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Lenny Coughlin

Sixteen Musical Candles

And Sinfonia Gulf Coast is Just Getting Started

By Beth Clavier

What's in a name?

Well, in Latin, "Sinfonia" means a group of musicians, which local founder, Artistic and Music Director Demetrius Fuller says is how Sinfonia Gulf Coast got its clever moniker. "I wanted Sinfonia to represent any group of musicians, not just a full orchestra, so we can remain versatile in what we present."

Our locals love a local story.

Demetrius grew up in the area and attended Fort Walton Beach High School, where the strong history of music programs and his very supportive parents inspired him at a young age to make music his career. He went on to study at the University of Cincinnati's prestigious College Conservatory of Music, where he received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees and then went on to post graduate work in Geneva, Switzerland



with additional training in Italy, France and Estonia. From 2005-2007, he was visiting professor and guest conductor at the Festival of Music in Poços de Caldas, Brazil, and was selected to conduct the Unity Academy Orchestra in Erbil, Northern Iraq.

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He could've settled anywhere with this extensive background. But Demetrius had a passion to bring the musical arts back to his hometown and our local region and knew he could do it in a way that nobody else had done before. "I wanted to create Sinfonia so that our community would have its own professional, stand-alone organization dedicated to all genres of music and could provide access to music education for

LOCALLY OV

SINFONIA continued on page 2

Amvets Set Ride To Fight Autism

By Kenneth Books

There is no cure for Autism Spectrum Disorder. And the expenses for families with a member who has autism are steep. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that, in addition to medical costs, intensive behavioral interventions for children with autism cost \$40,000 to \$60,000 per child per year.

Amvets Post 78 of Valparaiso is there to help.

On April 2, the veteran's organization will sponsor the third annual Amvets 4 Autism All Wheels Poker Run, to benefit the Autism Spec-

continued on page 2

AMVETS

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Page 2

The community

SINFONIA

continued from page 1

the region's school districts," said Demetrius.

From Sinfonia Gulf Coast's inception in 2005, the organization has provided countless unforgettable concerts that Northwest Floridians may have otherwise never had the opportunity to attend. Among several industry A-listers that have performed with Sinfonia, some very recognizable names include Vanessa Williams, Kristin Chenoweth, Matthew Morrison, Patti LuPone, Roberta Flack, Mary Wilson and Jane Lynch. With Demetrius' go-big or go-home mentality, it's no surprise that he chose to bring the talented Bernadette Peters into town for Sinfonia's first major event back in 2006. That was the hook; that's what turned heads and accelerated Sinfonia's reputation as a fully professional orchestra and entertainment organization in our area.

Making a mark has never been an issue for Demetrius as he lives and breathes his craft. His drive to foster a love of music in the next generation is why Sinfonia took over the management of the region's only



youth orchestra in 2013, when then director Liz Aylor determined it needed a larger support base. Since then, the orchestra vouth program, along with its many branches, has grown exponen-

tially. Now under the direction of Conductor Aaron King Vaughn, the Sinfonia Youth Orchestra is thriving with opportunities to perform alongside professional musicians regularly. Just this year, a first of its kind after-school violin program was born by Aaron at Destin Elementary school. It has been



a success, which has fueled his goal to expand into more schools across the districts. "The excitement and pride I see in my student's faces is priceless to me, because in many cases, this will be the only time they will ever be exposed to music in this way and it will forever leave a lasting impression whether they choose



to continue their music education or not," said Aaron.

This year is Sinfonia Gulf Coast's 16th season, and with the limitless opportunity to reach new students and patrons alike, it's fair to say that Sinfonia is still in the prelude of the organization's history. If there is one thing Northwest Floridians are adept at, it's embodying the local vibe and fervently supporting local businesses. Music is a universal language, so come and immerse yourself in one of Sinfonia Gulf Coast's offerings this season. Your support is instrumental to its success!

Beth Clavier is the director of events and patron services for Sinfo-



nia Gulf Coast. To find out more or to get involved, visit www.SinfoniaGulf-Coast.org, email info@sinfoniagulfcoast.org or call 850.460.8800.



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AMVETS *continued from page 1*

trum on the Emerald Coast.

This is the third such event the Amvets have held, according to Geno Teichert, a member of the board of trustees. And its growth has been phenomenal.

"Last year, we had at least 75 entrants," Teichert said. "We have a bunch. A lot of people go to the stops and don't make it back to the post."

The poker run will feature five stops. Leaving at 10:30 a.m. from the Amvets post, riders will stop at Nick's Seafood in Freeport, Amvets Post 178 in DeFuniak Springs, Amvets Post 35 in Crestview and return to the local post about 3:30 p.m., where they'll receive a meal and enjoy live entertainment. The cost is \$25 per rider and \$15 per passenger. The first 100 registrants receive a free T-shirt. Registration kicks off at 9 a.m. and coffee and donuts will be available.

"It's over by 5 or 6, Teichert said. "It's a long day, but we do it for the kids. We just want a bunch of riders. The more the better, the more money it makes."

The first year of the event garnered about \$4,000. Last year, it brought in about \$9,000.

Numerous valuable door prizes will be awarded, such as a \$500 gift certificate for Ja-



mie's Gun Shop. "We're getting sponsors," Teichert said. "A lot of grocery stores give us gift certificates."

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication, and by restricted and repetitive behavior.

People with autism might

repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that one in 68 children in the U.S. have autism. The prevalence is 1 in 42 for boys and 1 in 189 for girls. These rates yield a gender ratio of about five boys for every girl.



Our Hometown Hero Julie Porterfield Wants To End Child Abuse

By Kenneth Books

Julie Porterfield loves children. Because of that, when she was offered the chance to be Chief Executive Officer of the planned Children's Advocacy Center 23 years ago, she jumped at the opportunity.

"I worked at the state attorney's office," she said. "I started as a receptionist and went to night school to get my bachelor's and master's degrees," studying legal administration and public administration.

It was there that she got the chance to build the CAC.

"It came out of the state attorney's office," she said. The impetus was a severe child abuse case.

The goal was to put all services helping abused children under one roof.

"I started researching grants and organizing," Julie said. "After a year, I was asked to be executive director. It seemed like a good fit. I absolutely love kids."

The CAC officially opened in October 2000 with Julie at the helm. "We started with three employees," she said. "Now we have 23." In addition, the center has a regular roster of volunteers. But the children it serves could use more. "The center is always in need of volunteers," Julie said. "There are lots of opportunities."

A second facility, called the Pierce Family Children's Advo-



cacy Center, opened in DeFuniak Springs in spring 2017.

The CAC has a budget of about \$2 million, Julie said, up from its original budget of about \$180,000. The money comes from grants, state funding and 60 percent from the community. "We live in a very kind, generous community," she said.

The need is great. Each year, the CAC helps between 700 and 800 children. But, Julie said, that's probably just the tip of the iceberg.

"We only see reported cases of abuse," she said. "I think there's about two thirds more out there."

In 2017, Julie said, the CAC added prevention efforts to its repertoire. A program called Child Safety Matters was begun in local schools, educating about 10,000 youngsters in 2021 from kindergarten through 12th grade. This has led to more disclosures from children about their circumstances. "They didn't know who to tell," Julie said.

"We focus on the more egregious cases," Julie said, such as sexual abuse and physical abuse. "There are a lot of online predators," she said. "With social media, it's just

rampant." And the incidence of crimes against children rose during the pandemic, as schools were no longer open.

Some cases stand out due to their gruesome nature.

"Probably the worst was a girl with 90 percent of her body battered, burned and abused," Julie said. "There was a lot of evil in that case. There was no rational reason." The perpetrators, two women who were not the girl's caretakers, received 20 and 15 years in prison, respectively, sentences Julie believes were too lenient. But the good news is, the girl was adopted and is a successful adult today.

"For me, I'm doing God's work," Julie said. "What has kept me here is you see a lot of good. If something bad is going

10,000 youngsters in
2021 from kinder-
garten through 12th
grade. This has led
to more disclosuresto happen to kids, we're here."
But, she adds, "It would be
great to hang a 'Closed for Busi-
ness' sign. Our mission is to end
child abuse."

To learn more about the Children's Advocacy Center, including its ongoing need for volunteers, check the website at ECCAC.org.



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Buzz Bav

Persistence Pays Off for Safety in Niceville

Redwood Avenue in Niceville is a county road. It is also a main arterial road for many pedestrians walking to school and shopping at nearby stores. Judy Boudreaux, formerly on the Niceville City Council and Transportation Planning Organization, saw this as a safety issue and pushed for a much-needed sidewalk along Redwood Avenue from Hwy. 20 south to Valparaiso Blvd. It took a number of years but with the support of the City Council and the members of the county commission, success was achieved with the passing of the County Infrastructure Surtax. "This project will bring 4,600 feet of sidewalk for our children and adults who travel this path daily," Judy remarked, "Thank you to the people who voted for the

Surtax and the tourists who will help pay for our much-needed sidewalks." By June (or possibly much sooner), Redwood Avenue will become a safe place to walk in Niceville.

Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary's Grant Donation to CBA

Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary Club awarded a \$4,399 grant to the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) that purchased equipment and supplies for the Alliance's "Grasses in Classes" environmental education curriculum. The program serves 19 elementary schools across Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The grant funding comes from dollars donated by Mid-Bay Bridge Rotarians combined with money raised at the club's events, such as Octoberfest, corn hole tournament and golf tournament and



Mid-Bay Rotarian and Grants Chair Dave Underwood; CBA Education Program Manager Amanda Briant: Director of CBA Allison McDowell; and Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary President Steve Wolfrom.

through the Rotary District 6940 Grant Program. CBA's "Grasses in Classes" is a hands-on, environmental education program that gives students a direct role in the restoration of Choctawhatchee Bay. Mid-Bay Bridge Rotarians will also help students plant the shoreline grasses grown as part of the curriculum at the end of the school year. To learn more, visit basinalliance.org.

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ing in business, we have decided to close our doors and liquidate all the merchandise at Schlatter's Fine Furniture, your friendly neighborhood store for all your quality fur-

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The Freeport Republicans will meet March 8 in Freeport at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1830 Great Hammock Bend. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m.; meeting 6-7 p.m. This month,



Freeport Republicans and We The People 850 members joined the Mardi Gras parade in Defuniak Springs.

the club will meet in "Working Groups" such as "Mom's for Liberty," Local/county issues, Legislative bills/issues, Voter registration; Parades/events/ fund raisers, Finding & Vetting candidates and Illegal immigration. The club meets monthly on the second Tuesday at the same location and time.

Niceville High School's Jerral Horton received the 2022 Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year. The program is designed to provide local recognition for outstanding administrators and provide an opportunity for the Okaloosa County Administrators and Supervisors Association (OCASA)

to be represented in state-level recognition programs such as the Florida Association of School Administrators and the Florida Department of Education.

The **Distinguished Young** Women (DYW) of Okaloosa County will hold its information meeting Sun., Feb. 27 at 3:00 PM at Crosspoint Church Fellowship Hall for young women in their current Junior year of high school. Additional information meetings by zoom are Mon., Feb. 28 and Tues., March 1 at 7 p.m. Email Okaloosa@distinguishedyw.org for zoom link. Okaloosa County has had multiple State winners which have been awarded full scholarships.

The Walton County Republican Executive Com**mittee (REC)** will be meeting monthly at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1830 Great Hammock Bend in Freeport. Registration begins at 5:45 p.m.; meeting at 6 p.m. These meetings are open to Republicans in Walton County. The REC meets monthly on the third Monday at the same location and time. The next REC meeting will be held March 21 at 6 p.m.

Continued on page 10

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MARCH

01	Katharine Hepburn by Shirley Simpson 7:30pm Emerald Coast Theatre Company Destin
03 05	The Marvelous Wonderettes 7:30pm Emerald Coast Theatre Company Destin
04	Sip N' Stroll 5pm J.Leon Gallery and Studio Destin
05	Clinch 46 6pm 3rd Planet Brewing Niceville
	That Golden Girls Show 7:30pm Mattie Kelly Arts Center Niceville
F	THE EMERAL S CAUSE MARCE SCALE MARCH CHAR MARCH CHA
06	Mac & Cheese Festival 12pm Destin Commons Destin Fore Her for Tea in the Garden 12pm Clay 30A Seagrove Beach The Marvelous Wonderettes
09	2:30pm Emerald Coast Theatre Company Destin Second Wednesday Breakfast 7:30am Niceville Community Center Niceville

FARMER'S MARKETS

Niceville Community - Saturdays March 5, 12, 19, & 26 9am-1pm | Palm Plaza | Niceville

Hammock Bay - 1st & 3rd Sundays March 5 & 19 8am | Victory Blvd | Freeport

- 10 Bluewater Bay Garden Club Meet: Aquaponics (Fish Farming) 10am | Niceville Crosspoint Community Life Building, Rm 909-911 | Niceville A Taste of Jazz 5:30pm | Ruth's Chris Steakhouse | Destin
- 11 Paradise Music Festival 12pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center | Destin
- 11 | 2nd Annual Buggin' Out Festival: A Vintage VW Festical and Car Show
- 13 The Island Resort | Fort Walton Beach
- 12 Wild Game Dinner for Taylor Haugen Foundation 3:30pm | Walton Plantation | Santa Rosa Beach Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Gala 5pm | Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa | Miramar Beach St. Patrick's Day Party with O'mericans 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewery | Niceville
- 13Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Golf10:30am | Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa | Miramar Beach
- 16 Songs by the Campfire with Bryan Kennedy & Forrest Williams 7:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Company | Destin
- 17 Niceville St. Patrick's Day Brewery Crawl 3rd Planet Brewery | Niceville
- 18 Niceville Valparaiso Rotary Club Annual Golf Tournament Bluewate Bay Golf Course | Niceville Rob Romans

6pm | 3rd Planet Brewery | Niceville

 19
 OneBlood Drive

 11am | Costa Enterprises McDonald's | Niceville

 Soiree on the Bay

 1:30pm | Children's Volunteer Health Network | Santa Rosa Beach

 Luke & Kaylee

 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Menopause The Musical 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

- 25 Casey Kearney 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 26 Crawfish Boil for NWF Symphony, music by Duchess 6pm | 3rd Planet Resort | Niceville



NWFSC Receives New Grants

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) was awarded two new grants to support students in their pursuit of innovative workforce and career education opportunities that lead to employment in high-demand industries.

The Florida Department of Education awarded the College \$116,954 through the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant to support apprenticeships in Computer Support and Computer Networking. With this grant, NWFSC will work with employers and CareerSource Okaloosa-Walton to make apprenticeship opportunities available to public and external organizations through outreach efforts, job fairs, collaborative partnerships and web-based activities. Tuition for the apprenticeship programs is paid by the employer, making them free to students.

The new apprenticeship programs are comprised of two major components: The Required Technical Instruction (RTI) and the On-the-Job Training (OJT). The RTI comprises 328 hours

of classroom work taken in a computer lab at the College's Fort Walton Beach Campus. Students will work with faculty members who are appropriately qualified in each of the various RTI classes, which are scheduled over two semesters. The OJT will occur at the apprentices' respective employer's job site. Each apprentice will be assigned a mentor who can provide the instruction needed to ensure they achieve the learning objectives set by the employer. The program anticipates at least five apprentices completing each program beginning in 2023

The Florida Department of Education also granted \$2 million through the Early College Career and Technical Education grant to expand the dual enrollment program at NWFSC's Collegiate High School. The Collegiate High School is a public charter school located on the College's Niceville campus. The innovative charter school enables 10th, 11th, and 12thgrade students to simultaneously earn a standard high-school diploma and a transferable twoyear Associate in Arts degree or transferable college credits. As a public school, the Collegiate High School is free to students.

The Early College Career and Technical Education grant will extend Collegiate High School services to 9th-grade students and expand its degree tracks to include an Associate in Science (A.S.) in Computer Information Technology and an Associate in Science (A.S.) in Engineering Technology. These degree tracks will give students the opportunity to earn industry certifications to include Comp-TIA A+, CompTIA Network+, CompTIA Security+, Solidworks, National Coalition of Certifications Centers NC3, and Manufacturing Skills Standard's Council's CPT. Work-learning experiences to include internships within the local industries.

For more information on the apprenticeship programs the College offers or the Collegiate High School, please contact Cristie Kedroski at (850) 729-5210 or stratcomm@nwfsc.edu.

NWFSC President to Receive Phi Theta Kappa Shirley B. Gordon Award

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) President Dr. Devin Stephenson will be among the few college presidents to be honored with the Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction during Phi Theta Kappa's 2022 PTK Catalyst convention, April 7-9, 2022, in Denver, Colo.

This Award of Distinction is PTK's most prestigious award for community college presidents and is named in honor of the late Dr. Shirley B. Gordon, Phi Theta Kappa's longest-serving Board of Directors Chair and longtime president of Highline Community College in Washington.

The award is given to college presidents who have shown strong support of student success on their campus by recognizing academic achievement, leadership, and service among high-achieving students at their colleges. Recipients are nominated by students on their campus and are only eligible to receive the award once over the course of their careers.

In an award letter, PTK President and CEO Lynn Tincher-Ladner stated Dr. Devin Stephenson was nominated for the award due to his work and dedication to "increase student success in entirely unfamiliar circumstances," including racial and political unrest and a global pandemic that made 2021 one of the most challenging years in recent history. Dr. Stephenson's nomination is "evidence of the gratitude NWFSC PTK students feel for supporting them and students like them-even during the most difficult times."



(*) Community

Trey Gowdy: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

By Doug Stauffer

Northwest Florida State College President Devin Stephenson is a visionary with purposeful determination. His caliber of speakers for the "President's Speaker Series" reflects his keen leadership and focus. I consider Dr. Stephenson to be a persuasive communicator in his own right.

Most people have heard the cliché that "You get what you pay for." Frequently, a true statement indeed, unless someone else foots the bill and invites you to come. This speaker series is FREE to the public, and Trey Gowdy packed the Mattie Kelly Arts Center with an eager, enthusiastic crowd.

When someone mentions Trey Gowdy, people tend to have opinions of him at opposite ends of an ever-widening spectrum. They generally admire him greatly or vociferously criticize him. Unfortunately, this is the political climate of twenty-first-century America. No matter, Trey poured out his heart, humbly baring his soul to a spellbound audience. Trey started his message with amusing quips and stories that ingratiated him to his audience, but his innate passion showed as things turned serious. The audience sat on the edge of their seats, wondering what was coming next. Trey revealed himself as someone not ready to yank America's life support from its socket. Instead, he believes that America needs to rediscover who we are, where we are going, and how to get where we need to be.

Granted, we are a politically divided country with red and blue sides more willing to shout things out than attempt to understand what drives the passions of the other side. Trey pointed out that every day carries the sense of it being like election day. So few people are forging relationships outside their sphere of fellow cheerleaders. He urged his audience to display an uncommon form of grace to bring us closer together.

Trey frequently transitioned to talk about his family and good friend and co-author, Senator Tim Scott. They developed



PHOTO BY NORTHWEST FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

a close bond as they spent many eating opportunities together at the Capitol Hill Club. Trey told the audience of Senator Scott's upbringing with his grandfather, who picked cotton and never learned to read. Yet, his grandfather believed in the power of knowledge and the magic of education, and he thought these things would make a difference in his grandson's future. His grandfather raised a grandson who became a U.S. Senator and author of a New York Times #1 Best Seller.

Trey mentioned meeting his wife through a church youth group and traveling and the importance of faith, sometimes shaken by his life experiences. His early career included prosecuting the worst criminals and how these interactions took their toll mentally, spiritually and physically. Like many politicians, Trey Gowdy left his hometown of Spartanburg, South Carolina, for our country's capital to make a difference.

If you watch his famous social media sound bites, he comes across as a skilled prosecutor interrogating political adversaries. In person, he also comes across as genuine and caring.

After one hour of clearly articulating his thought-provoking speech, the last question pinpointed how this master of persuasion had moved many juries to agree with him beyond a reasonable doubt. He was asked why he was advocating compromise, although he never alluded to compromising with whom you disagree. Absent a court reporter to retrace his words; interrogator Gowdy kicked into overdrive to reiterate that he promoted dialogue-persuasion over argument. He encouraged

sincere communication with empathy, not a win-at-any-costs methodology.

Trey never alluded to compromising one's beliefs. Instead, he pleaded for people to search for common ground. He encouraged practicing the art of persuasion rather than using insults as a means of self-validation. His appeal: we all should make an effort to listen to the "other side." Insults make others determined not to give up any ground, and the mentality of crushing your opposition has eroded our society's fabric.

Trey encouraged talking responsibly and ending the bitter feuding and fussing with neither side desiring to listen and learn from the other. His point was to be fair-minded yet encourage people to think for themselves.

Upcoming Event: Dr. Stephenson has invited Charles Payne to be the next speaker in the President's Speaker Series on April 8, 2022. Come hear the Fox Business Network financial journalist and host of Fox's Making Money. Mark your calendars and I'll see you there.



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Commissioner's Prayer Breakfast One of a Kind

BY DOUG STAUFFER

I had the distinct pleasure of attending the 2nd Annual Commissioner's Prayer Breakfast sponsored by Mel Ponder in conjunction with Rocky Bayou Christian School. I caught up with Commissioner Ponder and asked him several questions.

What led you to start this gathering? Mel—It was on my heart to create an opportunity for Okaloosa county pastors to gather as a family reunion of sorts. This county-wide gathering includes faith leaders, business and community leaders, and elected officials. I do this in my role as a citizen who also serves as a county commissioner. I believe in unity, camaraderie and wisdom.

What part does Rocky Bayou Christian school contribute to coordinating the event? Mel— Doc Mike Mosley has been a gracious supporter, and his team manages the logistics. Additionally, he works with One Twenty Bistro to put on a delicious spread.

What is the purpose of the Annual Prayer Breakfast? The

theme has been "In One Accord," because I am a big believer in the corporate body of believers working together. The Bible repeatedly expresses that God did amazing things when the believers were in one accord.

What is your vision for the future of the Annual Prayer Breakfast? Mel—I want this breakfast to honor every role that believers play as we assemble in one accord to pray (Ephesians 4:16).

Why do you think prayer is so important for this county, state and nation? Our churches are independently to be Houses of Prayer with a heavenly mandate to pray. Our forefathers were people of prayer, making prayer a part of this nation's DNA. It is a foundational element that allows us to see heaven invade the earth with God's goodness prevailing.

I want to thank you for recognizing the veterans, active-duty personnel, along with the pastors. How have you been so successful in combining politics with the spiritual arena? Mel—We should be the same



PHOTO BY CHRIS MCKAY

person in and out of every arena of life, loving God and loving others. Christians are to be the light of the world. No matter the venture, we carry that light with us. There should not be any separation between our personal and professional lives. Christian principles should be the same ideals presented by politicians and preachers alike. We should exercise our faith on Monday just as much as we do on Sunday.

How did this prayer breakfast personally impact you? Mel—When people go into their churches, they know who is on their team, but we need to know the many others in our community on our team too. I become very inspired when I see multiple churches sit together at the same table as Christ's fellow ambassadors.

I am sure you received some feedback; how were others impacted? Mel—The feedback I received was very positive. Some mentioned that the prayers were powerful, and others said that they needed this time set aside to gather together. The goal was for people to hear messages from God and leave full of hope, and evidently, that happened.

I have traveled the world several times and have seen the best and worst. I wish every community could be just like ours, which I consider one of the best. I pray that the spirit of this prayer breakfast impacts the other 364 days of the year and reverberates up to heaven and back.



The community

Group Forms to Promote Recycling in Walton County

Last month members of the Walton County Democratic Environmental Caucus (WC DEC) traveled to the Recycling Center for Walton County, to meet with Billy McKee, Solid Waste Director for Walton County. The Caucus, a club made up of Democrats, Republicans and NPA's, wanted to tour the facility and learn more about recycling in Walton in order to help make this process more efficient and improve the effectiveness of recycling in our community.

Mr. McKee gave the members a tour and described the recycling process. Recycling is currently a voluntary process in Walton. Individual households

must gather their recycling and deposit it at one of the 15 recycling trailer sites around the county. These trailers are then transported back to the Recycling Center located at the landfill north of DeFuniak Springs for sorting. Mr. McKee stated that, on average, the recycle trailers bring in approximately 50 tons of loose, mixed material for sorting and recycling each month. Unfortunately, a large amount of the material that is put in these trailers is not recvclable (probably 50-60 percent). This is primarily because of contamination by materials that are not recyclable and various kinds of debris and garbage that



should not be put into the trailers. Once the contents of the trailers are emptied, the material is hand sorted, piece by piece, into collections that are then "baled" and stored for eventual pick up and transport to a Recycling Facility or Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

Recycling is necessary to try and slow the expansion of land-

fills, but not really cost effective. It's very important for individuals to take a few steps to make the process more efficient. The WC DEC created a flier and distributed these at the recent Recycle Amnesty Days and at Recycle Information booths. Recycling should be one of the last steps an individual takes. First, start by refusing single use plastics like water bottles and plastic bags. Reuse plastic food containers, and repurpose plastic containers.

The estimated cost of a single stream curbside recycling collection program along with the construction and operation of the necessary facilities to drop off and load into transport trucks (Transfer Station) would likely be into the many millions of dollars. Options to offset the costs include building a combined use Transfer Center for household garbage and recycling located somewhere closer to South Walton to save fuel and decrease drive time for collection trucks and their crews, pursuing public-private partnerships and grants like those through the Triumph funding, and encouraging end-market development for circular material management.

To learn more, or if you'd like to join in working to improve recycling in Walton County, send an email to WaltonEnvironmentalists@gmail.com.

BAY BUZZ

continued from page 4

The March 16th **Business Empowered Luncheon** will feature the acclaimed author (of several books) Peggy Brockman. She has been a John Maxwell Certified Speaker, Trainer and Coach for many years. She has owned several businesses and, in semi-retirement, is the regional coordinator for "United for A Good Cause.com" and more specifically, "Hope Squad Peer-to-Peer Suicide Prevention Program." She will share some of her own miraculous survival from a critical illness and surgical complications that kept her hospitalized on the brink of death for six months as well as others.

(850) 835-4444

To register, call or text Al at 850-586-1472.

Geek Lights Fans Donate Over \$8,800 to CALM

The Geek Lights on the Corner Lights and Music Show recently presented \$8,826.76 to Crisis Aid for Littles and Moms a.k.a. CALM. The amount represents the sum total of visitor donations collected during the recently completed 14th season of the Geek Lights on the Corner, which took place at the corner of Bluewater Blvd and Antiqua Way November 29, 2021 to January 7, 2022. "I want to make sure everyone knows that this donation comes from the show's fans, not from us," said Jeff Werner, proprietor of the



show. "Your incredible generosity broke every donation record that we track. I'm very proud of how much you've helped CALM to do their mission, and you should be proud of yourselves."



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Bay Buzz Highlighted Events

ECCAC Gala & Golf Weekend 2022



Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (EC-CAC) is hosting its annual Gala & Golf Weekend, this year presented by Jim & Tammy Pierce. The Gala features a cocktail hour starting at 5 p.m., with dinner being served at 6 p.m. on Sat., March 12, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Guests, in coastal chic attire, will enjoy dinner and live entertainment by popular local musicians, The Will Thompson Band, as well as live and silent auctions. The Gala is an energetic, yet important ECCAC fundraiser to benefit children by providing services at no cost to help identify, treat and support child victims in abusive situations.

to benefit ECCAC, will take place on Sun., March 13, at Kelly Plantation Golf Club with registration and brunch from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. for a tournament shot gun start at 12 p.m. Tournament cost is \$400, which includes two tickets to the Gala. Gala tickets only are \$250 per couple. Please make reservations online at https://cbo.io/eccac/ tickets. Sponsorships are still available. Contact Mary Fomby at 850-833-9237, Ext. 283, or email her at Mary@eccac.org.

The Golf Tournament, also

Mac & Cheese Festival



Thought macaroni and cheese was just for kids? Think again! Join us at the 4th Annual Mac & Cheese Festival presented by Cox Media on Sunday,

2022

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Continued on page 35

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YOWZA! 2021. What a Year in Real Estate!



By GAIL PELTO, REALTOR

2021. Done. Caput! On to a new, exciting year! So, let's recap the Destin and Miramar Beach residential real estate market stats for 2021 compared to 2020:

In 2021 the **number of SOLD Listings was up by 23.9%** over prior year.

In 2021 the **Median Sales Price was up by 23.4%** over prior year.

In 2021 the **Number of New Listings was up by 10.6%** over prior year.

In 2021 March, April and

May had the highest number of sales.

The **Median Sales Price** was \$549,000 in 2021 and in 2020 it was \$448,250. WOW!

Average Cumulative Days on Market (length of time from listing to under contract) was 63 in 2021 compared to 129 in 2020.

Average Sold to List Price was 97% in 2021 and 95% in 2020.

In 2021 **we averaged 1.94 months of inventory,** in 2020 we averaged 4.48 months of inventory. (Five months or less is considered a sellers' market; we just may be transitioning to a buyers' market.)

The current (as of January 26) Active Listings have been on market 206 days on average; the sold listings were on market an average of 49 days.

Keep in mind that these stats are for ALL residential sales through Dec. 31, 2021. Depending on where you are selling or buying, the numbers may change.



What does this all mean to YOU?

2021 was an incredible year! The number of new listings were lower than the number of sales, so inventory was (and still is) really low which in turn, drove prices higher. **Prices were up more then 22% over prior year!** Statistically, a 10% increase is considered a great year.

If you are on the market for sale now and you've been on market for more than 63 days, then it's time to review why and make some changes. Maybe it's because of the condition? Or maybe it's the price? Talk to your Real Estate Agent and find out why your house hasn't sold.

If your property is **priced correctly, you should expect to sell at about 97% of list price,** maybe higher. (Remember, this number is an "average.")

If you are looking to sell in 2022, LIST NOW! Why? First, March is right around the corner and the stats show you have a better chance of going under contract in the Spring; you need to be on the market soon. Second, what goes up, usually comes down. Could housing prices continue to rise? Maybe. Could they come down? Maybe. So, strike when the iron is HOT and it's hot NOW! Third, interest rates are rising which has an effect on what buyers can afford. Don't let the buyer pool shrink. Time to interview to make sure you get the right agent. **Don't know how to interview agents? Reach out to me** at 850.374.0454 or Gail.Pelto@ KW.com and I'll give you some pointers.

If you're looking to buy, BUY NOW—there aren't too many buyers right now and you might have a good chance at finding a motivated seller! Plus, you want to avoid the next rate increase if you're financing. Need an agent? I can help. Call me at 850.374.0454 or email to Gail.Pelto@ KW.com.

Know the stats. More importantly, make sure your real estate agent knows the stats...just sayin'. Cheers to Your Healthy, Prosperous and Joyful New Year! Call me if you need some help.

Gail Pelto is a full-time real estate agent with Keller Williams and a board member with both the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and The Rotary Club of Destin.

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Boys & Girls Clubs Announces 2022 Youth Winners

Since 1947, the Youth of the Year program has been the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's premier recognition program, providing the highest honor any teen member can receive. The addition of the Junior Youth of the Year extends these opportunities to youth ages 10-13 years old. The Youth of the Year (YOY) embodies the values of leadership, character, and service; academic excellence; and living a healthy lifestyle.

Each year, thousands of Club teens participate in local, state, and regional Youth of the Year events. Six teens advance to the National Youth of the Year, where one outstanding young person is named National Youth of the Year. This national teen spokesperson is a role model, leader, and advocate for the millions of youth served by Clubs each year and all of America's young people.

"Youth of the Year winners embody the values of leadership and service and have proven academic excellence. This group of remarkable young people makes the lives of all those around BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

them better by their kindness, leadership, service, and encouragement to others. Together, we congratulate each of them for all of their hard work and dedication to the Clubs and our community," said Shervin Rassa, CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast. Junior Youth of the Year Winners:

Joey S. (Fort Walton Beach Youth)

Tania C. (Jacobe Turner Teen Center)

Alyssa C. (Kenwood Club) Esabella F. (Destin Club) Stella J. (South Walton Club) Evalynn H. (DeFuniak Springs

Club) Emma A. (Riverside Club) Nashyree R. (Pensacola -

Englewood Club) Connor B. (Montclair Club) Allana G. (Dixon Club)

Youth of the Year Winners: Amia J. (Jacobe Turner Teen

Center)

 $Dar\ M.\ (South\ Walton\ Club)$

Joseph S. (DeFuniak Springs Club) Kalea S (Pensacola -Englewood Club) Visit www.emeraldcoastbgc. org/ for more information.









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(*) Community

Moms for Liberty: Standing Up for Parental Involvement

By HEATHER BENNETT

We work hard to protect our children and embrace them with our family values. When we send them to school, we entrust their teachers and the school system to keep them on the straight and narrow, to cul-

tivate their creativity and imbue them with a love of learning. As parents, the last thing we want to worry about is what they are learning, and what they will be exposed to.

Mothers across the nation are joining the group Moms for Liberty to advocate for parental rights in American school systems. If you are unfamiliar with their group, they are a grassroots, nonprofit nonpartisan organization that is nationwide. Their purpose is to fight for the survival of America by unify-

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ing, educating and empowering payers aren't involved with the parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government. Since the organization started in January 2021, it has grown to over 80 local chapters The Walton County chapter is led by local mothers who

MOMS -

are encouraging parents to get involved in their children's education. Krissa Johansen, Chapter Chair, who moved here from Kansas in 2020 with her husband and two kids, has seen what happens when parents become uninvolved and complacent with the public school system, and she wants to encourage others to get involved and contribute in a healthy, productive way. "I believe in leading by example, and I want to help keep our county great, which is why I felt compelled to start a Moms for Liberty chapter in our new home in Walton County," said Krissa.

in 33 states.

+ LIBERTY

Krissa is joined by Lisa Robertson, Co-Chair. She is a retired USAF recruiter, medic, instructor and mother of two boys. She believes our country is only as strong as the people who participate and care enough to be involved. "Moms for Liberty provides an opportunity for all of us to do just that. Every child should be provided the opportunity to grow up and learn in a safe environment," stated Lisa. "Moms For Liberty is an organization based in faith, family, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I believe - the values our nation was founded on."

Jolene Jashurek joins Krissa and Lisa as a Co-Chair. She and her husband moved to Florida 7 years ago when he retired from the Navy. She's noticed what happens when parents and taxlocal school board, and wants more parents to be involved to ensure our children are receiving the quality of education we all want. "It takes the entire community coming together on a local level to ensure Walton County remains and even exceeds where it is now. Moms for Liberty gives us all the ability to partner together for the well being of all our school-aged children, public school and homeschool alike. We are better and stronger together," said Jolene.

Luckily for us, Walton County does not face many of the challenges that plague other school districts and parents across the nation. "Walton County has a wonderful superintendent that truly cares about the students overall health and success, and Moms for Liberty has a great working relationship with our school board and superintendent," said Krissa. In Walton County, parents have the right to choose whether to mask their children or not. Parents have the right to choose whether to vaccinate or not. Moms for Liberty believes these decisions should be the parent's choice to make, and Walton County recognizes and respects the parent's right to do so.

If you are interested in joining Moms for Liberty, or learning more about the organization, please visit www.momsforliberty. org or email them at mom4libertywcfl@gmail.com. Moms for Liberty - Walton County chapter meetings are held every second Tuesday of the month. School board meetings are every first and third Tuesday of the month, which you are encouraged to attend.

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Lt. Governor Nuñez Visits Niceville

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Okaloosa County and the city of Niceville were blessed to have a rare visit from Florida's Lieutenant Governor. It was my distinct honor to host Lt. Governor Nuñez at the Niceville Senior Center with 20 varied Okaloosa County Representatives. The gathering was intended to introduce the Lt. Governor to Niceville and Niceville to the Lt. Governor.

The Lt. Governor gave a great speech and mentioned how she fully supported the Governor's policies and positions, including election integrity, critical race theory, cancel culture and preserving religious liberties. She also supported his positions regarding K-12 education, vaccine mandates and passports, etc. She stood firm in not allowing the egregious government overreach forced by other governors upon their constituents.

Big government, by design, increases the citizens' dependence upon the government. This administration determined not to use the pandemic to intensify a crisis and increase government control over businesses, education, healthcare and families in the state of Florida.

The Lt. Governor also mentioned the small margin of victory in the 2018 gubernatorial election-less than 33,000 votes. She sounded the clarion call for Floridians to understand that your vote matters and every vote counts. In Florida, we learned how much elections matter and that things could have been very different (during Covid) if the election had swung in the other direction. She cautioned us not to take our basic constitutional liberties for granted, a message that did not fall on deaf ears.

Dr. Mike Mosley, Rocky Bayou Christian School superintendent, said the Lt. Governor's speech charged his batteries. Dr. Mosley mentioned her comments on job creation, maintaining low taxes, protecting our water quality and the environment and bettering our education system. As a lifelong K-12 educator, he appreciated the administration's position on in-person school, because children need more than a Zoom



education. Florida will have a competitive advantage in the future over the states that have lost two years of quality schooling.

History will judge this administration's decisions as some of the most critical choices made during one of history's most significant times.

From 2010-2018, Lt. Governor Nuñez served in the Florida House of Representatives, also serving as speaker pro tempore for her final two years in office. She is a businesswoman

who served in several healthcare industry capacities. She also worked for FIU (Florida International University) as an adjunct professor and advisor. When the world turned upside down in March of 2020, none of us could have imagined how important her background would be.

The Lt. Governor said she appreciated the educational and spiritual investment her parents made. "Looking back, I've learned that God was putting me in the right place to have experiences and knowledge for what was to be my future. I say this because as a fully devoted follower of Christ, the beliefs and values instilled in me at a young age have shaped me, laying the groundwork for THE type of faithfulness I would need in this line of work."

The Lt. Governor mentioned her favorite verse as Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."



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The community

Fun Facts and the Lighter Side of Insurance...



By Joe Capers, Insurance Zone

Last month, we updated everyone on the changing insurance marketplace in Florida, and the fact that the hard market (increase in premiums and tighter carrier guidelines) will continue for at least another year. I do not anticipate any improvement until well into 2023.

Knowing that insurance can be boring, and currently very stressful, we are going to have fun with some insurance facts. Granted, it's not the most exciting subject on earth. However, as we all know, it's necessary in our lives when we need a safety net underneath to protect the things that matter to us the most.

Let's have a bit of fun and take a look at some interesting and intriguing insurance facts that you might not be aware of.

Golf insurance protects you when you win! In some cultures, it is required so anyone who scores a hole in one can use this policy to help buy drinks for everyone.



US insurance policies often vary from state to state. Although there are similarities in laws and rules, they may vary a lot in the U.S.

Fire departments revolve around insurance. The very concept of a fire department has ties to insurance. In the beginning they were established to put out fires for specific households and policyholders.

Gender gap is tightening in the insurance industry. Current studies still show that the majority of people working in the industry are women, about 60-40 divide.

9/11 resulted in huge payouts. The World Trade Center disaster in 2001 resulted in payouts up to \$40 billion from life and property claims.

The meaning of insurance has changed enormously. Insurance used to refer to being engaged to wed someone. The term has evolved to now mean 'assurance'.

GPS once had conflicts with insurance. Those that engineered GPS and satellite navigation thought that insurance would not cover those who drove with navigation systems guiding their way. It was never patented as such.

Some companies make serious returns on insurance. Some companies like Sony are believed to make more money off its insurance division than from selling its products and services.

Mental health is not always protected by insurance. Many U.S. health insurance companies do not cover mental health issues for their policyholders. They are required to cover in some states.

Can you obtain alien abduction coverage? The policy would pay should you be abducted by aliens and the UFO Abduction Insurance Company states that they have paid out!?!

Life insurance can skyrocket for celebrities. The most influential people have obtained some high limits life insurance policies, and Steven Spielberg is reported to have a policy over \$1 billion. Betty Grable insured her legs for \$1 million and Bruce Springsteen insured his voice for \$5.7 million. Starbucks pays substantially for life and health insurance. They pay more to cover their staff than they pay for their actual coffee. It is believed that they pay staff more than \$300 million.

Insurance has been around for centuries. The first contract was signed back in the 14th Century or earlier. Traders in China insured their boats in case of loss at sea or theft.

Ben Franklin founded the first Insurance Company in the United States in 1751. The Philadelphia Contributorship for the Insurance Houses from Loss by Fire still exist today.

Body part insurance is a big deal. Famous people, actors and singers often purchase body part or body insurance.

Your insurance score can significantly influence your insurance costs. All companies today utilize 'credit-based insurance scores' that will influence the premiums quoted.

Home insurance policies often exclude animal liability and certain dog breeds. Over 4 million people are bitten by dogs each year so if you have a pet this coverage is very important.

Car insurance for male teenagers is surprisingly expensive. Statistics show that 16-year-olds have twice as many accidents as 18-19 year olds.

Which of the facts below did you already know and which ones are new to you? Let us know! We would love to hear of any odd and bizarre insurance facts you might have! Send your comment to info@ins-zone.com or post them on our Facebook wall.

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) and Inlet Beach. Visit their interactive website at 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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What to Check Before the End of Open Enrollment for Medicare



By Greg Durette, Florida Health Connector

The end is near! Not in the mortal sense, but rather, the end of the Open Enrollment Period for predominantly Medicare Advantage plan members in 2022. We will leave the mortality proclamation to the crazy guy wearing the sandwich board roaming various city streets around the country.

Keep in mind, if you are

"aging-in" this year, you have a whole different set of deadlines and circumstances (see last month's article). This article will cover what you should be checking up on before the March 31st deadline rolls around and locks you in until the next Annual Enrollment Period (October 15 – December 7).

So, what should you do to make sure this year's coverage selection treats you well and is something you will be happy with until next year? First, you will have hopefully had some time to try out your new coverage. Whether that be a visit to the doctor of your choice or a trip to the pharmacy, you likely have had a chance to use your current coverage. If you are one of those folks that needs neither, bully for you! However, even you should still take this time to conduct further research into whether the doctors, hospitals and pharmacies you favor are included in your network at a reasonable cost. If you find some changes would be required of your intended selections, you have until March 31st to do something about that.

One point of note: If you have already made a change during this Open Enrollment Period, you have used your last bite at the apple for the year. Changes made during this period are final and cannot be changed. If you have yet to use this last chance opportunity then, you still have that one chance available.

Second, have you reviewed the functionality of your plan? What I mean is, are you able to easily use your new insurance card and have the providers accept it without a hassle? Do you find it difficult to know why your neighbor with a PPO has a much easier time finding an in-network doctor or facility (especially when traveling) than you have with an HMO? Has your doctor or medical group suddenly stopped accepting your coverage with little to no explanation?

If so, it is time for

you to get busy with the business of taking care of you. If you have read my articles for any length of time, you know I am no fan of the grand promises made by the sports figures and celebrities on television about the benefits, and here is the kicker statement, "You MAY be eligible to receive." Talk about slick!

The fact of the matter is, the proof is in the pudding. Nobody but you can get you what you need. Do the work. Do the research. Call people local and



knowledgeable to get the details that matter to you. Once you make that final call for the Open Enrollment Period, you can sit back and relax in the comfort of knowing you did the very best for you. Happy 2022!

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 38 years and can be reached at his office at (850) 842-2400 or his mobile at (978) 509-2941.



Five Themes for Investors to Explore in 2022



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL Advisor and Branch Manager

As we are now into a whole new year, the more things change, the more they stay the same: The Covid virus is still with us, the money supply is still at historically high levels, rates remain low, housing remains strong. Unemployment is now at pre-Covid levels. Some things are not the same: Inflation is at its strongest in two generations, there are more jobs than job seekers, the employment rate (percent of eligible Americans working) is at an all-time low. Savings rates are higher, U.S. household net worth (as reported by Josh Brown and CNBC) is at an all-time high of \$130 trillion. In generations past, that net worth was mainly

comprised of home value and pensions. Today over a third of that is in stock holdings, pensions are no longer a significant source, and housing maintains its influence on people's overall net worth. Something to ponder when fretting about national debt levels: household net worth is more than four times the national debt. And overall national wealth (the value that all governments hold) is around 10 times greater than the national debt. That is not to say that the current elevated levels of debt are not challenging to economic growth and sustainability - considering debt to GDP is at over 100%, the highest since 1946 but still worth noting that overall wealth far exceeds overall debt.

Here are some themes for investors to ponder and explore for 2022. We provide five in this edition of Research and Commentary from The First Wealth Management. As the world evolves and changes, investors can take note of innovations and disruptions and explore potential opportunities for their future investments.

Electrical Vehicle (EV) **Batteries** – It is interesting to note that there will need to be

considerable increase in the supply of EV batteries to come anywhere near the projections for new EV sales by 2030. Note that in 2022 in the U.S., EV sales might reach 5% of vehicles sold, a relatively small percentage. Still, ABC News reports there were 15mm cars sold in the U.S. in 2021 and if EV sales are to make up 5% in 2022, that means 750k batteries are needed. The supply of batteries is dependent upon the mining and development of lithium and cobalt and rare earth minerals and somewhat in the recycling of existing phones and laptops. Although the U.S. is a leader in the natural resources needed, it is a laggard when it comes to mining and production. It could take years for supply to meet the demand. The takeaway for investors is to look at those stocks and funds that concentrate on exploration, mining and producing minerals such as cobalt, lithium, copper, nickel, manganese and zinc and rare earth minerals. Investors might want to consider some of the emerging (some of them or still private) companies that recycle batteries and sell them to

> electric vehicle manufacturers. Infrastructure. With billions being set aside for everything from roads and bridges to the electric grid and recharge stations, materials and materials producers, as well as industrial construction firms, could stand to gain significant new business opportunities. Copper might very well be one basic metal whose demand could grow at an increasing rate. There are numerous firms and funds that investors could consider in order to participate in these areas.

> Quantum Computing. Simply put, quantum computing execution means that computers could run and produce at rates exponential to today's rates. It is important to note that major technology firms are investing a lot in this technology, but it is too early to experience any revenues. Ari Zoldan, the CEO of Quantum Media Group, wrote recently that the quantum computing market is "valued at \$0.5 billion and is expected to grow to \$65 billion by 2030, indicating a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 56%.

> Carbon Sequestration. There may be economic and in

vestment opportunities to consider here. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) defines carbon sequestration as the process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. It is done naturally (biologically) by plants, trees and oceans. Plants need CO2 as part of the photosynthesis process. When areas of the world are "deforested" (to grow other crops or clear for development), we are in a sense decreasing the number of carbon sinks in the world. It is also done by Geologic carbon sequestration, which is the process of storing carbon dioxide (CO2) in underground geologic formations. Some of this is done in oil and gas extraction. The oil is forced out of the reservoir through the injection of CO2 (which takes the place of the removed oil and remains there forever). Some firms are also developing technology that removes carbon from the atmosphere and then injects it below the earth's surface and charges storage fees. Many major oil and gas firms, in addition to green tech companies, are rapidly pursuing this. Carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) is also part of coal burning energy producers.

PBS suggested that three keys would be 1) Increasing plants and forests, as plants and trees use carbon dioxide as part of the photosynthesis process. Forests act as lungs (as do oceans) and sequester the carbon emissions that are produced. The problem is that while deforestation is finally declining, reforestation is declining too. 2) Construction of carbon sequestration plants. These are facilities that capture carbon in the air and pump it underground. 3) Food consumption. PBS points out that if people threw away less food, which could significantly reduce carbon emissions as well.

The takeaways for investors: Consider opportunities to invest in forestry companies. Most new trees planted each year are by forestry companies. While the rate of deforestation is slowly declining, there is yet to be a commensurate increase in reforestation. Regarding CCS, there are firms pouring billions into new technology to capture and often sell the carbon. According to CNBC, Arizona State University has reported that its research shows that automated CCS can be thousands of times more efficient in removing carbon from the atmosphere. It is early with this technology, but some major oil and gas firms are putting billions into technology that could produce significant carbon capture each year as early as 2030 and to double that by 2040.

Energy & Energy tran**sition.** We think this is still an area that investors should continue to consider. There are ETFs that invest in wind, solar, nuclear, clean and, of course, traditional energy firms, such as oil and gas. The aforementioned PBS story pointed out that the demand and consumption of fossil fuels should be addressed, but also acknowledged that it continues to grow. As demand is growing however, a report from Rystad Energy says, "the oil and gas industry will deliver its worst exploration year since 1946... production budgets are not returning to pre-Covid levels and probably never will." A classic case where supply cannot meet the demand.

We last reported that the European Union was set on reducing carbon emissions to net zero sooner than later and with strict targets as early as 2030. This has had an added impact on natural gas supplies, which is already constrained. The New York Times reported that now there is a proposal before the European Union, by the European Commission, to make certain natural gas and nuclear electricity plants be considered either green or transition to green energy producers. That could have a significant impact, according to The Times, on new investment into these types of facilities. Despite the huge gains being made by wind and solar, in that order, the investment and production in those technologies would not be able to meet the ever-growing demand. Many traditional energy producers are making significant investments in wind and solar but also natural gas as well. As for nuclear, we take note that nuclear plants (which produce electricity) produce zero carbon emissions. The EC proposal points out its support for nuclear is only for those facilities that

Continued on page 25

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The community

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(*) Community

The Wonders of Nature in Our Own Backyard

By Heather Bennett

All of us in Walton County know that it is one of the most beautiful places to live. Not only is it beautiful, the environment is very unique. The coastal dune lakes in South Walton are rare. Only a few areas in the world have them including Madagascar, New Zealand, Australia and Oregon. North Walton is home to the Longleaf Pine ecosystem, which is considered the sixth most biodiverse area in the continental United States. Our Longleaf Pine ecosystem is protected within the Nokuse Plantation, made up of 54,000 acres purchased by conservationist M.C. Davis for preservation. Nokuse is the Muscogee word for Black Bear, which is an important and protected species in Florida, and an umbrella species in our local ecosystem, whose habitat supports other plants and animals, including the gopher tortoise. Every year fourth and seventh graders from surrounding counties visit the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center at Nokuse Plantation to learn more about the biodiversity of the Longleaf Pine ecosystem and the animals that call it home.

M.C. Davis named the center after Dr. Edward O. Wilson, whose mission in life was to educate people on the importance of conserving biodiverse environments, and his work and writing influenced Mr. Davis in his activism. Dr. Wilson passed away recently on December 26, 2021 at the age of 92. He was recognized as one of the most important scientists and influential people, and known as the "father of biodiversity." He coined the term "biophilia," which means, "the love of all living things." The center supports and continues his mission by educating people on the importance of biodiversity, promoting sustainability, and encouraging conservation, preservation and restoration of ecosystems.

The center is one of a kind, and is educational for children and adults alike, teaching people about the native animals and plants that make up this special ecosystem and how they are important to making the forest flourish. The center has an interactive exhibit hall, state-of-theart theater, an outdoor camp and nature trails. During the school year, the center hosts an average of 100 students a day. During the summer, the center offers public museum days, animal encounters, summer day camps and



overnight camps, and guided trail hikes. The experiences enhance learning, making it more memorable, in a way that reading books in a classroom cannot.

If you have not made a visit to the center yet, I encourage you to do so, to be inspired by the beauty and awe of our unique environment and the importance of conservation, something M.C Davis and Dr. Wilson were passionate about and dedicated their lives to.

The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center is a 501(c)(3) environmental education center located 6 miles west of 81 in Bruce and 4 miles east of 331 in Freeport on Hwy 20. Please visit their Website www.eowilsoncenter.org for more information.

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Modern Homeschooling

By Les and Gina Payton, FPEA Region One Representatives

Every person's educational journey is unique. Every child is different. Every person is fearfully and wonderfully made. When it comes to your child's education, leave no stone unturned. We began home education 20 years ago, when our oldest turned two. The Marine Corps moved us to six different states and the District of Columbia. I left the Marine Corps at the end of my service, and stayed home with our first born. Since then, we've added three more children and they've all been home educated.

During the last two years, many parents have realized the benefits of home educating their children. With concerns about kids' health and wellness, many parents have turned to bringing their children home. Some of the benefits include extra family time and remarkable progress tailoring their work to their child's individual learning style. Building good character in our kids at a young age will help



them to be disciplined young learners with everything we ask our kids to do in our home. We must teach them to prioritize time management and establish discipline because, honestly, aren't we all still learning every day?

The new challenge in home education, compared to when we began 20 years ago, is the abundance of resources. There is so much to choose from for every type of learner. By joining local support groups, parents and children can also stay informed of regional events and field trips.

As regional representatives of our state organization, the Parent Florida Educators Association (FPEA), we volunteer to keep families informed about homeschool legislation, current laws and building community. One way we

recommend families do this is by joining a support group. You can email the local Destin support group at panhandleche@ gmail.com.

FPEA puts on many family field trips throughout the year such as trips to Key West and the Space Coast. Families can join us on February 19 for Homeschooling 101 and a Highschool Homeschool Seminar (https://fpea. com/events/6216/yes-you-canhome-educate-florida-style). For questions about this event, write to regionalrep1@fpea.com. FPEA also holds one of the nation's best conventions at the end of May every year in Orlando. This year's theme is "Gather" and will be held at the Rosen Shingle Resort. All the details can be found at www.fpea.com or contact us, regionalrep1@ fpea.com, so we can answer your questions before you register.

New homeschoolers or homes with growing families have so much to choose from! There are child-led studies, unit studies, as well as robust and complete curriculums. We educate our kids from a biblical perspective, which helps us to hone in on particular curriculums. No matter whether you choose to home educate your kids for faith-based, academic or physical health and wellness choices, visiting a homeschool convention will help you and your child appreciate how large the homeschool movement has grown and you'll know you're not alone.

It's been during the last two years only that my husband and I have felt able to dive in as volunteers. Our oldest joined the Marine Corps at 17, four years ago, and is now at the United States Naval Academy. Our oldest daughter is 19 and a sophomore in Industrial Engineering at Liberty University. With 16- and 10-year-old's still in the home, we continue our homeschool adventure in this beautiful area. We have finally been able to live where we want after husband Les has been in uniform for 27 years. With FPEA we have found a community, found a support group and can enjoy the many field trips to include traveling to the yearly convention in Orlando.

Whether you are new to homeschooling or are a veteran homeschooler, everyone questions their ability to homeschool successfully. Each home can define what success looks like for their own children. Each person's educational journey is unique. Every child is different. Each person is fearfully and wonderfully made. When it comes to your child's education, leave no stone unturned.In order to get started now, send in your letter of intent to your local district superintendent's office.





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Off the Hook

Off the Hook: Black Drum Fishing

By Cali Hlavac, To Do In Destin

If you've wandered around any dock inside the Destin Harbor, you might have looked down to see some very large fish swimming below and wondering what kind they were. Often referred to as the "Big Ugly" by fishermen around the area, these monster fish are Black Drum.

Black Drum are a cousin to the Red Drum and are a popular fish among anglers, because they will eat both live and dead bait. They typically feast on oysters, crabs, shrimp and small bait fish and are often circling docks to eat the crustaceans off the sides of the pilings. Another name for these fish is the "lazy fish," for their tendency to feed on dead bait more frequently than Red Drum will.

When the weather is warm, you'll often find them on top of the water, making it easy to sight the fish, or throw a fly at them if you're a fly fisherman.

Black Drum can surpass the 50 lb. range, and while they



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are edible, their flesh becomes coarser and less desirable once they surpass lengths of 30 inches. Slot size for a keeper is 14-24" and you are able to keep five per day. When they are too large and pass the slot size, they have an old prehistoric look to them and can be full of worms, so not ideal for the dinner plate.

In terms of a fight, Black Drum are strong and solid, but not as determined as other fish. Often, they will run towards the dock and, if you're not careful, you might break the line when it hits the pilings. While you may not want to eat the large ones, catching one is still a great fight and should be on your bucket list while visiting Destin.

Try to snag one yourself from a dock or call up one of our local Charter Captains to take you out and get it done.

Artists Revealed For 2022 Underwater Installation

The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) and South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) are proud to reveal the 10 sculpture designs, including two international selections, chosen by jury for permanent exhibition in the fourth installation of the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA).

The 2022 installation will include the following pieces of sculpture: Currents and Tafoni by Joe Adams (Ventura, CA) Pirate Shipwreck by Sean Coffey (Pittsburgh, PA), Bloom Baby Bloom by Brit Deslonde (Santa Rosa Beach, FL), The Seed and The Sea by Davide Gal-

🔅 Off the Hook

Emerald Coast Marine Wins Prestigious Award

Emerald Coast Marine was one of six marine industry organizations recently recognized by the Sea Tow Foundation for its exceptional boating safety campaigns and initiatives in 2021, winning the prestigious "National Boating Industry Safety Award" for the 'Retailer with One to Three Locations" category. "Emerald Coast Marine created an integrated campaign including an extensive social media initiative featuring a mix of online boating education resources, along with a new series



of boating safety videos produced internally that show it is possible to accomplish a lot with limited resources," said Sea Tow Foundation Executive Director Gail R. Kulp. "In addition, the dealership underwrites the cost and promotes in-person boating safety classes in partnership with the USCG Auxiliary, along with promoting boating safety in its monthly newsletter. They also promoted National Boating Safety Week with a custom video featuring every member of the dealership team wearing

life jackets." Ongoing boating safety programs are slated for 2022 including seven months of seasonal boating safety training programs held in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary; a dedicated on-site boating safety event including vessel checks with the auxiliary in March; ladies boating events/classes; and a continued emphasis on boating safety via live seminars, social media and video messaging.

CCA Florida to Restock Redfish in Okaloosa County

A donation, by a private party, to Coastal Conservation Association Florida (CCA Florida) leads to the first redfish restocking initiative in Choctawhatchee Bay.

Because of a \$25,000 donation to CCA Florida, the Coastal Resource Team of the Okaloosa County Tourist Development Department, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism will assist with the transport of 10,000 juvenile redfish between four and eight inches in length. The release will take place from the shore at Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park in Niceville.

"The release is a beneficial project for the health of the Choctawhatchee Bay area fisheries and we are fortunate to

Rosa Beach, FL).

Summer 2022.

have CCA Florida as a meaningful partner in this conservation effort," said Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners Chairman Mel Ponder.

CCA of Florida invites the public, community partners and media to be a part of the conservation event at noon on Tues., March 29. Children are encouraged to attend. Anyone



who is interested in physically taking part in the release, should wear athletic attire and water shoes.

Contact Amanda Krpan for additional details at akrpan@ ccaflorida.org or view the Save The Date flyer HERE. Date, time and location are subject to change. Follow along on Facebook @CCA_Florida.

ARTISTS

continued from previous page







biati (Valreas, France), Fibonacci Conchousness by Anthony Heinz May (Eugene, OR), New Homes by Janetta Napp (Honolulu, HI), Arc of Nexus by Tina Piracci (Richmond, CA), We All Live Here by Marisol Rendón (San Diego, CA), Mobifish-2021

by Mathias Souverbie (Les Va-Visitors who wish to expelence, France), and Common rience the site at-depth should Chord by Vince Tatum (Santa be certified divers who are comfortable swimming in open The deployment is slated for water. The coordinates for the center sculpture (SWARA Skull) are Latitude N 30 18.754 Longitude W 86 09 33.722. Out of respect for the art, boaters are asked to find the center location and then move away from the park to anchor in order to avoid

damage to the artwork.

We'd love to see any images you capture while diving! Tag your photos with #UMAFL or @UMAFlorida on Facebook and Instagram.



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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 cheese and then choose if you want to add Jojo's homemade smoked jalapeño beef bologna, bacon, house smoked barbecue or ham! Cinnamon Rolls and Kaloches still hold the top spot for SELL OUTS! Stop in for featured Muffins, Coffee Cake or Pound Cake which go great with Maple Cinnamon Latte or Caramel Macchiato!

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ly Roasted Coffee and GREAT DOSES OF GOODNESS! Order ahead and pick up some for the office, a gathering or your next meeting! Book online at bigorangehousedesigns.com.

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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 Schooner" (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 the Mardi Gras Party on February 26 with live music from Catalyst! And don't miss all the fun in March beginning March 5 with Duchess, 6-10 p.m., Chess Night-March 7, 6-10 p.m., Nautical Flea Market March-12, 8 a.m. to Noon, John Gault Dnce Band-March 12, 6-10 p.m., Sock Burning-March 13, 5:30 p.m., Ronny Dean Garrett March-13, 4-8 p.m., The Traveling Painter-March 15, 5-7 p.m., Jody Lucas March-18, 6-10 p.m. and Catalyst-March 26 from 6-10 p.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 Open Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m.-8 p.m. (850) 897-6400 290 Yacht Club Dr., Unit 200, Niceville in Bluewater Bay



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

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Page 24

HOF Braves Pitcher Tom Glavine to Speak at 2022 ASA Banquet!

By Lori Leath Smith

Each February, many of the area's top high school, collegiate, amateur, professional, Special Olympics athletes, and individuals who have fostered youth activities are honored during the annual All Sports Association's (ASA) Awards Banquet. The ASA is a Northwest Florida non-profit organization whose primary mission is to help raise money for local youth-oriented non-profit organizations with an emphasis on sports programs. The annual awards banquet is used to identify, then recognize and honor some of the finest athletes from Northwest Florida who are contributing to their sports and their community. The recognized individuals not only excel in their sports, but also are at the top in academics and community involvement.

Synonymous for attracting the likes of NFL and MLB MVPs, Hall of Fame coaches, Super Bowl quarterbacks, award-winning journalists and LPGA major champions, this year is no exception. Herschel Walker, Bo Jackson, Nick Saban, Bobby Bowden, Paul "Bear" Bryant, Tim Tebow and Herm Edwards are just a few former speakers. Now add two-time Cy Young winner and first-ballot Hall-of-Famer Tom Glavine.

Glavine is an American former professional baseball player. A pitcher, Glavine played in



Major League Baseball for the Atlanta Braves (1987–2002, 2008), and New York Mets (2003–2007). With 164 victories during the 1990s, Glavine earned the second-highest number of wins as a pitcher in the National League, second only to teammate Greg Maddux's 176. He was a five-time 20game winner and two-time Cy Young Award winner, and one of only 24 pitchers (and just 6 left-handers) in major league history to earn 300 career wins. He was the MVP of the 1995 World Series as the Braves beat the Cleveland Indians. On January 8, 2014, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility, receiving 91.9% of the votes cast.

This year, the banquet returns to its roots and will be held at the Emerald Coast Convention Center on Feb. 25 from 6-9 p.m. Other events include the 2022 Buck Smith FCA Breakfast with guest speaker Willie Spears on Feb. 25 at Northwest Florida State College Arena from 7-9:15, a golf outing and fish fry.

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

For more information, visit allsports association.org.

Tim Seketa Hired as FC Dallas Emerald Coast Director of Coaching

FC Dallas Emerald Coast announces the hiring of Tim Seketa as the Director of Coaching and Player Development. Tim has been serving the club since 2013 and has contributed greatly to the success of the club during his time on staff.

Prior to working with FC Dallas Emerald Coast, Tim was a member of the MLS's Real Salt Lake Academy staff in 2012 and 2013 and worked under Martin Vasquez who was a US Men's National Team Assistant Coach at the time. "I am grateful & eager to have an individual with Tim's professional experience and dedication leading our coaching staff and players," said Executive Director Louis Richard. "He has a wealth of knowledge and ideas and I look forward to his implementation of these concepts into all areas of the FC Dallas Emerald Coast organization."

Tim began his soccer career playing in Niceville with PAL in 1992. He graduated from Niceville High School in 2003 and went on to play NCAA Division 1 soccer at Jacksonville University. He currently holds a U.S. Soccer Federation National



"C" License and United Soccer Coaches Level III Goalkeeping Diploma.

"I am very excited to take on the role of Director of Coaching," stated Tim about his new appointment. "It is an honor and a privilege to be in a position to shape the soccer experience for so many young players in our area. I think it means that little bit more when you get the opportunity to take the reins of your childhood club. I look forward to helping advance the club by applying what I learned working for an MLS academy and find pathways for all of our players to reach their sporting and life goals."

FC Dallas Emerald Coast is Northwest Florida's Soccer is a

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the Center of Excellence and a primary provider of soccer opportunities for youth athletes across the Emerald Coast region since 2007. It supports more than 600 kids aged 4-18 with our recreational, academy and competitive programs as well as providing excellent learning and character-building experiences with a broad impact on the local economy.



FIVE THEMES

continued from page 18

can safely dispose of the waste. We know of only one nuclear plant under construction in the USA currently. Should the EU pass legislation approving of nuclear, we think that additional U.S. nuclear plants are in the offing. Interested investors could

consider equities or ETFs in the Industrials and Materials

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

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There is an inverse relationship between interest rate movements and fixed income prices. Generally, when interest rates rise, fixed income prices fall and when interest rates fall, fixed income prices rise.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrency issuers are not registered with the SEC, and the Bitcoin marketplace is currently unregulated. Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are a very speculative investment and involve a high degree of risk. Investors should consider the investment objec-

Investors should consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses of an exchange traded fund carefully before investing. The prospectus contains this and other information and should be read carefully before investing. The prospectus is available from your investment professional. The companies engaged in the communications and technology industries are subject to fierce competition and their products and services may be subject to rapid obsolescence. Investing in the energy sector involves special risks, including the potential adverse effects of state and federal regulation and may not be suitable for all investors.



Wellness

You Made a Resolution, Now Stick With It!

By Lisa Leath Turpin, Health & Fitness Coach/Consultant

Consider these suggestions to get the best out of your workouts and keep you interested.

Structure your workouts to fit your goals: A gymnast doesn't train like a football player, and a tennis player doesn't train like a basketball player. Why? Because in order to perform better at each sport, it takes specific movements and strengths, in specific areas, to make one stronger for each sport. How does this equate to you? You are unique. From your bone structure, genetics, chemical make-up (hormones/immunity) and body type. It's great to get ideas from others, but make sure it will benefit you personally. When I train my small groups of two to six people, even if they do somewhat the same order of exercises, not all lift the same weight or perform the same



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reps. Some people want a more muscular build; some want long lean smoother muscles; some need to focus on fat burning. Figure out your goals at the beginning of your quest and it will give you direction and keep you more motivated.

Mix it up: In order to customize your workout journey, tailor it to fit your goals and make it enjoyable. Your body needs to be challenged to change. Do something called "Phase Training." Briefly, a phase training plan manipulates exercise volumes and intensities over the course of weeks, months and years. Change your range of repetitions, how many sets, as well as the exercises themselves. It's suggested, though, that in order for a muscle to get stronger or more toned, it needs time to adapt and change. Therefore, we need to have some time repeating a movement for this muscle adaptation to occur. A good example is the push-up. When you first begin doing pushups, you might be lucky to do five good ones. But if you do push-ups more often, you will increase the number of push-ups you can do. This is most important when looking for strength gains, but also for coordination. So, a simplified example of Phase Training for overall fitness would be:

Weeks 1-4: Endurance Phase/high repetitions 13-20/2-3 sets 3-4 days/week focusing on mobility, stability and form

Weeks 5-8: Strength Phase/ moderate repetitions 8-12/2-6 sets 3-4 days/week focusing on lean muscle mass and gaining strong muscles (not bulky). Strong is GOOD!

Cycle through these phases all year.

Other additions to keep it interesting are Circuit Training, HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) or other types of interval training. Again, depends on your goals.

Slow down: For strength and safety purposes, perform your repetitions SLOWLY. The slower you go, the more muscle fibers you recruit, thus maximizing strength gains and less joint or ligament damage. There are times that you want to move faster like in Circuits or Interval Training. But the key to "faster" is stay in control and in good



form. It's best to sometimes work as fast as you can, but while performing full range of motion (ROM) with full control. If you can't perform full ROM with full control, then you are too fast or too heavy. That makes speed relative to controlled performance. When lifting weights there is a positive and negative motion. When performing a bicep curl, you start with your arm relatively straight; but when you raise or curl the weight, flexing the elbow, it is the positive part of the lift. The lowering of the weight or extension of the elbow, is the negative. You always want to control and go slowly on the negative: this is where "resistance" training gets its name. It's the control of resisting the weight that challenges the muscle and makes the greatest difference.

Be Active – choose what you like! Any and all movement is good. Don't overthink it. Dance if it makes you happy! Guess what? You will be working out!

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fitness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation. Have a fitness question for Lisa? Email BeActive850@gmail.com.

Weight Loss and Thyroid



By Dr. Richard Chern, MD

In this column, we've discussed the thyroid before. However, it's such an important subject, because even mild thyroid dysfunction can cause weight gain over months and years. And this weight gain is nearly impossible to lose and keep off without getting the thyroid optimized.

The thyroid regulates every metabolic process in our body. This includes growing hair and fingernails, moisturizing your skin for less dryness and a better appearance. It also means keeping our toes warm, and our brains focused and working.

The thyroid determines how many calories we burn for each process. With age, thyroid function often decreases causing weight gain. So how does this cause weight gain?

Imagine you are in your 30's. Your thyroid is functioning perfectly and your weight has been the same for years. Your calorie intake matches your calorie output. If you are eating 1500 calories a day then you must be burning 1500 calories a day. Now fast forward 10 years. You haven't changed a thing, but your body has decided that adding color to your hair is no longer a priority, and also, that your hair and fingernails do not need to be made as fast or as well. Your hair gets some gray, and becomes more coarse, dry or brittle. You don't need to trim your nails nearly as often and they seem brittle and thin too. You are getting tired and unfocused in the afternoon and either nap, drink caffeine or just push yourself though the day. And you notice your weight is creeping up!

Now the diet and exercise is a start, but it's always a struggle and seems less and less successful. What is going on? It's you thyroid! Even though you haven't changed anything in your life, your body has decided to burn less calories. You're still eating 1500 calories a day and have exactly the same activity level, but your body is slacking on the job. Maybe your body is just burning 50 calories less a day. That's five pounds of weight gain every year! And as you decrease your calorie intake or increase your exercise, your body continues to burn fewer and fewer calories each year. So, your diet and exercise just becomes more difficult.

What's the solution? Get your thyroid functioning! When you turn the thermostat up, you burn more fuel. Hair, nails, skin, energy, focus improves and weight loss can happen without effort.

But my doctor says my thyroid labs are normal. We hear this a lot and, unfortunately, traditional medicine only orders a TSH and stops. Dr. Richard Chern, MD, orders numerous thyroid labs and understands that normal and optimal do not always agree. Of course, optimizing thyroid without also optimizing hormones is like going shopping without your credit card.

Dr. Richard Chern specializes in bio-identical hormone and thyroid optimization. He is the only Platinum Provider for BioTE in the region and

mentors other physicians on the practice of bio-identical hormone therapy. Call Dr. Chern at 850-837-1271 for an appointment and turn your body back on!









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Wellness



By TODD CRAIG

Sometimes we need a wake-up call, something to shake us from being lulled into the dull existence of an unintentionally lived life-something that awakens us to snap out of the mindset that life is something that happens to us rather than a gift we get to live. One of my wake-up moments came from a friend who had just finished two challenging years serving as a missionary in



When I heard that statement, things deep down in my soul wanted to spring to life. There were things I needed to do, decisions I needed to make, and growth that needed to take place. What about you? What stirs within you when you hear, "You are only given one life?" Are there truths and desires that begin to awaken?

"You are only given one life" is a powerfully simple statement packed with four truths to consider

The life you were given is your life to live.

It is so easy to conform our lives to what we perceive to be the expectations of others. Often, we do this without even thinking about it. We are surrounded by cultural scripts (buy the bigger house, take the higher paying job, get married and have kids, stay single and free, retire early if you can, you are too old, you are too young, etc.). Maybe it is time to stop worrying about what other people think and live the life you were meant to live. Sometimes it is good to get wise council from those you trust but pay close attention to who you are listening to and remember, this is your life.

You weren't given someone else's life.

If we are only given one life, that means we weren't given the lives around us. As the father of three boys, I find myself often saying, "Stop policing your brothers and get your stuff done." The truth is this temptation to tell other people how to live their lives is as much a distraction for adults as it is for kids. Maybe it is time to stop worrying about what other people do so you can take responsibility for you own life. Additionally, if we weren't given someone else's life, maybe it is time to free ourselves from the comparison trap. Paying too much attention to what others have with jealousy will lead to resentment. Comparison and resentment trap us in a sense of helplessness that can prevent us from living our one life with intention.

Who do you want to be? What do you want-really?

You are given one life. It wasn't given to anyone else. So, what are you going to do with it? Who do you want to be? And, what do you want-really? If you block out the voices around you, free yourself from the shackles of comparison, and work towards answering these questions for yourself with courage and vulnerable honesty, you will begin to awaken a vision and passion for life that may have

been buried for years.

What is the next step you need to take?

We tend to overestimate what we can do in a day and underestimate what we can accomplish in a year. Impatience can kill a vision. Clarifying who you want to be and what you want is one step on a life-long journey. You do not have to have every step toward your vision clarified, just the next one. A life well lived is lived one day at a time with courageous intentionality. Your next step might be to work towards clarity on what you want and who you want to be. It might be to share that vision with someone else. It may be time to try something new or to quit something. Whatever your next step, may you be challenged and encouraged to take it remembering, 'You are only given one life."

Connect with us at journeybravely.com for coaching support as you pursue living your one life with intentionality.



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Dogs Rescued from Cold Crates

Nine dogs that had been kept confined in rusty wire crates their entire life have been rescued from a South Alabama property. Alaqua Animal Refuge answered a call from a rescue partner seeking help with the neglected animals in freezing and filthy conditions.

Alaqua's team discovered the dogs cramped and cowering in outside cages covered with tarps. "These dogs were cold, fearful and in need of attention. Their frail bodies indicated they have lived their entire lives in these restricted, small crates," said Alaqua Founder Laurie Hood. "One of the dogs was literally slumped over with an arched back indicative of never being given the opportunity to stand up straight or run around. Sadly, he will be forever deformed."

Another dog was found relentlessly barking and scared with an embedded collar in her neck. There was no fresh food or water in any of the crates and there were feces all around. All of them were hungry, and most of their noses were scraped and



raw at the top where they had been bumping them on the rusted cages.

When crates are used properly, they can be a safe and cozy haven. However, for these sweet dogs that was not the case. Animals still need proper exercise, medical care, food and waternot to mention a loving, warm home environment for them to thrive and live.

With loving care, Alaqua helped persuade all of the animals out of their caged environment and comforted each of them before transfer. Five of the dogs were taken to local rescue groups that had space to help

Continued on next page



End the Cravings



By Kay Leaman, Health Architect

When we think of ending cravings, we usually begin with telling ourselves, "I'm going to stop eating." However, as most of us know, the willpower to eat it is many times stronger than our will power to not eat it. Let's be real. As soon as we make this decision,

someone offers us a doughnut or a sumptuous homemade goodie.

In order to conquer our cravings, I'd like to look at it from a different point of view. So, what habits can we work on that can help us in conquering our cravings?

Here's a quote: "Life changes in mere moments. It all comes down to the decisions you make in the little moments of each day. Yeses and nos. But here's the catch: It's the hours and days after those decisions that dictate the direction you'll head. So, what split-second decisions can you make each day over the next 28 days to make healthy changes

or that will last a lifetime?"

Decide to go to bed on time. Set an alarm if you need to be reminded. Sleep is critical to improve our health. While we sleep, our bodies are busy repairing, healing and performing many other functions. Getting enough sleep can help us make healthier decisions. As a side note, if you eat within 2-3 hours before going to bed, your body has to focus on digestion which interferes with the other tasks it needs to be doing.

Decide to make exercise a habit. If you'd like to exercise, but just can't seem to work in 30 minutes a day, then it's time to think out of the box. Break it up into short segments. Find exercises you can do at your desk like leg lifts, stretches, etc. Take a quick break and walk up and down a flight of stairs, etc.

Decide to take time for yourself. Tell your family you're taking 10. Find a quiet place, take some deep breaths, close your eyes, clear your mind, read a few pages, relax. De-stressing works wonders.

Decide to eat to live, not live to eat. This is a powerful statement. We associate food with fellowship, entertainment and comfort. Food is fuel. How well will your car run if you add the wrong fuel to the tank? How well will your body run if you do the same?

Decide that your health is a priority. This one decision can change what shows up in our grocery cart. It will inform our choices on how we spend our personal time, how we look at the goodies in the break room. It also changes how we look at ourselves in the mirror.

If we set our minds on taking these decisions to heart, we can make a huge difference in our health, energy and mindset.

Here's to health!

HealthyDay HealthyLife, Inc. succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

DOGS

continued from previous page

them, and Alaqua took in four that needed the most attention. Each is being treated and cared for by Alaqua, and it is expected that they all will most likely recover and be able to be adopted.

Taking in animals like these presents a challenge for rescue organizations as there are so many obstacles the dogs have to overcome before they are ready to be adopted to a new family. Alaqua's team works with each of them and doesn't rush their

journey to well-being. It is a slow but worthy process to ensure the animals aren't uncomfortable at any time while being cared for and socialized. Alaqua recognizes the emotional triggers and works with them until the animals are finally ready to find their forever home. "It's heartbreaking to imagine living in such a confined space. Sometimes the wounds you can't see are the hardest ones to heal. Emotional scars are real - for us and for animals," Hood iterated. "Dogs are pack animals. They enjoy being part of a family. Being cooped up is mentally bad for them. They deserve to enjoy life, love, exercise, and compa-

lly bad ny...just like all of us do." o enjoy For more information on compa- Alaqua's services or to donate to the care for animals like these, please visit www.Alaqua.org.

"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.

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Business

Boeing Selects Fort Walton Beach for Competitive Expansion Project

One Okaloosa EDC announced that Boeing Global Services has selected Fort Walton Beach for a competitive expansion project. The anticipated \$2,550,000 project involves

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a 20,000 SF expansion to the company's existing facility located at 20 Hill Ave. in the Fort Walton Beach Commerce & Technology Park. In addition, Boeing's current position as one

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of Okaloosa County's largest private sector employers will be further reinforced with the creation of 12 new positions at an average salary of \$70,000 per year plus benefits (168%) of Okaloosa County's average wage).

In Fort Walton Beach, Boeing Global Services employees are dedicated to modifying, testing, repairing and servicing aircraft for customers in the U.S., including the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force, as well as customers around the globe. Additionally, there is a maintenance repair and overhaul facility that services avionics, wiring and hydraulic systems for a variety of aircraft. The engineering capability is extensive and concentrates on military aircraft sustainment.

Boeing employees in Fort Walton Beach also support technical manual development for Boeing and non-Boeing platforms, such as the C-130, F-15, F/A-18, CH-47 and elements



of the U.S. national defense system.

"Boeing is a world class company, and the fact that they have chosen to undertake this important expansion project in Okaloosa County is a testament to our community's continued ability to provide them with the top-notch talent and infrastructure they require. We welcome Boeing's growth in Fort Walton Beach and appreciate the vital role they play in supporting our nation's warfighters," stated Chairman Mel Ponder, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners.

Construction is expected to begin in March 2022 with completion in March 2023, while hiring of the 12 new positions will occur within the next two years.

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Hospitality Heroes Awards

The Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) Hospitality Hero Awards were held in February. The awards ceremony recognizes outstanding employees in the hospitality industry.

2021 Award Winners Hotel / Resort

Front of House: Rosalie Wong - Hampton Inn and Suites,

- Destin Back of House: Carrie Pritchard - Newman-Dailey
- Resort Properties, Inc.

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

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Manager: Jeff Welch - Hilton Garden Inn, Destin/Miramar Beach

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Spirit Of Hospitality

Nick Sarra - Saltwater Restau-

rants, Destin

Golden Pineapple Billy Martin - McGuire's Irish Pub, Destin

Engineering and Manufacturing Defense Contractor Plans Expansion to Freeport

By Lori Leath Smith

A defense contractor and leader in Aerospace Development and Engineering Services is planning to move its headquarters from California to Freeport! The American Metal Bearing Company (AMB), a premier supplier of propulsion bearings to the U.S. Navy and developer of micro-turbine systems, has been servicing the U.S. Military for the last 85 years.

In 1921, the small bearing company was established in Los Angeles to manufacture specialty bearings for early Indy Cars, according to its website. It later grew into the WORLD'S leading developer in bearing propulsion systems. Throughout the 20th century and modern day, the company has pioneered advancements in journal bearing design, the manufacture of bearings, which control motion in various types of machinery, such as Navy submarines and other ships. The list of Navy ships and submarines equipped with bearings that AMB has engineered and manufactured reads like the history of the U.S. Navy fleet.

In a presentation to the Walton County BCC, CEO Michael Litton said they plan to bring half of AMB's current staff with them and hire new employees, roughly 15, for the other half initially—that number could grow to 50 eventually.

Litton stated the company has most recently been working on missile platforms, such as Navy submarines and additional similar jobs, but is wanting to expand to aircraft, and thus, it



discovered our area was highly conducive.

Not only is Florida, in general, ideal due to the state's tax incentives and advantages, but Freeport is appealing due to its proximity to I-10 and airports, its mild climate and former military—workforce talent with skills from engineering to IT to maintenance—in the region. The company also hopes to connect with nearby Tyndall and

Eglin Air Force bases, but has the potential of connecting with our six major military installations in the region, "all with aviation/aerospace-related missions, which have a huge impact on the industries, research and development and talent pool in the region," as stated on Florida's Great Northwest's website. "Defense contractors, manufacturers and high-tech businesses located in the region benefit from the skills of the 3,000 service members that separate each year and a talent pool of more than 130,000 former military-trained personnel in the region. Local school resources are also a benefit-Walton and Okaloosa County schools are ranked among the top in the state as well as our award-winning local colleges. Of course,

it's also a safe and beautiful place to live and raise a family.

From an economic development standpoint, this is a win in continuing to try to diversify our economy in the region. It's long been known in the economic development arena that our area would benefit by developing in other industries so as to not depend totally on the hospitality industry.

Planned for 60,000 square feet on 11 acres at the Walton County Industrial Park, the Freeport building will be larger than its California counterpart allowing for its expansion of services. Welcome AMB—we look forward to you thriving in our beautiful and resourceful paradise.

The Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber's New 2022 Executive Board!

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Musing

What Ever Happened to Love?



By Myrna Conrad

February is the month that we celebrate Valentine's Day - aday where we purchase a special gift or card to express our love for someone. Even though the day will be celebrated on February 14 by many people, the world seems to still be filled with people expressing anger and hatred toward one another. James addresses this inconsistency in God's Word as follows: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be." James 3:9-10 NIV

Given all of the discord, dismissiveness, anger and hatred evidenced around us, we might ask the question, "Whatever happened to love?" Why do we

Workto

go out of our way to find a way to express love on this day and not every other day? What does love even mean?

Merriam Webster defines love as "a strong or constant affection for a person. "A profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person" is the definition found on www.dictionary.com. The Cambridge dictionary describes love as "liking another adult very much and being romantically attracted to them or having strong feelings of liking a friend or person in your family."

The words "I love you" can be said to many different people and the meanings can vary widely. Many people struggle to define and understand love. We all want to be able to express love and we want to be loved.

God's Word tells us that God is love and that we humans crave love from the moment of existence. However, the emotion of love holds differing degrees of intensity. Four forms of love are found in God's Word, coming from four Greek words:



Eros, Storge, Philia, and Agape. Eros describes romantic love that two people feel for each other and we express as being "in love." The Greek word Storge describes the affectionate bond that forms between parent and child, and between siblings. The word Philia is used to describe the deep emotional bonds found in friendship. Agape is the highest form of love and describes the immeasurable, unchangeable love that God has for His creation, mankind. This kind of love was demonstrated by Jesus when He gave His life for us.

All of these definitions and words center around a person's



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feelings. Feelings come and go and that, I believe, is why committed love is so elusive in our society today. While love is a feeling, I believe lasting love is a choice followed by an action. Most of the time, people are seeking love to fulfill something within themselves, to fulfill their needs. However, when we experience the agape

love of God, our need for love is fulfilled and we can love others by focusing on their needs. As I said before, feelings fluctuate, they change with the situation, but when we practice committed love with our actions, the feeling of love will come back even stronger.

You've heard the saying, "Actions speak louder than words." This definitely applies to love. So, how can we better love those around us?

Be Aware:

Be aware of the discrepancy between what you say you feel and how you act.

Realize that love is a choice and an action, not just a feeling. Think about the way you use the word "love" and make sure you aren't replacing the word "like" with "love."

Be Intentional:

When you are feeling frustrated with someone, choose to love them.

Don't just express words of love, express your love through your actions.

Try to find ways to express your love toward those who are important to you every day, not just on special occasions.

A Pastor's Ponderings: A Week in the Life of This Pastor



By Pastor Doug Stauffer

My dad was a towering (often intimidating) figure in my youth, standing six foot five. Add over twenty years in the military followed by ten years as Captain of a police force, and "you will still have barely a glimpse of what I'm talking about." I inherited my mom's genes, making me a bit vertically challenged. Both of them taught me life's lessons that impacted me immeasurably.

My dad taught me many things, especially through his example, like working hard. He stressed that time wasted is time lost, never to be redeemed. As I matured, I realized the wisdom of this guidance and that some of the simplest choices produced the most profound outcomes. Forty years ago, I decided to follow Jesus, taking the admonitions of scripture seriously.

I have studied my Bible for four decades now, even writing over twenty books on the subject. Decisions have consequences—some bad, some good—and the profoundly impactful ones I treasure most. I learned that one of my best investments involved quality time poured into the lives of others.

I am blessed to experience so many great things because I actively engage in this life with robust passion and laser-focused purpose. There is always something to learn in life's arena, and the best growth comes through timely sowing, regular watering, and then reaping your investment.

As I listened to Aaron Hale speak on Thursday night (EOD-Fudge.com), one poignant statement of his seemed to sum things up nicely, "Success without contribution is the biggest failure." I choose to wear many hats, all focused on making a difference.

So, I thought I would share some snippets from a week's schedule in this pastor's life.

Sunday: Preached three times at the Church I pastor Monday: Afternoon funeral followed by the honor of praying before a packed house at the Okaloosa County School Board

Tuesday: Morning meeting at the Police Department as the Niceville Police Department chaplain. That afternoon I hosted Lieutenant Governor Nuñez at the Niceville Senior Center with twenty prominent Okaloosa County Representatives. Commissioner Mel Ponder and the Lt. Governor and I then met for a more intimate talk at Black Rifle Coffee Company.

Wednesday: Evening church service followed by catching the last half of Northwest Florida State College Men's Basketball game. I am a professional photographer, so I voluntarily take pictures for their social media platform.

Thursday: Lunch at Rocky Bayou Christian School, followed by a tour of this wonderful institution. That evening I presided as President of the Okaloosa County Republican Club, and J.D. Peacock swore in the newly re-elected board. This formality was followed by our speaker, Aaron Hale, stealing the show. While serving in Afghanistan, an IED blew up, with Aaron ending up blind and later deaf. Yet, he recently completed his first 100-mile ultra-marathon and McKayla, and he managed their own Fudge company (www. EODFudge.com).

Friday: The morning started with the Second annual Commissioner's prayer breakfast hosted by Dr. Mike Mosley, with several hundred in attendance. It was inspiring and moving!

Saturday: We traveled to Pensacola to hear a Southern Gospel group in concert, followed up by finishing my sermons for the next day. Then comes another Sunday: lather, rinse and repeat with a new set of variables.

These are merely some highlights with one all-encompassing goal. "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). To redeem time means to use it diligently. It is never too late to revolutionize your life with plenty of ways to engage in our community. Find out how to make a difference. The Bible says this could be you: "And of some have compassion, making a difference" (Jude 22). Busy people never have enough help; try volunteering.



Note: After serving 14 years in both the Navy as a chef to the Commander of the US 6th Fleet and then transitioning on to becoming an Army team leader in one of the military's most dangerous jobs, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Staff Sergeant Aaron Hale was blinded by an IED. Not letting his injuries hold him back, Aaron became an EOD instructor, motivational speaker, mountain climber, white water kayaker, and marathon runner. Four years later tragedy struck again when Aaron contracted bacterial meningitis which robbed him of his hearing leaving him not just 100% blind but completely deaf as well.

Again, Aaron picked himself up, dusted off, and continued to chase the best of what life has to offer. Today, he's back speaking and sharing his story, running marathons, he's a proud husband and father of three boys, an 11 year old and two year old identical twins, runs a thriving chocolate company with his wife, a real estate investor, social media influencer, and recently completed his first 100 mile ultra marathon.

Dr. Doug Stauffer is pastor of Faith Independent Baptist Church. He was saved July 6, 1980, in Niceville, while stationed at the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base and has now been in the ministry for over 35 years. He has written 20 books including the best selling "One Book" trilogy ("One Book Rightly Divided, One Book Stands Alone, One Book One Authority"); along with several devotionals ("Daily Strength" series); and prophecy books ("Reviving the Blessed Hope, When the End Begins").

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🏇 Musing

Sean of the South



By SEAN DIETRICH

We were newlyweds, living in a grungy apartment.

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

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

scattered throughout our apartment for her to find.

One such poem read:

"Together, the two of us, "In thought, and deed, and breath, and heart,

"Shall never be lacerated apart."

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

LACERATE [verb: las-uhreyt] lac er at ed, lac er at ing l. to tear; mangle; rip. Exam-

ple: "Hey dude, that poem you

wrote really freakin' lacerated."

My wife saved all my crum-

my poems in a shoebox, and

today they reside in a storage

ried, we lived in an apartment

that smelled like dead squir-

rels. I am not being figurative.

I mean our apartment actual-

We're your neighbors

— and your

Anyway, when we first mar-

closet.

BAYSIDE TO SEASIDE

REALT

AND ANYTHING IN BETWEEN



ly had a nest of decomposing squirrels in the attic above our master bedroom.

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

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

My friend, Chubbs, found an old console television on the side of the road. I was lucky enough to claim the TV before the garbage man came.

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

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

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

our cash for a new window unit

AC-our air conditioner was on

the fritz. The thing would only

work on days of the week begin-

end, we ate donuts. It was our

simple ritual, and I loved it.

Krispy Kreme was only a stone's

throw from us, and when the

hot-and-ready light would glow,

for hours about nothing. Heavy

doses of sugar can do things to

the human mind. It can make a

told her mine. You can do a lot

of soul-searching over crullers.

non-existent, I took whatev-

er jobs I could get. I spent

days crawling rooflines, swing-

ing a hammer, or operating a

commercial lawn mower. She

worked as a preschool teacher at

ano at a Baptist church on Sun-

For extra income, I played pi-

church, or in a kitchen.

She told me all her stories. I

My professional life was

Over donuts, we would talk

by God, we were there.

On weekends, every week-

ning with "R."

person honest.

days, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights, Thursday night
choir practices, and Saturday
night prayer meetings.

We learned things about each other. We learned important things.

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

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

We learned how to hold each other when loved ones die. We learned how to sit together—me reading a magazine, her playing a crossword puzzle.

We learned how to wring our hands in hospital waiting rooms. We learned how bury dogs with a shovel and a burial sheet.

We learned how to make a life together.

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

This morning, however, I did not write. Instead, I sifted through our storage closet. I found things. An old coffee-tin sewing kit, some scented candles, love poems, and the picture of a young man and his new wife in their first apartment.

In the picture, the place had ugly gray walls, but that's the only ugly thing about this photo.

He's holding her. She's holding him. They are young. Their skin is smooth. I wish I could tell you how much I love these two people in the picture.

I wish you could see their faces, and their punch-drunk smiles. You can tell they belong together by looking at them. You simply know that their names should never be said apart.

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

I suppose that word is growing on me.

Happy Valentine's Day, Jamie.

Gary Jennings Jr 1020 Bay Grove Rd., Freeport 850.532.6403



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🐞 Arts & Music

BAY BUZZ EVENTS

continued from page 11

favorite comfort food. Local restaurants will compete for the best mac in town. Be there to sample everything for yourself and cast your vote! All proceeds from this event will go to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, which works in our community to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence through its programs focused on academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. Sponsorships for this event are available. To learn how your business can be involved, please contact hello@francesroy.com. Tickets are \$45 for VIC (Very Important Cheese tickets); \$25 for adults; \$15 for kids (5-16 years). V.I.C. (Very Important Cheese) tickets include (1) beverage ticket and a t-shirt.

Wild Game Dinner for Taylor Haugen Foundation

The 'Real' Forrest Gump,

Medal of Honor Recipient Sammy L. Davis, will be the special guest speaker for the Taylor Haugen Foundation's Wild Game Dinner & Auction on Saturday, March 12 from 3:30-6:30 p.m. at Walton Plantation. Individual tickets for this exclusive event are \$250 at TaylorHaugen.org.

Buggin' Out: A Vintage VW Festival and Car Show



Vintage Volkswagen lovers, start your engines and head to The Island Resort March 11-13—the 2nd Annual Buggin' Out Festival is a weekend full of spectacular vintage cars, poolside fun, live music and more!

On Friday, March 11, festival guests are invited to a pool party at the grotto pool, with drink specials, a live DJ, and more. Saturday, March 12, is the main event! From Noon to 4 p.m., more than 60 vintage cars will be on display, along with live music, local vendor booths, groovy cocktails, kids' activities and more. Attendance Saturday is free. All vintage vehicles are welcome in the car show, but only Volkswagen buses and bugs will be judged and eligible for awards. All vehicles must be registered in advance, as space is limited and on a first come, first served basis. Registration includes attendance at Friday's pool party, confirmed space for vour vehicle in the car show, breakfast at Fish House and complimentary drink tickets to be used at any of the four bars on The Island Resort. To register: https://850tix.com/events/ buggin-out-a-vintage-vw-festival-and-car-show-3-12-2022.

Tea in the Garden

Join Fore Her for Tea in the Garden fundraiser presented by Emerald Coast Hospice on Sun., March 6, 12 to 3 p.m. at Clay 30A. Guests are encouraged to dress up and join friends for an afternoon of tea, light



bites and rosé in support of Fore Her's mission to raise funds for those battling breast cancer. Guests will enjoy light bites sponsored by Corcoran Reverie, a complimentary glass of Good Clean Wine rosé, cookies from Sweet Henrietta's and tea in the garden. The event will include a silent auction, live music and a photo booth sponsored by Own At the Beach Team. Hats are encouraged for a chance to win the "Best Hat" prize. Tickets are \$50 per person and \$45 for breast cancer survivors. Gather your friends and join Fore Her for this signature fundraiser!

Soirée On The Bay

Enjoy a lavish gathering with fine wine, food and spirits benefiting Children's Volunteer Health Network (CVHN). Presented by the Dugas family, the

Soirée will take place on their stunning family estate overlooking the Choctawhatchee Bay in Santa Rosa Beach. The main event is Sat., March 19. Starting at 3:30 p.m., guests will enjoy a mix and mingle style event featuring small bites, wine samples, and live music from the Tip Tops Band. A sunset toast during the ceremonious shooting of the cannon and fireworks complete the evening. For tickets: www.cvhnkids.org/ soiree-on-the-bay. VIP - \$1,000 per person. Includes Friday's event, Saturday's VIP Party and Main Event. Main Event - \$300 per person. Proceeds from this event benefit CVHN's second mobile dental clinic, providing free restorative dental services to children in need throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties.

A Bed 4 Me Expands Into Walton County

A Bed 4 Me is now serving families in Walton County while continuing to serve in Okaloosa. A Bed 4 Me serves children ages

Continued on page 39

Scan here for more information 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 March19, 2022



The Price is Right Live April 1, 2022



An Officer and a Gentleman April 10, 2022



Waitress April 30, 2022



Buy Your Tickets TODAY!

Arts & Music

ECTC: Spring has Sprung and Summer's a Comin'

By NATHANAEL FISHER

2022 has blossomed at Emerald Coast Theatre Company like a field full of wildflowers. It has been wonderful seeing full houses at our shows. Our wonderful VIP members, sponsors, winter visitors and local patrons alike have been living in the fullness of our season theme of "fun and funny." In March, we have our last weekend of The Marvelous Wonderettes, the incomparable Shirley Simpson as Katherine Hepburn, A Taste of Jazz at Ruth's Chris Steak House, Songs by the Campfire with Bryan Kennedy and Forrest Williams is returning March 16, and April 1- Comedy on the Boulevard returns! Our field is full of wonderful entertainment ready to create a cultural bouquet for you.

The Marvelous Wonderettes is showing March 3-6. Wipe that lipstick off your collar and time travel to the 1958 Springfield Prom with us where you can be serenaded with all the classics like "Lollipop" and "Dream Lover." Featuring over 30 classic '50s and '60s hits, The Marvelous Wonderettes will keep you smiling in this musttake musical trip down memory lane! Great music, fine wine and a good time are central to this cabaret stage addition to our professional season.

Shirley Simpson as Katharine Hepburn in Katharine Hepburn finishes out our Storyteller Series this season. An unforgettable one-time event, our very own Shirley Simpson embodies wit, charm and fierce grit as Katharine Hepburn. Simpson gives a humorous and touching portraval of the fiery and independent Hepburn throughout her career and the events and people who shaped her life. A fascinating story performed by a fascinating woman. This is one you will not want to miss! This show is March 1.

Join us for A Taste of Jazz at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse this spring for the tastiest fundraiser around! If you have attended this event in the past, you know that Tyler and the team at Ruth's Chris Steak House lays out the most delicious offering of hors d'oeuvres to enjoy. In addition, local favorite Cheryl Jones and Company will be keeping the jazz theme alive, along with fantastic raffles and a wine pull to round out the evening. It's all happening on March 10th so save the date because this night sold out last year!

It's hard to describe how special a night it was this past fall when Bryan Kennedy and Forrest Williams brought their Songs by the Campfire show to ECTC. These two artists shared personal stories of their friendship, how a song they wrote was inspired, and sang with such honesty and authenticity that you truly felt like you were sitting by the campfire with them. They are coming back on March 16th with more songs and more stories. Don't miss it!

Comedy on the Boulevard is back and guarantees more than a few laughs with these April fools! ECTC presents some of the Southeast's most hilarious comedians hosted by resident funny guy Jason Hedden and featuring headliner Jenn Weeks. If you saw Jen Weeks and SummerPOP this past summer then you know the laughs will be plenty on April 1st.

Parents! Summer is coming



and ECTC has a bouquet of camps ready to inspire, educate, and entertain your child. From the Mini Player camps for Kindergarten through 1st grade to our Musical and Non-Musical production camps for 2nd Grade to 5th grade and Musical Theatre Intensive and Non Musical Production camp for 6th through 12th grade, we have what you are looking for. One of the great things about our summer camps is that it provides an opportunity for children to try something new- and very often fall in love with it! It's not just about summer camp, it's also about the joy of live theatre and how it can teach children teamwork, empathy, and literary skills. Last year almost all of our camps sold out so please be

sure to register early. Also, don't let pricing be an issue, check out our scholarship for all the educational classes and camps! To find out more information and to register go to: emeraldcoasttheatre.org/summer-camps

We look forward to seeing you at the theatre, where we do community through the art of theatre! More information, registration information, and ticket purchases can all happen at www.EmeraldCoastTheatre. org or call the box office at 850-684-0323.

Upcoming Schedule: The Marvelous Wonderettes Musical by Roger Bean,

Continued on page 39



Studio 237 Music Lessons: Music Literacy

The sound of music is a language. Learning to decipher musical notation whether that be traditional staff or chord method enables one to effectively comprehend a message. How often do we read a paragraph and have no idea what we just read? Even if the words were read properly, there was no meaning.

While learning to play an instrument, it is important to put reading first. Reading starts with the smallest sound which is the note itself. In music, we have 7 letters which are A,B,C,D,E,F and G and in the same order as the alphabet! Each letter is assigned a particular sound or tone such that the note "A" always sounds like "A." Just like when we learn to read English, letters have particular sounds that together form words.

Once we learn how to find our 7 notes on our instrument, then the fun begins! The combinations of notes are endless. We can express just about any thought using notes in a variety of orders and patterns in a poetic form.

Next, we begin to identify certain note combinations that sound good and when blended together communicate a particular feeling or meaning. Like the "Star Wars" theme, where the first 10 notes are all we need to feel the excitement of good triumphing over evil in our vast galaxy. There is a rhythm that happens as the notes are combined, a beat pattern that can make us dance or chill out in a cozy chair. As the notes are combined with the beats, we begin to have even more fun! Creativity soars to new heights.

As we place our notes in certain orders, they form a musical thought, phrase, or sentence. Teachers help the student to identify these phrases within the music they are studying. Just like a sentence, there is a beginning (the capital letter) and an end (which is the period). In music, we use symbols such as a curving line over the notes which groups them together. The notes are placed on staff lines to indicate letter name and where to play them on your instrument.

Why should I bother to learn to read words (or notes), when all I need to do is speak them to communicate? Simply put, a person will not function to their fullest potential, on a daily basis, if they are unable to read and write. The same is with music. Grammar is music theory, words are notes, books are songs. If you are musically illiterate, then your ability to grow is reduced. Besides, reading opens up a whole new world of adventure and possibilities!

Lastly, musicians who are fluent are accomplished. The dynamics of speech play an important part in connotation. The words "I love you" can be said in a variety of ways to express or elicit happiness, sadness, or anger. In music, we call this dynamics, articulation, and phrasing. Loudly played notes are labeled as "forte," and softly played notes are "piano." How we annunciate our notes creates a very different feeling such as short bouncy sounds are called "staccato," suddenly loud notes are "accented," and smooth connected notes are "legato." I like staccato because it reminds me of a sneaky fun tip toe motion. How fast or slow we speak/play can imply urgency, excitement, calmness, or a jovial fun feeling. In music, we call that "tempo." If we play a fast song too slowly, it just doesn't provide the same meaning or "sound right."

Next time you hear a musical tune, consider the intention of the music, the highs, the lows, the beginning, the end, note patterns, and the rhythmic patterns that cause your feet to tap, your heart to cry, or your mind to relax. What is the musician trying to say to you? What have you just musically read?

Studio 237 Music Lessons, Santa Rosa Beach, FL is located in Santa Rosa Beach, FL. Our teachers are ready to teach guitar (acoustic, bass, electric), piano, ukulele, drums, voice, song writing, and more. For more information call 850-231-3199 and visit our website at www.Studio237Music.com.







🀞 Arts & Music

Get Ready for the Paradise Music Festival, March 11!

Paradise Promotions of the Emerald Coast Presents a Spectacular SPRING BREAK In Paradise Music Festival, March 11 at the Destin-FWB Convention Center (1250 Miracle Strip Parkway, Fort Walton Beach). This all-day music event features three great bands performing five hours of Live Music on the **Step One Automotive Stage.** Doors open at 3 p.m. for visitors to browse the vendor and enter-

tainment section and indulge in some great food and beverage before Ted Corcoran the Master Of Ceremonies (President/ CEO of the FWB Chamber Of Commerce) introduces the awesome Paradise Bayou Band who will open the show at 4:30 p.m. with Classic Rock, Country and Motown Tunes. At 6:30 p.m., the guys with the Fantastic Cadillac Willy Band will perform their **Deadspread** show with a

tribute to Widespread Panic and the Grateful Dead. And at 8:30 p.m. Ron Adams (the shadow of the king) and the Memphis Echoes close the event with one of the best Elvis Shows in the land. And don't be surprised if Elvis dons his Johnny Cash hat for a song or two.

There will also be a vendor and entertainment area and food and beverage booths. Vendors will be selling T-shirts, hats, hand-made and fine jewelry, cookware, and more. The entertainment section will be manned by volunteers from United For A Good Cause, Inc. raising money for the Hope Squad peer-to-peer suicide prevention program in our local schools. Play cornhole, darts, murbles, face painting, stick on tats and other games. There will also be \$5,000 in door prizes and raffles.

Tickets are on sale now at the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce (who will be raising money for One Hopeful Place) or visit www.Paradise-PromotionsFL.com (Paradise Music Festival). Reserved Table Seats are \$30-\$75; General Admission is \$20 in advance and \$25.00 at the door. Hosted by Paradise Promotions.

Area Art Classes March 2022

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

-Shamrocks and Leprechauns: Acrylic ages 8 and up -Sheila Mahony \$37.50 Acrylic Wave Pour & Bloom: 2

pieces, ages 14 and up- Tamika Thomas, \$67.50 11-Trio Acrylic Pour: (three canvases) ages 14 and up Debi Pro-

HERE FOR TICKETS

feta, \$67.50

- 12-Kids St Patrick Art: ages 6 and up - Marla Armstrong, \$37.50
- 19—Stained Glass Mosaic Box: ages 14 and up- Dulcie Scalf, \$37.50

SPRING BREAK WEEK

- 22-Kids Painting Sea Turtles: ages 8 and up. Sheila Mahony \$42.50
- 24—Welcome Spring Watercolor Cards: ages 8 and up. Corina Zalace, \$37.50
- 24—Character Design Writing Workshop: ages 12 and up. Eliza Scalia, \$17.50
- 25-Start to Finish Acrylic: Choose Floral or Sailboats. Ages 16 and up. Rosalyn O'Grady, \$67.50
- 26-Needle Felting: Ages 14 and up. Jenn Dennis - \$37.50

On Going Classes

- Rosalyn O'grady OIL OR ACRYL-ICS. Tuesdays 10am - noon, ogradytr@cox.net. www.RosalynOgrady.com \$20 per session plus supplies
- Theresia Mcinnis - WATERCOL-**OR TECHNIQUES.** Tuesdays 12:45pm- 3:45pm. Sign up: 850-729-2600. www.TheresiaMcInnis. com. \$27.50 plus supplies
- Charlotte Arnold OPEN STUDIO WITH LIVE MODEL. Wednesdays 10:30am- 1:30pm. Sign up: 850-729-2600. Uninstructed- \$15 MJ's HOME SCHOOL DRAWING/ PAINTING/CLAY CLASSES. Starting February. Thursdays

2-3:15pm. Email mjmontgomery42@gmail.

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- -Open Leather & Pearls: Open Studio Jewelry with Sherrie on SAT! \$21.30 -Kidz Paint Seahorses! \$19.26
- 10-Glass Art Crosses: Create your own cross with glass. \$53.50
- 12-St. Paddy's Day Cookie Decorating: Sugar cookies with Mery! \$19.79

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🏇 Arts & Music

BAY BUZZ EVENTS

continued from page 35

two to 18 from low to middle income families. After a referral and introductory visit are completed, a new bed to include a twin bed frame, mattress, sheet set, comforter and pillow are provided to each child. A Bed 4 Me serves children who do not have beds due to economic struggles and lack of financial resources as well as displaced families starting over due to domestic issues.

A Bed 4 Me is hosting an informational social for anyone interested in volunteering or supporting the mission. The social will be held Monday, March 7, 2022 at the Hammock Bay Lake Club, 1850 Great Hammock Bend, Freeport, Fl, 32439. Social starts at 5:30pm, information session starts at 6:00pm. Light refreshments will be available. RSVP diane@abed4me.org

Information about A Bed 4 Me is available at abed-4me.org. If you would like to attend the informational social, please email diane@ abed4me.org ECTC

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Cabaret Stage: Musical Revue March 3 - 6, Thursdays -Saturdays at 7:30pm, Sundays at 2:30pm

Katharine Hepburn by Shirley Simpson

March 1 at 7:30pm

A Taste of Jazz

Fundraiser at Ruth's Chris Steak House March 10 at 5:30pm Songs by the Campfire with Bryan Kennedy and Forrest Williams

March 16 at 7:30pm Comedy on the Boulevard April 1 at 7:30pm



March Madness
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