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# BAY Life

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## Love Is A Choice

BY LAUREN CATANESE

*“The pastor told us, “Love is not a feeling; feelings change periodically. Love is a choice. And when you make that choice to choose love, even if you don’t feel like loving, you are choosing to love unconditionally. You recognize that we are all flawed creations, created for greatness.” — local resident Myrna Conrad.*

Since the month of February heralds Valentine’s Day where we emphasize the importance of love in our lives, let’s talk about love—the kind that makes time stand still—the kind that as human beings we dream to have, feel and experience. When we say we want to be “in love,” what we really long for is connection—to be accepted, supported, forgiven and cherished and have a safe space where we can be vulnerable, but still loved. We want a best friend and confidant—a love for the ages. And it does exist.

Depending on the lives we lead, we might be unaware of what a healthy relationship looks like. Is there an owner’s manual? When it comes to



matters of the heart, we are all deserving of being in a great loving relationship.

These are the love stories of couples in our community—ones where, through commitment, have been

shaped into the best versions of themselves. I hope they inspire you to believe in love, know you deserve love and, once you find it, that you are capable of choosing love every day.

*“There is no fighting for victory; you are fighting from victory. When you place yourself on the altar, and every situation, you are allowing the part of you that just wants to be right, to die away. If you surrender it and let it go, change will come. The seasons that we go through, we wouldn’t be the same person today without them.” — Tiffany Miller*

**Robert and Tiffany Miller** were married for five years, then divorced. But, after a decade, they remarried each other, now five years! They met in Alabama originally. He would see her driving around town. One day he saw her up front at church. After the service, he was having lunch at his pastor’s house. They were discussing why he hadn’t met anyone yet and asked him what kind of person he wanted. He thought for a minute and said, “Well, you know that girl that was up front today? I want someone like that.” Robert laughs as he tells it. He says his pastor

### LOVE

*continued on page 2*

## Minimizing the Impact of Birth Defects

BY HEATHER BENNETT

Getting the news that you’re pregnant can be wonderful, yet scary. There’s a roller coaster of feelings that can come with it—excitement, fear, happiness and anxiety. Parents to be all want to do what’s best for their baby before and after he or she enters the world. Genetics isn’t something we can control, but there are precautions we can take to prevent birth defects.

A baby is born every 4.5 minutes with a birth defect. Babies impacted by birth defects are 1 in 33 or 120,000 a year. Twenty percent of infant deaths are caused by birth defects annually. A variety of things can cause birth defects. Genetics can be one factor, but our behavior and environment can also have an impact. As a parent to be you can help minimize the impact of birth defects of your unborn child and possibly prevent them.

Birth defects can be functional or structural. Structural defects can be more physically noticeable and have to do with the development and structure of the body such as miss-

### BIRTH DEFECTS

*continued on page 2*

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 Community

## LOVE

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Robert and Tiffany Miller

recommended he write down everything he desired in a relationship and pray to God for that person. “Who knows,” he said, “maybe something is in the works.” It was. Tiffany caught his eye. Robert would see her at church and they would talk. She was a hairdresser in town, so he made a point to get 2-3 haircuts a week! Robert laughs again. Tiffany said he was always dressed to the nines in a white collared shirt. Every time he walked into the salon, she

couldn't help but blush.

They married soon after, but pain from a difficult childhood and difficult first marriage got in the way. “It was a constant struggle; his love was so good and it touched everything in me. And made me run in the opposite direction,” Tiffany says. Eventually they divorced and she moved to our area. She was desperate to be healed and for God to restore her life. So, she went on a path to healing and Robert continued to pursue her in the gentlest of ways, waiting for her to heal, though, at times, questioning himself, wondering if he was crazy to keep calling and coming to see her. Even when he went on a few dates they would say, “you're not showing any interest, are you still in love with your ex?” And that was it, he was. He always felt he and Tiffany were meant to be, and he knew she would eventually come back to him. She finally did! Now they couldn't be happier. Even people around them say they love the way she looks at him. You can't help but to be

filled with love and the power it has while listening to them tell their story. They spend each day being grateful for each other.

*“I got gaps; she's got gaps. And together we ain't got no gaps.” — Bob Conrad from the words and wisdom of Rocky Balboa*

**Myrna and Bob Conrad** met while in school in Auburn University. She was a freshman, he was junior. They both worked at the same place on campus. He had just ended an unhealthy relationship and wanted to meet a nice girl—and there she was. So, he asked her out.

Myrna's mother had warned her about good-looking Auburn guys, so somewhat leery, she declined. But he kept trying until she said yes. They went bowling on their first date, and he impressed her with all his strikes. The rest, as they say, is history. After six months of dating they were engaged, then married. They celebrate 50 years of marriage this June—50 years filled with 24 moves, two kids, starting



Myrna and Bob Conrad

and running their own business together, publishing books and now mentoring and coaching other couples about marriage together. Though there were a lot of ups and a lot of downs over the years, “God never gives you more than you can endure,” says Bob. “In the darkest times of your life, you wonder where God is. But when you get on the other side, you realize He was there all along. And you are stronger because of it.” At the lowest points in their relationship, they felt like giving up, but made a commitment that divorce was not an option. In

those moments, they worked even harder. They learned to communicate and how best to respond, thus growing in their relationship together and with God. “Input comes at you from all directions and what you do with it is your choice,” Myrna said. “Attitude determines your behaviors; behaviors will determine your outcome.” And as they tell me their story while traveling in their RV, Bob and Myrna say that they are at their best today even after 50 years.

*“You have to let yourself be vulnerable, and don't go looking for it. The best ones find you. Our life together is definitely a love song, or better yet, all the love songs together.” - Chris Fichtl*

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## BIRTH DEFECTS

continued from page 1

ing or misshaped heart valves, spina bifida, Down syndrome, cleft palate or clubfoot. Functional birth defects are related to the systems of the body such as immune, endocrine and neurological systems. These types of birth defects include blindness, deafness, Rett Syndrome, Autism, autoimmune disease, ADD and ADHD.

Many babies born with some of these defects can grow up to live full, healthy adult lives. But some can cause severe and long-lasting health issues. While birth defects can be common, it is important to be proactive in preventing them and minimizing risk by taking the proper precautions.

Some great practices are to follow a proper hygiene regi-

ment, avoid insect bites, such as mosquitos (who can carry viruses like West Nile or Zika), and get vaccinated against the flu and whooping cough. Expecting mothers should also speak to their doctors about family health history and reproductive health-care.

Mothers to be should also avoid smoking, drugs and alcohol. The use of these substances can lead to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and neonatal abstinence syndrome, greatly increasing the chances of a child being born with a birth defect. While these are not birth defects, they can lead to premature birth, learning disabilities, speech or language delays, low birth weight, poor memory, poor judgment skills and hyperactive behavior. Alcohol can cause problems for a developing baby throughout pregnancy and



there really is no safe amount or time to drink when pregnant. It's never too late to stop, because brain growth continues throughout pregnancy. Drug use during pregnancy can lead a baby to experience withdrawal symptoms when they are born. Neonatal abstinence syndrome is when a child experiences withdrawal at birth due to exposure to certain substances, including opioids, while they were still in the womb.

While we strive to do what is best for our children while they are still developing in the womb, sometimes even our best efforts

can't stop us from having a child with a birth defect. All we can do is try, and when our child is born, love, celebrate and accept them for who they are, obtain support and educate ourselves on how we can best care for them going forward.

For more in-depth information on steps to take as a parent of a child impacted by one of these things, you can visit: [kidshealth.org/en/parents/baby-has-birth-defect.html](http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/baby-has-birth-defect.html) The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center outreach and prevention team works continually to bring awareness to this topic. Visit [eccac.org](http://eccac.org) or find them on Facebook and Instagram. As always, if abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Information derived from: [birthdefects.org](http://birthdefects.org), [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and [healthline.com](http://healthline.com)



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# From Niceville to Neon Lights Meet our Hometown Hero Nicholas Ward

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

*They say the neon lights are bright on Broadway*

*They say there's always magic in the air...*

*From "On Broadway" - sung by George Benson; written by Barry Mann / Cynthia Weil / Jerry Leiber / Mike Stoller*

Magic is just what Niceville native Nicholas Ward has conjured up in New York City! This month's hometown hero and Northwest Florida State College (NWFS) alumnus, Nicholas Ward is a "true Niceville local made good!" An extraordinarily talented singer as well as captivating performer, Nicholas has carved his career on the big stage - Broadway - now a veteran of four Broadway shows, including two original companies!

Born in Oakland, Ca., Nicholas' family moved to Niceville when he was age 5. So, he has always considered Niceville home. A 2019 NWFS Distin-

guished Alumni Award recipient, and currently residing in NYC, Nicholas began his "career" right here in our backyard as a former member of the then Okaloosa Walton Community College Soundsations Show Choir and the Madrigal Singers in the fall of 1997 until May 1998. Since graduation, he's been up to a little something!

Most recently, after having finished his run with Disney Theatrical's Broadway original cast of the hit Broadway musical Frozen, where he could be seen nightly as Elsa & Anna's loving father, King Agnarr, Nicholas could be seen in another Disney Broadway phenomenon, The Lion King, in the iconic role of Mufasa, Simba's father on various nights.

Nicholas' Broadway debut was in the critically acclaimed revival of On The Town where he opened with a stirring rendition of "I Feel like I'm Not Out Of Bed Yet" by Leonard Bernstein. He was then seen in



Broadway's first a cappella musical, In Transit, nominated for the 2011 Drama Desk Award and resulted in his debut at the legendary Carnegie Hall.

Nicholas has shared his talents at a few other iconic venues as well including The Music Man at The Kennedy Center, with Norm Lewis and Jessie Mueller which featured the role of Olin Britt. He also performed at the famed Lincoln

Center, where he was a featured soloist in composer Andrew Lippa's Kristin thrilling opera, I am Harvey Milk starring Kristin Chenoweth. Some of his favorite regional and/or popular roles include Joe in National Tour of Show Boat, Caiaphas in Jesus Christ Superstar, the European Tour of Porgy and Bess, Booker T. Washington in Ragtime, the Plant in Little Shop of Horrors, Fred (the Bass) Smokey Joe's Café and The Giant in Big Fish.

He has worked with many Broadway greats including Kristin Chenoweth, Jessie Mueller and Norm Lewis and has shared the screen with the legendary Meryl Streep and Audra McDonald in the 2015 American musical comedy-drama, Ricky And The Flash. His work with New York City Center Encores includes Pipe Dream with Leslie Uggams, 1776 with Andre DeShields, Brigadoon with Kelli O'Hara, and Zorba with the late great Marin Mazzie, just

to name a few. At one point, he even worked for the luxury cruise line Seabourn where he was a principal singer for a cruise around the world.

While Broadway has been shut down over the last few months, Nicholas could be seen visiting his old stomping grounds and appearing at places such as The Mattie Kelly Arts Center at NWFS or down on 30a at the Old Florida Fish House.

Nicholas says to be successful in this business, "it takes determination and patience." That is Nicholas' M.O. and what has led him to success in a tightly, competitive industry.

Fortunately, for us, the only Greyhound bus we want Nicholas to catch is back to his hometown—when he returns periodically to perform for us!

*Bay Life's "Hometown Heroes" are sponsored by Northwest Florida State College. To read about more Hometown Hero graduates or for more information, call 850.837.8880 or visit nwfs.edu.*



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# Happenings Around the Bay

## MARCH

- 02** | Niceville Young Professionals Lunch  
11:30am | Niceville Senior Center | Niceville
- 05** | Sip N' Stroll  
5pm | J. Leon Gallery + Studio | Destin  
  
Deborah Norville  
7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- 06** | Women's Climbing Circle  
9am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
- 07** | Mac & Cheese Festival  
12:30pm | Destin Commons | Destin
- 10** | Second Wednesday Breakfast  
7:30am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville
- 12** | Walt Ruckel Memorial Scholarship Golf Tournament  
12pm | Rocky Bayou Country Club | Niceville
- 13** | Kids Class Art Fun- with Corina Zalace  
Artful Things | Niceville
- 18-19** | Weekday Acrylic Pours - Two Part - with Marcy Breault  
Artful Things | Niceville
- 20** | Book Writing Workshop and Signing - with Eliza Scalia  
Artful Things | Niceville
- 23** | Business After Hours  
5pm | Bluewater Bay Boats and Yachts | Niceville
- 27** | 2nd Annual EOD Warrior Foundation Poker Run  
8am | American Legion Post 221 | Niceville  
  
Spring Illuminotes - Calligraphy - with Elia Saxer  
Artful Things | Niceville

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 Community

**LOVE**

*continued from page 2*

I get to write my own love story and it's one I have been ready to write my whole life. I am engaged! Like the words of the song by Matt Stell, "Cause every single day, before I knew your name, I couldn't see your face, but I prayed for you."

Chris and I met through one of my best friends (since 5th grade) and her husband, who has been Chris's best friend for 10 years. I had been hearing about him and, apparently, he had been hearing about me, too—for years. And when divine timing aligned, he finally called me last fall. I had already been writing down and visualizing the man I wanted to meet. And it was apparent within the first few phone calls that he might be just that man. Our relationship began over the phone because of distance. But, because



Chris Fichtl and Lauren Catanese

of that, we were able to build a foundation based on connection, communication and authenticity. We easily talked for three to four hours at a time. His friends and family even noticed and said they'd never seen

him so happy. Non-disclosing at first, we kept our relationship a secret to give ourselves time to learn more about the other without any outside influences. Chris says he fell in love with me the first time we talked and that

he has never been so completely happy and at peace.

It's true we felt like we had known each other our whole lives. My friend had even told him that we would end up getting married. She felt we shared the same soul; she was correct. He was everything I wrote down I wanted, what I didn't know I needed, and then some. Meeting in person the first time confirmed our connection and we knew we "had found the one." Our lives, our kids and our families fit together like one big puzzle piece that had been there just waiting for us to pick it up. Chris says it's like, "my soul saw you and kind of went, oh, there you are. I've been looking for you all my life." The poet Rumi says, "Lovers don't finally meet somewhere; they're in each other all along." I couldn't agree more. I am so excited to marry this man. We both feel we are the luckiest to have each other

in our lives and can't believe the other is real, that we actually exist. His love is a gift, a blessing from God and I have promised to tell him that every day.

It's a choice. Love is a choice, and we are committed to putting love first through it all. Love finds love. And it brought us right where we were meant to be, igniting within each of us a spark that beams from heart to heart.

When we consciously make the choice to choose love, we are also choosing to believe in love. Life wants to bless us. Life wants us to experience a deep love. It IS possible. It starts with hope coupled with trust, faith and surrender, softening when we want to harden, communicating when we want to blame. In choosing love every moment, we can. Choose love daily and feel the grace of God fill you up in ways you didn't know were possible. Your love story is next!

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Northwest Florida State College is transforming the economy of our region by providing the future workforce — **ONE STUDENT, ONE OPPORTUNITY, ONE POSSIBILITY** at a time.

One-half of the nation's undergraduates are served by the community college system, proving that state colleges provide a life-changing impact on our community. In 2019-2020, Northwest Florida State College served 9,238 students and conferred close to 1,600 credentials during our virtual commencement ceremony.

Did you know that for every person with a college credential, there are two who have none and that gap is increasing every day? The one thing we must do is encourage students to move from a high school diploma to a college credential to bolster individual earning power and positively impact the local economy.

What we do know is that grad-



Elliot Wyant

uates with associate's degrees and certifications are contributing to the economy sooner than those with a bachelor's degree. In many cases, our associate degree completers have higher salaries than workforce bachelor's degree completers in their first jobs. We are making that impact ONE degree at a time.



Nicole Vandembenden

There are numerous stories of resilience and persistence from our community. Here are a few of our students who are already experiencing transformational change in their lives.

When the real-life moment came, Elliot Wyant didn't hesitate to implement what he had just learned in class at North-

west Florida State College. The NWFSC plumbing apprentice was working for a local plumbing company when a customer asked to change out his plastic piping for copper.

After inspection, Wyant's work proved to be error-free and he said he looks forward to accepting more complex work assignments in the future. Wyant plans to complete both the plumbing apprenticeship and a follow-up program of home-building so he can obtain as many licenses as he can.

Former Air Force Combat Controller Dillon DeMers found a home in NWFSC's teacher education program. "No other school provides the same preparation, certifications and endorsements, all of which directly influenced my decision-making process. After graduation, I plan to pursue a graduate degree in psychology to better the lives of all the children in Northwest Florida."

Against the odds, Nicole

Vandembenden, mother to five children, is currently pursuing her Associate in Nursing degree on scholarship. Working around-the-clock, she has the drive to succeed in order to improve her family's quality of life.

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 Community

# The Sonder Project Returns to its Roots After Nearly Two Years of Hurricane Michael Relief Projects

By ANNA MCKAY

It's often said that leaving a positive impact on the world begins at home. After over two years of community restoration projects following the destruction caused by Hurricane Michael, The Sonder Project is returning to its roots as a non-profit focusing on sustainable development in Africa. Its mission is "to do the most good" for impoverished communities that need it the most through projects such as building schools, drilling wells for clean drinking water, and increasing food security. Chad Zibelman, CEO, sat down with PCB Life to provide an update on their current international projects.

**Can you explain an overview of the process to those who are not familiar with TSP?**

**TSP:** The Sonder Project approaches our global communities as partners. We do not invest in projects for a community but with a community. Every project we undertake begins by holding mass meetings where we are working and assessing needs and interests. Once a community is selected, we work with the community to nominate a Project Leadership Com-



mittee to mobilize and oversee the project. The community directly contributes to all projects, typically in the form of sourcing raw materials and providing necessary manual labor. By the time the project is complete, they are fully invested.

**Can you provide an update on TSP's current projects?**

**TSP:** In 2020, we expanded our international operations and opened an office in Malawi, which is in Southeastern Africa. Collectively, we increased access to clean water for over 18,000 people through our wells. On the local level, we brought our

Hurricane Michael housing recovery efforts to a close and completed the construction of a school garden at Walton High School to support their new agriculture program. In 2021, we plan to drill 10 new wells, new school blocks in Malawi, and revitalize our Community Farms program in Burkina Faso. Additionally, we are excited to be unveiling a new sponsorship program to support students in our schools that are vulnerable to dropping-out due to financial hardship. More details to be announced soon!

We also met Kurt Freudenreich when his Rotary Club, the

Mid-Bay Rotary Club, volunteered with us for a hurricane recovery project and our partnership has been serendipitous since. Kurt shared his vision to fund a well in the developing world by backpacking the Triple Crown (Appalachian Trail, Continental Divide Trail, Pacific Crest Trail). With over 2,000 miles hiked, he raised \$12,129 in tandem with fellow hiker James Stiely to fund a well in Burkina Faso.

Since the onset of the pandemic, I've been unable to visit our project countries, and we had to postpone group trips as well but I have excellent communication with our project managers on the ground, and we were successful in meeting all of our 2020 goals.

**How would you encourage those who wish to get involved with TSP to help locally?**

**TSP:** In this altered landscape due to Covid, we have temporarily canceled all of our in-person fundraising events. Your support is greatly appreciated to make a donation, or support us on AmazonSmile. You can also check out our website to learn other ways to Get involved! If you have specific non-profit experience, such as grant writing, fundraising, or marketing and would like to lend your time, please feel free to email [chad@thesonderproject.org](mailto:chad@thesonderproject.org).

Want to know the Value of YOUR home here on the Emerald Coast? Find out! Go to: [BaysideAgentGail.com](http://BaysideAgentGail.com)

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# Kolter Homes Announces Successful Opening of NatureWalk at Watersound Origins

Kolter Homes, a leader in developing master-planned communities in the Southeast, reported 55 sales generated during the VIP Preview of its latest new home community in Walton County. Interested home shoppers who registered as a VIP on Kolter Homes' interest list were invited to preview NatureWalk at the Watersound Origins® community for a two-week period beginning in late December. Of those who visited, over 50 VIPs purchased a new home in this gated community prior to the official public opening scheduled for this month. The property is located within the Watersound Origins community by The St. Joe Company, directly off U.S. Hwy. 98, less than two miles from the famed Scenic Highway 30A corridor between Panama City and Destin.

"Our team, the professionals at St. Joe, and everyone involved put tremendous effort into bringing NatureWalk to the Watersound Origins communi-

ty," said Kolter Homes Community Director Todd Schermerhorn. "The experience Kolter has gained over the last six years in this market gives us a deep appreciation for what new home shoppers are looking for. We are excited for these founding residents to experience and enjoy all NatureWalk will offer."

St. Joe officials see the addition of NatureWalk as a valuable complement to the Watersound Origins community. "The Watersound Origins community has been a highly sought-after neighborhood for a wide variety of homebuyers," said Bridget Precise, Senior Vice President of Residential Real Estate for The St. Joe Company. "NatureWalk and the homes that are being built by Kolter Homes will provide another op-

tion for those looking to move into a great new home and experience the lifestyle of the Wa-



tersound Origins community."

Recreation and lifestyle plans for this new community include a resident-exclusive social center with fitness center, pool, tennis, pickleball, event lawn and more. NatureWalk residents also have access to the Watersound Origins community's amenities including Origins Golf Course, Lake Powell and fitness facilities.

A total of roughly 460 new homes are planned to be built within the gates of NatureWalk.

There are fourteen fresh floor plan designs to choose from, ranging from 2- to 5-bedrooms and priced from the \$400s. NatureWalk homesites offer either preserve and/or water views to maximize comfortable backyard living. All homes include Kolter-quality features and exceptional partner products with an on-site Design Gallery to select personalization and finish options. To learn more visit [NaturewalkWatersound.com](http://NaturewalkWatersound.com).

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 Community

## AAF CEO to be Guest Speaker at FPRA Luncheon

### Northwest Florida Communications Summit Postponed

**Where:** The Island

**When:** Friday, February 26, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Due to the current climate of COVID, the Florida Public Relations Association NWFL Coast Chapter board has decided it's in the best interest of its members, attendees, speakers, sponsors and organizations, to post-poned the annual North-

west Florida Communications Summit. "At this time, we don't have a future date set, but will keep you updated when that time comes," says local chapter FPRA president Shaye Smith. "While it was hard for us to make this decision, we stand committed to bringing exceptional professional development and learning to Northwest Flor-



ida, while ensuring the safety and wellness of all parties as a top priority."

To stick to its commitment to provide professional devel-

opment opportunities, NWF Coast FPRA will host one of its keynote speakers from the postponed Summit—Steve Pacheco, CEO of the American Advertising Federation and a board member for Coredadi, a locally-owned marketing tech platform.

Steve will be discussing how tech and innovation are power-

ing public relations and advertising.

In-person attendance is limited due to spacing and allowing for social distancing. Masks are welcome, but not required, and social distance and minimal contact are encouraged.

Register by Fri., Feb. 19 at 5 p.m. Visit [Eventbrite.com](http://Eventbrite.com) or [NWFLCoastFPRA.org/events](http://NWFLCoastFPRA.org/events).

## Teen Dating Violence Awareness

**DID YOU KNOW** statistics show 1 in 3 adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. And, 1 in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend, with 80% of girls who have been physically abused continuing to date their abuser.

Teen dating violence abuse can occur in several ways—phys-



ical, emotional/verbal, sexual and/or stalking. Digital abuse is

now being practiced using technology to bully, threaten or intimidate a partner with texting, social media, apps, tracking and more.

That's one of the reasons why the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Centers (ECCAC) in Okaloosa and Walton Counties have monthly prevention and awareness programs to help children, teens and families. This is an issue that impacts everyone, not only teens, but

their parents, teachers, friends and communities as well.

Jasie Landeros, who heads up the prevention/awareness department as ECCAC's Outreach Program Manager, commented, "This subject ties in well with ECCAC's on-going Teen Safety Matters program that we do in-school, in grades 6 – 12, in Walton and Okaloosa schools. We can help make students aware of the 'red flags' in their partner that may indicate

an unhealthy relationship, teen dating information, and what to do if they are in an abusive relationship.

Information and resources can be found on-line at [www.teendvmonth.org](http://www.teendvmonth.org)."

For further information, visit [www.eccac.org](http://www.eccac.org), or email or call Jasie Landeros at [Jasie@eccac.org](mailto:Jasie@eccac.org), 850-833-9237, Ext. 267. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

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# Laundry Tips and Tricks...with Sudsy!

Thanks for taking the time to read our fun, informative column for some basic laundry tips and tricks! Every few months we will go over helpful and creative ideas to combat stains, eliminate smells, dispel myths, etc.

In this issue, we want to talk about white vinegar and hydrogen peroxide.

Both are very common, inexpensive, easily accessible, and work wonders on your laundry at home!

Do you ever have a nasty, lingering smell in your laundry? Possibly nervous sweat stink, some nasty gym clothes odor, or a dog that loves to lift their leg on your favorite comforter? If so, have no fear...white

vinegar is here to help! That's correct – add 1-2 cups of white vinegar to your load of clothes in your washer (with your good detergent), and the smell will magically disappear!

At Total Laundry Services, we add vinegar to many loads of laundry...think fishermen's clothing, guys working outdoors in the summer heat or the pet that just couldn't hold their bladder for one more second.

It has worked wonders for us for 15 years, and we always have 3-4 bottles on site at each store to help with the laundry.

Besides vinegar, always have hydrogen peroxide at your disposal at your laundry at home as well. You can use hydrogen peroxide to whiten and brighten clothes, disinfect laundry and remove stains. It works especially well on blood stains!



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Community

# Bird Count 2020

BY MALCOLM MARK SWAN

Lots of people turned to bird watching during the past year, seeking enjoyment and relaxation. Tree swallows, bluebirds, finches and other birds are doing their part to lift human spirits.

Many of our area locals participated in The Christmas Bird Count, the longest running citizen-science program that provides data useful for scientists to evaluate population fluctuations and trends. This year was the 121st Count (nationally) since the program began.

In the 1900's, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." Whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many people were concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman of the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition, a "Christmas Bird Census," that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

In the Destin/Niceville/FWB area, 126 species of birds were seen by 28 people on December 19, 2020, during the Choctawhatchee Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The annual CBC is held nationally during a two-week period near Christmas and organized by the National Audubon Society.

Several uncommon birds were observed including a male Black Scoter (a duck), a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and two Rufous Hummingbirds at feeders, a Semipalmated Plover, a Spotted Sandpiper, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, a Black Skimmer, a male Vermilion Flycatcher at the FWB Recreation Center, four Red-breasted Nuthatches and two Purple Finches (a good year for both species so far south), two Yellow-throated Warblers, an Indigo Bunting, and one species never before recorded for our count, a Western Meadowlark.

Our day was sunny and calm with the temperature between 45° and 63°F. Our 19 birding parties covered 45.4 miles on



foot and while driving. We spent 63 hours of daytime birding and three hours of owling (at night). For Covid-19 safety precautions, we social distanced, had no public gathering, and birded alone or with immediate household members.

What is normally a social event, which pairs volunteers new to birding with more experienced birders, had to be

altered this year. Carpooling outside related family members was discouraged, and the count zones were divided into smaller areas.

This year we skipped our wrap-up chili dinner and lost the opportunity to share each other's company and sightings. But, we looked for birds within a Count Circle, which locally is a 7.5-mile radius from a point south of the Destin Fort Walton Beach Airport. We do not try to count every bird in the Count Circle; instead, we count birds and keep track of our time and

travel so that scientists can study numbers of birds per hour and miles of birding.

We counted 5463 individual birds. This is unusually low; during most years our counts of about 28 species each average more than 200 birds. This year we counted more than 200 birds for only six species: Double-crested Cormorant, Brown Pelican, Laughing Gull, Eastern

Bluebird, American Robin, and Yellow-Rumped Warbler.

Our counts of about 100 species were low compared to their average counts over the history of the local count (likely attributable to our reduced hours). However, our counts of two species, Tree Swallow (97 counted) and Eastern Bluebird (213 counted), were much higher than the local averages.

The Christmas Bird Count is only one of the fun bird outings that people participate in. Next up is the worldwide Great Backyard Bird Count this month. Until last Spring, the Choctawhatchee Audubon had led free local morning field trips during non-summer months. We hope to resume field trips in the Fall. We welcome participation in any of our events from all interested parties. For information visit our websites: www.ChoctawhatcheeAudubon.org and www.facebook.com/choctawhatcheeaudubon/ To view the historical data for all Christmas Bird Counts, go to netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation.

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# Why Price Shouldn't be the Key Factor in Choosing a Roofing Company

By ERIN BAKKER

With the cost of residential roofing, many people start out thinking that it's a good idea to look for the cheapest possible company. Unfortunately, this typically results in a substandard job that will end up costing more due to the need for repairs or even the premature failure of the entire roof. If the roof lasts less than half as long as it should, the total cost over

that will actually stand the test of time and weather.

Next, a high-quality roofing company will use more fasteners to attach shingles and underlayment. While the price of a single nail might be negligible, this adds up when there are thousands of nails involved. Not only that, the labor costs go up significantly when a large number of fasteners are used, because it takes longer to put them all in.

that it's a good idea to look for the cheapest possible company. Unfortunately, this typically results in a substandard job that will end up costing more due to the need for repairs or even the premature failure of the entire roof. If the roof lasts less than half as long as it should, the total cost over the years is more than twice as much as a properly-done job would have been.

There are a few reasons

to attach shingles and underlayment. While the price of a single nail may be negligible, this adds up when there are thousands of nails involved. Not only that, the labor costs go up significantly when a large number of fasteners are used because it takes longer to put them all in.

The reason you should care about the number of fasteners is simple: More nails makes your roof more wind-resistant. You

definitely want a lot of fasteners so a freak windstorm won't take your residential roofing into your neighbor's yard.

For these reasons and more, you should consider your new roof to be an investment in your home. Always for the highest quality you can afford.



the years is more than twice as much as a properly-done job would have been.

There are a few reasons cheap roofing doesn't last. The most obvious is the grade of materials used. A high-quality roofing system with a decades-long warranty will last the longest, but it isn't cheap. Instead, it is priced as most would expect for things that won't fall apart soon. Therefore, a roofing company won't be able to offer a deep discount if they are using materials

The reason you should care about the number of fasteners is simple: More nails makes your roof more wind-resistant. You definitely want a lot of fasteners so a freak windstorm won't take your residential roofing into your neighbor's yard.

For these reasons and more, you should consider your new roof to be an investment in your home. Always for the highest quality you can afford. With the cost of residential roofing, many people start out thinking

cheap roofing doesn't last. The most obvious is the grade of materials used. A high-quality roofing system with a decades-long warranty will last the longest, but it isn't cheap. Instead, it is priced as most would expect for things that won't fall apart soon. Therefore, a roofing company won't be able to offer a deep discount if they are using materials that will actually stand the test of time and weather.

Next, a high-quality roofing company will use more fasteners

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Moving in? Moving out? Moving up? Carpe diel!

 Community



By VICTORIA OSTROSKY

“I don’t understand!” Jack whined. “I just don’t. Why is buying flood insurance so hard?”

“I hear you,” replied Megan. “All insurance can be confusing, and flood insurance is no different. Let me try to explain it in layman’s terms to make it a little easier.”

Megan, Jack’s insurance agent and friend, also conducted CE classes for some of the local Realtor offices in the area, so she knew her stuff. She took the time to teach Jack all about flood insurance and started by indicating that Flooding is the #1 natural disaster every year and anywhere it rains, it can flood.

“Let’s break the subject up into several pieces, ok? We’ll start with what flood zones are, the difference between zones and designations, what is the

# What Flood Zone Do You Live In?

CBRS, and the difference between the NFIP, the federal flood program, and private insurers.”

Everyone Lives in a flood zone. The most common flood zones here in the Panhandle are zones A, AE, V, VE, and X. X means moderate to low-risk areas while the others listed are in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) or high-risk areas. What this means to you is that if you have a lender and if the property is in a zone other than X, it’s in the SFHA and flood insurance is mandatory. In most instances, for properties in an SFHA, an Elevation Certificate is recommended and sometimes required to obtain the best premium.

What is the NFIP? NFIP stands for National Flood Insurance Program and is part of FEMA. All flood policies written through the NFIP, no matter what carrier’s paper it’s written on, will have the same rates since they are set at the federal level. FEMA periodically updates the flood maps, and a property that was in an X zone, might be changed to AE or vice versa. Here is a site you can use to locate your home’s Flood Factor, [www.floodfactor.com](http://www.floodfactor.com). \*The Flood Factor model is designed to approximate flood risk and

not intended to include all possible risks or mitigations of flood.

Elevation Certificates are important. An Elevation Certificate (EC) is a type of survey done by a licensed survey company. They calculate how many feet and inches above or below base flood elevation (BFE) the house sits. The accuracy of your flood quote is in direct correlation to the readings on the EC. Elevation Certificates can be new or old as long as they’re legible.

What about designations? CBRS stands for Coastal Barrier Resource System. This designation recognizes specific protected coastal areas. Over the years, many believed too much development was being encouraged and federally subsidized. “To remove the federal incentive to develop these areas, the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) of 1982 and subsequent amendments designated relatively undeveloped coastal barriers including the Gulf of Mexico and many parts of our local area. These areas are ineligible for most new federal expenditures and financial assistance. CBRA encourages the conservation of hurricane prone, biologically rich coastal barriers by restricting federal expenditures such as federal flood insurance.” (<https://www.fws.gov/cbra/>)

The CBRS designation can be in any flood zone. What this means to you as a homeowner, is that the NFIP will not write a flood policy, no matter what the flood zone is if the property is in the CBRS.

What is private flood? In our area, we began to see more private flood insurers enter the market a few years back. They are separate from the NFIP and usually offer higher coverage limits and loss of use that the NFIP doesn’t. The maximum coverages through the NFIP for residential homes is \$250,000 for the structure and \$100,000 for the contents. For homes of higher value, excess flood can be purchased. Private flood insurers can write up to the replacement cost of the house. However, there are limited private insurers who will write in the CBRS, and premium can be much higher.

So, when it comes to flood zones, designations, and policies in Florida, the bottom line is this: any flood zone other than X, if a lender is involved, will require flood insurance. ECs are usually needed to get an accurate quote. If the property is in the CBRS, no matter what zone it’s in, the NFIP will not write a policy, and many private flood insurers won’t write one either.

“Does that help any, Jack?” asked Megan.

“I think so,” said Jack. “So, you’re saying that even though the house I’m buying is in an X flood zone, because it’s in the CBRS I can’t get flood insur-

ance through the NFIP?”

“That’s right. The good thing is that your lender won’t require flood, but the bad thing is that unless I find a private carrier who will give us a quote you’re willing to live with, you won’t have flood protection. Let me submit an application for you and see what we can do.”

Because it can flood anywhere in Florida, we always recommend flood insurance, so when you’re looking to purchase, talk to your insurance agent so you will know up front what the cost of flood insurance will be.

*Insurance Zone, owned by Joe and*



*Lea Capers, is a full service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Niceville, Freeport, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Visit their Video Library on [www.ins-zone.com](http://www.ins-zone.com) and watch several informative videos including 'Auto Insurance Made Easy,' or call 850.424.6979. Victoria Ostrosky, author of this article, is a Personal Lines and Life Agent/CSR with IZ.*



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# Winner... Winner?

## ENERGY TIPS

by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions



By CHRIS BALZER, ECES

According to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), 2020 won the 2nd warmest year prize since they started recording in 1880, knocking 2019 down to third. The world's seven warmest years have all occurred since 2014, 2016 being the warmest.

If you do a search for "things we insulate," you will see the majority of sites and images are of attics, walls and windows. We insulate much more than our homes. We are constantly looking for that right beach cooler or cup to keep our drinks and snacks cold and cool. YETI has become very popular and on the scene of just about every beach, boat or fishing outing. Just look around. If you don't own a YETI, your neighbor most likely does. One video on YouTube about what's inside a YETI cup has more than 8.3 million views. That's more views than the entire population of Tennessee and that's just one video. It's no secret we care about insulating things and pay a little more for quality and efficiency. So, why

when it comes to our biggest investment, our homes, we fall short of upgrading our home's efficiency and insulation?

A Former U.S. President once said during a press conference on renewable energy that insulation is sexy stuff and that if you haven't upgraded your home, it's not just heat or cool air escaping, it's energy and money that you are wasting. Based on a study conducted by NAIMA (North American Insulation Manufacturers Association), the majority of U.S. homes are under-insulated, wasting energy and money and decreasing comfort for the homeowners. Unless your home

was specifically built for energy efficiency, you can benefit from energy upgrades like: fiberglass insulation, radiant barriers, attic air sealing, to name a few.

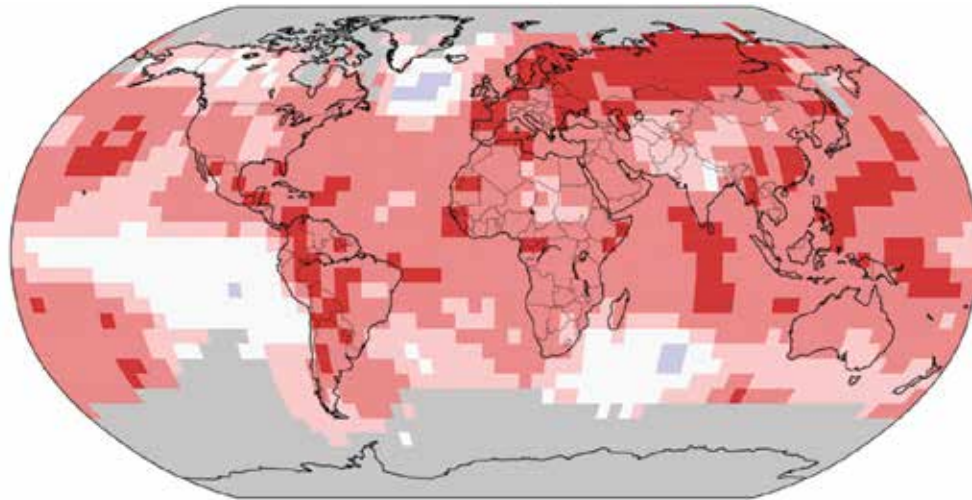
Dr. Levy, Professor of Environmental Health at Boston University, stated that if all U.S. homes were fitted with insulation based on the 2012 IECC (International Energy Conservation Code), residential electricity use nationwide would drop by

5% and natural gas use by more than 10%. That's an impressive number and a positive impact on our environment.

So, let's talk about cost. I know getting an energy upgrade for your home costs more than a cooler or a cup. But, let's look

several years can become worn and sometimes uncomfortable due to the settling of the batting or filling. Your energy upgrade continues to add value to your home and increased comfort. Getting a proper energy upgrade can also help with reducing dust and decreasing humidity in your home. I don't know if I would call adding insulation sexy, but I do know adding insulation saves you money, increases your comfort and has a positive impact on the environment. So, the next time you are putting ice in your cooler, sipping something refreshing from your cup or sitting on your couch, think about getting an energy upgrade for your biggest investment and remember, with many options such as Solar, Hydro or Geo Thermal, our most sustainable energy source is YOU!

*Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions which is a Smile Provider Company. We provide smiles to our customers after installing our high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save this summer and become energy efficient, schedule an inspection by calling (850) 588-2870, visit [www.trustees.com](http://www.trustees.com) or email [wecare@trustees.com](mailto:wecare@trustees.com) and Beat the Heat!*



at this slightly differently. On average, an energy upgrade today costs around what a good living room couch costs. The difference is the couch will start to lose its value the moment it is delivered, and the energy upgrade immediately starts to save you money and increases comfort. Plus, energy upgrades will see a full return of your investment in a few short years based on energy savings. The couch, after



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# Keep Your Pet from Becoming Prey to Coyotes

“Coyotes are found throughout Florida and they are part of the landscape,” said Greg Kaufmann, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Wildlife Assistance Program Administrator. “There is a strong possibility coyotes are in your community, even if you

are living in an urban part of the state.”

Protect your pet and backyard animals from becoming prey to coyotes and other wildlife as reports of interactions with these animals generally increase this time of year.

Coyotes occur throughout

the eastern U.S. and can be found in all 67 counties in Florida including rural, suburban and even urban areas. They thrive in natural habitats, but are incredibly adaptable and will also live in urban environments where there is available food.



**DID YOU BUILD OR PURCHASE A HOME LAST YEAR?**

## PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FILING DEADLINE MARCH 1, 2021

Gary J. Gregor, Walton County Property Appraiser, reminds property owners who intend to make application for Homestead Exemption, Deployed Military Exemption, Combat Disabled Veteran's Discount, Veteran's Exemption, Disability Exemption, Agricultural Classification, Additional Senior Exemption, or Widow's and Widower's Exemption, the absolute filing deadline is **MARCH 1, 2021**.

If you plan to file your exemption for the first time, please bring with you a copy of your recorded deed or tax receipt, the social security number(s) of all owners of property, Florida driver's license number, Florida auto tag number, and voter's registration number. If you are entitled to disability exemption, please bring proof of disability (two doctors' statements). If you are filing Homestead Exemption on a mobile home, please bring the title or registration certificate.

If you are filing for the “Additional Exemption for Persons 65 and Older” your annual household income cannot exceed \$31,100 (adjusted annually) (proof will be required).

If you would like information to determine your eligibility for exemptions, please call **850-892-8123** or **850-267-4500**, Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

**You may file for exemptions at the following office locations of the Property Appraiser Monday thru Friday, 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.**

**DeFuniak Springs - Courthouse**  
571 Hwy 90 East

**Santa Rosa Beach**  
31 Coastal Centre Blvd Suite 600

**THE ABSOLUTE FILING DEADLINE FOR 2021 EXEMPTIONS IS MARCH 1, 2021.**

**Have You Applied For Ag Classification of Newly Acquired Agricultural Lands For 2021?**



To help avoid conflicts with coyotes and other predators, take proactive measures by removing food sources including unsecured trash and pet food, and securing pets and small livestock as they can become prey to coyotes. These actions will help protect your animals and help deter coyotes from repeatedly coming into your yard or community.

Unaccompanied small pets such as dogs and cats that are left outdoors can be preyed upon by wildlife. Protect small pets by keeping them indoors or in an outdoor predator-proof pen.

“Cats should be kept inside for their protection as well as to protect songbirds and other native wildlife cats prey upon” said Kaufmann. “When walking dogs, keep them on a short leash, especially at night, dusk or dawn, and be extra careful when walking your pet in wooded areas.”

As feasible, people should also take necessary precautions to shelter animals, such as goats, sheep, calves, pigs, poultry and other small livestock, from coyotes and other predators. Small livestock can be protected by keeping them in a secure fenced enclosure with a roof, especially at night. Electric fencing is also an effective deterrent to prevent wildlife from preying on domestic animals.

Additional tips for preventing conflicts with coyotes:

Never feed coyotes and do not place food outside that will attract coyotes or other wildlife.

It is illegal to feed coyotes in Florida in a manner that is likely to create or creates a public nuisance.

Clean up pet food, fallen fruit and seed around bird feeders – coyotes are opportunistic feeders and can be drawn to these types of food sources.

Secure garbage cans and compost in animal-proof containers.

Encourage wildlife to nest or den in natural areas by closing off crawl spaces under houses and other buildings to prevent them from resting or raising their young in areas around your home.

Talk with your neighbors and ask them to follow these same steps.

The most effective ways to reduce problems with coyotes involve removing food or other attractants. However, if a coyote has lost its fear of humans or continues to be a problem, other control measures might be necessary. Such methods should be directed at specific coyotes or toward coyotes in a specific area.

For technical assistance regarding coyotes near your home or in your neighborhood, contact the nearest FWC regional office by going to [MyFWC.com/Contact](http://MyFWC.com/Contact) and clicking on “Regional Offices.” Additional information on coyotes can be found by going to [MyFWC.com/Wildlife](http://MyFWC.com/Wildlife) and clicking on “Living with Wildlife” then “Coyotes.”

For more information, visit [MyFWC.com/Coyote](http://MyFWC.com/Coyote).





# Meet our Local Pro: Byron Beplay with Coastline K9

“The dog thing found me,” said Byron Beplay of Coastline K9, a business that trains dogs and also provides world-class protection dogs for family and other needs. “But we’re not your average protection dog company,” says Byron. “Our leadership team is made up of special operations K9 handlers who have trained and utilized protection dogs in some of the most dangerous and demanding circumstances ever.” He says because of that, the team understands the importance of security and protection in ways that many have never experienced.

In fact, Byron, a local who grew up in Destin and Pensacola, joined the military in 2001 and served our country as a Special Ops Army Ranger. While serving, he participated in the Iraqi and Afghanistan invasions, risking his life to protect ours, as do so many others.

In 2009, he returned home as an instructor and taught a pre scuba dive course for the Army’s Special Ops Special Forces Combat Dive School on Eglin Air Force Base. Since then, Byron has worked as a contractor, an underwater welder, and in the medical field’s emergency services. “Now, I’ve found another purpose with training these dogs that help so many,” says Byron.

And Byron is no stranger to helping people. When Hurricane Michael hit Panama City and Mexico Beach, he sprung into action. On foot and with



only a rucksack, he began rescuing people from the rubble. The next thing he knew, he was coordinating rescue efforts by helicopter, and soon the total monetary aid he implemented reached 3.5 million dollars.

In addition to managing the local Coastline K9 business, Byron volunteers delivering medicine, medical care and aid to some of the world’s most dangerous places through the Global Surgical Medical Support Group (GSMMSG). He takes former military Special Ops Veterans, (1000 members from all branches of the military) and coordinates going into war torn countries to teach tactical combat casualty care. He also leads military teams of nurses, doctors and surgeons that render medical aid and who all vol-

unteer their time in service of others. “In a world that is very inhumane where I’ve witnessed so much destruction, I want to bring a little humanity,” says Byron. For this Army Ranger who deployed 15 different times, he feels it’s an honor to serve others and in turn honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

“That’s why dog training is such a perfect fit,” says Byron. “Anything can happen to anyone, and we train our dogs to handle it. That gives me a lot of satisfaction and also utilizes my experience and knowledge.”

Byron says the majority of the K9s are imported from Europe, where the world’s best K9s have been bred for decades. “We hand-select the pedigree for excellent temperament—a balance between being loving,

loyal and protective—and security attributes to perfectly suit an owner’s personality, lifestyle and protection requirements.”

Byron and his partner, Trent McDonald, a well-known veteran dog trainer, expanded Coastline K9 to our area. The business originated in Naples by partner Erick Innis, also founder of the RESCUE 22 Foundation 5013(c). Erick served as Special Operations K9 Handler with his teammate, a Veteran Military Working Dog named Rex. The two served two combat tours together throughout Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. After military service, Erick began training law enforce-

ment canines in both the U.S. and Internationally as a civilian.

Coastline K9’s are sourced from its partners in the UK, Holland, Belgium and Ireland. “We rigorously assess all prospects for the qualities and attributes that will perfectly suit your needs,” says Byron. Once approved, training begins. When training is complete, your new companion is transported to you anywhere in the continental U.S. and your trainer will spend 3-4 days with you providing hands-on, specialized training.

You can visit [coastlinek9.com](http://coastlinek9.com) or give Byron a call with any questions at (850) 307-7771.

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 Travel



BY JODELL HAVERFIELD,  
HAVE TRAVEL MEMORIES

Relax, you can't turn me in, because I wasn't at the capitol on Jan 6, 2021. I know we celebrate Valentine's Day in February. However, I can't ignore the current vibe in our Nation's Capital as we enter the month of love, heart shaped candy, chocolates, cuddly PJ's and teddy bears. So, please hear me out.

Little did I know when I hosted a girl's trip to Washington D.C. in April 2019 just how much things would change less than two years later. The cherry blossoms might be the only thing recognizable in D.C. by this coming spring.

There was quite a different atmosphere in that beautiful city the day we toured one of the

most architecturally and symbolically important buildings in the world that has housed the Meeting Chamber of the Senate and the House of Representatives for over 200 years—the U.S. Capitol Building. We were lucky enough to get passes from Senator Marco Rubio's office to watch Florida's own Rick Scott in action on the Senate floor that day.

Later, once we passed through security, we were welcomed into the White House and given free rein to peek into her historic rooms and take pictures. It was a warm sunny day as we looked out the windows at her manicured lawns and flower beds. Today, the White House is surrounded by thousands of soldiers and concertina wire fences. There are no tourists, and the city resembles a ghost town.

I like to say to people, "You Have to Travel to Truly Live and Memories Last Forever." This rings especially true to me today, as I reflect on my memories of this trip. While I had traveled to many places and other countries in my life, I had never been to our nation's capital.

It was humbling to visit the

# I Was at the Capital



National Archives Museum and view the original 232-year-old document of our Constitution, the longest surviving written charter of government, a document that some in our government now wish to change. I will never forget the view of the beautiful Lincoln and Washington Memorials lit up at night, or how I felt as we reverently walked the hallowed grounds of Arlington Cemetery to lay flowers at the marker of a soldier who was the husband of one of the participants in our group. My heart ached as I looked over and saw a horse drawn caisson

wagon pulling someone else's loved one to be laid to rest.

This February 2021, I am thinking of my friend and of all those whose loved ones have served or are serving to protect our country including those called to serve in Washington D.C. today. I am thinking of how we should love one another. You do not need an excuse to buy a box of chocolates or flowers for yourself, a loved one, a friend, a neighbor or someone else. So, I hope everyone reading this editorial had a Happy Valentine's Day, no matter who you are.

If you want to travel clos-

er to home and you're a fan of the Food Network and HGTV, then you will love our next hosted trip to visit Pioneer Woman and Magnolia Market May 1-8, 2021. For more information, visit our website [havetravelmemories.com](http://havetravelmemories.com), click on Travel Agency at the top of the page or email me at [jodell@havetravelmemories.com](mailto:jodell@havetravelmemories.com). You can also see more of our upcoming trips for 2021-22 & 23 and don't forget to visit our Facebook, too. [Facebook.com/havetravelmemories](https://www.facebook.com/havetravelmemories).



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# Off the Hook

## Is It Nice Enough To Go Fishing Yet?



By CALI HLAVAC,  
SILVER SHADE STUDIOS

By this time in the season, most of us anglers have a severe case of cabin fever. We're constantly checking the weather apps on our phones, seeing which days will be warm enough with low winds to try and get out on the water. Weather changes mean new fish species to target, and the excitement is almost too much to bear.

"Flounder and Sheepshead are two popular winter/spring fish that anglers will be targeting in this area," says Captain Lionel James of Lion's Tale Adventures Fishing Charter. "Flounder will start to school up in October as they prepare to migrate during winter with the cooler water," he says, "typically heading out into the nearshore gulf areas." The move allows them to settle on natural and artificial reefs to spawn at this time.

Because of their shape, Flounder are typically always found on the bottom, where they can burrow into sand to await prey. They hang within 200 yards off the beach, typically at depths of 20 to 60 feet. Common Flounder species in the Gulf of Mexico are the Gulf Flounder and the southern Flounder, and odds are the latter will be a much larger fish – with the female southern Flounder maxing out at roughly 28 inches.

Our other winter fish, Sheepshead, become a lot more active in the winter time and the cooler water. They're almost always found hanging around structures such as jetties and bridges where oysters and barnacles grow. To try and catch one, we recommend using live shrimp or fid-



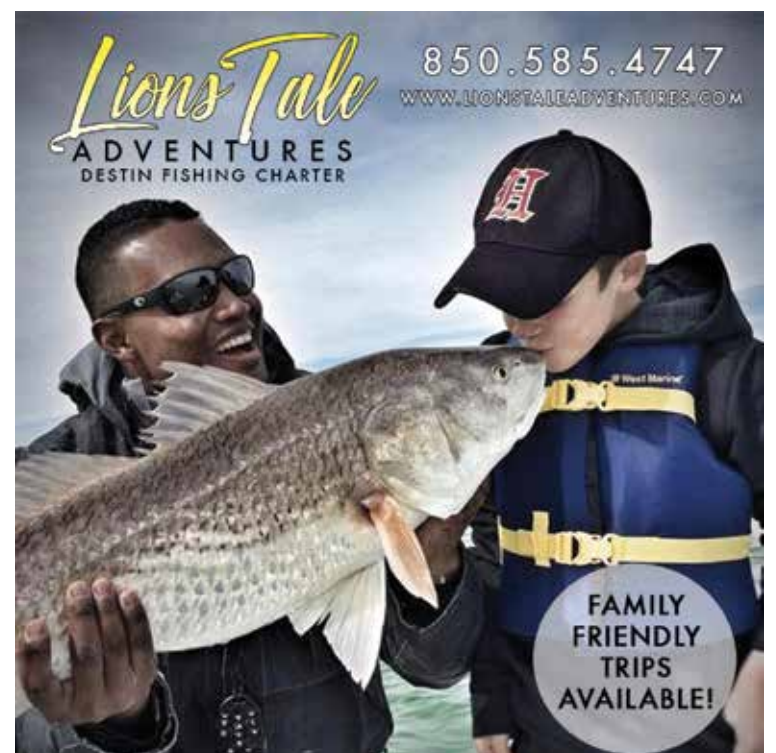
der crabs as bait, as Sheepshead will rarely take artificial bait. "Sheepshead can be a little trickier for clients to catch," James says. "They like to steal your bait and leave the hook exposed, so you've really got to feel for that subtle bite. Once you hook them though, they're quite a fight!"

These fish are abundant, so there is no closed season for either of these species. The minimum size on the Flounder needs to be 12 inches, and the bag limit is 10 per person, per day. Minimum size for Sheepshead is also 12 inches, and the bag limit is 15 per person, per day.

When we mentioned earlier they are two of the tastiest fish to catch, we weren't kidding. Both species are considered prime seafood, with a delicious white meat that's never oily or "fishy" in taste. Flounder have most of their meat contained to one side, making it easy to clean and keep one solid chunk of meat. Sheepshead have a few more bones to

remove, and both fish are tasty when prepared grilled, broiled or fried.

Just reading this not only makes my mouth water, it has me pulling out those weather apps asking, "Is it nice enough to go fishing yet?" If you're a fellow angler feeling the same way, we're in this together. Let the countdown to spring begin!



 Off the Hook

# Nation's First Underwater Museum of Art Expands

Eight new sculptures were recently added to the nation's first permanent Underwater Museum of Art (UMA) in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Grayton Beach State Park in South Walton.

Named by TIME Magazine as one of 100 "World's Greatest Places," the UMA is the first presentation of the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA)'s Art In Public Spaces Program and is produced in collaboration with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA). The purpose of the UMA is to create art that becomes marine habitat, expanding fishery populations and

providing enhanced creative, cultural, economic and educational opportunities for the benefit, education and enjoyment of residents, students and visitors in South Walton.

This installation includes the following sculpture: Bee Grayt by Katie Witherspoon (Santa Rosa Beach, FL), Building Blocks by Zachery Long (Oklahoma City, OK), Dawn Dancers by Shohini Ghosh (Highlands Ranch, CO), Eco-Bug by Priscila D'Brito (Boca Raton, FL), El Plastico by George Sabra (Georgetown, TX), From The Depths by Kirk Seese (Lutherville, MD), Hope by Jonathan Burger (New Bern, NC)

and Three Wishes by Marisol Rendón and Ingram Ober (San Diego, CA).

With support from Visit South Walton, The Alys Foundation, Visit Florida, the National Endowment for the Arts, Walter Marine/The Reefmaker, and the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs, the sculptures were deployed with SWARA's existing USACOA and FDEP permitted artificial reef project that includes nine nearshore reefs located within one nautical mile of the shore in 58 feet of water. This installation joins the 17 sculptures previously deployed on a one-acre permit patch of

seabed off Grayton Beach State Park, expanding the nation's first permanent underwater museum to a total of 25 sculptures. The UMA patch will continue to be filled with several new sculptures annually.

Individual sculptures are sponsored by 30A Company, Beachy Blooms, Bud & Alley's Restaurant, Hilton Sandestin Golf Beach Resort & Spa, the St. Joe Community Foundation, Visit South Walton, Noreen & Kevin Dooney, and Kasja Larson & JoAnn Ribaud. A special thanks goes out to the fishing captains who transported artists, sponsors and guests to the deployment site to witness the



CREDIT: GULF STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

installation, including Van R. Butler, III with Family Tradition Charters, Captain Cole Taylor of Grayton Coast Rentals, Scott Provow of Grayton Beach Charters, Mark Thompson of Fishy Booty Charters and Mike Valentino of Trigger Happy Fishing Charters.

Admission to the UMA is free, however, the site is only accessible in person as a dive location. Divers who wish to visit the site can take a dive boat .93 miles off the coast of Grayton Beach State Park. The coordinates for the center sculpture (SWARA Skull) are N 30°18.754 W 30°09.562. Out of respect for the art, boaters are asked to find the center location and then move away from the park to anchor in order to avoid damage to the artwork.

Visit [UMAFL.org](http://UMAFL.org) for more information about dive shops, tours and obtaining your certification while visiting South Walton. Photos and videos of the sculptures will continue to be updated online periodically to document the marine growth on each sculpture.

Artists interested in submitting artwork for consideration to the 2022 UMA installation can visit [UMAFL.org](http://UMAFL.org) to complete a pre-application in anticipation of an Artist Call announcement in Spring 2021.



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# The Ships Chandler to Break Ground on a New Marine and Service Center in Freeport

Many readers might know of The Ships Chandler location in Destin—an icon on the Destin Harbor. Now, the marine and service center has broken ground on its second center as of Thursday, February 18 in **Freeport!**

Located at 17309 U.S. Hwy. 331, constructed by Chapman Building and Consulting and designed by Philip Spann and Associates, the new building will create 10 full-time jobs in Walton County. With more than 14 acres of space, the company's new marine and service center will supply the area with fishing and pontoon boats, outboard motors and everything in between to make sure the boater is set up for success and supported in their boating journey.

"Freeport has always been a wonderful city filled with good hard-working people," said owner, Peter Wright Jr. "We're excited to become a part of the community and help it grow



Rendering



with the help of all the surrounding communities in Walton County."

The Ships Chandler is a family-run boating and fishing business that has been in Destin since 1980. Currently owned by

Peter Wright, the business was started originally by his father, Peter Wright Jr., Peter's son, is also a prominent figure in the business. As a family-owned and operated business, The Ships Chandler prides itself on its

work while supplying customers with the best service in the area. With more than four decades of experience, The Ships Chandler staff knows the best boats for Panhandle area fishing, and what the best tackle, bait and locations are for what's biting that season.

The new location will offer state-of-the-art service including a new boat dealership featuring top of the line brands such as Maverick, Hewes, Pathfinder and Cobia boats. The new center will also provide brokerage

boat sales, engine sales for Yamaha and Mercury Outboards, engine service and warranty for Yamaha and Mercury Outboards, engine parts and accessories, boat/marine repair and maintenance services, boat/marine parts and accessories, gelcoat repair, boat detail service, and custom marine work, including electronics, boat restoration and a refurbish shop.

"Freeport is quickly becoming the hub of everything Walton County has to offer," Wright said. "Our goal is to provide customers with exceptional sales and service in the marine industry by bringing our 40 plus years of knowledge in the business and customer first reputation to the area."

The Ships Chandler will also be constructing Phase Two of the project in the coming months which will include 170 covered spaces for boat and RV storage.

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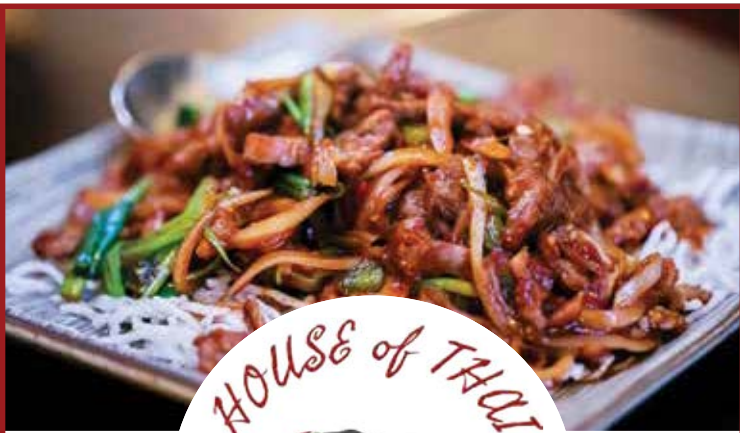
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## Brothers Kitchen

Brothers Kitchen is a casual, Southern-style restaurant, a place where you can get all your comfort food favorites. Blue Plate Specials are featured each day—meaning you choose one meat and two vegetable options from the daily list. Other delicious options include fresh salads, smoked chicken breast sandwich and the famous Boss Burger. Nightly specials vary each evening, but can include sirloin steak, shrimp & grits and some pasta dishes. Come on by and “taste” for yourself! Or pre-order for the weekend 24 hours in advance: Smoked whole pork butt, full or half racks, barbecue smoked meatloaf, smoked wings all slow-smoked on the Big Green Egg. And don't forget the sides! Call 850-842-2687 to place your order!

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## L.J. Schooners Dockside Restaurant

Welcome to L.J. Schooners Dockside Restaurant located at the spectacular Bluewater Bay Marina Complex. The restaurant is named after “L.J. Schooner” (the L.J. is for Lazy Jack) who was a cherished four-legged icon on Bluewater Bay Marina docks. The open air Oyster Bar and restaurant is open to serve you! Almost all seats offer a magnificent view of the water, marina and unparalleled sunset

with, of course, oysters and a delicious varied menu. Join L.J. Schooners for Sunday Brunch, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. and drink your bottomless Mimosas for \$10! Adults \$13.95; Children 7-12 \$4.50; Children under age 6 free. Call to order take-out and pick-up in the L.J. Schooners Oyster Bar or call when you arrive for curbside pick-up.

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## Jojo's Coffee and Goodness

JoJo's is owned and operated by Angela “JoJo” Stevenson who wanted to incorporate a cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere to accompany her attached teaching studio. Her dream team bakes fresh “goodness” daily—breakfast and lunch—Tuesday-Saturday. Feel free to come work (free WiFi) or meet up with friends or family.

Bakery Report for February includes fresh goodness specialties such as Scones: Jalapeño Mozzarella, Strawberry Lemon, Apricot Coconut, Pumpkin Coffee Cake, Banana Bread, Triple Chocolate Muffins, Vanilla Pound Cake, Carmelita and White Chocolate Lemon Cookies; and breakfast specials such as quiche (spicy sausage, ham, roasted red pepper or keto) with hash brown casserole and best coffee ever! Order ahead and pick up some for the office or your next meeting!

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## House of Thai

With 20 years of experience cooking traditional Thai food here and in Thailand, House of Thai is a veteran- and family-owned restaurant that focuses on food eaten every day in homes throughout Thailand. Traditional recipes handed down from generations of Thai family chefs date back 400 years. Ingredients from local farmers markets are used to ensure freshness. The menu has just the right amount of offerings, and food is fresh and seasoned to your

*Continued on page 25*

# Fatboys: Premium Burgers & Wings the Way YOU Like Them!

If you're looking for juicy beef burgers and tasty bird using only the freshest ingredients available, you'll want to get into Destin's newest hangout on the Harbor — Fatboys.

Now open, Fatboys starts with 100% premium beef, the freshest-sourced ingredients, and custom built it just the way you like it! "We're really good at burgers and wings," said Harshil Patel, Fatboys owner. All burgers are custom made of 100 percent premium beef, each patty a quarter-pound! And you can order up to 12 patties on a burger! And, by the way, if you finish off all 12, you receive a free hat or T-shirt!

The menu is focused on the offerings Fatboys does best. "Nothing is frozen; all ingredients are completely fresh—no frozen wings or frozen meat patties. We make your burgers and wings to order," says Bernadette Gray, Fatboys Destin manager. "We even wait until fries are ordered to drop and serve! So, you know you're getting the absolute, up-to-

the-minute, hot burger, fries or wings!"

Popular menu items include the "Original Fatboy," with lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, Fatboys sauce and a brioche bun; the "Roadhouse," topped with pulled pork, BBQ sauce, onion straws, Fatboys sauce, cheddar and a brioche bun; The Fatboy Club Sandwich with grilled or crispy chicken, lettuce, bacon, honey Dijon, Fatboys sauce, Swiss cheese and Texas toast; and the "I Love Bacon," served up with six pieces of bacon, lettuce, tomato, mayo, two slices of American cheese, Fatboys sauce and a brioche bun.

Fatboys, which is named after the motorcycle, also has other sandwiches such as a Fatboy Philly as well as a meatless beast for the vegetarian with a black bean veggie patty, or gluten-free buns and fun kids' offering combos with hamburgers, chicken bites or grilled cheese sandwiches.

And, wow, the wings are served with a variety of sauces from garlic parmesan, barbe-

cue, sweet orange teriyaki, buffalo to Fatboys Fire!

Side items include local favorites such as Cheese or Chili Cheese Nachos, Jalapeno Bites, Onions Straws, Fresh Fried Pickles, Plain or Salted Pretzel Bites or a Side Salad.

This is the second location for Fatboys says Harshil. "Our first location is in Enterprise, Ala., (opened in 2018). We wanted to open one in this area, so began looking and found this great spot!"

"Daily specials, lunch specials and Happy Hour specials include 10% off for all military, veterans, EMS, firefighters, police and local residents," says Bernadette. Monday is 1/2 price wings all day; Tuesday is "buy one get one 1/2 off" burgers and sandwiches; and on Wednesdays kids eat FREE with adult purchase.

The Monday through Friday specials include a Fatboy cheeseburger, fries and salad for \$9.99 or a 6-piece wing meal with carrots and celery or sal-



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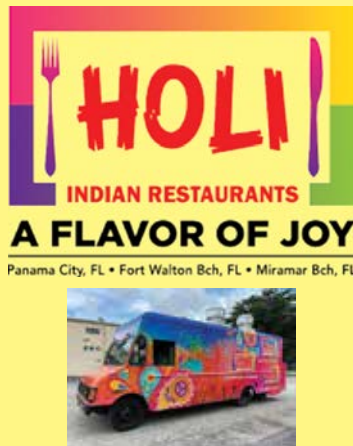
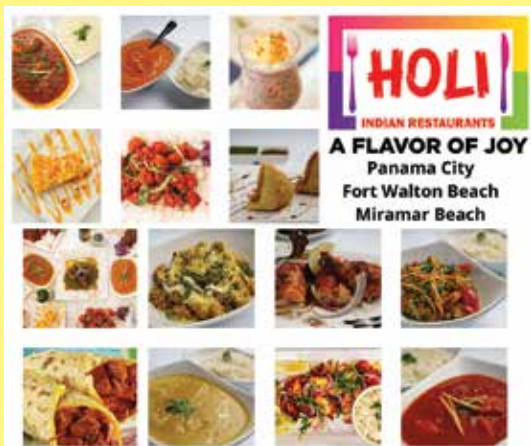
ad and drink for \$9.99 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Monday through Friday Happy Hour is 3-6 p.m. where all draft beer is 50% off!

"We're continually thinking of ways to cater to locals," says Bernadette, "because they're the ones that will keep us in business. So, we're looking to help sponsor sports teams or work with local charities. We want to be involved in the community

as much as possible." She says Fatboys is even considering a "bike night" on Thursdays for the local biker community. Stay tuned!

Fatboys is open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily and until 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday and has an outside patio on the backside of the restaurant that is pet friendly.

Visit the website at [ilovefatboys.com](http://ilovefatboys.com) to look at the menu, to order ahead or for more information.



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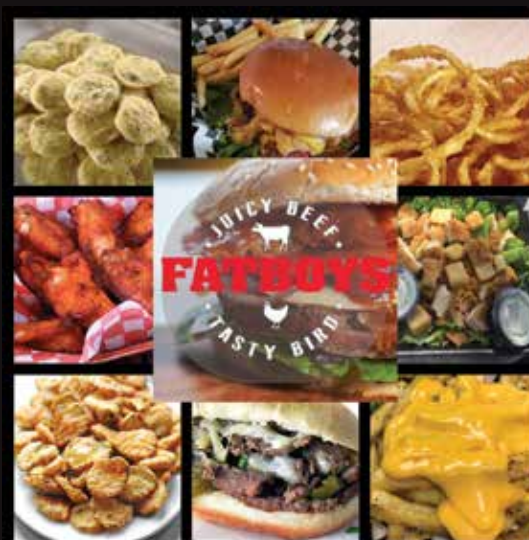
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# Herschel Walker to Speak at 2021 ASA Banquet!

52nd Annual Banquet to be held at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center Feb. 20 from 6-9 p.m.

By LORI LEATH SMITH

Each February, many of the area's top high school, collegiate, amateur, professional, Special Olympics athletes, and individuals who have fostered youth activities are honored during the annual All Sports Association's (ASA) Awards Banquet.

The ASA is a Northwest Florida non-profit organization whose primary mission is to help raise money for local youth-oriented non-profit organizations with an emphasis on sports programs. The annual awards banquet is used to identify, then recognize and honor some of the finest athletes from Northwest Florida who are contributing to their sports and their community.

The recognized individuals not only excel in their sports, but also are at the top in academics and community involvement.

The ASA is synonymous for attracting the likes of NFL and MLB MVPs, Hall of Fame coaches, Super Bowl quarterbacks, award-winning journalists and LPGA major champions. And this year is no exception. Now that



coveted list includes one of the best college football players of all time—former Heisman Trophy winner, Herschel Walker, joining other big-name speakers in most recent years such as Bo Jackson, Tim Tebow and Herm Edwards.

Walker played for the University of Georgia, earned consensus All-American honors three times and won the 1982 Heisman Trophy. He ran for 1,616 yards with 15 touchdowns as a freshman in 1980, leading the Georgia Bulldogs to a 12-0 record and national championship, winning against Notre Dame in the Sugar Bowl. He ran for 1,891 yards as a sophomore and 1,752 as a junior when he won the 1982 Heisman Trophy. During his three-year collegiate career, Walker set 41 Georgia, 16 SEC and 11 NCAA records. Georgia was 33-3 during his three seasons playing and he was ranked No. 1 by Bleacher Report and Sporting News, and No. 2 by ESPN.

Walker began his professional football career with the New Jersey Generals of the United States Football League (USFL). He later joined the NFL's Dallas Cowboys and also played for the Minnesota Vikings, Philadelphia Eagles and New York Giants during his professional career. In 1989, Walker's name became synonymous with the largest trade in league history. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1999.

Walker is now president and Chief Executive Officer of H. Walker Enterprises and Renaissance Man Food Services and also serves on the President's Council on Sports Fitness and Nutrition.

The 52nd Annual Banquet will be held at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center on Feb. 20 from 6-9 p.m.

Other events include the

2021 Buck Smith FCA Breakfast on Feb. 20 From 7-9 a.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center. And The 2021 VIP Golf Outing will be held on Feb. 19 from 11 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. at the Fort Walton Beach Club.

This year's FCA breakfast speaker is Tim Hiller who currently serves at Stryker Corporation—a Fortune 250 medical device company where he has held leadership roles in global service, talent management and sales. Formerly a head high school football coach, Tim spent time with four NFL teams, primarily the Indianapolis Colts. He is a two-time graduate of Western Michigan University where he was an Academic All-American quarterback and winner of the Wuerffel Trophy. He enjoys serving in his community through coaching young athletes at Next Level Performance, volunteering at the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, and through sharing his book "Strive: Life is Short, Pursue what Matters."

Through the efforts of the annual All-Sports banquet and summer golf tournament, and in addition to supporting our local high school athletic programs, the association helps fund numerous worthwhile sports organizations and charitable causes. The primary beneficiaries are the Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, Special Olympics Florida-Ocala, Eleanor J. Johnson Youth Center and Okaloosa Walton FCA.

ASA has donated roughly 1.1 million to local youth sports over the last 7 years, and "it will be at 1.3 million by the end of this year," says Don Collins, ASA president. "\$145,000 will be given at the Saturday evening banquet! We are all volunteers. We take no money for this. We just pay our bills and all money goes back to the kids," he says.

A lot of planning has gone into the 52nd year banquet through the ASA volunteers and with the help of NWFSC's Jeanette Shirer and Dr. Stephenson to comply with COVID guidelines.

For more information, visit [allsportsassociation.org](http://allsportsassociation.org).



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BY LISA TURPIN,  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH

Boosting your metabolism is important to losing weight. Genetics, age, and gender play a huge role, but there's not much you can do about how old you are and whether you are male or female. There are, however, some ways you can increase your metabolism and help your body burn as many calories as capable. We are all very unique, so where our base starting point is will be different for everyone. But no matter who you are, if you follow these simple suggestions you will have better success on your weight loss journey. Your body is always burning calories, even when you are sleeping. This is called your basal, base or resting metabolism. It's very hard to know for sure what your resting metabolic rate is, but there are some techniques you can use to raise your metabolism and therefore burn calories more efficiently.

**Build Muscle:** Every pound of muscle burns about six calories a day just to sustain itself, whereas each pound of fat burns only two calories a day...at rest. This is your resting metabolic rate—the amount

of energy it takes your body to function at rest. This pertains to muscles, organs, blood flow, breathing, etc. Anything we can do to raise our resting metabolic rate will help us utilize calories with less effort. As an added bonus, during a strength training session, muscles are activated all over your body raising your average daily metabolic rate for that day.

**HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training):** This is a form of cardiovascular or aerobic exercise. There is a plethora of studies showing the benefit of metabolism from any form of aerobic activity, but the recent studies on HIIT workouts shows your body elevates into a fat burning machine for some up to 48 hours or more after. Even a low energy cardio session can keep your motor revved up for two hours past your session.

**Eat clean:** Stay away from fad diets that restrict your calories to below 1200 for women and 1800 for men. You might lose during the diet, but you are wrecking your metabolism. If your body begins to slow down to conserve energy because you aren't bringing in enough, you will be battling quicker weight gain in the future. It's better to snack healthy just a little and eat less at each meal. Your body can only process so many calories at any one time. So, if you put too much in (like a big meal), your body will have no choice but to use what it can and then store the rest. Spread those calories out throughout all your meals and snacks and there won't be any left to store as fat. Plus you

## Metabolism at Its Best



will absorb more of the vitamins and minerals from what you eat. What you put into your body is the most important part of a healthy lifestyle and can make all the difference in your weight loss efforts.

**Hydrate:** Water is crucial for weight loss. Your body uses water to process calories. Even mild dehydration may slow down your metabolism. In one study, according to WebMD, adults who drank eight or more glasses of water a day burned more calories than those who drank four. Some good tricks are to drink an 8oz. glass of water before each meal as well as one every hour. You can also snack on fresh fruits and vegetables which contain natural water as opposed to chips or pretzels. Water is super important if you are increasing your fiber intake to help with weight loss. Increasing fiber without increasing water intake will have an adverse effect and could leave you feeling bloated and gassy.

**Green Tea:** Research shows that drinking two to four cups of either green tea or oolong tea can rev up your metabolism for a couple of hours. Either tea

may push your body to burn 17% more calories during moderately intense exercise, says WebMD.

Caffeine and spicy foods can also raise your metabolism, but use these in moderation.

The bottom line is there are factors we can control when it comes to optimizing our metabolism. Around age 40, our metabolism begins to slow on its own. So, if you want to keep your machine running optimally, then follow the suggestions above and keep your metabolism running efficiently as possible. If you have any questions feel free to write or call me. If you are looking for training, I have openings and train small

groups as well as one on one sessions. Remember to be active and stay active!

*Lisa Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the bodies and minds of others. With over 20 years' experience as a group exercise leader and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, she is diverse and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation. Try some workouts, more ideas and recipes on Facebook: Lisa Turpin-Be Active Health & Fitness (@LisaTurpinFitness) or text at 850.974.2005.*

### LOCAL DINING

continued from page 22

preference, served in just the right portion sizes to share with another or to enjoy at home later. It's also allergy friendly with no added MSG and non-dairy. Garlic lovers will love the Garlic Pork on the Specials menu. And there's fun, tasty features such as Ginger Shrimp Glass Noodles (Goong Ob Won Sen), Pineapple Fried Rice or Stir-Fried Glass Noodles (Pad Woon Sen) all \$15.95. Perfect for a special meal with variety!

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 Wellness

# Testosterone is Good for the Heart

BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD  
 Some patients and doctors ask us about testosterone and its effects on the heart. Many patients (and some doctors) are mistakenly under the impression that testosterone increases the risk of heart problems. This article will hopefully dispel these



monary embolisms and more. Second, testosterone entered the news because of early deaths and aggression in bodybuilders. These negative results were due to the use of synthetic testosterone in doses up to 20x higher than the natural amounts found in our body. As we all know, too much of a good thing can be bad.

I would never recommend the use of synthetic testosterone even in physiologic doses. But bio-identical testosterone has the exact same chemical structure as our own body. This means we are putting the right kind of gas in the tank and we are not overfilling the tank.

This physiologic dose reduces the risk of disease across the board and makes patients feel fantastic. Testosterone helps with mood, concentration, libido, decreases depression, anxiety and pain and more. I find it crazy that people are afraid of it.

Go to [www.mayoclinicproceedings.org](http://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org) and search for "fundamental testosterone". Read the International Expert Consensus Resolutions on the use of testosterone from June 2016. See for yourself that among the top experts on the planet who have read every study on testosterone, they believe "evidence does not support increased risks of cardiovascular events", and "does not support increased risk of prostate cancer with T therapy." They also believe that testosterone therapy can improve "cardiometabolic disease, including diabetes"

Feel better, less disease, live longer. Why would anyone not consider this?

*Dr Richard Chern, MD has been treating patients with hormones for nearly 30 years. He has training specific to the use of testosterone in both men and women and is currently accepting new patients. Call for an appointment today at 850-837-1271.*

myths and explain how they came about.

There have been hundreds of studies looking at testosterone's effects on the heart and they are all reassuring. The Mayo Clinic has even reviewed every study to come up with recommendations based on the review of all studies involving testosterone. Their findings agree, testosterone is good for the heart.

Studies show low testosterone is associated with increased mortality from any cause. Low testosterone is associated with increased blood pressure, increased cholesterol, increased heart attacks, increased aggressiveness of prostate cancer, increased Alzheimer's, increased diabetes, and the list goes on.

As we increase testosterone, we can reduce death and disease across the board. So how did testosterone get a bad image. There are a couple reasons.

First, you need to know there are different types of testosterone. Testosterone shots are synthetic and because of this they react differently in the body from our natural testosterone. Think of your car. 87 octane, 93 octane and diesel are not the same and putting the wrong one in your car can cause major damage. The same is true when you put synthetic testosterone in your body instead of bio-identical testosterone. Clotting factors increase when using synthetic testosterone which can lead to stroke, heart attack, pul-

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## Ask Dr. Marty: Sugar



**QUESTION:** I am so confused about sugar. There seems to be an unending selection of sugars. Which ones are healthy? Which ones taste awful? Which ones will cause me to spend half my day in the bathroom?

**ANSWER:** There ARE a lot of choices. And of course, some are better choices than others. Which are the good guys and which are the bad guys? You practically need a degree in labelese to decipher the labels on sugar. So, confusion abounds, we throw our hands in the air and we drown our sorrows in peppermint patties! If you're like most people, it seems harder to resist sweets as we age, because the sensor for sweetness is the last to fade away.

You may have heard that sug-

ar is sugar. Not so. They differ in the way (and the speed with which) our bodies absorb sugar. And they differ in taste. Let me guide you through a list of sugars. The list starts with my least favorite and heads better and better from there.

Refined sugar is table sugar made from sugar cane or beets, refined honey and corn syrup. These sugars are empty calories and raise blood sugar very quickly, causing a sugar high and subsequent slump in energy. This blood sugar spike can cause hyperactivity in children. We just call it "stress" in adults. An excess of refined sugar can also result in diabetes, high triglycerides and cholesterol, high blood pressure and yeast issues, as well as a whole host of other problems.

Sugar alcohols, such as sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, erythritol and other "ols" tend to have a cool feel in the mouth and can cause some serious gastrointestinal discomfort (alias diarrhea) when eaten in excess.

Raw honey is a good alternative to other sweeteners unless you are an infant. Infantile botulism is a risk for babies. Raw honey has been helpful for many who suffer with seasonal allergies.

Barley malt, brown rice syrup, sorghum molasses, natural maple syrup, sucanat and maltose are all healthier sugars since they cause less of a spike in blood sugar and actually provide some minerals.

Agave juice is made from cactus and doesn't raise blood sugar. It has a very pleasant taste.

Stevia is a naturally sweet plant and comes in drops or mixed with sugar alcohols such as erythritol. Try different brands until you find one that has a flavor you like.

We all know that candy is almost pure sugar. And you might not know that a 12-ounce soft drink can have 10 teaspoons or more sugar in it. But don't let the sugars in processed food creep up on you. Food processors know that sugar can be addictive and often add sugars into foods you might not suspect. Become an expert in labelese. Yes. It is a foreign language. But it's worth the effort.

**Hot Tip:** Even good sugar should be kept to a minimum.

Sugar lowers immune system function, which is evidenced by a lower white blood cell count.

Stay well.

*Marty Kernion, Ph.D. is not a medical doctor. She has a doctorate in naturopathy. Naturopathy uses natural, gentle ways to bring our bodies back into balance so that they have the God-given ability to heal themselves. She is a retired professor of herbal medicine and nutrition and has written 39 college level courses in natural approaches to health. She has published two books on natural health and can be reached on [askdoctormarty@cox.net](mailto:askdoctormarty@cox.net) for scheduling a class or consultation, or for sending in your questions for this column.*

## Hurlburt Field Airman Leadership School Helps CIC Kids

Students from the Hurlburt Field Airman Leadership School held a food and paper products drive to help the kids living at the Children In Crisis Neighborhood. According to Ken Hair, CIC President & CEO, "The donation helped provide our at-risk kids with needed items at a very difficult time. The donation was timed so that our children would have needed items throughout the year and truly makes a difference. We are very thankful." Children in Crisis, Inc. is a 501(c)(3), non-profit charity of caring people working together to provide homes and establish hope to the abused, neglected, and abandoned children of our community. The Children's Neighborhood is a beautiful facility, built by the generous support of our community. To learn more about Children in Crisis, call 850-864-4242 or visit [www.childrenin-crisisfl.org](http://www.childrenin-crisisfl.org).



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 Wellness


## The All or Nothing Trap

time. Life is not made of 100% success or failure but of small, consistent steps in a healthier direction over time.

All or nothing thinking is a rigid trap that keeps you from making reasonable progress toward life change. All or nothing thinking invites you to quit and view yourself as a failure any time you behave inconsistently with your goals. A flexible, gracious mindset will produce obvious, life-giving change over weeks, months and years. Flexible, gracious thinking allows you to notice when you've gone off track, to understand resistance to progress, and to repetitively get back on track as needed. Flexible, gracious thinking allows you to celebrate any steps toward change as success even if you haven't taken those steps 100% of the time.

Don't worry. You aren't alone if you're struggling with all or nothing thinking. The social media saturated culture encourages you to believe that others have it all together with the perfect family, body, mindset, food, parenting, business, home or life and you're in the minority who just hasn't found the perfect formula. But, the truth of being human is EVERY person struggles and there is no secret formula.



So, how do you move from the prison of all or nothing thinking to the freedom of flexible, gracious thinking?

### 5 Ways to Increase Flexible, Gracious Thinking:

**Acknowledge your humanity.** Expect struggles. Remember your brain is created for growth and change. Knowledge and mastery are learned through experience. Stop expecting yourself to be good at things without having learned and practiced over time.

**Set reasonable expectations for change.** Your brain requires 1-2 months of

consistently doing something a new way to create and sustain change. Continue those practices for months to follow to make them a lifestyle. Expecting massive change in short periods of time creates discouragement and quitting.

**Create flexible goals for growth.** I want to eat healthier 80% of the time instead of I must eat healthy at every meal, seven days per week. I want to engage in one personal/spiritual growth discipline 3-5 times per week instead of I want to spend 1 hour per day, seven days per week on said discipline.

**Measure every morsel of success.** Every single movement in a healthier direction adds up to sustained change and progress over time. I am proud of myself for eating healthy breakfast and dinner today instead of I'm quitting healthy eating, because I ate cake for lunch. I am proud of myself for reducing compulsive spending from 1-2 times per week to 1-2 times this month instead of I

can't believe I didn't follow my budget perfectly so I'm giving up on intentional spending.

**Use the same kindness you'd offer to a friend when talking to yourself.** Judgmental and negative self-talk is self-defeating, unmotivating and promotes a downward emotional spiral. Change takes time and I'm capable of learning new things instead of I'll never get this right and I always screw up. Everyone takes steps backward in their journey forward and I'm gaining wisdom in the journey instead of I'm a failure and won't ever change.

As you try increasing flexibility and grace in your process of change, remember there is no perfection in humanity, not even in being flexible and gracious toward yourself! If you need support along your journey of change, Journey Bravely has coaching and counseling sessions available to help you. Connect with us at [journeybravely.com](http://journeybravely.com).

BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,  
JOURNEY BRAVELY

Are you already over hope for new year possibilities? Maybe 2021 is already draining you and feeling like a punch in the gut. Sometimes you round New Years with ideas, goals and energy for something new only to be met with resistance, sick season, negative thinking and more of the same from last year.

You start your new exercise program and miss day 5 and have a hard time getting back on track, because you're telling yourself you blew it. You've changed your drinking/smoking/spending/eating habits for two weeks and then slip up and tell yourself to forget it because you can never get it right all the time. You're left discouraged, disempowered and depressed.

There's hopeful and empowering news! Perfection is not reality for humans. You aren't going to get anything right every

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BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

Investors are, and have for some time, been hearing and seeing a lot about green and clean energy. Green energy is also known as renewable energy or not expendable like a fossil fuel. Examples of green or renewable energy include solar energy, wind energy and hydroelectric energy. These are not only considered green, as in good for the environment, but also clean in that the carbon emissions are low to none. As industrialized nations look to ensure the quality of their air, green energy sources are growing in focus and importance. Cleaner energy, while not necessarily green or renewable, has much lower emissions. The best example of that is natural gas.

As the world continues its focus on greener or cleaner energy, an increased demand has been placed on these sources. Electric utilities, which produce the electricity for homes, businesses and now cars historically have depended heavily on coal to generate electricity. Simply put, they would make electricity by burning coal which creates the steam that turns the turbine that produces the electricity.

Coal has been replaced at an increasing rate by wind, solar and natural gas and this is likely to continue and accelerate. Add to that, the new administration in Washington is placing great emphasis on green energy and that has implications for investors as well. We will attempt to cover those for you here.

**WIND ENERGY.** Have you ever seen the huge windmills that might dot the scenery as you drive across certain areas of the country? They are prevalent in the desert. (Driving from Palm Springs to Los Angeles you can see hundreds of them from Interstate 10). Those are known as windfarms. And you are beginning to see several dot the waters offshore as well. Many large oil

## Investing in Greener and Cleaner Energy

and gas firms have significantly increased their investment in wind energy. They are doing this by investing in wind farms as well as investing in or buying smaller companies that specialize in wind energy. There are stocks that investors can explore as well as funds that invest in wind energy. Those huge blades turn in reaction to the wind that generates the force to turn the turbine to create the electricity. This is seen as a renewable source as well as environmentally better. One caveat: As the wind blades reach the end of life, their disposal is typically done so by burying them and they cannot be recycled.

**SOLAR ENERGY.** Solar energy, simply put, is using the sun as it interacts with special panels that make electricity that is used by utilities in their system or stored in a battery. Solar energy can also be used to heat water as well. There are a multitude of companies that have sprung up as well as major investments being made by established energy firms. Solar's growing advantage is its cost. A recent report produced by Wood Mackenzie states that by 2030, solar is likely to be the cheapest form of energy to produce. Aside from that, the only known concerns are the batteries (the availability and environmental impact of extracting the special materials required to make them) and their disposal.

**HYDROELECTRIC ENERGY.** This form of renewable or clean energy is created by the building of dams that build up a water supply which runs over or through the dam. Again, this energy is created by the turbines that create electricity. This type of renewable energy has been about for some time. There are several examples around the nation, the Hoover Dam is a famous example. There are also many that are along the Columbia River which runs between Washington and Oregon. The Tennessee Valley Authority, according to TVA.com was created in the 1930s. It has a network of dams that supply renewable electricity to many parts of the southeastern U.S. It also supplies other forms of electricity. The criticism that hydroelectric power sometimes draws is that it disturbs the natural environment and can have long term implications as a result.



**NATURAL GAS.** Natural gas has sometimes been referred to as a transition energy mainly for electric utilities to burn in place of coal (and eventually relying more on wind and solar as an example). Natural gas consumption (along with wind and solar) has proportionately replaced coal at many electric utilities for the past decade. Many expect this trend to grow. Natural gas not only has lower emissions, but it is seen (at least currently) as cheap and abundant. Many U.S. and international firms have developed extensive search and production capacity as a result. Natural gas is now produced in a liquid state (liquefied natural gas or LNG) making it more easily transportable overseas. An increasing amount of the energy demand from China and India (and others) is being met by LNG. There are investment opportunities through stocks and funds should you want to make that part of your allocation.

We have not touched on nuclear energy, which has some significance in electricity generation in the U.S. and in some places in the world. Many U.S. utilities still utilize nuclear energy. France is heavily dependent upon nuclear energy. According to France 24, nuclear energy makes up 75% of its energy generating capacity. French President Emmanuel Macron, however, has pledged to reduce that to 50% by 2035. Will that come from green or clean energy?

Changes in types of energy consumption also are being driven by electric vehicles (EV). Many EV stocks saw significant appreciation and growth in 2020. That was driven by the attraction to clean burning vehicles, but also the innovative artificial intelligence utilized in those vehicles. The future potentially includes autonomous driving vehicles as well.


According to the IEA, the top three consumers of energy in the world (in order) are China, the USA and India. These countries most likely will consume more energy by 2030 than they use today. The question becomes what forms will that energy take? It is likely to be an increase of all three of the sources spoken to in this writing. Investors and or their advisors can do additional research and help plan as to whether these investments might play a part in their long-term plan.

Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management and Raymond James and he resides in Grayton Beach. He has been in financial services for over 33 years. His main office is located at First Florida Bank, a division of the First, A National Banking Association, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32541 with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City, Pensacola, Tallahassee and Moultrie, Ga. Phone 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: [Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com](mailto:Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com). Securities offered through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC, and are not insured by bank insurance, the FDIC or any other government agency, are not deposits or obligations of the bank, and are subject to risks, including

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 Business


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Now is a really good time to revisit the ACES for a few reasons: One, it’s a great time to pick up a short-term and/or a long-term investment property in our area. It’s reported that 1000 people a day are moving to Florida and they’ve gotta live somewhere! Plus, we’re getting more visitors during this health event, because many now can work from home and, better yet, from our beaches! And two,



BY GAIL PELTO

This is a reminder article because the timing is good. A few years back, I wrote a three-part series in *Destin Life* on “why” real estate is a great investment vehicle. I called it the A.C.E.S Plus of Real Estate and here is what the acronym stands for and why A.C.E.S. is timely:

**A=Appreciation.** Normally real estate goes up in value, thus off-setting inflation.

**C= Cash flow.** We can rent a property out and have some extra cash flow every month, AND somebody else paying the bills.

**E= Equity build-up.** If you have a tenant paying you rent, not only are they giving you cash flow, but they’re also

if you have equity built up in your home, with interest rates so low, doing a cash out refinance might be a great way to buy an investment property with little or no out-of-pocket monies. What a great way to start or add to your investment portfolio, right?! So, if you are thinking about investing, it’s the perfect time to stop thinking and act

now! Call me—I can help you navigate through the process. You can also find the complete A.C.E.S. Plus of real estate investing articles on the *Destin Life* website – go to [mydestinlife.com](http://mydestinlife.com) and search A.C.E.S.

Full disclosure...although I’m a great real estate agent, I am not a CPA, attorney or tax advisor. So, please seek the ad-

vice from a person who is confident and licensed in those areas before making any investment decisions...and do that soon!

*Gail Pelto is a full-time real estate agent with Keller Williams and a board member with both the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and The Rotary Club of Destin. If you have questions about real estate, call her at (850) 374-0454.*

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# Your Defense Against the Tyranny of Mediocrity



BY RICKY HARPER, C12

*“Behold the turtle; he only makes progress when he sticks his neck out.”*  
—James Bryant Conant

How do you improve as a leader? How do you increase your business acumen? What is your process or strategy for growth? What I am really asking is, what is your defense against the tyranny of mediocrity?

One of the most important and overlooked aspects of leadership is professional development. The irony is that it is not hard to have and execute an effective plan for development as there are many options for business leaders and owners, college courses, leadership seminars, and truckloads of books. You do not have to look far to find opportunities for improvement, development, assistance and growth. But you must look.

And then there is coaching. Coaching comes in many forms, business, life, executive, health, leadership, spiritual and many more. Coaching is an intentional and disciplined path to professional development and is usually very effective. These programs have been professionally developed over decades and most are high-quality, results-driven sys-

tems that almost any leader will find helpful, if not life changing.

Of the many types of coaching available, I believe Peer Advisory is the most effective. Why? Because you are not placing your development into the hands of one person. When you join a Peer Advisory group, you receive coaching through collective wisdom. Joining a Peer Advisory group offers you a ‘sounding board’ of 10 or 12 or more experienced, successful and like-minded ‘coaches’ who are available to you every day, often for less than the price of a single business coach.

The C12 Group offers Peer Advisory based on what we call a ‘Buffalo Culture.’ Our philosophy is to run at or charge one’s storms before they intensify and become more difficult to overcome. Your Peer Advisory group becomes your ‘herd,’ running with you, watching your back. C12 is designed for Christian owners and CEOs. There are secular Peer Advisory groups as well such as Vistage which is an excellent choice.

At C12, we sharpen each other by ‘charging’ into each other’s issues and gaps and doing so with “truth in love,” which is a biblical concept that we live out every day. In a C12 Peer Advisory group, we learn together and from each other, we challenge and hold each other accountable, and we do it with boldness, directness and a focus on excellence that is born of our desire to serve and honor God.

Mark Farley, co-founder of Tile said in a 2017 Inc. article, “I’ve worked hard to build a strong board of directors, all of whom have relevant business experience. But your corporate board is not there to give you ad-

vice. They have a fiduciary duty to hold you accountable and keep you moving forward in the right direction. When you’re facing a hairy problem, you need to talk with someone who is 100 percent objective and doesn’t have his or her own agenda. That’s when

you need your own personal sounding board.”

What will you do differently this year? How will you lead better? Visit a local C12 Peer Advisory group and start investing in yourself, your business, your marriage and your walk with God.

*“Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. It will not only improve your life, it will improve the lives of all those around you.”* — Robin Sharma



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 Environment

## Day 22



BY MATTHEW VANDERFORD,  
CLAIMOLOGY

Day 22. Where do you stand? Where do you stand 22 days after a disaster hits your life? Do you remember where you were 22 days after hurricane Michael? You might not. And that's ok. Hurricane Michael affected each one of us differently. For some it was, and is, the most life changing event they've ever

known. For others, it was just another news story. But either way, there was a cause and effect. A cause that shook the lives for some, and an effect that only shook headlines for others.

I remember Hurricane Michael for several reasons. One of those reasons is due to the amount of damage that ravaged the area. I witnessed multiple towns, for miles and miles, one after another, reel from the massive CAT 5 hurricane that ran like a blowing ball up the Panhandle 231/71 Corridor. The stories I've heard of those who decided to ride it out are pretty intense. Real Florida Man Style intense. One of my dearest friends decided to be just one of those Florida men. When I asked him, "When did you know you it was bad?" He replied, "When I saw a fridge go by my house at 175 miles

per hour." When I asked him if he would do it again, he simply replied, "Yes I would." Real Florida man style indeed. I'm not sure what this says about me or my circle of friends. But one thing's for certain. I'm so very grateful to have that person in my corner.

22 days after Hurricane Michael made landfall in the Mexico Beach area, I was going through one of the most intense internal upheavals of my life—my very own personal Hurricane Michael, if you will. This hurricane, this force of nature, took my entire life, put it in a blender, hit the pulse button a few times and then poured on a tray and said, "Now go make art."

The three-year insurance claim filing and supplemental deadline for hurricane Michael victims was a recent topic of conversation which prompted this column. The supplemental and claim filing deadline topic came up during my weekly

Master Networks meeting. I call that weekly meeting business therapy. It's a great place to grow a holistic approach where business and life are not things to be seen as separate, but as one energy that gets divided depending on where we place our focused attention. It's a place where one can be as vulnerable as they wish while tending to the garden of their life's business. It's the vulnerable places where we grow the most.

Hurricane Michael, my own personal Hurricane Michael, it laid me bare. It dropped me to my hands and knees. It had me adding to the salt of the Gulf through the tears I shed while facing the aftermath of a life lived focused on self and not others. The lessons I learned from that storm have forever altered this life's trajectory. It's the lessons of those choices, and the lessons learned while helping others in their times of tragedy, that I wish to relay, so that others may receive a bit of help,

maybe a ray of hope during those events that seem to take us for a ride from time to time.

Hurricane Michael, the actual CAT 5 Michael is still affecting the area. Claims remain unsettled, lives remain forever altered, physically and geographically. Hurricane Michael has become a name and a notch to add to the belts of those Real Florida men and women who have ridden the winds and waves of life. Right through the eye of the storm, and out the other side.

If we could see the result of the life that comes after the storm, we couldn't appreciate the joy that comes from doing the work that life demands to mend the walls of our gardens, to tend the soil of our souls.

Here's to lives well lived and souls well cared for. To healing and friendships forged. To new beginnings in this new year.

### CLAIMOLOGY

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For over a decade, Matthew Vanderford has worked in the Construction, Restoration and Insurance Industries as an Insurance Company Preferred Vendor, Insurance Industry Continuing Education Instructor, Public Adjuster/ Policy Holder Advocate and Licensed Contractor. He's proud to call Destin his home, with his wife Candice and four children: Matthew, Blake, Jordan and Scarlett.

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## Public Relations Foundation to Award Scholarship

The Emerald Coast Public Relations Foundation awards a \$1,000 scholarship to graduating seniors planning to pursue a college degree in the areas of public relations, communication, marketing or journalism. Applicants must be high school

seniors residing in Okaloosa, Walton or Santa Rosa counties, with a GPA of 3.5 or higher, a U.S. citizen, and planning to pursue studies in public relations, communication, marketing or journalism. In addition, applicants are required to sub-



mit a brief essay addressing an ethical issue in public relations or journalism and a list of demonstrated leadership or community service. The award will be paid directly to the college or university to which the recipient has registered. The Foundation has, in the past few years, awarded six \$1,000 scholarships to graduating seniors from Crestview, Niceville, Pace, Choctawhatchee and Fort Walton Beach High Schools. Deadline for applications, electronically or by mail, is Monday, March 15, 2021. The application and additional information are available in high school guidance counselors' offices and at [www.ecpro.org](http://www.ecpro.org). The Emerald Coast Public Relations Foundation is a 501©3 non-profit charitable organization established to support education and advancement in public relations and related fields.



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*"Because the ones who want to change the world are not afraid to get out in it."*



# What Ever Happened to Freedom of Speech?



BY MYRNA CONRAD

What does freedom of speech mean? We all have the ability to say or express whatever we want to in any country. However, there are varying degrees of repercussions and consequences within the legal system of various governments. In the U.S., the First Amendment addresses our rights, within our country, to exercise freedom of speech. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievance.” Generally speaking, the “abridging the freedom of speech” portion of this Amendment means that “the government may not jail, fine or impose civil liability on people or organizations based on what they say or write except in exceptional circumstances.” [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org)

The U.S. Supreme Court has sometimes had to struggle with what constitutes protected speech and what falls within those exceptional circumstances. There have been many legal cases throughout the years to determine what freedom of speech includes and what it does not include. Some of these cases can be found on [www.uscourts.gov](http://www.uscourts.gov). With all liberties come responsibility and consequences. If freedom of speech is not used wisely and thoughtfully, people can be harmed and this very freedom we gratefully embrace can be used to oppress and destroy.

So, why is freedom of speech so important? Our nation’s government was set up to be representative of the people therein. It was supposed to be, as expressed by Abraham Lincoln, “a government of the people,

by the people, for the people.” That the people of our United States have a voice to express their views, ideas and concerns without the fear of being censored or persecuted is imperative to the liberties that we hold dear in our country.

I don’t know about you, but I have been astounded and very concerned about the stripping away of this freedom that has been evidenced over the last year. It seems that more and more, people are being censored and persecuted if their expressions do not line up with those who disagree. Just over the last month, people have been publicly vilified, physically attacked, lost their jobs, or banned from social media. Some social media platforms have been shut out and shut down, and friends, and even family, have turned on each other all because of what was said or expressed.

People used to be able to agree to disagree, but it seems not anymore. Today it seems it is “my way or the highway.” In fact, it is through the sharing and expression of different ideas and thoughts that we learn and grow. It is so important for all people to be able to express their ideas, thoughts and opinions, but to do it with a measure of kindness and consideration. We need to learn to listen if we want to also be heard. We need more communication and less confrontation.

Any privilege can be used for good or evil. Freedom of speech is a privilege, but only



if used to build up, not tear down our country, cities, families and friends. I love the advice that Paul gave in 1 Corinthians 10:23-24: “All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.” I think if we applied this same criteria to freedom of speech, we would see a change in ourselves and in our country.

So how do we practice our freedom to voice our ideas and opinions while at the same time respecting those of others?

**Be Aware:**

Be aware of your audience

and how they might receive and respond to what you want to say.

Understand what you believe about what you are standing for and why you believe it.

Be aware of how you process and respond to ideas that differ from your own.

Try to understand where the other person is coming from.

Be aware of your rights under the federal and your state Constitutions.

**Be Intentional:**

Be willing to listen and consider before you speak.

Choose your words carefully and use language that encourages and builds up instead of offends and tears down.

Take responsibility for what you say and do.

Never take your freedoms for granted. Stand up for them with respect and enjoy them with discernment and wisdom.

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 Musings

## End of the Loaf



BY RICK MOORE

I have two older brothers. All three of us are less than a year and a half apart. My little sister is eleven years younger than me. During our elementary school days, many mornings my brothers and I would fight (yes, literally) over who had to eat the end of the loaf of bread. It was supposed to be an orderly affair. Af-

ter all the other bread was gone, if it was your turn to put some bread in the toaster, and there was only one sad, paper-thin, crinkled-up, over-cooked end of the loaf, it was yours. Our mother made sure we did not throw it away and open up a new loaf of bread.

Some think I've always been calm and kind. Nothing could be further from the truth. I stood up to my older brothers many times. Yet, they were so much stronger than me, and they could usually make me do whatever they wanted to. That included taking the end of the loaf, even if it wasn't my turn. Maybe if this had been a really important issue, like who gets the prize at the bottom of the cereal box, I would have put up a fight, even if I would have lost. I wasn't afraid to fight. But instead, I agreed to be the one



to eat the ends of every loaf of bread. This tradition continued all the way through high school when my brothers and I went our separate ways.

Just a few months before my wedding day, my fiancée joined me at my mom and dad's house for breakfast. My sister, who at that time was just about to enter her teen years, helped make the

breakfast. As we sat down, she brought over a saucer with toast on it and said, "just like you always liked it." I laughed and said that's funny. She said, "you do like the ends of the loaf don't you?" At that moment, it occurred to me she was being serious. She never knew why I ate the ends of the loaf. She really thought I liked the taste of the ends better than the rest of the bread. I then smiled and said, yes, the ends are my favorite. I didn't tell anyone the back-story. For years, even my wife thought I actually loved the taste of the end of the loaf better than the rest of the bread.

As the years went along, my children became old enough to make their own toast. They definitely didn't like to eat the ends of the loaf anymore than my brothers did. They always left the ends for me. When my children read this they will question if I'm telling the truth because they really believe I like the ends better. I suppose, in a way, they

would be right. I really wasn't lying when I would tell my sister the ends are my favorite. But not because the ends taste better. It was because the ends of the loaf represented something to me.

Eating the ends was proof that I knew how to be kind. Many years ago, my elementary school teacher, Mrs. Turner, had challenged everyone in the class to do something that week that proved they were kind. Chances are, I'm the only one in the class who thought of eating the ends of the loaf of bread.

There are things worth fighting for. But the very most important things in life are worth "not" fighting for. What is your proof that you know how to be kind? Could you prove in a court of law that you were kind today? If nothing comes to mind, try volunteering to eat an end of the loaf. It may not taste great, but it sure will make you feel great.

*Rick Moore is Communications Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.*

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## Smoke on the Coast Identifies 15 Benefitting 2021 Charities

Fifteen local non-profit organizations have been selected to compete for more than \$85,000 in cash prizes at the 10th annual Smoke on the Coast BBQ & Fireworks Festival. Each non-profit organization teams up with a restaurant or BBQ aficionado and fires up their grills for years' worth of "Best BBQ" bragging rights. Join Destin Commons in supporting the local charities by feeding the parking meters at Destin Commons and attending Smoke on the Coast 2021, where you can cast your vote for your favorite BBQ team, support the mission and enjoy a day of family fun.

"Destin Commons is fired up and ready for a great Smoke on the Coast celebration this year. This event is an exceptional way for area nonprofits to educate the public of their mission and enjoy a fun-filled day of friendly competition. Through Destin Commons' Coins for a Cause initiative, we were able to donate \$85,000 to area charities at Smoke on the Coast 2019. By plugging the meters at Destin Commons, you are making a difference in our community." - Brooke Zannis, Marketing Manager, Destin Commons

**Below are the 15 non-profits organizations, along with their BBQ teams:**

- Air Force Enlisted Village & Knife's Edge
- Children in Crisis & B&C Fire Safety
- Dog Harmony & Café Rico
- Emerald Coast Science Center & Bow Tie BBQ & Catering
- Gulf Coast Council of the Boy Scouts of America & Smok'n Scouts Barbeque Crew
- Habitat for Humanity & Construction Crew
- Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida & Pallet Bar and Grill
- Jobs4U & Lillie's Q
- Niceville/Valparaiso Rotary Club
- Rotary Club of Destin
- Taylor Haugen Foundation & Century 21 Blue Marlin Pelican
- The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast & Smoke 'N Whiskey
- The Implant Truth Survivors & Chef Matthew Gourmet
- Toys for Tots & Bass Pro Shops
- United 4 A Good Cause & Conexion Media Group

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# Love



BY SEAN DIETRICH

We were newlyweds, living in a grungy apartment.

Each morning, I would wake before her. I would pass my morning hours writing poetry on a yellow legal pad, sipping coffee.

Mostly, I'd write the kinds of god-awful things you'd expect newlyweds to write. I'm talking painfully corny stuff. I'd leave these poems on slips of paper scattered throughout our apartment for her to find.

One such poem read:

“Together, the two of us,  
“In thought, and deed, and breath, and heart,  
“Shall never be lacerated apart.”

Gag me with a number-two pencil. “Lacerated?” What kind of a dork uses that word? In fact, I'm not certain this verb works in this particular case.

LACERATE [verb: las-uh-reyt] lac'er at'ed, lac'er at'ing  
1. to tear; mangle; rip. Example: “Hey dude, that poem you wrote really freakin' lacerated.”

My wife saved all my crummy poems in a shoebox, and today they reside in a storage closet.

Anyway, when we first married we lived in an apartment that smelled like dead squirrels, and I am not being figurative. I mean our apartment actually had a nest of decomposing squirrels in the attic above our master bedroom.

The place was tiny, about as ugly as homemade underpants. The tenant before us had painted the walls black and greenish-gray. Sherwin Williams officially titled this color “Seasick Granite®.”

When we moved in, we made the place our own. We painted the walls brown and khaki. We bought a used coffee table and some scented candles.

My friend, Chubbs, found an

old console television on the side of the road. I was lucky enough to claim the TV before the garbage man came.

The thing was heavier than a dead man, but we got it up the stairs. Chubbs, however, would suffer from severe disc degenerative problems for the rest of his life.

Our building sat across the street from a Waffle House, a Chick-fil-A, and an ice cream shop. And this is why we gained nearly fifty pounds within our first year of marriage.

We never went to the movies because we didn't have the money. We ate Hamburger Helper without hamburger sometimes.

We saved our cash for a new window unit AC—our air conditioner was on the fritz. The thing would only work on days of the week beginning with “R.”

On weekends, every weekend, we ate donuts. It was our simple ritual, and I loved it. Krispy Kreme was only a stone's throw from us, and when the hot-and-ready light would glow, by dog, we were there.

Over donuts, we would talk for hours about nothing. Heavy doses of sugar can do things to the human mind, it can make a person honest. She told me all her stories. I told her mine. You can do a lot of soul-searching over crullers and chocolate cake donuts.

My professional life was non-existent, I took whatever jobs I could get. I spent days crawling rooflines, swing-

ing a hammer, or operating a commercial lawn mower. She worked as a preschool teacher at church, or in a kitchen.

For extra income, I played piano at a Baptist church on Sundays, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights, Thursday night choir practices, and Saturday night prayer meetings. All the while we were learning things about each other. Important things.

We learned how to argue in the middle of a Winn-Dixie, and how to attend three Thanksgivings in one day. How to share a sunset, seated on the hood of a truck. How to read in bed with a flimsy battery-powered book light.

We learned how to travel together with paper maps. And after years of practice, we finally learned how to make a bed together without me getting murdered.

We learned how to hold each other when a loved one die. We learned how to sit together—me reading a magazine, her playing a crossword puzzle. We learned how to wring our hands in hospital waiting rooms. We learned how to bury dogs with a shovel and a burial sheet.

We learned how to make a life together.

A lot has changed since those days, but I still wake early in the mornings to write. I don't use a legal pad anymore, I use a laptop.

This morning, however, I did not write. Instead, I sifted through our storage closet. I



found things. An old coffee-tin sewing kit, some scented candles, love poems, and the picture of a young man and his new wife in their first apartment.

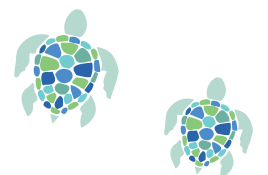
In the picture, the place had ugly gray walls, but that's the only ugly thing about this photo. He's holding her. She's holding him. They are young. Their skin is smooth. I wish I could tell you how much I love these two people in the picture.

I wish you could see their faces, and their punch-drunk smiles. You can tell they belong

together by looking at them. You simply know that their names should never be said separately.

It's as though nothing bad in this life can ever touch them. As though the two of them, in thought, and deed, and breath, and heart, shall never be lacerated apart.

The word is growing on me.



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Arts & Music

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for your painting and in addition, a still life will be set up for those who would like to paint from life.

**Anime and Basics of Drawing** - MJ Montgomery. Thursdays 3:30 - 5 p.m. Introduction to character design. Basics of how to draw characters, explore the history of anime. Supplies provided for the initial class.

**Basics and Essentials In Oil Painting** - Ed Nickerson.

Fridays 10 a.m. - Noon. \$25 plus supplies. How to develop a good painting, and interpreting what you see. Using a combination of drawing and paint. Limited palette. Beginners and those looking to reach the next level are welcome. Ed\_Nickerson@hotmail.com or text: 850-420-9606 to reserve space and more details.

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3/18-3/19/21 Weekday Acrylic Pours two part, Marcy Breault

3/20/21 Book Writing workshop and signing with Eliza Scallia

3/27/21 Spring Illuminotes - Calligraphy with Elia Saxer

Monthly workshops may include calligraphy, watercolor, monoprints, mixed media, sip & paint, acrylic pours. All students attending a workshop or continuing classes receive a 10% discount. NWFS art students and local Jr. High and Sr. High art students receive a 10% artist discount with proof of ID.

## Upcoming Classes at Big Orange House Designs Niceville

**Feb. 23: Macrame Wall Hanging.** Come and learn lots of NEW KNOTS to accomplish this fun wall hanging! \$63.90.

**Feb. 24-March 31: Pottery Series.** Join us for Laurel's POTTERY Series! 6-week journey of creativity! \$255.60.

**Feb. 25: Glass Art Word Board.** What is your WORD for 2021? \$58.85.

**Feb. 26: Open Studio Glass Art (5x7).** Glass on Glass FUN- no experience necessary- just bring your ideas! \$47.92.

**Feb. 26: PRIVATE Glass Art "Coyote Pack."** Join us for FUN creating! \$21.40

**Feb. 26: PRIVATE Glass Art "Coyote Pack."** Make a personalized glass art HEART- or whatever design you would like. \$32.10.

**Feb, 27: Kids Paint-TURTLES!** Bring your kids to have FUN CREATING this sea themed painting! \$19.26.

**Feb 27: FAMILY Glass Art.** Join us to make GLASS ART w/Ang! \$37.45.

**March 6: PRIVATE Wall Hanging (Vanessa).** Come and learn lots of NEW KNOTS to accomplish this fun wall-hanging! \$53.50.

**March 13: Quilting Bee (Private Group).** Join us to CREATE with hostess Lauren. \$37.45.

To book your fun and creative class, visit bigorangehousesdesigns.com.



# Studio 237 Music Lessons: **The Sound of Love**

**“L-O-V-E”** and **“Unforgettable”** by Nat King Cole. So much fun to sing to your significant other! And of course, the one you love is always unforgettable.

**“Loyal”** by Lauren Daigle. A song about God’s loyal, dedicated and unfailing love through people for each other.

**“At Last”** by Etta James who rejoices deep in her heart about finding and embracing true love.

**“Something”** by the Beatles. George Harrison artfully describes, by melody and words, the qualities that magnetically infatuate persons to each other. It reminds me of the “Love at First Sight” phenomena. Like when Cupid shoots his arrow of love.

**“Valentines Day”** by Steve Earle. This humorous song is about excuses of forgetfulness, IOU’s, and at the same time, one’s loving heart. Steve sings it with such honesty and tenderness that one is compelled to forgive him.

**“All of Me”** by John Legend. An enchanting song about his eternal devotion and unconditional love to his wife. He is a true romantic.

**“Valentine”** by Willie Nelson. A cute folk song about simple child-like love including candy hearts and sweetness.

**“Valentine”** by Train. Sure to brighten your day and make you dance to a 1950’s rhythm and blues doo wop beat. Very fun!

**“For Once in My Life”** by Stevie Wonder. It only takes one person to positively change another person’s life. Uplifting.

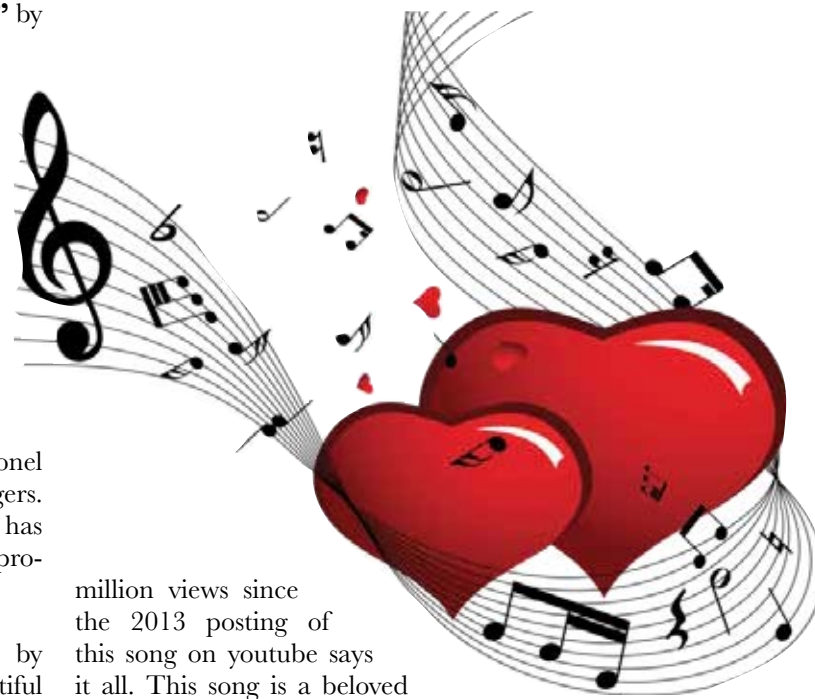
**“I will Always Love You”** originally written and sung by Dolly Parton and covered in 1992 by Whitney Houston. This song touches the inner soul.

**“Lady”** written by Lionel Richie / sung by Kenny Rogers. My knight in shining armor has gallantly arrived and will protect me forevermore! Yay!

**“A Thousand Years”** by Christina Perry. A beautiful breath-taking song about a love worth waiting for.

**“When a Man Loves a Woman”** by Percy Sledge. He gives everything and will do anything he can for the one he loves. Wow!

**“Can’t Help Falling in Love”** by Elvis Presley. 263+



million views since the 2013 posting of this song on youtube says it all. This song is a beloved timeless classic.

Musicians often write from personal heartfelt experiences. I am thankful for all the endearing love songs which may have touched, healed, and lifted people’s hearts. What would this world be like without them? I can only imagine.

*Since 2011, Studio 237 Music has been providing private lessons to people of all ages in Santa Rosa Beach and the surrounding communities. For more info or to schedule a visit, call Ray or Lisa Cyr at 850.231.3199, email: [studio237music@gmail.com](mailto:studio237music@gmail.com) and visit [www.Studio237Music.com](http://www.Studio237Music.com).*

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 Arts & Music

# 2021 Sundance Film Festival Movies and Where to See Them

By DR. DAVID SIMMONS,  
PROFESSOR OF FILM STUDIES,  
NWFSC

The 2021 Sundance Film Festival was different from all other years. Instead of flying to the snow-covered mountains of Park City, Utah, as I have several times before, I was able to stream 17 films during the six days it ran (Jan. 28-Feb. 2). I sat on my couch and enjoyed them as I ate popcorn, without anyone coughing on me or talking during the movie.

Below are three of those films (and a fourth I saw at another streaming film festival) and where you can watch them right now.

## Judas and the Black Messiah (Shaka King, \*\*\*\*)

In 1968, when Bill O'Neal (LaKeith Stanfield) gets arrested for impersonating a federal officer and stealing a car, F.B.I. agent Roy Mitchell (Jesse Plemons) cuts him a deal: you can face five years in prison or infiltrate the Chicago Black Panthers and get close to Chairman Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya). O'Neal strikes the Judas bargain and chooses the latter. While Hampton's organization is feeding poverty-stricken school children and seeking the means for a new community hospital, Hoover's F.B.I. is carrying out his orders of white supremacy, while backed by corrupt state power. LaKeith

Stanfield and Daniel Kaluuya undoubtedly will be nominated for their powder-keg performances. Judas and the Black Messiah resonates with great insight, not only into the systemic racism of the criminal justice system fifty years ago, but into our own system today.

(Playing at the AMC Destin Commons and streaming on HBO Max).

## Land (Robin Wright, \*\*\* ½)

Director Robin Wright also plays Edee, a woman who has gone through an unspeakable trauma, of which she never wants to speak again. She throws her cell phone away and moves to an extremely remote mountain cabin in Alberta, Canada, to isolate herself from other



Courtesy of the Sundance Film Festival

people forever. At one point, as she is close to death, a hunter named Miguel (Demian Bichir) stumbles onto her and nurses her back to life. When she asks why he helped her, he responds, "Because you were in my path." This film is about how compassion and community are what help us to safely land.

(Playing at the AMC Destin Commons, and streaming in early March on Amazon, iTunes, YouTube, Google Play and Vudu).

## The World to Come (Mona Fastvold, \*\*\* ½)

A haunting period love story set in the bleak farming world of upstate NY in 1856. After Abigail (Katherine Waterston), who is married to the indifferent Dyer (Casey Affleck), loses their age 5 daughter to diphtheria, the only thing that cheers her up are visits from her neighbor, Tallie (Vanessa Kirby), who is

married to the demanding Finney (Christopher Abbott). Abigail and Tallie first find solace in each other and then, a deep, meaningful love. But can a love like this abide in such a harsh, patriarchal world?

(Playing at the AMC Destin Commons and streaming on March 2, likely on Amazon, iTunes, and YouTube).

## Supernova (Harry Macqueen, \*\*\*\*)

One of the most moving films of the year. Sam (Colin Firth) and Tusker (Stanley Tucci) are a longtime couple traveling through England's Lake District in their RV, so Sam can perform a piano concert. As they journey through the majestic countryside, they also navigate through Tusker's early-onset dementia. This film tenderly looks at universal themes like love, death and dignity. It is one of the best films I know for getting at the heart of early-onset dementia. If love is based on identity, what happens if the one you love is no longer there, replaced by a different person who looks like them?

(Playing at the AMC Destin Commons and streaming on Feb. 16th, for \$3.99 on Amazon, iTunes, YouTube, Vudu and Google Play).

## The Cheesiest Event of the Year Returns!

Thought macaroni and cheese was just for kids? Think again! Join other Mac & Cheese lovers at the **3rd Annual Mac & Cheese Festival** benefiting the **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast** on **Sunday, March 7** at the **Destin Commons!** This family-friendly event will feature gourmet, chef-inspired twists on the South's favorite comfort food. Local restaurants will compete for the best mac in town. Be there to sample everything for yourself and cast your vote! There are three categories that each local restaurant can win in total: Judge's Choice Award, People's Choice Award and Kid's Choice Award. Visitors are invited to taste each delicious vendor and cast their vote — all the while supporting a charitable cause.

For the first time ever, the event will offer special V.I.C. (Very Important Cheese) tickets that include an all-access pass to the Beer Garden and air-conditioning seating. "We are excited to bring everyone together for this fun, family-friendly and flavorful event," Says Shervin Rassa, Chief Executive Officer, The Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast. "This event wouldn't be possible without the generosity of the vendors, sponsors and attendees who make it a very successful fundraiser for the Boys & Girls Clubs."

All proceeds benefit the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast which works in our community to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence through its programs focused on academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles.

Sponsorships are available. If your business is interested, please contact the Frances Roy Agency at hello@francesroy.com. **Tickets are now available for purchase at eventbrite.com.** For more information, visit emeraldcoastbcg.org or follow on Facebook and Instagram.



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# Bay Buzz

## Freeport Merchants Association (FMA) Has a New Website

If you're looking to get introduced to Freeport businesses, the Association's new website is a great resource. Visit [thefma.online](http://thefma.online). Here you'll find area resources, news, a business directory, events and how to join the FMA.

## Geek Lights Fans Donate Over \$7,000 to C.A.L.M.

The Geek Lights on the Corner Lights and Music Show recently presented \$7,086.28 to Crisis Aid for Littles and Moms - C.A.L.M. The amount is the sum of visitor donations collected during the recently completed thirteenth season of the Geek Lights on the Corner, which took place at the corner of Bluewater Blvd and Antiqua Way Nov. 30, 2020, to Jan. 6, 2021. "I want to thank everyone who made donations," said Jeff Werner, proprietor of the show. "Your amazing generosity shattered every previous donation record that we had. This is your donation, not mine, and I'm proud of how much you've helped C.A.L.M. to do their mission."

C.A.L.M. is an all-volunteer organization with a mission to "break the generational bonds of poverty for single moms and their children in Northwest Florida."

## Alaqua Animal Refuge Welcomes New Executive Director

Jeff Jacob has become new executive director of Alaqua. Jacob will be responsible for helping to lead the organization during an unprecedented growth period as Alaqua relocates to its permanent home, a multimillion-dollar facility with expanded programs and services. Jacob was selected for this critical role from a nationwide search that garnered more than 50 applicants.

Alaqua Founder Laurie Hood will continue in her role as President to set and drive the vision for the Refuge while strengthening and expanding national partnerships and leadership roles with organizations such as Animal Welfare Action, the Humane Society of the United States, Florida Wildlife Federation, and the E.O Wilson Biophilia Center. She will continue to lead Alaqua's advocacy efforts, rescue operations, co-

ordination with governmental agencies in prosecuting animal cruelty offenders, and supporting their efforts in the judicial system.

## Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative

Okaloosa Libraries are inviting you to complete your education online. Scholarships are available now for Okaloosa adults without a high school diploma but want to advance their careers and prepare for workforce entry or continue their education. There are no out of pocket costs for students and self-paced online classes are available 24/7. Applicants who successfully complete the online self-assessment, the prerequisite course and an in-person interview (at the Niceville Library) will be considered for enrollment. Get started at [COHS.OCPLC.org](http://COHS.OCPLC.org).

## Impact100 Hosts Roundtable Conference

Impact100 of Northwest Florida, in conjunction with the Morgridge Family Foundation (MFF), will host a "Future of Giving" roundtable discussion on Thursday, Feb. 18 starting at 11:30 a.m. The roundtable will

explore the seismic cultural changes that are shaping the future of giving where technology, changes in human behaviors, expectations and strategies are forcing us to reconsider how we work together to support and encourage giving in our community. Keynote Speaker Tony Cohn, director of strategy - Morgridge Family Foundation, will be LIVE to highlight and lead a discussion based on key findings of the MFF report "The Future of Giving." This FREE virtual event is open to the public! To register, visit [impactnwfl.org](http://impactnwfl.org).

## F-15EX Completes First Flight; Two Coming to Eglin

Two F-15EX fighters should be delivered to Eglin Air Force Base by the end of the first quarter of 2021. The first F-15EX completed its initial flight in St. Louis Feb. 2. The latest iteration of the F-15 Eagle Mission Design Series, the F-15EX features



an increased payload capacity, fly-by-wire controls, a digital cockpit, modernized sensors, radars and electronic warfare capabilities. The Air Force plans to eventually acquire at least 144 F-15EX fighters.

## Holiday Inn Express & Suites Receives Diamond Award

Eglin AFB presented its Diamond Award to Colleen Smith, Director of Sales at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites in Niceville. With funding from Eglin AFA's Chapter and volunteers from our local churches such as Crosspoint and Destiny Worship Center, "Operation Covid 19" provided over 2,500 masks to Eglin AFB.

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