, and the strong theater presence in Bay County with The Martin and Kaleidoscope Theaters. With the growth of the Destin, Miramar Beach

and Santa Rosa Beach communities, it seemed like there was an opportunity to complement the theatre scene with professional theatre programming in Destin and Miramar Beach. So, in summer of 2014, Anna and I again started knocking on doors. Who had an empty retail space or event space that would allow us to produce a show? A Dickens Christmas is a three-actor adaptation of A Christmas Carol that I wrote to help launch our professional theatre, and HarborWalk Village and Sandestin both blessed us with event spaces for that inaugural production. 367 people attended the performances of that show and ECTC's productions for adults and families were launched... anything can happen!

During the first three years of the organization, we stored all the props and costumes we acquired in our garage, the carport was used as the scene and paint shop, and our Chevy Traverse was the work van. We had plastic bins and foldable dollies. One of my most vivid memories is dropping Anna off to teach a class with Miss Darla while I took care of our 8-year-old twins and two-year-old baby. There they were walking down the sidewalk in 90° weather, dolly and bins in tow with a full heart and determination to teach theatre to their students. In the summer of 2015, Stacey Brady, Marketing Director at Grand Boulevard, hired ECTC to produce a 45-minute adaptation of Shakespeare's A Midsummer's Night Dream for Theatre Thursdays in the Grand Park. The following year, Stacey and her team were gracious enough to let us use the space that is now Williams Sonoma for some additional professional theatre shows and kids classes. These were humble beginnings for sure, but Anna and I were already seeing the benefits for kids and patrons.



The ECTC Board Touring 560 Grand Boulevard, Suite 200, August, 2016

The long days, hard work and lugging all the "stuff" around was so worth it when we heard how people's lives were changing for the better.

In addition to producing shows and camps, I was working as an adjunct professor at UWF in Pensacola as well as at Gulf Coast State College in Panama City. During this time, as I drove from one end of Highway 98 to the other and worked on productions in between, I just kept looking for empty spaces. The prayer in my heart was to have a home for ECTC. One day while driving by Grand Boulevard it hit me: every building had second floors that had offices built out, but the 560 building looked empty. Every time I drove by, I considered the idea, "What if that was a space for us?" We already had a great relationship with Grand Boulevard; what were the possibilities? One night while driving by with Anna, I pointed to it. "Anna, see that building? See how it's dark, and how every other building on the second floor has lights but that one?" She nodded with a small smile of understanding. "They haven't built out that space yet and I really feel like we are going to be there one day." "How do you know?" she asked. "I just have a feeling; I'm not saying it's a word from God or anything, I just have this really strong feel-

ing we are going to be there one day."

In August of 2016, I got the call from Stacey Brady. "Hey Nathanael, can you and Anna meet me at the 560 Building at Grand Boulevard?" We walked upstairs into the empty, echoey expanse and she said, "Well, it's 17,600 square feet. Think you can use it?" "Yes!" Anna and I exclaimed as we burst into happy tears. As I recount this story, I can't help but think of some of

*Continued on page 30***Publisher's Note:**

This year, \$32 million was cut from Florida's state cultural arts budget. The impact was immediately felt statewide by 600 organizations as well as additional businesses. Some art organizations had to shut their doors. This unprecedented slash of funds means supporting the arts at the local level is more important now than perhaps ever.

According to an impact 2022 study by Florida Arts &

Culture, Florida's cultural arts generated 91,270 jobs and \$694 million in revenue, with an overall economic impact of \$5.8 billion. As a tourist destination, the arts and tourism go hand in hand. The arts elevate every community's Quality of Place. To defund that impacts the local experience our tourists travel here to enjoy. But, more importantly, these cuts to organizations with education outreach programs have a direct impact on our local community, namely our children.

How can you help? Play your part. Donate. Purchase a ticket to attend a play or concert. Volunteer at an art festival. Own a business? Consider sponsoring an event or, better yet, an art organization's entire season. You will enjoy marketing exposure for your business and the bonus of positively impacting the Quality of Place of your community. Some organizations, such as Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and Emerald Coast Theatre Co. featured here, are membership based. Consider joining. The benefits far exceed the cost. And you are sure to meet many new folks who will kindly remember your philanthropy—and pay it forward.

To do our part, in this and upcoming editions, we are sharing a series of articles spotlighting the missions of some of our local art organizations, so our readers can better understand what they contribute to our communities and the significant economic and social impacts the arts have, both as a driver of tourism and in fostering local communities, particularly for children, the military and educational outreach programs. I believe, when you hear their stories, you'll agree.



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# The Benefits of Post-Acute Rehabilitation: **What is Rehab?**

BY TERESA HALVERSON

Post-acute rehabilitation is a vital component in the recovery journey for patients transitioning from hospital care to home or a lower level of care. The journey towards recovery can often feel daunting, but with a dedicated skilled nursing team and therapists, you are not alone. Skilled Nursing Rehab programs are designed to be compassionate and personalized, ensuring that every patient can progress at their own pace.

Skilled Nursing Rehab facilities offer targeted rehabilitation interventions that focus on improving functional outcomes, whether it's regaining strength, enhancing mobility, or rebuilding confidence in daily activities. The clinical team works closely with each patient to develop customized therapy plans, ensuring that every step taken is aligned with personal goals. We believe that rehabilitation is not a one-size-fits-all process; it requires a tailored approach that respects the individual needs and preferences of each patient.

Inpatient therapy is more than just a treatment; it's a path-

way to reclaiming independence and improving overall quality of life. Therapists utilize a variety of therapeutic techniques and innovative methods to maximize rehabilitation outcomes. From manual therapy and strength training to advanced modalities, our team employs evidence-based practices to help patients regain their strength and functionality.

Post-acute care services can bridge the gap between hospital care and returning home by providing ongoing medical monitoring, medication management, wound care, and therapy services. The goal is to facilitate a smooth transition back to daily activities, enabling patients to reclaim their independence with confidence.

## Benefits of receiving post-acute rehabilitation services:

**Continuity of Care:** The care and treatments you received during an acute hospital stay are carried over to the post-acute setting. This allows for medical treatment to be carried over to the post-acute setting which al-



lows for a coordinated approach to healing.

**Assistance with ADL's (Activities of Daily Living):** ADL's encompass essential self-care tasks such as bathing, dressing, grooming, eating, and toileting. Depending on the individual's needs, post-acute care services can provide trained caregivers who offer assistance and support with these activities. This assistance ensures that patients can maintain their dignity, independence, and overall quality of life while receiving the necessary care and support.

**Person-Centered Treatment Plan:** You receive an individualized treatment plan based on your abilities and needs. While some individuals may only start out with one to two hours of daily therapy, others can achieve up to three hours daily. As mentioned earlier, one

size does not fit all.

**Nursing Care:** Skilled Nursing Rehab Facilities provide 24-hours nursing care. Nursing assists with daily activities: administering medications, monitoring vital signs, and ensuring patient comfort and safety. They speak daily with the physician and monitor any changes in conditions.

**Care Plan and Discharge Planning:** Each individual in a skilled nursing rehab facility is assigned a team of professionals. This team meets with the patient and family to discuss goals, progress and discharge planning. Dedicated discharge planners are available to assist each patient with a smooth transition back into the community once they have completed their rehab program. Resources are arranged on behalf of the patient to ensure success.

It's common for potential patients to have concerns or misconceptions about inpatient therapy. Some may worry about feeling isolated or overwhelmed during their recovery. However, at the Manor at Blue Water Bay, we foster a warm and welcoming

atmosphere, where support is always available. Our therapists are not just skilled professionals; they are empathetic individuals who genuinely care about your well-being.

At The Manor at Blue Water Bay, we recognize the importance of this phase in enhancing the quality of life and ensuring a smooth return to independence. Our commitment to supporting patients through personalized therapy services means that each individual receives tailored interventions designed to meet their unique recovery needs.

If you or a loved one is considering the next step in recovery, we encourage you to reach out for more information about the specialized programs offered at The Manor at Blue Water Bay. Together, we can embark on a journey towards healing and renewed independence. You have a say where you go. Your health; Your choice. Take that first step—your recovery awaits!

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# Daniel "Gus" Gusoff, Owner of Emerald Coast Harley Davidson: Rebel with a Cause

By KELLY MURPHY-REDD

Gus grew up as a city kid in Detroit, Michigan. When he was a young boy, riding in the back seat of the family car, Gus saw something that changed his life. His face, plastered against the window, he saw a bearded biker pull up beside the car. Gus could feel and hear the motorcycle before he could see it. The biker turned to see Gus and gave him a thumbs up. It was the coolest thing Gus had ever seen.

A father who was a fire chief for 40 years in Detroit, a mother who worked for the Ford Motor Company, and his brothers, one a fireman and the other who works in technology, shows Gus came from a hard-working family. He went to college, played football, and after college got a "real job" in sales and advertising.

Telling his parents corporate America was not for him, Gus went to the Harley Davidson store to sell bikes in 1997. The owner, who became a men-



tor, took Gus under his wing, showed him the business, and was patient while he made mistakes. After managing dealerships, his mentor helped make Gus' dream come true. In 2014 Gus bought the Harley Davidson store on Beal Parkway in Fort Walton Beach.

In the 10 years Gus has owned Emerald Coast Harley Davidson, the store has won national awards for sales and customer service. It helps to have a 120-year-old global, iconic brand. Another contributing factor is having a vision. Selling bikes happens but Gus feels the responsibility to be a community pillar with a dedication

to helping the people and the community grow and develop. He lives here and raises his kids here. He and his employees volunteer. In fact, Harley Davidson has donated nearly 1 million dollars to various organizations in the community in the last 10 years.

As with most companies, hiring and keeping a dedicated team is a challenge. The team needs to love the brand and want to work at Harley Davidson. The store is open late when others are closed, sometimes until 10 p.m., and open on weekends. There is a 90% failure rate when selling bikes. It is a want-based purchase not

a need-based one. The team has to have the energy and emotion to make it happen. They can't hide in a cubicle and it doesn't matter if they are not "feeling it" on a particular day.

The purchase of a bike is an entirely emotional decision. There is no logic. Gus loves hearing the journey someone has taken to arrive at his store ready to buy a bike. He doesn't know what lives inside them to inspire them. Owning a bike represent freedom and escape. It's a lifestyle.

The customer base is very broad. The younger generation may say their dad had a Harley. An older customer has waited 20 years until the kids got out of school. The 90-year-old buys his 36th bike, a trike, and says it's the best part of his day. Some will try to justify the purchase by saying the bike is to get to work. But, whatever the reasons, they

trust Gus and his team to be a part of the decision. They've done their research beforehand and no matter what their friends may say, they have the courage to walk in the store.

There are misconceptions people have. Some think all bikers are like Sons of Anarchy. But bikers are lawyers, doctors, accountants, military, garbage men and more. They all have a little rebel in them.

It hasn't always been easy and it's been hard work. But Gus say anything good takes hard work. He has put every penny earned into the company and bet his family's financial security on it. Success is the only option. Gus says a lot of people walk up to the edge of the cliff but few jump off when it comes to putting it all on the line to realize a dream of owning your own business.

He has created a culture of development, accountability and volunteerism for his team.

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# Get Out the Christian Vote!



BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

As we approach election day on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, 22-year veteran and mother Lisa Robertson, an advocate for Get Out the Christian Vote, has a question for all those who are considering not getting out to vote: What kind of future do you want for your children and the generations to follow?

Charlie Kirk recently posted, ‘If we’re silent, nothing may happen to us. But, it will most certainly happen to our children in the future and that has stuck with me. We had a meeting on September 13th that showed the movie, A Letter to the American Church (a film adaptation to Eric Metaxas’ book by the same name), and Mao, Stalin, and Hitler were able to come into that kind of power through three critical and strategic areas: For one, if they could control the pastors, they could control the people. Second, if they could take away land and possessions, they could control us. Finally, if they could get to the children, then they could change the trajectory of the future. That’s what they did and we are seeing evidence that this is happening now.’

Already, there is evidence that the Church is not participating in what is sure to be a pivotal election. 50% of Christians are not even registered to vote and many who are already thinking about not voting on election day. In the 2020 election, more than 25 million Christians chose not to vote. Lisa is concerned too that while there’s still time, many pastors aren’t actively advocating for Christian participation in the election process, because of the misconception that this would be seen as a political leaning in a house of worship. What she is hoping for, however, is that churches would set aside the dis-

ussion about politics from the pulpit, and recognize that the Biblical responsibility still exists for each Christian to participate in the governing bodies of our country.

“Even as early as Genesis, we are given authority. Isaiah 29:2 says that when the righteous are in authority and become great, the people rejoice, but when the wicked man rules, the people groan and sigh. Speaking about voting is not political, but acknowledging that everyone who believes in the Gospel needs to preach the Gospel, not just in words but in actions. It’s how we decide what we want as the moral center of our government and the kind of country we ultimately want for our children. If we want them to have the freedom to gather in a house of worship, to have freedom of speech, to be taught to work hard, that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that they have a right to work toward owning land, it is going to be through the election process. We do that by showing up to vote.”

Lisa acknowledges that not everyone has the time to volunteer for their political affiliations and that there are so many important needs that take the forefront of the average American family. What families can do, however, is available to all.

“After 22 years of being in the military, I still feel a call to duty and serving my community. But, I understand everybody’s busy, and it’s hard for people to get involved, especially now. Times are tough, things are so expensive, and people are just trying to do the best they can to get food on the table for their children. What we can still do though, is to be salt and light as the Bible calls us to be. We can still pray, gather together, and encourage one another to show up for this election’s outcome in leadership and initiatives like Amendment 4.”

What we seem to be learning from traditional and social media alike is not to vote for who would best run our country, but for what image we like best. In the minutiae of agendas that lean toward blue or red, it has kept the voting public from taking any action and it is so critical to show up and participate in our right to vote. Our vote is a declaration of the future we want to see.

“We need to show God’s

love and have leaders who love this country’s freedoms, support our rights as individuals to worship and speak freely, and who will give our younger generation hope again. They need to know that they have a purpose, a place in society and that working for your family and community is

a good thing. Everything free comes with some kind of attachment, whether it be physical or psychological, and not all attachments are good for us.

It’s easier to fight for our rights now because when they’re lost, it’s way harder to get them back.”

If you would like to join Get Out the Christian Vote for an upcoming meeting or for questions, contact Lisa Sanders Robertson on Facebook or you can call 850-737-0226 or email lisarobertson610@icloud.com.



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## Lazarus Memorial Service

BY CAROLYN NEWCOMER KETCHEL

On Nov. 2, 2024 at 1 p.m. at the Beal Memorial Cemetery (316 Beal Pkwy. NW, FWB), over 35 clergy and members from various faith communities will gather to remember and say goodbye to the invisible members of our local community. The Lazarus Memorial Service is an ecumenical ceremony to bury individuals in our community who have died without means to provide for their own burial. The ceremony provides a dignified manner to memorialize the remains of those who otherwise would not have funeral services—our community's outpouring of respect and community spirit to provide the unclaimed deceased a dignified resting place.

A much-celebrated event within the faith community and in the life of our county, it is a dignified way to memorialize those we have lost, many of whom are senior citizens who

have outlived their relatives as well as infants/children whose parents and families are without financial means. Some are members of our community who have become estranged from their families due to mental illness. This year, we have 31 individuals from ages 29 to 88.

Florida Statute 497.005(43) requires that each of the 67 counties ensure the proper final disposition of indigent and unclaimed deceased persons in the respective counties. Each year, Okaloosa County receives an average of 30-40 individuals who die without family support or financial means to cover the cost of interment. Other counties have begun to follow Okaloosa's leadership and have their own ecumenical services. Okaloosa County was recognized by the Florida Association of Counties for Best Practices.

Over the past 17 years, Okaloosa County has contracted with various private funeral homes to provide these crema-

tion services. When I first became a commissioner, I found out no one knew what happens to individuals once cremated. A quick search of various, local funeral homes that had contracted with Okaloosa County over the years, yielded approximately 450 sets of cremains in storage.

In 2016, local pastors were invited to plan a service like no other to bury these forgotten individuals in a dignified, but joyful ecumenical service. That same year, a coordinated effort was developed to purchase seven burial plots at Beal Memorial Cemetery in the heart of Okaloosa County. The county initially agreed to pay \$7,530. Area churches took up a collection to defray the cost, which resulted in a contribution of \$5,000 to the cost of the plots. Further, the clergy were able to contribute \$1,481.00 to purchase and place two benches, one at either end of the burial plots.

The Okaloosa County Lazarus Memorial Service has

become a cherished ceremony. The name is taken from the recorded words of Jesus about the poor man named Lazarus who went to Paradise after death, after struggling on earth (Luke 16:19-21.) Roughly 800 individuals have been buried to date.

Mr. Bass, director, and the wonderful staff at Emerald Coast Funeral Home have graciously hosted this ceremony each year. Each set of cremains is held in a box bearing the individual's name. Prior to the ceremony, the boxes are placed inside green velvet bags for display. Those attending the outdoor ceremony can pay their final respects before the ceremony begins. A program provides a list of the individuals to be interred. The service includes ringing the cemetery bells, offering prayers, reading scripture, singing hymns and music, a message of faith and hope, and the recitation of each person's name. The name and date of death of each interred

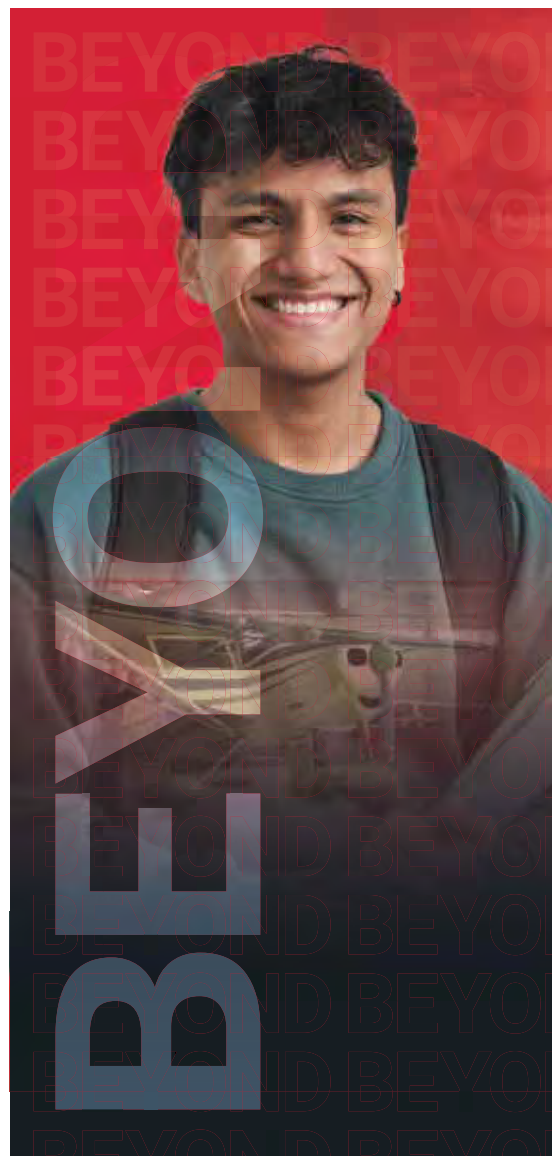
individual is entered in The Book of Remembrance stored at Beal Cemetery for relatives and friends of the deceased.

Okaloosa County has found a compassionate and dignified way to bury these invisible members of our society. Many faith communities mark November 2 as All Souls Day, also the date chosen by the group for the Lazarus Memorial Burial.

You will leave the ceremony with a quiet feeling of having done something "right" that cannot be repaid in this world. Bring a lawn chair to sit (rain or shine) and join us as we say goodbye to individuals who may have died alone, but are remembered by our community.

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

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## Events Around Town

**16th Annual Baytowne Wharf Beer Festival**  
**Friday, Oct. 11, 6-8 p.m.;**  
**Saturday, Oct. 12, 2-5 p.m.**



American specialty beers from throughout the nation will be available for participants to sample and savor. The grand, craft beer tasting event on Saturday, Oct. 12, will feature more than 200 domestic and international craft beers available for sampling. For tickets, visit [baytownebeerfestival.com](http://baytownebeerfestival.com). Live Music: Friday, 6-8 p.m.: Duchess; Saturday: 2-5 p.m.: Below Alabama

**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 Bloody Marys 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.

**DCWAF 8th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival**

**Oct. 17-20 | Grand Tasting – Cerulean Park – WaterColor | Santa Rosa Beach**

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](http://dcwaf.org).

**Saints Markella and Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church Festival**  
**Oct. 18, 4 – 8 p.m. | Oct. 19, 11:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | Oct. 20, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. | Saints Markella & Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church**

Transport yourself to Greece, sit under a canopy, en-

joy delicious food with family and friends, while music and dancers provide you with enchanting entertainment. The parishioners of Saints Markella and Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church will host the annual Greek Festival, Oct. 18-20 at Saints Markella and Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church (104 Bryn Mawr Blvd.), from 4 to 8 p.m. on Friday the 18th, and from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday the 19th, and 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, the 20th. You will enjoy the sights, sounds and flavors of Greece.

Though the Church is the home to parishioners of many different ethnic backgrounds, this remains a marvelous opportunity for the community of the Panhandle to. There will be music, Greek dancing, vendors booths, children’s activities and, of course, some of the most delicious Greek food (prepared by loving hands) for your enjoyment. Not to be missed are the scrumptious desserts, to be enjoyed with a Greek coffee. All are welcome to attend. Visit [www.greekfestfwb.com/](http://www.greekfestfwb.com/) or contact the church office at 850-244-0822.

**Wicked Triple Fun Run!**  
**Oct. 19-20**

Runners...be a part of the

Wicked Triple Fun Run 5K (5:30 p.m.), 10K (7:30 a.m.) and Half Marathon (7:30 a.m.) October 19-20 hosted by the Northwest Florida Track Club (NWFTC) and Run With It. The 10K runs through the neighborhoods surrounding downtown Fort Walton Beach starting and ending at Ferry Park on Hughes St. with awards ceremony immediately following. The 5K course will run along Beachview Dr. in Cinco Bayou, start line is across

Eglin Parkway from AJ’s on the Bayou, with awards ceremony and after party immediately following. The Half Marathon starts and finishes at Ferry Park on Hughes St. with throw down immediately following. Food, drinks and live music! Cost is 10K \$40, 5K \$35, and Half Marathon \$80 or all three for \$145. Participants in all three races receive a finisher’s medal

*Continued on page 9*



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# Happenings Around the Bay

2024  
EVENTS

## OCTOBER

- 10** Mini Makers and Experimenters Lab  
10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB  
Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Nothing But Networking  
11:30 am | The Salvation Army | FWB  
Best of the Emerald Coast Winners Soiree  
6 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach  
Movies on the Beach: Turning Red  
7 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 11** 32nd Annual Freedom Fund Banquet  
5 pm | The Island Resort - Maui Ballroom | Okaloosa Island  
Blue Dog & Bourbon on the Bayou: An Evening with Wendy Rodrigue  
6 pm | Churchill Oaks | Santa Rosa Beach
- 12** Halloween Spooktacular  
2 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville  
Girls Empowered with Math and Science (GEMS) Workshops  
10:30 am | Fort Walton Beach Public Library | FWB  
Zombie Walk & Canned Food Drive benefiting Sharing & Caring of Okaloosa County  
4 pm | The Landing | FWB  
Bloody Mary Festival  
11 am | The Market Shops | Miramar Beach
- 15** Baytowne Beer Fest Grand Tasting  
2-5 pm | Baytowne Events Plaza | Sandesti
- 17** Planetarium Night  
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- 17-20** Harvest Wine & Food Festival  
Times & Locations Vary | Watercolor
- 18-20** Sts Markella & Demetrios Greek Festival  
Times Vary | 104 Bryn Mawr Blvd | Mary Esther
- 18** ADSO Gallery Show Reception: October Fest  
6 pm | Arts & Design Society (ADSO) | FWB  
Football Game: Fort Walton Beach High School vs Godby High School  
7 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
- 19** 2024 Wheels & Wings Car Show  
8 am | Air Force Armament Museum | Eglin  
Concealed Carry Weapons Class  
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso  
Kiwanis Charity Cornhole Tournament  
10:30 am | United Fidelity Bank | FWB  
Sip & Science: Fright Night  
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB



- 20** All Ages Paint Party: Spooky Friends  
10 am | Painting with a Twist | FWB  
Live Music: Robbie Paynter  
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 21** Glock Sport Shooting Foundation (GSSF) Indoor League  
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso  
Paint Party: Field of Flowers  
6:30 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
- 23** C.A.R.E.ing for Turtles  
4 pm | Gulfarium CARE Center | Okaloosa Island
- 25** Barktoberfest  
4:30 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach  
Festival of the Arts Arty Kick Off Party  
6 pm | Henderson Beach Resort - Piazza Plaza | Destin  
Live Music: Soulfly  
6:30 pm | DownTown Music Hall | FWB  
Football Game: Choctawhatchee High School vs Fort Walton Beach High School  
7 pm | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB
- 26** 29th Annual Festival of the Arts  
9 am | MKAF - Cultural Arts Village | Destin  
Early Learning Coalition Storybook Village  
10 am | United Fidelity Bank | FWB  
Fall Festival  
11 am | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport  
Trinity Boo Bash 2024  
2 pm | Trinity United Methodist Church | FWB
- 27** 29th Annual Festival of the Arts  
10 am | MKAF - Cultural Arts Village | Destin  
4th Annual BrunchFest  
11 am | Seville Quarter | Pensacola  
Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast  
2 pm | Air Force Armament Museum | FWB
- 29** Planetarium Special Feature: Spooky Secrets  
5 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- 31** Halloween on the BOOlevard  
4 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach  
9th Annual Tricks & Treasures  
5 pm | The Boardwalk | Okaloosa Island



## NOVEMBER

- 01** Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's First Friday Coffee  
7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | FWB  
Football Game: Fort Walton Beach High School vs Crestview High School  
7 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
- 02** Discover Science Saturday  
10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB  
Trade Night: Buy, Sell, or Trade Your Games  
6 pm | RadJunk | Fort Walton Beach  
Eggs on the Beach  
10 am-1:30 pm | Seascape Towne Centre | Miramar Beach
- 03** Surge Adventure Park Sensory Play Sunday  
10 am | Surge Adventure Park | Mary Esther  
Women's Climbing Circle  
5 pm | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
- 07** Luminescence: Catalyst by Candlelight  
7:30 pm | Seaside Chapel | Seaside
- 08** 30A BBQ Festival  
5 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach
- 09** Girls Empowered with Math and Science (GEMS) Workshops  
10:30 am | Fort Walton Beach Public Library | FWB

**ONGOING EVENTS**

- VFW Post 7674 - Sunday Breakfasts  
8 - 11:30 am | Sundays | 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



EVENTS

continued from page 7

and a special edition long sleeve shirt! Online Registration closes Thursday, 10/17 at midnight. Or register on race day or packet pick up Friday, Oct. 18, 4-6 p.m. at Run With It, Fort Walton Beach. Day of race registration and packet pick up will be at each race start approximately 1.5 hours prior. To benefit the rubberized track project at Fort Walton Beach High School, register and obtain more information at RWI or active.com)

https://www.active.com/fort-walton-beach-fl/running/distance-running-races/wicked-triple-fun-run-2024.

Arty Kick Off Party | Festival of the Arts

October 25 | 6 p.m. | Henderson Beach Resort | Piazza Plaza | Destin

This year's 29th annual celebration of art, food, music and family fun begins on Friday, Oct. 25, at 6 p.m. with the Arty Kick Off Party on the Piazza Plaza Henderson Beach Resort. Mix and mingle with Festival artists, watch award-winning featured guest artist Melanie



Moore paint live, view enjoy live music by Coconut Radio, light bites, creative cocktail by Black Sheep Tequila and cash bar. \$50 per person (includes two drink tickets for cash bar); MKAF members save 10%. Proceeds benefit MKAF and its ArtsReach community outreach education initiatives.

29th Annual Festival of the Arts

October 26 | 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. — October 27 | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

The Festival of the Arts, produced by Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF), is a celebration of art, music, food and family fun. Head to the Cultural Arts Village in Destin Saturday (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and Sunday

(10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) to browse original artwork by more than 100 premier artists from across the U.S. (and Europe!). Watch live artist demos, hear live music, enter the art drawing, purchase souvenir Festival merchandise, enjoy hands-on creative children's activities, street performers, snap a keepsake "masterpiece" photo, savor food truck fare, sip beer, wine, Bloody Mary's and more. Join in the festivities by casting your vote for the People's Choice Award (Saturday). FREE admission. Proceeds benefit MKAF and its ArtsReach community outreach education initiatives.

Eggs on the Beach!

Nov. 2 | 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. | Seascape Towne Centre

Eggs on the Beach is celebrating its 10th Anniversary Nov. 2,



and is partnering with two well-known brands—Tony Chachere's Seasonings and Angel's Envy—to enhance the cooking competition. Presented by Bay Breeze Patio, the beloved annual event will include more categories for cook teams to compete in, and more opportunities for tasters to sample delicious bites and beverages. Held at Seascape Towne Center in Miramar Beach, cook teams will be smoking, grilling and baking their favorite dishes on the Big Green Egg while tasters sample the delicious bites and vote for their favorites, while supporting two local causes—Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food for Thought. Taster tickets: \$50 in advance; \$60 day of. Visit www.EggsOntheBeach.com.


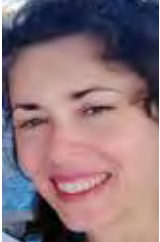
DANIEL "GUS"

continued from page 4

Their hurdles are his hurdles. They have each other's backs.

Gus says he's made mistakes at full speed and it's important to have humility and self-awareness. Proud of his business, there is nothing he would rather do or any place else he would rather live.

For more information visit https://www.emeraldcoasthd.com.

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# Simplifying Medicare Advantage vs. Supplement Choices



BY GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA HEALTH CONNECTOR

This is the time of year when you should review your Medicare options and make important decisions about your coverage for 2025.

Right now, we are in the Annual Election Period (AEP) for all Medicare beneficiaries. It is often referred to as the Annual Open Enrollment Period. This annual event runs from October 15th through December 7th.

Because this period allows ALL Medicare eligible folks to make switches and changes to their plans, it is the most heavily advertised time of the year—not like I have to tell you that! Folks on Original Medicare (Parts A&B), Supplements (MediGap), Stand Alone Prescription Plans (Part D) and Advantage Plans have a chance to pretty much do anything they want with their coverage mix. The hard part comes with sorting it all out.

One of the things I often talk about with Medicare beneficiaries around this time of year is to make sure you don't get so overwhelmed by all the information out there that you run out of time to take action. It can sometimes become "paralysis by analysis" syndrome. Remember, the AEP ends on December 7th!

Figuring out which coverage options are best for you can be confusing at any age, but understanding healthcare options for those 65 and older can be even

more difficult.

I suggest considering these three things when shopping for Medicare Advantage/Supplement plans:

**Choice:** When it comes to Medicare, one size does not fit all - what works for your neighbor (or doctor/provider!) may not work best for you. Take the time to learn and understand the benefits and costs of each plan so you can feel confident in your decision and your health care coverage. Remember, you are getting the best for you, not your doctor or other provider.

**Care:** Care starts with a strong relationship with your primary care provider. If your plan has a network, make sure you're comfortable with the doctors and hospitals in that network. Check to see if your plan will coordinate your care with the rest of your providers...in and out of State.

**Experience:** Medicare can be complex and confusing. It's

important to find a seasoned agent that works for you and supports you throughout your health care journey with plan benefits and resources that can help you live more and worry less about out of pocket costs.

Since Medicare Advantage Plans are offered by private companies, one excellent feature is they have more freedom and motivation to include extra benefits such as vision, hearing, gym memberships, dental, over-the-counter pharmacy items and more.

However, it is important to note that, not only do Medicare Advantage plans vary by state, but are different right down to each individual county in each state. Supplements are universal regardless of state/county, but often times cost more premium per month and do not cover prescriptions, requiring additional premium costs to pick up that coverage.

Your sibling in North Dakota

is not going to have the same insurance company/coverage options you would in your Florida county. Try not to get trapped into believing the terms Supplement and Advantage are the same. It is critical to know your specific differences before making choice that works for you.

This is why it is vitally important to work with a local agent that knows the area and understands the benefits landscape as it applies to you. A famous actor or retired athlete on TV touting a toll-free number from who knows where will likely not.

*Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State of Florida and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 41 years and can be reached at his office number of 850-842-2400 or mobile at 978-509-2941.*

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October 15

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Saturday, Oct 19 | 10am-2pm  
Fort Walton Beach Public Library  
185 Miracle Strip Parkway

AMAZING KIDS DAY is a sensory friendly event presenting educational resources and fun activities designed for kids with autism and children with special needs.

Please register at [wsre.org/education](http://wsre.org/education)

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PBS KIDS—America's #1 educational media brand for children—has several shows that delve into autism and have introduced autistic characters, like Max on "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," AJ Gadgets on "Hero Elementary" and Julia on "Sesame Street." This representation helps young viewers better understand and accept the unique gifts autistic children bring into their families, friendships and communities.

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# News Around Town

## Northwest Florida State College Energy Program Earns Best-In-Class Award



A dedicated, 10 year-long effort to create healthier, more efficient buildings not only paid off financially for Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC), but is earning industry recognition for setting an example for others to follow.

NWFSC has cut expected energy use by 61.9 percent since partnering with Cenergistic, the pioneer and leading provider of technology-enabled conservation services, which presented the NWFSC Board of Trustees its Cenergistic Best-In-Class Award on August 20, 2024. The award lauds the organization's success with the Cenergistic energy management program — a comprehensive science-based, technology-driven approach to energy conservation at all levels of the organization. It delivers financial savings as well as environmental benefits from a reduced carbon footprint. Energy not used prevents the emission of carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. According to the EPA, NWFSC has reduced CO2 emissions equal to 168,031,457 miles not driven by the average vehicle for 10 years. NWFSC's comprehensive energy conservation program addresses energy use throughout the organization. The energy specialist track energy consumption at all campuses through state-of-the-art technology to identify and correct areas where energy is over-used. They also work closely with organization personnel as well as Cenergistic engineers and experts to continually optimize systems and schedules. Together they monitor energy use with advanced technology and shape energy-using practices through education — affecting how each person in the organization understands, uses and saves energy for years to come. The outcome is healthier, more efficient buildings using less energy — and lower related costs.

## Florida's Great Northwest Selects This Year's Leadership Northwest Florida Class

Through a program designed to focus on regional collaboration through community, content, and connection, the following Leadership Northwest Florida students will be immersed in a seven-month educational program and meet other leaders from a variety of backgrounds who represent Northwest Florida's diverse composition: Tracy Andrews, Florida Power & Light; Ivan Beach, Bay District Schools; AJ Brown, Wharton-Smith, Inc.; Rhonda Byrd-Lee, West Florida Electric Cooperative; Bill Conder, The Highland Group; Branden Crosby, Warren Averett, LLC; Brandon Elkins, CareerSource Okaloosa Walton; Darwin Gilmore, Jackson County Economic Development Committee; Brent Hargett, Navy Federal Credit Union; Ildi Hosman, Landrum; Kristie Kelley, Central Gulf Industrial Alliance; Brent Melvin, David H. Melvin, Inc.; Ruthie Noel, Achieve Escambia; Hong Potomski, Florida Blue; Kerri Powell, Merrick Industries, Inc.; Michaelean Stewart, Visit Panama City Beach; and Justin Woodard, Community Bank.

## Three Dolphins To Be Relocated From Disney's Epcot To Our Own Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Disney will permanently relocate its three dolphins from Epcot to our the Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park on Okaloosa Island by the end of October. Epcot has had dolphins on display since The Living Seas — now The Seas with Nemo & Friends — debuted in 1986, three years after the theme park opened. In a memo sent to Cast Members, Lou, one of its beloved manatees, will also be relocated. “For decades, Walt Disney World has provided extraordinary care for thousands of fish and marine mammals — including dolphins and manatees that have served as ambassadors for their species, inspiring us about marine mammals and aiding in conservation and research efforts. As we look to the future of The Seas with Nemo & Friends at EPCOT, we are making some changes that require careful thought, prioritizing the wellbeing of these

sensitive marine mammals... This decision came after a comprehensive evaluation as to what is best for these dolphins as infrastructure work progresses at The Seas. Through the extraordinary care from our team, these three male dolphins have thrived and led long lives, and we will contin-

ue to be a resource while they receive the best possible care after they are moved.”

## DCWAF to Celebrate 20 Years of Fundraising for Children in Need in NWF

Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF is cele-

brating two decades of positive impact in our local community. The celebration officially kicked off on August 29 at the Foundation's annual check presentation ceremony where just over \$3 million was presented

*Continued on page 31*

 Community

# Renovation Mistakes to Avoid: A Guide to Successful Home Upgrades



BY MELISSA FORTE-LITSCHER,  
NEXTHOME CORNERSTONE  
REALTY

We're in a challenging real estate market right now. So, many of us aren't looking at selling our homes, but just need a refresh or want to use some of our equity to improve the quality of life in our current home. Home renovations are an exciting way to enhance your living space, making it more comfortable, functional and valuable. However, the process can be complex and filled with potential pitfalls if not approached with careful planning. While it's easy to get caught up in the excitement of new designs, staying grounded and informed is essential to avoid costly mistakes that could derail your project. Whether you're remodeling a small bathroom or overhauling

a kitchen, knowing what to avoid is as important as having a clear vision.

One of the biggest mistakes homeowners make is starting a renovation without a clear and realistic budget. Without financial planning, it's easy for costs to spiral out of control as unexpected expenses pile up. Setting a budget involves more than just estimating costs—it requires detailed quotes from contractors, material costs, labor and permits. Don't forget to account for potential delays or surprises. It's wise to include a contingency fund, typically 10-20% of your overall budget, to cover unforeseen issues. Sticking to this budget is critical to avoiding financial strain and ensuring your renovation stays on track.

Another costly error is skipping necessary permits. Some homeowners might try to bypass this step to save time or money. But, doing so can lead to significant legal and financial problems. Many renovations require permits to comply with local building codes. Failing to get them can result in fines, project delays or even the need to redo work. Additionally, unpermitted work can create issues when selling your home, as it could lower



your property's value or complicate the sale. Before starting your renovation, consult with local authorities or your contractor to determine which permits are required.

Timing is another area where many homeowners miscalculate. Renovations often take longer than expected, and it's easy to underestimate how much time the process will require. Rushing can lead to subpar results or incomplete work. Unforeseen issues such as supply chain delays or hidden structural problems can also throw off timelines. To avoid frustration, establish a realistic timeline with your contractor and allow extra time for potential delays. Patience is key to ensuring the renovation is completed properly rather than rushed.

While aesthetics are a big part of any renovation, it's essential not to overlook functionality. A beautifully designed space that

doesn't meet your daily needs can quickly become frustrating. When planning your renovation, consider how the space will be used. Think about the layout, storage solutions and flow to ensure the space is practical and comfortable. While design trends are exciting, functionality should remain a top priority throughout the renovation process.

Finally, cutting corners on materials and labor is a mistake that can have long-term consequences. Choosing cheaper materials might seem like a good way to save money, but low-quality materials tend to wear out faster and require more frequent repairs or replacements.

Similarly, hiring less experienced workers to save on labor costs can lead to shoddy workmanship, which may result in more expensive repairs down the line. Investing in high-quality materials and experienced professionals might increase upfront costs, but it will pay off in the long run by ensuring your renovation is durable and built to last.

Whether you are planning on staying in your home for many more years, or renovating with selling in the near future in mind, home renovations can significantly improve your living space. Avoiding common mistakes is essential for a successful project. Setting a clear budget, obtaining necessary permits, planning a realistic timeline, prioritizing functionality, and investing in quality materials and labor will help you achieve the home of your dreams without unnecessary stress or added costs. Taking a thoughtful, patient approach to your renovation will leave you with a space that enhances both your quality of life and your home's value for years to come. If you are ready to reap the benefits of your renovation, let me know how I can help you, I'm at your service.

*I'm at your service. Call or text me at (850) 496- 7444 or email Melissa@NextHomeCornerstone.com. Visit [destin-fwbrealty.com](http://destin-fwbrealty.com) on the web.*

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compassion for the homeless in need.

# Welcome to the Season of Layers, Loafers and Luxe Accessories

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

As we transition out of beach body season and slide into fall (we see you, pumpkin spiced everything), it's all about blending comfort and style—which means cute, but fantastically supportive loafers and closed-toe shoes (beauty isn't always pain, ladies), fabulous wide-leg trousers and jeans, and accessories that help finish it off and pull it all together into one amazing look. Because the temperatures might be cooling down, but you can still look hot.

## Step Into Style: Loafers, Wedges, and Heels (Oh My!)

Bid adieu to your summer sandals (but not too soon, because let's face it—we'll miss them, and it's still warm out) and say hello to supportive, cute loafers from Aetrex. Whether you're headed to brunch or running errands, loafers are the MVP of the shoe world right now. Comfortable? Check. Stylish? Double check.



They're perfect for pairing with pretty much everything, from skirts to jeans or trousers. These shoes say, "I'm here to slay" with-

out making your feet scream for mercy before lunchtime.

For anyone craving a little extra height, closed-toe wedges



and heels are here to save the day, and Aetrex offers both with the added bonus of built-in arch support that keeps you comfy and ready to crush your look. Wedges are fun and easy, perfect for pairing with fall's signature wide-leg trousers and jeans; and closed-toe heels offer a polished, sophisticated option for those days when you want to be a little fancy.

## Wide-Leg Trousers and Jeans: The Pant of the Season

Fall 2024 is the season of the wide-leg. Whether you're slipping into wide-leg trousers or throwing on some high-waisted, wide-leg jeans, this silhouette is all about giving you that chic, elongated look. These pants are not only super flattering (they cinch in at the waist and flow out

*Continued on next page*



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## Magnolia Grill

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

Rice and many types of burgers, sandwiches, soups and salads. For dinner, savor divine Italian dishes such as Italian Sausage and Peppers with Marinara Sauce and Filet Tips Florentina. But there's also steaks, seafood "Camp Walton style" and even a kids' menu.

Hours: Lunch M-F 11-2; Dinner M-Th 5-8; F-Sat 5-9; Closed Sundays.  
[magnoliagrillfwb.com](http://magnoliagrillfwb.com)  
 157 Brooks Street SE, FWB  
 (850) 812-5761



## WELCOME

*continued from previous page*

for a dramatic, elegant effect), but they also pair perfectly with all of those loafers and wedges you've just invested in. Liverpool trousers are ideal for the office, while their range of wide-leg jeans can take you from casual coffee dates to stylish weekend strolls.

### Layer Up: The Art of Fall Layers

As temperatures start to dip (and then swing up again), layering is your best friend. Light layers are the key to mastering that in-between season vibe without being too hot or too cool. Lightweight cardigans, puffer vests and cropped jackets are piec-

es that keep you warm without overheating and also add a level of sophistication to your look. Liverpool, Flag & Anthem and Rhythm offer great options for any fall wardrobe, with colors, textured and prints that elevate your outfit and keep you cozy. Don't be afraid to play with lengths—long cardigans over shorter tops, cropped jackets with flowy blouses. It's all about balance and creating visual interest.

### Leather Handbags: The Must-Have Accessory

No fall wardrobe is complete without a fabulous leather handbag. Whether you prefer a sleek crossbody, a structured tote, or a bold, colorful satchel, a quality leather bag is your go-to for

adding that luxe touch to any outfit. Go for classic shades like black or brown for everyday use, or choose rich autumn hues like burgundy, mustard, or forest green to add a pop of seasonal color. A leather handbag isn't just an accessory—it's the finishing touch that ties your whole look together and makes you feel like the queen you are. Check out Hobo's line of leather goods and find your new favorite.

### Accessorize Like a Pro: Earrings, Necklaces and More

Fall is the perfect time to experiment with bold, statement earrings and layered necklaces. You know how they say accessories make the outfit? They

weren't kidding. Adding some chic earrings or a stack of delicate gold necklaces or beaded chains can transform your look in seconds.

This season, go for metallics, chunky jewelry or even playful, nature-inspired pieces like leaf-shaped earrings or gemstone necklaces. Don't be shy—fall is the time to experiment, and accessories are the easiest way to do it. If you're rocking a simple, monochrome look, a vibrant pair of earrings can instantly elevate it. It's all about balance and having fun with your style!

Add a pair (or ten) of earrings in fun shapes and patterns by Clay Creations from Ellesee; mixed metals and textures from Lizou's line of earrings, necklaces and bracelets; handmade pieces from Fran & Bel; pearly baubles from Studio G; or happy, whimsical little studs from Lilliput—you may even find some wickedly fun Halloween-inspired goodies to add a little spook to your spice.

Go on, girl—strut into fall with confidence and flair! Come into Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. to find all your essentials, because you're about to own this season.

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# 2024 Football Guide

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



## Best Places to Watch Your Favorite Teams



BY SCOTT MILLER

As we roll through week 5 and into week 6 of the 2024 College Football season, the excitement continues to build...the training wheels have come off!

No more Auburn vs. Alabama A&M matchups, a 73-3 romp in week one or Middle Tennessee State @ Mississippi, a 52-3 cake walk in week 2. And

no more Kent State @ Tennessee beatdowns, a 71-0 shellacking in week 3. The warm up games have been played. I call it the college football preseason. Now the schedules get interesting. I sure hope you caught the Georgia at Alabama match-up—what a game! Of course, it depends on which team you're pulling for, but nonetheless, what a game! With week 6 now in front of us, the training wheels are definitely off. It's time to see who's who this year. The 2024 College Football season is definitely now in full swing. And that's just skimming the surface; we haven't even touched on November yet.

So, friends, let's all gather together at our favorite local sports bars and restaurants, and 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 week-day 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 potato 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 mu-

*Continued on next page*



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#### Niceville

• 1106 John Sims Pkwy, Unit E

#### Mary Esther

• 251 Mary Esther Blvd, Unit 2C

#### Pensacola

• 4051 Barrancas Ave, Suite E

#### Fort Walton Beach

• 901 Beal Pkwy NW

• 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	Oct 5	Oct 12	Oct 19	Oct 26	Nov 2	Nov 9	Nov 16	Nov 23	Nov 30
Alabama	@VANDY	S. CAR	@TENN	MIZZ	OPEN	@LSU	MERCER	@OU	AUB
Arkansas	TENN	OPEN	LSU	MISS ST	OLE MISS	OPEN	TEXAS	LA TECH	@MIZZ
Auburn	@UGA	OPEN	@MIZZ	@KEN	VANDY	OPEN	UL MONROE	TEX A&M	@BAMA
Florida	UCF	@TENN	UK	OPEN	UGA	@TEXAS	LSU	OLE MISS	@FL ST
Georgia	AUB	MISS ST	@TEXAS	OPEN	FLA	@OLE MISS	TENN	U MASS	GA TECH
Kentucky	OPEN	VANDY	@FLA	AUB	@TENN	OPEN	MURRAY ST	@TEXAS	LOUISVILLE
LSU	OPEN	OLE MISS	@ARK	@A&M	OPEN	BAMA	@FLA	VANDY	OU
MSU	OPEN	@UGA	A&M	ARK	U MASS	@TENN	OPEN	MIZZOU	@OLE MISS
Missouri	@A&M	@U MASS	AUB	@BAMA	OPEN	OU	@S. CAR	@MISS ST	ARK
Oklahoma	OPEN	TEXAS	S. CAR	@OLE MISS	MAINE	@MIZZOU	OPEN	BAMA	@LSU
Ole Miss	@S. CAR	@LSU	OPEN	OU	@ARK	UGA	OPEN	@FLA	MISS ST
SC	OLE MISS	@BAMA	@OU	OPEN	A&M	@VANDY	MIZZOU	WOFFORD	@CLEMSON
Tenn	@ARK	FLA	BAMA	OPEN	UK	MISS ST	@UGA	UTEP	@VANDY
Tex A&M	MIZZOU	OPEN	@MISS ST	LSU	@S. CAR	OPEN	N MEX ST	@AUB	TEXAS
Texas	OPEN	OU	<b>UGA</b>	@VANDY	OPEN	FLA	@ARK	UK	@A&M
VANDY	BAMA	@UK	BALL ST	TEXAS	@AUB	S. CAR	OPEN	@LSU	TENN



### BEST PLACES

*continued from previous page*

sic 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  
116 Harbor Blvd.  
ajstestin.com

### 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.

850-226-7084  
114 Amberjack Dr.,  
Okaloosa Island  
fubarfwb.com



## 2024 College Football Game Day Highlights

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

Week 8: October 19  
Missouri vs Auburn TBA  
Tennessee vs Alabama TBA  
Arkansas vs LSU TBA  
Texas vs Georgia TBA  
Oklahoma vs S. Carolina TBA  
Ga. Tech vs Notre Dame TBA  
Louisville vs Miami TBA

Week 9: October 26  
Auburn @ Kentucky TBA  
Penn State @ Wisconsin TBA  
Texas @ Vanderbilt TBA  
Missouri @ Alabama TBA  
Oklahoma @ Mississippi TBA  
Florida St @ Miami TBA  
LSU @ Texas A&M TBA

Week 10: November 2  
Penn State vs Ohio State TBA  
Auburn vs Vanderbilt TBA  
Mississippi @ Arkansas TBA  
Kentucky @ Tennessee TBA  
Florida @ Georgia TBA  
Duke @ Miami TBA  
USC @ Washington TBA

Week 11: November 9  
Georgia @ Mississippi TBA  
Florida ST. @ ND TBA  
LSU vs Alabama TBA  
Oklahoma @ Missouri TBA  
Miami @ Ga Tech TBA  
Florida @ Texas 11am ESPN  
Miss St. @ Tennessee TBA



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office@baldwinturfniceville.com



# NFL Football Schedule

## Week 5

Thursday, Oct. 3  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Atlanta Falcons -- 8:15 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 -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Baltimore Ravens at Cincinnati Bengals -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Buffalo Bills at Houston Texans -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Indianapolis Colts at Jacksonville Jaguars -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Miami Dolphins at New England Patriots -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Cleveland Browns at Washington Commanders -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Las Vegas Raiders at Denver Broncos -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Arizona Cardinals at San Francisco 49ers -- 4:05 p.m., Fox  
Green Bay Packers at Los Angeles Rams -- 4:25 p.m., CBS  
New York Giants at Seattle Seahawks -- 4:25 p.m., CBS  
Dallas Cowboys at Pittsburgh Steelers -- 8:20 p.m., NBC\*  
Monday, Oct. 7  
New Orleans Saints at Kansas City Chiefs -- 8:15 p.m., ESPN

## Week 6

Thursday, Oct. 10  
San Francisco 49ers at Seattle Seahawks -- 8:15 p.m., Prime Video  
Sunday, Oct. 13  
Jacksonville Jaguars vs Chicago Bears (Tottenham) -- 9:30 a.m., NFL Network  
Washington Commanders at Baltimore Ravens -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Arizona Cardinals at Green Bay Packers -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Houston Texans at New England Patriots -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at New Orleans Saints -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Cleveland Browns at Philadelphia Eagles -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Indianapolis Colts at Tennessee Titans -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Los Angeles Chargers at Denver Broncos -- 4:05 p.m., CBS  
Pittsburgh Steelers at Las Vegas Raiders -- 4:05 p.m., CBS  
Atlanta Falcons at Carolina Panthers -- 4:25 p.m., Fox  
Detroit Lions at Dallas Cowboys -- 4:25 p.m., Fox  
Cincinnati Bengals at New York Giants -- 8:20 p.m., NBC\*  
Monday, Oct. 14  
Buffalo Bills at New York Jets -- 8:15 p.m., ESPN

## Week 7

Thursday, Oct. 17  
Denver Broncos at New Orleans Saints -- 8:15 p.m., Prime Video  
Sunday, Oct. 20  
New England Patriots at Jacksonville Jaguars (Wembley) -- 9:30 a.m., NFL Network  
Seattle Seahawks at Atlanta Falcons -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Tennessee Titans at Buffalo Bills -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Cincinnati Bengals at Cleveland Browns -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Houston Texans at Green Bay Packers -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Miami Dolphins at Indianapolis Colts -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Detroit Lions at Minnesota Vikings -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Philadelphia Eagles at New York Giants -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Las Vegas Raiders at Los Angeles Rams -- 4:05 p.m., CBS  
Carolina Panthers at Washington Commanders -- 4:05 p.m., CBS  
Kansas City Chiefs at San Francisco 49ers -- 4:25 p.m., Fox  
New York Jets at Pittsburgh Steelers -- 8:20 p.m., NBC\*  
Monday, Oct. 21  
Baltimore Ravens at Tampa Bay Buccaneers -- 8:15 p.m., ESPN  
Los Angeles Chargers at Arizona Cardinals -- 9 p.m., ESPN+

## Week 8

Thursday, Oct. 24  
Minnesota Vikings at Los Angeles Rams -- 8:15 p.m., Prime Video  
Sunday, Oct. 27  
Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Tennessee Titans at Detroit Lions -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Indianapolis Colts at Houston Texans -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Green Bay Packers at Jacksonville Jaguars -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Arizona Cardinals at Miami Dolphins -- 1 p.m., Fox  
New York Jets at New England Patriots -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Atlanta Falcons at Tampa Bay Buccaneers -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Chicago Bears at Washington Commanders -- 1 p.m., CBS  
New Orleans Saints at Los Angeles Chargers -- 4:05 p.m., Fox  
Buffalo Bills at Seattle Seahawks -- 4:05 p.m., Fox  
Philadelphia Eagles at Cincinnati Bengals -- 4:25 p.m., CBS  
Carolina Panthers at Denver Broncos -- 4:25 p.m., CBS  
Kansas City Chiefs at Las Vegas Raiders -- 4:25 p.m., CBS



Dallas Cowboys at San Francisco 49ers -- 8:20 p.m., NBC\*  
Monday, Oct. 28  
New York Giants at Pittsburgh Steelers -- 8:15 p.m., ESPN/ABC

## Week 9

Thursday, Oct. 31  
Houston Texans at New York Jets -- 8:15 p.m., Prime Video  
Sunday, Nov. 3  
Dallas Cowboys at Atlanta Falcons -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Denver Broncos at Baltimore Ravens -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Miami Dolphins at Buffalo Bills -- 1 p.m., CBS  
New Orleans Saints at Carolina Panthers -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Las Vegas Raiders at Cincinnati Bengals -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Los Angeles Chargers at Cleveland Browns -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Indianapolis Colts at Minnesota Vikings -- 1 p.m., CBS  
Washington Commanders at New York Giants -- 1 p.m., Fox

New England Patriots at Tennessee Titans -- 1 p.m., Fox  
Chicago Bears at Arizona Cardinals -- 4:05 p.m., CBS  
Detroit Lions at Green Bay Packers -- 4:25 p.m., Fox

Los Angeles Rams at Seattle Seahawks -- 4:25 p.m., Fox  
Jacksonville Jaguars at Philadelphia Eagles -- 8:20 p.m., NBC\*  
Monday, Nov. 4  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Kansas City Chiefs -- 8:15 p.m., ESPN

## High School Football Schedules

Fort Walton Beach District 2-4A  
Head coach Bobby Clayton  
8/23 vs. Tate  
8/30 — 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 (FWB)  
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

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# First Step Toward World's Largest Artificial Reef?

The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners recently approved a contingent contract to acquire the SS United States that could see the historic ocean liner converted into the world's largest artificial reef, in an announcement from Destin-Fort Walton Beach and the SS United States Conservancy. Part of the deal would also include funding from the county to support the Conservancy's establishment of an innovative land-based museum that will provide divers, local residents and visitors an opportunity to learn about the legacy of America's Flagship.

Launched in 1951, the SS United States still holds the transatlantic speed record, achieved on her maiden voyage using only two-thirds of her power. She transported presidents, stars of stage and screen, heads of state, tourists, members of the armed forces and immigrants until the advent of the jet age forced her retirement in 1969. Notable passengers included four U.S. Presidents (Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, and a



young Bill Clinton), plus Marlon Brando, Coco Chanel, Sean Connery, Duke Ellington, Salvador Dali, Walt Disney, Judy Garland, Cary Grant, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe and John Wayne. (To learn more about the ship's historical importance, visit <https://www.ssusc.org/history-the-glory-years>.)

Designed as a top-secret, convertible troop carrier and Cold War weapon, she could transport 14,000 troops 10,000 miles without refueling. The vessel is widely considered the pinnacle of American post-war maritime engineering and a soaring symbol of her name-

sake nation. The SS United States Conservancy has kept the famous ocean liner safely afloat since acquiring her in 2011.

Once deployed off Destin-Fort Walton Beach, at nearly 1,000-feet long, the SS United States will be a home for a diverse range of marine life and attract divers and anglers from around the world and will continue the growth of Destin-Fort Walton Beach's robust artificial reef program, the most active, and one of the largest vessel artificial reef collections in the U.S.

The deal to acquire the vessel from the Conservancy could



close in the coming weeks, contingent upon the conclusion of the current U.S. District Court-imposed mediation. The vessel would then be moved from Philadelphia after initial preparations and a towing plan are completed. A conservative allocation of up to \$10.1 million is estimated for the acquisition, remediation, transport and deployment of the historic ocean liner, as well as partial funding to help establish the Conservancy's land-based museum and immersive experience.

"I am extremely proud of our team and the effort required to achieve this tremendous next step in bringing such a breathtaking vessel to the waters of Destin-Fort Walton Beach," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Paul Mixon. "Our artificial reef system has shown impressive growth through the years and this accomplishment confirms our commitment to remain good stewards of the environment, while also enhancing our community's status as a premier diving and fishing destination."

"Having the title of the World's Largest Artificial Reef continues to elevate Destin-Fort Walton Beach as a premier destination to visit for scuba diving and fishing. The SS United States will be an exciting addition to the many artificial reefs and wrecks available in Destin-Fort Walton Beach for divers to explore while providing essential habitat for the fishery that our fleet is so dependent on," said Jennifer Adams, Tourism Director.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, for every dollar spent on artificial reefs in the

Florida Panhandle, the conservative overall economic benefit of the artificial reef system over its life span is \$138, a 13,800% return on investment. This includes job creation in the construction and maintenance of reefs and increased economic activity in related sectors such as retail.

"The SS United States has inspired millions the world over as a symbol of American pride and excellence. Should the ship be converted into an artificial reef, she will become a unique historic attraction above and below the waterline. A land-based museum and immersive experience utilizing the latest technology will showcase her unique story and proud history. Converting the world's fastest ship into the world's largest artificial reef will write a new chapter for the SS United States as a world class destination," stated Conservancy President Susan Gibbs.

The SS United States Conservancy's future museum is expected to feature a one-of-a-kind experience for visitors who will be able to explore the ship's extraordinary history. It will encompass iconic components from the ship, including the vessel's radar mast and at least one of her signature funnels, and highlights from the Conservancy's extensive curatorial collections.

This agreement, once closed, would mark the start of a lengthy process that will include the cleaning and preparation of the ship. It is expected to take more than a year to complete the necessary environmental remediation of the historic ocean liner and an additional six months to a year to arrange the vessel's deployment. The exact deployment location offshore Destin-Fort Walton Beach has not been determined, but it is projected to be deployed at a depth that will be widely accessible, providing ample opportunities for novice, intermediate and advanced technical divers.

For more information on Destin-Fort Walton Beach's extensive artificial reef program, including coordinates and 3-D mapping, please visit <https://www.destinfwb.com/explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/>. To learn more about the history of America's Flagship, visit <https://www.ssusc.org/>.



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# Introducing The Touchless Boat Cover

## An Interview with the Owner

**From the Publisher:** “I’m here with Karen Scholz, the person who’s brought The Touchless Cover to the Emerald Coast area. Karen, let’s begin with an introduction of you, and why you felt it made sense to bring The Touchless Cover here.”

**Karen:** I own a marine custom canvas and upholstery business in Niceville. I used to make all types of boat covers, fastened with snaps and straps. I found that my customers just didn’t want to take all the time needed to affix them properly. No matter how well-made, the process of strapping and unstrapping was a pain. I was recently introduced to The Touchless Cover and realized we needed that here.

**Q: What’s a Touchless Cover?**

**A:** Well, it’s a custom-made boat cover system. It’s measured for the boat, lift and dock so that there’s a perfect fit with all components. It’s raised and lowered electronically.

**Q: Where else are they located?**

**A:** Touchless Covers are all over the state of Florida, and throughout the U.S. You can barely go anywhere in Miami without seeing one.

**Q: Why do you say it’s better than the manual covers you used to make?**

**A:** It’s not just better than the manual ones. It’s just the best boat cover out there. It has four panels on the sides that can fully cover and uncover the boat in seconds. In our NW Florida sun, protection of the gel coat of the boat, its upholstery and accessories, can save money and a lot of time by eliminating those types of needed repairs caused by sun damage. Many covers—even boathouses—don’t eliminate damage from the sun’s rays. Also, it keeps birds and debris out.

**Q: But what about those who already have a boathouse?**

**A:** It can be installed on docks with lifts with no boat-



house, OR it can go up seamlessly under the existing roof of a boathouse. Its motors operate from the frame of its top, so all of them have a top; having a top under a boathouse is just added protection.

**Q: People who live here will always be concerned with hurricanes. How does it do in high winds? How does it compare with other covers out there?**

**A:** We can provide a third-party engineering study that we had done that shows

the bearable winds. It performs very well, comparatively.

**Q: How’s it made to withstand winds?**

**A:** It’s made of a heavy, coated fabric, and has 2” aluminum framing on all four sides, as well as in the top. Additionally, it has fiberglass rods that form a skeleton around the entire inside.

**Q: How does it lift and cover electronically?**

**A:** That’s part of what’s so cool about it. It works off the house or dock Wifi; you’d either use a remote or a voice command to lift and lower it. Many customers use the voice command feature (and an installed camera) to check on their boat while they’re away.

**Q: You said it’s made well, but why would someone want a remote-controlled boat cover, when they can really just cover it themselves?**

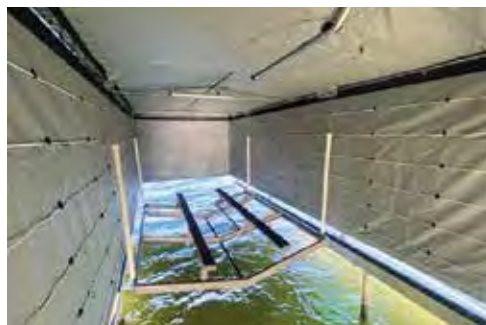
**A:** For most, it’s just a matter of convenience. Time is money. A lot of Touchless Cover customers have said that the pain of their manual cover keeps them from enjoying their boat. With this, the owner presses a button to get the boat fully-protected.

Think of the garage door opener. Initially, it was thought of as frivolous. Why have one when you can do it yourself manually? Now, you hardly can find a house without one. Why? Because we all crave convenience and saving time.

It’s not for everyone. It’s a high-quality cover that can take a day or more for us to install, but for those who want a fix for the hassle of manual covers, or have another type that just doesn’t protect, this is will do the trick. It’s likely the last boat cover they’ll need to get.

**Q: How do people reach you for more information?**

**A:** Visit: <https://Flyte-MarineCanvas.com/boat-covers/> or call me at 850-782-0882.



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 Sports


By BARBARA PALMGREN

It's fall and golf is in full swing again for enterprising young junior golfers. Under the new

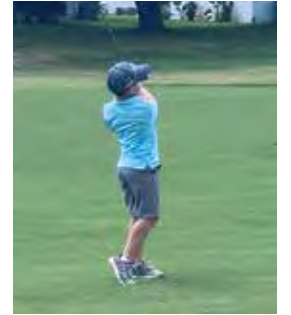
## Growing the Game: Under Armour Junior Golf Tour Tees Up at Shalimar Pointe

leadership of Mike Luzansky and wife, Heather, golf championships are available for youth between ages 6-18. Mike took over the position from Chris Henson who moved to Ohio last year. Mike has always loved golf and played golf in high school. Daughter, Mila, now age 10, entered this golf tour a few years ago and father became excited

to help all future golfers. The Luzansky family owns Street Legal Golf Carts, a golf cart dealership and rental company in Miramar Beach.

But, on a beautiful day, Sept. 29, at Shalimar Pointe Golf Course, only parents could ride in a golf cart to watch a group of young golfers compete for medals and points. Points become important toward qualifying for the winter championship at PGA National in West Palm Beach. The spring season is followed by the summer championship at the same location. Top scores from both seasons lead to the world championships at the Reunion Resort in Orlando in July.

Points are accumulated by participation in at least three of the six seasonal tournaments. First place is 100 points; second place is 90 points; third place is 80 points. The more tournaments you play, the more points you accumulate. For more information on the Junior Tour Powered by Under Armour, please visit [www.usagolftour.com](http://www.usagolftour.com) or reach out to Mike directly at [uaemeraldcoast@gmail.com](mailto:uaemeraldcoast@gmail.com) or 850-714-2550.



### Road Dogg Rescue Pet of the Month



**Red** was rescued along with 52 other dogs from a neglect situation with patches of hair missing and nervous about everything! She has now been in rescue with Road Dogg Rescue for more than eight months. In fact, Red is the LAST ONE of the 52 rescued that is still looking for her forever family. Es-

timated to be a one-year-old, medium sized Vizsla mix and she has blossomed over the last few months. She is super sweet, loves dogs and everyone she meets. She is generally quiet and only barks when she is alerting. She would do best in an active family or one that has another pup looking for a playmate. Red is crate trained and potty trained. She has been in foster in a home with other large dogs and fits in well with the pack!

If you are ready to schedule a Meet & Greet with this amazing pup, fill out the adoption application (Adoption Form ([airtable.com](http://airtable.com))) and we will get that scheduled!

Today's golfers played 9 holes. Parents or caddies were allowed to help if the golfer was under the age of 14. Winners:

Girls: 6-8: Lilian Tatman-1st, Paislee Romack-2nd

Boys: 6-8: Decker Fiorentino-1st, Dyland Bond-2nd, Gaines Wilburn-3rd

Girls: 9-11: Mila Luzansky-1st, Olivia Haddock-2nd, Coco Lacky-3rd

Boys: 9-11: Pierson Hooper-1st, Colin Obannon-2nd, Evan Bacani-3rd

Girls: 12-14: Allie Ellis-1st, Emily Brigman-2nd, Parker Poole-3rd

Boys: 12-14: Hiram Merchant Jr.-1st, Mason Hampton-2nd, Kyle Cummins-3rd

Boys: 15-18: Maximus Cooper-1st, Owen Cuney-2nd, Jackson Zielnski-3rd

## 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 season 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 registration fee to cover the cost of materials and printing of the boat bibs (boat numbers.).

To register, email [Trump2024BoatParade@yahoo.com](mailto:Trump2024BoatParade@yahoo.com) or text 850-376-5634.

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. If you would like to become a part of the team, find out more at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/fwbtrumpgroup>.

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# Complete Ketamine Solutions of Destin: A Lifeline for Healing

By CHRISTOPHER MANSON

Almost two years ago, childhood friends Diane Cooke and Melanie Yost brought Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions to the Destin community, and their partnership has been nothing short of amazing. Combining Melanie's extensive experience as a licensed clinical social worker with Diane's business expertise, they have created a unique healing space dedicated to improving brain health and overall wellness.

Melanie, with more than 30 years of mental health experience in Virginia, first became aware of Ketamine treatments after a deeply personal tragedy. Six years ago, Diane's 20-year-old son died from suicide, shattering her world. She was struggling to function. After doing some research, she discovered Ketamine IV infusion therapy and its innovative use in treating depression, anxiety, PTSD and chronic pain. This therapy proved transformative for Di-

ane, helping her re-engage in life and begin to work through her grief.

Two years later, Diane moved to Northwest Florida full time and discovered that the quality Ketamine treatments she was used to receiving weren't readily available. She reached out to Melanie about the idea of combining their expertise and starting a clinic together. They eventually purchased a Complete Ketamine Solutions franchise because of their superior protocols, the amazing clinical director, Clint Fletcher, CRNA, and Medical Director, Dr. Farago, as well as the ability to be a part of larger network with clinics located in Atlanta, Phoenix, Detroit, Nashville, Connecticut and other parts of Florida.

"Ketamine is an anesthesia that has been around for over 60 years. In the last 10-15 years, researchers began investigating its effectiveness in treating depression, anxiety, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and chronic inflammatory pain.



Be Well Solutions/Complete Ketamine Solutions of Destin owners Melanie Yost and Diane Cooke.

With more than 2000 research papers published, the success rate is 80-85%. That's really exciting! We have many clients who have struggled with treatment resistant anxiety and depression for years and are now feeling better and getting their life back," Melanie explains. "It's so rewarding!"

Melanie's dedicated team at Complete Ketamine Solutions includes three Nurse Practitioners and a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant, all working

closely to ensure the highest quality of care for clients. One special member of the team is Marmaduke, a mixed-breed, rescue dog who provides comfort to clients. "Our clients love him. If I don't bring him to work, people ask where he is. I even have people request that he be there on their treatment day," says Melanie.

In addition to Ketamine infusion therapy, the clinic offers other innovative therapies geared to improving brain health and overall well-being, including mild Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, BEMER Therapy, NAD infusions and injections, and a medical weight loss program.

Melanie is deeply grateful for the support of the Destin community and other local businesses, and she remains committed to giving back. The clinic offers

significant discounts for active and retired military personnel, first responders and even larger discounts for disabled veterans. "Our goal is to partner with our clients on their journey to healing and growth," Melanie says.

"One thing that makes us unique is the consistent feedback from our clients that they feel listened to and cared for by our staff."

As Melanie and Diane continue their mission, they are determined to help as many people as possible, offering a lifeline to those in need of healing through the transformative power of Ketamine and compassionate care.

Be Well Solutions/Complete Ketamine Solutions of Destin is located at 4641 Gulfstarr Dr., Suite 105 in Destin. Office hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Saturdays by appointment only. Call 850.786.2051 or visit CompleteKetamineSolutions.com for additional information.

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Wellness

# Fall Prevention for Older Adults

BY KELLY STALNAKER

According to a 2021 CDC study, falls caused over 38,000 deaths among older adults. Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries and can lead to long-term disabilities and hospitalizations. While the risk of falling rises with age, many falls can be prevented.

It has been proven that healthy, physically active seniors are less likely to suffer a fall. So, engaging in regular exercise that targets strength and balance is one of the best overall ways to significantly reduce the risk of falling. In addition, it's also important to maintain regular visits with all of your doctors. Falls can occur for many different medical reasons such as: poor eyesight, restless sleep, various conditions/illnesses, general weakness or even a vitamin deficiency. Include an eye and ear exam every year, as the ability to see and hear well are important for good balance. Routinely review medications with your doctor or pharmacist because as we age it becomes more necessary



to treat medical conditions, as well as general aches and pains, but taking multiple medications increases the chance of side ef-

fects and risk of falling.

A healthy lifestyle is a great place to start, but there are many other measures that can be taken. Thousands of older adults fall at home each year due to common household hazards, but prioritizing home safety can help prevent falls with just a few easy steps. Remove trip hazards such as throw rugs, cords or clutter and position furniture to create a path for easy movement throughout the home. Increase visibility by replacing burned out light bulbs as quickly as possible, and add nightlights throughout the home for safer movement in

the dark. Be mindful of how you store frequently used items; keep them between waist and shoulder height for easy accessibility without the need for a step stool. More than 80% of falls in the home occur in the bathroom. So, consider purchasing shower seats, grab bars, and/or security poles for these high-risk areas. Falls from the bed are also quite common, but you can protect yourself with a bed rail, fall mat and/or bed alarm.

A large variety of innovative products are available nowadays to help prevent falls. The selection may seem overwhelming, but J&B Medical can help! We

carry several different options such as toilet safety rails, shower chairs and benches, security poles, bed rails, fall mats, ramps, mobility aids and so much more! Stop by and chat with us about your safety concerns and check out all of the options on display in our showroom. We're here Monday through Friday from from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. to answer any questions at 540 E. John Sims Pkwy. in Niceville. Or call us at 850-729-2559. For more information about fall prevention, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/falls>.



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- Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

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# “Crush The Crisis” Prescription Drug Take Back Day Oct. 26

HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital and HCA Florida Navarre will host a ‘Crush the Crisis’ prescription drug take back day on Saturday, Oct. 26, to help raise awareness about the dangers of prescription drug misuse and the importance of safe and proper disposal of unused or expired medications. The event, which coincides with the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, offers the community an opportunity to safely and anonymously dispose of medications before they fall into the wrong hands.

Last year – for the first time since 2018 – there was a decrease in national drug overdose deaths in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, prescription drug misuse remains a public health crisis in the United States.

“For more than 50 years, HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital has cared for the tri-county area, and our ‘Crush the Crisis’ prescription take back day is a testament to this commitment,” said Dr. Dan Hagler, Chief Medical Officer of HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital. “By offering a safe and anonymous way to dispose of medications, reducing the risk of misuse and preventing potential harm, we are helping to create healthier tomorrows for the people who live and work in our community.”

HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital and HCA Florida Navarre Emergency is participating as part of HCA Healthcare’s sixth annual national ‘Crush the Crisis’ prescription drug take back day. Last year, more than 120 HCA Healthcare facilities from all 15 U.S. divisions partnered with local law enforcement. In total, approximately 13,136 pounds, equivalent to 9.02 million doses, of unused and expired prescription medications were collected.

Law enforcement officers from the Fort Walton Beach Police Department and Santa Rosa County Sheriff’s Office will be collecting tablets, capsules and patches of Hydrocodone (Norco, Lortab, Vico-



din), Oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet), Tramadol (Ultram), Codeine, Fentanyl (Duragesic), Morphine, Hydromorphone (Dilaudid) and Oxymorphone (Opana). Ointments, lotions, drops, liquid medication in leak-proof containers, vape cartridges without batteries and pet medication will also be accepted. Any medications will be accepted; however, needles, syringes, lancets or liquids will not be accepted.

As a part of its commitment to combat prescription drug misuse, HCA Healthcare, the parent company of HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital and HCA Florida Navarre Emergency, has worked with the National Academy of Medicine’s (NAM) Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic.

HCA Healthcare uses data from approximately 43 million annual patient encounters to help continuously improve care. The organization uses the science of “big data” to reduce prescription drug misuse and transform pain management, with initiatives in surgical, emergency and other care settings, including:

Enhanced Surgical Recovery (ESR): a multi-modal approach to pain management using pre, intra and post-operative interventions to optimize outcomes. HCA Healthcare’s ESR programs have demonstrated significant improvements in surgical recovery and patient satisfaction, including decreases in opioid usage.

Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Substances (EPCS): aims to stem increasing rates of opioid-related addiction, misuse diversion and death by making it more difficult for medication-seekers to doctor-shop and alter prescriptions. Physicians have access to aggregated electronic health records, providing data that will allow them to prescribe opioids judiciously.

‘Crush the Crisis’ will take place at two locations:

**HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital**  
1000 Mar Walt Drive, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547

October 26, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. – Noon

**HCA Florida Navarre Emergency**  
1809 Granada Street, Navarre, FL 32566

October 26, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. – Noon

For more information, visit [hcahealthcare.com/crushthecrisis](https://hcahealthcare.com/crushthecrisis) or call toll-free: (833) 582-1970.

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 Wellness

# Boosting Your Immunity



By KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

Fall is here and although we have had some amazing mornings, summer is still showing up in force by 9:30 a.m. Whether or not the weather is cooperating with the official start of the season, our minds are beginning to think about the coming holidays. And along with the seasons and holidays comes the cold and flu season.

It's time to boost our immune system. That being said, let's first look at what can weaken our immune system.

- Sugar

- Lack of Sleep
- Stress
- Alcohol

When looking at sugar, consider using honey or pure maple syrup in place of processed sugar. You can also decrease the amount of sugar in the recipe. Put out an array of goodies using smaller plates to decrease how much is being eaten each day.

Lack of sleep coincides with stress. So, taking time to schedule your to do list each day and tossing procrastination out the window can help. When it comes to family get togethers, take time to meditate or do some deep breathing to calm the nerves. You can do this each morning when you first awake and before you go to sleep; deep breathing can be done at any time during your day and can quickly take your body from stress to calm.

When it comes to alcohol, be aware of how much or how quickly you are consuming it.

The following list of foods have immune boosting prop-



erties due to the vitamins and minerals they contain. Vitamins A, C, E and D all play a part

- Citrus fruit (lemons, limes, oranges, clementines, tangerines, grapefruit). Add as a side to every meal.
- Poultry - Chicken soup can ease congestion, supply protein, increase fluids and offer electrolytes, which are important for hydration and recovery. Making your own stock or using bone broth will offer the best benefits.
- Yogurt (plain with good

bacteria) Add fruit, nuts and seeds.

- Almonds (1/2 cup per day) These also contain healthy fats.
- Broccoli (top of the vegetable list for its nutritional impact) Steamed, microwaved or raw are the best methods to retain the most nutrient value. It also contains a good amount of fiber.
- Garlic (medicinal) Add it to whatever you're cooking; soups, stews, sauces, casseroles, etc.
- Ginger (can decrease inflammation, help with sore

throats and aids with nausea) I love the crystalized ginger as I enjoy sweet and spicy flavors. Ginger tea is a great alternative.

- Green tea (contains epigallocatechin 3 gallate or EGCG for short) It enhances the immune system. This can be consumed hot or cold.

Take a high-quality vitamin that has been researched, tested and verified for potency, purity, dissolution and void of coloring and preservatives. No matter how much we eat, our foods no longer contain the nutrients they used to. Extra vitamin D (take this daily) is also important.

Grounding can boost your body's ability to fight off invaders, calm the nerves and give you that little boost of energy you need to finish your day. Whether it's cleaning up the yard, getting your hands in the dirt or walking the beach, spending 10-20 minutes outside daily makes a difference.

Finally, maintain an exercise routine. If a 30-minute routine doesn't work for you, consider breaking it up into 10 minute intervals.

Remember to think outside the box and have fun. After all, our holidays are just around the corner. Here's to Health! succeed.hddl@gmail.com

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# Private Flood Insurance vs. FEMA Flood Insurance What's the Difference?



By JULIE A. MARTIN

There are two types of personal primary flood insurance in the State of Florida. One is FEMA Flood insurance, in which a standard carrier will offer you up to \$250,000 on the Dwelling and up to \$100,000 in Contents. Those are the maximum flood limits that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will allow on a policy issued under the National Flood Insurance Program.

If you have a FEMA flood policy, you have two deductibles, one on the Dwelling and one on the Contents. FEMA has a standing rule that if you go more than 30 days without flood coverage, and you wish to purchase a new flood policy through NFIP, there will be a 30-day wait after binding until the coverage becomes effective.

What if the total insurable replacement cost of your home is more than \$250,000? What happens if there is a flood and

you have only the \$250,000 with which to cover your home in the event of a flood loss, such as happened last year with Hurricane Ian? FEMA also has excess flood insurance available, but it's not easy to get. Several carriers have stopped writing excess flood in certain areas of the state, and those with NFIP policies have a coverage gap that may cost them in the event of a flood.

Private flood insurance offers more comprehensive coverage and is specifically designed to give you the amount of insurance you need in order to protect your home, which is one of the most important, and expensive assets, you will ever have. Private flood will often offer limits as high as \$4 million on the

Dwelling and up to \$500,000 in Contents.

There is one deductible for the loss itself, rather than separate deductibles for Dwelling and for Contents. Private flood also offers an endorsement for Additional Living Expenses, which National Flood Insurance policies do not offer. Private flood coverage may also be more expensive than NFIP flood insurance, but it covers more of your home than NFIP does. Another advantage to Private flood is that if you don't have flood insurance right now, but you need to get insurance quickly, Private flood has only a 10-day wait, rather than the 30-day wait required by FEMA when there is a lapse in coverage.

Which option is the best for

you depends on the size, quality and total insurable replacement cost of your home. Your agent is best suited to help you determine the total insurable replacement cost of your home by performing a Replacement Cost Estimator, using your square footage, year built, roof type, roof shape, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, flooring types, etc. If your replacement cost is more than \$250,000, you may wish to consider Private

flood as a viable option in order to avoid a gap in coverage. If your home is smaller, the National Insurance Flood program might be the best option for you.

Whichever option you choose, it is important to have flood insurance in Florida, as we live on a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the ocean or Gulf of Mexico. If you believe your home is not in a flood zone, I must remind you dear reader, water doesn't know that.

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# Sean of the South: **Aftermath**



This was followed by images on my screen that were apocalyptic. One of America's most historical storms. Hurricane Helene. Destruction from Florida to Virginia.

And here I am, sitting in my comfortable living room, watching the tube, thinking about how scary all this is.

These people's lives are ruined. These people have nothing left. These are Americans. These are my brothers and sisters.

BY SEAN DIETRICH

"It's all gone." That's what the lady on the news said.

She was an older woman, being interviewed by a reporter. Giant news camera shoved in her face.

The lady sounded like she was in a uniquely frantic state, poised somewhere between panic and absolute exhaustion. It is a frame of mind where you experience millions of emotions at once, and yet feel none of them.

I know this because that's how she described it.

"It's all gone. All of it."

Whole towns are gone. Highways have been upended. Floodwaters rage. Mudslides. Missing persons. Missing pets. People going hungry. People trapped. People injured.

All I can think about are the emails and texts going back and forth between those who experienced the nightmare.

"We still haven't heard from my mom..."

"My son hasn't called yet..."

"It's been days and I don't know where my husband is..."

As I write this, the death toll tops 120. And I just read some-



where that 600 are still missing. And that's just the ones we know about.

And as I'm watching this unfold on the television, I'm about to cry. I'm about to give up, deep inside. For there is little hope left in this world, I'm thinking.

But then I see something.

On the television, I see a kid picking up debris. He's slight and small, maybe 6 years old. Blond hair. And he's out there helping. Busting his tail.

I see food trucks galore, on their way to affected areas. Saint Pete. Western North Carolina. Waycross. One Salvation Army food truck, teeming with volunteers, is capable of cranking out 12,000 meals at a time.

Small churches with food lines. Churches with buildings that don't even exist anymore

are feeding the hungry. Feeding each other.

Members of the Cajun Navy, speeding toward flood zones in bass boats, with utility trailers full of supplies.

I see young guys with chainsaws, slicing through fallen oaks. I see men and women from other states, who took a field trip into hell, just to help. They have no relatives here. They just want to pitch in.

I see the Baton Rouge Fire Department flying to Charlotte, North Carolina, just to be airlifted into a rural area of the state.

Volunteer hikers, on their way to the Tennessee state line, a badly damaged area that hasn't been assisted yet.

There are mule packers, headquartered in the North Carolina

hills. Men leading mule trains, trained to haul military ammunition, now delivering meals and water to neighbors stranded.

The stories are too many to count. As I write this, a new story of heroism is occurring every minute in this nation.



Lives are being saved. Heroes. Each one of them. They are carrying the wounded of our kinship toward safety, on their own backs.

And I am reminded of something I once heard one of my own heroes say about horrific events occurring in our world.

"Look for the helpers," he said. "You will always see people who are helping."

He's absolutely right. And in this case, they're called Americans.

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# Op-Ed: Amendment 4—Not What it Seems



By "DOC" DOUG STAUFFER

The most controversial issue on the November ballot is Amendment 4, titled the "Amendment to Limit Government Interference with Abortion." Abortion is, unfortunately, divisive, but this amendment is deceptive. This change to the state's Constitution would forever alter Florida. While Amendment 4 is being marketed as a means to "restore reproductive rights," in reality, it allows unlimited abortion, strips away parental consent laws, and removes doctors from the equation.

### The Deceptive Language of Amendment 4

Amendment 4 does not define one term used in the amendment. All constitutional amendments are carefully crafted with specific terms and

detailed language, leaving less room for misinterpretation. Amendment 4, however, has no such clarity. Words like "viability," "health" and "healthcare provider" are undefined. This opens the door to extreme interpretations that will be exploited by lawyers, making abortion in Florida a legal quagmire.

For instance, the term "viability" typically refers to the point at which a fetus can survive outside the womb, around 22-24 weeks. However, Amendment 4 leaves this term up for interpretation. This ambiguity creates one of the many dangerous loopholes.

The phrase "patient's health" is equally concerning, which could be defined as physical, mental, emotional, and even financial well-being. By using vague and undefined language, Amendment 4 will allow abortion at any stage during the nine months if the "health" of the mother is deemed at risk. That "risk" could include emotional stress or financial strain. The life of the mother is already covered.

### Parental Consent Stripped Away

Amendment 4 attacks the family, because it obscures its impact on parental consent laws. While its proponents argue that "parental notification"

remains intact, the reality is that this amendment, if passed, would repeal Florida's parental consent laws. Think about it! Every other medical procedure performed on a minor requires parental consent—why should abortion be the ONLY exception?

### Who's Behind the Amendment?

Florida voters should ask themselves: Who stands to benefit from this radical amendment? Groups like Planned Parenthood, the ACLU and the Open Society Fund, led by George Soros, have poured millions of dollars into this initiative. These are not grassroots organizations, but well-funded, out-of-state interests determined to make an example of Florida by creating an abortion destination state.

In 2022, Michigan passed a similar state constitutional amendment. What has followed are taxpayer-funded abortions and the removal of all restrictions, including late-term abortions. If Amendment 4 passes, Florida will follow the same path, forcing taxpayers to pay the bill and allowing abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Even most proponents of abortion do not believe in third-trimester abortions.

### Why This Amendment is Too Extreme for Florida

Amendment 4, as an amendment to the Constitution, will result in an almost irreversible outcome. Once enshrined in the state Constitution, our elected representatives will be powerless to fix any problems. If passed, this amendment would turn Florida into a haven for limitless abortions, drawing individuals from states with more common-sense abortion guidelines. The lack of definitions and legal loopholes would enrich attorneys, sparking years of costly litigation. The taxpayers will be adversely affected and have no hope of finding a solution.

### A Call for Informed Voting

The supporters of Amendment 4 want to deceive voters into thinking that the amendment's real outcomes are unknown. Floridians deserve to be fully informed, not misled by

deceptive language and hidden agendas. If parents no longer must give permission for a juvenile to have an abortion, be honest!

During all the heated rhetoric surrounding Amendment 4, one crucial element is often overlooked: love and understanding for the women who have experienced abortion. While some may be satisfied with their decision, others carry a lifetime of regret, and every time this issue ignites another firestorm, those emotions are stirred anew. As we engage in this important debate, let us not forget that compassion must remain at the heart of our conversations. Regardless of our views, every person, including those who have walked this difficult path, deserves our love, respect and empathy.

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**MKAF**

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munity. Taking part as an individual member helps to support the arts education and outreach that Mattie Kelly is known for," Fuller says.

Melanie Moore is the Director of Art Education and couldn't agree more. This year, she has plans to complete nearly 160 custom ArtsReach programs. From teaching artists, residencies, workshops, touring performances and summer camps, each offering is designed to uniquely benefit a range of diverse populations from the needs of K-12 students, children and adults with special needs to veteran and active-duty military service members.

"We're connecting with and providing creative opportunities for populations that lack access to art," Moore explains. "We tailor our programs to those who uniquely benefit from different ways of learning innovative and unique programming. We want to share the arts and a love of the arts with everyone we can and with the best programming we possibly can."

And this is where you come in. MKAF cannot deliver qual-

ity arts programming like the annual Festival of the Arts in the fall, the 10-week Concerts in the Village in the spring, not to mention its year-round ArtsReach community outreach initiatives without the community's help. So please join us.

"Membership is affordable, and the benefits are fun," assures Fuller. "Where else can you spend \$150 and get access to 15 concerts, a Festival of the Arts pass, plus discounts on MKAF events? You just can't."

There are several new MKAF membership levels from just \$75.

**Art Nouveau (40 years old and under) Single \$75** – For those 40 years of age and under. Member benefits include admission to all of the Spring Concerts in the Village and Festival of the Arts, plus preferred pricing to all MKAF events.

**Pop Art – Single \$150 or Double \$250** – Member benefits include admission to all of the spring and fall Concerts in the Village and Festival of the Arts, plus preferred pricing to all MKAF events. This category is available as a single or reduced fee for couple who reside in the same residence.



**Renaissance Single \$250** – Includes all member benefits of the Pop Art category plus a VIP Table seat at all of the Concerts in the Village, table is assigned upon arrival. (This is a limited membership category and will be filled on a first come, first served basis.)

**Impresario Single \$500** – Includes all member benefits of the Pop Art category plus a preferred VIP Table seating at all of the Concerts in the Village, plus 10 general admission tickets to use at any Concerts in the Village or Festival of the Arts. (This is a limited membership category and will be filled on a first come, first served basis.)

Plus, pledging your support is easy to do. Simply go to the

MKAF website and sign up on the home page.

Supporting MKAF means you are a champion of the arts. Since forming in 1995, MKAF has impacted 420,000 through our ArtsReach programs.

You will be helping to support this special MKAF memory shared by Melanie Moore of Hands On with Zig, an MKAF ArtsReach partner who presents interactive educational based music events with multicultural themes:

One of my favorite memories working with Zig was after visiting the ARC of Walton County. Zig begins each program by introducing himself and sharing some things about his life as a musician/compos-

er/educator based in Nashville. After two hours of all of the clients learning to play percussion instruments of various genres (including country music) and making music as an ensemble, I saw that some of the participants were huddled in a group off to the side. It seems that they deduced that since Zig is from Nashville, and as a musician, that he must know Crystal Gale, and asked if he could bring her with him next time, as one of them was actually named after Crystal Gale. Zig explained that he did not know her personally, so it would most likely be him returning by himself in the future. However, when Zig returned to Nashville, he did work his connections and reached out to her. Needless to say, Crystal Gale sent an autographed photo to the ARC and it now holds pride of place. Needless to say, her namesake was moved to tears. What many may not realize is that when Zig comes to visit, and everyone learns to play an instrument as part of "the band," they become the stars of their own show, and feel like they are a part of something special.



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Arts & Music

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the lyrics referenced earlier: If you reach for the heavens, you get the stars thrown in — ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!

When we moved into 560 Grand Boulevard, I was still paid part time with ECTC while volunteering full time. Anna was hired as an independent contractor per teaching or costuming gig and volunteering the rest of the time as well when she wasn't at her regular job teaching 4th grade. With a grant from the St. Joe Community Foundation, we bought curtains and tracking to divide off the performance space. A grant from the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County covered additional theater lighting, and with some amazing volunteer help from friends at University of West Florida – Glenn Breed and Phillip Brulotte – we moved in and prepared to open Constellations, our first show in the new space.

Because audience members need a place to sit, we filled this need with donated white folding chairs. Monica Bowes owned an event company and



Shirley Simpson and Nathanael Fisher

offered her event chairs whenever I wanted as long as I was able to come get them myself and they weren't in use for an event. By this time, my Father in Law, Jerry Ogle, had donated an old Ford truck to ECTC. So, every time we did a show at the Market Shops, the Williams Sonoma space at Grand Boulevard, and even the first couple of shows at 560 Grand Boulevard, off I would go in the old Ford to pick up one to 200 foldable white event chairs, and, of course, to return them the day after the production run ended. Soon after moving into 560 Grand Boulevard, with generous donations from Eric and Teresa Bolton and Doug and Jan

Best, we were able to purchase our soft, cushy, black chairs and some sound equipment! For a time, these chairs set in rows on ground level worked. But, one day we had a few hundred children at a Field Trip production of Flat Stanley the Musical, and the kids on the back two to three rows were sitting on their knees and standing up. They simply could not see, because all of our nice cushioned chairs were ground level. Unfortunately, we did not get the grant funding we were hoping for to purchase risers. Later that week, I was having lunch with Shirley Simpson and we were discussing how unfortunate it was that we didn't get the grant money. Mrs. Simpson asked me, "Well, how much do you need for the risers?" I replied with the amount. She returned with, "You've got it!" WHAT?!!! To this day, Shirley and I recount this story, her joy in being able to have such a positive impact on ECTC and my overwhelmed reaction at her news. If you know me, then you know that I responded with some breathless wonder and a few tears – truly, anything CAN happen!

Since 2016, the partnership

with Grand Boulevard for the space has been a dream come true. Our first season there, Season 4 (2016-2017), we produced two to three actor shows and no musicals: Constellations, A Dickens Christmas and Bakersfield Mist. We had a little over 1,800 people attend those three productions, 1,745 people attended our educational program performances, and we had about 470 education program registrations. I had just become full time with the company, but still supplemented by continuing to adjunct at Gulf Coast State College and UWF, Anna was still hired as needed as an independent contractor and volunteered the rest of the time, and our team was filled out with some amazing independent contractors like Bridgett Bryant, Darla Briganti, Cana Strong and others.

Fast forward to the end of Season 11 and looking forward to Season 12 – we are now producing shows with casts of up to 22 actors; we had over 13,000 people attend Season 11 professional and Family Theatre productions, over 3,100 people attend the educational theatre productions, and 769 registra-

tion in our educational theatre programs including the satellite programs in DeFuniak Springs, Freeport and Panama City. Our team has grown to eight, full-time employees, including Anna and I, and one part-time employee. And, we're looking forward to another season of spectacular professional and educational theatre with the goal of serving our community with excellence! ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!

While we were celebrating our 10-year anniversary, we were being interviewed by Zandra Wolfgram for an article in a local magazine. She asked Anna and I, "So, Year 10! Is it 'Mission Accomplished?'" Anna and I looked at each other and laughed – "Mission just getting started! We are not done dreaming!" We still feel that way. Look at the last 11 years, look what's happened, look how YOU our community has embraced us. We are so incredibly grateful for everything that has happened, but with YOUR help there is more. Will you dream with us, will you believe with us that even still...ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN!?!?

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**AROUND TOWN**

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to 17 benefitting charities, all providing life-saving services to at-risk children and families in the local community. This year's donation also marks a major milestone for DCWAF as the organization surpasses \$35 million donated since its inception in 2005. To date, DCWAF funding has helped to build more than 60 Habitat for Humanity homes, a Level II NICU, two dental busses, a pediatric exam room, resources for those with developmental differences, scholarships to after-school programs, support services for homeless, abused, and neglected children, and countless other lifesaving programs. Learn more at <http://www.DCWAF.org>.

**Business Organizations Endorse Okaloosa Tax Exemption Renewal**

Citing the need for Okaloosa County to remain competitive for new, high wage jobs, seven respected community business organizations have aligned to support and encourage approval of the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption (EDATE) incentive program that will be placed before Okaloosa County voters in the November 5 general election: Building Industry Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors, the Crestview Area Chamber of Commerce, the Destin Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce and One Okaloosa Economic Develop-

ment Council. The Boards of Directors of each of the seven organizations have endorsed the renewal of the economic incentive program and are encouraging their respective membership bases to support the initiative.

Providing temporary property tax exemptions to eligible new and existing businesses that invest in facility improvements and/or equipment while creating new jobs with an average wage at 110% of the county's average wage or more, the EDATE program was initially adopted in 1981. Under Florida law, the program must be reauthorized by voters every 10 years. Following the August 6 decision by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners to place the referendum question on the ballot, voters in Okaloosa County will have the opportunity to renew the EDATE incentive. "It should come as no surprise that getting these seven organizations to come together to support the renewal of this vital economic development tool was remarkably easy. Quality jobs are foundational to a healthy economy, and

with our neighboring counties offering an EDATE incentive to facilitate new employment opportunities, we have to do everything we can to ensure that we remain competitive," said Nathan Sparks, Executive Director, One Okaloosa EDC.

According to an economic impact report completed by the University of West Florida's Haas Center in July, Okaloosa County's EDATE incentive has resulted in the addition of 317 jobs to the local economy over the past 10 years and an additional \$19.1 million in local payroll. The UWF Haas Center tallied the overall Return on Investment to Okaloosa County at 663%.

Visit [www.jobsforokaloosa.com](http://www.jobsforokaloosa.com) for more information.

**Local Sons and Daughters of Italy Lodge**

The local Sons and Daughters of Italy in America, Lodge #2422, encourages participation of all Italian Americans throughout the area. Though the Lodge is devoted to the culture and heritage of Italy and all things Italian, community citi-



Left: Laura Hussey Co-Anchor Channel 3 (Guest Speaker for September) pictured with President Maddie McNeal.

zens 18 and older can become members.

The organization provides academic scholarships and participates in many Fort Walton Beach activities. Meetings are the first Thursday each month at the Fort Walton Beach Yacht Club at 6 p.m. Apply by contacting President Maddie McNeal [smile4maddie2@gmail.com](mailto:smile4maddie2@gmail.com) or 850-259-0292.

**The Pyramid Players Returned to the Stage In Willy Wonka, Jr.**

By AUTEM BUSH

Celebrating their 30th Anniversary this year, The Pyramid Players recently brought Roald Dahl's Willy Wonka, Jr. to the Fort Walton Beach Civic Auditorium that included an art show featuring the works of Pyramid Artists statewide.

Willy Wonka, Jr. was The Players' 16th annual community-inclusive production, who study their craft at Pyramid, Inc., an arts-focused nonprofit day program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

While The Players assumed the adult and ensemble roles in the musical, the cast was peppered with community youth actors, who lent their talents as the ticket-holding children and the Oompa Loompas. Also joining the cast in the title role of Willy Wonka was former Player and local rising performer Reid Soria of Autism Sings, LLC.

"The Players were excited to share the stage with some of the best local talent in our community," said Nicole Fahle, Pyramid Performing Arts Coordinator and show director, who also thanked Mosaic Theatre Company, Niceville High School Theatre Department and The Story House Theatre for lending talent, time, costumes, props and sets.



The performance provided a glimpse into the abilities of a group of people whose talents too often go unrecognized. Cast members learned that hard work and dedication permit them to excel, not only on stage, but in their personal lives as well.

According to Pyramid Chief Operating Officer Marilyn Yon, "When Pyramid opened in 1994, it was to provide services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," she said, "but it was the introduction of the visual and performing arts program that paved the way for students to explore their abilities, to discover talents and to create something amazing from within themselves."

For more information, contact at Pyramid Director Carrie Lawrence at 850-862-7139 or [clawrence@pyramidinc.org](mailto:clawrence@pyramidinc.org).

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