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Locals get it!

FWB Life

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Pass the Turkey, Bring on the Twinkle!

The Holiday Season in Fort Walton Beach Means Feasting, Festivities and Giving Back

By Lori Leath Miller

Eat. Give thanks. Beach. Repeat. Then sprinkle in shopping, sparkling lights and a visit with Santa! November (and beyond) in Fort Walton Beach has a rhythm all its own, and I love that we can celebrate with a little sand between our toes.

This season, let's start right here at home—with a downtown celebration, a Christmas village, a parade straight out of Santa's workshop and plenty of opportunities to give back!



Shop, Stroll and Stay for the Glow

The Downtown Fort Walton Beach **Holiday Market & Light Up the Night Tree Lighting** fills the Landing Saturday, Nov. 28, from 11 a.m.–6 p.m., brought to you by Eglin Federal Credit Union.

Shop more than 100 local vendors for handmade goods, locally sourced products, unique gifts and holiday treasures. Enjoy live music, food trucks, cookie decorating and visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus. The Landing will debut an all-new Christmas display featuring new lighting, a new tree and Santa's Workshop.

Stay for caroling with the **Fort Walton Beach Community Chorus** and the tree lighting at 5:30 p.m. sharp. Come for the market, stay for the magic!

Jointly sponsored by the Downtown Fort Walton Beach organization and the City of Fort Walton Beach, the celebration puts hometown holiday spirit center stage. Vendors can visit downtownfwb.com and select the Saturday & Holiday Market tab. Find additional details on the Facebook event page.

A Little Wonderland, a Whole Lot of Heart

The Fort Walton Beach Police Department's **Winter Wonderland Toy Drive & Community Event** returns Friday and Saturday, Dec. 4–5, from 5–8 p.m. nightly, at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Rigdon Center, formerly the NWF Fairgrounds, 1958 Lewis Turner Blvd.

Enjoy live music, food trucks, holiday crafts, small business vendors, raffles and family photos with Santa. Don't miss the legendary Christmas village, built from recycled pallets decorated in holiday themes!

Admission is FREE. Bring a new, unwrapped toy or pet food donation to receive raffle tickets. Donations benefit Toys for Tots and the Panhandle Animal Welfare Society. Bring the family, share in the holiday spirit, and help make the season brighter for those in need! To decorate a pallet or donate raffle items, contact Lt. Kendra Stalls at kstalls@fwb.org.

Straight from Santa's Workshop to Eglin Parkway

The **City of Fort Walton Beach Christmas Parade** steps off at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 7, with the theme "In-

PASS THE TURKEY
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Beyond the Uniform:

A Veterans Day Call to Purpose and Community

By Bruce R. Duty, Retired U.S. Army Chaplain, CrossCountry3

This past Veterans Day, I found myself thinking about the remarkable men and women who have served our nation in uniform, especially those who now call Okaloosa County home. From Fort Walton Beach and Destin to Valparaiso, Niceville and Bluewater Bay, veterans are woven into the fabric of our communities. They are our neighbors, business owners, teachers, coaches, pastors, parents and grandparents.

Their service deserves our gratitude. But, perhaps Veterans Day should also remind us that our veterans still have much to offer—and much worth hearing.

Our region has a remarkable military heritage. Nearby Eglin Air Force Base and the Army's 7th Special Forces Group are reminders of those who continue to defend our nation. Many veterans have cho-

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Community

BEYOND

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sen to make Okaloosa County their home, bringing with them extraordinary experience, leadership, courage, resilience and a willingness to serve.

As a local retired Army chaplain, I understand something of that journey. My military career, including combat deployments to Iraq, allowed me to walk alongside remarkable soldiers and their families. Those experiences reinforced something I have never forgotten: Military service changes you – ordinary men and women serving in extraordinary circumstances.

It teaches discipline, sacrifice, teamwork and the importance of the person standing beside you. It also provides something that can be surprisingly difficult to replace when the uniform comes off—a powerful sense of purpose and belonging.

When military service ends, the mission can suddenly seem less clear. The question quietly becomes, What is my mission now?

Recently, I traveled to Boise, Idaho, where I attended a Mission43 event featuring acclaimed author and journalist Sebastian Junger. His remarkable book, Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging, explores our fundamental need for community, meaningful responsibility, and purpose.

During his presentation, Junger contrasted environments of high consequence and low consequence. Military service often places individuals in situations where their decisions and sacrifices have immediate significance. Returning to civilian life, where that same sense of responsibility may be less obvious, can be difficult.

Junger's message reinforced something I witnessed repeatedly as an Army chaplain: Veterans don't simply need appreciation. They need connection, purpose and opportunities to continue contributing.

One particularly meaningful suggestion Junger makes in Tribe involves communities creating opportunities for veterans to speak openly about their experiences. He encourages gatherings similar to town halls, where veterans can share what they witnessed, what they learned, and what they believe their fellow citizens should understand about military service and war.

I believe that is an idea worth pursuing right here in Okaloosa County. Imagine bringing together veterans from different generations and branches of service—not simply to recognize their accomplishments, but to listen. Some might discuss combat, others the challenges of transitioning to civilian life or lessons learned about leadership, sacrifice, family and friendship. And perhaps some would simply appreciate being heard.

Through CrossCountry3, the nonprofit ministry I lead, I would like to explore hosting such a gathering. I invite Okaloosa County veterans and family members interested in participating to contact me. Perhaps we begin with a simple gathering over coffee and see where it leads. This would not be a political rally or another ceremony



filled with speeches, but an opportunity for veterans to speak, neighbors to listen and our community to grow stronger.

Veterans Day is certainly a time to remember and honor those who served. Yet, our responsibility extends beyond saying, "Thank you for your service." We should also be asking, How can we continue serving together? Okaloosa County possesses an extraordinary reservoir of veteran experience, character, leadership and wisdom. Our challenge is not simply to celebrate it, but to engage it.

I firmly believe that retirement from military service does not mean retirement from significance. The uniform may hang in the closet, the rank may belong to our history and the deployments may be over. But the opportunity to lead, mentor, encourage and serve remains. Some of our greatest contributions may still lie ahead.

Perhaps the greatest way we can honor our veterans is not merely to thank them for what they have done, but to invite them to help shape what our community can become. To my fellow veterans throughout Okaloosa County: Your experiences matter. Your perspective matters. And your voice deserves to be heard.

The military teaches us that every mission eventually comes to an end. But a life of purpose does not.

Perhaps the most important question we can ask is not simply, What have we done with our lives? It is, What is our mission now?

An Invitation to Okaloosa County Veterans

If you're a veteran interested in participating in a community town hall or informal gathering, I would welcome hearing from you. Let's bring veterans together, share our experiences, and explore how we can continue serving our communities.

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Every Life Is Worth Running After!

By Denise David

Some people run to clear their minds. Others run for fitness, endurance or the challenge of the next mile. For Vanessa d'Aquin, Crossroads Center Executive Director, running has become something more — a way to process the enormous compassion she carries for the people she is called to serve.

With a compelling desire to support the health and well-being of people without restriction, Vanessa has spent her career stepping beyond boundaries and serving with her whole heart. She is the director of clinical services and a family nurse practitioner at Crossroads Center, where her mission is simple but far-reaching: to help ensure that every individual has access to quality health care, regardless of circumstances.

Vanessa d'Aquin, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, has dedicated her career to expanding health care access for uninsured and underserved individuals throughout Northwest Florida. Through leadership, compassionate care and a commitment to community partnerships, she has become an advocate for those who might otherwise struggle to receive the care they need.

That service was recognized in 2026 when Vanessa was inducted into the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women as the Humanitarian Award winner.

A verse from Matthew captures much of the heart behind her work: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." — Matthew 25:40

A Florida native and longtime health care professional in Okaloosa County, Vanessa saw firsthand the need for people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances to have access not only to quality health care, but also mental health support and compassion. That drive led her to earn multiple master's degrees and serve prison populations, the uninsured and those without adequate funding for desperately needed care.

But Vanessa comes equipped with more than knowledge, experience and a stethoscope. She





also carries her faith, offering prayer for the patients under her care.

The road has not always been easy. When tough decisions must be made or obstacles arise, "Slow Down and Don't Be Selfish" are words that have guided her. Other principles — get clarity and don't jump to conclusions — have served her well throughout her tenure in the critical care space and continue to guide her as new challenges emerge.

One of those new chapters is already taking shape at Crossroads Center, where Vanessa has served for the past five years. On the horizon is the addition of a Spiritual Health and Wellness Wing and six expanded patient exam rooms. The expansion builds upon work underway since 2022 on land donated by a local congregation. Already serving as a medical clinic, the new facility will not only increase the clinic's physical space, but add another dimension to the services it can offer.

Through community outreach, multi-denominational cooperation and creative solutions where they are needed most, the nonprofit practice has thrived. Whether volunteering time or serving within the community, Vanessa feels an urgency to help others understand why this work matters. Every second matters. Every opportunity to serve has purpose.

And perhaps that is where the running comes in.

If you see Vanessa out running, chances are she has packed her gear, carved out the time and is running toward something important. She encourages the students she works with to live just as purposefully — to recognize a problem and bring a solution.

It is a lesson she teaches by example: Keep moving. Keep serving. Keep running toward the need.

And when it comes to her community, Vanessa d'Aquin is leaving it all on the asphalt.

Save the Date: The community is invited to celebrate Crossroads Center's 20th anniversary on July 23, 2027, at a free event featuring the unveiling of the new Spiritual Health & Wellness Wing, newly renovated medical and dental facilities, and an expansion to six medical patient rooms. The celebration marks another milestone in the center's commitment to meeting the needs of its neighbors — and another reason to keep running toward the need.

This Fall...
Fall in Love
The Place on Beal
@ThePlaceonBeal
850-659-3553



Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel, Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2



Master Gardeners:
The Few, the Trusted, the Informed

By Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel

A Master Gardener program is designed to train a volunteer educator who partners with a university's Cooperative Extension to share research-based horticultural information with the public.

These nationwide programs began in Washington state in 1972-73, when Extension agents, overwhelmed by home gardening questions, trained community volunteers to help. The model spread widely and now operates in nearly all U.S. states (often called Extension Master Gardener programs), the District of Columbia and even some Canadian provinces.

Participants complete an intensive course, typically 40-80 hours of classroom work taught by university specialists, researchers and horticulturists. Topics cover soil health, plant pathology, vegetables, fruits, integrated pest management, composting, water conservation, entomology, taxonomy, pruning and sustainable landscaping. This earns participants their Master Gardener certification.

Master Gardeners commit to a set number of hours in the first year, with annual requirements such as teaching educational courses, answering gardening helplines, offering workshops and talks, staffing plant clinics and/or maintaining school programs or assisting with other programs.

Programs are typically administered through state land-grant universities and their local Cooperative Extension offices (such as the University of Florida IFAS Extension).

In Florida, the University of Florida (IFAS) was the original land-grant school. Master Gardeners act as representatives of their Extension service and provide unbiased, science-based recommendations rather than personal opinions. The title "Master Gardener" is generally used only when performing approved Extension-sponsored activities. Those who are selected to be Master Gardeners are typically community members who enjoy plants and people, want to deepen their knowledge and are willing to volunteer.

The programs emphasize environmentally responsible practices that support healthy gardens, landscapes and communities. To maintain certification and keep the title active, volunteers must complete an annual quota of volunteer service and continuing education hours.

We are fortunate to have two offices in Okaloosa County. They are the Gerald R. Edmondson Extension Building in the north end at 3098 Airport Road, Crestview, and the Sheila Dunning Extension Building at 1954 Lewis Turner Blvd., by the fairgrounds, in the south end.

As a homeowner, you may find you have questions about your lawn, whether regarding watering, fertilizer application or an insect infestation. A Master Gardener can help you find the answers. Perhaps you are frustrated with trying to grow vegetables or determining which citrus trees would grow in Northwest Florida. Perhaps you have a landscaping question about which flowers would bloom in season in Florida. Our region of Florida is very different from South Florida. It is important to know what will grow when in our area.

Lastly, if you have a green thumb or concern for our environment, you may be interested in becoming a Master Gardener. This coursework is intensive but rewarding. Individuals in the Master Gardener program provide research-based education and are a trusted resource for horticultural education in Florida. I am grateful for the volunteers who are a great source of information to take care of the resources entrusted to our care.

Whether you want to find local classes or contact a volunteer help desk, call 850-689-5850.

It is an honor to serve as your commissioner.

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

Around Town

Detective to Receive Valor and Lifesaving Awards



Fort Walton Beach Police Detective Collin Savoie will receive the Medal of Valor and Life Saving Award for helping resolve an armed mental health crisis without injury Oct. 14.

Savoie, an Army veteran, connected with a fellow veteran while coordinating responding officers and a nearby building's evacuation on Miracle Strip Parkway SW. After speaking with Savoie, the man put down his weapons and surrendered peacefully. He was connected with mental health and veterans' resources.

Chief Robert Bage will present the awards during the Nov. 17 City Council meeting at 6 p.m. at City Hall, 107 Miracle Strip Parkway SW. The public is welcome.

National Partnership Supports Air Commando Museum



The Air Commando Heritage Foundation is among 11 organizations selected for Lockheed Martin's five-year, $25 million 25Forward initiative.

The partnership will support the future Air Commando Museum, planned for Hurlburt Field's Memorial Air Park outside the installation gates. Exhibits will share Air Force Special Operations history from World War II to today, honoring Air Commandos and their families. A planned STEM classroom will connect students with lessons in teamwork, problem-solving and innovation.

Announced Oct. 30, the partnership is part of an initiative commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks. Learn more at aircommandoheritagefoundation.org.

Veterans Park Honors Service and Founding Principles

Okaloosa County marked Veterans Day with a veteran appreciation event, the unveiling of its second Charters of Freedom monument and recognition of four women veteran statues recently installed in their permanent locations at Veterans Park.

Continued on page 31

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

TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING

VISIT ILOVEFWB.COM

I ♥ FWB

Community

The Market Has Changed. The Opportunity Hasn't Disappeared.

Understanding Today's Real Estate Market and Finding The Opportunities Within It.



By Paul Domenech, The Domenech Group, Keller Williams Emerald Coast

There's no question that today's real estate market feels different.

Higher interest rates, increased inventory, and homes spending more time on the market have created uncertainty for buyers and sellers alike.

For sellers, it can be frustrating watching a home sit longer than expected. For buyers, higher monthly payments can make purchasing feel more challenging.

I understand both sides.

But something I've learned through years of real estate, coaching, and conversations with agents across the country is that the market is never necessarily good or bad. It's simply the market we're in.

And every market creates different opportunities.

For Buyers: Less Competition Can Mean More Opportunity

When we hear the term buyer's market, we often assume it means getting a property at a significant discount.

But that's not necessarily the greatest advantage today.

The real opportunity may be having less competition for the home you actually want.

There's a difference between purchasing something simply because it's inexpensive and purchasing something because it's truly desirable.

With fewer buyers actively competing, you may have a better opportunity to find the right home without the pressure of multiple offers.

However, desirable homes are still desirable.

There are buyers waiting for the right property, even in this market. When that home becomes available at the right price, it can still attract serious interest.

The opportunity isn't always about paying less. Sometimes it's about getting more of what matters to you.

For Sellers: Desirability Creates Opportunity

I also understand the frustration sellers are experiencing.

More inventory means more choices for buyers. But not all inventory is equally desirable.

And that's an important distinction.

Having more homes available doesn't necessarily mean buyers have more homes they genuinely want.

Today's buyers are often more deliberate with their decisions. When financing costs are higher, the condition, presentation, and value of a property become even more important.

This is why I believe creating a desirable product is one of the greatest opportunities sellers have right now.

Preparing the home properly, understanding the competition, and developing a pricing strategy supported by current data can make a meaningful difference.

It's not about chasing a price or giving your home away.

It's about positioning your property to achieve the strongest result today's market will support.

Understanding the Bigger Picture

There's another perspective worth considering, especially when you're selling one home to purchase another.

It's easy to focus on what your home might have sold for a year or two ago.

But the more important question may be what your current equity allows you to purchase today.

When values shift, they can create opportunities on both sides of a transaction.

Depending on where you're selling and buying, a lower sale price may be accompanied by a more favorable purchase price on your next home.

What matters is understanding both markets together rather than evaluating either transaction in isolation.



Serving the Market We're In

One of the advantages I've experienced through national speaking, coaching, and working with real estate professionals across the country is seeing how different markets are responding to similar challenges.

Those conversations help us recognize trends, share effective strategies, and continually adjust how we serve our customers.

And that has contributed to one of our strongest years, even in a market many consider difficult.

Not because the market has been easy, but because we've continued learning how to serve it.

The value of having the right real estate professional isn't predicting when the market will change. It's understanding the market we have today and helping you recognize the opportunities within it.

For buyers, that means finding the home you truly want and making a confident, informed decision.

For sellers, it means creating a desirable product, developing the right strategy, and working toward the strongest possible net result.

Because ultimately, the market will always change.

But the opportunity to make a good real estate decision doesn't disappear. It simply requires a different understanding.

A House Sold Name



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Community

HAPPENINGS AROUND FWB

2026 EVENTS

NOVEMBER

13

100 Point Cult & Wine Dinner
5 pm | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport

14

Cruisin' The Beaches Car Show
10 am | De'France Indoor Fleamarket Antiques & Collectibles | FWB

PUPs at the PIER
11 am | Angler's | Okaloosa Island

Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest
11 am | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport

Blues Brews & BBQ
1 pm | Harborwalk Village | Destin

Reduce, Reuse, Refashion Show
4:30 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

Voices of Freedom
7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

Classical Connections feat. Howard Levy, Harmonica + Piano
7:30 pm | Destin High School | Destin

Karaoke
9 pm | Fubar | FWB

15

47th Annual Toys 4 Tots Ride
8:30 am | Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson | FWB

Karaoke
9 pm | Fubar | FWB

17

Karaoke
6 pm | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB

Trivia Night
6 pm | Rick's Crab Trap | FWB

Line Dancing Night
7 pm | Soundside | FWB

18

Business Entrepreneur Night
5 pm | Soundside | FWB

Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours, hosted by U.S. Bank/Evalon at The Place on Beal
5:30 pm | The Place on Beal | FWB

Karaoke
7 pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty | FWB

19

Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup
7 pm | Downtown Music Hall | FWB

20

Greater FWB Chamber Lunch N Learn; Victory Health Coaching; " Holiday Harmony: Managing Stress, Food & Feelings"
11:30 am | FWB Chamber | FWB

Santa's Arrival & Holiday Tree Lighting
5 pm | Destin Commons | Destin

Grand Boulevard Holiday Parade
6 pm | Grand Boulevard | Sandestin

Nutcracker Performance
7:30 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

21

Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso

Farmers Market
8 am | The Landing | FWB

10th Annual Thanksending
10 am | Rockout Climbing Gym | Destin

Santa Claus Arrival
10 am | Silver Sands Outlet Mall | Miramar Beach

Holiday Market
2 pm | Destin Commons | Destin

Nutcracker Performance
7:30 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights
4 pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin

Karaoke
9 pm | Fubar | FWB

22

Nutcracker Performance
2 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

Karaoke
9 pm | Fubar | FWB

24

Karaoke
6 pm | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB

Trivia Night
6 pm | Rick's Seafood & Sports | FWB

Line Dancing Night
7 pm | Soundside | FWB

25

Business Entrepreneur Night
5 pm | Soundside | FWB

26

AJ's Thanksgiving Feast
11 am | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB

AJ's Thanksgiving Feast
12 pm | AJ's Grayton Beach | Grayton Beach

Thanksgiving Feast
11 am | Harbor Docks | Destin

27

Tree Lighting Ceremony
5 pm | Harborwalk Village | Destin

Black Friday Holiday Sip & Shop
5 pm | Harborwalk Village | Destin

28

Breakfast with Billy Claus
8 am | Lulu's | Destin

Holiday Market & Light Up the Night Tree Lighting
11 am | The Landing | FWB

Grinch on the Boardwalk
12 pm | The Boardwalk | FWB

Santa's Arrival & Visits with Santa
12:30 pm | Harborwalk Village | Destin

Here Comes Santa Claus
6 pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin

29

Grinch on the Boardwalk
12 pm | The Boardwalk | FWB

Karaoke
9 pm | Fubar | FWB

DECEMBER

02

Daniel's Ballad
5:30 pm | St. Simon's Episcopal Church | FWB

04

Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce's First Friday Coffee
7 am | First Baptist Church | FWB

Festival of Trees
4 pm | Grand Boulevard | SRB

Winter Wonderland Toy Drive & Community Event
5 pm | Destin-FWB Rigdon Center | FWB

05

Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso

Rick's Breakfast with Santa
8 am | Rick's Seafood & Sports Bar | Okaloosa Island

FREE Community Day
10 am | Fort Walton Beach Public Library | FWB

Winter Wonderland Toy Drive & Community Event
5 pm | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Rigdon Center (formerly NWF Fairgrounds) | FWB

Christmas Luminaries
5 pm | Eden Gardens State Park | SRB

07

Greater FWB Chamber Lunch N Learn: Holiday Harmony: Managing Stress, Food & Feelings
11:30 am | FWB Chamber | FWB

07 Continued

City of Fort Walton Beach 2026 Christmas Parade
6:30 pm | Downtown FWB, starting at Eglin Pkwy. and First St. | FWB

10

Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking at FloridaOne with Zaxby's
11:30 am | FloridaOnel | FWB

Feliz Navidad: Fiesta on the Coast
5 pm | Rockin' Tacos Grill & Tequila Bar | FWB

Holiday Pops: Hark! feat. The Broadway Boys
7:30 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center | FWB

13

Boys and Girls Club of the Emerald Coast Brunchfest
11 am | 130 E Government St | Pensacola

14-20

Living Nativity
6 pm | First Baptist Church, corner of 2nd St. and Church St. | FWB

19

Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso

MONTHLY EVENTS

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

Brunch Buffet with Gone Coastal
11 am | Sun | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB

Free Pirate Show
5 pm | Mon | The Boardwalk | FWB

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

The Big BLVD Bash - DJ Dance Party Series
6 pm | Tues | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach

Okaloosa Island Fireworks
9 pm | Wed | The Boardwalk | FWB

Downtown FWB Coffee Club (Mar - Dec)
9 - 10 am | 2nd Thurs | The Florida Place Food Trucks | FWB

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

Karaoke Night
7 pm | Thurs | Soundside Waterfront Bar | FWB

Alzheimer's Association Caregiver Support Group
1 pm | 2nd Thurs | Trinity UMC | FWB

SAVE THE DATE!

The Nutcracker
by studio6twenty5

Friday, Dec. 18, 7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 19, 7 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 20, 2 p.m.
Fort Walton Beach Civic Auditorium
Tickets: studio6twenty5.com

FARMERS MARKETS

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

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Community

PASS THE TURKEY

continued from page 1

side Santa's Workshop." Gather along Eglin Parkway as the parade travels north from First Street to Hughes Street.

Businesses, groups and organizations can apply at fwb.org/christmasparade. Entry is $35, proof of liability insurance is required, and applications are due by 5 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 24.

Contact Recreation Supervisor Polly-Jo Pangelinan at 850-833-9580 or ppangelinan@fwb.org.

A Little Puppy Love

Add some tail wags to your holiday season! Saving with Soul Pet Rescue hosts its fifth annual **PUPs at the PIER Puppy Petting Pawty** at Angler's Beachside Grill on Okaloosa Island Saturday, Nov. 14, from 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Meet adoptable dogs, enjoy a little puppy therapy and perhaps find your newest family member. Now that's something to be thankful for!

Rev Up the Giving

The **47th Annual Toys 4 Tots Ride** rolls out Sunday, Nov. 15, presented by Emerald Coast H.O.G. Chapter #3605. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson in Fort Walton Beach, with kickstands up at 11 a.m.

Bring $10 per person and a new toy or gift card to benefit children served by the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center and Children in Crisis. Visit emeraldcoasthd.com.

A Thanksgiving Table with Room for Everyone

AJ's on the Bayou welcomes the community **Thanksgiving Day,** Thursday, Nov. 26, from 11 a.m.–4 p.m., for a traditional feast and fellowship. Meals are free, with donations appreciated for the Kids on the Coast Foundation. Visit ajsonthebayou.com.

Keep the Cheer Going Along the Coast

A Little Bluegrass, a Lot of Heart

Alaqua Animal Refuge in Freeport hosts the animoré **Weekend Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest,** presented by Café Thirty-A, Saturday, Nov. 14, from 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Enjoy bluegrass headliner Sister Sadie, food trucks, local vendors, crafts, games and animal encounters.

Proceeds support Alaqua's animal rescue and care. Online tickets are available through Nov. 11; gate admission is $15 for adults and $5 for children, with ages 2 and younger free. VIP options are available. Visit alaqua.org.

Santa, Sleigh Bells and Sparkle

Santa has a busy Friday, Nov. 20! **Grand Boulevard's Hometown Holiday Parade,** 5–7 p.m., brings community groups, festive performances and holiday cheer to the Boulevard.

At Destin Commons, **Santa's Arrival & Holiday Tree Lighting,** 5–9 p.m., features holiday music, complimentary face painting, free photos with Rudolph and Frosty, and a holiday photo booth. Santa arrives in the 7 p.m. parade before lighting the 50-foot Christmas tree. Fireworks finish the evening!

For grown-up sparkle, the **14th Annual Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights** returns to the Village of Baytowne Wharf Saturday, Nov. 21, from 4–6 p.m. Sample more than

Continued on next page



Community

A Holiday Tradition Comes to Life: Northwest Florida Ballet's The Nutcracker

The magic of the holidays takes center stage this November as Northwest Florida Ballet celebrates its 47th annual production of The Nutcracker, bringing one of the season's most beloved traditions to life at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center in Niceville, Nov. 20-22.

For nearly five decades, this enchanting production has delighted Emerald Coast audiences with the timeless story of Clara, her magical Nutcracker Prince and a journey into a world of dancing snowflakes, dazzling costumes and the unforgettable Sugar Plum Fairy. From the excitement of the Christmas party to the wonder of the Land of Sweets, it's a holiday experience that continues to capture the imaginations of children and adults alike.



As the area's only full-length presentation of The Nutcracker, this year's production features more than 140 performers, including internationally acclaimed guest artists and more than 100 local children. For many young dancers, the opportunity to share the stage with professional artists is a dream come true, while audiences enjoy seeing familiar faces from their own communities become part of the holiday magic.

Adding to the enchantment, the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Northwest Florida Ballet Music Director and Conductor David Ott, will perform Tchaikovsky's celebrated score live at every public performance. The combination of graceful choreography, beautiful costumes and the stirring sounds of a full orchestra makes this production an especially memorable way to welcome the holiday season.

Performances are Friday and Saturday, Nov. 20-21, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 22, at 2:30 p.m. Tickets start at $28 for adults and $14 for children ages 12 and younger, with three seating tiers available.

Whether it's a cherished family tradition or a first introduction to the ballet, The Nutcracker offers a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the beauty, imagination and joy of the season.

For tickets and information, visit nfballet.org/the-nutcracker.

PASS THE TURKEY

continued from previous page

30 champagnes and sparkling wines with appetizers from participating Village restaurants, plus carolers and the choreographed Nights of Lights show. Tickets are $75 presale or $85 day of, subject to availability.

Trade your flip-flops for skates at **Baytowne on Ice,** running through Feb. 7, 2027. A 90-minute skate is $15, plus $3 for skate rental. For tickets, skating hours and details, visit baytownewharf.com.

More Places at the Thanksgiving Table

AJ's Grayton Beach serves its **Thanksgiving Day** meal Nov. 26, noon–5 p.m. The traditional feast is free, with donations appreciated for the Kids on the Coast Foundation. Visit ajsgrayton.com.

In Destin, **Harbor Docks' 32nd Annual Thanksgiving Feast** runs Nov. 26, from 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Everyone is welcome for a free traditional meal, with donations supporting Food For Thought Outreach and Emerald Coast Food Rescue. Visit harbordocks.com.



Blue Pancakes, Bay Views and Ho-Ho-Ho

After Black Friday, I'm ready for blue pancakes! **Breakfast with Billy Claus** comes to LuLu's in Destin Saturday, Nov. 28, from 8–10 a.m. Santa's tropical brother and the LuLuBelles bring a breakfast buffet, holiday photos, story time, children's crafts, letters to Santa and hot chocolate. Visit lulusfunfoodmusic.com.

At HarborWalk Village, **Santa's Arrival** on the Harbor begins with his entrance Nov. 28 at 12:30 p.m., followed by photos and holiday performances 1–4 p.m.

That evening, **Baytowne Wharf's Here Comes Santa Claus,** 6–9 p.m., features Santa's arrival, the Village tree lighting, face painting, balloon making, a brass band and fireworks.

Let the December Twinkle Begin

Grand Boulevard's **Festival of Trees** returns Friday, Dec. 4, from 4–7:30 p.m., with 16 trees decorated by local nonprofits. Purchase a $5 voting bell to support a favorite cause and cast your People's Choice vote 4–6:30 p.m. Winners are announced at 7:30 p.m.

On Saturday, Dec. 5, from 5–8 p.m., enjoy **Christmas Luminaries** at Eden Gardens State Park. Follow luminary-lined pathways after sunset, tour the decorated, historic Wesley House and enjoy live music, cookies and warm beverages.

Give a Little Christmas Joy

A familiar local tradition has a new name: **Operation Jingle Bells!** The Okaloosa County School District and Sheriff's Office are partnering through the program formerly known as Angel Tree.

School counselors and school resource officers connect students' holiday wish lists with community members willing to help. To participate, contact Catherine Card at catherine.card@okaloosaschools.com or Katie Tingle at ktingle@sheriff-okaloosa.org.

Shop with a neighbor, share a meal, donate a toy and gather beneath those downtown lights. Here in Fort Walton Beach, the brightest part of the season is the community we share.

Wishing you a blessed Thanksgiving with good food, grateful hearts and plenty of reasons to gather. Pass the turkey—and bring on the twinkle!



Community

A Christmas Gift, 38 Years in the Making

First Baptist Church's Live Nativity returns December 14–20

Some Christmas gifts don't fit beneath a tree. They come wrapped in a warm welcome, a cup of hot chocolate and a quiet moment beside a manger.

For the 38th year, First Baptist Church of Fort Walton Beach will share its Live Nativity with the community, December 14–20, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. each evening. The weeklong celebration is the church's free gift to Fort Walton Beach and its neighbors, with no admission charge and no donations requested.

At its heart is the birth of Jesus. Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus are joined by the three Wise Men, with angels above heralding His arrival. But the story continues beyond the manger. A cross and an empty tomb invite visitors to reflect on His sacrifice, His resurrection and the promise that began with that holy birth.



This year, a new entry route gives guests a chance to meet sheep and donkeys as they make their way toward the nativity. There, visitors can have their picture taken before entering the Shepherd's Field. Their printed photo will be waiting at the exit—a little keepsake of an evening together.

The Shepherd's Field brings its own kind of Christmas joy. Sheep, miniature donkeys and two camels welcome visitors ready to pet and feed them. Naomi, a familiar face for more than a decade, returns with her son Nicodemus, affectionately called Nico, for his third year.

Shepherds supply sweet feed and carrots, while handheld feeding cups help keep little fingers safe. Meanwhile, the church's young shepherds stay busy as "super-duper scoopers," tending to the less glamorous work that keeps the field welcoming for everyone.



Golf cart rides through the Live Nativity are available for guests with disabilities or walking limitations, helping them enjoy all the evening offers.

Beyond the field, a Roman soldier stands at the cross and directs visitors toward the empty tomb. There, an angel announces the joyful message: "Why do you seek him here? He is Risen!"

The welcome continues with candy canes for children and the Christmas symbolism shared at the Candy Cane booth. Deacons offer free Bibles, and the church's music department fills the evening with seasonal, inspirational songs. Cookies, hot chocolate and coffee invite guests to linger around warm fire pits.

It takes many willing hands to bring this gift to life, from the costumed volunteers to the young shepherds tending the field. Together, they create a place for families, friends and neighbors to slow down, gather close and remember why Christmas matters.

The Live Nativity is beside the First Baptist Church sanctuary at the corner of 2nd Street and Church Street. Free parking is available across the street in the church lot at 126 Harbeson Ave. SE.

Come for the manger, meet Naomi and Nico, and stay for a song by the fire. For 38 years, this church has made room for its neighbors at Christmas. There is room for you, too.



Community



You're Not Supposed to Need a Holiday From Your Own Body

By Dr. Karen DeVore

The turkey is not the only thing carrying tension this Thanksgiving.

Your shoulders have been somewhere near your ears since September. Your lower back has opinions about the drive to see family. And the headache you hoped would disappear has invited itself to dinner.

But there are groceries to buy, deadlines to meet, and people counting on you. So you reach for your usual remedy, say "I'm fine," and keep going.

Sound familiar?

Before you spend another holiday working around your body, consider giving it some attention. Acupuncture could be one way to begin.



When "Normal" Starts Costing You

You may have gotten very good at living with discomfort. You know which chair to avoid. How long you can stand before your back starts protesting. Which activities will leave your knees aching tomorrow.

Those adjustments can feel small until you realize how much of your day they control. Pain takes more than comfort. It takes concentration, patience, spontaneity, and sometimes the desire to participate at all.

That is why the conversation about acupuncture should begin with a question: What would you like to get back to doing?

Cooking without constantly leaning against the counter? Enjoying a walk after Thanksgiving dinner? Making the drive to see someone you love without dreading every mile?

Those are meaningful treatment goals.

Small Needles. Meaningful Possibilities.

Acupuncture involves placing very fine needles at selected points on the body. Rooted in traditional Eastern medicine, it is also the subject of modern research examining its effects on pain and the nervous system.

Some of the strongest evidence supports acupuncture for chronic lower back pain, neck pain, and knee pain associated with osteoarthritis. For someone living with those conditions, relief may make everyday movement and activities more manageable.

Acupuncture may also help reduce the frequency of migraines and tension headaches. Imagine what fewer headache days could mean: fewer canceled plans, fewer afternoons spent distracted by discomfort, and more time available for your life.

Results vary. Acupuncture does not help everyone, and improvement may take multiple visits. But you deserve to know that another option exists.

Your Treatment Should Start With Your Story

A sore back does not tell us everything we need to know about you. When did it start? What makes it worse? What have you already tried? Are you sleeping comfortably? What are you avoiding because you are afraid it will hurt?

A thoughtful consultation connects your symptoms with the way you actually live.

Acupuncture fits within an integrative approach that considers your health history, current care, and personal goals. It can complement appropriate medical treatment, physical therapy, and movement.

We also recognize when symptoms need further evaluation. The goal is a plan that makes sense for you, with progress measured by changes you can notice in daily life.

About the Part That Makes You Nervous

Yes, acupuncture uses needles.

They are much thinner than those used for injections. You may notice a brief pinch, pressure, or a dull ache. Your practitioner should explain the process, check your comfort, and respond to your feedback.

Continued on page 14

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Supporting Emerald Coast veterans and their families.





A Community Built on Service

Few places understand service like Northwest Florida. With Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field as neighbors, many of us count veterans among our parents, grandparents, friends, and neighbors. This Veterans Day, we're grateful for every one of them.

Care That Honors Independence

Many veterans spent their lives taking care of others, and asking for help doesn't always come easily. Home Instead's caregivers help with companionship, personal care, meals, light housekeeping, and errands, so veterans can stay in the homes they worked hard for, on their own terms.



An Approved VA Community Care Provider

Home Instead of Fort Walton Beach is an approved VA community care provider. Eligible veterans may qualify for in-home care through VA benefits, and our team can help families understand the referral process. Once we receive a referral, care can often begin within 48 hours.

Support for the Whole Family

Spouses and adult children often carry the day-to-day load of caring for a veteran. Respite care gives them time to rest and recharge, knowing their loved one is in good hands.

Thank You for Your Service

To the veterans of Okaloosa and Walton counties: thank you. If you or someone you love could use a little help at home, we'd be honored to listen, learn your story, and talk about what support could look like.

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Community

Giving Thanks for Recovery

Caring for Our Community-One Patient at a Time



By Teresa Halverson, Business Development/Community Relations Director

This Thanksgiving season, we celebrate the strength of the human spirit, the support of family, and the compassionate care that helps older adults take the next step toward recovery.

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on what matters most: our health, our families, our independence, and the people who make a difference in our lives. The holiday season is filled with family gatherings, favorite traditions, and new opportunities to make lasting memories. For older adults recovering from an illness, injury, surgery, or hospitalization, this season can also be a reminder of how important the right care and support can be during life's unexpected challenges. As families prepare for upcoming celebrations, it is important to understand how post-acute hospital care and rehabilitation can help loved ones move forward on their recovery journey.



While leaving the hospital is an important milestone, recovery often continues long after discharge. Many patients need additional medical attention, nursing care, and rehabilitation before they can safely return home. This is where post-acute rehabilitation can make a meaningful difference.

Rebuilding Strength, One Step at a Time

Recovery looks different for everyone. Some patients may need help with walking after surgery, while others may be rebuilding strength following a serious illness or learning new ways to manage daily activities after a stroke. Rehabilitation can help patients work towards these important goals.

Physical Therapy: Rebuilding Strength and Mobility

Helps improve strength, balance, mobility, and coordination through individualized exercises and functional training. Individuals can work toward walking more safely, transferring in and out of a chair, navigating their homes and reducing their risk of falling.

Occupational Therapy: Regaining Independence in Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

Focuses on everyday activities such as bathing, dressing/grooming, and other tasks that support independence in the home. Therapists may also recommend adaptive equipment and/or energy-conservation techniques to make daily life safer and more manageable.

Speech Therapy: Supporting Communication and Swallowing

Speech Therapy helps individuals address difficulties with communication, memory-related skills, and swallowing when these abilities have been affected by an illness or medical condition. Speech Therapy can be especially important for individuals recovering from a stroke, and other neurological conditions.

Working together, along with skilled nursing services, these therapies can help patients work toward meaningful milestones and prepare for the next stage of recovery.

At The Manor at Blue Water Bay, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve individuals and families in our communities during important moments in their lives.

Our in-patient and out-patient skilled nursing and rehabilitation services focus on individualized care, helping patients recover following hospitalization and work toward improved strength, function and independence. We recognize that behind every patient is a personal story, a family that cares, and hope for what comes next.

This Thanksgiving season, we extend our gratitude to the patients who inspire us, the families who trust us, and the healthcare professionals who dedicate themselves to helping others.

If you or a loved one is preparing to leave the hospital, we encourage you to ask the hospital team about post-acute care and where skilled nursing rehabilitation may be appropriate.

Because every step toward recovery is something to be thankful for.

The Manor at Blue Water Bay | 1500 N. White Point Rd. | Niceville
Email: wecare@manoratbwb.com | www.manoratbwb.com



Lifestyle

Black Friday, Blue Bay Style!



By Liesel Schmidt

Halloween is done and dusted (well, mostly…We all have those neighbors who can't seem to put away the 10-foot skeleton on the front lawn, and there may or may not be some candy that's still survived the post-tick-or-treat binge), and the stores are so full of Thanksgiving-themed everything that you feel like you might go mad if you see another cartoon turkey…

The holiday slide is well underway.

Which means you're mentally girding your loins for the upcoming throng of visitors that will soon descend on your house. Repeatedly. In waves.

And as much as you may love seeing their faces, it can get stressful, having to coordinate times, dishes, seats at the table, and who's going to pick up Great Aunt Birtha and her new hip.

You've got a houseful to feed, too many people standing in your kitchen looking for something to "tide them over," someone has commandeered the remote and decided that this is the year you're all going to watch The National Dog Show even though the diehard Lions' fans in attendance are loudly protesting, and you're just thinking…

I just need some fresh air.

Don't worry, lovelies, we get it.

And while we at Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. may not be your Thanksgiving Day escape hatch (we're taking our turkey break, too), we'll be here to help you de-stress the day after (yes, we know it's Black Friday, but consider us your pocket of zen in all the shopping madness). No crazy early-opening hours, no frenetic sales, just our usual level of small-town friendliness and desire to help—plus some great discounts that last all weekend long.



Schedule the chaos for early in the day, grab a coffee, and come relax as you browse all the unique and beautiful things we have in the store. Bring in your bestie, your sister or that cousin you wish you saw more often and have some fun discovering new things. Bring the men along for a change of scenery (yes, we have some massively comfy leather chairs where they can hang out and talk about whatever football grievances they have, if they so choose) and maybe even a wardrobe refresh. We believe in quality, comfort and style, so you'll love our fall and winter lineup of Liverpool, Charlie B, Lovestitch and Flag & Anthem for women, while the guys are sure to find something they love from Rusty, Roark, Vuori and Free Fly.

Pick out a few items for each other that you might never have looked at for yourselves and try them on—no "this isn't me" comments or snap, on-the-rack judgements. Open your mind, expand your horizons and try something new. Make it a competition to see who knows the other best and just have fun (we do love a classic '80s-style dressing room montage). Who knows—you might find a new favorite thing that you'd never imagined yourself loving.

And what's a good makeover montage without a shoe moment to finish off the look? Try on some shoes you wouldn't necessarily thought you needed (trust us, you need them—and your feet will thank you, whether you're falling for the cute suede Aetrex boots or in your Birkenstock clog era).

However you play the game, why not use this time to catch up, now that the pressure has cooled and you have time to just be in the moment? We know that, in all that preparation for the main event, talking can get put on the back burner, and you may not have gotten to spend much one-on-one time with someone you've really been missing. Sure, you've passed potatoes, moved cars and washed dishes together—but have you actually had time for a conversation? Take the afternoon out for some time beyond kitchen duty and enjoy one another's company.

Who knows—shopping at Blue Bay might just become one of your favorite Black Friday traditions.

Stop by Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. at 27 Racetrack Road NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547, call 850.374.8236 or visit bluebaylifestyle.com.



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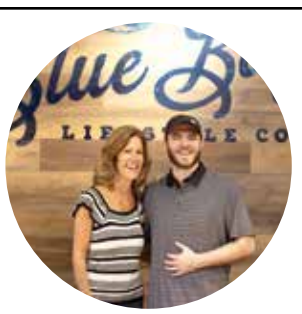
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Lifestyle

Why Artesano Boutique is Your Holiday Shopping Destination

By Nikki Via

As the holiday season approaches, the search for the perfect gift begins. We've all been there: scrolling endlessly online or walking through crowded aisles filled with mass-produced items, hoping to stumble across something meaningful. This year, skip the generic gifts and discover something truly special right in the heart of downtown Fort Walton Beach at Artesano Boutique.







Artesano Boutique isn't just a shop, it's a vibrant blend of creativity and community. Showcasing work from over 50 local and regional artists, the boutique offers a carefully curated collection where every item tells a story. From handcrafted jewelry, artisanal candles, and fine art to coastal home decor, pottery, and unique accessories, you're guaranteed to find gifts your loved ones will actually love, use, and cherish for years to come.

Artesano makes it easy to find gifts that feel both personal and intentional, no matter your budget. If you are searching for that hard-to-buy-for loved one, explore a wide variety of one-of-a-kind treasures that simply cannot be found anywhere else. It is also the perfect destination for thoughtful teacher appreciation gifts and stocking stuffers, featuring charming handcrafted gifts at every price point.

The holiday celebration really kicks off on Small Business Saturday, when downtown Fort Walton Beach comes alive with holiday magic. Artesano Boutique's festivities coincide directly with the Holiday Market at The Landing and the city's annual Downtown Tree Lighting. Join us for sales, complimentary food & drinks, gifts with purchase, and merriment right in beautiful downtown!

This holiday season, give unforgettable gifts with heart and character. Visit Artesano Boutique and make your holiday shopping an unforgettable experience!

HOLIDAY

continued from page 10

Some people find the experience relaxing. During a season of constant demands, having time devoted entirely to your care can feel welcome.

Choose a licensed practitioner who uses sterile, single-use needles. Discuss your medications, medical conditions, and any pregnancy or bleeding concerns before treatment. You can arrive curious, skeptical, or nervous. Bring your questions.

Stop Saving Yourself for January

There is always a reason to postpone care. After the guests leave. After the shopping is finished. After the year ends.

Meanwhile, your life keeps happening. The family walk happens. The grandchildren get on the floor to play. Someone starts telling a story that makes everyone laugh until they cry.

You deserve to experience those moments with as much comfort as possible.

This November, give yourself something more useful than another promise to take care of yourself later. Start a conversation about what hurts, what you miss, and whether acupuncture could help.

Everyone else is already on your list. Put yourself on it, too.



Artesano Boutique
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Join us Nov. 27-28 for our annual Shop Small Weekend event, featuring sales, sips and bites, and a gift with purchase!

184 Brooks Street SE
850-244-4222
www.artesano.boutique





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LaFamiglia



La Famiglia's new Shalimar location brings the welcoming spirit and rich flavors of an Italian family table to the Fort Walton Beach area. Begin with fresh Burrata La Famiglia, homemade meatballs over whipped ricotta or an Italian board filled with imported meats and cheeses. Then explore an enticing selection of handmade pasta, risotto, pizza, seafood and traditional entrées. Favorites include Mezze Maniche Carbonara, Lasagna Della Nonna, Lobster Ravioli, Osso Buco and Cioppino, along with distinctive pizzas topped with ingredients such as truffle cream, prosciutto, burrata and imported mortadella. A kids' menu makes it easy to bring the whole family. La Famiglia also offers online ordering, catering and private-party packages for gatherings of all sizes. Reservations are available, and walk-in guests are always welcome. Hours: M-Sat 11-9; Closed Sundays.

850-279-4527
1281 Eglin Parkway, Shalimar
lafamigliaitalianshalimar.com

Magnolia Grill

In 2001, Magnolia Grill in Fort Walton Beach opened its doors after a renovation that took 18 months—and it's been thriving since. A local's favorite dubbed "The Museum That Serves Food," you'll find equal parts museum and dining establishment. Its second floor contains artifacts from World War II, Vietnam and other segments of American history. And downstairs—is where you'll find lunch favorites such as Meatloaf with Mashed Potatoes, Crab Cake with Fettuccine and Shrimp Alfredo Sauce, Red Beans and Rice and many types of burgers, sandwiches, soups and salads. For dinner, savor divine Italian dishes such as Italian Sausage and Peppers with Marinara Sauce and Filet Tips Florentina. But there's also steaks, seafood "Camp Walton style" and even a kids' menu. Hours: Lunch M-F 11-2; Dinner M-Th 5-8; F-Sat 5-9; Closed Sundays.

(850) 812-5761
157 Brooks Street SE, FWB
magnoliagrillfwb.com

Smoothie King

Smoothie King in downtown Fort Walton Beach serves convenient, health-focused choices through its drive-through window. The locally owned franchise offers fruit-and-veggie smoothies, protein-packed fitness blends and hydrating favorites such as the Pineapple Mango—delicious with a Greek yogurt enhancer. Guests can also enjoy açaí bowls, avocado or peanut butter toast and satisfying chicken flatbreads. Ingredients are selected for



peak ripeness, flavor and nutrients, while water and ice undergo a multifaceted filtration process. With 16 protein options—including vegan, keto-friendly and muscle-building blends—there's something for nearly every lifestyle. Join the loyalty program for BOGOs, freebies and other rewards. Hours: M-F 7-9; Sat 8-9; Sun 10-8.

(850) 374-3233
3 Eglin Parkway SE, FWB
locations.smoothieking.com







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

Local Fan Favorites



By Scott Miller

Rolling into week 11 of the 2026 College Football season we have some intrigue and some business as usual that has caught my attention. November is the home stretch. It's the time of the season that determines who will be in line for, not only a top tier Bowl Game invitation, but also a run to the College Football Championship Game and the opportunity to be crowned National Champion! As of November 1st, here's where things stand; Currently sitting at the top and ranked #1 is Miami (FL) with #2 Georgia close behind. No surprises so far. Sitting at # 3, and here comes that intrigue I mentioned, is Utah (8-0). Yes, Utah. Sitting at 4 and 5 are Notre Dame and UCLA which feels a bit interesting. Reigning Champion Indiana nestles in at 6, with BYU following at #7, Kentucky #8, Alabama #9 and Texas #10. Who will rise to the top?

And there's no better place to watch the action than Destin. Some of the best sports bars and restaurants anywhere are right here in our own back yard. They're ready to welcome us in, serve up some really great food, cold beer and delicious specialty drinks and make every game feel like a championship. Here are a few of my favorites. So, grab your crew, claim your spot and get in on the action—I'll see you there…

AJ's on the Bayou

Kick back by the water and cheer on your team at AJ's on the Bayou, located at the base of the Cinco Bayou Bridge in Fort Walton Beach. With indoor seating and an open-air deck overlooking the bayou, AJ's lets fans pair football with a beautiful waterfront view, a refreshing mimosa and something delicious to eat.

Make a weekend game even better with brunch and bottomless mimosas for just $10.95 with a food purchase. AJ's also serves $12.95 weekday lunch specials that include iced tea. With live music or entertainment every day, it's a lively destination where football, food and fun come together.

200 NE Eglin Parkway | FWB
850-226-7579
ajsonthebayou.com

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Go big on game day at AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, home to the one and only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor. Watch your favorite football teams on the big, big screen while taking in the energy and beauty of the harbor, enjoying fabulous food and sipping a game-day drink.



For 40 years, AJ's has been serving fresh Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hangout for fresh oysters and cold beer—shucked from the deck behind a small trailer on the harbor—has grown into one of Destin's most iconic hot spots with four locations along the Emerald Coast. Add daily specials, mouthwatering drinks, live music throughout the month and exciting water activities in the Destin area, and AJ's has everything you need for a winning football season.

116 Harbor Blvd. | Destin
850-837-1913
ajsdestin.com

AJ's Oyster Shanty – Okaloosa Island

Bring your appetite and your game-day crew to AJ's Oyster Shanty on Okaloosa Island. A dozen for me, a dozen for you—and plenty of football-season fun for everyone! The Shanty serves fresh, cold oysters and seafood alongside some of the best live music on the island.

Thursday football pairs perfectly with the Prime Rib Dinner Special, available every Thursday beginning at 4 p.m. Enjoy a 10-ounce cut of prime rib with a baked potato, side salad, au jus and horseradish cream sauce for $22.95. Save room for Key lime pie, served all day, every day.

Join the fun with karaoke every Wednesday at 7 p.m. and live music every other night. With food, entertainment and island energy, AJ's Oyster Shanty is ready for football season.

108 Santa Rosa Blvd. | FWB
850-226-8108
ajsoystershanty.com

FUBAR Pizza Bar

Pizza, wings, football and a waterfront view—FUBAR Pizza Bar has the game-day lineup covered. Nestled on Okaloosa Island, this locally owned, family-friendly favorite carries all sports games and offers live entertainment, impeccable service and an inviting place to cheer on your team.

FUBAR is known for its almost-famous pizza and wings, but the fun goes well beyond the menu. Kids can enjoy an assortment of games, while adults can challenge friends to pool, cornhole or darts. Boaters can pull into one of FUBAR's slips after a day on the water, and furry friends are welcome to join the party on the patio.

Planning your own football gathering, party or special event? FUBAR offers several private sections with the option of a private bar. Its outdoor deck can comfortably accommodate up to 300 guests and can be divided to suit your needs. Customized menus can feature everything from Italian favorites to prime rib.

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The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island

Turn game day into a day at the beach at The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island. With its prime Gulf-front location, convenient parking and variety of dining, shopping and entertainment options, The Boardwalk offers football fans plenty of ways to watch their favorite teams while enjoying the sights and flavors of the Emerald Coast.

Grab a table at Rockin Tacos, The Crab Trap, Floyd's Shrimp House or Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar, then enjoy a halftime walk along the shore. The breathtaking views are always on the menu, and sandy toes and salty swimsuits are welcome.

The Boardwalk is also an official county park with public beach access, free parking, pavilions, picnic tables, public restrooms and outdoor showers. Throughout the year, it hosts community favorites such as the Emerald Coast Motorcycle Challenge, coastal beach cleanups, the "Tricks and Treasures" Halloween event and the New Year's Day Pelican Plunge. It is also home to two legendary volleyball tournaments: Emerald Coast Volleyball Week in the spring and the Emerald Coast Fall Classic.

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FOOTBALL. FOOD. FUN. FANS. Let the Games Begin...

SEC Football Schedule

SEC	Nov 7	Nov 14	Nov 21	Nov 28
Alabama	@LSU	@VANDY	UTC	AUBURN
Arkansas	@AUB	S CAR	@TEX	LSU
Auburn	ARK	@MISS ST	SAMFORD	@BAMA
Florida	OKLA	@UK	VANDY	@FSU
Georgia	@OLE MISS	MIZZOU	@S CAR	GA TECH
Kentucky	@TENN	FLA	@MIZZOU	LOUISVILLE
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Ole Miss	UGA	@OKLA	WOFFORD	MISS ST
Miss St	VANDY	AUB	TENN TECH	@OLE MISS
Missouri	TEX	@UGA	KU	OKLA
Oklahoma	FLA	OLE MISS	A&M	MIZZOU
S Carolina	A&M	@ARK	UGA	@CLEMSON
Tennessee	UK	@A&M	LSU	@VANDY
Tex A&M	@S. CAR	TENN	@OKLA	TEX (11/27)
Texas	@MIZZOU	@LSU	ARK	A&M (11/27)
Vanderbilt	@MISS ST	BAMA	@FLA	TENN



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2026 Pro Football Schedule

WEEK 9

Thursday, Nov. 5
Jacksonville Jaguars at Baltimore Ravens, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 8
Cincinnati Bengals at Atlanta Falcons (Madrid), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
Denver Broncos at Carolina Panthers, Noon, CBS
Dallas Cowboys at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, Fox
New York Jets at Kansas City Chiefs, Noon, CBS
Detroit Lions at Miami Dolphins, Noon, Fox
Cleveland Browns at New Orleans Saints, Noon, CBS
New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox
Los Angeles Rams at Washington Commanders, Noon, Fox
Houston Texans at Los Angeles Chargers, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Green Bay Packers at New England Patriots, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Chicago Bears, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 9
Buffalo Bills at Minnesota Vikings, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Pittsburgh Steelers, Tennessee Titans

WEEK 10

Thursday, Nov. 12
Washington Commanders at New York Giants, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 15
New England Patriots at Detroit Lions (Munich), 8:30 a.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, CBS
Houston Texans at Cleveland Browns, Noon, Fox
Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers, Noon, Fox
Miami Dolphins at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at New Orleans Saints, Noon, Fox
Buffalo Bills at New York Jets, Noon, CBS
Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans, Noon, Fox
Los Angeles Rams at Arizona Cardinals, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Seattle Seahawks at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., CBS
San Francisco 49ers at Dallas Cowboys, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Pittsburgh Steelers at Cincinnati Bengals, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 16
Los Angeles Chargers at Baltimore Ravens, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Chicago Bears, Denver Broncos, Philadelphia Eagles, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

WEEK 11

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

WEEK 12

Wednesday, Nov. 25
Green Bay Packers at Los Angeles Rams, 7 p.m., Netflix
Thursday, Nov. 26
Chicago Bears at Detroit Lions, Noon, CBS
Philadelphia Eagles at Dallas Cowboys, 3:30 p.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Buffalo Bills, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Friday, Nov. 27
Denver Broncos at Pittsburgh Steelers, 2 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 29
New Orleans Saints at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon, CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at Cleveland Browns, Noon, Fox
Baltimore Ravens at Houston Texans, Noon, CBS
New York Giants at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, Fox
New York Jets at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox
Tennessee Titans at Jacksonville Jaguars, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Washington Commanders at Arizona Cardinals, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Seattle Seahawks at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
New England Patriots at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 30
Carolina Panthers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: None

WEEK 13

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

WEEK 14

Thursday, Dec. 10
Minnesota Vikings at New England Patriots, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Dec. 13
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Baltimore Ravens, Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at Carolina Panthers, Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at Cleveland Browns, Noon, CBS
Tennessee Titans at Detroit Lions, Noon, Fox
Chicago Bears at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS
Denver Broncos at New York Jets, Noon, CBS
Indianapolis Colts at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox
Houston Texans at Washington Commanders, Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Kansas City Chiefs at Cincinnati Bengals, 3:25 p.m., Fox
New York Giants at Seattle Seahawks, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Buffalo Bills at Green Bay Packers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Dec. 14
Pittsburgh Steelers at Jacksonville Jaguars, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Arizona Cardinals, Dallas Cowboys

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Sports

Golf Series: **Fort Walton Beach High School's Girls Golf Team is a Winner!**



By Barbara Palmgren

Area high school golf teams are enjoying autumn weather with the additional challenge of competing and finishing a round of golf as the sun sets earlier in October. In a recent match with Crestview High School held at Shalimar Pointe Golf Course, one of the girls' golf teams from Fort Walton Beach High School was victorious. Congratulations to Catherine Bridgeford, Lucy Bonfonti, Ann Harper Wright and Pacie Joy Scannell for posting a group score of 211. Mackenzie Marez, golf coach for Fort Walton Beach congratulated all the girls afterwards, encouraging further work as they prepare for district competition in the near future at a course in Panama City.



As the sun set over the golf course, I was fortunate to get a photo of the smiling winners. Congratulations young ladies and good luck at the district competition!

Don't Wait Until College to Teach Your Daughter Self-Defense



By Dave Durman

When your daughter is 10 years old, college probably seems like a lifetime away. But in just eight short years, she may be leaving home, living independently, meeting new people and navigating unfamiliar situations without you nearby.

The question I would ask parents is simple: What skills do you want your daughter to have when that day arrives?

For me, personal safety and the ability to defend herself should be high on that list.

That's why I believe age 10 is an excellent time for girls to begin martial arts training.

Effective self-defense isn't something we learn in a weekend seminar. It takes years of consistent practice to develop the physical skills, awareness, judgment and confidence needed to respond effectively under pressure.

At 10, a girl can begin developing balance, coordination, strength and fundamental defensive techniques. More importantly, she starts learning how to recognize uncomfortable situations, establish boundaries, use her voice confidently and make decisions about her own safety.

We teach this through a simple philosophy called RAD: Recognize, Avoid, Defend. Recognize potential danger early, avoid confrontation whenever possible and develop the skills to defend yourself when avoidance is no longer an option.

As she grows, her training grows with her. Techniques become more advanced, reactions become more familiar and her understanding of personal safety becomes more sophisticated.



By 16 or 17, a young woman who has trained consistently for years has developed a foundation that someone attending their first self-defense class simply hasn't had the opportunity to build.

And there's another important benefit.

Martial arts teaches girls that being strong doesn't mean being aggressive. It teaches them to stand up for themselves, overcome challenges, remain composed under pressure and develop confidence in their own abilities.

Of course, no amount of training guarantees anyone's safety. The ability to recognize and avoid danger will always be the first priority. Physical self-defense provides additional options when those aren't enough.

Starting at 10 isn't a requirement. Girls can benefit from beginning at any age. But if our goal is to have them well prepared for independence at 18, giving them eight years to develop those skills makes far more sense than waiting until they're about to leave home.

The best time to prepare your daughter for independence isn't when she's packing for college. It's years before.

At Coastal Martial Arts & Fitness in Fort Walton Beach, our Kempo Karate program welcomes students ages 8 and up, helping them develop practical martial arts skills, confidence and personal discipline.

Dave Durman is the head instructor at Coastal Martial Arts & Fitness in Fort Walton Beach. He has more than 40 years of martial arts experience and has been teaching martial arts for over 25 years.



Sports

Crunch Fitness: The Workout You'll Want to Come Back To

The more you enjoy moving, the more likely you are to keep coming back.

What makes you want to do a workout again?

The music? The instructor who gets one more rep out of you? The energy of a room full of people moving together? Or simply finding a workout you look forward to instead of one that feels like another item on your to-do list?

That is the idea behind Crunch Fitness and its longtime philosophy: Make Serious Fitness Fun.

When Crunch Fort Walton Beach opens this winter in Longhorn Plaza, members will have plenty of ways to find their kind of fun.

Want strength? Try Crunch formats like Chisel It or Belly, Butt & Thighs. Prefer mind-body movement? Yoga Body Sculpt combines yoga with weights, cardio and strength work. Want to move to the music? Zumba® brings high-energy dance and cardio together.

Then there is HIIT. Crunch's HIIT classes combine fast-paced intervals, strength, cardio and functional training, with some formats adding team-style drills and friendly competition.

The Hot Studio adds even more variety with Hot Yoga and Hot Pilates.

Fort Walton Beach will also be a flagship location for two of Crunch's newest boutique-style concepts: the Crunch Reform Pilates™ Studio and Crunch Pump™ Strength Studio. Reform Pilates will blend instructor-led coaching with integrated digital guidance, while Crunch Pump will focus on progressive, coach-led strength training.

Peak and Peak Results memberships include group fitness classes, so members can mix things up, try something new and find workouts they enjoy. Access to the new boutique studios is included with Peak Results.



Research into exercise motivation has found that enjoyment can play an important role in helping people stay active. If you like the experience, there is more reason to come back.

Crunch adds music, energetic instructors, variety and connection. A class can become more than a workout. It can be the instructor you love, familiar faces or the class you never want to miss.

Crunch's No Judgments® philosophy ties it all together. You do not have to move at the same pace, have the same goals or like the same kind of workout. The idea is to give everyone more ways to find movement they enjoy.

Because when you find a workout you love, coming back gets a whole lot easier.

Recovery is part of the experience, too. Crunch's Relax & Recover® area will feature HydroMassage® beds, red light therapy and cryotherapy, plus tanning, a sauna, locker rooms with showers and Kid's Crunch babysitting. The club will be open and staffed 24 hours a day.

Memberships start at $9.99 per month, and Crunch Fort Walton Beach will offer an exclusive, limited-time promotion for founding members. The first 500 members can join for only $1 and receive their first month free, a limited-edition founding member T-shirt and free Crunch swag. To become part of the Founding 500, reserve your rate here. Prospective members can also enter to win one of 10 free one-year memberships here.

Local businesses can get involved, too. Crunch's Corporate Membership and Perks Partner programs offer employee discounts and ways for local businesses to connect with Crunch members through the app, in-club events, gym TVs and social media.Learn more about Crunch partnerships.

Think Crunch sounds like a great place to work? Explore career opportunities with Fit Fusion.

For Fort Walton Beach, the new Crunch will bring Pilates, strength training, hot classes, HIIT, group fitness, a full gym and recovery together in one place, giving the community more ways to find a workout they love, people to do it with and a reason to keep coming back.

To learn more visit:

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Wellness

Care Beyond the Emergency:
Okaloosa's Andrew Kindle Earns National Honor

For Okaloosa County EMS Community Paramedic Andrew Kindle, caring for people means making sure help reaches them beyond an emergency. His work includes delivering care, educating residents and connecting with people who need to know someone cares.

That commitment has earned Kindle the 2026 National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians Community Paramedic of the Year Award.

Kindle has helped build and lead Okaloosa County's Community Paramedicine Team over the past 18 months, serving residents whose needs can extend well beyond a single ambulance ride or emergency room visit. "I am truly humbled by this recognition and am proud to serve Okaloosa County in the role of a Community Paramedic," said Kindle. "We are out in the public every day delivering care to patients, passing out Narcan, educating people and making sure that the people who need help know that someone cares."

The county's Community Paramedicine program brings non-emergency services to residents through scheduled home visits, education and connections to other health care providers. Its goal is to help patients maintain their health while reducing ambulance use and costly emergency room visits.

Community paramedics also participate in the Post Overdose Support Team, known as POST. The partnership brings together Okaloosa County EMS, law enforcement and Bridgeway Center Inc. to provide prompt and ongoing support to people who have survived an overdose within the previous 72 hours. "We are very proud of Paramedic Andrew Kindle," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. "Our Community Paramedicine program has led the state of Florida in excellence to reduce fatal overdoses, patient care and unnecessary ER visits. Andrew is a shining example of how to lead by example, showing passion for his work and empathy for his patients that truly changes lives."



A husband, father, Marine and firefighter, Kindle brings more than 17 years of first responder experience to his work. His career began in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he deployed with the Hurricane Katrina Task Force.

He later entered the fire service, became a certified hazardous materials specialist and worked in North Dakota, Tennessee and Antarctica's McMurdo Station. Today, he serves Okaloosa County EMS as a critical care, tactical and community paramedic.

His dedication has also earned him the Emerald Coast United Way's 40 Under 40 Award and Okaloosa County's Humanitarian Efforts Award. Within his department, he shares his commitment to caring for often-overlooked residents through frequent training presentations.

The national honor is part of the National EMS Awards of Excellence presented by NAEMT and EMS World. Recipients were recognized during NAEMT's General Membership Meeting on Sept. 30, and at the opening ceremony of EMS World Expo in Orlando.

For residents and families, the work being recognized is available close to home. To learn about receiving community paramedicine services or to make a referral, call 850-651-7566 or email OCEMSMIH@myokaloosa.com. More information is available myokaloosa.com/ps/community-paramedicine.

The Effectiveness of GLP-1 Medications:
A Healthier Approach to the Holiday Season

By Dr. Richard Chern



As Thanksgiving approaches, many people look forward to gathering with family, enjoying traditional holiday meals, and celebrating the season. However, for individuals working toward weight-loss goals, the holidays can also bring challenges. With larger portions, tempting desserts, and busy schedules, maintaining healthy habits may seem difficult. Fortunately, GLP-1 medications have emerged as an effective tool for weight management and improved metabolic health, helping many people make meaningful progress toward their health goals.

What Are GLP-1 Medications?

GLP-1 stands for glucagon-like peptide-1, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar, appetite, and digestion. GLP-1 receptor agonist medications, including semaglutide, mimic the effects of this naturally occurring hormone. Tirzepatide, another widely used medication, acts on both GIP and GLP-1 receptors.

These medications help people feel full sooner, stay satisfied longer, and experience fewer food cravings. They also help regulate blood sugar levels, making certain medications useful for managing type 2 diabetes. By reducing hunger and supporting better portion control, GLP-1-based treatments can make it easier for eligible individuals to achieve and maintain weight loss.

How Effective Are GLP-1 Medications?

Clinical research has demonstrated that GLP-1-based medications can produce significant weight loss when combined with healthy lifestyle changes. In major clinical trials, adults without diabetes taking semaglutide 2.4 mg lost approximately 15% of their initial body weight on average over 68 weeks. In a separate trial, tirzepatide produced average weight reductions of approximately 15% to 21%, depending on the dose, over 72 weeks.

People with diabetes may experience different average weight-loss outcomes. Medication choice, dosage, nutrition, physical activity, and ongoing medical supervision all influence success.

Beyond weight loss, some patients experience improvements in blood sugar control, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and other measures of metabolic health. For eligible patients, certain medications may also provide additional cardiovascular benefits.



Enjoying Thanksgiving While Protecting Your Progress

Thanksgiving does not have to mean abandoning your health goals. Whether you take a GLP-1 medication or are pursuing weight management through lifestyle changes, a balanced approach can help you enjoy the holiday without unnecessary pressure.

Consider these simple strategies:

• Prioritize protein and vegetables. Include turkey, other lean proteins, and vegetables to help support fullness and balanced

Continued on page 24

Wellness

A Quick Test of Strength and Why It Matters



By Kassia Garfield, Owner, MaxStrength Fitness

When was the last time you thought about how you get out of a chair? It is something most of us do dozens of times a day without giving it a second thought. But try this simple test: Sit in a sturdy chair, cross your arms over your chest and stand up without using your hands to push yourself up. Then sit back down under control.

Did it feel easy? Did you have to rock forward, push through your thighs or reach for the armrests? Maybe you surprised yourself. Did you flop back with no control?

This simple movement can tell you something important about your physical health, and it is worth paying attention to long before it becomes a problem.

If that did feel easy, put one leg out, almost like you are going to stand up just using one leg. Try both sides. Did one side feel easier? Could you do it at all? This could show an imbalance from side to side.

More Than Just Getting Out of a Chair

Standing up from a chair requires a combination of leg strength, balance, coordination and control. Your quadriceps, glutes and other muscles must generate enough force to lift your body weight against gravity. Your nervous system must coordinate those muscles, and your balance system must keep you stable as your center of gravity shifts.

As we age, these abilities can gradually decline. We may lose muscle mass, muscle strength and the ability to produce force quickly. These changes are part of a process called sarcopenia, the age-related loss of muscle mass and function. Every time you use your hands, you are not using your legs, slowly weakening them.

The tricky part? It often happens so gradually that we don't notice.

You might start using the armrests because it is easier. You might push off your thighs without thinking about it. You might avoid sitting on low couches or choose a higher chair because standing up feels more comfortable. Eventually, you may find yourself needing help with something that used to be automatic.

The change doesn't happen overnight. It can sneak up on you, one small adjustment at a time. Using your arms might only take 10% of the load off your legs, but that is slowly reducing how much strength you need, and your body accommodates to doing less. Beyond the natural loss of muscle as you age, the lack of using the strength you have also progresses the muscle loss.

Why This Matters for Longevity

The ability to stand up from a chair is more than a measure of leg strength. It is one indicator of functional capacity: Your body's ability to handle the physical demands of everyday life.

Research has linked poorer performance on chair-rise tests and other measures of physical function with increased risks of disability, loss of independence and mortality. These tests do not predict an individual's future with certainty, but they can help identify when physical capacity may be declining.

Think about what happens when getting out of a chair becomes difficult. Getting off the toilet, climbing stairs, getting into a car and rising from the floor can become harder, too. Activities that once required little thought may start limiting where you go and what you do.

Maintaining strength gives you a greater physical reserve. If you have more strength than your daily activities require, you have more capacity to handle an illness, recover from a hospital stay or manage an unexpected challenge. That reserve can make a meaningful difference in how independently you live as you age.

The Good News: Strength Is Trainable

One of the biggest misconceptions about aging is that getting weaker is inevitable and there is little we can do about it. Although aging brings biological changes, muscle strength can improve well into older adulthood. It's never too late to start.



Progressive resistance training challenges muscles to produce force and adapt. Exercises that strengthen the quadriceps, glutes and other lower-body muscles directly support movements such as standing, climbing stairs and walking. With appropriate training, people can improve their strength and ability to perform everyday tasks and improve balance.

The goal isn't necessarily to lift the heaviest weight in the gym. It is to maintain the physical ability to do the things that matter to you.

That might mean getting up from the floor to play with your grandchildren, carrying groceries, traveling, gardening or simply getting out of your favorite chair without assistance.

Try the test, but don't treat it as a diagnosis. Use a sturdy chair

Continued on page 25



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Wellness

Feelings on Bioenergetics



By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, Certified Nutrition & Skin Advisor

Who hasn't ever wanted more energy? We need energy to accomplish everything we do each day, from getting out of bed to spending time with family and friends and managing all the busyness of the day. We use it every day, as it makes our lives easier and brings enrichment in different ways. We can't see it, but we know when it's not there. Let's take a mini-dive into what it is and how exploring physics helps us find new ways to harness it for better health.

In some wellness and spiritual traditions, energy, described using terms such as qi, prana, spirit and ether, etc., and exploring these concepts is becoming more popular in thinking about enhancing the Body's healing processes.

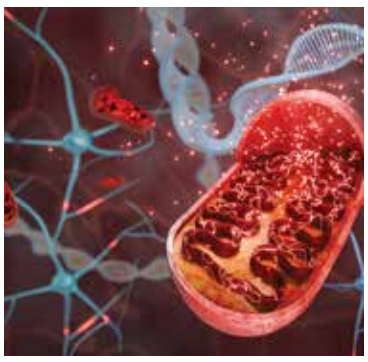
Physics shows that everything is composed of energy. This energy can be observed or felt even though we are unable to see it. It is constant, occupies space and can be influenced by other energy. Matter (energy) can't be created or destroyed; it only changes form. It also has a frequency or a vibration and frequency.

Matter is made up of atoms and all atoms emit waves of energy that interact with other atoms. We recognize energy as energy waves. We use these waves daily in the form of radios, ultraviolet waves, far infrared light, microwaves, etc. These waves are identified by their frequencies. Frequency is determined by the number of waves that pass a point every second.

Human cells operate in the range of 1 to 32,000 hertz. In other words, the highest frequency to which the body was designed to respond is approximately 32,000 waves per second. In contrast, cell phones operate in the range of 3 to 4 gigahertz (3 or 4 billion waves per second). Personally, I'm concerned about possible health effects, such as DNA damage, from holding a phone against the ear regularly or carrying it in a front pocket.

Everything is energy. Energy is frequency. Frequency is vibration. We are energy.

These frequencies can be



separated into different categories including Light, Sound, Smell, Emotions. Balancing the Energy Equation includes chemical energy, electrical energy, heat energy, mechanical energy and so many more. They are constantly changing from one to another.

Let's move on to the title of this article: Bioenergetics is a field in biochemistry and cell biology that concerns energy flow through living systems. This is an active area of biological research that includes the study of the transformation of energy in living organisms and the study of thousands of different cellular processes such as cellular respiration and the many other metabolic and enzymatic processes that lead to production and utilization of energy in forms such as adenosine triphosphate (Wikipedia). And, Bioenergetics bridges physics, chemistry, and biology, providing an integrated framework for understanding how life captures, stores, and channels energy to sustain itself.

Insights into energy transformation and regulation in cells continue to influence advances in science and technology.

Have you ever listened to talks on maintaining a positive attitude, both in mind and speech? What have you noticed about how you feel when you think or speak positively versus negatively? One has a higher vibration and the other a lower one. Higher vibrations heal and lower vibrations injure. If you want to see how what we speak affects us, I encourage you to watch these: https://m.youtube.com/shorts/E61HDfG70c8?rq=m and https://m.youtube.com/shorts/QRks5iiP2PU?ra=m.

The human body is comprised of 70% water. Water has memory as does nature and our body. So, what are we telling it?

The bioenergetic field offers various tools and therapies that can aid in restoring balance and flow to energetic systems of the body. Many of these devices can be purchased for in home use. My husband and I own a BEMER (Bio-ElectroMagnetic Regulation) mat. Certain BEMER devices can aid in improving circulation.

Today is a good day to start speaking life into yourself and others. To me, "health is frequency" is a reminder to pay attention to the thoughts, words and habits we repeat. Have a fabulous and positive Thanksgiving.

Here's to Health! HealthyDay HealthyLife

succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

GLP-1

continued from page 22

nutrition.

• Practice mindful portions. Enjoy your favorite holiday foods in reasonable portions rather than feeling obligated to try everything.

• Eat slowly. GLP-1 medications can increase feelings of fullness, so pay attention to your body's signals and stop when comfortably satisfied.

• Stay hydrated. Drinking enough water supports overall health and may help reduce constipation, a common side effect of these medications.

• Keep moving. A family walk after Thanksgiving dinner can be an enjoyable way to stay active.

• Skip the guilt. One holiday meal does not define your long-term progress. Consistency over time matters most.

A Sustainable Path Toward Better Health

GLP-1 medications can be powerful tools for appropriate patients, but they are not a quick fix. These medications require medical guidance, and they are not suitable for everyone. At The Hormone Restoration Center we can help determine which treatment is appropriate and establish a safe, individualized plan. Call (850)837-1721 to schedule a consultation.

As Thanksgiving approaches, remember that health is about more than the number on the scale. It is about building sustainable habits, improving well-being, and enjoying meaningful moments with loved ones. With the right medical support and realistic expectations, GLP-1 treatment may help eligible individuals move toward a healthier future—during the holidays and throughout the year.





Business

Selling Your Business in 2027? Build Your Team Now



By Natalie Kessler

Selling a business is a team sport. If you're thinking about selling your business in 2027, the best time to build your team is this fall, before you need them.

Start with your accountant and your bookkeeper. Whoever buys your business will want to see three years of numbers, and 2026 will be one of them. Buyers and their lenders treat your tax return as proof, so what you say the business makes has to match what the return says. When the two don't line up, buyers get nervous and deals slow down. Your bookkeeper is the first line of defense here. Are your books up to date every month, or only at tax time? Are personal expenses kept separate? Are payroll and sales tax payments current? Then tell your accountant before year end that you are considering selling. It changes the conversation.

Next, bring in an attorney who knows business sales. Contracts, leases, and the purchase agreement all land on their desk eventually, and it's much better to have them looking things over early than scrambling at the closing table. If you lease your space, pull out your lease and make sure you have a fully executed copy on hand. Does it have any provisions that would prevent you from selling the business and assigning the lease to the new owner? How many years do you have left on it? A short lease or a tricky assignment clause can sink a deal, so it's best to know where you stand before a buyer asks. In many cases it also makes sense to consult with your estate planning attorney, since a sale can change how your assets are held and what your plans need to look like afterward.

A financial planner or wealth advisor is the one people skip, and often wish they hadn't. Selling is a big life change, and a good advisor helps you think through what comes next, whether that's retirement, a new venture, or something else entirely. Knowing your goals before you list helps you make better decisions along the way.

Don't forget the people closest to you. Your spouse and family are part of this decision, and



everyone should be on the same page early.

Then there's your business broker, who ties the whole team together. A good broker is like a quarterback, keeping everyone moving in the same direction. The best place to start is a preliminary market price analysis. It's a look at your business through a buyer's eyes, based on your financials and what similar businesses have actually sold for. It gives you a realistic price range, shows you what's helping and hurting your value, and tells you what to fix before you go to market.

That analysis also gives the rest of your team something to work with. Your accountant can see which numbers need attention. Your attorney knows what issues may come up. Your financial planner can see whether the likely price fits your goals. And you can decide, with real information, whether this is the right time to sell.

If you are considering selling your business next year, the groundwork happens now. A few good conversations this fall can make a big difference when the offers start coming in.

Natalie Kessler is the Broker/Owner of First Choice Business Brokers of NW Florida. She can be reached at 850-588-1025 or natalie.kessler@fcbb.com.

QUICK TEST

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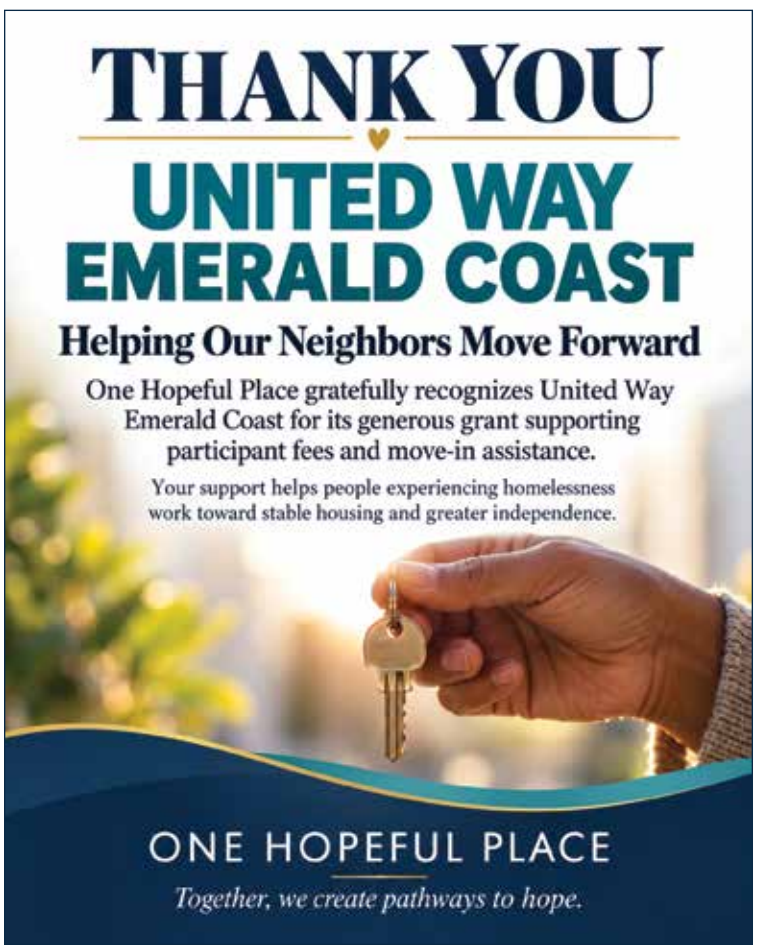
against a wall, and only attempt the movement if you can do so safely. If you feel unsteady, have significant pain or are concerned about falling, don't attempt it alone. A physical therapist or qualified exercise professional can help assess your ability and find a safe starting point. Included are the norms for how many sit-to-stands (no hands) someone can do in 30 seconds. Below the norm puts you at a high risk for falls.

Your future independence is built through the physical capacity you maintain today. Don't wait until standing up becomes difficult to start working on your strength.

Sometimes, one of the most important measures of how well you are aging is something as ordinary as getting out of a chair.

If you are having a hard time fitting in a workout, feeling like you don't know where to start or just need some help, try MaxStrength Fitness. We do effective, efficient and safe 20-minute workouts, just twice a week. We deliver results with a science-backed program. Give us a call at 850-373-4450 (Niceville) or 850-467-9729 (Fort Walton Beach)!







Business

Bit-Wizards and TalkingParents Begin New Era with Move to Freedom Tech Center Headquarters

By Jeff Andrejcik

After years of planning, growth, and anticipation, Bit-Wizards and TalkingParents have officially moved into their new headquarters at Freedom Tech Center, marking a significant milestone for the two Fort Walton Beach-based technology companies.



The new 50,869-square-foot facility is the culmination of decades of perseverance, innovation, and community support. For these two homegrown companies, the headquarters represent their continued evolution, which has contributed to Northwest Florida's emergence as a center for technology, entrepreneurship, and workforce development.

Bit-Wizards, founded in 2000 by Vince Mayfield and Louis Erickson, grew from a bootstrap startup into an award-winning Managed IT Services provider serving organizations throughout the region and beyond. And TalkingParents, launched in 2011 by Stephen Nixon, Vince Mayfield, and Louis Erickson, has grown into a leading co-parenting communication platform that's supported nearly a million families worldwide.

Together, the companies employ close to 100 professionals and continue to expand, delivering technology services and software solutions for businesses, courts, legal professionals, and families locally and across the globe.

"This move signifies far more than having a new space to do business," said Vince Mayfield, CEO of Bit-Wizards and TalkingParents. "It represents the people who invested their time, talent, and trust into something bigger than themselves.

We're incredibly grateful to our employees, customers, partners, community leaders, and families who helped make this possible. Every milestone we've achieved has been a team effort, and this new headquarters is a testament to what can happen when people believe in a shared vision and work together to bring it to life."

While the headquarters increases capacity for expanded operations, it also reflects a long-term investment in the future of Northwest Florida. As Bit-Wizards and TalkingParents continue to grow, their new building provides the space and infrastructure needed for future hiring, staff development, and advancements in tech support.

When construction began, leaders described the project as an example of what can happen when local businesses, government organizations, economic development leaders, and community stakeholders work together toward a common goal. Today, the completed facility stands as a visible reminder of that partnership and the momentum it continues to generate throughout the region.

"For more than two decades, we've been fortunate to grow alongside this community," Mayfield said. "This building symbolizes our commitment to innovation, our belief in the potential of this region, and our determination to continue creating opportunities that positively impact our customers, employees, and communities."

As the teams settle into their new home at Freedom Tech Center, both companies remain focused on the same mission that fueled their growth from the beginning: serving others through people-first care and support, delivering exceptional technology solutions, and building organizations that make a lasting difference.

For those interested in learning more about Bit-Wizards or TalkingParents, visit: www.bit-wizards.com or www.talkingparents.com.



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Thankful, Grateful & Rebuilding Stronger This November

By Brittany Younker



November is usually the month of turkey, football, family gatherings, and figuring out which relative you're strategically avoiding at Thanksgiving dinner. (Don't worry, we build privacy fences for a reason!)

But this year, Thanksgiving feels a little different along the Emerald Coast.

After the recent hurricane, many of our neighbors are facing damaged homes, destroyed fences, and unexpected expenses. While the storm may have knocked down fences, it certainly hasn't knocked down the strength of this community.

At Dirty N Sturdy Fencing, we're working hard to help our neighbors get back on their feet—or at least get their fences standing again!

Our days are filled with answering calls, providing free estimates, coordinating permits, scheduling installations, and getting our crew out to rebuild as quickly, safely, and efficiently as possible. We know everyone wants their yard secured yesterday, especially those with kids, pets, and a little less privacy than they'd prefer!

We're also reminding homeowners that rebuilding is an opportunity to build stronger. Our galvanized steel post system provides a durable alternative to traditional wood posts, helping eliminate wood post rot and creating a stronger foundation for your fence.

As a veteran-owned, family-operated business, we're especially thankful for the trust, patience, and support our community continues to show us.

This Thanksgiving, we're grateful for our hardworking crew, our customers, our families, and the neighbors who continue looking out for one another.

From our family to yours, Happy Thanksgiving!

And remember, we're on the fence about a lot of things—except quality!

Musing

Sean of the South: **The Chalkboard**





By Sean Dietrich

We have this place in our kitchen. It's a wall. It used to be a door, some 102 years ago, when the house was built.

There used to be stairs outside this kitchen door, leading to the backyard. But the doorway has been sealed off. Now it's just a big blank space in our kitchen.

The wall is painted with black chalkboard paint. So it's basically a big blackboard, just like the kind you once used for working out algebra problems in front of your whole class.

We write things on this board. My wife and I. The writings always change.

Usually you walk into the kitchen, and you'll just happen to notice that someone has erased the old writing, and added something new.

My wife writes messages like, "Welcome home, you've been on the road for two weeks, we missed you!"

"The dogs say 'We 'ruff' you, Daddy.'"

"Happy birthday, Sean. I cannot imagine my life without you."

Little messages. Little words. Small words. But words carry power. Words are not lightweight.

In the mornings, as I make the coffee, standing in the kitchen with a bad case of bedhead, I stare at this chalkboard. And sometimes, in my half-waking state, I get lost in the chalkboard text. Gazing into the black-and-whiteness of it all.

During the Thanksgiving season, my wife writes messages to—well—to God, I guess. She writes things she is thankful for.

And as the coffee percolates, I shuffle over to the chalkboard for deeper inspection. Then, I and add my contribution to the lot.

The dogs see me squatting, writing with a small piece of chalk. Squatting, of course, puts me closer to their eye level. So, because I am hunching low, my dogs naturally assume I must have ham.

And they attack me.

Soon, I have lost my balance. I am now on the floor. Flat on my butt. With three dogs swarming, trying to muzzle their way past the other, as if to say, "He's mine!" "No, no! He's mine!" "Get out of the way, everyone knows he's mine!"

Tails wagging. Butts wagging. Lots of panting. Lots of licking.

All three of them are pressing their surgically cold noses on my bare skin. Each dog, wholly unashamed, devoid of ego. Fully vulnerable. Unconditionally honest with themselves, and with each other, in all regards. They are expressive, effusive, and rhapsodic with their demonstration of love. They love others like they've never been hurt.

And when I am thoroughly covered in dog saliva, which contains 98 percent water, a variation of proteins, enzymes, and other compounds, such as lysozyme and immunoglobulins, which aid digestion and have potent antimicrobial properties, I start to laugh privately.

I'm still looking at the chalkboard. I'm still holding the piece of chalk in my hands. And I'm thinking about my life. About my people. About my little family.

I'm looking at the white hairs on the snouts of my dogs, and remembering when they were mere puppies, cradled in my ams.

I'm thinking of how many generations this 102-year-old house has seen—how many Thanksgivings, Christmases, birthdays, and how many funerals.

I'm thinking about how friends become our truest family. About how nothing in this world lasts forever except memories. About how thankful I am. About how my life has been guided by an unseen hand, steering me from self-destruction, guiding me toward real love.

But mostly, I'm thinking about how it all went by so fast.

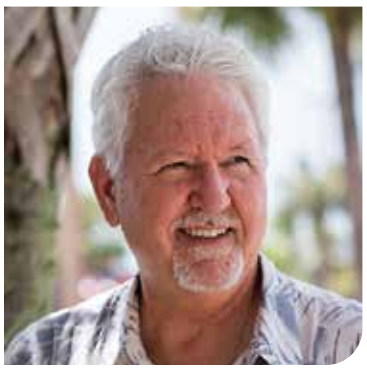
Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Southern Living, The Tallahassee Democrat, Good Grit, South Magazine, Alabama Living, the Birmingham News, Thom Magazine, The Mobile Press Register and Life Media publications, and he has authored seven books.







Musing



A Pastor's Ponderings: **When the Church Says No, but Jesus Says Yes**

By Pastor Dave Holland

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles." — Luke 6:12–13, NIV

The majesty of Rome's Sistine Chapel overwhelmed me. Magnificent paintings, sculptures, and centuries of Christian history filled every corner. St. Peter's Basilica, rising 448 feet above the city, made me feel small. Yet the biblical scenes painted by Michelangelo drew me into the Gospel stories.

My wife, Jonie, and I explored Rome's historic churches, admiring masterpieces by Raphael and Michelangelo. During one visit, we encountered a celebration of the Mass. We sat quietly, enjoying the worship.

When the priest invited worshipers forward for Communion, Jonie, raised Catholic, whispered, "Let's go forward."

I hesitated but agreed. Standing among hundreds of worshipers, I knew my Protestant beliefs differed from Catholic teachings. Yet my heart longed for more of Jesus. Silently, I prayed, Lord, I want more of You.

Approaching the altar, the priest noticed my uncertainty. "Are you Catholic?" he asked in halting English.

"No," I answered.

He refused to offer me Communion.

I understood. Catholic teaching reserves the Eucharist for Catholics properly prepared to receive it. Many Protestants might question why I approached the altar.

Nevertheless, Scripture teaches that salvation rests upon faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.



Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:2–4: "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Because Catholics share this foundational belief, I consider them brothers and sisters in Christ. I anticipate the glorious Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when all believers gather to celebrate Christ's victory.

God chooses believers for salvation through "the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Ephesians 1:4 assures us that God chose us in Christ.

Though religious traditions may separate us at Communion, Jesus welcomes everyone who comes to Him in faith.

Sadly, Christianity remains divided. I treasure my Protestant heritage while loving and respecting Catholic believers. Must tragedy or persecution unite us before we recognize our common Lord?

Jesus offers a better way.

Before choosing His disciples, Christ spent the night praying. Later, approaching His crucifixion, He prayed for their unity:

"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one." — John 17:11

Christ's prayer remains powerful today. The Holy Spirit continues drawing believers together.

Several years ago, during Easter, I felt compelled to walk every street in my hometown, praying for families, homes, and churches. At each church, I placed my hands upon the building and prayed for spiritual renewal.

Occasionally, I met pastors and prayed for them. Only one reciprocated by praying for me: Father Jim Golka of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in North Platte, Nebraska.

That simple exchange reminded me that Christian unity begins with individual hearts.

Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken. Heal Your wounded people. Forgive our divisions and our determination to protect religious territory. Unite us in love for Your glory. Amen.



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History

Museum Series:
Our Indiana Jones Donates A Treasure for The Ages!

By Barbara Palmgren

No snakes or gruesome evil-doers chasing our Indiana Jones, but this discovery was none the less as exciting.

Our Indiana Jones quietly works hard to support family and a career. Visiting his office at the Okaloosa County School Board building, American history is framed and displayed on every wall. Yes, you know him well. Pleasant and unassuming, Parker Destin loves history and universities.

On October 20, 2026, the three donors formally presented Northwest Florida State College's (NWFSC) President Mel Ponder an artifact purchased from an auction house in Virginia. There was no doubt in Parker's mind that this artifact belonged to the ages and should be displayed in the Doolittle Exhibit in the Raider Arena on the campus of NWFSC, preserving an important piece of American treasure that was a perfect fit for NWFSC.

The ceremony was also attended by members of the community and U.S. Representative Jimmy Patronis as well as State Rep. Patt Maney and Dewey Destin. "As a former student and adjunct instructor, I was excited by the opportunity to tie together the local history of the Doolittle Raiders represented by these instruments to the future of the Okaloosa County as represented by Northwest Florida State College, as we celebrate America's 250 years of freedom sacrifice and heroism. Go Raiders!" said State Representative

Continued on next page



finding historical artifacts. At a meeting last year with Parker and Chair of the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, Dr. Marie Hallion, I listened as the two of them bantered back and forth about historic dates of American History. Parker is an Okaloosa County School Board member and also Florida Historical Commission Vice Chairman. History is his passion, his hobby, his life's work.

Parker's love of Florida history and American history in inherited from his father, Dewey Destin and further encouraged by Patt Maney, our Florida State Representative. Parker is always searching for artifacts that celebrate our history. No fedora or whip used of course! Only hours at a computer looking for any treasure online at auction houses or through auction house catalogs. Then, bidding with perfect timing, helped with finances from Dewey and Patt if necessary, Parker buys the artifact with the intent of the trio to donate this to local museums or military history for future generations. "These artifacts are more than pieces of military history. They are tangible reminders of the courage, sacrifice and determination of the men who answered their nation's call during one of the most challenging periods in American history," said NWFSC President Mel Ponder. "We are honored to preserve these remarkable pieces of history and share their story with our students, our community and future generations."

The artifacts are a signal mirror and navigation equipment flown on the 1942 Doolittle Raid at the beginning of America entering World War II. The mirror and navigation equipment belonged to Lt. Col. Carl R. Wildner and were put up for auction from an heir of a friend of Carl Wildner. That friend inherited Carl's personal belongings over 30 years ago and they came up for auction about 18 months ago. And there was Parker, searching for a historical treasure, suddenly finding a



Arts & Music

St. Simon's to Host 'Daniel's Ballad' Folk Opera Dec. 2

St. Simon's on the Sound Episcopal Church in Fort Walton Beach will host "Daniel's Ballad, A Folk Opera" at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 2, in the church's nave.

The hourlong musical brings the Old Testament book of Daniel to life through songs about faith, courage and exile. It follows Daniel and his fellow Judeans through the events recounted in chapters 1-6, then explores the dreams and visions described in chapters 7-12.

Local resident Ellen Sheppard, a retired mathematics teacher in the Okaloosa County school district, composed the score. Her sister, Scottie Fredrickson, of Seneca, South Carolina, wrote the lyrics. With music ranging from uplifting to somber, the opera invites listeners to explore Daniel's experiences during the Babylonian exile and his faithfulness to God.



Contributing local musicians include John Zirpola, Doug Bowers, Donnie Morgan and JoAnne Schwab.

Admission is free, and donations are encouraged to support the church's outreach programs. A reception in the atrium will follow the performance.

The church is at 28 Miracle Strip Pkwy. SW in Fort Walton Beach.

The following review is from the Rt. Rev. George D. Young III, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee.

"Reminiscent of Godspell, and Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat from the 60's and 70's, Ellen Sheppard and Scottie Fredrickson's folk opera Daniel's Ballad, based on the Old Testament's Book of Daniel, comes to life through music, poetry and humor. So often books of the Bible with iconic stories like the lion's den and the fiery furnace aren't grasped as fully as they could be. In this powerful presentation, the wisdom and courage of Daniel and his friends in the face of captivity and hostility absolutely come to life as we, the audience, become more than observers: we're participants in the events, singing, laughing and feeling the drama of the story. We feel the darkness and the uplifting nature of God's presence and faithfulness all at the same time. Brilliant! I highly recommend Daniel's Ballad for all of us looking for hope in difficult times, as well as for any who revel in singing, laughing, and experiencing God's faithfulness with friends and fellow searchers."

— The Rt. Rev. George D. Young III, retired bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee



MUSEUM SERIES

continued from previous page

Patt Maney.

I spoke with William "Rusty" Wells who drove from Pensacola for the ceremony. His mother worked with the Doolittle Raiders as a secretary when they trained at Eglin AFB for the mission. He was delighted to view the exhibit inside the foyer of the Raider Arena as well as participate in the ceremony.

President Ponder, speaking at the ceremony, talked about how the Raiders name and the college symbol reflects courage, perseverance and teamwork, much like the men who demonstrated these same commitments, not knowing if they would survive a one-way ticket on a secret mission in an air raid over Japan at the beginning of the United States entering World War II. "The Raiders' legacy is not simply something we preserve. It is something we carry forward," Ponder said. "Our name represents far more than our athletic teams or our

Continued on next page



AROUND TOWN

continued from page 4



Donated by Foundation Forward Inc., the monument features stainless-steel replicas of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights and Civil Rights Amendments. The county's first display was unveiled Nov. 3 beside the Crestview Courthouse.

Along Choctawhatchee Bay, Veterans Park features 12 statues by sculptor Jon Hair honoring women's military service throughout history. Details: myokaloosa.com/bcc/women-veterans-memorial.

Lazarus Service Remembers 28 Lives

Twenty-eight people, ranging from an infant to a 90-year-old, were laid to rest during Okaloosa County's 11th annual Lazarus Memorial Service Nov. 2 at Beal Memorial Cemetery in Fort Walton Beach.

The interfaith ceremony provides dignified burials for those who die without family or the means to pay for interment. Thirty-five religious leaders representing at least 20 congregations participated, with support from Emerald Coast Funeral Home and Davis Watkins Funeral Home.

Scripture readings in English, Spanish and Hebrew accompanied musical tributes. Each person's name was read aloud from the Book of Life before the committal.



Eglin Federal Credit Union Partners with The Landing

A new three-year Gold Sponsorship Agreement between Eglin Federal Credit Union and the City of Fort Walton Beach includes naming rights for the downtown gathering space, now designated "The Landing brought to you by Eglin Federal Credit Union."



The partnership supports cultural arts programming, outdoor concerts and community events for residents and visitors.

The agreement is part of the city's new Corporate Sponsorship program, which offers multiple participation levels to help offset costs for Concerts at The Landing, fireworks, parades and other city-organized events.

Rally On the Court Raises More Than $10,000

The inaugural Rally On the Court pickleball and tennis tournament raised more than $10,000 for Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research–Gulf Coast.

Held Sept. 25–26 at the Fort Walton Beach Tennis Center in partnership with the city and USTA Florida, the tournament united area players to fund childhood cancer research and support families navigating treatment.

Organizers thanked title sponsor Emerald Coast Hospice, along with sponsors, volunteers, committee members, vendors, participants and supporters, and look forward to growing the event.

MUSEUM SERIES

continued from previous page

school spirit. It reflects values we strive to instill in our students and demonstrate through our service to this community every day."

Following the speeches and ceremony, participants got a closer view and information about the artifact from Jennifer Wren Daugette, Director and Curator of Mattie Kelly Arts Center Galleries & Collection at NWFSC.

A model of excellence for future generations, the gift that Parker, Patt and Dewey gave to the college will now be enshrined with other artifacts in the permanent exhibit located inside Raider Arena. Thank you, dynamic trio, for this gift to the college and everyone who comes to view the historic moment that continues to inspire us all.

Publisher Note: *On April 18, 1942, just months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 80 American airmen under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James "Jimmy" Doolittle launched 16 B-25 bombers from the deck of the USS Hornet to conduct a daring air raid on the Japanese homeland. The mission became a defining moment of World War II, boosting American morale and demonstrating the nation's resolve. The donation adds to the College's permanent Doolittle Raid exhibit, located inside Raider Arena, which provides students, residents and visitors an opportunity to explore the history of the mission and its connection to Northwest Florida.*

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