



APRIL 2022  
VOL. 3, NO. 8

# BAY Life

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## Keeping Military Families Together During Times of Medical Need

BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

*Publisher's Note: Our area is blessed with several military installations, serving thousands of military personnel and possessing a significant deployment commitment. Consequently, our family and friends in the military are continuously placed in harm's way. Fortunately, we have Fisher House, which provides a home away from home with no fee, where our military and their families from throughout the U.S. receive caring, unconditional support.*

Fisher House of the Emerald Coast is a tangible "thank you" for those who have served in the military. Located on Eglin Air Force Base, across the street from the hospital and VA Clinic, this nearly 11,000 square foot five-star facility includes 12 private suites, a large common kitchen and areas where guests can rest and renew. Any time a military member or family member is being treated at any local medical facility, they are eligible to use the Fisher House.



The idea of Fisher House first started in the 1970s when Pauline Trost, the wife of Admiral Trost, saw an injured combat veteran return home and wondered where the family would stay during this time of crisis. She knew high-priced hotels would only add a financial burden to an

already difficult time. This thought never left her and it led to a critical partnership. Pauline brought the need for housing to her husband, and he reached out to Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher who were builders, philanthropists and patriots. They caught the vision immediately and went

to work. Since then, the Fishers have donated more than \$20 million in the building of homes that receive families of hospitalized military personnel, free of charge. Today, the number of homes has grown

**FISHER HOUSE**  
*continued on page 2*

**Better Together.**

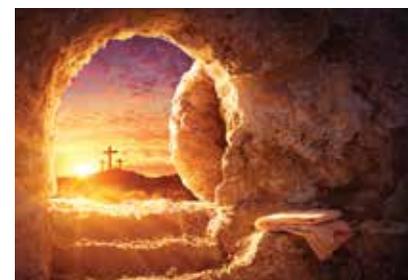
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## Easter Reflections



BY GUERY CLENDENING

It is Spring! The flowers are blooming and Azaleas are beautiful this time of year. I love this season. To me Spring speaks of new beginnings. When I lived in Illinois, the winters could be harsh at times. I remember during one winter, looking out my office window at a

**EASTER**  
*continued on page 2*

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 **Community**

**FISHER HOUSE**

*continued from page 1*

to 92 throughout the U.S. Fisher House of the Emerald Coast, our area's own, was built in 2010 and was number 48.

In 2019, Fisher House of the Emerald Coast hosted more than 1,100 guests and provided 2,900 bed nights, saving military families over \$290,000 in lodging.

It is the goal of Mia Hughes, our local Fisher House's Executive Director, for Fisher House of the Emerald Coast to be a home away from home when our military members need it the most. "If it's the birth of a baby and grandma doesn't live here but wants to come, she can stay at Fisher House. We've also had babies that were delivered, but mom got ill and couldn't be around the baby," Mia says. "They've stayed at our house so they could be close. On the other end of the spectrum, we've

also had guests who were dealing with end-of-life situations and were in their last stages. During the pandemic, however, because it's a military installation, they restricted some of the access. Life-ending scenarios were given higher priority."

"Many of our guests will only stay a few days, but our record is 13 months," Mia continued. "One family had a member going through oncology treatments and they were able to stay here. Before that, a guest of 11 months was blinded during the battle in Afghanistan, and he used our home for therapy. Fisher House was built to help lighten their load."

Fisher House of the Emerald Coast serves every branch of the military from Pensacola to Panama City. So, guests will not be more than an hour from the therapies and services they require.

Fundraising efforts are continual; monies raised provide



much needed funding to the house to support the operation

and the maintenance of the home, and to provide the families with any necessary items needed during their stay. Are you interested in partnering with Fisher House? Mark your calendar to attend the Fisher House gala on October 27th with guest speaker Joey Jones, Fox News Contributor and former marine who lost both his legs in combat.

There are additional unique ways you can help as well.

"We've had corporate teams come for one week in the spring and fall to help clean the house," says Mia. "They do it for team building and we're always so grateful for the extra help. It's their way of giving back."

"We also have a young guy who lives in Birmingham, and his mom, who was a volunteer, passed away in 2016. On the anniversary of her passing, he comes to the Fisher House and makes her recipe for Cornish Hens for those there at the time. It's his memorial tribute to his mom and he does it every year he can," she says.

Fisher House accepts meal

donations, enough for eight to 12 people, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Because Covid protocols are still in place, the food needs to come from local restaurants. Although the fridge is always fully stocked, these needed donations bridge the gap. If guests have specific dietary needs or desires, the staff does their best to accommodate them as well to make the stay easier. As Mia says, "We love making people happy and want this to feel like home."

If you'd like to learn more, go to [fisherhouseemeraldcoast.org](http://fisherhouseemeraldcoast.org) or you can reach Mia Hughes directly at [Director@fisherhouseemeraldcoast.org](mailto:Director@fisherhouseemeraldcoast.org) or 850-259-4956.

**EASTER**

*continued from page 1*

very large tree. With snow and ice covering its branches, you would have thought the frozen limbs were dead. But when

spring came, an amazing thing happened; what seemed to be dead came alive! The branches budded and before long the tree was filled with green leaves. It is fitting that Easter is celebrated in the Spring. Each year, people

from all over the world celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Years ago, I was on a plane travelling to Israel. The person sitting next to me was a man from Israel who knew the historical record con-

cerning Christ. As we discussed the story, he made a statement that got my attention. He said, "You know, they never did find the body of Christ." I breathed

*Continued on next page*

**Want to Join an Easter Church Service?**

**Crosspoint Church  
Bluewater Bay Campus  
Sunday, April 17, 2022**  
8 a.m. | Contemporary  
9:30 a.m. | Contemporary  
11 a.m. | Contemporary  
Kids programs are provided for 4th grade and younger at the 9:30 and 11 a.m. services only.

**Crosspoint Church  
Niceville Campus  
Sunday, April 17, 2022**  
8 a.m. | Easter Traditional | Sanctuary  
9:30 a.m. | Easter Contemporary | Sanctuary

9:32 a.m. | Easter Contemporary | Community Life Center  
11 a.m. | Easter Traditional | Sanctuary  
11:02 a.m. | Easter Contemporary | Community Life Center  
Kids programs are provided for Pre-K - 4th grade at the 9:30 and 11 a.m. services.

**Crosspoint Church  
Freeport Campus  
Sunday, April 17, 2022**  
9:30 a.m. Contemporary  
11 a.m. Contemporary

Kids programming through 5th grade is provided for both services.

**Destiny Worship Center  
Freeport Campus**



**Saturday, April 16**  
Community Egg Hunt 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at the Freeport Regional Sports Complex.  
Carnival 3 p.m.; Easter Ser-

vice 5 p.m.  
**Sunday, April 17**  
Easter Services: 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m., 11:30 a.m.

**Faith Independent Baptist Church**

**Easter Sunday, April 17**  
10 a.m. Easter Service  
11 a.m. Easter Service  
6 p.m. Evening Service

**The Church On Bayshore**

**Easter Sunday, April 17**  
8 a.m. Worship Gathering  
9:30 a.m. Worship Gathering  
11 a.m. Worship Gathering



Published Monthly  
Mailed FREE to the communities of Bluewater Bay & Hammock Bay

P.O. Box 1424  
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

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# A Diver's Wonderland

## "Boat Yard" Artificial Reef Site Expands

For those who dive, the wait is over for the county's most recent expansion of its artificial reef program. Okaloosa County Tourist Development Department (TDD) Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism expanded fishing and diving opportunities with the deployment of a decommissioned tugboat—MISS JOANN. The 64-foot vessel is an addition to nearly 400 artificial reef sites offshore Okaloosa County.

Morgan Marine deployed MISS JOANN with oversight from the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Coastal Resource team on March 2. "We are fortunate to have a Coastal Resource Team dedicated to the continued growth of the artificial reef program," said Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners Chairman Mel Ponder. "Fishing and diving are important coastal activities to our county and reefs like this offer such a unique underwater experience for divers and snorkelers, not to mention an excellent op-



portunity for anglers."

In 2021, Morgan Marine was notified by the U.S. Coast Guard that its tugboat would require significant retrofits to bring it into compliance. Rather than invest significant funds in an older vessel, Morgan Marine donated the vessel to Okaloosa County to deploy as an artificial reef. Okaloosa County funded the remaining preparations and costs associated with the deployment. "Artificial reefs are essential to our community that depends heavily on fishing and diving as a recreational activity and tourism product. We lack the offshore natural reef habitat; therefore, artificial reefs are even more important here. The

MISS JOANN will be a great addition to our artificial reef program and we hope it will be visited by divers and fisherman for years to come," said Alex Fogg, Coastal Resource Manager, Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

MISS JOANN will accompany two previously deployed vessels, the DYLAN (61 ft.) and the BRANNON (65 ft.). Due to the smaller sizes of these existing artificial reefs, the MISS JOANN was deployed in close proximity to the existing vessels in 119 feet of water, but with 40 feet of relief, will provide a shallower option to the site if visitors don't wish to dive the deeper wrecks. The additional relief also provides habitat that

supports prized fish species such as Amberjack and Cobia. The vessels are secured to each other for increased stability and to provide additional complexity to the site that has been named the "Boat Yard."

MISS JOANN was deployed 16.43nm SE of Destin Pass in the Okaloosa County Large Area Artificial Reef Site A (LAARS A).

For those who don't know, artificial reefs are man-made structures built to promote marine life and, in some cases, improve surfing. The reef structures are designed to provide a sustainable food source for many species along with shelter and protection. Destin is home

to many man-made reefs, most located near public beaches anywhere from 200 to 300 yards off the shore to make it easier for guests to visit. A GPS device is also helpful when finding reefs.

Artificial Reefs are a popular snorkel destination, but it's also common to see people bring paddleboards and kayaks out to our local reefs and enjoy the wildlife scenery such as turtles, stingrays and more. While they are free to visit, remember you are accessing them at your own risk. Always remember to heed the tides and the local beach flag system for safety.

Coordinates for all Okaloosa County artificial reefs can be found by visiting [destinfwb.com](http://destinfwb.com). For more information on Destin-Fort Walton Beach or the Artificial Reef Program, contact Stacey Young, Community & Media Relations Strategist at (850) 606-5389 or [SLYoung@MyOkaloosa.com](mailto:SLYoung@MyOkaloosa.com), or Alex Fogg, Coastal Resource Manager at (850) 609-5394 or [afogg@myokaloosa.com](mailto:afogg@myokaloosa.com).

### EASTER

*continued from page 2*

a silent prayer and said to him, "The reason they never found the body is because He rose from the grave. That is the foundation of the Christian faith."

There is a passage of scripture in the New Testament, that

is found in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 12-15 and verse 20, that says, "Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how is it that some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead? ...for if there is no resurrection from the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; then our preaching

is useless, and your faith is also useless...But now (as things really are), Christ in fact has been raised from the dead...

So, what people celebrate on Easter is not only the resurrection of Jesus Christ; but they also celebrate the hope they have in Christ; that they too will rise from the grave to live forev-

er with him! Jesus said this: "Because I live, you will live also." - John 14:19. That's why Easter is so special for so many. Not only do they celebrate Christ's resurrection and His promise of Resurrection for them; but they also celebrate, because through Christ's death, sins are forgiven and new life is theirs through

faith in Christ! Yes, miracles do happen. Just like the tree that blossomed in the Spring, those who put their faith in Christ will experience a new life of peace and freedom from the past. As we enjoy Spring, may we celebrate and experience the power of Christ to make all things new.

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 Community

## Fire Truck Pull to Benefit Twin Cities Pavilion

Multiple community organizations are teaming up to complete fundraising for a major project at Twin Cities Pavilion (TCP). “You could say we are ‘all pulling together’ to sponsor a fire truck pulling contest on April 23 at 3rd Planet Brewing,” said Bob Hoffman, coordinator of the team effort that will address safety and cosmetic issues at the front entrance area at TCP. “We’re looking for any community group or business

willing to come out and have some fun to help the residents of TCP.”

The Rotary Clubs of Mid-Bay Bridge, Niceville/Valparaiso, Destin and Fort Walton Beach, along with the Knights of Columbus from Christ Our Redeemer and Holy Name Catholic churches are supporting the effort with donations, planning and staffing. Also helping with donations and staff are the Okaloosa County Fire-Res-

cue Organization, Valparaiso Realty and Dynamic Software Solutions.

There will be two competitions—the Open Division for the more serious competitors to show their stuff. A team consists of 10 people who pull a fire truck 15 feet one time, and the best time wins. The \$200 per team entry fee all goes to the project.

“In the Business Division, any group can enter. They will get

their name or logo on T-shirts we’re making for competitors,” says Bob. “This could include businesses, churches, non-profits or even neighborhoods.” The \$250 entry fee helps the Pavilion and offsets the cost of the event.

Teams can register by scanning the QR code on flyers being distributed or visiting the Facebook pages and website of the organizations listed above, such as Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary.

The TCP project involves

refurbishing the entrance area, which is also used by residents for sitting and relaxing outdoors.

The event will begin with team check-in at noon. Competition begins start at 1 p.m. There will be two food trucks, raffles and music.

Contact Bob Hoffman at (850) 428-3261 with additional questions.



## Women Unite to Improve Mental Health

“We live in a world where we are told to follow our dreams, but we weren’t told how hard it would be to achieve our dreams. For a female in today’s society, there are a lot of things that hold us back from reaching our full potential,” said Marlee Tucker, Director of Development, United Way Emerald Coast at the recent launch of United Way Emerald Coast’s (UWEC) new Women United chapter.

118 women from throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties gathered at WaterVue at Brooks Street in Fort Walton Beach to celebrate and provide input for the causes they are passionate about. “As we come together this morning, we celebrate and



PHOTOS BY KAITLYN SANCHEZ

honor the accomplishments of the women that came before us, those who paved the way for us to be where we are today. We also recognize that there is much more work to be done, to be where we want to be both as women and as a society,” Marlee said. “But, most importantly, this morning we decide how WE will be the ones to do some-

thing about it, how we will step up and improve the quality of life for the women and girls in our area.”

The attendees also voted on the first focus of Women United. “We considered some of the most important issues in our local area as they relate to women and girls, and two issues kept

being repeated in our discussions: mental health and education,” said President & CEO, Kelly Jasen. With a 65% vote, the group selected the mental health of women and girls as its focus.

“Women and girls need to know that it is OK to talk about mental health,” said Kelly, “to realize no matter your circumstances or your struggles, you are NOT alone.”

In Okaloosa and Walton counties, there are currently no existing support groups for women dealing with postpartum depression. Through this initiative, Women United hopes to help young girls learn their worth, build their self-esteem

and practice developing healthy coping skills so they all feel loved and supported; help provide resources and treatments they need to overcome their mental illness; and provide at least one supportive relationship that a little girl or a young single mother needs in order to change their life. “With the right tools and support, there’s no limit to what women can do and as part of United Way, we have unparalleled resources to make lasting changes for local women and girls,” said Kelly.

Women United is a network made up of female leaders who wish to affect change in their

*Continued on page 33*

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 Community

# Happenings Around the Bay

## APRIL

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>01-02</b> Old MacDonald Theatre<br/>9am   Emerald Coast Theatre Company   Grand Blvd.</p> <p><b>01</b> J.Leon Sip N' Stroll<br/>5pm   J.Leon Gallery and Studio   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>SOW Social</b><br/>5pm   The Outpost, SOAC, Pine Tree Lounge, and Spectre Hall   Duke Field</p> <p><b>Trest Richerson</b><br/>6pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> <p><b>The Price is Right Live</b><br/>7:30pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Center   Niceville</p> <p><b>02</b> AmVets Ride to Fight Autism<br/>10:30am   Amvets Post 78 of Valparaiso   Valparaiso</p> <p><b>Wing Family Day</b><br/>11am   Parade Field   Duke Field</p> <p><b>The Art of Batik and Silk Painting</b><br/>2pm   J.Leon Gallery and Studio   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>Below Alabama</b><br/>6pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> <p><b>Annual Awards Banquet: Duke Field</b><br/>6pm   The Island Resort   Fort Walton Beach</p> <p><b>03</b> 3205th Drone Group Memorial Dedication &amp; Tribute<br/>7:30am   Parade Field-South End   Duke Field</p> <p><b>Sparks In The Park Car, Truck and Bike Show</b><br/>9am   Mullet Festival Fairgrounds   Niceville</p> <p><b>07-10</b> The Sandestin Wine Festival<br/>The Village of Baytowne Wharf   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>08</b> Charles Payne<br/>7:30pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Center   Niceville</p> <p><b>09</b> Emerald Coast Autism Center ONE Run 5K<br/>7am   Northwest Florida State College Campus   Niceville</p> <p><b>43rd Annual BIA Home Show</b><br/>9am   Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center   Okaloosa Island</p> <p><b>15th Annual Rumbly' for Hope Poker Run</b><br/>9:45am   VFW Post 4437   Defuniak Springs</p> <p><b>Road Dogg Rescue Adoption</b><br/>12pm   Shades of Blue 6-9, 3rd Planet Brewery   Niceville</p> | <p><b>10</b> 43rd Annual BIA Home Show<br/>11am   Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center   Okaloosa Island</p> <p><b>An Officer And A Gentleman</b><br/>7:30pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Center   Niceville</p> <p><b>13</b> Second Wednesday Breakfast<br/>7:30am   Niceville Community Center   Niceville</p> <p><b>14</b> Artz for All with Zot<br/>11:30am   Hotel Effie Sandestin   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>Doggie EGGstravaganza benefitting Dog-Harmony</b><br/>5:30pm   Grand Boulevard   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>15</b> Old MacDonald Theatre<br/><b>-16</b> 9am   Emerald Coast Theatre Company   Grand Blvd.</p> <p><b>15</b> Bob Cushing<br/>6pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> <p><b>16</b> 90's Party: Clinch 46<br/>6pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> <p><b>21</b> Concerts in the Village: MJ LIVE<br/>7pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Cultural Arts Village   Destin</p> <p><b>21</b> South Walton Food and Wine Festival<br/><b>-24</b> Grand Boulevard   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>22</b> Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber Golf Classic<br/>11:15am   Eglin Golf Course   Niceville</p> <p><b>Live Music with Purple Monkey</b><br/>6pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> <p><b>Dance Facets</b><br/>7:30pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Center   Niceville</p> <p><b>23</b> Firetruck Pull to benefit Twin Cities Pavilion<br/>12pm   3rd Planet Brewery   Niceville</p> <p><b>28</b> Concerts in the Village: Naturally 7<br/>7pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Cultural Arts Village   Destin</p> <p><b>30</b> 5K Run/Walk<br/>8am   Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida   Valparaiso</p> <p><b>Spring Vendor Fair</b><br/>11am   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> <p><b>Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Ball</b><br/>Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort &amp; Spa   Miramar Beach</p> <p><b>Forrest Williams Band</b><br/>6pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville</p> |
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## FARMER'S MARKETS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Niceville Community - Saturdays<br/>April 2, 9, 16, 23 &amp; 30<br/>9am-1pm   Palm Plaza   Niceville</p> | <p>Hammock Bay - 1st &amp; 3rd Sundays<br/>April 3 &amp; 17<br/>8am   Victory Blvd   Freeport</p> |
|---|---|



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# Local Hospitals and ERs Become Part of the HCA Florida Network

By LORI SMITH

On this particular day, Olivia and her father were moving her to college—an exciting time in Olivia’s life. They were on their way when a terrible car accident abruptly stopped their plans—leaving both father and daughter in critical condition and Olivia on the brink of death.

Both were air-flighted to then Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Olivia at one point even losing her pulse. Hospital staff quickly went to work. Due to the numerous caring doctors’, nurses’ and practitioners’ diligence, “both Olivia and her father’s lives were saved,” said Zach McCluskey, CEO, HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital. “But it took more people than are sitting in this auditorium today to make sure that was possible,” he said at a recent Chamber breakfast with roughly 250 in attendance. “After many months, we were able to return Olivia and her Father back to their lives. This is what makes it all worth it,” Zach stated emotionally, as he conveyed

the hospital’s mission is to truly care for each life in our community.

Locally, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Twin Cities Hospital, Destin ER and Navarre ER were four of more than 450 HCA Florida Healthcare affiliated sites of care across the state that united recently under a new, statewide, shared brand—HCA Florida Healthcare—and have become HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital, HCA Florida Twin Cities Hospital, HCA Florida Destin Emergency and HCA Florida Navarre Emergency.

HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital has served the community for nearly 50 years. In the past five years, this hospital and other connected care sites have served more than 740,000 patients and invested in the community through the expansion of needed healthcare services, including the addition of freestanding ERs in Destin and Navarre; a 10-bed expansion to the only acute inpatient



care rehab facility in Northwest Florida; an expansion of its main emergency room and addition of a roof-top emergency flight helipad; a new parking garage and a multi-phase project that encompasses building a new two-story patient tower with the capability of expanding vertically to four floors, bringing total capacity to 309 beds.

It is a 267-bed full-service hospital and is the only Level II Trauma Center in the Tri-County Area, with over 300 physicians. For women and children services, it has 24/7 neonatologists available and is the area’s only Level II NICU. Its expanded emergency services include a dedicated Pediatric ER, 24/7 HCA Florida Destin Emergency, 24/7 HCA Florida Navarre Emergency, and full-service

24/7 HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Emergency. It is the only acute care hospital in the Tri-County area that offers open heart surgery, an Accredited Advanced Primary Stroke Center, an

Accredited Chest Pain Center, and a Cancer Care Center that is accredited by the Commission on Cancer and an Associate of the UAB Birmingham Health System Cancer Community Network. HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital also has the only inpatient acute care rehab facility in the tri-county area – The Rehabilitation Institute of Northwest Florida, located in Destin.

Zach said he’s very excited about being a part of the new HCA Florida Healthcare network. “Our local hospitals and ER’s will now collaboratively be connected with approximately 11,000 staff physicians, 77,000 colleagues, 49 hospitals, more than 350 physician practices and freestanding emergency rooms and more than 50 urgent care

centers throughout the state.” Zach said last year, the state network saw more than 6.4 million patient encounters and represented over one quarter of the healthcare encounters across the country. “Because it’s now more connected than it’s ever been,” said Zach, “through this comprehensive network, HCA Florida Healthcare can offer the utmost quality and personal attention to its patients, expand access to care, address the ongoing nursing shortage, respond better during times of disaster, advance diversity in healthcare and fund and collaborate with non-profit organizations to address high-priority community needs.” With one baby born every 17 minutes at an HCA Florida Healthcare hospital and trauma outcomes better than the national average throughout the state, patients and families can continue to expect the same quality care from physicians and nurses, with no changes to facility hours of operation or phone numbers.


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# Education News

**Northwest Florida State College** (NWFSC) was recently named a 2022-23 Military Friendly School with a Gold Distinction by MilitaryFriendly.com. Every year, institutions earning the Military Friendly School designation are evaluated using public data sources and responses from a proprietary survey. Final ratings are calculated by combining the institution's survey scores with the institution's ability to meet minimum thresholds for student retention, graduation, job placement, loan repayment, and loan default rates for student veterans. Methodology, criteria, and weightings are determined with input from the Military Friendly Advisory Council of independent leaders in the higher education and military recruitment community. The gold-level distinction is awarded to schools that score within 10% of the 10th best school in their category. These schools are considered to be setting the example with their programs and initiatives. For more information about Northwest Florida State College's military and veteran services, please

contact our Veterans Success Center at 850-729-5375 or va@nwfsc.edu. The 2022-23 Military Friendly Schools list can be found at [www.militaryfriendly.com](http://www.militaryfriendly.com).

The **Collegiate High School at Northwest Florida State College** is expanding. In February, NWFSC announced that it received a \$2 million Early College Career and Technical Education grant from Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Florida Department of Education, which will allow it to expand the Collegiate High School by introducing the first class of ninth graders and implementing a new degree track. The new degree track will enable students to earn an Associate in Science in Computer Information Technology or an Associate in Science in Engineering Technology while simultaneously earning their high school diploma.

The Collegiate High School is a public charter school located on NWFSC's Niceville campus and is free to students. The high school is a designated Florida School of Excellence and rou-

tinely ranks among the best high schools in Florida.

A **FREE Apprenticeship Program** is available at NWFSC, which is committed to helping the community and businesses attract and retain a talented, vibrant and skilled workforce. The program offers apprenticeships in Construction/Carpentry, Culinary, HVAC-AC-Ventilation, CNC Machining, Plumbing and IT. It blends classroom instruction and On-the-Job training to provide business and employees world-class training leading to employer recruiting and retention and giving employees tangible skills and certifications to better their careers. If interested, contact NWFSC workforce development staff at [apprenticeships@nwfsc.edu](mailto:apprenticeships@nwfsc.edu). Fill out the application on NWFSC's website for more information about a specific opportunity or meet with in person at NWFSC. <https://www.nwfsc.edu/academics/non-degree-programs/registered-apprenticeships>.



Bluewater Bay Elementary School's Academic Team

### Okaloosa County

Congratulations to **Bluewater Bay Elementary School's Academic Team!** Coached by Mrs. Erk and Mrs. Brown, they placed 2nd in the nation in the Knowledge Master Open! They were behind a middle school team. This qualifies them for a national competition in June.

The **Okaloosa County School Board** is in the process of upgrading its parent-teacher software to a program called **FOCUS**. The upgraded systems will streamline education services while at the same time put more information in the

hands of parents than ever before. Different parts of the FOCUS system will come online periodically until the completed system is fully operational in October 2022. The FOCUS Parent Portal is a tool designed to enhance communication and involvement for you in your child's education and is accessible through the FOCUS mobile app or an internet browser. With this upgrade, parents will have access to their student's attendance, grades, accommodations and more in real time. Kindergarten registration is now taking place through FOCUS for the

*Continued on next page*

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Northwest Florida State College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Questions about the accreditation of Northwest Florida State College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website ([www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)). Northwest Florida State College is committed to equal access/equal opportunity in its programs, activities, and employment. Materiales de la Universidad son disponibles en Español llamando a la Ophidian de Admisiones de Northwest Florida State College al 850-678-5111.

# A Bonfire that Brings the Community Together

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

3rd Planet Brewing knows a lot about beer, creating a vibrant atmosphere and great brews in a cool environment.

But they also know a lot about people and their community. They know that locals like to connect and unite for a common cause.

Not surprisingly, their recent annual bonfire drew a crowd—and I mean a BIG one, an attendee stating it was as large as any Mullet Festival event!

After another challenging year, this positivity went viral when 3rd Planet announced it was having its annual bonfire in March along with the City of Niceville barbecue fundraiser to generate funds for the Niceville Fireworks Trust Fund. They stockpiled wood for days to get ready.

On the big night, friends and families, with lawn chairs in tow, showed up in droves to drink some great suds, eat amazing barbecue, listen to live music and watch ginormous flames dance in the night sky.

But they also gathered for another purpose. “Our annual bonfire was a great fundraising event,” said Heather Julseth, event coordinator. “It’s the 6th time 3rd Planet Brewing partnered with the Niceville Fireworks Trust Fund and the 4th annual bonfire held the Friday of Super Bowl weekend to benefit the annual Fireworks on the Bayou.”

The event raised \$5,900 for the Trust Fund. “It was a very large community gathering with an estimated 3,000 attendees,” said Heather.



While the City of Niceville offered pulled pork sandwiches and plates for donations, the Niceville-based band Duchess performed. This local fan favorite has the reputation of being the best rock band on the Emerald Coast. They, too, draw a crowd performing favorite rock classics—hits that span multiple decades.

The beneficiary, Niceville Fireworks Trust Fund, offers one of the most anticipated events each year—the fireworks display over Boggy Bayou on Independence Day. The Boggy Bayou Fireworks show brings locals and visitors together to celebrate America’s freedom on the 4th of July with spectacular fireworks at dusk. Thanks to the

generosity of many supporters, the tradition is still alive. Visit [lightupthebayou.com](http://lightupthebayou.com) for more information.

Heather says 3rd Planet Brewing hosts an average of at least one charitable event per month that supports 3rd Planet Brewing’s motto of “Rooted in the Community,” with at least three fundraisers already planned for April.

If you missed the Annual Bonfire this year, clear your schedule next year for this growing annual event that brings our community together. “We can’t even express how excited we are to host this annual bonfire event, and we know you’ll be excited too,” said Heather. “This isn’t your average backyard bonfire!”

## EDUCATION

*continued from previous page*

Fall of 2022. Visit [www.okaloosaschools.com/focus](http://www.okaloosaschools.com/focus) to view the roll-out timeline, see a sneak peek at what FOCUS looks like,

and ask questions about the new system.

### Walton County

Congratulations to **Freeport High School’s Sydni Free** for winning the weightlifting state

championship. She earned gold in snatch and picked up a bronze in traditional combo lifts. This win is the first state weightlifting title in school history! What an incredible achievement for Sydni and her coach, Owen Cole.

### Walton County Schools transportation department

announced the opening of a new facility in Freeport. The District built the new facility considering the county’s south end growth. The new building allows buses to

be fueled, serviced and inspected in a convenient barn without traveling to the DeFuniak Springs barn. Congratulations to the transportation department!





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## Bay Buzz

### Rotary Club Recognizes Local First Responders

Recently the Rotary Club of Niceville-Valparaiso took the opportunity to say thank you to a few of our everyday heroes for all the great work they do to keep our community safe and secure. These first responders truly live the Rotary motto of Service Above Self. In February, the Rotary Club of Niceville-Valparaiso recognized the top police officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians for 2021 from each of our local departments for their outstanding service to our community. The award recipients included: Niceville Fire Department Firefighter of the Year, Firefighter Jason Maines; Valparaiso Fire Department Firefighter of the Year, Lieutenant Timothy "Alex" Winkler; Niceville Police Department Officer of the Year, Officer Sierra "Sadie" Eakins; Valparaiso Police Department Officer of the Year, Officer Jason Lecuyer; East Niceville Fire District Firefighter of the Year, Deputy Fire



Chief Jon Kramer; North Bay Fire District Firefighter of the Year, Firefighter Brett McDaniel; Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) Security Forces Airman of the Year, Senior Airman Christina Jagiello; Eglin AFB Security Forces Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Technical Sergeant Daniel Brewer; Eglin AFB Security Forces Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Master Sergeant Floyd Ford; Eglin AFB Security Forces Company Grade Officer of the Year, First Lieutenant Christopher Young; Eglin AFB Security Forces Category I Civilian of the Year, Officer Daryl Culberston; Eglin AFB Security Forces Category II Civilian of the Year,

Officer Lawrence Holst; Eglin AFB Military Firefighter of the Year, Staff Sergeant Dominick Kelly; Eglin AFB Fire Department Civilian Firefighter of the Year, Mr. Ellis Nutt; Eglin AFB Fire Department Military Fire Officer of the Year, Technical Sergeant Travis Cumpston; Eglin AFB Fire Department Civilian Fire Officer of the Year, Mr. Robert "Bobby" Manby; Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Deputy of the Year, Deputy Eric Swain. We are proud of the accomplishments of these first responders, and we are grateful for their efforts to make the Twin Cities area a safer place to live.

### Democratic Women's Club of Walton County Hosts two Women Veterans

The Democratic Women's Club of Walton County hosts two women Veterans who speak about their service Tuesday, March 29, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at the Sunset Bay Cafe in Sandestin.

Kayla Buck is a veteran of the U. S. Air Force and the Air Force Reserves who served in Germany, Kuwait and Iraq, and also stateside, continuing her education, and then attending Air Force Intelligence operations school. She served in the Air Force Reserves from 2000-2012, and worked as a contractor with the Air Force, in Iraq and at Hurlburt Field AFB.

Julie Jones is a veteran of the U.S. Navy who served one six-month deployment in the Mediterranean Sea and three six-month Persian Gulf deployments, as well as serving in several locations stateside. She attended Intelligence Specialist School, at the Navy and Marine Corps Intelligence

Training Command. (NMITC) She served in the Navy from 1988-2008, and also worked as a contractor at Langley AFB, Hurlburt Field AFB, and Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar.

To attend, visit [waltoncountytwdwc.org](http://waltoncountytwdwc.org) and register.

### 4th Annual Mac & Cheese Festival Supersedes Previous Years

The 4th Annual Mac & Cheese Festival held on Sunday, March 6, 2022, at Destin Commons was a record-breaking success. The event raised \$65,000 and welcomed roughly 1,500 attendees throughout the day. Proceeds from the event benefit the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast. "Our fourth Mac-N-Cheese Festival was a huge success and thoroughly outperformed our own expectations. We are extremely thankful to all that attended, all of our cooking participants, Destin Commons, and all of our sponsors for making this

*Continued on next page*



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# From the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office: **Spring Break**



cal businesses, but also the stereotypical crowded beaches and roadways.

The primary goal of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) during the time span that runs February 26th through April 24th this year is simple – keep people safe. “To a large extent, that involves putting the brakes on underage drinking, which often leads to binge drinking and all the related safety issues that can follow,” said Sheriff Eric Aden. “As always, we have a zero-tolerance policy for underage possession of alcohol.”

Last year over a 51-day period, the OCSO made 700 Spring Break arrests, the vast majority for underage possession of al-

cohol. 518 of those arrests were in Destin and 182 took place on Okaloosa Island. Members of the OCSO Beach Unit initiated 422 of the 700 total arrests. In addition, 125 of those arrests involved juveniles.

If caught with alcohol, juveniles ages 17 and under are issued a notice to appear and released to an adult.

Individuals 18, 19 or 20 years of age in possession of an alcoholic beverage are arrested and given a notice to appear before a judge.

Our public safety efforts are part of a partnership with the Tourist Development Council, the City of Destin and other first responder partners to include Fire, EMS, Florida Fish

and Wildlife and the Florida Highway Patrol.

Property owners and managers also play a big role. We recommend they take preventative safety measures as well. Good strategies are to have your security disperse larger groups loitering on your property before the situation gets out of hand, monitor for law violations and report those promptly, evict guests who won't comply with the rules and, of course, contact us with any questions.

The OCSO will have extra beach patrols alongside an enhanced number of deputies on the roads. In addition, many area hotels and condos hire off-duty deputies for added Spring Break security.

“As we've said in the past, the vast majority of our visitors come down, have a wonderful time, and cause no problems. They get to leave here with great memories,” said Sheriff Aden. “For that small percentage, however, who don't follow the rules and act responsibly, there will be consequences.”

In the meantime, whether they love it or just tolerate it, most locals know what to expect during the Spring Break season.

“Stay vigilant on the roadways and exercise patience. Our deputies will be out there doing our best to keep the peace and keep everybody safe, because ultimately that's our biggest concern.”

## BAY BUZZ

*continued from previous page*

year's event amazing. Every cent raised through this event will make an impact on the over 4,000 youth we serve on an annual basis,” said Shervin Rassa, Chief Executive Officer, The



Jackacudas, Judges Choice Winner

Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast.

Award winners are as follows:  
**Judge's Choice:** Jackacudas's Seafood and Sushi

**People's Choice:** Smoke N' Whiskey BBQ

**Kid's Choice:** Dixieland Chicken

## OCSO 2021 Deputy of the Year Eric Swain

Deputy Eric Swain was named the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office 2021 Deputy of The Year!

After being hired in 2016,

*Continued on page 37*



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 Community

# It's Almost Time for A Superior's Veterans & First Responders Appreciation Lunch

BY MARTA ROSE THORPE

SAVE THE DATE! A Superior will once again host its quarterly Veterans & First Responders Appreciation Lunch on Tuesday, April 12, at Faith

Assembly Christian Church, 306 S. Geronimo Street in Miramar Beach from 11:30 a.m to 1 p.m. All area Veterans and First Responders are invited, as well as the local community who

want to welcome and support this group. A Superior will again give away an HVAC system to one Veteran or First Responder in need.

At the January 11th lunch, a

U.S. Marine won the Q1 HVAC Unit Giveaway. Travis Stephens, who served his country for 18 years, was separating from service in January for medical retirement. At that time, he was on a 60-day terminal leave with no job in sight. Travis lives in Crestview with his wife of seven years and two young children, ages 3 and 4. In December, the family's 20-year-old HVAC unit had stopped working and the parts to fix it could not be located. The family had placed some window units in the children's bedrooms as all they could afford at the time. Needless to say, the gift of

the HVAC system went to a very deserving man for his family.

"The bigger picture of all of this, and why we started this appreciation lunch in the first place," explains owner Jimmy Thorpe, "is simply to be an example, and show other companies that they, too, can give back. We saw that the way we could give back is by donating what we have – HVAC units. Others can use our event as a template to create their own program to give back." Veterans and First Responders may apply for the April 12th giveaway online at [ASuperiorAC.com](http://ASuperiorAC.com).



## Preserve Bluewater Bay, LLC Community Update

BY THE MANAGERS OF PRESERVE BLUEWATER BAY, LLC  
[INFO@PRESERVEBWB.COM](mailto:INFO@PRESERVEBWB.COM)

As of March 1st, the Preserve Bluewater Bay, LLC (PBWB) has taken over operations of the Golf Club at Bluewater Bay. The team has been busy getting processes and procedures

two years and includes an option to purchase the land associated with the 9-hole Bay course, 9-hole Marsh course (for 18 holes of golf), as well as the former Lakes course holes #1 (portion of), #2 and #3. Purchase of the land can be made at any time within the two-year



in place, hiring key leadership positions and establishing business connections. We're already halfway to our goal of getting 100 total golf members by the end of April. We hired two rock stars in Dennis Stein and Jodie Lang to be our Superintendent and Director of Golf, respectively. Their energy and passion for this course is infectious. So, if you haven't met them, I would highly encourage it. New Yamaha EZ-Quiet Golf Carts are also on the way, meaning we'll be able to support expanded golf hours. We have an "adopt-a-hole" program for those that want to get more involved. The support from the community has been extremely encouraging and we look forward to more community interaction.

lease period. The goal is for the residents of Bluewater Bay to own the land and, thus, protect it from development and use it for golf, or for green space and possible expansion of recreational amenities.

Golf play is one effort for generating the capital needed for the community to purchase the land, and therefore PBWB will strive to operate the golf course for the foreseeable future. But to preserve the course as community green space, we will need revenue generation from the homeowners themselves. A sincere thank you to all those that have already graciously donated to this cause. Please note that we are still accepting donations and that we've established

As you'll recall, this lease is

*Continued on next page*

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## Bay Buzz Highlighted Events

The **Building Industry Association of Okaloosa & Walton Counties** will hold its 43rd Annual Home Show at the Emerald Coast Convention Center on Okaloosa Island April 9 & 10, Saturday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. If you're interested in being an exhibitor, call the BIA office at 850-863-5107. Visit [biaow.org](http://biaow.org) for the official 2022 Home Show Rules and Entry form.

The **Freeport Republicans** will meet Tuesday, April 5 in Freeport at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m.; meeting 6-7 p.m. April's speaker is Mr. Tim Norris, Walton County State Committeeman. He will be presenting the highlights of the Florida Republican annual convention

held in March 2022 and discussing initiatives to move the party forward. The club meets monthly on the second Tuesday of each month at the same location and time.

The **Walton County Republican Executive Committee (REC)** will meet Monday, April 18 at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse. Registration begins at 5:40 p.m.; meeting 6-7 p.m. These meetings are open to Republicans in Walton County. If you want to know what the various clubs in Walton County are doing, to include speakers and events, this is the place to find out. The REC meets monthly on the third Monday of each month at the same location and time.

The **35th Annual Sandes-**



**tin Wine Festival** will be held Thursday, April 7th - Sunday, April 10th—Friday 5-8 p.m. and Saturday 1-4 p.m.—at The Village of Baytowne Wharf. Grand Tasting Dates: Friday, April 8th, 5-8 p.m. and Saturday, April 9th, 1-4 p.m. For more information and to buy tickets, visit [SandestinWineFest.com](http://SandestinWineFest.com).

The **15th Annual Rumbly' for Hope Poker Run** will be held April 9 beginning at 9:45 a.m. with registration and Blessing of the Bikes. A signa-

ture ride of VFW Post 4437 in DeFuniak Springs, the cost is \$15 per Bike/\$5 additional rider (includes your meal after ride). Extra hands will be available for \$5. Plan for approximately a 75-100-mile ride. All proceeds benefit the local "Cancer Freeze" Program. "Cancer Freeze" is a non-profit organization that provides much needed financial assistance to Northwest Florida and South Alabama individuals battling cancer.

Join the **Choctawhatchee Audubon Society** for April Field Trips:

**April 7, Presentation: Alaska - Birds Of The North Country.** Malcolm Swan and Shannon Hobson will present recent videos and photographs of spectacular birds, Kodiak Bear

cubs and sea mammals observed during their 2021 trip to Pt. Barrow, Nome, Kodiak Island, and Seward. The program will be held in Room 130 of the Student Services Center at NWFSC main campus in Niceville. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m.; program begins at 7 p.m. Admission is Free.

**April 9, Saturday Morning Field Trip to Veterans Park,** Okaloosa Island with Malcolm Swan. Visit Bayshore, Barrier Island Woodland and five wetlands. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the NE corner of the Emerald Coast Convention Center parking lot. Wear closed-toed shoes, binoculars and/or camera and perhaps a hat.

**April 23, Saturday Field Trip to Deer Lake.**

*Continued on page 14*

### BLUEWATER BAY

*continued from previous page*

a social membership. It's a one-time donation to the LLC of \$1,000 (which gets you a vote in the LLC) then \$50/mth+tax.

The LLC will be hosting periodic social events exclusive to LLC members. So, be on the lookout for those opportunities.

The time is now! Please show your support for the community by donating to the LLC or by

getting over to the clubhouse and becoming a golf member today! We look forward to your support in preserving this unique community.

Please reach out to the Board of Directors of PBWB, by email-

ing [info@preservebwb.com](mailto:info@preservebwb.com) or check our social media profiles on Nextdoor, Facebook and Instagram. The Golf Course staff can be reached at [golf@preservebwb.com](mailto:golf@preservebwb.com), Facebook or at <https://www.bwbresort.com>.

Additionally, if you would like to have someone come speak at your HOA meetings, we welcome the opportunity to give a presentation.

 Community

# Dress For Success Launches Emerald Coast Affiliate

Dress for Success Worldwide prepares women to meet the public with greater self-confidence and high self-esteem while instilling a need to thrive in the workplace. And now, the new affiliate, Dress for Success Emerald Coast (DFSEC), is here, primarily serving Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

In general, the Emerald Coast of Florida, and Okaloosa County in particular, has a strong military presence and attracts tourists, snowbirds, retirees and young professionals. Professional and non-professional jobs are available and necessary to run the area's hospitality industry, retail and many other area businesses. How can DFSEC serve the community? By meeting

unmet needs of diverse women with proper grooming and skill-sets to demonstrate their fit for the next job.

With a successful corporate and higher education career behind her, DFSEC was founded by Dr. Gail Shorter-Judson, D.B.A., M.B.A. She will be serving as DFSEC President and Board Chair. Their Executive Director is Erica Cortes, M.B.A. and Cornell University graduate, who has an extensive background in IT in the health industry.

Dr. Shorter-Judson commented, "I feel my earlier 14-year career in corporate America, my role as a paid Loan Executive, and university adjunct faculty, coupled with



New Dress For Success Emerald Coast affiliate announced by founder and Board President, Dr. Gail Shorter-Judson; Executive Director, Erica Cortes; and new Board member, Mikiko Land-Tucker.

volunteer posts in community service prepared me to lead this DFSEC effort and pass on necessary skills to women who need them most. Erica and I are

looking forward to working with women."

Focusing on unemployed and underemployed women, Dr. Shorter-Judson's team will be reaching out to partner with various organizations. Some of which include the Okaloosa School District's Homeless Children's Program to work with the mothers; the Youth Division of Children in Crisis to work with youth who age out of foster care; and women referred by other non-profits with relevant outreach services for women such as Path of Grace, churches, public service organizations, shelters for victims of domestic violence, welfare recipients; and law firms handling divorce cases. These organizations can re-

fer women who may need DFSEC's services.

In alignment with Worldwide, Dress for Success Emerald Coast's mission is to empower women to achieve economic independence and career success by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.

To get involved, email [emeraldcoast@dressforsuccess.org](mailto:emeraldcoast@dressforsuccess.org), or for more information visit [www.emeraldcoast.dressforsuccess.org](http://www.emeraldcoast.dressforsuccess.org). The local affiliate is in need of personal shoppers, board members and workshop facilitators. If interested, please contact us at the email above or call 850-586-0667.

## BAY BUZZ EVENTS

*continued from page 13*

**E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center** is hosting a free, members only event on Saturday, April 2, featuring age divided egg hunts for kids up to 12 years old. At this Easter Eggstravagan-

za, kids will enjoy a meet and greet with the Easter Bunny! The Biophilia Center exhibits will be open to observe at your leisure. Biophilia Memberships are available at [www.eowilson-center.org/become-a-bio-member](http://www.eowilson-center.org/become-a-bio-member).

Looking for an egg-citing happening on Easter Sunday? Bring the family and hop on over to **LuLu's** to see the tropically clad Easter Bunny. He will be on hand for free photo ops with the kids on Sunday, April 17, from 1 to 3 p.m. The Easter Bunny will be visiting with boys and girls and giving them an Easter egg with a toy inside. LuLu's is located in



Destin at the foot of the Mid-Bay Bridge next to Legendary Marina. For more information, visit: [www.lulubuffett.com/destin/](http://www.lulubuffett.com/destin/).

The **Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber Golf Classic** will be held April 22 at Eglin Golf Course. Check-in: 11:15 a.m. Shotgun Start: Noon. If you're interested in a team sponsorship, visit [nicevillechamber.com](http://nicevillechamber.com) or email [events@nicevillechamber.com](mailto:events@nicevillechamber.com). Thank you to Corporate Sponsor, Okaloosa Gas District, Putting Sponsor, The Ryland/Morrow Allstate Agency, Golf Cart Sponsor, Florida Power & Light Company and Hole-in-One Sponsor, Niceville Insurance Agency for their support!

The **2022 Emerald Ball** to benefit Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast will be held Saturday, April 30, at 6 p.m. at the

*Continued on page 39*

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# Florida National Guard Attacks Wildfires from the Air

BY MASTER SGT. CHRISTOPHER MILBRODT, FLORIDA NATIONAL GUARD PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Florida National Guard aircrews from Cecil Field reported for drill weekend March 5 to train in the air on their Chinook helicopters. Their plans changed quickly when requests for helicopter assistance came from the state's Department of Emergency Management to help fight wildfires. "We have the capability to carry a water bucket with up to 18,000 pounds of water underneath the helicopter to deploy anywhere there is an active fire away from structures," said 1st Lt. Isaiah Carlton, commander of B Company, Detachment 1, 1-111th Aviation Regiment. "When there's people in need and they call the Florida National Guard, we are ready to respond."

Crews from Cecil Field and Brooksville were among the personnel activated by the Florida National Guard to support



PHOTOS COURTESY NATIONALGUARD.MIL

civilian authorities as they fight the Chipola Complex wildfires in Florida's Panhandle.

In addition to the pilots, the Florida Guard has activated two dozen Guardsmen, two Black Hawk helicopters and two Chinook helicopters to support the state's response. At the time of this printing, the Florida Guard helicopters have conducted 20 missions, dropping 156,500 gallons of water to help suppress the wildfires.

"This is my first time responding to wildfires. We train for it and stay ready to respond, but this is the first time I've ever had to put it into practice," said Carlton. "It is extremely fulfilling when you know you're coming out to help people. We are dropping water where it's needed, but it is rare to see the individuals who are affected by our efforts."

The aircrews interacted with one person who was directly af-



UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopter crews from the Florida National Guard support the wildfire suppression efforts in Bay County, March 7, 2022.

ected by their efforts because he happened to be working at the airport where they were refueling.

"The Star Avenue fire was about two miles from my home," said Edward McNair, a heavy rescue tow truck operator from Panama City. "I could see the smoke and the helicopters

each time they made a pass. I truly believe if the Guard didn't get here when they did, my whole neighborhood would have burned down."

The Florida Guard helicopters are working alongside Florida Forest Service air assets. The Chipola Complex fires were reported March 4 and have impacted the Florida Panhandle counties of Bay, Gulf and Calhoun.

**Publisher's Note:** As we know, wildfires can affect us locally at times. It's nice to know we have the Air National Guard close by and ready to help in times of need. The Florida Air National Guard has five main bases across the state located in Cocoa Beach, Jacksonville, Starke, Tampa and our local one in Panama City — Tyndall Air Force Base. They perform nine unique missions training

*Continued on page 36*

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# Thoughts for Investors So Far This Year



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

As bond yields have risen for most of this new year (The bell-weather 10-year U.S. Treasury is at 1.92% as of this writing), and that has had an impact on equity and bond markets. For equities, the NASDAQ, S&P and Dow are all negative YTD with the NASDAQ the most affected. The NASDAQ represents over 3500 stocks while the Dow represents 30 stocks, and the S&P represents 500 stocks. It is significant to take note that S&P 500 makes up over 70% of the value of all U.S. traded stocks.

Why have the markets seen negative performance for most of this year? Take note that

certain “sectors” – the eleven subsets of the market are not all equally weighted. The S&P 500 has 28% of its value in technology (TEC) stocks yet only about 3% in Energy Stocks. The TEC sector is down over 9% so far this year, while the ENE sector is up over 23%. If there is almost 10 times the value of TEC stocks vs. ENE stocks, it might make sense to see that that is what has driven a lot of the volatility and performance. Most of the household name TEC stocks are negative for the year. The main reason that TEC stocks have been more volatile is that when bond yields rise, investors (large institutional investors) historically have sold lower dividend stocks and rotated to higher dividend or so-called value stocks (TEC representing so-called growth stocks).

So, when you see money coming out of one sector and wonder where it may be going or rotating to, the above is one significant, and recent example. That may be leaving individual (as opposed to institutional) investors wondering what to do now. It is important to note that diversification, patience along

with staying informed and aware have served investors well. The Wall Street Journal recently had an article that quoted the legendary value investor Benjamin Graham. Graham was quoted to have said, “I don’t know, (after many years of experience) what the market is going to do, but I do know what investors are likely to do.” In other words. We tend to see that as investors being reactive vs. being proactive. A proactive strategy to us is one where goals, time lines and risk tolerance are well known and thought through and then a strategy is adapted and followed over time. Human nature and instinct are motivated by survival and, hence, investors might give up hope at the worst possible time. And timing is a key. When markets move, they move swiftly up or down. It is next to impossible to know when those movements are going to happen. Have a look at this excerpt from Raymond James’ Weekly Headings on January 28th. It highlights the significance of time in the market vs. timing the market. The numbers are based upon the annualized rate of return of the S&P 500 over the past 20 years, which was approximately 5033 trading days:

- Average return for staying invested over the past 20 years: 7.3%
- Missed the best 5 days and your return would have averaged 4.9%
- Missed the best 10 days and your return would have averaged 3.2%
- Missed the best 15 days and your return would have averaged 1.8%
- Missed the best 20 days and your return would have averaged .6%
- On the other hand, what if you’d “known” which days to be “out” of the market:
- Missed the worst 20 days and your return would have averaged 15.2%
- Missed the worst 15 days and your return would have averaged 13.7%
- Missed the worst 10 days and your return would have averaged 12.1%
- Missed the worst 5 days and your return would have averaged 10.1%

The challenge is, who knows when those days will be? As the legendary Peter Lynch once

said: “They don’t ring a bell at the top and they don’t ring a bell at the bottom.” Again, market rallies and sell offs happen if a noticeably brief period making it almost impossible to predict.

We also encourage our clients to think about emerging trends which might be worth considering in their long-term strategy. We will start with semiconductors or computer chips. We have seen and heard a lot about the disruption that chip supply shortages have brought about. Chip production capability, advanced chips, have crimped revenues of many firms and contributed significantly to inflation. We note that advanced chip design is mainly in the U.S. and yet the advanced chips are manufactured overseas (Taiwan is the leader). Take note of the foundries (chip manufacturing plants) that are under construction or being planned in the U.S. Two of note are the multibillion-dollar facility that Taiwan Semiconductor is building in Arizona and the recently announced multi-billion-dollar facility to be built in Ohio by Intel. These are just two examples, but nonetheless, a trend we think is important. The U.S. sees the economic and strategic need to have these foundries in the U.S. vs. overseas.

The same can be said for battery production (for electric vehicles – EVs). The U.S. is a world leader in possessing the natural resources that go into these batteries, yet is the world’s laggard when it comes to refining the minerals and manufacturing the batteries. That, too, is changing as seen in the focus of the U.S. government and the commensurate activity in building the production capability.

How impactful could this be? Look at liquified natural gas (LNG). The U.S. now leads the world in the export of this high in demand, cleaner burning fuel. It is used to create electric at power plants and to heat homes and power natural gas fueled vehicles. Many years ago, the multi-billion-dollar investment in the infrastructure that was needed, started to take shape. Many wondered why so much money was going in to liquification and export facilities as the world demand was not seen. Fast forward to today and you can see China’s demand

has grown 50% which adds to the already resilient demand from Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. And now the U.S. has come to the aid of western Europe as countless ships are making their way there now loaded with LNG. The result has added to the earnings of ENE companies which are experiencing record revenues and hence cash flow and profitability.

Wrapping it all up we see that while the markets remain more unstable than they have been in the recent past, investors can continue to position their investments to participate in the ever-growing areas of opportunities represented in the world today and tomorrow.

*The First Wealth Management is located at First Florida Bank, a division of The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd., Destin, FL 32541 with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City. Phone 850.654.8122.*

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BY JOE CAPERS,  
INSURANCE ZONE

# It's Time for your Annual Insurance Review

Although I encourage everyone to engage in an insurance review at any time during the year, the New Year is the perfect time to resolve to better protect your family's home and belongings.

**When was the last time you reviewed your insurance?**



The review should include an analysis of current exposures, a review current policies and limits, with recommendations to maximize protection by offering competitive alternatives.

As a good rule of thumb, when there's a change in your life, more likely than not, your insurance will need to change, too. Some of the more common events that you may have experienced are if you have gotten married, had a baby, added a four-legged friend to your family, sent a kid off to college, a major renovation, bought a car, boat, RV, ATV or trampoline, replaced your roof, added a pool, made a big purchase like a diamond ring, fine art or a set of golf clubs, or started a business, your insurance is most likely out-of-date and it is time for a review.

There are many benefits to an annual insurance review. First of all, in the instance of a loss, you'll want your policy to be up-to-date to ensure that you're covered. During an insurance review, your agent will go over specific details about your life and insurance policies

to make sure that all your needs are met. Secondly, you may find something that you don't currently have covered, a discount that you aren't taking advantage of, or an extra coverage to add at no additional cost. Finally, your agent can help you understand your current coverages and go over any changes in your premium cost.

Here are a few important items to address in an annual review and this checklist will keep you prepared.

**Your Auto Policy.** Don't make the mistake of setting it and forgetting it and letting the policy automatically renew every period.

- **Change in Vehicle Use.**

Maybe you no longer commute to work or the distance may be shorter.

- **Older Vehicles.** Vehicles depreciate so review increasing deductibles or eliminating coverage.

- **New Drivers.** Additional or youthful drivers should always be added to prevent gaps.

**Your Home Policy.** Like the Auto Policy, don't renew without a review each year.

- **Home Value.** Reconstruction costs have risen significantly, so the limits need to increase.

- **Renovations.** This cost must be considered and coverages adjusted accordingly.

- **New Collections and Valuables.** Did you add valuables to insure?

- **Home Inventory Checklist.** This comprehensive list should be extremely detailed with photos and receipts, updated often and securely stored

- **Umbrella and Flood should be evaluated as well.**

**Your Life Insurance.** Placing life insurance on those

we care most about is a perfect act of love.

- **Life Events.** Marriage, children, and retirement should trigger a coverage change.

- **Beneficiaries.** Knowing who should receive the benefits sometimes without any disputes is the key.

- **Lifestyle Changes.** As are income, assets and standard of living increase, so should the amount of benefit.

- **The time is now.** The best time to establish or expand

the protection foundations is when we are the youngest and healthiest.

There's a reason to review your insurance policies each year. And there's an even better reason to listen to your agent's professional recommendations based on your situation and their experience and expertise. Your insurance policies are there to protect not just your life and property, but your bank account as well.

*Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is a full service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach (30A), Niceville, Freeport and Inlet Beach. Visit their interactive website at [www.ins-zone.com](http://www.ins-zone.com) and click on our Video Library to watch several informative videos to enhance your Personal and Business Insurance Programs, or simply call 850.424.6979 and talk with an IZ Team Member.*

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## Sticking it Out: Fun Drivers You Can Still Buy with a Manual

BY WILL ESTELL

If you're an automotive junky like me, and anywhere north of age 30, you can probably remember a day when all the cool cars had stick shifts and three pedals. It just seemed like a part of driving; that feeling of being at one with the car often associated with effortlessly—and oftentimes aggressively—shifting through the gears, while feeling a big smile come across your face that made you feel as if you could race cars for a living.

Over the past 20 years, however, increased technology brought the end of manual transmission cars being quicker than their auto shifting counterparts of the same model. This led to less manuals being produced, until such time that many people under 30 never even learned to drive one. Nowadays, making a stick-shift about the best automobile theft deterrent device you can have. With only 27 new cars even available in manual formats for the 2022

year, here are some of the sportier ones that can still put that big smile on your face as you run through the gears.

### BMW M 3, M 4 and 2 Series

As someone who loves the responsive drive of a BMW, I'm encouraged that the brand decided to continue offering a manual trans in at least some models. My wife and I own a classic M Roadster as a weekend/fun car, and as cool as it is with the top down and that quad exhaust roaring, I can't imagine that car being even half as much fun if it was an automatic.

All M3 cars since the original E30 offered a manual, and BMW has chosen to keep that an option in their new M 2, 3 and 4 cars also. I mean who'd want 473 hp in a new M3 and not be able to clutch and shift? To be fair, I had a 4 Series coupe a few daily drivers ago, and I did enjoy that automatic with its paddle shifters. In addition to the M3 and M4 variants, rear-



drive 230i, M240i, M2 Competition, and M2 CS can all be had with a stick.

### Chevy Camaro

The brand with the blue bowtie might not offer a manual in the new mid-engine Corvette, but you can still get a six-speed stick in every version of the Camaro. So, whether you choose the base turbo 2.0, the ZL1 or 1LE with the rambunctious supercharged 6.2-liter V-8, you can still show your muscle car's muscle while flexing your own a little, too.

### Ford Mustang

I get that a lot of people

probably haven't been opting for manuals in their pony cars for decades. But, the fact that you can is cool. Every 2022 model—other than the range-topping Shelby GT500—offers a manual option, whether you choose the turbo-four, 5.0 GT, the 480-hp Bullitt (probably my favorite current Stang) or the Mach 1.

### Mazda MX-5 Miata

Contrary to what some may think about a Miata, it's regarded by most true auto aficionados to be one of the purest back-to-basic sportscars you can own. Pretty much what owning an early 70's Lotus Elise was five decades ago... but with reliable mechanicals in the Miata.

Ever since the first generation car hit the U.S. market in 1990, the Miata has offered a manual transmission to accompany the little rear-drive's sporty handling, peppy high-revving four, and well-balanced suspension. Driving a Miata at half its potential is often more fun than driving most cars... and the

manual trans certainly plays a big part in that equation.

### Toyota 86 and Subaru BRZ

I'm grouping these fun little sportscars together since the Toyota 86 and Subaru BRZ have been co-developed from the beginning—back when the 86 was originally badged as a Scion FRS. Both of these well-balanced 2+2s were reworked offering new designs, in and out, for 2022. Though each car offers a different engine based on its individual brand, they're very much alike in every other way; including the fact that both can be had with a six-speed manual.

### Porsche 911, 718 Boxster, and 718 Cayman

I hope we never see a time when you can't get a new Porsche sportscar with a manual trans. Though having owned seven Porsches over the years, I understand why some people

*Continued on next page*



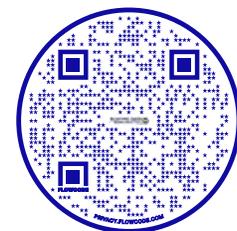
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# Comfort, Savings, Peace of Mind

## ENERGY TIPS by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

BY CHRIS BALZER, ECES

According to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), December was the warmest December on record since recording temperatures began in 1880 by the administration. So, what does that mean? There are many different thoughts and ideas on this subject and I will let you make your own conclusions. What I do know is we all enjoy being comfortable. We buy jackets in the winter and breathable clothes in the summer. In February, I would run the heat in the morning and AC in the afternoon, just to stay comfortable. If you do a search for “things we insulate,” you will see the majority of sites and images are of attics, walls and windows.

But, 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 on just about every beach, tailgate 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 being comfortable and will 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 comfort? 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, money and decreasing your comfort in the home. To in-

crease comfort, there are simple solutions like weather stripping doors and caulking windows. Properly weatherizing your home and adding insulation will increase comfort, reduce pollutants in the home, control moisture and help your heating and cooling systems work more efficiently.

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. 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 running the air condi-

tioner, think about getting an energy upgrade for your largest investment—your home—and remember our most sustainable energy source is not Solar, Hydro or Geo, it's YOU.

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions, a Smile Provider Company. It

provides smiles to its customers after installing high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save this spring and become energy efficient, schedule an inspection. Call (850) 588-2870, visit [www.trustees.com](http://www.trustees.com) or email [wecare@trustees.com](mailto:wecare@trustees.com) and Beat the Heat!

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### FUN DRIVERS

continued from previous page

who buy them as daily drivers choose the ultra-convenient, and fast shifting, dual-clutch automatics.

For 2022, every variation of Porsche's mid-engine Boxster and Cayman comes with a stick

as standard equipment, while the automatic is an option. In fact, the six-speed remains the only transmission available in the ultra-cool Boxster Spyder and race-bred Cayman GT4 iterations.

As for the iconic 911, every model comes standard with a manual, with the dual-clutch

automatic available as the no-extra-cost option. Personally, I can't imagine buying a 500 hp 911 GT3 and not being able to dump the clutch and sling the rear-end out while laying black marks through first, second and third. Different strokes for different folks though.

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 Off the Hook

## Fishing News

### Saltwater Fishing Reopenings in the Gulf

Gray triggerfish reopened in Gulf state and federal waters to recreational harvest on March 1.



If you plan to fish for gray triggerfish in state or federal waters from a private recreational vessel, you must sign up as a State Reef Fish Angler (annual renewal is required). To learn more, visit [MyFWC.com/Marine](http://MyFWC.com/Marine) and click on “Recreational Regulations” and “State Reef Fish Survey” under “Reef Fish.” Sign up today at [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](http://GoOutdoorsFlorida.com).

Spotted seatrout reopened in the Western Panhandle Management Region, which includes all state and federal waters from Escambia County through the portion of Gulf County west of 85 degrees, 13.76 minutes west longitude but NOT including Indian Pass/Indian Lagoon.

Snook reopened in some Gulf waters, including Escambia County through State Road 64 in Manatee County, and waters

south of Gordon Pass in Collier County through Monroe County (also includes Everglades National Park).

Snook remains catch-and-release only in state waters from State Road 64 in Manatee County south through Gordon Pass in Collier County through Aug. 31, 2022.

Learn more about recreational fishing regulations at [MyFWC.com/Marine](http://MyFWC.com/Marine) by clicking on “Recreational Regulations.”

### FWC Commission Approves Rules to Allow the Production and Sale of Largemouth Bass

At its March meeting, Commissioners with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) approved rules to allow for the production and sale of Florida largemouth bass as a food product.

Statutory changes made during the 2021 legislative session sanctioned the sale of Florida largemouth bass produced in aquaculture facilities for food. Staff worked with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) to ensure continued genetic conservation of Florida’s iconic freshwater game fish. “We appreciate the ongoing col-

laboration with FDACS, and we are confident in the established protocols in place to protect Florida’s iconic gamefish,” said Commissioner Gary Lester.

For more information, visit [MyFWC.com/Commission](http://MyFWC.com/Commission) and click on “Commission Meetings.”

### Take a Boater Education Class

Spring has arrived and that means many locals and visitors will be flocking to our beautiful beaches and waterways. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recommends boaters “Spring Aboard” and get educated prior to the kick-off of the boating season to make the most of their time on the water. Spring is the perfect time to take a boating safety course before the summer boating season begins.

In 2021, Florida boating accident statistics indicated that 83% of boating deaths occurred on boats where the boat operator had never received boating education instruction. Education is the key to having a safe and enjoyable day on the water.

While not currently required, owners of human-powered watercraft, such as paddleboards and kayaks, are encouraged to take a boating education class as



well so they are aware of critical boating knowledge that anyone who plans to get out on the water should have and be better prepared for the risks they might face while boating.

“In Florida, boaters who were born on or after Jan. 1, 1988, are required to complete and pass a boater safety education course. But everyone interested in boating should take a course,” said Maj. Rob Beaton, FWC’s Boating and Waterways Section Leader. “Taking a boating education course is one of the best things you can do to prevent accidents on the water.”

Boaters have many ways to get educated, from classroom courses offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary and United States Power Squadrons to on-

line offerings available any time day or night. Learn more about boater safety education by visiting [MyFWC.com/boating](http://MyFWC.com/boating) and clicking on “Boating Safety and Education.”

### FWC Approves Limited Recreational Harvest of Goliath Grouper in State Waters

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has approved a limited, highly regulated recreational harvest of goliath grouper in state waters beginning Spring 2023. This unique recreational opportunity is possible through conservation efforts by state and federal agencies that aided in the goliath grouper population rebuilding over the course of three decades, following years of overfishing. This limited harvest will allow access to a fishery that has been closed since 1990 by issuing up to 200 harvest permit tags via random-draw lottery.

This approved recreational harvest of goliath grouper includes:

- A recreational harvest of up to 200 goliath per year, with a maximum of 50 from Everglades National Park.
- A required recreational goliath harvest permit and tag, issued via a random-draw lottery, to legally harvest a goliath (\$150 for residents, \$500 for non-residents).
- Limiting harvest to one fish per person per open season with permit and tag, non-transferable.
- A March 1 through May 31 season.
- Allowable gear will be hook-and-line only.
- A slot limit of 24 to 36 inches total length.
- Harvest would be permitted in all state waters except those of Martin County south through the Atlantic coast of the Keys, all of the St. Lucie River and its tributaries, and Dry Tortugas National Park.
- Post-harvest requirements, such as proper utilization of the harvest tag, reporting harvest data and submitting a fin clip for genetic analysis.
- Harvest will continue to be prohibited in federal waters.

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*Continued on next page*

**FISHING NEWS**

*continued from previous page*

**Celebrate Trophycatch's 10th Season With 10 Tags and Thousands Of Dollars In Prizes!**

Florida's freshwater trophy bass are special – and right now there are some extra special bass swimming in the Sunshine State! To celebrate Season 10 of the TrophyCatch program, biologists with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) tagged and released 10 largemouth bass with bright pink tags in 10 different locations across the state. If caught, one tag could be worth thousands of dollars in prizes!

Bass Pro Shops, a proud partner of TrophyCatch since the program's inception in 2012, is providing up to \$50,000 in gift cards in honor of the company's 50th anniversary celebration this year. Winners of the pink-tagged bass can also receive gift cards for AFTCO merchandise and cash award money.

The freshwater locations of these high-value fish will be revealed with hints. The answers to the mystery waterbodies will be



revealed the following Tuesdays after each hint, until all 10 locations are announced. All waterbody hints and announcements will be made on the TrophyCatch website, [trophycatchflorida.com](http://trophycatchflorida.com), and Facebook page.

"Thanks to successfully working with Florida's fishing community, TrophyCatch is kicking off its 10th season with this unique 10-TAG Celebration," said Tom Graef, Director of Freshwater Fisheries Management. "We are honored to host this program and connect anglers with our industry partners, such as Bass Pro Shops. It will be fun to see anglers figure out the 10 mystery waterbodies where these tagged fish are swimming, waiting to be caught!"

To claim their prize, lucky anglers landing a bass with a pink tag must follow the submission instructions on the TrophyCatch 10-TAG webpage. Bookmark the 10-TAG webpage to stay updated on this special promotion and to plan your fishing adventure!

The TrophyCatch program rewards anglers who provide documentation of their catch and release of largemouth bass weighing 8 pounds or heavier in Florida. To be eligible for prizes, anglers are required to submit photos or videos of their catch to [TrophyCatch.com](http://TrophyCatch.com), showing the entire fish and its weight on a scale, before releasing it back into the water. FWC biologists use TrophyCatch data for bass research to make informed decisions about the management of Florida bass fisheries and to promote the catch and release of trophy bass. The associated TrophyCare program promotes best handling practices for trophy bass to ensure that each TrophyCatch bass is released alive.



For the latest news about the TrophyCatch 10-TAG Celebration subscribe to the program's Topic Email (select "TrophyCatch" under "Freshwater Fishing"). For more information about the TrophyCatch pro-

gram or the 10-TAG Celebration, email KP Clements at [Kp.Clements@MyFWC.com](mailto:Kp.Clements@MyFWC.com).



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 Off the Hook

# New Diamondback Terrapin Conservation Measures in Effect

Have you ever heard of a Diamondback Terrapin turtle? Did you know we have them in our area, just not in huge abundance as some other turtle species?

These brackish water turtles spend their entire lives in a marsh system feeding on mollusks and crustaceans. Like map turtles (their nearest cousins), the females are larger with wide heads for crushing the shells of their prey. They are considered an important member of the ecosystem in that the reduction of terrapins can cause an increase in the marsh periwinkle (a popular snail food) who would in turn stop feeding on leaf litter and attack the live plants themselves – threatening the existence of the marsh. So, they are important predators on marsh grazers.

Diamondback terrapins are medium-sized turtles that live in salt marshes, barrier islands, mangrove swamps, tidal creeks and rivers. They eat a variety of foods including snails, crabs, clams, mussels, worms, fish and plants. Five of the seven subspecies occur in Florida, three of which can be found nowhere else in the world. We find the

Ornate and Mississippi sub species in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

Measuring at about 9.4 inches long, female diamondback terrapins are typically larger than males, which measure about 5.5 inches in length. Diamondback terrapins can usually be distinguished by the pattern on their shell, which consists of concentric rings and a “diamond-like” pattern with knobs along their backs. The shell is often multi-colored with outer rings being lighter than inner rings. In some cases, the shell is completely dark. The plastron, or underside of the shell, can be yellow or orange, though it is sometimes all black. Their skin is often grey to pale white with black spots or bars. Some individuals may lack markings, or may have a pink hue around the cheeks.

Diamondback terrapins are active during daylight hours for most of the year. Within their brackish water habitats, terrapins may be found basking in open or densely vegetated areas, submerged in muddy substrates, foraging on land or water and hiding under vegetation to protect themselves from predators



PHOTO COURTESY FWC

or the elements. In Florida, males reach maturity between two and three years of age and females reach maturity between four and five years of age. Terrapins have been known to live for up to 40 years in captivity, and scientists estimate that they typically live for about 25 years in the wild.

In Florida, courtship occurs in the spring, between March and May. Nesting usually takes place during the day in sparsely vegetative sandy areas above the high tide line. Nesting season occurs from April through July, but may be extended depending on the area. Females can lay two or three times per year, with clutch size ranging from five to ten eggs.

Diamondback terrapins eat a variety of foods including snails, crabs, clams, mussels, worms, fish and plants.

But these beautiful turtles face a variety of threats, including: habitat loss, unsustainable collection from the wild due to growing popularity in the global pet market, predation and road mortality. Because of overlapping

habitat, there is also a potential for terrapins to be accidentally killed in blue crab traps.

To help protect them, as of March 1, 2022, all collection and possession of diamondback terrapins is prohibited with the exception of scientific research with a valid permit. People who currently possess diamondback terrapins as personal pets may legally keep these animals, but must obtain a no-cost Personal Possession permit by May 31, 2022. Individuals or institutions who keep diamondback terrapins for public display, education, outreach or other similar conservation-based programs must obtain a no-cost Exhibition and Education permit.

In addition to this new rule, the FWC is helping conserve terrapins by requiring all recreational blue crab traps to have rigid funnel openings no larger than 2 inches by 6 inches at the

narrowest point, or 2-inch by 6-inch bycatch reduction devices installed. This change, which takes effect March 1, 2023, will reduce the number of terrapins accidentally captured in crab traps.

## How you can help:

Be sure to watch out for terrapins as you drive along the coast. If you see one in the road, and if you are safe from oncoming traffic, you may move the turtle across the road in the direction it was heading.

If you use crab traps, get ones that have a By-Catch Reduction Device (BRD) to keep terrapins out – but allow crabs in. The FWC will provide them for free if you are interested.

If you come across an injured diamondback terrapin, contact your FWC Regional Office to find a list of rehabbers in your area. If you suspect that someone is illegally capturing or selling wild diamondback terrapins please contact FWC Wildlife Alert.

For more information on the diamondback terrapin regulation changes, visit [MyFWC.com/FreshwaterTurtles](http://MyFWC.com/FreshwaterTurtles).

**Habitat loss:** Loss of important nesting and foraging habitat are a major concern for population stability.

**Predation:** Predators such as wild hogs, raccoons and rats prey on terrapins at all life stages, although eggs and young terrapins are most vulnerable to predation.

**Road mortality:** Females often crossroads in search of suitable nesting areas and can be struck by cars. The loss of mature females may have large impacts on populations of terrapins.

**Boat strikes:** Accidental collision with boats can injure and kill terrapins.

**Crab traps:** Accidental drownings in blue crab traps occur when adults enter the traps in search of food and cannot escape.

**Harvest for the pet trade:** Due to their colorful appearance and friendly disposition, terrapins are susceptible to unsustainable wild take for the pet trade.



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# Gopher Tortoise Day is April 10!



Since its founding six years ago, Gopher Tortoise Day has been celebrated annually to raise awareness for Florida's only native tortoise. April 10 is approaching quickly, and now is the time to begin prepping festivities for this yearly event.

Ways to prepare for and celebrate Gopher Tortoise Day 2022!

Urge your local government to adopt a resolution proclaiming April 10 as Gopher Tortoise Day.

Get involved! Host or attend an event to raise awareness for gopher tortoises.

Spread the news on social media using #FWC and #GopherTortoiseDay.

Plan local events, such as invasive plant pulls or greenspace litter pickups, to help improve gopher tortoise habitat. Be sure to get proper approvals.

The gopher tortoise plays a significant role in many of Florida's ecosystems and deserves our recognition. Gopher tortoises are considered a keystone species, as their burrows provide refuge for over 350 different species of wildlife. Burrow associates range from common animals such as opossums and rat snakes, to rarer and lesser-known species such as the punctuate gopher tortoise onthophagus beetle and the Eastern indigo snake. Without gopher tortoises and their burrows, there would be fewer of these species. Some species could even go extinct! By raising awareness for this threat-

ened species, we can all help to make sure gopher tortoises and all the other important species that call their burrows home will be around for years to come.

If you would like to learn more, visit

[GopherTortoiseDayFL.com](http://GopherTortoiseDayFL.com).

For questions, contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Gopher Tortoise Day Coordinator at [GTEvents@MyFWC.com](mailto:GTEvents@MyFWC.com)

# Help FWC Report Horseshoe Crabs

It's almost spring and that means it's peak mating season for horseshoe crabs. Help biologists with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) gather valuable information about these ancient creatures by reporting sightings on the online survey at <https://survey123.arcgis.com>.

Horseshoe crabs have blue blood which is very expensive, but with numerous medical benefits. Due to this coveted resource, it's become vulnerable to extinction. But, this highly-valuable resource worth protecting.

Horseshoe crabs mate by pairing up, with the smaller male attached to the larger female. They then crawl onto the beach up to the high tide line where the female digs a nest and lays her eggs, all while the male is attached and fertilizing the freshly laid eggs. They mate year-round, but it is most common to see mating groups along the shore of sandy, lower wave action beaches from March through October. Each season, usually May or June in our area, just one female crab can lay as many as 80,000 eggs!

Unlike other crabs, horseshoe crabs aren't actually



PHOTO COURTESY FWC

crustaceans — they don't have antennae and they have multiple eyes. They are an arachnid (in the spider family).

You will have the most luck spotting horseshoe crabs around high tide within a few days of a new or full moon. If you see a horseshoe crab on its back, you can help it flip back over by gently picking it up (holding both sides of the shell), turning it over and releasing it back into the water. Simple actions such as this help conserve this species and the many other species that depend on it.

Reporting horseshoe crab sightings provides valuable information about habitat use, popu-

lation distribution and environmental conditions for nesting to the FWC. Although horseshoe crabs have existed for more than 450 million years, scientists are still learning about Florida populations. Public sighting information helps FWC researchers target nesting beaches for the Florida Horseshoe Crab Watch Program, a citizen science based initiative to collect data throughout the state.

You can report sightings by visiting [MyFWC.com/research](http://MyFWC.com/research) and clicking on "Crustaceans" then "Horseshoe Crabs" and selecting "Report Your Nesting Horseshoe Crab Sighting"




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 Dining

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Cheddar Thyme; Strawberry Coffee Cake; Cranberry Orange Muffins; Red Velvet Cookies; Brownies with Espresso Ganache or Caramelitas! Try a Breakfast Special with a piece of Quiche or Kolache-Hashbrown Casserole. Breakfast Burritos are rolled and ready daily! Choose from Andouille, Bacon, Chorizo or Veggie. Or tantalize your taste buds with a made-to-order Breakfast Sandwich on Croissants or Bagel with two eggs and



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## LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant

Welcome to LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant located at the spectacular Bluewater Bay Marina Complex. The restaurant is named after "LJ Schoo-

ner" (the LJ 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 with dinner specials such as Blackened Mahi and grilled shrimp

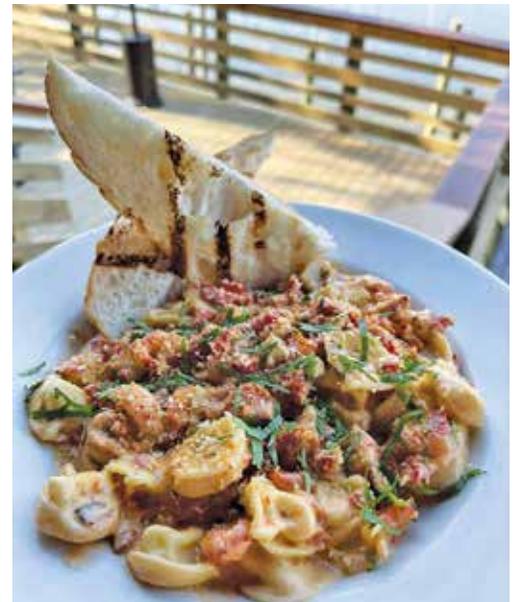
with hollandaise, served over cheese grits! Join L.J. Schooners for Sunday Brunch, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. and drink your bottomless Mimosas for \$10! Adults \$13.95; Children 7-12 \$4.50; Children under age 6 free.

Join us for our spectacular Sunset Shrimp Boil, last Sunday of the month, April through October and enjoy the most delicious local wild caught shrimp you've ever tasted. And don't miss all the fun in April beginning with Saturday, April 2 when we give back by donating 10% of food sales to Niceville Fireworks Fund and join in the fun by helping out as we host Ward Cove Clean-Up Day. Chess Night - April 4, 6-10 p.m., Gilleran's Island 6-10 p.m., DJ Chris

Saylor April 9, 6-10 p.m., David Gautreau 6-10 p.m., Catalyst & Hippy Party April 16, 6-10 p.m., Easter Brunch, April 17 9a.m.-1p.m. & Jackson Bledsoe 4-8p.m., Underwater Dive Clean-Up April 23 followed by John Galt Dance Band 6-10p.m., Ed Wrann, April 24, 4-8p.m., Matthew Nino, April 30, 6-10p.m.

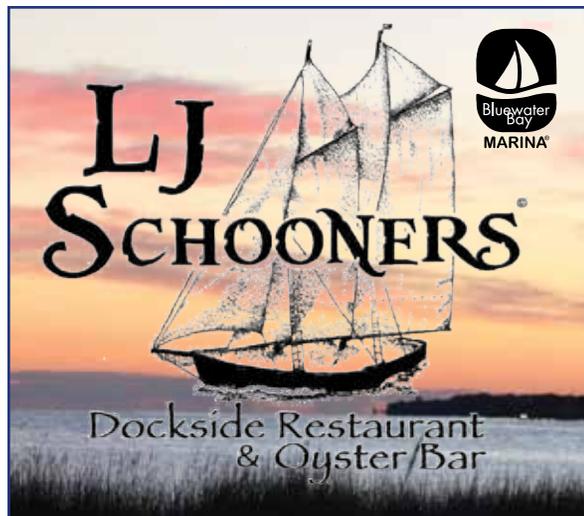
Call to order take-out and pick-up in the L.J. Schooners Oyster Bar or call when you arrive for curbside pick-up. Dine-in, pick-up, to-go.

Oyster Bar Hours, April: Mon-Thurs. 3p.m.-10p.m., Fri.-Sat. 11a.m. to Midnight, Sun. 9am-9pm.  
 Restaurant Hours, April: Mon.-



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**Saturday, April 2: 10% of Food Sales will be donated to Niceville Fireworks Fund**

## More Upcoming Fun:

- April 2 Ward Cove Clean-Up Day
- April 4 Chess Night 6-10pm
- April 8 Gilleran's Island 6-10pm
- April 9 DJ Chris Saylor
- April 15 David Gautreau 6-10pm
- April 16 Catalyst & Hippy Party 6-10pm
- April 17 Easter Brunch 9am-1pm & Jackson Bledsoe 4-8pm
- April 23 Under Water Dive Clean-up
- April 23 John Galt Dance Band 6-10pm
- April 24 Ed Wrann 4-8pm
- April 30 Matthew Nino 6-10pm

Oyster Bar Hours April: Mon.-Thurs.3pm-10pm, Fri.-Sat. 11am to midnight, Sun. 9am to 9pm  
 Restaurant Hours April: Mon.-Tues. Closed, Wed.-Sat. 11am to 9pm, Sun. 9am to 9pm, Sunday Brunch 9am to 1pm

# Area Students Win in Sports and Academics

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

Recently, the All Sports Association (ASA) held its 53rd Annual Banquet where it recognized and honored some of the finest Northwest Florida athletes (top high school, collegiate, amateur, professional and Special Olympics athletes as well as individuals who have fostered youth activities and made a significant impact in our community) who are contributing to their sports and their community. These exceptional athletes not only excel in sports, but also in academics, community involvement and overcoming obstacles to achieve their goals.

Bay Life spoke with several to find out what the awards mean to them and where they're going from here.

**Niceville High School Senior Eric Trapp** won the Taylor Haugen Trophy award, one that has become one of the most impactful in our region. An overcomer due to a bout with depression, Eric feels this award symbolizes his perseverance through this challenge and his recovery. "I learned I was at my best when I kept going and kept working hard, even though everything might not be good all the time. Football was an escape of sorts and I was all in." He feels the adversity now has given him a platform in the mental health arena. "Through my faith and being open about this has really helped me overcome it. It's been my testimony, my purpose, and I feel others going through it can notice that positivity and feel 'If he can do it, so can I.'" Assuming his love of football from his mom, Eric said, "This award, I believe, is truly the best award in the area, because it symbolizes everything I think a young man should possess. I'm so blessed that the Haugen Foundation believed that person was me to be able to carry on Taylor's legacy."

A graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2019 with a BS in Systems Engineering and an MS in Management Science and Engineering, Senior quarterback **Isaiah Sanders** of Stanford University was the 2021 recipient of the Wuerffel Trophy. Isaiah's adversity came when he felt terribly isolated at the Air Force Academy. But, he pushed through and has now realized his dream of playing football. Being able to go through the adversity of Covid with his Stanford teammates was actually one of the greatest experiences of his life. An overcomer who gives all Glory to God for the platform he now has, Isaiah wants to leverage that story. "When it comes to leadership, it comes to so much more about how you can serve the people around you."

Ranked #1 in her senior class of nearly 500 students, Niceville High School senior **Page Doll-off**, a two-sport athlete (swimming and tennis), is the 2022 Female Scholastic Award Winner. She also earned an AP Scholar Award and is the Niceville High School Heisman Scholarship School 2021 winner. "I was more than honored to be nominated for this award. To win is an even greater accomplishment," said Page. "I couldn't have done it without all my supporting teammates, coaches and parents. To be recognized by this association and represent Niceville High School is truly amazing." Page will be headed to the U.S. Air Force Academy after graduation.

2022 Male Scholastic Award Winner **Noah Harman** is a two-sport athlete in football and track and field at Niceville High School, also carrying a 4.6 GPA. "Not only did winning this award tell me that all the hard work I have done has paid off, academically and physically, it also showed me that all my ef-



PHOTO by DOUG STAUFFER

Pictured are athlete award winners with ASA's 53rd Annual Banquet keynote speaker, Hall of Fame pitcher Tom Glavine.

orts have been recognized, for my family and friends who have also sacrificed as well as young kids who ask me how to get here." Going the extra mile in his studies, Noah plans to attend Cornell University in Engineering.

Male Collegiate Award Winner **Juanyeh Thomas**, from Walton and Niceville High Schools, makes his presence known on the gridiron at Georgia Tech on defense and special teams. This three-time high school All-State football player set a high school national record as a sophomore when he returned interceptions for touchdowns in five consecutive games.

This year's Amateur Award Winner, Fort Walton Beach native **Johnathan Newby**, is currently ranked in the top 1% of all-time natural powerlifters in the world. After a successful sports career at Fort Walton Beach High School and college football career at both Saint Francis University and Cumberland University, he now competes with the U.S. Powerlifting Association. Many of our readers probably know him best

as a member of the Niceville Police Department's Tactical Response Team. He also serves as a certified state referee for USPA competitions.

Professional Athlete Award Winner **Richie Grant** played high school football at Choctaw and then UCF. Finishing his college career at UCF with 291 tackles, 10 interceptions and five forced fumbles, he was also first-team All-American Athletic Conference for three consecutive years (2018-2020) and was a finalist for the Jim Thorpe Award, given to the best defensive back in college football. Now a member of the Atlanta Falcons, Richie said "My name being on that plaque is particularly meaningful to me. It goes to show it doesn't matter where you come from (having grown up in a small town in Mississippi), if you do hard work and prepare like you're supposed to, it pays off." He says his uncle, his role-model who played football for Alabama, had the most influence on his life and now career.

This year's Special Olympics Athlete Award was given to **Shane K. Kamm**, a graduate

of Silver Sands School where he played in Special Olympics Basketball and Bowling. Overcoming his fear of deep water, Shane now excels in paddle-boarding which has become his favorite sport. "If it wasn't for God, I wouldn't be receiving this award," Shane says. "This is a real honor. I've never received an award like this."

Female Collegiate Award Winner was **Emily Madril**. After playing soccer at Navarre High School, she was integral on FSU's 2021 top-ranked team that won the 2021 NCAA Division I Women's Soccer National Championship! She was also named the Atlantic Coast Conference Defensive Player of the Year for 2021. Still reeling from this win, Emily says she was born into soccer. With a master's in IT, Emily says she likes being a mentor and hopes to begin teaching soccer camps in the area. She also wants to play soccer professionally in the U.S.

"In the past eight years, our organization has given over 1.5 million dollars to local youth and to support youth athletics.

*Continued on next page*

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 Wellness

# Hope Squad: Positive Mental Health for Our Youth

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24. According to the Florida Department of Vital Statistics, suicide was the third leading cause of death for individuals ages 5 to 14 in 2020.

Northwest Florida, from Walton to Escambia Counties,

combined in 2018-2020, falls in the top five in youth suicides per 100,000 population for the State of Florida. It is time for our communities to come together on this topic and be aware of the challenges we face in keeping our kids safe.

The Youth Risk Behavior

Survey (YRBS), a statewide school-based survey of Florida's public high school students, showed that 39.3% of high school students felt sad or hopeless. 17.7% seriously considered attempting suicide, 13.8% made a suicide plan and 8.9% attempted suicide.



Students are finding hope again and are learning that it is ok to speak up and seek help. 75% of young people will tell a peer before harming themselves but will not go to an adult. That is why the peer-to-peer program is so successful across the country."

Recently, four regional "Community Conversation" meetings regarding the mental health of our youth were held—locally at Choctawhatchee and Crestview High Schools and Pensacola State College Milton and Pensacola Campuses.

Dr. Greg A. Hudnall, founder and Executive Director of HOPE4UTAH and creator of the Hope Squad peer-to-peer suicide prevention program, led the conversations. He has championed suicide prevention in schools and communities for more than 20 years. His expertise is not only sought after locally, but also nationally and internationally at the highest levels of government.

In addition, the seventh annual Youth Leadership Conference took place at Niceville High School on March 5th and encouraged area 7th-12th grade students in public, private or homeschools to attend. It specifically was designed to help these students cultivate leadership skills, empower them with tools and resources, and inspire them to live and model civic action in the community while helping them discover their purpose and potential. The conference brought together students and youth from throughout the region that are interested in leadership—a great number already actively participating within the Hope Squad Peer-to-Peer Suicide Prevention Program.

For more information, contact our Executive Director, Peggy Brockman at (850) 259-8356 or e-mail: u4agchs@gmail.com. And please visit [unitedforagoodcause.org](http://unitedforagoodcause.org), [hopesquad.com](http://hopesquad.com) or Facebook at United for A Good Cause, Inc.

Fortunately, there's the Hope Squad, part of United for a Good Cause, a local 501(c) (3) charitable organization. United for a Good Cause is the lead entity that helps secure funding for and implements Hope Squad in our region's schools.

In 2019 after seeing the concerning statistics for our region, United for a Good Cause, Inc. took on the task of raising the money to bring the Hope Squad program to this region. Thanks to many area businesses like Eglin Federal Credit Union, United Way Emerald Coast, Okaloosa Cares Grant, Bit-Wizards, Emerald Coast Harley Davidson, and organizations like Impact 100, Sunday's Child, 100 Women Who Care, Niceville Strong, The Tatissa Foundation and numerous smaller donors, funding has been made possible to start a Hope Squad program in most elementary and secondary schools in Okaloosa and Walton School Districts and others over the next year.

According to United for a Good Cause, Inc. Executive Director Peggy Brockman, "We have 18 schools that currently have their Hope Squad program in various stages of implementation. Fifteen of those are in Okaloosa County School District, one in Santa Rosa and two in Escambia County. Others will be onboarding their programs over the next year. We still have a long way to go, but we are moving forward in spite of a global pandemic slowing the process.



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## AREA STUDENTS

*continued from previous page*

Our primary fundraiser for the year is this banquet..." said Carter Zorn, ASA President. "We have over 100 dues paying members who contribute their time to our mission. Bear in

mind that we have no paid staff or administration. So, 100% of our money raised after expenses goes right back into our community."

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

# Breast Cancer



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer in women and the second leading cause of death from cancer in women. Metastatic breast cancer tends to invade the bone causing intense pain and invades the brain causing dementia and memory loss. It is not a pleasant way to finish your days. Breast cancer survivors will tell you that the return of breast cancer is something that weighs on their mind anytime something seems different. A catch in your back, a weird cough, or any number of minor issues can trigger that fear that the cancer might be returning. In addition, cancer treatments are invasive, painful and life altering. Prevention is really the key to survival.

But what is the likelihood of

a woman getting breast cancer? When you look at all women, the risk seems relatively low. The rate of breast cancer in women is about 2.6%, but this number is deceptive because this is the risk for all women. What is my risk of breast cancer? This is the question women really want to know the answer to. There are many factors involved, but advancing age is a major factor and the risk of breast cancer with advancing age can be as high as 16%.

The Women's Health Initiative was a study started in 1991 and stopped in 2005. It originally reported that giving estrogen to postmenopausal women increased their risk of breast cancer. Unfortunately, this report was not entirely accurate. What this study showed was that women who received synthetic estrogen (estrogens) have a higher incidence of breast cancer while women who received bio-identical estrogen (estradiol) actually had a lower risk of breast cancer. This change has been published, but was not reported with the fervor of the original reports. As well, not only did these women have a lower risk of breast

cancer, but also a lower risk of strokes and heart attacks as well.

A recent study was published in 2019 which looked at breast cancer risk in women who received testosterone pellet therapy. Yes, testosterone. Women have an idea that they don't need testosterone, but this is not true. In fact, women make testosterone in the ovaries and much of this testosterone gets converted to estrogen. So, women make more testosterone than estrogen. Anyway, the women in this study

were followed for over 10 years. It turns out that the incidence of breast cancer in the women who received testosterone therapy was 40% lower than the women who did not receive testosterone.

So, now you see that both bio-identical estrogen and bio-identical testosterone reduce the risk of breast cancer. This doesn't even touch on the benefits to bone density, heart health, prevention of depression and anxiety, increases in libido and the many other proven benefits

of both estrogen and testosterone therapy.

If you are concerned about your health and wellness, please come see us.

*Dr. Richard Chern, MD not only provides hormone therapy to men and women, but also teaches hormone therapy to doctors across the country. In addition, he treats many of the doctors in the area, is a platinum BioTE provider and runs one of the largest BioTE hormone clinics in the country right here in Miramar Beach. Call today for an appointment at 850-837-1271.*

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 Wellness


BY TODD CRAIG

I don't remember most of my dreams, but I'll never forget this one. In the dream, I am in the third-row seat of a car traveling down a straight highway. I am content with my situation until I am suddenly aware that the car is on cruise control, and I am supposed to be in the driver's seat! The rest of the dream is my struggle from the third row, over the second row of seats, and the center console to the driver's seat. In the several months I had the dream, I am not sure I ever made it to the driver's seat.

I had this recurring dream during a season of my life when I was living on autopilot. During this season, life felt more like something that was happening to me than a gift I got to live. I think all of us have had seasons, or days, when we've felt like this. Maybe there are areas of your life right now that feel exactly like this.

We weren't given life to be a passive passenger in the back seat. In nearly all areas of life, including our relationships, our

vocation, our health, our attitudes and our personal growth, we often have far more power than we think. The reality is, we are ridiculously in charge of the lives we've been given.

### 5 Ways to be ridiculously in charge of your life:

**Let go of the need to be in control.** If the last three years have taught us anything, it is that there are things outside our control. But even when we are not in control of everything happening in life, we are in charge of how we respond, our attitude and the actions we take in response to difficult people, circumstances and setbacks. Trying to control things outside of our control distracts us from the choices we can make. One of the great ironies of life is that we try to control what we can't control and play victim to things we are in charge of.

**Be in charge:** Make a list of things outside of your control and another list of things you can control. Be intentional throughout the day of focusing your energy on things you can control.

**Acknowledge learned helplessness.** There are many different reasons why we begin



to feel helpless. Sometimes, it's because we are trying to control things outside of our control. So, we begin to assume we have no agency in other areas of life. Sometimes, this happens when we see what others have that we don't (if I had their resources..., if I were as lucky..., if I were given the same opportunities..., if the world weren't against me..., if I had more time...). This view of life may let us off the hook for responsibility, but it will rob our lives of meaning. Being ridiculously in charge means shifting from focusing energy on what is not possible to how you will find a way and taking the next step.

**Be in charge:** In what areas of life have you learned helplessness? What one small step can you take forward?

**Treat the past as a teacher not a master.** The past becomes a master when we assume it is a predictor of the future. You do not have to be

imprisoned by mistakes or failures in your past, and you do not have to repeat them. Allow those experiences to teach you, not define you. Today is a new day, a new chapter. What story do you want to tell?

**Be in charge:** If you were to write the next chapter of your story, what would you title it?

**Approach life as a possibility to be lived rather than a problem to be solved.** The easiest way to get stuck in life is to focus on all the problems in life that need to be solved. When we do this, we start living life as a list of "should:" I should lose weight, I should read more, I should be a better spouse/parent, etc. Life soon becomes an obligation. When we shift our focus from the problem to the possibility, "should" becomes "can:" I can lose weight, I can read more, I can be a better spouse/parent. This approach to life is an empowering invitation to live the life we want to live.

**Be in charge:** What are your dreams? What do you want to be true?

**Be intentional about yes and no.** Being ridiculously in

charge means we recognize the everyday choices we make are helping us move towards our desired outcome or they are not. This is true of both the active choices we make as well as the passive choices. And, because we are limited beings, every time we say "yes" to something we are saying "no" to something else.

**Be in charge:** Once you identify what you want to be true in your life, make a list of things you need to start and a list of things you need to end.

If you would like to connect with us, you can find us at [journeybravely.com](http://journeybravely.com).

*From childhood, Todd's great passion has been to see others discover and thrive in the life they were meant to live. With over 20 years of having clarifying conversations and guiding people through life change, Todd has coached others using effective, strategic tools and questions to help them move life forward both at home and work. Todd, and his wife, Stephenie, offer coaching through Journey Bravely ([journeybravely.com](http://journeybravely.com)) in both professional and personal capacities toward identifying, developing and living your goals, desires and dreams.*

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## It's All About Sugar



BY KAY LEAMAN,  
HEALTH ARCHITECT

It's a love-hate relationship. We eat it to celebrate, comfort our souls and give as gifts. Enjoying special moments is a good thing. But even if you're an occasional sweet eater, you might be eating much more than you think. Sugar is more addictive than cocaine and causes inflammation which is the root cause of most diseases.

Sugar is in almost everything we eat: fruits, vegetables, breads, dairy (lactose), sweets, boxed, canned and frozen foods and the list goes on. Did you know that manufacturers add sugar to 74% of all packaged foods? There are currently 61 names for sugar not counting artificial sweeteners. Regarding the latter, these have been associated with headaches, depression, fatigue, memory loss,

gastrointestinal problems, etc.

Both sugar and inflammation can rob our cells of the required nutrients they need to function at their optimal levels. And since sugar has no nutritional value, it has to 'borrow' nutrients to digest it. It depletes the body of vitamins C and E and is particularly draining to the B vitamin complex. It also leeches minerals such as calcium and magnesium from your bones and teeth.

Added to this list are refined carbohydrates such as pasta and breads. The body turns these into sugar for energy. However, the body doesn't recognize these as 'real foods' and processes them differently than it would a whole grain bread or gluten free pasta.

Natural sugars from fruit and veggies are a body's friend. Take time to read ingredient labels and begin choosing the labels that have no added sugars. Watch out for 'low fat' or 'sugar free' items. 'Low fat' decreases flavor; so, sugar is added as a flavoring and many 'sugar free' items means artificial sweeteners might be added which wreak

havoc on our bodies.

Take care of your body and cherish your health. Every step you take makes a difference. Shoot me an email with "Sugar List" in the Subject if you would like a list of names.

Kay Leaman,  
HealthyDay HealthyLife, [succeed.hdhl@gmail.com](mailto:succeed.hdhl@gmail.com)



### "Rise Up for Change"

Local Niceville nonprofit, Crisis Aid for Littles and Moms (CALM) Organization, Inc., is planning its **5th annual Spring Fundraiser, "Rise Up for Change," on Saturday, April 9th** from 5-8 p.m. at VenYou201 which will include both silent and live auctions. Highlights feature music by Ed Wrann and the John Galt Band, food courtesy of One 20 Bistro, Café Rico and Tisano's, Jeff Jourdan, auctioneer, and our new favorite, optional jar pulls.

Tickets are now on sale for \$75.00 per person and will insure your seat, food, two beverage tickets and a signature souvenir goblet at VenYou201, located at 201 Redwood Ave, Niceville. Additional drinks will be offered per pour. The mission at CALM is to provide transitional housing and life skills training to moms and their kids who are essentially homeless. All money's raised will go to help provide for them as well as our new building program, CALM Village. If you'd like more information, visit [www.NicevilleCALM.com](http://www.NicevilleCALM.com).



## White-Wilson Medical Center is now in DeFuniak Springs!

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**Brittany Mosley, APRN**  
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## Free Federal Income Tax Preparation Available

Free Federal income tax preparation is being offered in Walton County for low to middle-income families and individuals, with special attention to senior citizens. Tax Preparation service will be available from Feb. 15 to April 14, 2022 at the Walton County Coastal Branch Library in Santa Rosa Beach.

Taxpayers must make appointments on-line at [tinyurl.com/44kf76rx](http://tinyurl.com/44kf76rx) or by calling (850) 404-9125.

The site will be open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Tax Aide is also offered in DeFuniak Springs at the Life Enrichment Center, (850) 892-

8746, Thursday, 10 pm to 1 pm by appointment only.

This service is sponsored by the AARP Foundation and the IRS. There are no age restrictions, AARP membership is not required, and the service is absolutely free. Taxpayers must bring their 2020 tax return, Social Security cards for taxpay-

er(s) and all dependents, picture IDs, and all tax documents received, including information on stimulus payments and advance child tax credit received. Bring checking or savings account information if direct deposit of refunds or direct debit of amounts due is desired. If applicable, bring Identity Pro-

tection PIN (IP PIN) for each individual. Taxpayers who wish to itemize deductions must bring appropriate information. Note that complicated tax returns involving rental properties, inventories, depreciation, etc. cannot be prepared.

## Florida SBDC at UWF Presents Local Business Classes

### “Staying Competitive in an Employee-Driven Labor Market”

The Great Resignation!

We’ve all heard about it and are maybe even a victim of it. Join April 6th from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. to learn how to remain com-

petitive in today’s tough labor market. Staffing experts from Landrum HR will discuss how to attract workers, how to properly hire and onboard new team members, and provide guidance on how to increase employee engagement and retention! Lunch provided by Emerald Coast Vibe. No fee. Location: Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548. To register, visit [www.sbdc.uwf.edu](http://www.sbdc.uwf.edu) and click on “Training & Events.”



ald Coast Campus, 1170 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Bldg. 1, Rm 126, Fort Walton Beach, 32547.

### “Starting a Business” – Fort Walton Beach

You have an idea for a business. What’s the first step? Take the idea that has been forming in your head and see if you can turn it into an actual business. Join us on April 14th from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. when we will take an in-depth view of your business concept and discuss the steps to a successful start. We will discuss funding options for your business, basic marketing strategies, legal business structures, taxation, and the nuts-and-bolts of launching your new venture. Fee: \$50. To register, visit [www.sbdc.uwf.edu](http://www.sbdc.uwf.edu) and click on “Training & Events.” Location: UWF Emerald Coast Campus, 1170 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Bldg. 8, R/836, Fort Walton Beach, 32547.

### “Demystifying Business Loans” – Fort Walton Beach

You’ve worked hard on your business and you’re ready to grow. Your current building is at maximum capacity and you need a larger space. You’re an innovator looking to launch a new product. Whichever applies to you, every business needs capital to start and grow. Com-

mmercial lending can sometimes be confusing. Knowing the steps to prepare for and obtain a commercial loan can ease stress and frustration and can improve your chances of approval. So, join us on April 13th from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. for our “Demystifying Business Loans” workshop to gain insight and understanding of the commercial lending world, what lenders look for, and what steps to take now to prepare! Lunch will be provided courtesy of Synovus. No fee. Location: UWF Emer-

### “Launch Your Business with Customer-Focused Marketing” – Online Webinar

As a new entrepreneur, you’ll need more than good products or services to grow your business. It’s also important to have strong customer-focused marketing strategies to reach your audience and turn them into loyal customers. Join us online April 19th from 9 – 10 a.m. when you will learn how to create a compelling brand, define your audience, convert customers and build loyalty and advocacy. No fee. To register, visit [www.sbdc.uwf.edu](http://www.sbdc.uwf.edu) and click on “Training & Events.” Presented by Matt Weber, President and CEO of ROAR! Internet Marketing and Speaker, Grow With Google at Google

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You could have it answered in one our columns.

# Honeybee's Duke Higgs Loves Ice Cream and Games

BY KENNETH BOOKS

Duke Higgs loves video games, ice cream and Niceville. It was only natural that the Marine Corp veteran would gravitate toward those loves when he built Honeybee Ice Cream and Arcade across the street from Niceville High School. "I've always been into arcades and games and playing with my son," Duke said. "I decided to merge the two and have a family place for kids and adults to enjoy themselves for a short time. I found a great place near where my son goes to Niceville High School. I wanted to give kids a place like those I grew up in the 80s and 90s."

The Evansville, Ind., native found a perfect place to stay after he retired in 2015 and "I thought this would be a good place to stay for a while."

Duke left Evansville at age 18 to begin his Marine Corps career and finished at Eglin Air Force Base.

"I feel great about the time I served and feel great about the future," he said. "It was one of my greatest accomplishments and I hope that my 23 years in the Marines wouldn't be my only accomplishment."

Honeybee Ice Cream and Arcade boasts 32 flavors of five-star Wisconsin ice cream and 17 ice cream roll flavors – ice cream spread out on a cold plate, chopped up and rolled up into a cup, "making it picture-worthy." It also provides 24 flavors of snow cones and a large selection of fruit sodas and, in addition to the ice cream, will make milkshakes with any of the flavors, as well as sundaes and pizza by the slice.

The arcade is unique to the

area as well. "We started with 20 games and now have more than 50 working games and probably another 25 just waiting to be rotated in, fixed up and repaired," Duke said. "I'm actually more than halfway to opening up a new location," he said, and is considering Freeport, Santa Rosa Beach, Milton and Crestview.

A great deal of work went into creating Honeybee Ice Cream and Arcade. The existing location, which for many years was a used book store, required significant renovations to create a family-friendly environment.

"I spent a lot of time and money renovating the building, modernizing it into a place where people can walk through the doors and feel very comfortable," he said. He added new floors, lights, new black lights, and added some retaining walls to make his customers happy and comfortable.

"That's what it's all about," he said.

"It's not really about the money with me," Duke said. "I signed a lease and started working on things around September 2019. It was about 18 months before I opened the doors. I took my time to make the building extra nice."

Duke opened Honeybee Ice Cream and Arcade in July 2021 after a year of Covid. "We were born from adversity," he said. "The community has come in and they can appreciate the time and effort we put into that place. I think they appreciate our amazing ice cream selection and an affordable place where you can drop in a couple of quarters. I pride myself for be-



ing affordable. I'm excited about the opportunity. I'm kind of an achievement addict and I like to strive to accomplish things not only for myself, but for kids and my family. It's been a great six

months since we opened."

Duke hired several 16- and 17-year-olds as staff and describes them as "some of the most enthusiastic and friendly

and happy employees. They're all capable of making animal balloons. All these separate us from many of the businesses out there. We go the extra mile."

Honeybee Ice Cream and Arcade is involved with Niceville High School as well. "We have been sponsoring local school sporting functions," Duke, whose son, Talon, 16, is a sophomore at NHS, said. "We support the community in many ways. We also sponsor Niceville ROTC and look forward to continuing to do so."

"Business is great," he said. "The weather's warming up and we're doing really well."

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 Business

# What You Need to Know: Coworking Spaces

BY MELISSA FERTITTA,  
BEACHWORX

Did you know that the U.S. is the world leader when it comes to the amount of physical coworking space available? Upwards of 80 million square feet is identifiable as a flexible workspace.

The coworking movement is not a hot new trend, though. Many enterprise level clients are realizing what freelancers, gig workers and small businesses already knew. Coworking is a way to cut expenses and maximize productivity.

So, what exactly are coworking spaces? How do they work and what are the benefits? Be-

low are some ideas businesses should take into consideration before renting in a coworking space.

## How Does Coworking Support a Workforce?

### 1. Community

Coworking operators are entrepreneurs themselves, which means they understand the power of networks and communities. Many strive to support their members by offering structured networking and mentoring programs.

Whether a member is an employee of a larger company or an entrepreneur just launching their business, a community surrounds

them when needed. The knowledge, referrals and resources that can be realized by connecting with members of a coworking community is of immeasurable value to both the worker and the operator. Coworking spaces want to be known as a resource for the business community, beyond just being an affordable space for meeting and working.

### 2. Flexibility and Affordability

Coworking is a flexible solution for entrepreneurs and companies of all sizes. They reduce the capital and operating expenditures associated with traditional leasing and real estate, generally by 20 - 40 % compared to traditional office rentals.

Many coworking operators allow month-to-month memberships, which allows its customers agility in regards to staffing size as well as the markets in which they operate.

### 3. Results

One unexpected finding from the pandemic is how resilient and productive the workforce could be outside of the office. According to research by University of Southampton, pandemic-era



productivity was not affected by remote work; in fact, 54% of survey respondents felt their productivity per hour worked was increased by working remotely.

The “autonomy afforded them by their employer when working from home was highly valued and allowed them to better regulate their thoughts and avoid distractions,” the survey found.

Coworking spaces are free from the distractions of working from home and their flexibility encourages the autonomy of control employees desire.

### Choosing the Right Coworking Space

Consider the points above when choosing a coworking space for your business. Have conversations with the operator about your business needs

and ask how solutions can be customized to fit those needs. Check out Beachworx in Destin to learn more about the services and solutions for businesses of all sizes.

To sign up for Beachworx’s Virtual Office, visit [thebeachworx.com/virtual-office-life-media](http://thebeachworx.com/virtual-office-life-media).

34990 Emerald Coast Pkwy, Suite 300, Destin 32541. Call (850) 974-3435.

## Niceville Valparaiso Chamber Awards!



Small Business of the Year: **Spine Life Chiropractic, Justin & Tiffany Turner**

Young Professional of the Year: **Mitch Anderson, Okaloosa Gas District**

Large Business of the Year: **Carr, Riggs & Ingram, LLC**

Volunteer of the Year: **Aly Wrann, Smileology**

You Rock: **Josh Woekener, Highlight Weddings & Events**

Community Enrichment: **Brandon & Chandler Huff, Huff Developments, LLC**

Rev. Dennis Brown Servant Leadership Award: **Bernard Johnson, Florida Power & Light Company**

Chairman’s Award: **Leslie Moland, White-Wilson Medical Center**

## Walton Area Chamber Annual Awards!

Ambassador of the Year: **Ginny Richerson, Fore Her**

Person of the Year: **Mike Storey, Mang Law & Title**

Small Business of the Year North: **Main Street DeFuniak Springs**

Small Business of the Year South: **Slick Lips Seafood & Oyster House**

Large Business of the Year: **Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa**

Young Professional of the Year: **Austin Bentley, Progress Bank**

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# A Pastor's Ponderings: Called to be a Resurrection Witness



BY PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER

Easter or Resurrection Sunday? So, why a distinction? Some believers refer to Easter as Resurrection Sunday, and for good reason. The Christian's blessed hope resides in two stages: 1. Christ's resurrection from death, hell and the grave almost two thousand years ago. 2. The resurrection of believers when we unite with Him.

Interestingly, the Bible refers to Easter only once. "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And when he had apprehended (Peter), he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people (Acts 12:1-4 KJV). This pagan king (Herod) planned on waiting until he celebrated Easter to kill another Christian.

I have never seen the resurrected Christ, but by faith, I know that one day I will meet Him face-to-face. I know this because the Bible tells me so. But, far too many people have never heard. I speak this to my shame, because God gives believers the power to be His witnesses. "But ye shall receive power,

after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8a).

Believing the gospel requires faith, and the resurrection is one aspect of the gospel consisting of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel...By which also ye are saved...how that Christ died for our sins...And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The gospel that saves is simply someone believing (and trusting) in Christ's atoning sacrifice: trusting in His death, burial and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

We are to be witnesses. Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver. After his betrayal, he took his own life,

and a replacement had to be chosen. I want us to consider the charge for his replacement: one must be ordained to witness or preach Christ's resurrection, "from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts 1:22b). Every believer is given this same charge—to be His witness.

Peter repeatedly testified that all the believers were witnesses of Christ's resurrection. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). "And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). The Bible sums it up: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:33a).

"The God of our fathers raised up

Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:30-32).

Paul testifying the same truth. "But God raised him from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people" (Acts 13:30-31).

So, Happy Resurrection Day! Be a witness to a world desperately looking for hope, desperately looking for answers. Keep looking up for our redemption draweth nigh.

## WOMEN UNITE

continued from page 4

community through philanthropy and service. By investing their time, talents, and treasures these passionate ladies come together and address some of our area's most pressing issues as they relate to women and girls. "I am so excited to have launched Women United right here in Okaloosa and Walton counties," said Carol Rogers, United Way Emerald Coast (UWEC) Board Member and Women United Chair. "I was previously a member of the Women United chapter in Volusia and Flagler counties where I experienced first-hand the difference a passionate group of women can make. The Emerald Coast is home to some of the most caring and generous ladies

in the world and I look forward to uniting with them to build a stronger community where women and girls can thrive."

The event featured several local female-led businesses as vendors and sponsors, including Corcoran Reverie, Lumi Pod Photo Booth Rentals, Emerald Epicurean, Forget Me Knot Florals, Happy Helium Destin, Emerald Coast Vibe, Tap The Coast, WaterVue at Brooks Street, Emily Bass Music and Mrs. Jones Cold Brew Coffee.

United Way Emerald Coast has had a presence in this community for the last 65 years, fighting for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our two-county area of Okaloosa and Walton counties. We strive to bridge the gap for children and families who

are struggling – to let people know that they are more than their circumstances, that their community is on their side, that we want to see them succeed.

Are you interested in be-

coming a member of Women United? Women United is open to women that donate a combined household gift of \$500+ a year (unrestricted funding) to UWEC.

Visit [www.united-way.org/womenunited](http://www.united-way.org/womenunited) or contact [womenunited@united-way.org](mailto:womenunited@united-way.org) to learn more.

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Musing

# Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

The two girls knocked on my door. They wore Kelly green berets and green vests. I greeted them.

The two Girl Scouts went

through their spiel. “We’re selling cookies, sir,” they began.

“Do you have any identification?” said I.

They exchanged looks. “Wait, what?”

“Well,” I said amiably, “how do I know you’re really Girl Scouts? A little proof would be nice. Dangerous world out there.”

I have a deep appreciation for Girl Scouts, and each year I buy a LOT of Thin Mints, which has made me quasi-famous in local Girl Scout circles. Last year, for example, my salesgirl won a pink Cadillac.

So the tallest girl gave me her name, rank, and serial number.



“And this is my new American flag badge,” she added. “We had to iron it on because my mom can’t sew.”

“How about you?” I said to the girl with pigtails. “Got any ID?”

Pigtails had no ID, but she did proudly display her proficiency badges, her Junior Leadership pin, her Junior Aide Award, her Daisy Safety Award pin, and her Purple Heart.

Then Pigtails described in painstaking detail how she earned her Junior First Aid badge, a process wherein she not only learned how to care for injured persons, but she rode shotgun in an ambulance, toured an emergency room, and extinguished a three-story residential fire single handedly.

I pointed to another badge. “And what’s that badge for?”

“Oh, this one?” she said. “This is the Junior Inside Government badge.”

The Junior Inside Government merit badge requires Girl Scouts to explore the ethics of American government. To do this, girls are given faux

countries and charged with the task of making up fun, nonsensical, whacky laws for their countries, sort of like Congress.

I asked what kinds of laws they came up with for their faux countries.

“Um,” said one girl. “Well, my country was called the United States of Amandica. I had a law where you got to eat candy with every meal. Oh, and each house was required to have one swimming pool. Vegetables were illegal. And all dads had to have a permit before eating beans.”

I pointed to another badge. “What’s this one?”

“This my Lifesaving badge. This one was really hard. I had to basically swim in a pool for-EVER and learn how to save someone’s life in the water. I learned about things like spinal injuries, rescuing a drowning person, and how to give CPR.”

“You mean you know CPR?” I said.

She nodded proudly. I pointed to another badge.

“This one?” said Pigtails. “This is the Playing the Past badge. I got this one when I was little. This is when you pick a period in history and you pretend you’re back in that time.”

“I picked Colonial America. Me and my mom dressed up

like colonial people and we had a party and ate colonial food.”

“Trust me,” her friend added, “you do not want to know what the colonists ate.”

I asked about another badge.

“This is the Social Butterfly badge,” the girl said. “It’s where you learn how to talk to people at, like, a dinner party or something. You have to make conversation and not be awkward, and be super polite. You have to use your manners, learn how to use the right silverware, and learn table manners from other countries, like, eating with chopsticks.”

“Yeah,” said Pigtails. “And then we had to write a BUNCH of thank-yous afterward. My mom said it was just like Junior League only with shorter people.”

After they explained several more badges, including the Practice with Purpose badge, Digital Leadership badge, Simple Meals badge, Staying Fit badge, Robots badge, and the Financial Management badge, I asked about another patch.

“This one? This is the Starts With Kindness badge.”

The girls explained that to earn this particular merit badge, Scouts are expected to hold the door for someone, give hugs at random, leave happy notes around town, make gifts for others, or call someone who is not feeling well.

“For my badge, I wrote chalk messages of encouragement on the sidewalks,” said Pigtails. “Cause I’m really good at art. So I wrote on the sidewalk, ‘you’re an amazing person,’ or ‘you can do this,’ or ‘you are loved.’”

The other girl said, “For my badge, my mom and I baked desserts for everyone at my grandpa’s nursing home, and, honestly, we just showed everyone that we care about them, and how special they are, and everyone wanted their pictures with me.”

After our pleasantries my sales professionals got down to cutting bait like two savvy businesswomen.

“So how many cookies can we put you down for this year, Mister Dietrich?”

I paid in cash. I hope those girls win a few Coupe DeVilles.

# Nashville Recording Singer-Songwriter, Bradley Gaskin, Performs on Main Street DeFuniak Springs

Main Street DeFuniak Springs will host a concert on April 1 with accomplished singer-songwriter Bradley Gaskin, at the historic Florida Chautauqua Theatre in Downtown DeFuniak Springs.

Bradley first gained notoriety in 2011, with "Mr. Bartender," an original ballad showcasing his powerful voice and knack for storytelling. Following the success of the debut single from his freshmen album, he performed at a variety of venues including those during his time on tour with multi-platinum and Grammy-nominated duo, Big & Rich, and several visits to the iconic circle that sits center stage at the Grand Ole Opry.

Accompanying his vocal talents, Bradley has penned songs for multi-platinum selling country music artist, Sammy Kershaw; season two X Factor winner, Tate Stevens; and southern



Records. 30A Life Records is headed by Walton County local, Jack Cole; and Missouri-based, Bob Clark. Currently tracking new music and set to release a full album later this year, Gaskin will bring his songs, both original and beloved classics, and stories to Main Street DeFuniak Springs.

"After listening to Bradley's stories and songs, I am thrilled to have someone with his talent performing in DeFuniak Springs," said Main Street Executive Director, Chelsea Blach. "Bradley's background and upbringing is something many can relate to, having led a blue-collar life prior-to and following his success with "Mr.

gospel's Grammy-nominated and Dove Award duo, Jeff and Sheri Easter.

After stepping away from Nashville nearly 10-years ago, Bradley is ready to debut new music and begin touring again after recently signing with an independent label, 30A Life

Bartender", but his talent and musical accomplishments are unlike anything we've been able to showcase locally in quite some time. Knowing Bradley's efforts on his new album and his vocal ability, Main Street is fortunate to have him perform before he finds more fame."

Bradley, along with musical guests, will perform two 45-minute sets. Taking advantage of the intimate setting, concertgoers will enjoy Gaskin's recollection

of stories from his initial rise to stardom, stories from the Grand Ole Opry, and what the future of his music looks like during a 15-minute Q&A intermission.

Tickets are on sale for \$25.00 in advance and will increase \$10.00 on the day-of. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the show will begin at 6:30 p.m. The Florida Chautauqua Theatre is located at 840 Baldwin Avenue, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435. For tickets,

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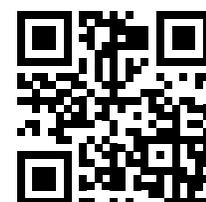
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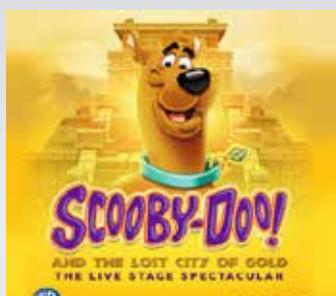


scan here for more information

Go to [MattieKellyArtsCenter.org](http://MattieKellyArtsCenter.org) or call 850.729.6000 for tickets.



**Lords of 52nd Street**  
January 7, 2022



**Scooby Doo! and the Lost City of Gold**  
January 27, 2022



**The Simon & Garfunkel Story**  
February 7, 2022



**The Golden Girls Show!**  
March 5, 2022



**Menopause The Musical**  
March 19, 2022



**The Price is Right Live**  
April 1, 2022



**An Officer and a Gentleman**  
April 10, 2022



**Waitress**  
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Arts & Music

# MKAF Spring Lineup

On Thursday, April 21, the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) kicks off the 2022 Spring Concerts in the Village series with the showstopping Michael Jackson LIVE, direct from Las Vegas featuring Santana Jackson, one of the top Michael Jackson tribute artists in the world! The highly-anticipated season includes pop icon, Taylor Dane; fan favorites, Sister Hazel; and the Music of Led Zeppelin featuring Sinfonia Gulf Coast.

“For 27 years, the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation has been at the forefront of providing arts entertainment and education to Northwest Florida. The annual Concerts in the Village is no exception and we are thrilled to announce this year’s incredible

lineup of guest artists,” stated MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller. “The revenue generated from these events enables us to provide the highest quality of arts education and community engagement throughout Okaloosa, Walton and Bay Counties. Thank you to all of our season sponsors, community partners, and members! If you are not yet a member, please consider joining,” said Demetrius.

### 2022 Season MKAF Concerts in the Village

Enjoy a night under the stars at the most beautiful outdoor music venue on the Emerald Coast. Bring a bottle of wine, your favorite craft beer, some delicious snacks, and a blanket



or chair. Food and drinks are available for purchase!

Throughout the Spring concert season, concert-goers can expect exciting performances from an incredible lineup of artists.

Thursday, April 21, 2022:  
**Michael Jackson LIVE (Vegas Show)**

Thursday, April 28, 2022:  
**Naturally 7**

Thursday, May 5, 2022:  
**Shania Twin (Shania Twain Tribute)**

Thursday, May 12, 2022:

**Yacht Rock Revue**  
Thursday, May 19, 2022:

**Six Piece Suits**  
Thursday, May 26, 2022:

**Taylor Dayne**  
Thursday, June 2, 2022:

**Alter Eagles**  
Thursday, June 9, 2022:

**Sister Hazel**  
Thursday, June 16, 2022:

**Sinfonia Gulf Coast Performing the Music of Led Zeppelin**

Thursday, June 23, 2022:  
**Boogie Wonder Band**

Gates open at 6 p.m. with concerts beginning at 7 p.m. for this come-as-you-are family-friendly outdoor concert series. Bring a lawn chair, picnic, wine or purchase food and beverages on-site

prepared by featured restaurants and food trucks.

Purchase tickets online at MKAF.org/events. General admission varies per concert. Children (12 and under), and MKAF members are free. Those interested in becoming a MKAF member can learn more at MKAF.org. Children 17 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. All sales are final; sorry, no refunds. Pets, tables larger than two feet, and drones are not permitted. A limited number of VIP tables (provides a reserved table and seating with admission for up to 8 guests) are available. Those interested in sponsoring the 2022 MKAF season, please call 850-650-2226 for details.

## NATIONAL GUARD

continued from page 15

and preparing the citizen-airman to respond to the Florida Governor for state emergencies or the call of the President in times of crisis.

At Tyndall Air Force Base, the 101st Air and Space Operations Group (AOG) provides

strategic air defense and sovereignty, air tactical warning and assessment to the North American Defense (NORAD) Commander and Combined Air Operations Center (AOC) in support of homeland defense and security of the southeastern U.S. The unit is responsible for monitoring air traffic in the world’s busiest air corridor, and

is one of three North American Aerospace Defense Command Sectors that combine the use of military and FAA radar facilities to accomplish its mission. The 101st AOG provides the manning for the 601st AOC to fulfill its mission of defending the homeland. From their homeland defense mission in the skies over the continental U.S. to pro-

viding aerial support to local authorities following natural disasters, the 601st AOC and the 101st AOG are often referred to as “America’s AOC.” The AOC plans, directs, and assesses air operations for the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command and work around the clock, 24-7. To stay updated

on all their life-saving activities, visit facebook.com/AmericasAOC.

The Florida National Guard has been headquartered in St. Augustine since 1907 and has a membership of more than nearly 10,000 Army National Guard personnel and more than 1,900 Air National Guardsmen.



**APR 21** Michael Jackson LIVE

**APR 28** Naturally 7

**MAY 5** Shania Twin  
Shania Twain Tribute

**MAY 12** Yacht Rock Revue

**MAY 19** Six Piece Suits

**MAY 26** Taylor Dayne

**JUN 2** Alter Eagles

**JUN 9** Sister Hazel  
Sinfonia Gulf Coast performing

**JUN 16** The Music of Led Zeppelin  
with Conductor Brent Havens and Vocalist Randy Jackson

**JUN 23** Boogie Wonder Band  
followed by Silent Disco

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# In the Moment

By LISA CYR

When teaching music is no longer about one's talent, degrees or dignity, then teaching becomes all about the student and the moment.

Here are some pointers to teaching in the moment:

Have a plan and work the plan. Lesson plans are important to consistently adhere to. The plan becomes a weekly expectation for the student. If you do not have a plan, then the student will implement their own plan which is usually chaotic in nature.

How are you? Usually, I spend a minute or two finding out how the student's day went. Children often say insightful thoughts such as, "I got an A on my spelling test today

and I studied a lot for it!" I might reply, "Congratulations! your family will be very proud of you and your hard work." Acknowledging a student's success is very motivating and caring. Or a student who travels extensively with their family might lament that they do not have friends. In other words, the child is lonely.

Stay Positive. A little laughter goes a long way. All feedback can be turned into positive energy. Smile, be positive, and behave kindly (This is for the adult teacher not for the student!). Look for the silver lining in every cloud. Reword your response to affirm and acknowledge the student and at the same time, guide the conversation into a positive



light. Such as, "Don't worry you are safe, thunder is fun, it's just the clouds clapping their hands together."

Find something nice to say. This is a quick and simple observation such as new tennis shoes, fun-colored fingernails, new haircut, fun socks, shirt, pretty dress, etc. Like vitamins, everyone could use a daily compliment. One of my students,

who was having a bad day, let me know that he was not happy about being at his lesson. As I opened his music bag to pull out his books, I noticed a wonderful drawing he had partially completed. I affirmed his talent and encouraged him to do more drawing. That simple moment of affirmation positively charged the atmosphere for the rest of his lesson.

What does your moment look like? A clean friendly room creates a positive atmosphere. Artwork that promotes music is a must. Play calm background music in the waiting room. Avoid too much clutter, clean, dust, and have lots of hand sanitizer and Lysol. Post artwork by students. Put out of sight/reach

any distracting items. Have a comfortable adjustable piano bench, extra chair for a parent, sunlight, file cabinet, bookshelf, plant, etc. These set the stage for a positive experience.

Respect, positivity and a smile set the atmosphere for reciprocity. Teaching in the moment is a fun and stress-free style of learning. It opens the channels of communication so that both parties know what to expect as soon as they walk through the door.

*Studio 237 Music Lessons is in Santa Rosa Beach. Our teachers are ready to teach guitar, piano, drums, voice, ukulele and more. Call Ray or Lisa Cyr at 850.231.3199 to schedule a visit or lessons. [www.Studio237Music.com](http://www.Studio237Music.com)*

## BAY BUZZ

*continued from page 11*



Deputy Swain began working patrol and instantly became "that deputy" on shift, a solid officer and significant resource for supervisors and teammates. He has proven himself essential for helping promote squad cohesion and professional relationships. Deputy Swain is well known as a quality field training officer. He remains highly motivated and has excellent interpersonal skills, common sense, professional aptitude and genuine humility. Among all, he has the power of a positive attitude when it comes to getting things accomplished. Deputy Swain recently achieved a well-deserved promotion to investigator in late December 2021. During 2021, Deputy (Investigator) Swain trained a total of 10 newly-hired deputies, providing over 1,680 total training hours. His total duty time was over 1,830 hours. Further, he consistently mentored shift mates, yet still

found time to handle his own casework. He arrested 41 law violators and generated 88 offense reports outlining his investigations. All that's in addition to the trainees receiving credit for cases under his influence or helping others. In 2021, Deputy Swain was voted on by his shift mates

and supervisors for his nomination. Supervisors noted his constant proactive attitude, knowledge, and willingness to put the shift first." Others commented on how he is "highly respected and sought-out by his peers and supervisors alike." Another called him a gentle giant—some-

one you want at scenes with you as backup and, at the same time, someone who wants to help you with cases and help victims — any and every time." Here is just one example of his countless cases of solid work: he responded to a business burglary, canvassing the area for video. He

located footage and identified a suspect. He then located and interviewed the man, obtaining a confession. The suspect admitted he had committed several burglaries to the business.




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 Arts & Music

# ArtsQuest Returns to Mother's Day Weekend

ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival returns to Mother's Day Weekend, May 7 - 8, 2022, in Grand Boulevard Town Center and the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County invites you to get involved.

### Purchase a Program Ad

Advertise your business and

show your support for the arts in the official ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival program! Copies will be printed and inserted into SoWal Life, Destin Life, Bay Life and more. Secure your spot today by contacting Courtney Malone.

### Show Your Support as An Event Sponsor

ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival is the ideal opportunity to align your business with the thriving arts and culture scene in Walton county. There are a variety of opportunities for you to support this community-wide initiative. Discounts available for multi-

year commitments. For more information, contact Gabby Callaway.

### Calling All Smiling Faces

Join CAA in celebrating 34 years of ArtsQuest! Volunteers are needed May 6 - 8. Volunteer activities include event set-up and break-down, artist load-in,

merchandise sales, ImagiNation (kids' art activities), gate greeters, bar-backs and more. While a lot of adults are needed for ArtsQuest, the event is also a great opportunity for high school and middle school students to earn those needed volunteer hours. Sign up to volunteer at [www.culturalartsalliance.com](http://www.culturalartsalliance.com).

## Area Art Classes April 2022

### Artful Things Niceville

Call the gallery at 850-729-2600 to reserve seating for the following workshops:

#### APRIL

2—Clay GNOMES! Class 10:30 - 1:30 pm. Ages 8 to adult. Marcy Eady,

\$37.50, includes supplies.

9—"Introduction to the Italic Hand"

Calligraphy Class 10:30 - 1 pm.

Ages 13 to adult. Elia Saxer, \$65.00, includes supplies.

10—Neighbors of Bluewater Bay Social 1 - 5 pm. Held at Bluewater Bay Golf Club. Meet local vendors

and visit with the Easter bunny, while participating in a variety of activities and enjoying good food. Face painting provided by Artful Things Niceville and Corina Zalace.

16—Denim Fabric Painting 10:30

- 12:30 pm. Ages 14 and up. Ren Colbert. Bring your own denim item;

\$32.50 including all other supplies.

23—Kids Art Class 10:30 - 12:30 pm. Ages 6 to 14. Sheila Mahoney, \$32.50, includes supplies.

30—Acrylic Pour 10:30 - 12:30 pm. 2 pieces. Ages 14 and up. Tamika Thomas, \$67.50, includes supplies.

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Tuesdays 10am - noon,

ogradytr@cox.net. www.RosalynO-

grady.com \$20 per session plus supplies

Theresia McInnis - Watercolor Tech-

niques. Tuesdays 12:45pm- 3:45pm.

Sign up: 850-729-2600. www.Theresi-

aMcInnis.com. \$27.50 plus supplies

Charlotte Arnold - Open Studio with

Live Model. Wednesdays 10:30am-

1:30pm. Sign up: 850-729-2600.

Uninstructed- \$15

Chris Mcloone - Anime & Drawing

Basics. Wednesday afternoons 3:30-

4:30pm. \$15. Bring a sketchbook and

pencil. Sign up: 850-729-2600

MJ's Home School Drawing/Paint-

ing/Clay Classes. Starting February.

Ages 10 and up. Thursdays 2-3:15pm.

Email [mjmontgomery42@gmail.com](mailto:mjmontgomery42@gmail.com). Sign

up: 505-690-3945.

#### MAY preview:

7—Open Air Art Day with local artists,

vendors and food trucks. Noon - 3 pm.

Tues-Fri 10am - 5pm | Sat- 10am- 3pm

| Appointments available

(850) 729-2600

[artfulthingsniceville.com](http://artfulthingsniceville.com)

1087 East, E. John Sims Pkwy. in

Niceville

### Big Orange House Designs

#### MARCH

29— #HKC Mini Rocket Challenge

10-12 \$18.50

31— Leather & Pearl GIRL'S NIGHT OUT w/ Sangria ;)

Reef Bracelet & Mini Rain Neck- lace 6-8 \$65

#### APRIL

1— Giving Plate w/ Laurel 10-12 | \$45

2— Play w/ Clay 9:30-11:30 | \$20+

2— Clay Animal Bowls 12-2 | \$35

5— #HKC Nano Science 10-12 | \$18.50

5— Leather&Pearl Beachy Key 6-8 |

\$65

7— Glass 8x10 Window 10-1 | \$80

8— Glass Art Open Studio 10-1 | \$35

9— Easter Mini Tray 12-2 | \$20

12— #HKC "Gear Up" 10-12 | \$18.50

14— Glass Open Studio 10-1 | \$40

14— Family Tree Glass Art 5-8 | \$90

15— Scarf Dyeing w/ Brunch 10-1 |

\$38

16— Scarf Dyeing FAMILY 9-11:30 |

\$15

16— Leather & Pearl Open Studio 12-2

| \$20+

19— Electric Circuits and Motors 10-12

| \$18.50

23— Earth Day Kids Painting 9:30-

11:30 | \$18.50

April Showers Cookie Tray - 12-2

| \$20

26— Paint your Dragon 10-12 | \$18.50

27-June 1—6-week pottery series w/

Laurel

28— Glass art "Bottle Floral" 10-1 | \$55

29— Paint Pour w/ JoJo 10-12 | \$38

30— Kidz Paint Pour 9:30-11:30 |

\$18.50

Open Studio Leather&Pearls

12-2 | \$20+

#### BOOK CLASSES

at [bigorangehousedesigns.com](http://bigorangehousedesigns.com)

Want to book a PRIVATE TABLE in a

class or host a PARTY? Contact JoJo

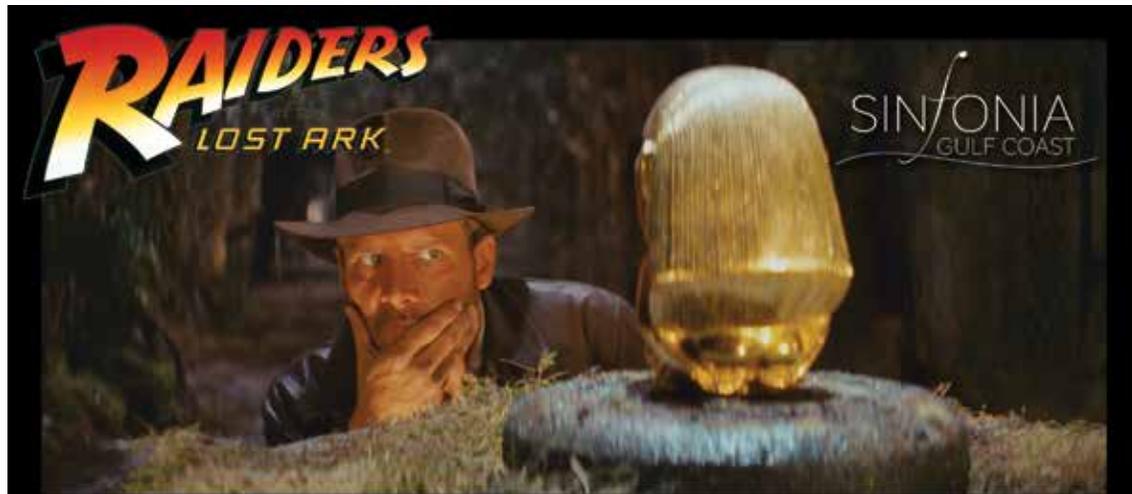
AT 334-320-6658 or [bigorangehousedesigns@gmail.com](mailto:bigorangehousedesigns@gmail.com)

[bigorangehousedesigns.com](http://bigorangehousedesigns.com)

(850) 737-6193.

4652 Hwy. 20E, Pineapple Plaza,

Bluewater Bay in Niceville



**RAIDERS of the LOST ARK IN CONCERT!**

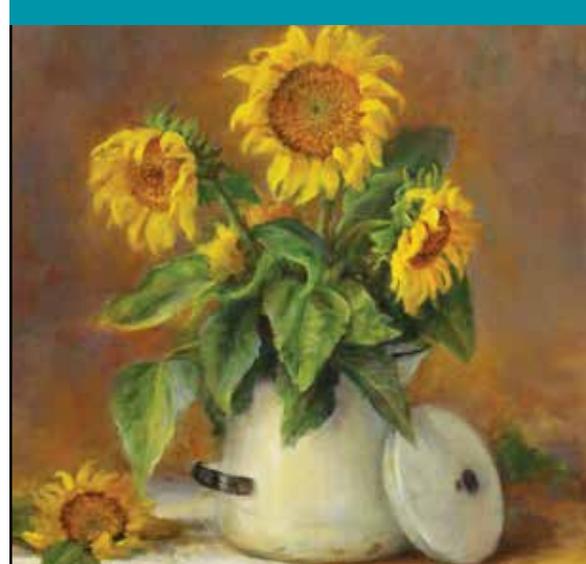
*A family friendly event!*

**SATURDAY, APRIL 30 | 7:30 pm**  
Destin Fort Walton Beach Convention Center  
Tickets: \$29.50 - \$55.00

SCAN HERE FOR TICKETS



SINFONIA BOX OFFICE: 850.460.8800 [SinfoniaGulfCoast.org](http://SinfoniaGulfCoast.org)



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Follow us:



**BAY BUZZ EVENTS**

*continued from page 35*

Hilton Sandestin. The inaugural event in 2019 raised an amazing \$217,631, thanks to the generosity of our community. This year's proceeds are earmarked for a state-of-the-art CT scanner for the hospital's pediatric and adult patients. The evening will begin with a cocktail hour at 6 p.m.

followed by dinner and dancing. Entertainment will include live music by Tribute Show Band of Mobile, Ala. Plans also include a bourbon and wine pull and a photo booth for guests to capture memories of the occasion. A highlight of the evening will be the opportunity to enter a drawing for a \$5,000 shopping spree at McCaskill & Company. Tickets for this exclusive jewelry

drawing will be available to purchase for \$100 each and limited to 150 entries. Individual tickets for the Emerald Ball are available to purchase for \$150 and include reserved seating, dinner and two drink tickets. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

Join the **Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida** for a 5K Run/Walk, Saturday, April

30, that will take you on a beautiful scenic route around Historic Valparaiso. Parking will be available in the open field next to the Museum at 115 Westview Ave, Valparaiso, 32580. The race will begin promptly at 8 a.m. and afterwards you can enjoy free refreshments in the Museum's outdoor exhibit, the Paradise Gardens. All runners will receive a participation medal for

completion. (shirt guaranteed for preregistered **ONLY**.) Cost: \$25 Museum and NWFTC members (Before 13 April); \$30 Non-member registration (Before 13 April); \$35 Regular registration (After 13 April). Call 850-678-2615 to pay and register.



**Local Coupons**

**SKIPPER'S FURNITURE & MATTRESS CO.**  
**15% OFF ENTIRE PURCHASE**  
(EXCLUDES MATTRESSES)  
 Offer expires 4/30/22  
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 Ft. Walton Beach (850) 586-7686 | Destin (850) 837-3454

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**EXTRA 10% OFF FOR MILITARY (W/VALID ID)**  
 Offer expires 4/30/22  
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 Ft. Walton Beach (850) 586-7686 | Destin (850) 837-3454

**SKIPPER'S FURNITURE & MATTRESS CO.**  
**FREE MATTRESS PROTECTOR OR PILLOW (W/PURCHASE OF MATTRESS)**  
 Offer expires 4/30/22  
 Niceville (850) 678-7800 | Crestview (850) 398-8182  
 Ft. Walton Beach (850) 586-7686 | Destin (850) 837-3454

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\$19.95 EACH ADD'L DOOR  
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 850-502-8615  
[destinoverheaddoor.com](http://destinoverheaddoor.com)

**CAPTAIN'S CHOICE BOATS**  
**10% OFF SERVICE**  
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 538 Eglin Pkwy NE, Fort Walton Beach  
 850-862.9111 | [www.captainschoiceboats.com](http://www.captainschoiceboats.com)

**AIRESERV**  
**\$50 OFF DUCT CLEANING**  
 Offer expires 4/30/22  
 850-678-9522  
[www.aireserv.com](http://www.aireserv.com)

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[Instagram.com/SavvyLeighPhoto](https://www.instagram.com/SavvyLeighPhoto)

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**Tempur-Adapt Medium Hybrid**  
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Queen Mattress  
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