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Festival of the Arts Marks 30 Years of Color, Creativity and Community



BY LORI LEATH SMITH

The first time I walked into the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation office, it felt like coming home. It reminded me of my mom—a talented artist with a gift for detail who loved bringing barns, old buildings, people, trees and landscapes to life in watercolor and pen & ink. Growing up, weekends often meant traveling to art shows, helping her set up and soaking in the creative buzz of those events. I even sold my own pet rocks (don't judge—some of you remember!) and tried my hand at leatherwork

and paint. Those early shows were my first classrooms in community—how art unites strangers in one place and somehow sends them home as friends. Perhaps that's why today, as a Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) board member, my love of art and artists still runs deep. And the Festival of the Arts remains one of my favorite times of year. This year, we celebrate MKAF's 30th anniversary, a milestone for one of the Southeast's premier juried art festivals.

Arty Kick Off Party

The celebration begins Friday night, October 24, with the Arty Kick Off Party at 6 p.m. at the MKAF Cultural Arts Village. Guests will vibe to tunes by DJ Josh, sip curated pours from Vinuv and enjoy light bites while mingling with artists and friends in a colorful, artsy crowd. Illustrator Janae Erickson—best known for the Niceville mural, MKAF's 30th anniversary logo and her role as Sr. Director of Design at Frances Roy Agency—will be creating live digital art on the Dugas Stage,

bringing her process to life in real time. It's also the perfect chance to learn about MKAF's new Artist Level Membership, designed to support the arts while unlocking exclusive perks. Tickets are \$50 per person and include one drink voucher, with MKAF members saving \$20. Proceeds benefit MKAF and its Arts-Reach community outreach education initiatives.

FESTIVAL OF ARTS
continued on page 2

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Remembering Charlie

Reflections on His Ministry from Across the World



Editor's Note:
Many readers are familiar with Charlie Kirk, who was tragically gunned down on Sept. 10. What stunned us at Life

CHARLIE
continued on page 2



Magnolia Grill

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

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Community

CHARLIE

continued from page 1

Media Group was the extraordinary, worldwide impact of his ministry. The following excerpt is drawn from an editorial written by Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkuno, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, in an article from *Orthodox Christianity*—offering a perspective from the other side of the Christian faith tradition.

Excerpt from Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkuno, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church:

Just a week ago, the name Charlie Kirk was virtually unknown in Russia. Then, like a supernova explosion, he burst into our information space, unleashing a wave of both indignation and admiration. Some saw in him the embodiment of values they found unacceptable and reacted with open hatred and outrage toward Kirk: “How can an American (an American!) be like that?”

Others—astonished and grieved that he is no longer among the living—discovered in him an unexpected kindred spirit. Death, without a doubt, became both the chief sermon and the pinnacle of Charles Kirk’s ministry. It also illuminated his complete image—one

filled with faith, resolve and Christian love—refuting the slanders of those who read the Gospel with their soul’s eyes shut, failing to understand that the bold defense of Gospel truth is love in action.

The murderer—and all those who stood behind him—are powerless to place a final period on the existence of a man who believes in Christ. And in the hearts of millions of his like-minded followers and friends, Charlie’s martyred death breathed new, greatly multiplied life in service of their goals, thoughts, and convictions.

In an age of post-truth, relativism, and libertarianism—when reality is constructed by the media and social networks, and conformity has become the norm—truth is drowning in a sea of political correctness. Charlie Kirk dared to go against the current. He acknowledged no shades of gray, no compromises, no deals with the conscience. He couldn’t have cared less about what was fashionable, accepted, or dictated by the crowd. He allowed himself a luxury almost unheard of in our time—to call things by their proper names, even if that meant that such a royal choice would, inevitably and without a doubt, bring a series of con-

Charlie Kirk, in his own words:

“I’m nothing without Jesus. I’m a sinner. I fall incredibly short of the glory of God. We all do. I gave my life to the Lord in fifth grade, and it’s the most important decision I’ve ever made, and everything I do incorporates Jesus Christ.”



sequences, including the most dreadful ones.

What is especially admirable about Charlie Kirk is his willingness to go and speak about the Kingdom of Heaven, about traditional values, about conservative principles in the very places that seemed most unsuitable—places whose inhabitants, for the most part, do not want to hear anything of the kind. He chose a “mission field” perhaps the most important, but—as we now see—far from safe, not

unlike preaching somewhere among a tribe of cannibals. University campuses, the youth culture of Generations Z and Y. But Charlie Kirk, even among these young and often aggressive beings—so dearly loved by him in a truly Christian way, each one of whom he saw as bearing the image and likeness of God—was not afraid to be a “black sheep,” was not afraid to go against the current, was not afraid to speak the truth as he understood it, even if it fre-

quently provoked anger and rejection.

The example of Charlie Kirk is a lesson for us.

Charlie Kirk spoke, first and foremost, about what he truly believed. His sincere passion, integrity, and conviction were contagious to young people and compelled them to think. That is precisely why he was both loved and hated—but he left no one indifferent.

The life and death of Charlie Kirk—his entire life’s work—cannot help but evoke the deepest respect. His stand against retreat and decline, against what our Orthodox elder Father John (Krestiankin) once called “the march of the destroyer,” proved, despite the confessional differences, to be strikingly resonant for many of us.

- Metropolitan Tikhon of Simferopol and Crimea

FESTIVAL OF ARTS

continued from page 1

A Celebration for All

On October 25–26, the MKAF Cultural Arts Village in Destin will transform into a

kaleidoscope of creativity, color and connection. Festivalgoers can stroll through more than 100 artist tents filled with original artwork from throughout the U.S., experience live demonstrations, enjoy continuous live

music, and sample food truck fare or relax in the beer and wine garden. Street performers will bring their playful artistry, children can dive into hands-on art activities, and visitors can cast their vote for the People’s Choice Award on Saturday. Admission is free, ensuring this beloved event remains accessible to all.

“The Festival of the Arts is one of our signature events,” says Festival Producer Deb Nissley, “It’s where our mission to enhance and inspire every life through Arts and Culture truly comes alive.”

A Legacy Rooted in Community

The festival is inseparable from the story of the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation itself. Founded in 1995 in honor of Destin matriarch Mattie May Kelly, the Foundation grew out of her vision that the cultural arts should be available to everyone. A pianist, organist, composer, poet and patron of the arts, Mattie dedicated her life to learning

and to lifting others. Together with her husband, Coleman, she helped pioneer Destin’s tourism and fishing industries while remaining a generous benefactor of culture and community.

Today, MKAF carries her legacy forward. Over the past three decades, the Foundation has delivered more than 160 ArtsReach programs, partnering with 100+ schools and agencies to bring the arts to students, veterans and individuals with special needs. Each year, more than 25,000 participants experience these programs—everything from music residencies in classrooms to therapeutic art sessions for military families. Since its founding, MKAF has touched more than 420,000 lives throughout Northwest Florida. And it’s not just individuals—more than 500 business and individual patrons continue to fuel this work, proving that when a community invests in the arts, everyone benefits.

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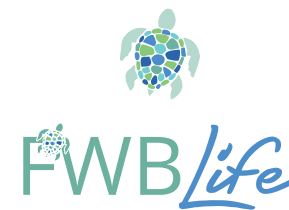
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Shane Weddle, Owner of FastSigns: “Leaning Into” His Community

BY KELLY MURPHY-REDD

Though Shane has only been in Okaloosa County for four years, the magnitude of his involvement in the community makes it seem as if he has lived here much longer.

Shane came to us from just outside Jacksonville, Fla. He was looking to buy a business. Having been in corporate manufacturing for 20 years, Shane had decided he didn't want to work for people anymore. He had worked his way up the ladder, but after so many years, he wasn't happy.

At first, he thought he would do something he knew well. Shane had experience in making lithium batteries, satellite antennas, and firearm accessories and armor. However, those products were highly capital intensive. For a short time, he thought maybe he would go into firearms holster manufacturing but that market was saturated.

A franchise coach found Shane on LinkedIn. She presented Shane with a dozen franchise opportunities. He looked online and found a sign company for sale in Fort Walton Beach. He had visited in 2015 while attending a wedding and loved the area. So, he came and visited the sign shop. And saw a lot of military products.

From Indiana originally, Shane enlisted in the Navy and served three years. He served on a guided missile destroyer participating in Caribbean drug operations, in Bosnia and Kosovo in 1993, and served in the National Guard for three years. When he inspected the sign shop and saw the military connection, he knew he was where he was supposed to be.

As the new owner of FastSigns, Shane joined the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce immediately. He currently serves on the board and is chairman of the Military Affairs Committee. Shane is also an Honorary Commander for the 58th Fighter Wing at Eglin and the 3rd Battalion at 7th Group Special Forces.

At first, community involvement and “giving back” weren't a line item for Shane's company. Then he started to, as he says, “lean into” giving back to his



new community. He says it may be what makes his sign company different – how much they engage and how many people they have the opportunity to help. Supporting various causes is now a big part of what he does.

He has given his employees the authority to give away what they deem appropriate. Shane says it is fruitful personally. It “does something for you” when you engage. He defines engagement as writing a check but also showing up. Some of the community projects he supports include One Hopeful Place, Motorcycle Riding Events of America, and the Savage Loop

run. He is also a member of One Okaloosa Economic Development Council's Tri-County Partnership Initiative (TCPI) and Defense Support Initiative (DSI) committees.

A board member of Motorcycle Riding Events of America, Shane has worked to raise money to provide LifeVac devices for schools, daycare centers, nursing homes and law enforcement. So far, they have provided over 700 devices from Pensacola to Tallahassee in a year-and-a-half. The first recipient was the Fort Walton Beach Police Department. There is a device in every patrol vehicle. There are



two confirmed reports so far of lives saved.

Recently Shane has become a community representative advocating for the preservation of the Eglin Gulf Test Range. He and others are asking for a bill to be passed that would lock in this protection for a lifetime. Shane recently returned from Washington D.C. where he participated in talks with the Department of the Interior, Oceana and Representative Patronis.

Shane simply states we have

two industries in Okaloosa County that make up the bulk of our economy: the military and tourism. Drilling would negatively impact both. Drilling prevents testing, which would result in a loss of ability to bring war to our country's enemies and to defend our nation. We have all seen what an oil spill does to the environment and to tourism.

As you can see Shane has done a lot of “leaning into” community involvement in just four short years. We have no doubt he will continue to be an energetic asset to our area.



Kelly
Murphy-
Redd

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FWB High School Inducts Three Longtime Educators into Viking Hall Of Fame

By JARED WILLIAMS,
GETTHECOAST.COM

Fort Walton Beach High School honored three longtime educators who shaped generations of students when it inducted them into the Viking Hall of Fame on Friday, October 3, during halftime of the football game.

The 2025 inductees — Kevin Craig, Barbara Britt and Randy Folsom — make up a combined 93 years of service to the school and left lasting impacts across athletics, academics and the arts.

Kevin Craig: Coach Craig built the Lady Vikings basketball program into a powerhouse during his 22-season tenure as head coach from 1982 to 2003. His teams earned 509 wins, 10 district championships, seven regional titles, six Final Four ap-

pearances and two state championships. Craig, who served 25 years total at Fort Walton Beach High School beginning in 1979, coined the team's enduring motto "Whatever It Takes."

Beyond basketball, Craig taught physical education and coached multiple sports including JV football, softball, track, cross country and tennis. He and his wife Lisa have six children and seven grandchildren.

Barbara Britt: Barbara Britt transformed student leadership during her 36-year career at the school from 1977 to 2013. As a leadership teacher, she expanded the program from 30 to more than 300 students, creating a curriculum that prepared students for college and careers through personal portfolios and community projects.

Her leadership launched ini-



tiatives supporting military families, local schools and homeless feeding programs, including the Silver Sands Prom.

As Physical Education Department Head and head cheerleading coach, Britt ensured Title IX compliance and expanded athletic opportunities for female students by introducing competitive cheerleading, dance and weightlifting programs. She helped build the women's field house and holds

certifications in John Maxwell Leadership Training, DISC Personality Insights, and Diversity and Inclusion.

Randy Folsom: Randy Folsom helped lead the Viking band program to national recognition during his

tenure from 1988 to 2020. Starting as assistant band director in 1988, he became Director of Bands in 1999 and guided the marching, jazz and symphonic bands to consistently earn the highest ratings at district, state and national events.

Under Folsom's direction, the bands performed at prestigious venues including the Pearl Harbor 75th Anniversary Celebration and the National Band Festival at Carnegie Hall.

His honors include serving as president of the Florida Bandmasters Association, receiving the FBA Oliver Hobbs Award in 2006, the Phi Beta Mu Outstanding Bandmaster in 2015, and induction into the FBA Hall of Fame in 2011. He was also named Fort Walton Beach High School Teacher of the Year in 2011.

Many of Folsom's former students have become music educators themselves, with several serving as band directors in Okaloosa County. The band program was a family affair — his sons Wade and Grant graduated from Fort Walton Beach High School, while his wife Gail served in various positions including teacher, staffing specialist, testing coordinator and dean of students before they both retired in 2020.

Brothers in Service: Buckthal Eagles Make Their Mark

The Town of Shalimar is beaming with pride over the accomplishments of brothers Bradley and Chandler Buckthal, both members of Scouts BSA Troop 529, who have recently achieved milestones that showcase leadership, service and dedication.

On Sept. 17, 2025, Bradley Buckthal, 17, was honored by the Town of Shalimar with a Certificate of Recognition for being named an alternate delegate to the American Legion Boys Nation program. Considered the pinnacle of the Legion's youth leadership initiatives, Boys Nation brings a



select group of high school students to Washington, D.C., each summer for a weeklong mock Senate. Delegates debate bills, elect leaders, meet with top officials and gain firsthand insight into civic life. Selection requires

excellence in academics, leadership and service—qualities Bradley has consistently displayed as an Eagle Scout and community leader.

Meanwhile, his younger brother, Chandler Buckthal, a



freshman at Fort Walton Beach High School, cleared a major hurdle toward earning Scouting's highest honor—Eagle Scout—by leading the construction of a fully equipped archery range that will benefit thousands of students for years to come. A member of Scouts BSA Troop 529, Buckthal selected the proj-

ect after recognizing a need for upgrading his school's archery range.

With help from a volunteer crew, Buckthal designed and built a 50-by-60-foot range that met official National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) standards. They first leveled the field, framed it and filled it with gravel. To finish it off, they installed target, 10-meter and 15-meter shooting lines, built sturdy benches for archers and mounted a cable-and-pole system to safely hang the arrow-catching curtain.

Continued on page 31

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

TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING

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What's Happening in Okaloosa County?

BY CAROLYN NEWCOMER
KETCHEL

I thought it might be of interest to have a few highlights of community projects from your Board of County Commissioners.

Lazarus Memorial Service

On Monday, November 3, 2025, at 10 a.m. at the Beal Memorial Cemetery, more than 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 cremains of those who otherwise would not have funeral services. It is our community's outpouring of respect and community spirit to provide the unclaimed deceased a dignified resting place.

The ceremony has become a much-celebrated event within the faith community, and in the life of our county, as a dignified



way to memorialize those we have lost. Some of the deceased are senior citizens who have outlived their relatives, some are infants and children whose parents and families are without financial means, but many individuals are those members of our community who have become estranged from their families. This year we have 30 individuals.

Fairground Renovation

The renovation of the fairground facility, now known as The Rigdon Center, is in full swing. The county has almost completely renovated much of the inside of the buildings, ceilings, walls, lighting, electric, HVAC and roofing, and demolished several of the older, obsolete buildings. We are now



working on flooring, technology, bath rooms and storm water. We are now bidding out a project addition for two new catering kitchens, bathrooms and a concession area. Behind this project will be a project to redo the entrances and façades.

Bridge to Bridge Bike Path Ribbon Cutting

The much-anticipated opening of the 12-foot-wide Bike Path from Brooks Bridge to Destin (Marler Bridge) will be on October 23rd, 2025 at 10 a.m. This project has been a partnership of the county and Eglin AFB using public funding as well as private. The roadway is open to walkers and bikes, not golf carts. We continue to work with Eglin to prevent cars from using it. A rope fence is being



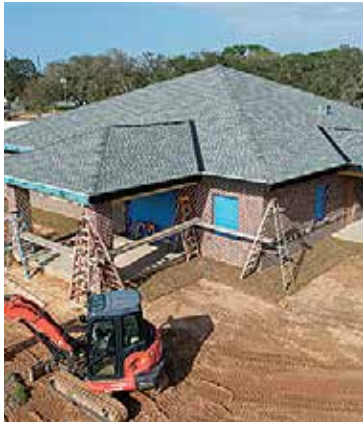
considered along the roadway to prevent any vehicles from accessing it.

The path will sparkle blue at night as the photo luminescent rocks added to the asphalt glow from the absorption of sunlight during the day. The pathway will be a community asset that is fun for recreation while protecting individuals from injury as it provides a safe pathway.

Extension Services Building

The new south end Extension Services Building will soon

be open for business and classes. This long-awaited building at the Rigdon Fairgrounds will replace the old facility that was finished off by Hurricane Sally. Classes will be held for those



who enjoy gardening, cooking and learning to grow flowers. Currently classes can only be held in the Crestview location.

Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2 / Vice-Chairman 2024-2025. She can be reached at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 850-651-7105.

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 Community

Events Around Town

Harvest Wine & Food Festival

Oct. 16–19 | Times vary by event | Cerulean Park, WaterColor



Four days. World-class wine. Unforgettable food. From Friday's sultry Harvest After Dark to Saturday's legendary Grand Tasting and elegant Sunday brunch, this is one of the Southeast's premier festivals. Proceeds benefit Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.

Tickets and details: dcwaf.org.

Wicked Triple Fun Run

Oct. 18–19 | Times vary by race | Fort Walton Beach

Ready to run? The Wicked Triple Fun Run features a 10K, 5K, and half marathon over two days in Fort Walton Beach. Whether you're a casual jogger or chasing a PR, there's a race for you. Registration is open now at active.com.

PORT 2025 - Watersport & Boat Tours Operators Forum

Oct. 20–21 | All day | Destin-FWB Convention Center

Back for its fifth year, the PORT Watersport & Boat Tours Operators Forum is the only event of its kind in the industry. Hosted by Greg Fisher and Kevin O'Neil of the Awkward Watersport Guys podcast, the two-day gathering offers education, networking and mentorship for operators, manag-

ers and newcomers. Nearly 30 vendors—including TripAdvisor/Viator, Yamaha, Seadoo and WaveRez—will showcase the latest products and tech. Sessions cover pricing, marketing, regulations and more, plus happy hours and live evening events. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

Silver Sands School Fish Fry Fundraiser

Oct. 24 | 5–6:30 p.m. | Silver Sands School, Fort Walton Beach

Students at Silver Sands School are prepping the tilapia for their annual fish fry fundraiser, Friday, Oct. 24, from 5–6:30 p.m. The evening begins with the popular student fishing rodeo, with trophies awarded in elementary, middle and high school divisions. The fish come from the school's one-of-a-kind Growth House aquaponics system, where fish waste fertilizes crops. Dewey Destin Seafood will serve plates of fried fish, hush puppies and fries for \$10,

with every dollar benefiting the school's programs. Pre-order tickets through the school's website to skip the line. Proceeds support hands-on learning initiatives like the Growth House that teach lifelong skills.

Fall Silent Auction for Emerald Coast Food Rescue

Friday, Oct. 24 | 6–9:30 p.m. | Local Market, Destin

Bid for a cause! Help fight hunger in Okaloosa and Walton counties while enjoying food, drinks and community fun. Proceeds support ECFR's mission to deliver 250,000 pounds of food monthly.

Details: emeraldcoast-foodrescue.org.

Fleets and Eats: A Party for a Purpose

Saturday, Oct. 25 | 6 p.m. | Destin Harbor (Tailfins, The Edge, Harbor Docks)

Hop aboard tiki boats for a Lu'au-style harbor crawl with

cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and live music. Proceeds support autism services at ECAC. After-party at Tailfins!

Tickets & Details: ecautismcenter.org.

Barktoberfest

Thursday, Oct. 30 | 4:30–6:30 p.m. | Grand Park, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Paws down, the cutest fall fest around! Bring your pup in costume for trick-or-treating, a legendary doggie costume contest, live DJ, photo booth, and tasty bites. \$15 preregistration (\$20 day-of). Benefits Dog-Harmony.

Register: dog-harmony.org

Tricks & Treasures at The Boardwalk

Oct. 31 | 5–8 p.m. | The Boardwalk, Okaloosa Island

Celebrate Halloween at The Boardwalk's 10th Annual Tricks & Treasures, Oct. 31 from 5–8

Continued on page 8

MAGIC + COMEDY

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Palms Resort Brings Dinner, Drinks, Live Magic & Comedy to Destin!

An action-packed live show featuring World-Class Magic Comedy and Ventriloquism is now open with nightly shows at the newly renovated Palms Destin Resort Showroom.

Interactive magic takes place just inches away in an intimate showroom that offers excellent table seating. The performance features sophisticated magic & smart comedy targeting adults but is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. The show is headlined by Bart Rockett who hosted his own nationally syndicated television show for three seasons, had a co-starring role on the former NBC Drama Parenthood and headlined his own 1,000-seat theater in the tourist mecca of Branson, Missouri for nine seasons. He has appeared in 85 countries around the globe and headlined for most every major cruise line.

Rockett, who started at the age of 10, trained under Jeff Dunham and is recognized for his excellent comedy ventrilo-

quism which is featured in the show. After growing up in the South, Rockett moved to Hollywood, California where his management team is located. He produced his teens to the finals of NBC's America's Got Talent and they have gone on to do major Hollywood projects over the years. Kadan, who starred in the movie Dark Skies with award winning actress Keri Russell and on CBS's rush hour combines forces with his Sister, Brooklyn to make guest appearances in Rockett's Destin show.

Brooklyn is well known for her viral Super Bowl commercial that currently has nearly 800 million views on YouTube and most recently played Hollywood superstar Bradley Cooper's daughter in a project with Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

This talented family has been vacationing in Destin for many years and now that Rockett's kids are almost grown, he is excited to be back

for a long-term residency in the place his Grandparents first introduced him to as a child. Rockett shared, "For me, coming back here feels like coming home. Some of my greatest childhood memories happened on these beaches and it's my desire to bring something unique to the area that is a fun experience for families to attend & make their own amazing memories."

Nightly shows happen at 7:30 p.m. with 5 p.m. early seatings offered on Sunday's and select dates. A variety of alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages are available as well as a full menu of food and desert offerings before or after the show. Parking is plentiful and free in The Palms Destin Resort multi-level parking garage, that is attached to the showroom.

Advance reservations are required and can be made at the official ticketing site: USATourTickets.LIVE.



Happenings Around FWB

2025
EVENTS

OCTOBER

- 10 | **Mystery by the Book Club**
12 pm | FWB Public Library | FWB
Paint Party: Galaxy Forest
6 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
Football Game: FWB High School vs. Arnold
7 pm | FWB High School | FWB
Football Game: Choctawhatchee High School vs. Rickards
7 pm | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB
- 11 | **Garnier Beach Garden Club**
10 am | FWB Public Library | FWB
Girls Empowered with Math and Science (GEMS) Workshops
10:30 am | FWB Public Library | FWB
1 Year Anniversary
4 pm | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB
Zombie Walk Trick or Treat
4 pm | The Landing + Downtown FWB | FWB
- 13 | **General Trivia Night**
6 pm | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB
Paint Party: A Witchy Boo
6 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
- 14 | **Games Club**
1 pm | FWB Public Library | FWB
- 15 | **Live Music: The Mighty Mystic**
8 pm | Docie's Dock | FWB
- 16 | **Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours**
5:30 pm | Ashley Furniture HomeStore | FWB
Planetarium Nights
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- 16-19 | **9th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival**
Various Times & Locations | WaterColor
- 18 | **Florida Concealed Carry Weapons Class**
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Trinity Boo Bash
12 pm | Trinity United Methodist Church | FWB
Wicked Triple Run
Times vary | Ferry Park | FWB
Live Music: Drivin' N Cryin'
8 pm | Docie's Dock | FWB
- 19 | **Halloween Market**
11 am | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB
- 20 | **GSSF Indoor League**
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Sports Trivia Night
6 pm | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB

- 20-21 | **PORT 2025 - Watersport/Boat Tour Forum**
all day | Destin-FWB Convention Center
- 22 | **Lunch N Learn: QuickBooks Online Tips & Tricks for Beginners**
11:30 am | Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce | FWB
Wine Down Wednesday
4 pm | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB
Word Waves Writers
5 pm | FWB Public Library | FWB
- 24 | **Football Game: FWB High School vs. Choctawhatchee**
7 pm | FWB High School | FWB
Silver Sands School Fish Fry Fundraiser
5-6:30 pm | Silver Sands School | FWB
- 25 | **30th Annual Festival of the Arts**
9 am | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin
Simple and Elegant Sewing
10 am | FWB Public Library | FWB
3rd Annual Boo Bash
10 am | Gold's Gym | FWB
HOWL-O-WEEN Trunk or Treat
11 am | Panhandle Animal Welfare Society | FWB
Sip & Science: Mystery at the Museum
6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Halloween Murder Mystery
6:30 pm | A.J.'s on the Bayou | FWB
- 26 | **30th Annual Festival of the Arts**
10 am | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin
5th Annual BrunchFest
11 am | Seville Quarter | Pensacola
All Ages Paint Party: Paint Your Pet
12 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
Live Music: Saving Abel
8 pm | Docie's Dock | FWB
- 27 | **Stranger Things Trivia Night**
6 pm | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB
- 29 | **All Ages Blacklight Paint Party: Glowin Batty**
6 pm | Painting with a Twist | FWB
- 30 | **Barktoberfest benefiting Dog Harmony**
4:30 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach
Planetarium Special Feature: Spooky Secrets
5 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Football Game: Choctawhatchee High School vs. Enterprise
7 pm | Choctawhatchee High School | FWB
- 31 | **Halloween on the BOOlevard**
4 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach

- 31 CONT. | **8th Annual Tricks and Treasures**
5 pm | The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island | FWB
Halloween Dinner Cruise
7 pm | Sunquest Cruises - Solaris Yacht | Miramar Beach

NOVEMBER

- 01 | **Always Above Planetarium Shows**
Various Show Times | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
Emerald Coast Out of the Darkness Community Walk
10 am | Beasley Park | FWB
Florida Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Military Family Appreciation Day presented by Eglin Federal Credit Union
10:30 am | FWB Landing Park | FWB
Discover Science Saturday
10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- 07 | **Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee**
7 am | Christian Life Center at FBC | FWB
- 07-09 | **Sister Act: The Musical**
Various Times | FWB Civic Auditorium | FWB
- 08 | **Girls Empowered with Math and Science (GEMS) Workshops**
10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- 22 | **Choctawhatchee Lady Indians Murder Mystery Fundraiser**
6:30 pm | Fort Walton Yacht Club | FWB

ONGOING EVENTS

- VFW Post 7674 - Sunday Breakfasts**
8 - 11:30 am | Sun | 231 Carol Ave | FWB
- SINGO Music Bingo Nights**
6 pm | Tues | The Island Resort | FWB
- Live Trivia Nights**
6:30 pm | Thurs | A.J.'s on the Bayou | FWB
- Karaoke Night**
7 pm | Thurs | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB

FARMERS MARKETS

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



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Community

EVENTS

continued from page 6

p.m. This free, family-friendly evening includes trick-or-treating, carnival games, costume contests, balloon artists, and stilt-walkers. Families can complete a treasure map activity for a sweet reward from The Crab Trap. Festivities wrap up with an outdoor showing of Hocus Pocus after dark.

Trick or Treat Street
Friday, Oct. 31 | 6–8 p.m.
| The Village of Baytowne Wharf, Sandestin

Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins take over Baytowne! Trick-or-treat at merchant booths, enjoy live music, and don't miss the fireworks at 8 p.m. Free admission.

Details: baytownewharf.com

Decades On Display:
A Nostalgic Journey
Through Automotive
History Past & Current
Saturday, Nov. 1 | 10 a.m.
| Heritage Museum | Val-
paraiso, 115 Westview Ave.
| FREE Admission

Join the Heritage Museum for Decades On Display. Take a ride through time with iconic cars from the swinging '60s to the bold '80s and beyond! This family-friendly event promises fun, flair and plenty of photo-worthy moments. To enter a vehicle: GA: \$35 | VIP: \$40 (limited availability)

Info: 850-678-2615

11th Annual Eggs on the
Beach - Big Green Egg
Cooking Competition!
Saturday, Nov. 1 | 10 a.m.–
1 p.m. | Seascape Resort,
Miramar Beach

Big Green Egg fans unite! Sample unlimited bites from 20+ cook teams, including nine nonprofits, and cast your votes for the 2025 People's Choice Awards. A distinguished panel of judges features local chefs, Big Green Egg grill masters, and celebrity talent from Netflix and Food Network. Hosted by Bay Breeze Patio, this fan-favorite foodie fest benefits Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food For Thought.

Tickets & details: EggsOn-TheBeach.com

Pirate Brew Fest
Saturday, Nov. 1 | 11 a.m.–
3 p.m. | Fudpucker's, Des-
tin | FREE Admission

Ahoy, mateys! Fudpucker's hosts the Pirate Brew Fest, a lively afternoon of food, fun, and frothy brews. Enjoy live music, games, artists and vendors,

alcohol samples, and a pirate costume contest. Festivities also include a magician, mermaid, fire performer, and beer memorabilia on display. Pirate attire is encouraged—and the first 100 pirates through the gate will receive special gifts. Admission is free.

Details: PirateBrewFest.com

The Moon Walk
Nov. 5 | 6 p.m. | Freedom
Tech Center, Fort Walton
Beach

The Arc of the Emerald Coast invites the community to its inaugural Moon Walk on Wednesday, Nov. 5—a glow-filled evening raising awareness and advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Starting at 6 p.m., participants will walk the track in vibrant glow-in-the-dark attire, enjoy interactive games, live music, community vendors, and even a breathtaking Supermoon overhead. The event highlights both fun and purpose: walking for those who cannot always walk for themselves. Proceeds directly support The Arc's mission of building pathways from disability to capability. Walk as an individual, create a team, or become a sponsor. Visit The Arc of the Emerald Coast's Moon Walk page to register or donate.



Animoré
Alaqua Animal Refuge |
Freeport
Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall
Fest | Saturday, Nov. 8 | 11
a.m.-6 p.m.

Saturday's Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest is a vibrant day of live music, local fare, and family fun in support of Alaqua's life-saving mission. Proceeds benefit Alaqua's mission to provide shelter, safety and second chances to animals in need.

Tickets & details: alaqua.org (Friday's dinner ticket includes VIP admission to Bluegrass Barn Jam.)

Choctawhatchee Lady
Indians Murder Mystery
Fundraiser
Nov. 22 | Doors 5:45 p.m.,
Dinner/Show 6:30 p.m. |
Fort Walton Yacht Club

Support Choctawhatchee High School's Lady Indians Soccer team with a night of comedy and suspense! Be-bopped at the Sock Hop, presented by Act4Mystery, features a hilarious dinner theater show, three-course meal, costume contest, silent auction and 50/50 raffle. Tickets are \$75 (non-refundable), with doors opening at 5:45 p.m. and dinner/show at 6:30. Sponsorships range from \$100–\$1,000, and auction donations are welcome. Contact act4mystery@act4mystery.com or call 850-862-2885 / 850-685-5224 to buy tickets, sponsor, or donate.

Destin-Ft Walton Beach Convention Center

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It's Almost Time for the
Florida Governor's Dinner!

Oct. 18, 2025 | 5:30 p.m. | Destin-Fort Walton Beach
Convention Center | Okaloosa Island

The Republican parties of Okaloosa, Walton, Santa Rosa and Escambia counties are joining forces to host the first-ever Panhandle Governor's Dinner. On Saturday, Oct. 18, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will deliver the keynote address, joined by Lt. Gov. Jay Collins and Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia. There will be a VIP reception, social hour and silent auction begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 6:45 p.m.

Proceeds benefit the four participating county Repub-

lican parties, helping fund operations, outreach, communications and state-level participation. Organizers emphasize the dinner as a major fundraising opportunity to support upcoming elections and strengthen conservative leadership across Northwest Florida.

Sponsorships are still available. For more information, sponsorship details, or ticket reservations, visit www.OkaloosaGOP.com or email Media@OkaloosaGOP.com. Business or semi-formal attire is requested.



BY DR. LISA FORSYTHE

Despite being practiced for thousands of years, acupuncture remains one of the most misunderstood healing modalities in modern medicine. As a licensed acupuncturist with a background in both Eastern medicine and neuro-acupuncture, I've seen how powerful this therapy can be—not just for pain relief, but for whole-body wellness. I've also heard just about every myth and misconception along the way. Let's set the record straight.

Misconception #1:
"Acupuncture is painful."

This is the most common fear I hear, and it's almost always followed by surprise once someone finally tries it. Acupuncture needles are extremely thin—about the width of a human hair—and nothing like the hypodermic needles used for injections. Most people feel little to no discomfort when the needles are inserted. In fact, many feel deeply relaxed or even fall asleep during treatment.

Truth: Acupuncture is typically a calming, restorative experience. Some patients feel a light tingling or warmth, which is simply the body responding to the stimulation.

Misconception #2: "It's only for pain relief."

While acupuncture is well known for its ability to reduce pain—including back pain, arthritis, and migraines—its applications go far beyond that. I regularly treat patients for anxiety, insomnia, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances, immune support, and even neurological conditions like stroke recovery and PTSD.

Truth: Acupuncture works by regulating the nervous system, improving circulation, and restoring balance to the body's

internal systems. That's why it benefits both physical and emotional health.

Misconception #3:
"There's no science behind it."

This one couldn't be further from the truth. Over the past several decades, research on acupuncture has exploded. Studies have shown that acupuncture influences the brain, nervous system, and endocrine function. It can reduce inflammation, release endorphins (your body's natural painkillers) and modu-



late the immune response.

Major institutions like Johns Hopkins, Cleveland Clinic, and Mayo Clinic now offer acupuncture as part of integrative treatment programs for chronic pain, cancer support, fertility and more.

Truth: Acupuncture is backed by evidence-based research and is increasingly integrated into mainstream health-care systems.

Misconception #4: "It's not safe for kids, older adults, or people with medical conditions."

Acupuncture is one of the safest medical therapies when performed by a licensed practitioner. At the Tortoise Clinic, I treat patients of all ages—from kids with anxiety or ADHD to seniors with arthritis or stroke recovery needs. We tailor every treatment to the individual's age, condition, and comfort level.

Truth: Acupuncture is gentle and can be adapted for almost anyone, including those who are medically fragile or on multiple medications.

Debunking the Top 5 Misconceptions About Acupuncture

Misconception #5: "If I don't feel better after one session, it didn't work."

This is where the tortoise—yes, like our clinic's namesake—has it right: healing takes time. Acupuncture is a cumulative

therapy, meaning each session builds on the last. Some people feel immediate relief, but for most, noticeable improvements happen gradually over several treatments.

Truth: Consistency is key.

Like exercise or nutrition, the effects of acupuncture are most powerful when practiced regularly.

Continued on page 14

WOMEN'S WELLNESS REIMAGINED

What if your story mattered as much as your labs?

What if "normal" isn't optimal for you?

What if your fatigue, bloating, or anxiety isn't just stress - but a sign your body needs support?



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Post-Acute Care for Seniors: The Critical Bridge After a Hospital Stay

TERESA HALVERSON, DIR. OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The autumn season, with its rich colors and comforting traditions, offers a wonderful opportunity to enhance the post-acute care and rehabilitation experience. The landscape of post-acute senior care is rapidly evolving, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach toward personalized, technology-driven, and holistic models. As the senior population grows in our area, innovative ideas are being implemented to improve outcomes, enhance quality of life and address the complex needs of patients transitioning from acute care settings like hospitals.

Post-acute care (PAC) refers to a range of medical and supportive services provided to patients, particularly seniors, who are discharged from an acute care hospital, but aren't yet



ready to return home and live independently. Following an illness, surgery or injury, a hospital stay can often be destabilizing for older adults, leading to a decline in their physical and mental functioning. PAC serves as a critical transition to promote functional recovery, maximize independence and prevent unnecessary hospital readmissions. For seniors transitioning out of the hospital, whether to a PAC (Post Acute Care) facility or directly home, preparation and proactive management are vital for a successful recovery.

Benefits and Challenges for Older Adults: Benefits

of Post-Acute Care in a Skilled Nursing and Rehab Facility:

Increased Independence: The primary goal is to help seniors regain strength and functional abilities (like walking, dressing, and eating) to become more self-sufficient.

Reduced Readmissions: Close monitoring and ongoing medical support help to identify and address potential complications early, which significantly lowers the risk of the patient returning to the hospital within 30 days.

Access to Specialized Care: Patients receive care from a multidisciplinary team, including specialized 24/7 nursing care (i.e. wound care, IV therapy, medication management), physical therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physicians who focus specifically on recovery. The goal is for the patient to regain strength and function and safely return home.

Understand the Discharge Plan: Meet with the hospital's discharge planner or case manager as early as possible. Get written clear instructions on all new or changed medications, wound care, activity restrictions, and signs of complications to watch for.

Complexity of Discharge Planning: The process of choosing the right setting, understanding insurance coverage, and coordinating care can be confusing and stressful. Carefully review what all post-acute hospital providers offer. It is your right to choose where you would like to go for post-hospital care. Make an informed choice.

Insurance for Post-Acute Care: Insurance coverage for this type of care is particularly through regular Medicare.

General overview of Medicare coverage for key post-acute care settings:

Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Care Insurance Coverage

Coverage: Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) covers skilled nursing care on a short-term basis for rehabilitation or skilled medical care.

Conditions for Coverage:

- You must have a qualifying inpatient hospital stay of at least three consecutive days (not counting the day of discharge).
- You must enter the SNF generally within 30 days of leaving the hospital.
- A doctor must certify that you need daily skilled nursing or rehabilitation services.
- The facility must be Medicare-certified.

Costs (in one benefit period):

Days 1–20: You pay \$0 for covered services (after meeting the Part A deductible for the hospital stay).

Days 21–100: You pay a daily coinsurance amount (which changes annually).

Days 101 and beyond: You pay all costs.

Limitation: Coverage is limited to 100 days per benefit period and ends sooner if you no longer require skilled care. Medicare generally does not cover long-term or custodial care in a nursing home.

Medicare Advantage (Part C) Plans: These private plans must cover at least the same post-acute care benefits as original Medicare, but they may have different cost-sharing (copayments/deductibles) and may require you to use specific in-network providers. We often see a patient who has a MA (Part C) plan and still think they have regular Medicare. Be sure to check your plan as not all post-acute providers are in network or accept Part C plans. Part C Plans (MA) require an authorization by your insurance company and your care is monitored by a case-worker at the insurance agency.

Medicare Supplement (Medigap) Plans: These plans work with Original Medicare and can help pay for out-of-pocket costs like the SNF daily



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Is Now the Perfect Moment to Make A Move in the Real Estate Market? Let's Dive In...



By PAUL DOMENECH

Is it a Good Time to Buy?

A good time to buy is when you are in a position to buy. Often, people think they should wait for interest rates to go down. Well, let's walk through that scenario. If you are waiting, do you think you are the only one? Most likely not. So, if the rates drop and more buyers come to the table to purchase

the same home, what do you think will happen to that value? Yup, you guessed it—multiple offers drive the price up, which then causes an increase in price and multiple offers for the next round. Not a great place to be as a buyer.

So, is now a good time to buy? If you can do it, do it now, and if or when the interest rate drops, refinance. Just make sure you have a team in your corner that will 'DOMEnate' the process, ensuring all the major items are inspected properly to avoid big-ticket expense surprises.

Is it a Good Time to Sell?

What a great question. With interest rates being what they are and a limited pool of buyers, the correct answer is both YES and NO. I am noticing that consumers in the market to buy are leveraging their "upgrading funds" to increase their monthly payment budget. So, if your home has all the big-ticket

items and features upgraded, it's a JACKPOT—perfect selling conditions with the right team that can "DOMEnate" the promotion and marketing of the property.

If you don't have the means to improve the space and major items but want or need to sell, the answer is still yes, it is a good time. However, you need the right team that will be able to present and navigate the value of the property to buyers and if necessary help you with the items that need upgrading. My team does have a program to help those in need get top dollar.

However, today is not the time to have the "Let's just put it on the market as is and see if someone will bite" mentality. The only bites taken for those listings are right out of the listing price. This is where we are seeing most of the drop-in prices. That's a NO-go situation.

So, plan to "DOMEnate" the market as close to turn-key, or hold tight; the time is not right.



When Should I Refinance?

Talk to your original lender. Sadly, the mortgage industry, like the real estate industry, has shifted, and when that happens, people tend to shift their focus to survival. A lot of promises and offers tend to shine but lose their luster in the long run. The habit of "have now and deal with later" is a culture that has been adopted by many, and a good talk track from a stranger with no long-standing relationship with you can lead to a win-lose situation. So, I advise making sure you are calling your original lender or feel free to contact me for a lender that, in the end,

will lead you into the future, not have you living just for today.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts. If you need anything related to real estate—from roofs to cleaning and anything in between—give me a call. I've got a guy. I'm your HOMEboy. It's what has been coined by our customers as the Domenech Effect.

Check us out at Thedomenechgroup.com or feel free to contact me directly at 850-543-1418 or Paul@thedomenechgroup.com.

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 Community

How to Make Enrollment in Medicare Smooth and Easy



By GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA HEALTH CONNECTOR

As with most big transitions/life elections, normalcy tends to fade and turmoil prevails. Medicare enrollment, while a big adjustment on many levels, can be relatively simple and painless—once you know how!

Most people looking to learn more about Medicare and their enrollment options could visit a local office, attend a seminar or sit down in the comfort of their home with a qualified, licensed agent among the many available avenues. This process could take several visits to become comfortable with the available choices, and it should. Even Joe Namath (not a qualified, licensed agent by the way!) would be hard pressed to help a person feel knowledgeable and comfortable with just one phone call, despite claims to the contrary.

Well, even with those in person options available, most folks like to do a little research on their own in advance of taking any additional steps. This makes sense since the questions you have for you are far more important than what your friends and family tell what you should be thinking. Keep in mind they bring only their perspective to the conversation and likely don't know the details that make up the intimate considerations you are facing.

So, what are your options to gather the information you need to make sure you are making the right choices to make your enrollment happen as smoothly as possible?

The first step is getting in touch with someone qualified to provide you with information for your specific needs. As you approach age 65, you get bombarded with email, regular mail, TV ads and phone calls and then every Annual Election Period (October 15 – December 7) thereafter. That type of information overload typically helps no one figure things out and, as I have been told on many occasions, tends to make things even more confusing. When it comes

to Medicare, quality, individualized information trumps volume of information every time.

Let's get started on the right foot. The first thing you will need to do is apply for your Medicare Parts A & B. There are a number of issues surrounding this first step so again, it would be wise to seek out a qualified, licensed person to guide you. Also, it is best to begin this process right when you are first eligible which for most, is 3 months prior to the month in which you will turn 65.

While waiting for your Medicare card to be issued (sometimes up to 6-8 weeks), you will have the perfect opportunity to explore your other options. Those options range from (but are not limited to) simply sticking with Original Medicare (Parts A & B only) plus getting a Stand-Alone Prescription Plan (Part D) to avoid unintended, lifelong penalties or choosing between an Advantage Plan or a Supplement Plan. Each comes with its own benefits and potential issues/considerations.

It seems like a lot because it is. However, if you take the time and are able to ignore the constant din of your telephone ring-

ing and mailbox being stuffed, you will eventually come to understand the best choice for you and your specific set of needs.

Fast forward where you have your Medicare card in hand and have decided on the best plan choice for you. Congratulations! There is only one last step to take—actually getting enrolled. With so many enrollment options available, what is a person to do?

You can relax in knowing many insurance companies have implemented multiple options to help get you enrolled in a timely manner. The two most popular being an in-person sit down with a licensed, trained professional or telephone call to your local representative. You can meet at an office or sit back in the comfort of your own home and rest assured all will be taken care of quickly and professionally.

Some, not all, insurance agents/brokers will be able to offer you the options of not just different insurance companies from which to choose but also, help you understand the costs and benefits of both Advantage plans and Supplement plans.

The differences can be dramatic and will have a tremendous impact on your healthcare and the ability to choose the doctors and hospitals of your choice—not to mention out of pocket costs.

Following these tips will help alleviate much of the hectic stress this major transition/continuation often causes.

As a side note, you can use this process to help eliminate the stress of comparing your existing plan to another as well as oftentimes, most companies/plans change their benefits and/or costs every year.

The ability to review and make changes to your previous choices is an extremely powerful tool you have at your disposal, so long as you know how and when to use it.

Boom! Welcome to stress-free Medicare enrollment.

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare Advantage and Supplement plans throughout the State and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 42 years and can be reached at his office at 850-842-2400 or his mobile at 978-509-2941.



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Home Safety & Fire Prevention

— Before the First Chill



By DAVID WILSON, OWNER/
OPERATOR - ODD JOBS WILLIE
& WILLIE'S CUSTOM KITCHEN
CABINETS

October is National Fire Prevention Month, making it the perfect time to give your home a safety check. As cooler weather arrives, families start running dryers more often, plugging in space heaters and lighting fireplaces. These seasonal changes make October the best month to catch risks before they become emergencies.

Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Many home-

owners only think about them when they hear the dreaded low-battery chirp at 2 a.m. The problem? By then, the detector may have been silent for months. We once met a family who assumed their detectors were working — until a kitchen mishap filled the house with smoke, and not a single alarm went off. Testing takes just seconds and can be life-saving.

Don't overlook the dryer vent. Lint is highly flammable and builds up quickly, even if you clean the lint trap. Pulling the dryer away from the wall once a year and cleaning the vent hose dramatically reduces risk. One homeowner told us they noticed clothes taking longer to dry; the cause wasn't the dryer at all but a vent so clogged it was a fire waiting to happen. After cleaning, not only was it safer, but laundry dried faster.

Inspect fireplaces and chimneys. Creosote, the byproduct of burning wood, builds up in chimneys and can ignite. A local

family shared that they hadn't cleaned their chimney in over a decade. When they finally had it swept, the chimney sweep removed buckets of debris. Waiting any longer could have meant a dangerous fire. If you haven't scheduled a chimney inspection in years, October is the time.

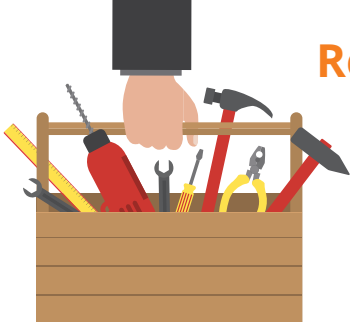
Space heaters deserve extra care. They're convenient for chilly nights but account for nearly half of all heating-related fires in the U.S. Place them at least three feet from curtains, bedding, or furniture, and never plug them into extension cords. We've seen homeowners melt outlets because the wiring wasn't built to handle the load.

Fire extinguishers and escape plans matter, too. Every home should have an extinguisher in the kitchen and garage, and family members should know where they are. Practice a quick escape plan, especially if you have children. In the stress of an actual fire, muscle memory helps.



Most of these are simple tasks — checking alarms, cleaning vents, reviewing safety plans. They're about prevention, not repair.

But when fire safety ties into bigger upgrades — like rewiring outdated electrical systems, remodeling laundry rooms to properly vent dryers, or updating storage around fireplaces — that's when it makes sense to contact us, Odd Jobs Willie, at (850) 591-0672 or Email odd-jobswillie@gmail.com. With decades of remodeling experience, our team handles the larger projects that make homes safer, more efficient and ready for every season.



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Clean Finish: 5 Small Goals to End the Year Feeling Proud



BY DANICA LAFaire, OWNER,
FISH WINDOW CLEANING

Hey there!

As the slightly cooler fall air moves in and the holiday season twinkles on the horizon, it's so easy to feel that end-of-year rush. We get so wrapped up in the busy schedules and the

growing to-do lists, don't we?

But what if we could shift our focus? What if we saw these next few months not as a sprint to the finish line, but as a golden opportunity to reflect, reset and celebrate some awesome personal wins?

I've always believed that clarity is a game-changer—in business and in life! Just like a clear window lets in more sunshine and helps you see the world more brightly, a clear, intentional plan for the rest of the year can help you finish strong and truly enjoy all the magic of the season.

So, as a fellow business owner and neighbor who absolutely loves seeing people win, I want

to share five simple goals you can set to feel proud of yourself when the year ends.

1. Celebrate a Friend or Mentor

It's easy to get so focused on our own goals that we forget to celebrate the incredible people around us. I want to encourage you to think of a friend or mentor who has had a great year, reached a personal milestone, or simply been a positive influence in your life. Take a moment to reach out and genuinely celebrate them! This isn't about giving a big gift; a simple phone call, a heartfelt text or even a handwritten note can make their day. The act of cheering on someone you care about

can bring you just as much joy and fulfillment as their success brings them.

2. Tackle That One Linger-ing Task

You know the one I'm talking about, right? That one personal project or chore that's been hanging around on your mental to-do list forever. It's like a foggy window pane—it just clutters your view and takes up space in your head. Well, this month, let's get it done! Whether it's organizing that one messy closet, finally framing those favorite photos, or deep-cleaning the garage, getting it done will give you a powerful boost of energy and confidence. Trust me, the sense of accomplishment is incredible.

3. Take Time for a "Highlights Reel"

Before you get swept up in the holiday hustle, set aside just an hour to reflect on your year. This isn't about focusing on what you didn't get to. Instead, let's create a personal "highlights reel" of your wins, no matter how small! Did you learn a new skill? Read some great books? Make a meaningful connection? Overcome a challenge you didn't think you could? Write these things down! This simple act of celebrating yourself will help you see just how far you've come.

4. Prioritize Your Health in a Small Way

The end of the year often brings busy schedules and plenty of temptation, and it's easy to

put our well-being on the back burner. So, instead of waiting for a New Year's resolution, let's set a small, achievable health goal now! It could be as simple as adding an extra glass of water each day, taking a 15-minute walk along the beach or making one healthy meal a week. These tiny, consistent habits will build up and leave you feeling more energized and ready to enjoy all the holiday festivities.

5. Protect Your Rest

Here's a big one: the holidays are not just for busy social events; they are for resting, recharging, and spending time with the people you love. You deserve a break! Make it a point to schedule your time off and commit to it. Taking a break isn't a luxury; it's essential for avoiding burnout. A well-rested mind is more productive, more creative, and ready for whatever comes next. By planning for rest now, you'll be stepping into the new year feeling refreshed and ready to take on new opportunities.

By focusing on these five goals, you can navigate the end of the year with purpose and pride. This isn't just about crossing things off a list; it's about building a strong foundation for continued success and a mindset of confidence.

As we finish this year strong, may your windows be clear, your goals achievable and your heart full.

-Stay Safe, Danica

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ACUPUNCTURE

continued from page 9

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Curious about how acupuncture could support your health? Schedule your consultation today at TortoiseClinic.com or give us a call at 850.267.5611 and mention this article to receive \$30 off as a new patient.

At the Tortoise Clinic, healing is not a race—it's a journey. Let's walk it together.

Wearable Wanderlust: Bara Boheme at Blue Bay Lifestyle Co.

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

Marilyn Monroe was on the right track when she said that diamonds are a girl’s best friend... But really, aren’t *all* pretty things a girl’s best friend?

We think so.

Which is why we at Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. are always on the lookout for jewelry brands that combine artistry, soul and wearability—which is why we *love* having pieces from Bara Boheme in our collection.

Created in 2006 by Bara, a Czech-born designer who launched her eponymous line in sunny L.A., Bara Boheme embodies a bohemian spirit—*bohème*—with a naturally chic sensibility. Now based in Miami Beach, Bara draws inspiration from her travels around the world, infusing each piece with that signature sense of freedom, beauty and individuality. Her work shines in the rings, bracelets and delicate earrings that have become favorites at Blue Bay.

Stretchy Beaded Rings & Bracelets: Effortless Style, Daily Wear

One thing that makes Bara Boheme’s stretchy beaded rings exceptional is their blend of comfort and style—and we love both. Designed to glide easily over the knuckle and then contour back to your finger, these stretchy beaded rings maintain a snug fit that prevents the slipping or spinning common with traditional bands (because we all know how annoying that can be).

The beads range from sleek gold-filled ones to faceted semi-precious stones, offering texture and variation without sacrificing the simplicity that makes them beautiful. Stack them, mix by color or wear solo as a subtle statement—just have fun with them!

Complementing these must-have rings are Bara Boheme’s stretchy beaded bracelets—which are a core part of Bara Boheme’s “forever jewelry.” Crafted to live with you,



these pieces feature 14K gold-filled materials, sterling silver, semi-precious stones and natural opals that are waterproof, hypoallergenic and—best of all—worry-free.

Dainty Earrings: Whisper-Light Glamour

As core to the Bara Boheme lineup as the rings and bracelets are, the dainty earrings are like the cherry on top. Studs, hoop huggers and delicate chains made in that signature minimal style featuring 14k gold-fill or sterling silver, these are earrings you can wear all day—to work, out to dinner or even to the

gym. They reflect Bara’s European roots—thoughtful, chic and not overly glitzy—at the same time as they evoke the bohemian style of an adventurous traveler.

The Designer’s Touch & Signature Aesthetic

Naturally, Bara’s story infuses every design in the line—from her life in the Czech Republic and the years she spent traveling to the life and business she built first in L.A. and then in Miami Beach—absorbing the colors, textures and atmospheres of every place she experiences. Each piece channels that energy where coastal light meets worldly wanderlust. These influences are evident in her color palettes—in the soft pastels, oceanic tones and earth hues—as well as in her use of semi-precious stones and the flexibility of her pieces. The stretch in her rings and bracelets isn’t just about

comfort. It’s symbolic of flexibility, of designs that travel with you—*wherever* you might go.

Wear Your Story, Wear the Light

In a world where accessories often feel mass-produced or disposable, Bara Boheme stands out—which is why we love them here at Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. The stretchy beaded rings, the bracelets that blend waterproof durability with elegance, the dainty earrings that whisper more than they shout—they’re all about honoring the wearer: their story, their travels, their desires. If you want jewelry that moves with you, that lasts, that reflects freedom and beauty... We’ve got your perfect pieces. Every piece you wear from Bara Boheme isn’t just an accessory—it’s a little piece of bohemian spirit—and we want to see how you channel your inner *bohème*! Follow us on Instagram @bluebaylifestyle and show us your favorite pieces and how you style them!



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Crush your fitness goals—big or small—with Run With It. From running and walking to court sports and pickleball, we’ve got the shoes, insoles, apparel and gear to keep you moving. Plus, join our Tuesday night runs or sign up for local racing events and discover a community that moves with you.

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Lifestyle

From Turf to Treasures: The Locals' One-Stop Shop for Premium Outdoor Living

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

The Shop at Baldwin Turf has quickly established itself as the go-to for everything outdoor entertainment and patio/garden décor for Niceville and beyond. Owner Jenny Herndon has nearly a decade of experience in fashion merchandising and sales, and Wynn, her mother, has a passion for outdoor living spaces that is evident throughout the aesthetics and environment at The Shop.

The Shop is an extension of the Baldwin Turf, a full-service lawn care and landscaping company that has been providing quality and reliable service for residential and commercial customers since 2002.

Herndon was born and raised in Niceville and spent eight years in New York after graduating from Florida State University. She returned to the area in August 2023. Her mom always dreamed of opening a store, and with Jenny's brother Matt and sister Leigh Anna



managing the company's landscaping operations, it is a true blue (green?) family business. "We work together on all of the buying and curating," says Jenny. "Mom has the best eye for all things design."

"We had a vision to enhance Baldwin Turf's offerings to include outdoor products including planters, water features, furniture and décor. We saw an opportunity to offer quality services and products in Niceville. With my mom's dream to open



a store and my experience in wholesale sales, we decided to go for it.

"You won't find the level of local expertise, personalized service and commitment to quality at the big box stores," Herndon says. She adds that you'll find "quality, unique and specially curated items for your home and garden, plus a friendly staff and a lovely, enjoyable shopping experience."

Herndon is excited about the fall-themed items available at The Shop. "Mums, marigolds, zinnias and fall plants are coming in gradually, as well as our POP colored pine straw," she says, the latter from the Santa

Rosa Beach-based landscape company. "We have a variety of seasonal outdoor décor, pumpkins and fun gift items sure to transition your home into the fall beautifully."

As The Shop's owner, no two days are ever the same for Herndon. "Some days include visiting clients at their homes, merchandising and working with customers in The Shop, delivering furniture or installing planters," she says. "Some days include more paperwork and assessing the products we will be bringing in and when." Coming from a sales background, Herndon says that her favorite thing to do is work the sales floor and

engage with her customers.

Herndon says The Shop brings "a unique and special shopping experience where you are guaranteed to find something you may have never seen before" to the community.

The Shop and its owner are also happy to give back. "We have hosted charity events for Guardian ad Litem, the Taylor Haugen Foundation and the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation," says Herndon. She serves as a board member for the Niceville Chamber of Commerce and loves to host chamber events.

The Shop at Baldwin Turf is located at 739 John Sims Parkway in Niceville. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. Call 850.842.2221 or visit baldwinturfniceville.com/the-shop to find out more. Also, follow them on Instagram and Facebook for new products and exciting events @baldwinturf.



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\$1 from each appetizer goes directly to filling backpacks with nutritious food, ensuring that local students have access to meals outside of school.



Best Places to Watch Your Favorite Teams

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Attention all die hard football fans, AJ's boasts the one and only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor, where you can watch your favorite games on the BIG, BIG screen surrounded by the energy and beauty of the Destin Harbor. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month, too. Don't miss any of the action!

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. Come on down to AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar all season long.
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ajsondestin.com

AJ's on the Bayou

Located at the base of the Cinco Bayou Bridge in Fort

Walton Beach, AJ's on the Bayou offers a beautiful waterfront setting with both indoor seating and an open-air deck overlooking the bayou. It's the perfect spot to catch a football game outdoors while sipping a mimosa and enjoying a bite to eat. AJ's serves brunch with bottomless mimosas for just \$10.95 with food purchase, plus daily weekday lunch specials for \$12.95 including iced tea. Add in live music or entertainment every day, and you've got one lively destination where the food, fun, and football never stop.

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

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 10 oz. 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
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FUBAR Pizza Bar

Looking for a favorite place to watch your favorite football teams? 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

The Boardwalk On Okaloosa Island

As us locals know, The Boardwalk is a popular destination. With its ideal location on the Gulf, convenient parking and wide range of activities, it's the perfect place to shop, savor various flavors of cuisine, and take in the incredible views of the Emerald Coast. Want to watch football? Then head to restaurants like Rockin Tacos, The Crab Trap, Floyd's Shrimp Shack or Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar, where you can watch your favorite teams with breathtaking views and breaks for walks on the beach! Sandy toes and salty swim suits are welcome.

The Boardwalk is an official county park with public beach access, along with free parking, pavilions, picnic tables, public restrooms and outdoor showers for beachgoers.

The Boardwalk hosts community events such as the Emerald Coast Motorcycle Challenge, coastal beach cleanups, "Tricks and Treasures" Halloween event and the New Year's Day pelican plunge. It is also home of two legendary volleyball tournaments: Emerald Coast Volleyball Week in the spring, and the Emerald Coast Fall Classic.

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2025 High School Football Schedule

Fort Walton Beach Vikings:

Head Coach: Josh Pulliam (1st Year)

Kickoff – 7 p.m.

9/11 – vs. Washington

9/19 – at Walton

9/26 – at Rickards *

10/3 – vs. Wakulla

10/10 – vs. Arnold *

10/17 – Open Week

10/24 – vs. Choctawhatchee *

10/31 – at Crestview

Choctawhatchee Indians:

Head Coach: Frank Beasley

Kickoff – 7 p.m.

9/12 – vs. Pine Forest

9/19 – at Niceville

9/26 – at Arnold *

10/3 – at South Walton

10/10 – vs. Rickards *

10/24 – at Fort Walton Beach *

10/30 – vs. Enterprise (AL)

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Fort Walton Beach
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• 1285 Eglin Pkwy.
• 290 NE Eglin Pkwy.

Crestview
• 297B James Lee Blvd.

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ACC and SEC Football Schedules

ACC	Oct 4	Oct 11	Oct 18	Oct 25	Nov 1	Nov 8	Nov 15	Nov 22	Nov 29
Boston College	@ Pitt	Clemson	UConn	@ Louisville	Notre Dame	SMU	Georgia Tech	Open	@ Syracuse
California	Duke	Open	North Carolina	@ Virginia Tech	Virginia	@ Louisville	Open	@ Stanford	SMU
Clemson	@ North Carolina	Boston College	SMU	Open	Duke	Florida State	@ Louisville	Furman	@ South Carolina
Duke	@ California	Open	Georgia Tech	Open	@ Clemson	@ UConn	Virginia	@ North Carolina	Wake Forest
Florida State	Miami	Pitt	@ Stanford	Open	Wake Forest	@ Clemson	Virginia Tech	@ NC State	@ Florida
Georgia Tech	Open	Virginia Tech	@ Duke	Syracuse	@ NC State	Open	@ Boston College	Pitt	Georgia
Louisville	Virginia	Open	@ Miami	Boston College	@ Virginia Tech	California	Clemson	@ SMU	Kentucky
Miami	@ Florida State	Open	Louisville	Stanford	@ SMU	Syracuse	NC State	@ Virginia Tech	@ Pitt
North Carolina	Clemson	Open	@ California	Virginia	@ Syracuse	Stanford	@ Wake Forest	Duke	@ NC State
NC State	Campbell	@ Notre Dame	Open	@ Pitt	Georgia Tech	Open	@ Miami	Florida State	North Carolina
Pitt	Boston College	@ FSU	@ Syracuse	NC State	@ Stanford	Open	Notre Dame	@ Georgia Tech	Miami
Syracuse	@ SMU	Open	Pitt	@ Georgia Tech	North Carolina	@ Miami	Open	Notre Dame	Boston College
Virginia	@ Louisville	Open	Washington State	@ North Carolina	@ California	Wake Forest	@ Duke	Open	Virginia Tech
Virginia Tech	Wake Forest	@ Ga Tech	Open	California	Louisville	Open	@ Florida State	Miami	@ Virginia
Wake Forest	@ Virginia Tech	Open	SMU	@ Florida State	@ Virginia	North Carolina	Delaware	@ Duke	
Stanford	Open	@ SMU	Florida State	@ Miami	Pitt	@ North Carolina	Open	California	Notre Dame
SMU	Syracuse	Stanford	@ Clemson	@ Wake Forest	Miami	@ Boston College	Open	Louisville	@ California

SEC	Oct 4	Oct 11	Oct 18	Oct 25	Nov 1	Nov 8	Nov 15	Nov 22	Nov 29
BAMA	VANDY	@ MIZZ	TENN	@ SCAR	Open	LSU	OKLA	Eastern Illinois	@ AUB
ARK	Open	@ TENN	TEXAS A&M	AUB	MISS ST	Open	@ LSU	@ TEXAS	MIZZ
AUBURN	Open	UGA	MIZZ	@ ARK	UK	@ VANDY	Open	Mercer	BAMA
FLA	TEXAS	@ TEXAS A&M	MISS ST	Open	vs UGA	@ UK	@ OLE MISS	TENN	FSU
UGA	UK	@ AUB	OLE MISS	Open	vs FLA	@ MISS ST	TEXAS	Charlotte	GA Tech
UK	@ UGA	Open	TEXAS	TENN	@ AUB	FLA	TENN Tech	@ VANDY	@ Louisville
LSU	Open	S CAR	@ VANDY	TEXAS A&M	Open	@ BAMA	ARK	Western UK	@ OKLA
MISS ST	@ TEXAS A&M	Open	@ FLA	TEXAS	@ ARK	UGA	@ MIZZ	Open	OLE MISS
MIZZ	Open	BAMA	@ AUB	@ VANDY	Open	TEXAS A&M	MISS ST	@ OKLA	@ ARK
OLE MISS	Open	Washington St	@ UGA	@ OKLA	SCAR	The Citadel	FLA	Open	@ MISS ST
OKLA	Kent State	TEXAS	@ S CAR	OLE MISS	@ TENN	Open	@ BAMA	MIZZ	LSU
S CAR	Open	@ LSU	OKLA	BAMA	@ OLE MISS	Open	@ TEXAS A&M	Coastal Car	Clemson
TENN	Open	ARK	@ BAMA	@ UK	OKLA	Open	New Mexico St	@ FLA	VANDY
TEXAS	@ FLA	vs OKLA	@ UK	@ MISS ST	VANDY	Open	@ UGA	ARK	TEXAS A&M
Texas A&M	MISS ST	FLA	@ ARK	@ LSU	Open	@ MIZZ	S CAR	Samford	@ TEXAS
VANDY	@ BAMA	Open	LSU	MIZZ	@ TEXAS	AUB	Open	UK	@ TENN

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Thursday, Oct. 16
Pittsburgh Steelers at Cincinnati Bengals, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 19
Los Angeles Rams at Jacksonville Jaguars (Wembley), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
New England Patriots at Tennessee Titans, Noon, CBS
Miami Dolphins at Cleveland Browns, Noon, CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at Kansas City Chiefs, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at New York Jets, Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at Chicago Bears, Noon, Fox
Philadelphia Eagles at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox
New York Giants at Denver Broncos, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Indianapolis Colts at Los Angeles Chargers, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Washington Commanders at Dallas Cowboys, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Green Bay Packers at Arizona Cardinals, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Atlanta Falcons at San Francisco 49ers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Oct. 20
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Detroit Lions, 7 p.m., ESPN
Houston Texans at Seattle Seahawks, 10 p.m., ESPN+
Bye week: Baltimore Ravens, Buffalo Bills

Week 8
Thursday, Oct. 23
Minnesota Vikings at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 26
New York Jets at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon, CBS
Chicago Bears at Baltimore Ravens, Noon, CBS
Miami Dolphins at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, CBS
Cleveland Browns at New England Patriots, Noon, Fox
New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox
Buffalo Bills at Carolina Panthers, Noon, Fox
San Francisco 49ers at Houston Texans, Noon, Fox
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at New Orleans Saints, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Dallas Cowboys at Denver Broncos, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Tennessee Titans at Indianapolis Colts, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Green Bay Packers at Pittsburgh Steelers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Oct. 27
Washington Commanders at Kansas City Chiefs, 7:15 p.m., ABC
Bye Week: Arizona Cardinals, Detroit Lions, Jacksonville Jaguars, Los Angeles Rams, Las Vegas Raiders, Seattle Seahawks

Week 9
Thursday, Oct. 30
Baltimore Ravens at Miami Dolphins, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 2
Indianapolis Colts at Pittsburgh Steelers, Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at New England Patriots, Noon, CBS
Chicago Bears at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Tennessee Titans, Noon, CBS
San Francisco 49ers at New York Giants, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at Green Bay Packers, Noon, Fox
Denver Broncos at Houston Texans, Noon, Fox

Minnesota Vikings at Detroit Lions, Noon, Fox
Jacksonville Jaguars at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., Fox
New Orleans Saints at Los Angeles Rams, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Buffalo Bills, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Seattle Seahawks at Washington Commanders, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 3
Arizona Cardinals at Dallas Cowboys, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye Week: Cleveland Browns, New York Jets, Philadelphia Eagles, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Week 10
Thursday, Nov. 6
Las Vegas Raiders at Denver Broncos, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 9
Atlanta Falcons at Indianapolis Colts (Berlin), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
Jacksonville Jaguars at Houston Texans, Noon, CBS
Buffalo Bills at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS
New England Patriots at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Noon, CBS
Cleveland Browns at New York Jets, Noon, CBS
New York Giants at Chicago Bears, Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at Carolina Panthers, Noon, Fox
Baltimore Ravens at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Detroit Lions at Washington Commanders, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Pittsburgh Steelers at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 10
Philadelphia Eagles at Green Bay Packers, 7:15 p.m., ABC
Bye week: Cincinnati Bengals, Dallas Cowboys, Kansas City Chiefs, Tennessee Titans

Week 11
Thursday, Nov. 13
New York Jets at New England Patriots, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 16
Washington Commanders at Miami Dolphins (Madrid), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Buffalo Bills, Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Jacksonville Jaguars, Noon, CBS
Cincinnati Bengals at Pittsburgh Steelers, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, Fox
Green Bay Packers at New York Giants, Noon, Fox
Chicago Bears at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox
Houston Texans at Tennessee Titans, Noon, Fox
San Francisco 49ers at Arizona Cardinals, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Seattle Seahawks at Los Angeles Rams, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Denver Broncos, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Detroit Lions at Philadelphia Eagles, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 17
Dallas Cowboys at Las Vegas Raiders, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye Week: Indianapolis Colts, New Orleans Saints

FWB and Destin Rotary Clubs Team Up for Rescue Tubes

By LORI SMITH

The Rotary Club of Destin has expanded its Public Rescue Tube (PRT) Project which began with installations in the City of Destin earlier this year, to now include additional locations throughout Okaloosa County beaches.

Phase 1 of this countywide expansion, which is being done in partnership with the Rotary Club of Fort Walton Beach, will place 26 new rescue tubes at public beach access points. Already, 16 tubes are fully sponsored by local businesses and individuals, leaving only 10 sponsorship opportunities available at the time of this printing. Each \$500 sponsorship covers the cost of the rescue tube, installation and five years of maintenance, with the sponsor's name/logo featured on the tube's signage for that period.

"These tubes are already making a difference at Destin beach accesses," said Rotary project co-chairs Dion Moniz and Wayne Bernheisel. "Now,

we are excited to expand this proven program across more parts of Okaloosa County, making our beaches even safer for residents and visitors."

The Facts Behind Rescue Tubes

- 600+ stations are already in place across the U.S. and Canada.
- 200+ successful rescues have been made using these tubes.
- Every known rescue with a tube has been successful.
- No rescuer has ever been injured while using a Rescue Tube.

Why Rescue Tubes Work

According to the World Health Organization, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional death worldwide, claiming approximately 236,000 lives each year. It is also the #1 cause of death for children ages 1–4. Florida recorded 465 accidental drowning deaths in 2023, many in areas without

lifeguard protection.

Rescue tubes provide flotation for both the victim and the bystander attempting a rescue, dramatically reducing the risk of a double tragedy. A 25-year study by the Hawaii Department of Health found that rescuer deaths fell from 60% to 13% after PRTs were installed; in areas without tubes, there was no reduction in rescuer deaths, while in areas with tubes there was a 100% reduction in rescuer deaths.

District-Wide Safety Effort

The Destin initiative is part of a larger regional effort led by Rotary Clubs and partners to protect swimmers across Northwest Florida. Rescue tubes have already been installed or approved in the following areas: Navarre (16), Perdido Key (4), Pensacola Beach (5), Panama City Beach (10), Bay County (10), Destin (9), Freeport (2), Eglin AFB (2) and Walton County (58). With Okaloosa County's planned 26 new installations,



the Emerald Coast is quickly becoming one of the most rescue-ready beach regions in the country.

Affordable & Sustainable

While each PRT station costs roughly \$245 to install (tube, signage, post, hardware), the \$500 sponsorship fee ensures long-term sustainability. Rotary members and volunteers inspect the stations every 4–6 weeks, before peak tourist seasons and after major storms. Annual community "work parties" han-

dle larger repairs, and signage includes a public phone number for reporting damage or missing equipment.

"This is a hands-on way to save lives in our community," Moniz said. "We encourage local businesses and individuals to join us in this important effort."

For more information or to sponsor a Rescue Tube, contact Dion Moniz with the Rotary Club of Destin at dmoniz@handfirm.com or (850) 814-3598.

POST-ACUTE CARE

continued from page 10

coinsurance.

The specific coverage and out-of-pocket costs can be complex. You should always check directly with the Medicare program or your specific insurance provider (Medicare Advantage, Medigap, or private plan) to understand the current coverage rules, facility network status and anticipated costs before receiving post-acute care.

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today for a tour and additional information on how we can help you on your road to recovery.

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FWB Golf Club Debuts New Trackman Driving Range

BY DEVON RAVINE

With a few ceremonial swings from Mayor Nic Allegretto, the Fort Walton Beach Golf Club officially opened its new Trackman Driving Range on Friday, Sept. 26.

Each of the range's 25 bays is now outfitted with Trackman, a Doppler radar system that tracks every aspect of a shot—carry distance, ball speed, launch angle, peak height, and more. Results are displayed on a 32-inch touchscreen, along with a shot tracer to show ball flight.

"It's got something for ev-

erybody," said Golf Course Director Jacob Hill. "From serious players analyzing every club to kids enjoying video-game style courses."

Beyond practice, the system allows golfers to virtually play world-famous courses such as Pebble Beach, Royal Troon, and Bethpage Black, the site of this year's Ryder Cup. Hill said the club will rotate its library of more than 400 courses to keep things fresh.

The system can be enjoyed solo or with groups of up to eight. Players can log in as



Fort Walton Beach Golf Club Director Jacob Hill, right, talks with a golfer about the club's new Trackman Driving Range, which opened on Friday, Sept. 26, 2025.



Golfers use the new Trackman Driving Range, which opened on Friday, Sept. 26, 2025, at the Fort Walton Beach Golf Club.

guests or create a Trackman account to track every swing on

their phone and even compete with golfers worldwide.

Use of Trackman is included with regular range fees—\$5 for 25 balls, \$10 for 55, or \$15 for 95. Hours are Tuesday–Sunday from 6 a.m.–10 p.m. and Mondays from noon–10 p.m. On Friday and Saturday evenings, food and drinks are available from the Clubhouse Grill, with specials on range balls.

The Fort Walton Beach Golf Club, at 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd., also features two 18-hole courses open to the public. For more information or tee times, call 850-833-9664 or visit fwbgolf.com.



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

Nestled in the Panhandle of Florida, lies a golf club that welcomes players of every skill level. Located in Navarre, The Club at Hidden Creek was purchased by the Navarre-Navarre

Water System in 2012 and serves as a spray field for the area. Unlike most courses in the winter, millions of gallons of water are used to keep the course lush and green. The landscape, rolling terrain and scenic beauty make playing the game special at this location.

Trey Childs, Director of Golf, keeps the golf course profitable. Besides membership and a competitive rate schedule, a loyalty program allows players to earn

points toward free or reduced prices for golf. Golfers earn one point for every dollar spent on golf.

Trey has served as director of Golf for over three years. Graduating from Florida State University in a professional golf management program, Trey started his career working in the golf industry from being an assistant golf professional to a general manager. For 15 years, beginning at Kelly Plantation,

Trey has worked at courses like Tiger Point in Gulf Breeze and Bay Point Golf Club in Panama City.

So, what drew him to The Club at Hidden Creek? This hidden gem speaks for itself and now Trey lives and works in Navarre. Trey says it's a great course and a destination that local and out-of-town golfers enjoy. With a driving range and practice putting green, the course also boasts a well-stocked Pro Shop. Golfers enjoy food options at the turn between the nine holes with items like pulled pork sandwiches and hot dogs. After a round, a fully staffed bar awaits! Their lovely banquet room is used for outside catered events and a monthly pot-luck dinner.

The course superintendent and crew are credited with maintaining excellent courses conditions. The 80 Yamaha leased golf carts are protected in the cart barn and ready for tee time use at this semi-private course.

Trey's favorite hole is number 8. This signature hole is a Par 5 that Trey calls a risk/reward hole. Longer hitters can get to the green in two strokes if they hit the perfect tee shot. Trouble awaits those who can't. The course was designed by Ron Garl in the mid-80's and plays 6,823 yards from the back tees. Several tee box choices ensure that expert players and newcomers enjoy the game of golf.

So, is it worth the search to find a golf course that you can



enjoy for a price that works as well? Does this hidden gem reward the golfer? A short drive off Highway 98 will lead you to this hidden treasure that is Navarre's premier golf destination.

Perhaps certain lyrics can be changed to answer that question.

"Somewhere over the rainbow, not quite out of reach,

There's a course that I heard of, close to a sandy beach.

Somewhere over the rainbow, hidden beneath the sky,

There's a course that I heard of, one that I long to try.

Someday I'll wish upon a star And wake up where the clouds are far behind me

Where birdies drop like lemon drops

On Par 4's when I reach the green Oh, that's my memory.

Somewhere over the rainbow, playing golf at Hidden Creek

My dream will be rewarded I'll find golf treasure that I seek.

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Mommy Makeovers: What They Are and When to Consider One



BY DR. CLARK, BLUEWATER
PLASTIC SURGERY

Motherhood is an extraordinary journey — one filled with love, transformation and growth. However, the physical changes that occur during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding can leave many women feeling disconnected from their pre-pregnancy bodies. At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we often hear from women who say, “I love being a mom, but I just don’t feel like myself anymore.” For those looking to restore confidence and feel comfortable in their skin again, a customized Mommy Makeover may be the solution.

What Is a Mommy Makeover?

A “Mommy Makeover” isn’t a single procedure, but rather a personalized combination of surgeries designed to address the areas most commonly affected by pregnancy and childbirth. The most common procedures include:

- **Tummy tuck (abdominoplasty)** to remove excess skin and tighten weakened abdominal muscles.
- **Breast augmentation, lift, or reduction**, depending on how the breasts have changed post-pregnancy.
- **Liposuction** to sculpt and remove stubborn pockets of fat that diet and exercise alone can’t address.

These procedures are usually performed in a single surgical session, which minimizes recovery time compared to spacing them out over months. The goal is not to “snap back” to a previous version of yourself, but to help you feel empowered, confident, and at ease in your own body.

Is It Right for You?

- Ideal candidates for a Mommy Makeover are women who:
- Are finished having children (future pregnancies can impact the surgical results).
 - Are close to their target weight and committed to a healthy lifestyle.
 - Have completed breastfeeding for at least six months.
 - Are in good overall health with realistic expectations about results and recovery.

A Mommy Makeover is not about perfection — it’s about feeling more like you again. Whether it’s restoring volume to your breasts, regaining core strength, or simply being able to wear clothing comfortably, these changes can be deeply meaningful.



What to Expect

Recovery varies depending on the combination of procedures, but most women take about two weeks off work and gradually resume normal activities over 4–6 weeks. While the initial results are visible fairly quickly, final results continue to refine over the following months as swelling subsides and the body heals.

At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we take a thoughtful, individualized approach. During your consultation, we’ll discuss your goals, medical history, and any concerns. Together, we’ll build a safe, strategic plan that supports your vision and lifestyle.

Ready to Feel Like Yourself Again?

You’ve given so much of yourself to your family. If now feels like the right time to reclaim a part of yourself, we’re here to help. A Mommy Makeover can be a powerful act of self-care — one that’s deeply personal and uniquely tailored to you.

To schedule a private consultation and explore your options,

contact Bluewater Plastic Surgery today. As a board-certified plastic surgeon, my practice is dedicated to cosmetic surgery, and I have performed thousands of procedures over the

past 25 years. My priority has always been patient safety and achieving superior cosmetic results. I believe the best measure of success comes from my patients themselves—with more

than 250 five-star reviews, their experiences speak louder than anything I could say.

Call 850.530.6064 or visit bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

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 Wellness

Pain in the Foot



BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTH ARCHITECT

Over the last couple months, I have talked to friends and acquaintances that have shared their struggle with Planter Fasciitis. Maybe you or someone you know is dealing with this 'pain in the foot.'

The plantar fascia (noted as pf) is a fibrous tissue that connects the toes to the heel along the bottom of the foot. This

thick band can become over-stretched or have excess strain due to repetitive stress, which can lead to chronic degeneration or small tears in the fascia fibers where it connects to the heel bone. In addition, ultrasounds often show calcifications and a thickening of the pf.

The cause is not fully understood, but has been connected to activities such as running, ballet and other types of dance, age, weight or occupation.

The pain experienced most often shows up first thing in the morning when the foot first touches the floor and is localized in the heel. This is due to overnight inactivity and the pf stiffening (like a sore muscle). Choosing to avoid walking on the foot can eventually lead to problems in the foot, knee, hip or back.

There are several therapies that can aid in the healing process:

- **Stretching:** Take time before letting your feet hit the floor to slowly stretch. Place your ankle over your knee, pull the toes up until you feel the stretch. Holding that position gently massage the pf for a few minutes. This will help the pf to relax relieving some of the sharp pain one experiences after a period of inactivity.

- **Calf Stretch:** Standing in front of a wall bend the knee on the good foot a step back on the affected foot. Slowly move the injured foot from the balls of the foot to placing the heel on the ground. This stretches both the calf and the pf. If you can't place your heel on the ground due to the pain, bring the leg in a bit to lessen the 'stretch.'

- **Ice the foot** after stretching or if your pf begins to act up due to over-activity.

- **Athletic Tape:** Learn how to properly apply from a professional such as a physical therapist to support your pf during your active times.

- **Night Splints:** This over the counter product keeps the pf in a stretched position while you sleep which can lessen the pain experienced upon rising.

- **Orthotics:** These can sup-



port your pf during the day. This therapy hasn't been shown to be consistently effective even though some studies have shown promising results.

- **Ultrasonic Tissue Repair:** A minimally invasive technology where ultrasound imaging is used to guide a needlelike probe into the damaged pf tissue. The probe tip vibrates

rapidly to break up the damaged tissue which is then suctioned out.

- **Surgery:** When all else fails. The surgery entails detaching the pf from the heel bone.

There are so many fall festivals coming our way. If you don't want to miss your favorite ones, be sure to include breaks throughout your day to stretch and massage your pf and don't forget your orthotics. Taking care of our feet allows us to have a more active and fun life. Even if you have healthy feet, a good foot massage from time to time couldn't hurt.

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



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Make Fort Walton Healthy Again



BY TRE BATTY, TOXIC FREEDOM
Four years ago, I was in heart failure, kidney failure and liver failure. Twenty-two prescrip-

tions weren't saving my life, the herbs were. Nature didn't just put a band-aid on my pain, it helped my body recover. I share this, because I believe many in our community are struggling with both illness and the side effects of the very drugs meant to help them.
Now hear me clearly, we're not saying don't take your prescriptions. What we are saying is that education and nature hold the key to deeper healing. And together, as a community, we can support each other in

learning, growing, and getting stronger.
If you look closely at medicine's history, you'll see the roots. Aspirin came from willow bark. Digoxin for the heart came from foxglove. Plants were always the first teachers.
And in Fort Walton Beach, those teachers still grow among us.
Take Yaupon Holly, a native evergreen along our bayous and streets. Its small, shiny leaves were brewed into tea for clarity, stamina, and cleansing. It's still

the only naturally caffeinated plant in North America, right here in our backyards.
Even our oaks have a story. For centuries, oak bark was used in folk medicine as an astringent to calm inflammation and build resilience. These weren't "alternatives." They were everyday wisdom.
Today, too many of us reach for quick fixes and forget the knowledge that once held communities together. Fort Walton doesn't need more dependency, we need reconnection.

That's why at Toxic Freedom, we partner with small farms to keep herbs pure and powerful, and we share that knowledge with our neighbors. Because when we start teaching each other again, health doesn't just improve, it lasts.
Fort Walton isn't just where we live; it's where we grow stronger together. And when we remember the wisdom that was always ours, we'll truly make Fort Walton healthy again.
www.toxic-freedom.com
"Clean Living, Delivered"

Making Waves with Veterans and Service Dogs

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON
"When I started this company, my goal was to do more than fix plumbing and go home. I wanted to make an impact on the community," says Tru Plumbing and Gas founder, owner, and CEO Cody Kearns.
"Thanks to the help of our customers, we've already supported A Bed 4 Me Foundation and Healing Paws for Warriors

with over \$3,000 in donations. Our goal with this charity initiative is to start a movement that ripples throughout the community." September's charity partner is Niceville-based CALM, with the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center scheduled for October.
The Niceville business' campaign is called Making Waves, and Kearns believes "we can make waves, one drop at a time.

And we're just getting started."
In August, as a lead-in to National Service Dog Month in September, Tru Plumbing and Gas donated \$1,690 to Healing Paws for Warriors to aid in their mission. The Fort Walton Beach 501(c)(3) nonprofit pairs trained rescue dogs with veterans who are living with PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and/or military sexual trauma.
Tru Plumbing and Gas contributed \$10 per completed service call to it's the nonprofit to defray the cost of rescuing dogs, training, veterinary care, and dog food. "Our veterans sacrifice so much. Healing Paws for Warriors gives back to the brave ones who put their lives on the line," says Kearns.
"I thought it would be a good partnership because they work with veterans and dogs. Ev-



Healing Paws for Warriors board member Monika Baltazar and her service dog Buddy.



Healing Paws for Warriors' Dennis Krebs, Chris Krebs, Sam Hay, Monika Baltazar, and Buddy with Tru Plumbing and Gas owner Cody Kearns at a September check presentation.

we think are doing good work in the community. A Bed 4 Me was kind of a personal thing for the owner, because they help children. We have a couple veterans here in the office that factored into choosing Healing Paws for Warriors."
Healing Paws for Warriors

Continued on next page



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 Wellness

A Beacon of Hope: Crossroads Center Expands with Spiritual Health and Wellness Building

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

On Tuesday, August 26th, 2025, Crossroads Center celebrated breaking ground for its new Spiritual Health and Wellness building. Cindy Bray summarizes what defines their growth.

"I may be the Executive Director, but really, Crossroads directs me."

Since 2007, Crossroads Center has served our community faithfully, not only through the mission to provide spiritual, medical, and dental care through God's love, but in the unwavering dedication of its Board of Directors, administration, medical providers, counselors and volunteers. Cindy recalls how Crossroads got started.

"In 2005, a mobile dental ministry visited the area, organized by Dr. Herschel Adams, a pastor who has since passed. At that time, he knew he had availability for approximately 70 appointments. On the day he arrived, however, close to 200 people were there, hoping for help. Knowing he didn't have enough appointments, he had to tell over a hundred people that they would not receive care that day, and it broke his heart."

Dr. Adams, acknowledging

the need and determined not to ignore the call, spent the next two years partnering with medical and law professionals, business entities, churches and individuals who wanted to serve their communities.

Since Crossroads opened in 2007, they have served Okaloosa and Walton counties in a way that acknowledges all the different aspects of what it takes to truly feel well – having your medical, emotional, and spiritual needs met with compassionate care.

Three branches make up Crossroads' primary services, free of charge to qualifying patients: medical, dental, and counseling. First, the medical team addresses primary and preventative care with a focus on the management of chronic disease and medication assistance. Select specialists are also available onsite and through referrals. Next, area dentists donate their time to administer initial and comprehensive exams, cleanings, and panoramic x-rays, as well as fillings and extractions. Finally, counselors and life coaches provide Christian counseling while offering spiritual, emotional, and mental health resources. While all these

are available, the patient gets to decide what they need.

It is this last branch that will be most impacted by the new building and the rooms that it will provide.

"Crossroads Center is our name because we don't just care for physical needs. In 2022, we started our counseling services. We knew that for our patients to truly move toward healing, mental health and counseling had to be addressed. Sometimes people just need some encouragement. We currently have a licensed clinical social worker who helps our patients connect to resources, and we also have a patient liaison who is a life coach. She is a big encourager and recently helped five people gain employment. That really is our goal – keep people working and participating in their lives."

The new expansion will offer rooms with more privacy and soundproofing for counseling sessions as well as spaces to meet and conduct classes for diabetes education, nutrition, and possibly cooking classes.

"We want to equip people to make better choices and



know what to do with what they learn."

Crossroads' efforts not only serve the individual, but Okaloosa and Walton counties as a whole:

- With a more robust and active population, working citizens benefit the economy.
- Ongoing care provided for their patients lessens traffic in emergency rooms.
- When patients without insurance are unable to pay the high cost of medical care, places like Crossroads help keep local healthcare costs down for everyone.

Non-profit organizations like Crossroads Center are invaluable for a flourishing community and mental health is a key component. With the Spiritual Health and Wellness building projected to open by June 2026, the center will continue to be a beacon of hope for years to come.

You can support Crossroads Center's mission through a direct donation or by volunteering, especially as a medical, dental, or mental health professional. To learn more about their current needs, or to see if you qualify to be a new patient, go to www.crossroadscenter.org.

MAKING WAVES

continued from previous page

provides "Battle Buddies" classes to veterans, consisting of two weeks of academics in a classroom environment followed by four weeks of "public access and familiarity in places like Publix, Kohl's, local restaurants, the Air Force Armament Museum, et cetera," says Executive Director Dennis Krebs.

"We also accomplish specialized training in going through TSA at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport, hospital orientation training at Northwest Florida State College, and going to a movie theater. We take the veterans to places they can experience daily living – to allow them to not just to survive, but to thrive."

The organization was founded in 2015 by a veteran and a group of supporters that understood the benefits a service dog could provide to veterans suffering from PTSD, MST, or TBI. "The idea of rescuing dogs and training them to become service dogs was a win-win situation," says Krebs.

"We save the lives of our veterans and dogs that might otherwise have been euthanized." Healing Paws for Warriors'

mantras are "Save a Veteran/Rescue a Dog" and "Saving Lives at Both Ends of the Leash."

This fall, Healing Paws for Warriors will continue providing veteran outreach and obtaining applicants for upcoming classes, soliciting for volunteers and fosters, and raising funds to continue supporting the program. "We do not receive any federal or state assistance," says Krebs, "and all of the training and equipment we utilize is provided at no cost to the veterans."

Krebs adds that Tru Plumbing and Gas has "gone above and beyond to support our program, not just by donating, but by helping us solicit potential veteran candidates for our training program. Working with them has been an awesome experience."

Find out more about Healing Paws for Warriors by calling 850.716.8198, emailing info@healingpawsforwarriors.org, or visiting healingpawsforwarriors.org.

Learn more about Tru Plumbing and Gas at tru-plumbingandgas.com, or call 850.610.3760.

Special thanks to Sam Hay for her contributions to this article.

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BY SEAN DIETRICH

I woke up looking for God. I always look for Him in the mornings. Sometimes, however, He’s hard to find. Sometimes He hides.

I went through my morning routine. I made the coffee. Let the dogs out to pee.

I turned on the TV news.

The TV headlines are shocking. Mostly, about wars, rumors of war, and celebrity mating habits. The news anchor doesn’t smile as he recites talking points.

I feel sorry for Newsguy. Even HE looks sorry he has this job as he talks about the shootings in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Evergreen, Colorado; and the killing of Charlie Kirk in Utah.

I pour coffee. I go to my laptop. Time to do some writing. I have deadlines. Open web browser.

The computer is bombarding me with more news. I skim headlines.

Today’s headlines are nothing like the newspaper headlines of yore. They are click-baity, weirdly worded, as if their sole purpose is to get me to click and nothing more. As if the organization behind each headline doesn’t give a flying fig whether I read the actual story, as long as I click the title.

“Click me,” I hear the headline whispering. “Come on, handsome. You know you want to. Just click me. Me love you long time.”

Here are some actual headlines I read:

“7 Products I Stopped Buying Once I Realized They Were Silently Killing Me.”

“Study Shows Hugging Can Cause Cancer.”

“Pamela Anderson Speaks Out; She Has A Lot To Get Off Her Chest.”

That’s not to mention all the stories about AI. Robots, robots, robots. If ever there was a trending topic in the news world, it’s the rise of AI.

Humanoid robots with water powered muscles. Robot humanoids being developed to possibly become law-enforce-

Sean of the South: Looking for God



ment officers. Humanoid robots expected to be operating within most American homes by the year 2042.

In the same vein, there are throngs of articles about “smart glasses,” and all they WILL be able to do, and how someday most humans on the globe will be sophisticated smart-glass-wearing people who let their household humanoid robots do everything from cut the grass to follow them into their bathrooms to wipe their own noses.

Smart glasses, the headlines tell me, are all about AR (altered reality), which is widescale technological integration of digital content with the real world. AR. How inspiring.

So within the next decade, according to the headlines, we will all be lying on our sofas, blissed out, lost within a half-digital hallucinatory trip. Our children will grow up making swiping gestures in the air as though they are playing on giant

humans to “Wake up!” I don’t understand where the future is leading us. And I don’t understand why everyone seems to WANT to go there.

Soon, I feel almost sick to my stomach. How did this happen to us? How did we become a race of tech-junkies who let AI do everything from read our news, to fight our wars?

What happened to our human spirit? What happened to our unique genius for creativity? Where are our Michelangelos and Monets?

How about our human capacity for kindness? Where’d that go? Where are the Ghandis, Saint Franceses, Mother Teresas, and Fred Rogerses of our time? Have we let ourselves become so numbed by the opioids of technology that we have suffocated our saints?

And what about the lessons we were put on earth to learn individually? Lessons of compassion, forgiveness, bravery, and unconditional love? Will we

invisible iPads.

I haven’t been awake for 30 minutes, and already I need an Alka Seltzer.

Namely, because I’m starting to feel like a stranger on this planet. A stranger in my own society. I want to weep. I want to cry. I want to tell my fellow

ever find God in a world like this one? Do we even WANT to find Him? Or is “God” becoming a dirty word? Will our future’s children even be aware that there IS a God within the next 100 years? Will they even care, or will humanity be too smart for such archaic beliefs?

Then it hits me.

I quietly turn off my TV. I shut off my phone. I close my laptop screen.

And, just like that, I found God.





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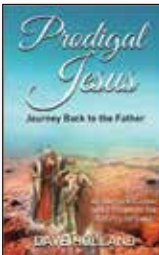
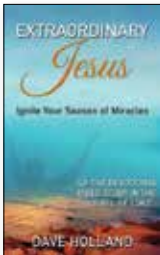
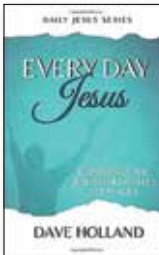
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A Pastor's Ponderings: Home Field Advantage



By PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER,
FAITH INDEPENDENT BAPTIST
CHURCH

This is the time of year when many of us gather around the TV or head to the stadium to watch football or basketball. Whether it's the roar of the crowd in college football's packed stadiums or the excitement of a basketball arena coming alive, one thing is clear: home field advantage is real. When a team has thousands of fans cheering them on, momentum shifts, players push a little harder, and the energy of the crowd has a significant impact.

As a proud Penn State alumnus, my favorite game each year is the "Whiteout" at Beaver Stadium. Over 100,000 fans dressed in white fill the stands, waving towels, chanting in unison, and creating an atmosphere that opponents dread. The electricity is unmatched—a sight to behold. I sometimes imagine what it would look like if Christians showed that same level of excitement and unity about serving the Lord. What if we cheered for Christ with the

same passion that fans cheer for their team? The impact would be eternal.

The Bible paints a similar picture of the Christian life. In Hebrews 12:1, we read: *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."* The writer reminds us that we, too, have a kind of "home crowd" advantage. You cannot see them, but surrounding us are the faithful saints who have gone before—Abraham, Moses, David, the apostles, and countless unnamed believers who endured trials and remained faithful.

Like athletes on the field, Christians can become weary. Life's battles, temptations, and trials sometimes make us feel like we're not winning. But we're not alone. The testimony of those who endured before us encourages us: "Don't give up. Keep going. Stay faithful. The prize is worth it." Their voices remind us that the same God who carried them through will carry us through.

There's also another aspect of this home-field advantage—our encouragement to one another in the present. The crowd in the stands doesn't just come from the past; it comes from today's church family. Just as teammates rally around each other when the game gets tough, we strengthen one another through fellowship, prayer, and shared burdens. A word spoken in love,



a simple prayer lifted up, or even showing up faithfully at church can encourage someone else to keep going.

And most of all, we look to Jesus Himself, the One who secured the victory. Hebrews 12:2 continues: *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* No matter how hostile the "away crowd" of this world might feel, the believer knows the outcome—Christ has already won. Our victory is guaranteed because of what He accomplished on the cross.

And while games may leave us biting our nails until the final whistle, our faith rests on a certainty already written. The book of Revelation reveals the outcome—Christ reigns victorious, Satan is defeated, and God's people dwell with Him forever. Unlike a football game, where the result is sometimes uncertain until the last play, our victory is settled from the beginning. That truth should give us courage and confidence, no

matter how fierce the opposition feels today.

So, the next time you watch a game and see the crowd on their feet, cheering loudly for their team, let it be a reminder: we have the home-field advantage, too. Heaven's witnesses are cheering, the church is encouraging, and Christ is leading. Keep running your race. Victo-

ry is already ours in Him.

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

New Commander Takes Over 1st Special Operations Wing

U.S. Air Force Col. Mark Hamilton took command of the 1st Special Operations Wing Oct. 6 during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field. He succeeded Col. Patrick Dierig, who had led the wing since February 2024. Lt. Gen. Michael Conley, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, presided over the transfer of authority. Hamilton, a Virginia Military Institute ROTC graduate commissioned in 2004, is a command pilot with more than 2,200 flight hours and deployments supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Inherent Resolve.

"Col. Hamilton's proven leadership is just what the 1 SOW needs to ensure our Air Commandos remain ready to answer the Nation's call," said Lt. Gen. Conley. "We have a lot of work ahead and must continue to maximize Air Commando attributes of boldness, valor, and ingenuity to ensure that when called... we win."

As commander of the 1



SOW with 20 years of Air Force service, Col. Hamilton will be responsible for preparing special operations forces for worldwide missions in support of joint and coalition objectives. The 1 SOW at Hurlburt Field is one of six Air Force active duty special operations wings which fall under AFSOC. Hurlburt Field employs more than 7,600 military and approximately 1,700 civilian personnel.

Previously, Col. Hamilton served as the 1 SOW's Deputy Commander of Operations, where he was responsible for employing manned and remotely piloted fixed-wing aircraft, including the

AC-130J Ghost Rider, MC-130J Commando II and MQ-9 Reaper. He also served as the primary operations advisor to Col. Dierig.

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SCAN ME

FESTIVAL OF ARTS

continued from page 2

A Showcase for Artists

Hospitality is at the heart of the Festival of the Arts. Year after year, artists return not only for the opportunity of multi-year sales, but for the experience itself. Staff and volunteers work year-round to create a warm and welcoming environment where creativity thrives. Jurying is conducted by three art industry professionals, and awards totaling \$12,000 are distributed, including Best in Show, People’s Choice, Awards of Excellence, Awards of Merit and Judge’s Recognition Awards.

For artists, it’s more than a weekend—it’s a stage to share their life’s work and connect with collectors who appreciate it. For the public, it’s an accessible way to experience museum-quality art outdoors in our own paradise.

Membership: Fueling the Mission

Becoming a member of MKAF means more than access to events; it means fueling a mission that changes lives. Mem-

bership levels—from the \$75 Art Nouveau tier (for those 35 and under) to the \$500 Impresario tier—offer benefits such as early admission to Concerts in the Village, discounts on Festival merchandise and season passes. But the real benefit is knowing that membership dollars help sustain programs like Arts for All Abilities, Warrior Arts and Arts Empower—programs that create safe spaces, provide therapeutic experiences and inspire growth for thousands in our region.

Volunteers: The Heart of the Festival

It takes an army of helping hands to bring the Festival of the Arts to life, and volunteering is one of the most rewarding ways to be part of it. Opportunities include everything from setting up tents and greeting guests at the main entry to assisting artists, helping in the children’s tent or staying for breakdown on Sunday evening. High school seniors can even earn community service hours while participating. “All volunteers are welcome to arrive early or stay after their shift to enjoy the festival,” says Volunteer Coordinator Step-



nie Shea. “It’s a wonderful way to both give and receive.”

More Than a Festival

Beyond the art tents, food trucks and live music, the Festival of the Arts symbolizes something larger: the weaving together of a community that values creativity as an essential part of life. In our area—a place already blessed with white sand and emerald waters—the arts bring depth, connection and meaning. They remind us that beauty isn’t just found in land-

scapes, but in the resilience of a child with special needs learning through paint, in the courage of a veteran rediscovering expression through the arts, and in the collective joy of friends and family gathering under tents, sharing culture, laughter and hope.

As a MKAF board member for several years, I hope you’ll join us for our 30th Annual Festival of the Arts. I say this not just as a publisher and writer, but as someone who believes in what this event stands for. Browse these amazing artists



from all over. By supporting them, you’re also supporting those who need help right here in our community.

This October 25–26, at the MKAF Cultural Arts Village in Destin, come for the art, stay for the memories and leave knowing you’ve been part of a tradition that for 30 years has helped transform not just canvases and clay, but lives. We appreciate you and look forward to seeing you all there!

For more information, visit mkaf.org.



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News Around Town

Fort Walton Beach Proclaims Italian American Heritage Month

At its Sept. 23 meeting, Fort Walton Beach Mayor Nic Allegritto proclaimed October as Italian American Heritage and Culture Month. Florida ranks third in the nation for Italian American population, with resi-

dents making significant contributions to the state's economic, educational and cultural life. The proclamation recognized their volunteerism, scholarships and community support for those in need. "We are proud of the efforts our lodge contributes to the communities in our area," said Maddie McNeal, president of

the Sons and Daughters of Italy Lodge #2422. Events statewide will celebrate Italian American heritage throughout October.

Okaloosa County Opens Bridge-to-Bridge Multi-Use Path

Okaloosa County celebrated the grand opening of its new

Bridge-to-Bridge Multi-Use Path with a ribbon cutting Oct. 23 at Beasley Park. The 4-mile, 12-foot-wide trail connects the William T. Marler Bridge to the future John T. Brooks Bridge, giving residents and visitors a safe, scenic space to walk and cycle. The path's unique feature: photoluminescent materials that



glow at night. Parking areas and safety bollards were also added.

"This is a great example of how we are improving recreation and supporting healthy lifestyles in Okaloosa County," said Commission Chairman Paul Mixon. Funding came from tourism revenue, FDOT and a private donor. Attendees were invited to walk or bike the path following the ceremony.

NWFSC Opens New School of Nursing

Ribbon Cutting Marks a Major Milestone for Healthcare Education

On September 4, Northwest Florida State College celebrated a new chapter with the ribbon cutting of its state-of-the-art School of Nursing building on the Niceville campus. Community leaders, alumni and supporters joined NWFSC President Mel Ponder and Dean of Health Sciences Dr. Charlotte Kuss for tours of the new 64,000-square-foot facility.

"This expansion is more than bricks and mortar—it's a bold investment in the future of healthcare in our region," said President Mel Ponder. "With over \$34 million dedicated to growing our nursing program, we're doubling enrollment and equipping students with the most advanced technology available."



The project was made possible through \$13 million in state education construction funds and a \$21.8 million Triumph Gulf Coast grant awarded in 2023. Inside the new facility are immersive learning spaces, including virtual reality labs and high-fidelity simulation suites, giving students hands-on training in a safe, real-world environment.

"This new building is a reflection of the incredible caliber and vision that guides our nursing program," said Trustee Chair Rhea Goff. "This will allow our faculty to do even more for students' learning experiences, ensuring they are prepared better than anyone for their field."

NWFSC's nursing program already outperforms state and

national benchmarks. In 2024, the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program achieved a 98.65% pass rate on the NCLEX-RN exam, compared to Florida's average of 84.1% and the national average of 90.6%. Retention rates are also strong, with 94.3% of students completing the program, far above the statewide average of 77.2%.

With the new facility now open, the college is poised to double nursing enrollment by 2026, helping to meet the growing demand for skilled healthcare professionals across North-west Florida.

To learn more about the health sciences programs at NWFSC, visit www.lookatme-now.nwfsc.edu.

Superintendent Chambers Named FHSAA President

Okaloosa County Superintendent Marcus Chambers has been elected president of the Florida High School Athletic Association Board of Directors. Appointed to the board in 2024 by Gov. Ron DeSantis, Chambers will lead the 13-member board guiding interscholastic athletics statewide. "High school athletics play such an important role in the lives of students, building character, teaching teamwork, and creating opportunities that last a lifetime," Chambers said.

Sons and Daughters of Italy Celebrate 47 Years



The Sons and Daughters of Italy Joseph B. Franzalia Lodge #2422 is celebrating 47 years of community service in Fort Walton Beach. The lodge has supported charities, hosted local events, and awarded scholarships while preserving Italian heritage and traditions. "Our Lodge is excited and committed to preserving and promoting our

Continued on next page



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Photo by: Nick Nelson

AROUND TOWN

continued from previous page

culture,” said President Maddie McNeal. Members meet the first Thursday of each month at Shalimar Pointe Clubhouse. For information, call McNeal at 850-259-0292.

Saltwater Restaurants Supports Food For Thought

Saltwater Restaurants presented a \$5,725 check to Food For Thought Outreach following its summer Bites for Backpacks campaign. Funds provide backpacks of healthy food for local students in need. The campaign raised money through special promotions, including \$1 donations from Lobster Bites appetizers. “We’re proud to support an organization like Food For Thought that makes a tangible difference in the lives of local children and families,” said COO Nick Sarra. FFT serves students at 32 schools in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Participating restaurants included The Crab Trap and Surf Hut in Destin and The Crab Trap, Rockin’ Tacos and Floyd’s Shrimp & Steak House at The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island. “And we’re not done, said Sarra.” We plan to continue supporting their important work



through the fall and winter as the need grows.”

Goodwill Gulf Coast Opens New Fort Walton Store

Goodwill Gulf Coast opens its new Fort Walton Beach retail store Tuesday, Oct. 14 at 9 a.m. at 111 Racetrack Road NW, the former Big Lots site across from Choctawhatchee High School. The move from Beal Parkway provides more retail space and parking. “We look forward to serving our customers and donors with an expanded store that will feature even more items in support of our programs and services,” said Barry Reed, President/CEO. An adjacent Opportunity Center offering workforce development and family support programs is set to open in November.

Mayor’s Charity Gala Honors Local Leaders

The Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce hosted its first Mayor’s Charity Gala Sept. 6 at the Hilton Gar-



den Inn, honoring current and former Okaloosa mayors and community leaders. Honorees included mayors Nic Allegretto (FWB), Bobby Wagner (Destin), Dan Henkel (Niceville), JB Whitten (Crestview), Mark Franks (Shalimar), Chris Stein (Mary Esther) and others. Former FWB Mayor Dick Rynearson received the Mike Anderson Award and a Boy Scouts Gulf Coast Council award presented by Vince Mayfield of BitWizards. The gala also honored State Rep. Nathan Boyles, Mel Ponder of Northwest Florida State College, and Captain Gary Jarvis, former mayor of the City of Destin.



CBA Announces Amateur Photo Contest Winners

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance has announced winners of its 2025 Amateur Photo Contest. The annual competition highlights the natural beauty of the Basin and surrounding areas, with winning images featured in CBA’s 2025 calendar. Winners include Augusto Cayson Barreto, Anna Brotzman, Kayla Gallant, Guy Donaldson, and more. “Each winning image tells a story about the beauty and importance of our environment,” said CBA Executive Director Alison McDowell. Learn more at basinalliance.org.

BROTHERS

continued from page 4

After investing 388 hours and raising nearly \$7,000 worth of donated supplies from several local businesses, Chandler’s Eagle Scout project was completed. More importantly, it created a suitable range for the school’s archery classes, competitive team, and JROTC program. With level ground and proper target distances, the teams can now practice under tournament conditions—an important step toward greater success in competitions.

Thanks to Buckthal’s initiative, which reflects the Scouting values of service and community, approximately 1,600 students who attend FWB High School have access to a regulation archery range fit for physical education and competition.

Together, the Buckthal brothers embody the values of Scouting and community service—one leading in the halls of government, the other leaving a lasting mark on local education and athletics.

Interested in joining Scouts BSA? To start the process or learn more, visit <https://beascout.scouting.org/>.



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