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Protecting One of Our Community's Greatest Assets: The Choctawhatchee Bay

By BRIAN L. UNDERWOOD, CBEP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AND LORI SMITH, PUBLISHER

JUNE 2021

VOL. 3. NO. 11

One of our area's most beautiful, coveted and useful resources has been experiencing significant challengesones that affect water quality, natural systems and benefits provided by our own Choctawhatchee Bay. And, whether you think about it or not, this massive body of water is woven into our everyday lives as we come and go...to work, to fish, to boat, to play, to receive goods, to experience magnificent views, nature and wildlife, and the list goes on.

A defining characteristic of the coastal reaches of the Choctawhatchee River and Bay watershed has been growth and development in our region. Our population has increased significantly over the last several decades with a projected 21.24 percent growth over the next 20 years. Some of the greatest growth is in Okaloosa, Walton, Santa Rosa and Bay counties, which





will bring continuing changes in land use and increasing demands on wastewater and stormwater management systems. (source: 850 Business)

Encompassing more than 5,000 square miles, the Choctawhatchee Bay watershed extends through six counties in Northwest Florida and 10 counties in Alabama. Within

our region, the contributions from this natural environment to our economy and quality of life cannot be overstated. Ecologically diverse, the watershed, land areas that drain into the Bay, includes one of Florida's largest alluvial rivers, an

> BAY continued on page 2



Saving the Sea Turtles

BY RITA L. SHERWOOD

Whether you're a local or not, one major issue with our beautiful beaches here on the Emerald Coast is helping the sea turtles. If you've been to the beach, I bet you've either seen an area roped off for a sea turtle's nest, seen a sign to fill in any holes on the beach, or maybe even encountered a volunteer asking you to pick up your trash.

We all know the phrase: "Clean, dark, flat." Clean: We can all do our part to protect the sea turtles by keeping the beach clean by removing all of your belongings, including trash when you leave the beach; leave no trace. Dark: Artificial light disturbs nesting sea turtles and hatch-

> C.A.R.E. continued on page 2



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M Community

BAY

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expansive riverine floodplain, a 129-square mile estuary, tidal marshes and seagrass beds as well as coastal dune lakes, Floridan aquifer springs, barrier islands and longleaf-wiregrass forests. It also includes some of Northwest Florida's fastest growing communities, including ours, as well as extensive public and private conservation lands.

The water resources that comprise the Choctawhatchee River and Bay provide numerous functions critical to our quality of life. The watershed's wetlands and floodplains store and regulate stormwater runoff, protecting water quality, providing flood protection, and recharging aquifers and potable water supplies. Its lakes, streams and coastal waters sustain numerous species of fish, shellfish and wildlife. Its springs provide windows to the aquifer, and its wetlands and coastal barriers provide resiliency against storms and coastal change.

To help preserve the Bay qualities we hold dear, the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program (CBEP) was recently established as a community-based, non-regulatory organization to coordinate stewardship initiatives for the Choctawhatchee Bay and its watershed, aspiring to protect and enhance these valuable assets for our enjoyment and benefit. These include restoring water quality, restoring and conserving its habitat, replenishing and protecting living coastal and marine resources, enhancing community resilience and revitalizing our diverse coastal economy. Grants and funds raised allow groups who have long worked on these assets to coordinate their efforts, educate, steward, strengthen and maintain this vibrant contribution to our economy.

In 2019, the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program was the beneficiary of grant funding from The Nature Conservancy. Additional Program funds have been received through a federal **RESTORE** Act financial assis-



tance award to the Gulf Consortium and Okaloosa County, on behalf of the Estuary Program, consistent with criteria set out in the RESTORE Act at 33 U.S.C. 1321(t)(3)(B)(i). Governance is provided by the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition Board of Directors, represented by County Commissioners from Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes and Washington Counties in Florida. Other organizations represented on the Board include the State of Alabama's Choctawhatchee Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Management Authority, the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance and Eglin Air Force Base as an ex-officio participant.

A Comprehensive Conser-

vation and Management Plan (CCMP) is currently being drafted for the Choctawhatchee Bay, River and headwaters. Consistent with the U.S. EPA's National Estuary Program standards, the Choctawhatchee's CCMP will highlight priority resource groups along with strategies to mitigate many of the known challenges. Some of these strategies include best practices for community resilience, water quality protection, natural resources management and land use planning.

Initial planning strategies have been successful, yielding positive stakeholder engagement. Reflecting the National Estuary Program model, the Choctawhatchee program has

organized technical advisory, education and outreach committees comprised of regional partners, who provide local knowledge and information on watershed issues. "We are hoping to build our partnerships to include a Community Advisory Committee and a Business and Industry Committee comprised of business owners, land owners or other members of the community interested in becoming involved in the Estuary Program and the CCMP development," says Chelsea Conley, CBEP Outreach Specialist.

If you would like to learn more about the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program, visit MyOkaloosa.com/cbec/program_overview.html or Facebook.com/Choctawhatchee-BayEstuaryProgram. For additional information, contact Chelsea Conley, Outreach Specialist, at 850-609-5390 or cconley@myokaloosa.com.

C.A.R.E. continued from page 1

lings; so, turn off all lights on or near the beach. Flat: When you

leave the beach each day, please knock down any sandcastles and fill in any holes.

We're so passionate about the sea turtles that we even have a local celebrity named Theo. Who is Theo? Theo is a lovable, plush turtle with a mission-to help protect and sustain the threatened sea turtle population along the Gulf Coast of Florida. "I'm a little turtle on a big mission. I'm here to save my fellow threatened sea turtles," says Theo.

One of Theo's favorite places is our verv own Gulfarium on Okaloosa Island known as the Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park, where it been active in marine animal rescue and rehabil-



itation for many years through the C.A.R.E. Center. Developed in 2015 as a non-profit to facilitate and further its continued coastal conservation efforts, the program has helped to rehabilitate and release various species of sea turtles found on the Gulf Coast, from the Loggerhead, Green, Kemp's Ridley, to the Leatherback. Through the years, hundreds of sea turtles have been rehabilitated and released back into the wild by the Gulfarium.

In fact, the C.A.R.E. Center's mission is to act as a beacon for coastal conservation through marine animal rescue and rehabilitation-encouraging awareness through public education as well as opportunities for locals to actively participate.

If you break it down further, to conserve is to ensure the future of marine animals and their habitats. To act is to play an active role in marine conservation. To rehabilitate is to support marine animal rescue, recovery and release. And to educate is to inspire awareness for marine conservation issues.

Rehabilitation starts when a sea turtle patient arrives; it is evaluated by animal care and veterinary staff using guidelines from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. These guidelines give staff the necessary information needed to evaluate a method for rehabilitation, recovery and release.

to release the turtle back to the ocean, occasionally a sea turtle is deemed non-releasable due to medical or physical limitations. These turtles are given a permanent home and full-time care at the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center.

Along with the turtles being rehabilitated for release, the Gulfarium's C.A.R.E. Center is also permanently caring for two Loggerhead sea turtles. They both were stranded along the beaches of the Emerald Coast originally and have now been deemed non-releasable due to medical or physical limitations. On the website Gulfarium.com, click on "Meet Our Animals" and learn about rescued sea turtles and other animals that call the Gulfarium home. Also,

Although every effort is made

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🔅 Community

Meet Our Hometown Hero: **Geoff Speyrer** Don't Give Up! Give Back

By LORI LEATH SMITH

While incarcerated, Destin resident and Army veteran Geoff Speyrer never dreamed he'd one day be a champion of bringing hope and awareness to veteran suicide. But now he is!

Sadly, 22 veterans and active-duty members per day take their lives thinking there is no hope.

But Geoff has set out to change this, showing that there IS help and hope, by raising money for Healing Paws for Warriors through his physical endurance—no small feat for a man who sustained injuries from being near explosives while serving in the military.

The medical care he received adversely affected his health, which resulted in a life-long injury due to lower leg trauma and surgery.

He was told his chances of running again were reduced and he began to experience the challenges of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). After leaving the military and becoming a fugitive, Geoff spent the next 13 years in and out of incarceration and treatment facilities. However, Geoff says it was during these darkest years that he turned his life around instead of becoming a statistic and taking his own life. Geoff found health and wellness as a tool to overcome this adversity.

And run again, he did! Geoff races to give back to his community after battling the addiction, PTSD and suicidal thoughts. He uses his strength and endurance to help other veterans facing the same challenges through Healing Paws for Warriors, a local veteran-founded nonprofit that provides trained service dogs at no cost to veterans who are faced with post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury or military sexual trauma.

For the second year in a row, Geoff completed a grueling 24hour physical challenge and ran 26.2 miles, biked 100 miles and raised approximately \$12,000 for vets in one day! The event is called SET 22—the SET stands for strength, endurance and training and the 22 refers to the number of veterans who take their lives every day.



PHOTO HEALING PAWS FOR WARRIORS

Beginning at midnight Friday, May 21, at Harbor Tavern in Destin, Geoff and fellow cyclist friends made four loops by bike around Destin and Scenic Hwy. 98 for a total of 100 miles! Then at noon on Saturday, he and several other runners made one more loop around Destin by foot, racking up a 26.2-mile marathon. And last, but certainly not least, at approximately 9 p.m., Geoff flipped a 200-lb. tractor tire around the Destin Elementary School track for one mile, where he was joined again by 25 to 30 people who cheered him on in the dark. He finished the challenge at roughly 10:45 p.m. Saturday, May 22. "As the tire continued to flip with each turn of a "thud," bystanders were reminded that he is an American soldier who sacrificed and proudly served his country," says Sheila Hale, Healing Paws for Warriors co-founder/deputy director. "Today he served his community by providing awareness to end veteran suicide, encouraging veterans to push through as there are resources for help." ALL of these amazing feats were accomplished in a 24-hour period! You might ask why Geoff

You might ask why Geoff would go through this grueling ordeal. "I know what it feels like to have no hope. It's all about giving back HOPE to these men and women who suffer," he says.

Geoff says his friends are what kept him going. "I have some of the most diverse, amazing, supportive people as friends!" Many flew in and ran with him from all over even as far as New York, New Jersey and Missouri. "I got zero sleep prior to the event taking off and it was all worth it. I truly wouldn't have it any other way," says Geoff. "I stayed mindful and present throughout the entire stay. I never wore headphones to get out of pain or get in the zone. I simply just talked to my friends. I'm so grateful for all of you!"

"We couldn't have done it

without community support from businesses such as Okaloosa Gas," says Sheila. "We had over 15 businesses alone to help support the event shirt which got us started and then held the fundraiser on Facebook."

"Geoff is representative of Don't Give Up! He has a huge heart, and wants to give back to his local community," Shelia says. "He chose Healing Paws for Warriors to support a veteran K9 team and to help veterans themselves. "If I can do this no matter how bad life can be, you can do it, too," says Geoff. "He is the example of a great American soldier," Sheila says.

To learn more about Healing Paws for Warriors, visit www. healingpawsforwarriors.org/ or at info@healingpawsforwarriors.org.



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The Islander

Destin

•••••••• 25 ••••••

Palm Grille

Music Hall

Landing

Boulevard

Music Hall

Beer Destin

Crab Trap Destin

Baytowne Wharf

Village

Island

Village

Grill

....

FWB

Music Hall

Seascape

Bay

Studios

Bistro

Harborwalk Village

of Baytowne Wharf

Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer

Comedy Zone | 7:30pm | Palms

Fireworks | 9pm | Okaloosa Island

Door Music Hall

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal

Name That Tune | 6:30pm | Village

Karaoke Night | 8pm | Village Door

Farmers Market | 8am-1pm | FWB

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door

Rock The Dock | 7pm | Harborwalk

Karaoke Night | 8pm | World Of

Beach Church Service | 7:30am |

Church at Crab Island | 10am | Crab

Sunday Cinema | 8pm | Village of

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night

Club and Burger Bar HydroFlight Monday | 6:30pm |

Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk

Music Bingo | 7pm | Pallet Bar and

HydroFlight Monday | 8:30pm |

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Singo Music Bingo | 5:30pm | LuLu's

Karaoke | 6pm | Enlightened Studios

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Village Door

Fat Tuesdays Celebration | 6:30pm |

Game Night | 7pm | Landsharks Pizza

Trivia Night | 7pm | Village Door at

Music Bingo | 7pm | World of Beer

7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Boomin' Tuesday Fireworks

Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpuckers

Bonfire on the Beach | 6pm | The

Rock'n Bingo | 7pm | FATBoys Destin

Free Concert Series | 7pm | Village

Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened

Pirate Davy Show | 5pm | Al's Beach

27

Karaoke | 6pm | Village Door

Restaurant (Baytowne)

••••• 28 •

5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Village of Baytowne Wharf

Village of Baytowne Wharf

Latin Night | 9pm | Bric a Brac

The community

Cali's To Do In Destin! JUNE 2021

Locals On The Harbor | 4pm | Boathouse Oyster Bar j.Leon Gallery Open House | 5pm |

j.Leon Gallery Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal

Palm Grille Karaoke Night | 8pm | Village Door

Music Hall **Latin Night |** 9pm | Bric a Brac

••••• 5 •••••

Farmers Market | 8am-1pm | FWB Landing

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door Music Hall

Rock The Dock | 7pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke Night | 8pm | World Of

Beer Destin



Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin Church at Crab Island | 10am | Crab Island

Karaoke | 6pm | Village Door Restaurant (Baytowne) Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Bistro Sunday Cinema | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Pirate Davy Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club and Burger Bar HydroFlight Monday | 6:30pm |

Village of Baytowne Wharf Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk

Village **Music Bingo** | 7pm | Pallet Bar and

Grill HydroFlight Monday | 8:30pm |

Village of Baytowne Wharf

Singo Music Bingo | 5:30pm | LuLu's Destin

Karaoke | 6pm | Enlightened Studios FWB

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Village Door Music Hall Fat Tuesdays Celebration | 6:30pm |

Harborwalk Village **Trivia Night** | 7pm | Village Door at

Seascape Game Night | 7pm | Landsharks Pizza

Music Bingo | 7pm | World of Beer Boomin' Tuesday Fireworks |

7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpuckers 9 Bonfire on the Beach | 6pm | The

Bay Rock'n Bingo | 7pm | FATBoys Destin Free Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer

Fireworks | 9pm | Okaloosa Island

Sunset Party | 5pm | Rhumcay Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club and Burger Bar

Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door Music Hall

Live Music | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation

Little Black Dress Ladies Night | 6pm | Palms Bistro

All American Thursdays | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village Dueling Pianos | 7pm | The Palms

Bistro Magical Thursdays | 7pm | Village of

Baytowne Wharf Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille Karaoke Night | 8pm | Village Door Music Hall

Latin Night | 9pm | Bric a Brac 12

Farmers Market | 8am-1pm | FWB Landing

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door

Music Hall **Rock The Dock** | 7pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke Night | 8pm | World Of Beer Destin

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin Church at Crab Island | 10am | Crab

Island Karaoke | 6pm | Village Door

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Pirate Davy Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club and Burger Bar

HydroFlight Monday | 6:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village

Music Bingo | 7pm | Pallet Bar and Grill

HydroFlight Monday | 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

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Singo Music Bingo | 5:30pm | LuLu's Destin

Karaoke | 6pm | Enlightened Studios FWB

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Village Door Music Hall Fat Tuesdays Celebration | 6:30pm |

Harborwalk Village **Trivia Night** | 7pm | Village Door at Seascape

Game Night | 7pm | Landsharks Pizza Music Bingo | 7pm | World of Beer Boomin' Tuesday Fireworks | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpuckers

Bonfire on the Beach | 6pm | The Bay

Rock'n Bingo | 7pm | FATBoys Destin Free Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer

Fireworks | 9pm | Okaloosa Island

Sunset Party | 5pm | Rhumcay

Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club and Burger Bar

Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door Music Hall

Live Music | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation

Little Black Dress Ladies Night

6pm | Palms Bistro All American Thursdays | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village

Dueling Pianos | 7pm | The Palms Bistro



Magical Thursdays | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village 18 Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Name That Tune | 6:30pm | Village Door Music Hall Karaoke Night | 8pm | Village Door

Music Hall Latin Night | 9pm | Bric a Brac

Farmers Market | 8am-1pm | FWB

Landing **Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door

Music Hall **Rock The Dock** | 7pm | Harborwalk Village

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Karaoke Night | 8pm | World Of Beer Destin

Beach Church Service | 7:30am |

Crab Trap Destin Church at Crab Island | 10am | Crab Island

Food Truck Festival | 11am | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Karaoke | 6pm | Village Door Restaurant (Baytowne) Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Bistro Sunday Cinema | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Eres Basek Barfire/SIN Nie

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille Pirate Davy Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club and Burger Bar HydroFlight Monday | 6:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk

Village Music Bingo | 7pm | Pallet Bar and

Grill HydroFlight Monday | 8:30pm |

Village of Baytowne Wharf

Singo Music Bingo | 5:30pm | LuLu's Destin Karaoke | 6pm | Enlightened Studios

FWB Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Village Door

Music Hall Fat Tuesdays Celebration | 6:30pm |

Harborwalk Village **Trivia Night** | 7pm | Village Door at Seascape

Game Night | 7pm | Landsharks Pizza Music Bingo | 7pm | World of Beer

Boomin' Tuesday Fireworks | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpuckers 23 Bonfire on the Beach | 6pm | The

Rock'n Bingo | 7pm | FATBoys Destin

Free Concert Series | 7pm | Village

Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened

Fireworks | 9pm | Okaloosa Island

Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach

Karaoke Night | 6pm | Village Door

Live Music | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Little Black Dress Ladies Night

All American Thursdays | 6:30pm |

Magical Thursdays | 7pm | Village of

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Harborwalk Village Dueling Pianos | 7pm | The Palms

Sunset Party | 5pm | Rhumcay

of Baytowne Wharf

Club and Burger Bar

6pm | Palms Bistro

Baytowne Wharf

Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer

Bav

Studios

Music Hall

Foundation

Bistro

Page 5

Celebrate, Escape and Embrace the Best of Summer!

Baytowne is boomin' with events, activities and family fun for summer! The Village and all of its merchants welcome you to visit, shop, dine and play!

Red, White & Baytowne! Sunday, July 4th 7-9:15 p.m. | FREE

Independence Celebrate Day at the Village of Baytowne Wharf, July 4 from 7-9:15 p.m. After a day of fun in the sun, come out for an evening that lights up the sky! Join Baytowne Village merchants for a spectacular 4th of July Red, White and Baytowne 2021 celebration with LIVE music from Donovan Keith on the Events Plaza Stage from 7-9:15 p.m., followed by a patriotic Fireworks display to light up the night sky at 9:15 p.m. The kids will love activities including kids crafts, face painting and balloon sculpting, too!

Hydroflight Monday

Mondays through Aug. 2nd 6:30 & 8:30 p.m. | FREE

Enjoy shows from fly-board

extraordinaire Ben Merrell over the lagoon! Watch as he soars to the sky and makes waves at Baytowne Wharf.

Boomin Tuesday Tuesdays through Aug. 3rd 7:15-9:15 p.m. | FREE

Turn your eyes on the sky and watch as we light up the night with a breathtaking fireworks show over the Lagoon at 9:15 p.m. PLUS now enjoy a DJ Dance Party with DJ Mike Whitty in the Events Plaza at 7:15 p.m!

Wednesday Night Concert Series June 2nd through Oct. 27th 7-9 p.m. | FREE

Grab your blankets and lawn chairs and head out to The Village of Baytowne Wharf in Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort. This summer sit back and relax, and enjoy live entertainment during our concert series that features both local and regional talent from a variety of genres. Concert begins at 7 p.m. on the



Events Plaza Stage. This Concert is free to attend and open to the public!

Live Music Schedule: June 9: Biscuit Miller and The Mix June 16: Will Thompson Band June 23: Luke Langford June 30: Dion Jones & The Neon Tears July 7: Boukou Groove July 14: Forrest Williams

Magical Thursday Thursdays through Aug. 5th 7 & 8 p.m. | FREE

Join us for magic, music, and mayhem! Watch as our featured pirate Captain Davy takes you on an adventure with two magic shows on stage! 7 p.m. & 8 p.m. Show Times!



Baytowne LIVE Music June 8th through July 2nd Every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 7-9:30 p.m.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf presents Baytowne LIVE on Adventure Lane. Located just across from Blast Arcade and Laser Maze.

Baytowne LIVE Schedule: June 8: Steve Hall June 10: Steve Hall June 11: Jarred McConnell June 15: Steve Hall June 17: Steve Hall June 18: Bobby Cutshaw June 24: Steve Hall June 25: Ken & Andi Johnson June 29: Steve Hall July 2: Jarred McConnell



Sunday Cinema June 6th through June 27th 8 p.m. | FREE

Grab a lawn chair or blanket and cozy up on the Events Plaza Lawn for a featured film on the big screen!

June Movies:

June 6 | Maleficent

June 13 | Croods A New Age

June 20 | Secret Life of Pets 2

June 27 | Moana

And don't forget all the fantastic, fun activities with Adventure Land Playground, Baytowne Adventure Zone, Baytowne Carousel and Blast Arcade & Laser Maze. So much summer...so much to do at The Village of Baytowne Wharf!





The community

Summertime is here and we're ready to go on a treasure hunt at City Market beachside and bayside for trendy and treasured finds to keep up with the times!



Personalized Gifts for DAD! Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Father's Day is Sunday June 20. As Dads serve such important roles in our lives, from our protector and provider to our hero and handyman, Dad, Grandad, Doggie Dad, Uncle or Grandfather deserves a thoughtful, personalized Father's Day gift. Whether it's a set of engraved high ball glasses, a money clip, sued-style liquor and wine boxes, suede bottle opener, a personalized cutting board with a special note, handwritten by you and engraved onto the board or a paddle board with a funny message, the shop has a variety of personalized Father's Day gifts that will make him smile. A suede style frame is ideal for a special family photo and keepsake, perfect for personalizing. Great for any Father figure in your life, not just for Father's Day, find unique gifts for birthdays, walks down the wedding aisle or "just because." No matter who the man in your life is, a personalized gift is a special way to celebrate him on the day reserved in his honor. Stop by to find 4th of July fun, too! Or shop 24-7 at FrillSeekersGifts. com. Free gift wrapping, too!

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Most Dads are simple: Give it to me clean, tasting good and



healthy! Healthy Coast Meals is clean eating made simple, providing gluten-free, healthy meals made with all-natural, whole ingredients. All meals are prepared in a licensed commercial kitchen and sold fully cooked. All you have to do is heat and eat! Eliminating the inconvenience and stress of planning, shopping, cooking and cleaning, Dads can select individual meals from the weekly menu which includes "Healthy Gourmet" specials and the staple "Clean and Lean" meals! No time to choose? Select one of the packages and Healthy Coast will choose a variety of healthy meals for you! Meals are made fresh to order, with clean, healthy ingredients, so you know exactly what you're eating! Whether Dads are trying to maintain their existing health, lose weight, build muscle or get fit, they're covered with great nutrition, accessible and exciting. Eating clean doesn't have to be boring and bland; you have healthy versions of your favorite dishes for you to enjoy. Healthy food never tasted so good!

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Trends & Treasures



birthday stars love receiving a gift of sweets! Make it personal with custom edible logos and images. The buzz in June is all about Banana Cream, Blueberry cake, Caramel Crunch, Chocolate Caramel, Cream Soda. German Chocolate, Golden Oreo Cheesecake, Key Lime, Maple Bacon, Orange Creamsicle, Peanut Butter, Pina Colada, Strawberries-N-Cream and gluten free-moist, delish and delightful. Personalize with custom edible logos and images on just about any flavor your dad loves! Order gourmet cupcakes, custom cakes and tempting treats as seen on the Food Network and Cupcake Warsbaked fresh with up to 18 flavors to choose from daily. Call ahead for pre-orders!

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Community

DHS Unveils New Iconic Statue and Athletic Director

BY KAY PHELAN

Destin High School's (DHS) Governing Board and Head of School, Principal Cruickshank, recently held a community surprise reveal, news update and a meet and greet for their new Athletic Director, Philip Dorn.

The first order of business was to unveil a very large 15' Mako shark statue for the new, tuition-free public charter school's courtyard water fountain for the incoming DHS students. A Mako shark is the chosen school mascot. Destin fisherman Capt. Mike Parker let guests know that this is a replica of a 15', 1,222-pound shark that holds the current world's record by IGFA (International Game Fish Association) as the largest, heaviest short-fin Mako shark in the world. It was caught off the coast of Massachusetts by Capt. Chris Peters in 2001.



The world-record holding Mako shark replica, generously donated by the LoCicero family, is now proudly displayed at DHS.

Capt. Mike and Father Mike Hessee made the trip to Gray Taxidermy in Pompano Beach to pick up the shark and bring it back to DHS in Destin. In a volunteer capacity, Capt. Mike and many fishermen from the Destin Fishermen for Christ Bible Study group were kind enough to perform the challenging shark installation in the fountain. For sure, this shark is destined to be an icon for the school as well as the Destin community.

The shark was generously donated by Heidi LoCicero, a founding DHS board member, and her husband, Brian LoCicero, along with their son Andrew and finance' Ann Elizabeth Walker, and daughter Peyton and finance' Beau Trist. "Great things are happening in our little beach town," says



Principal Christine Cruickshank (right) welcomes DHS's new Athletic Director Philip Dorn to the school.

Heidi. "I am truly honored to serve on the founding board of Destin High School and to be able to leave such a legacy for our community. In donating this gift, my family hopes that this iconic shark statue will be the backdrop of many wonderful moments, memories and photos taken at Destin High! Sharks help maintain a balance, which keeps our oceans healthy, and sharks have longevity, having inhabited our oceans for 400 million years. That's some serious staying power...just like Destin High will be!"

The first DHS students in the class of 9th, 10th and 11th grade will have the honor of naming the mascot shark. They will also select a school motto, alma mater song, mission and founding principles on which to live by.

Newly announced Athletic Director Philip Dorn is veteran leader in high school and college athletics. Coach Dorn has 13 years of experience as an Athletic Director in Florida, 19 vears as a Head Football Coach. and 20 years of experience as an Assistant Football Coach—all at the high school and college level. The well-known coach, formerly at Ft. Walton Beach High

Continued on next page



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C.A.R.E.

continued from page 2

be sure to check out the FAQS about what to do when you find a stranded sea turtle. Release stories can also be found online about two leatherback sea turtles, as well as the story of Ivy, Kale and Hazel, the three green sea turtles full of fishing hooks who have completely recovered. The stories of Captain Hook, Wendy and Tinkerbell, Aaliyah and the three loggerhead hatchlings are also on the website.

The C.A.R.E. team's rehabilitation efforts are funded in part by a grant awarded from the Sea Turtle Grants Program. The Sea Turtle Grants Program is funded from proceeds from the sale of the Florida Sea Turtles License Plate. Learn more at www.helpingseaturtles.org.

If you would like to help the C.A.R.E., take a look at their Amazon wish list at https://a. co/hb3ghy4.

If you enjoy working with people and love animals, Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center may be the perfect place for you to volunteer.

Sea Turtle rehabilitation volunteers have the opportunity to assist the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. staff with a wide variety of tasks supporting the C.A.R.E. mission. For more information, visit Gulfarium.com and the C.A.R.E. Center at facebook. com/gulfariumcarecenter. You can also help support the cause

DHS

continued from previous page

School, plans for a vigorous sports curriculum at the new DHS. His philosophy of "All Sports, One TEAM!," will begin immediately to build DHS athletics to a successful educational-based values athletic program.

In addition to offering an advanced and state-mandated core curriculum, DHS will also utilize a place-based approach to learning that will take advantage of the local geography, industry and community.

Currently, there are just under 29 open seats left towards a total enrollment of 300 students. Then DHS will start a waiting list, and open spaces will be chosen via a lottery format. Call (850) 424-1664, email info@destinhighschool.org or visit www.destinhighschool.org.





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at theotheturtle.com. A portion of every Theo purchase, from ball caps and pillows to Christmas ornaments and key chains, goes directly to help support the Friends of South Walton Sea Turtles. We can all do our part to protect these amazing marine animals; after all, it was certainly their beach first!

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🔅 Community

If I Sell in This Hot Seller's Market, Where Will I Go?



BY GAIL PELTO

I'm getting this question more and more frequently these days as I look for listings for my buyers: "Gail, I'd love to sell in this market and get top dollar for my home. But then I'll have to buy something else and pay top dollar for it. So, it doesn't make any sense—'cause, where would I go?"

GREAT QUESTION!

We have all heard the adage when it pertains to the stock market of "Sell High, Buy Low," right? Well, it kind of works the same in the real estate market. Sell when it's a Seller's Market, so you can garner top dollar, and if it makes sense, buy where it looks like it might be the next hot market.

A few points to ponder if you're thinking about selling in this hot market:

As of the day I'm writing this, May 19, in this area the median sale price for residential property is up 15.7% year-to-date compared to the same timeframe as last year. Think about it: a home that sold for \$500,000 last year sold for \$575,000 this year! That is a heck of a lot of equity in one year, I think. But wait, there's more: If you've lived in your house for, say, five years, the median sales price is 43.3%higher—\$500,000 in 2016, \$716,500 now! WHAT!?!?! That's crazy...crazy GOOD!

Could prices go higher? Maybe. Could prices go lower? Maybe. Will interest rates go up? Someday, probably. Could you buy more house while interest rates are low then when they go up? Yep. Lots to think about.

Now, where to buy:

First, ask yourself if you need to stay in the area. If yes, then



where do you think the next or current up-and-coming areas are that are close to where you live now? Could it be Freeport? Navarre? Crestview? Someplace else?

Second, could you move to one of those areas and still be within a short distance to the amenities you enjoy where you are now i.e., friends, family, gym, work, etc.? (Know that if you don't need to stay in this area, then there's plenty of information online of where savvy investors are moving to; and if you have a good realtor, like me, I can help you with that). Third, if those areas are next hot areas, might it be a good investment to buy there now? Maybe. It's certainly something to think about!

Is this the same way savvy investors hedge their bets and grow their wealth? Sell high, and then buy the next big thing with the profits?!

Full disclosure—I am a real estate agent, not a financial planner nor a psychic. So, as much as you and I want to know about what's going to happen in the real estate market in the future, it's a guess (plus my crystal ball is in the shop!) So, do your research, talk to your other professionals (and your family) before you make any decisions.

Want to talk more about your options, how much your property is worth today, or anything else real estate related? Then call me, Gail Pelto, 850.374.0754 or send me an email: gail.pelto@ kw.com.

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. She is also a mentor to new agents, helping them be better agents for their clients.



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Our daughter just completed her second phase and had her braces removed today, what a milestone!! This experience has been amazing. We love Dr. Stubbs and her staff. Always friendly and always went above and beyond for my daughter's comfort. ~ Micha K.

The community

Get Your Insurance Ready for Hurricane Season



By JOE CAPERS

NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) has just released its 2021 Hurricane Season Forecast calling for an above average season with 13 to 20 named storms. Last year's record setting 30 named storms only had 12 that actually made landfall.

The season is already off to a busy start, as the first named storm formed prior to the official June 1 start to the hurricane season, and in recent years, storms have grown increasingly intense.

If you own a home or investment property, you are probably aware that having the right homeowners or rental insurance policy in place is of utmost importance. Without proper coverage, you could be responsible for expensive damage in the event of a weather-related incident. In fact, as this year's hurricane season kicks off, now is a really good time to review your homeowner's insurance policy and make sure you are satisfied with your level of coverage.

We recommend you initially review your hurricane/wind coverage. Most policies (HO3, DP3, HO6, HO4) in Florida include either hurricane, named storm, or wind/hail under a separate deductible. Consistency of coverages is important in any policy, but this type is typically preferred. Some carriers do not write wind coverage if your home is close to the water. So, a stand-alone wind-only policy would be needed. When it comes to wind coverage, the best option is to opt for hurricane. Keep in mind there are several deductible options available that can have a large impact on what would be your out-of-pocket responsibility if you file a claim as well as the amount of premium you would pay for the policy.

Adequate Dwelling Limit (Coverage A) coverage to rebuild your home in the event of a loss is also important. Local and national data indicates that nearly two out of three homes and structures are underinsured. The cost of lumber and oth-

er common building materials

has soared in the past year as a result of supply chain disruptions and shortages, and this is the main reason new home construction has grown more expensive in recent months. As such, the homeowner's policy that was once sufficient for your property may now fall short.

Another important coverage to review is Loss of Use that pays for you to live somewhere else while repairs are being done to your temporarily unlivable home. This also goes for rental properties with Loss of Rents coverage. To trigger this type of coverage, there needs to be direct physical damage.

An often, misunderstood coverage not offered with each carrier, but always recommended, is Law or Ordinance coverage. Most carriers, if they have it available, offer either 10%, 25%, or 50% coverage tied to your Dwelling Limit. If there is extensive hurricane damage, like we saw with Hurricane Michael, there may be new building codes you must adhere to in order to rebuild. The additional Law or Ordinance coverage is crucial to your protection, since your policy is designed to rebuild your home as it was before the damage, with similar materials and quality, and not with more costly materials that could now be required by more stringent construction codes that may have come into play.

Our coastal properties are threatened by hurricanes and tropical storms each year, and flooding can happen anywhere, anytime—even in non-flood prone areas. We encourage everyone to purchase flood insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), or a reputable, private flood insurance facility which may be a better flood insurance alternative to the NFIP for your home, investment or commercial property.

It is also good to remember that flood and water damage from a wind event are not necessarily the same thing. There are a few carriers who will add flood coverage as an endorsement to a home policy. For most insured homeowners, your flood policy will be a separate policy written through the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) or a private market, and this is the method we prefer. Unless your lender requires the policy, or you are closing on a new purchase, there is a standard 30day waiting period through the NFIP before your flood policy will become effective. Many of the private markets in in the country, and especially in Florida, offer broader coverages than the NFIP and these should be

considered as an alternative to maximize your protection.

The insurance marketplace has rapidly changed with premiums increasing, guidelines and appetites tightening and some carriers losing the ability to offer new coverages and renewals. This seems to be especially for those with older properties that are close to the water. Citizens Property Insurance Corporation, the state's insurer of last resort is again becoming a popular and vital player in Florida. And to prepare this market with improved financial strength and capacity, the state legislature approved a \$2.6 billion reinsurance and risk transfer program for the upcoming hurricane season. It includes nearly \$850 million of new catastrophe bonds, which is about double the amount of last year's cat bonds.

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 Video Library on www.ins-zone.com and watch several informative videos on Homeowners, Condo Unit Owners and Flood', or call 850.424.6979 and talk with one of our experienced Team Members.



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(*) Community

Okaloosa County's First Solar Trees Arrive at HarborWalk Village

Okaloosa County has welcomed the first solar trees to HarborWalk Village in Destin during a ceremonial untying of a green ribbon in May. Legendcal and visiting children can see solar energy being made.

"It seems Gulf Power has been a part of everything I've done for so long and is a great erating 7.2 kilowatts of clean, renewable energy that is flowing into the power grid for the benefit of all customers. That's enough energy to power nearly six school classrooms on a daily basis.

With color-changing lights, each tree inspires conversations about clean energy and offers an element of education. They provide an opportunity for the public to see solar energy technology at work and use the trees' QR codes to access information about the benefits of solar, Gulf Power's solar trees and canopies, and our large-scale solar energy centers in service and in development across Northwest Florida.

Gulf Power Vice President Mike Spoor presented Peter with the remote controller for the color-changing light feature on each tree which, with the click of remote control, can change the light colors for different events and holiday celebrations. Gulf Power is working to bring more solar trees, parking canopies and solar zones — solar tables with charging stations

— to other areas across the region. For more information, visit: www.GulfPower.com/solar.



Gulf Power, City of Destin, Okaloosa County and HarborWalk Village leaders celebrated a more sustainable energy future with a ribbon untying for the new Gulf Power solar trees at the HarborWalk Adventures area in Destin.

ary developer and CEO Peter Bos joined the City of Destin, Okaloosa County, Destin Chamber of Commerce and Gulf Power officials on the HarborWalk Village dock where the two solar trees have been planted under the zip line.

The panels on the two solar trees harvest the sun to produce zero-emissions energy. Located in the high-energy entertainment district of the HarborWalk Adventures area, Peter noted that the solar trees are a great educational addition to the HarborWalk Village dock where lopartner, a willing partner," says Peter. "Gulf Power, we are glad to have you leading the path for this and educating our children and the children that are visiting us. We are super glad to have this right in front of the (fishing) fleet, in this setting."

"This is exciting because this is new technology," Destin Mayor Gary Jarvis says. "This is a visual example of teamwork, and the commitment your company has made with the city. I look forward to more of these innovative ideas."

Together, these trees are gen-



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Market Leaders Thus Far in 2021?

Community



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL Advisor and Branch Manager

The Energy Sector. According to Raymond James, "The Energy Sector remains the best performer in 2021, up 35% (10% greater than the next best sector) while the clean tech index is down 47% from its peak in February." (Raymond James Energy Daily Update May 14, 2021). Last fall, Fidelity Investments suggested that the Energy sector could be the leader in a recovering economy, and they continue to see Energy as a leading sector. What is interesting is that this in the face of all the negative news on fossil fuels and the focus on clean energy. Why is this group up 35% despite the unfavorable sentiment? Add to that the fact that the momentum in green energy can only accelerate. To answer that, it is important to take note of few facts about today.

The energy sector remains the best performer in 2021, up 35%, while the clean tech index is down 47% from its peak in Februarv.

Some investors might think this recent strong and leading performance is the proverbial head fake — that energy stocks (which were the worst performers for the past five years) might again lag the market before long. In the meantime, consider the following data:

During this year's Berkshire Hathaway annual meeting, Warren Buffet noted that there are over 290 million cars and light trucks on the road in the USA today. Add to that, Statista.com estimates worldwide daily consumption in 2021 will be 96.5 million barrels of oil. They project that to be 103.2 million by 2025. Car sales are projected to hit 18.5 million units this year (Seasonally Adjusted Annualized Rate, SAAR, for April) per Automotive News and Motor Intelligence. This adds up to a lot of demand. The consumption of



natural gas and liquified natural gas continues to grow as well. Natural gas is seen as not only a transitional natural resource, but a replacement for coal.

Most notable however is the significant decrease in exploration and production. Both Raymond James and Fidelity have spoken to that recently. Major oil companies (Exploration and Production or E & Ps) are not expanding their investments in new wells even though the price (currently around \$65 a barrel) is well above their costs. Most analysts see \$50 to be the average cost for these majors and some of the biggest oil companies have lift costs below that, in the low 40s.

Lower exploration and production mean less oil and gas in the future. Fidelity has pointed out that this could significantly decrease what has been an allout glut of oil and gas over the past several years. While we do not think this means shortages, we do agree this could lead to the firming of oil prices. Historically, this boom-and-bust sector has had large swings in price.

The result of firming oil prices means consistency of profit margins, resilience of dividends and increased share buy backs, all of which could support the continued growth in share prices. It also means that the majors, and smaller firms, through consistent margins, have the capital to expand in to greener and cleaner energy like solar and wind farms. That too could support share prices.

There is a flip side to this however: many institutional investors (pension funds, endowments, mutual funds, insurance companies and others) are shying away from these stocks because they, like many other institutional investors are focused on ESG investing (Environmental, Social and Governance) and hence that could slow or stunt the growth in share prices of many traditional energy firms. It takes that momentum of dollars to keep these equities growing at such rates. Do these investors have it right?

The takeaway is that investors who are looking for value, inflation resilience and income, and have confidence in what is happening in this sector, should possibly consider increasing their holdings or weightings into Energy, if this is right for you.

A note regarding Electric Vehicles: Raymond James (Energy Daily Update May 14, 2021) sees the growth coming much faster for heavy duty electric trucks, commercial vehicles and buses compared with electric cars. Investors can participate in those directly through the stocks in the firms that develop and produce all of these.

Inflation Resistent or Inflation Resilient Investments: The main measures of price inflation came out this past week. First were consumer prices (CPI) which showed an increase of 4.2% year over year and up .8% from March. That was the fastest pace since 2008. The second was producer prices (PPI). That showed a year over year increase of 6.2% or .6% from March. The Bureau of Labor Statistics noted that was the largest increase since 2010. While the Federal Reserve has two major focuses (one being inflation and the other being employment) it is most concerned for the moment about jobs. Interestingly the number of open jobs right now is 8.1mm, and the number of unemployed Americans is approximately 9.8 million.

Wage pressures may or may not be in our future. On the lower spectrum of wages, McDonald's reported that it is increasing the minimum wage to \$14 per hour at its company owned stores. It intends to move that to \$15 by 2024. Chipotle also announced that it is increasing its minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

The final takeaway, if investors wish to adjust their strategy during periods of price inflation, might possibly turn to increase their weightings in equities (value stocks in particular) as well as commodities (materials stocks) and Treasury Inflation Protected Securities. Energy stocks as well as financials, real estate (mainly REITS), materials and industrials represent more value-oriented stocks or equities.

Knowing what impact inflation and other factors may have and when that might happen means doing your research or utilizing the advice or professional management of an investment advisor.

The First Wealth Management is located at First Florida Bank, a division of the First, A National Banking Association, 2000 98 Palms Blvd., Destin, FL 32541, with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City. Phone 850.654.8124.

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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.

Utilizing an ESG investment strategy may result in investment returns that may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations.

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Community

Vets Helping Vets & First Responders

By MARTA ROSE-THORPE

312 guests attended the April 20th quarterly Vets & First Responders Appreciation Lunch held at Texas Roadhouse in Panama City Beach, and of the dozen or so entrees for the Free HVAC Giveaway, Mr. John Rickard (aka Uncle John), a

and were able to escape with minor cuts and bruises. John and Charles were able to help several others out of the emergency window before escaping themselves. Forty-seven people lost their lives that night.

Four and a half years ago, Edith passed away, and John how we give back: appreciating all local vets and first responders with a delicious hot lunch catered by Texas Roadhouse and co-sponsored by Century 21 Blue Marlin and Herbafex; and giving away an HVAC unit each quarter to one deserving veteran or first responder. We love

bringing the community together and we want to encourage everyone that they, too, can give back with whatever they have to give.

The community is invited to join us for the next Vets & First Responders Appreciation Lunch on Tuesday, July

13, 2021 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Faith Assembly Christian Church (a.k.a. The Rock & Roll Church), 306 South Geronimo Street, Miramar Beach, FL 32550. Veterans and First Responders: To register to win an HVAC unit, apply online at ASuperiorAC.com.





World War II veteran, was our winner. John joined the U.S. Navy when he was 17 and was an aircraft mechanic. He served for four years and afterwards, he and his wife Edith, who he was happily married to for 70 years, both worked for the U.S. Postal Service. When they retired in 1992, they - along with Edith's sister Verona and her husband Charles - took the trip of a lifetime all around the U.S. on Amtrack Railways. They were gone for over a month and had a wonderful adventure! In the last six hours of their trip, however, tragedy struck with what is now known as the largest Amtrack disaster in history.

A tugboat captain took the wrong bayou and couldn't turn around. He knocked out the railroad bridge just minutes before their train crossed at around 2 a.m. Their train car, along with six other train cars, plunged into the alligator-infested swamp. Miraculously, by the grace of God, they were sitting by an emergency exit window

moved into an assisted living facility in Zephyrhills, FL. When Covid-19 hit, his assisted living facility went on lockdown (meaning he was unable to leave his 12 x 12 room). No visitors, and his food was brought to his room. He became ill, but was not allowed to see a doctor "unless it is an emergency," he was told. After becoming severely ill, he was finally transported to the hospital by ambulance, where he stayed in ICU for two weeks. John's niece, Lisa Helmes, decided she wouldn't let him go back to the assisted living facility. So, she brought him to Panama City Beach last July, where, after six weeks of IV antibiotics, he is "good as snuff" again. Today, John exercises daily and makes it a point to keep a positive mindset.

A Superior Air Conditioning Co. has the honor and privilege of helping this gentleman stay Cool as a Cucumber with a new HVAC unit! We love helping Veterans and First Responders in our community, and this is





Community

And the Miss Destin Winner is Kaylie Sparks!

Eight contestants, Destin resident high-school girls between the ages of 16 and 19, recently vied for the title of Miss Destin 2021—Kathryn Ballard, Molly Bettinger, Kasidy Braden, Ella Kathryn Campbell, Whitney O'Keefe, Savannah Pitchlynn, Kaylie Sparks and Bella Wasson.

Each year sfor almost 30 years, Miss Destin has served as an ambassador for the City of Destin while assisting in numerous events in the community throughout her one-year reign. Sponsored by the Destin Fishing Rodeo Organization, Miss Destin's primary function is to represent our city for 31 days in October, EVERY DAY, for the annual Rodeo Weigh Ins.

gone on to be teachers, lawyers, engineers, mothers, doctors, news anchors, nurses, business owners and even the First Lady of Destin. Contestants are judged on personality, communication skills and availability to fulfill the duties of Miss Destin at the Destin Fishing Rodeo. "No small task," says Lori Smith, one of the four judges, "we were challenged with eight amazing young ladies who all seemingly could represent our city well. I have to commend them all. It took us 40 minutes to come to a final decision!"

"It just goes to show what an incredible group of girls we had running for Miss Destin this



PHOTO BY SAVANNAH LEIGH SMITH, SAVVYLEIGHPHOTO.COM

year that it took the judges so long to make a decision," says Helen Donaldson, executive director of the Destin Fishing

Rodeo. But, after finishing as first runner-up last year, Kaylie Anne Sparks, an age 18, 12th-grader at Niceville High School, was chosen to serve as Miss Destin 2021 and received a \$2,000 academic scholarship + others. "I have always dreamed of fulfilling this role ever since I was a little girl. From an early age, I saw the Destin community come and deliver meals to my family in difficult times. This is a great opportunity for me to give back to the wonderful people that have supported my family," says Kaylie.

Kaylie was also a contestant last year, finishing as first runner-up to Lauren Adams, Miss Destin 2020. She'll be attending Northwest Florida State College next year and plans to transfer to the University of Florida in Gainesville later. Kaylie says through her life experiences, she will use Miss Destin also as a platform to raise awareness for pediatric cancer. "I am an advocate for this cause, because I am a thyroid cancer survivor," says Kaylie.

Kathryn Ballard was first runner-up, Kasidy Braden was second runner-up and also named Miss Photogenic, and Bella Wasson received the coveted Peyton LoCicero Humanitarian Award, endowed by Frillseekers Gifts and the LoCicero family.

View the full photo library at savvyleighphoto.pixieset.com/ missdestin/.

Official Grand Opening: Captain Leonard Destin Park

By Catherine Card, City of Destin PIO

Traditionally, many

have

On Thursday, May 13th, Destin's Mayor, City Council, staff and special guests hosted a ribbon cutting and grand opening of Destin's newest park, Captain Leonard Destin. Named after the original founder of the City of Destin

who came from New London, Connecticut, in the mid-1800s to establish a fishing village along the Florida Gulf Coast, the park is located on the same plot of land as the original homestead of its namesake. "The allure of East Pass that brought Leonard Destin here almost 200 years ago still exists today; it's why each of us have chosen Destin to be our home. Six generations after Leonard built his homestead here, I'm beyond privileged to be a part *Continued on next page*



BY DAVE SAVIOLA,

Arborbrook Financial

Within a short period of time, two major holidays prompt us to reflect and commemorate the history of the United States. One a somber reminder of the sacrifice it takes and the price that is continually paid to protect and retain our freedom, and one a celebration of the birth of this great nation that has many times been a beacon of hope to the world.

If you are reading this and you have ever served in the military or as a first responder, we would like to pause to honor you and thank you for all that you have done.

Receiving an amazing gift

from someone, especially someone you do not even know is humbling and brings great joy. Gifts come in many forms, but the most meaningful ones tend to be those that are completely unexpected and not able to be repaid. A very long time before the U.S. was even a thought, Jesus said "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." Friends? Really? That either means He died for just a small handful of people He hung out with on this earth, or that you and I are friends of the God of the universe.

This gift of ultimate freedom, Amazing Grace (as several songs have proclaimed), is one we should be focused on con-

PARK

continued from previous page

of the City's efforts to preserve a part of our shared heritage and identity in perpetuity," stated former Councilman Parker Destin.

Mayor Gary Jarvis stated, "Captain Leonard Destin Park celebrate the unique character and history of Florida's communities," said DEP Secretary Noah Valenstein. "Immersion in Florida's natural beauty and increased educational opportunities creates generations of Floridians who will protect and perpetuate Florida's way of



is a true jewel of our City that not only represents our heritage but also honors the founding of the commercial fishing industry which is very much a part of our livelihood today. We are excited to have this world class park for all to enjoy." In 2015, The Trust for Public Land purchased the 3.42-acre property with Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment early restoration funds with a vision to create a park for the public, provide public access to the water and help preserve the history of the community. "Outdoor spaces like Captain Leonard Destin Park offer opportunities for outdoor recreation, improve public access to Florida's natural resources, and

life." In August of 2020, The Trust for Public Land transferred the park to the City along with operations and maintenance funds for 10 years. "We were thrilled to work with FL DEP and the City of Destin to create this unique and beautiful park for all to enjoy," stated Kate Brown, Senior Project Manager, The Trust for Public Land. The park, located at 101 Calhoun Avenue, includes an accessible beach area, boardwalk, playground, bathrooms, a splash pad, pavilions, dock, and paddle board/kayak launch. The park is also home to a heron rookery along with educational signage highlighting over 150 years of history and natural features of the park.

Freedom

tinually, especially now during a season of time when some are trying to divide us. No one earns a gift, but when you are genuinely grateful for something you can't help but respond in a certain way. What are we doing with the time, money, house, job, business, or influence we have been given?

There was a man who once threatened and murdered Christians who received this heavenly gift of freedom while he was on his way to persecute them further. Overcome by the great joy of being truly freed by Christ, he later wrote "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy yourself. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love."



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Environment



BY CHRIS BALZER, ECES

Now that we know the definition, what is it used for and how can it help? A thermo



Definition, noun; the technique of using the heat given off by an object to produce an image of it or locate it.

ENERGY TIPS by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

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Serving Walton, Okaloosa and Bay Counties LIC # CAC1819748 Family, Locally and Veteran owned invisible to the human eye. This characteristic makes these cameras incredibly useful for all sorts of applications, including security, surveillance, detection and military uses. Archeologists deploy infrared cameras on excavation sites. Engineers use them to find structural deficiencies. Doctors and medical technicians can pinpoint and diagnose problems within the human body. Firefighters peer into the heart of fires and can detect fires not visible to the eye. There are many different tasks and different types of thermal imaging, however; each camera relies on the same set of principles in order to function, using the heat given off by an object to produce an image. At ECES (Emerald Coast Energy Solutions), we are not archeologists,

medical doctors or firefighters. We are passionate about finding and curing energy inefficiencies in your home to make it more comfortable and efficient, saving you money. That's why we use Thermal Imaging when we inspect homes, for quick and accurate identification. An infrared camera can help diagnose a variety of home performance problems, including air leaks and missing insulation. Some common areas where air leaks occur are light fixtures, electrical receptacles, windows and doors, attic entrances and plumbing penetrations. Using thermal imaging allows us to see what other devices can't.

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) released this January that the Earth's warming trend continued making 2020 the hottest year since 1880, when they started recording temperatures, knocking 2019 to 3rd. The world's five warmest years have all occurred since 2015. We also have experienced a pretty mild winter and spring so far and this summer looks to be a hot one. Most homes and homeowners can benefit from having a thermal imaging inspection. Using this technology saves time, accurately identifies problem areas and once addressed, increases comfort and saves energy.

You can beat the heat by sealing those leaks, adding missing insulation, upgrading to an attic energy barrier and coating windows with our virtually clear ERG film which blocks 94% of heat and 99.9% of harmful UV rays. Adding insulation will increase your comfort, extend the life of HVAC systems, because they don't work as hard, increase air quality and save money.

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

2021: The Year Solar Becomes A Total Home Energy Efficiency Driver?



By GINA WEIDIE

2020 has certainly been a challenging year for all of us, including those in the solar industry. But as we've persevered, I see only more growth in residential solar in the coming years. I believe it will shift from homeowners wanting solar only to taking advantage of its ability to support a total home energy solution.

For the past couple of decades, those who've purchased solar, are considering it or simply have the information, have associated it with simply putting panels on their roof to reduce their energy bills. And yes, this is a simple, straightforward way to cut down electricity bills and save significant money. I hear first-hand from customers who are pleased at how solar has reduced their energy bill.

But over the next year or so, I expect homeowners to think of solar as part of a total solution, including battery storage, energy efficient upgrades, and charging electric vehicles to encompass a more holistic home energy picture.

Some of the factors driving this shift include solar becoming more affordable and viewed by locals as a safe, environmentally friendly energy alternative. Tesla has also worked to mainstream electric vehicles. According to cleantechnica.com, EV sales are projected to grow 70% in 2021 as new models come to market and both states and utilities offer more incentives. It will make sense for many EV owners to charge their cars with free solar energy produced on their own rooftops.

RenewableEnergyWorld. com says there's also a shift throughout the U.S. from oil and gas to electric powered heating to meet climate change and clean energy goals. As this *Continued on next page*

Environment

Roofs for Educators Winner: Charisse Stokes

In May, **Specialty Roofers, Inc.** held a Roofs for Educators contest! More than 275 Northwest Florida educators were nominated to win a free roof. It came down to a final three: Billie "Charisse" Stokes from Crestview High School, Donna Barton from Destin Elementary and Patrick Cole from Niceville High School. And Billie won!

"As a local company that deeply cares about this community, we wanted to give back," Erin Bakker, director of business development at SRI, said. "Early in my career I taught first and second grade at Destin Elementary, so I know firsthand that teachers deserve all the praise and appreciation we can give them."

Nominated by dozens of her students and peers, student Stephanie Barfield sums it up when she says Charisse "serves the community tirelessly." Charisse has been an educator for 14 years in Okaloosa County Schools and serves alongside her husband, a pastor, in their church ministry. "She is the best teacher I've ever had," says Stephanie. "She is always upbeat and encouraging the students. She truly believes in all of us and I never would have been able to make it through the end of last year or this year without her!! She is never too busy for the students, even if you're not in her class. She is one of those special teachers whose class you never dread going to and is al-



ways the best period of the day. She also helps out with clubs and band and is always volunteering."

"The 2020-2021 school year has posed many hurdles for educators across the country, and we are especially proud of the hard work and dedication of our teachers in Northwest Flor-



ida," Mike Miller, president of SRI, said.

The prize, a new roof which is now already-installed for Charisse and her family, is valued at \$18,500, and included all labor and materials. They were able to select their shingle color and SRI included its Golden Pledge warranty on the roof (includes a 50-year material warranty and a 25-year labor warranty).

Specialty Roofers, Inc. (SRI) partnered with GAF Roofing for this latest contest. Last year, Perry Heslep, an officer with the Fort Walton Beach Police Department and Florida National Guardsman, was the lucky winner of their Roofs for Responders contest.

SOLAR

continued from previous page

shift continues, and electrical load increases, solar is going to play an even bigger role in saving consumers money. Even utilities are encouraging this, offering rebates to customers to make the switch to solar. And now we have a lot more incentive to make whole home energy changes with many states establishing energy goals.

We offer guidance for solu-

tions such as solar installers who can design your solar system and help you decide whether battery storage makes sense for you economically. We help you navigate the economic impact of time of use rates and net metering and help you choose the right size for your home's needs. For EV owners, we help you balance solar production with EV charging, especially considering that charging times might occur when solar production is low. We help you understand the relationship between your solar production and your energy usage patterns, shifting energy-intensive activities to peak solar times or using a battery to store energy from peak times for use later.

As more of you witness the impact on your utility bills and the ways you can attain energy efficiency and clean energy goals, now is a great time to consider solar options—for those reasons and several others (See article in March 2021 Destin Life (https://mydestinlife.com/ nows-a-great-time-to-considersolar-options).

I work with Powur, the first solar company to offset 100% of the emissions from the manufacturing and installation of a solar system. With a vision to accelerate the adoption of sustainable energy worldwide, we strive to live by our values, and set an example for others to follow. Currently, we are conducting electric bill evaluations. See our coupon on p. 43. Call me, Gina Weidie, with your questions at (985) 317-9583. Put the Sun to Work for You!

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🐲 Travel



By JODELL HAVERFIELD, HAVE TRAVEL MEMORIES

Father's Day is a customary day for the celebration of fatherhood. In Catholic Europe, Father's Day is known to date back to at least 1508. It is usually celebrated on March 19th



Dodd, who along with her five brothers were raised by her father alone, being inspired by attending a Mother's Day celebration at church, convinced the Spokane Ministerial Association to celebrate Father's Day worldwide. However, it wasn't named a national holiday until Richard Nixon signed it into law in 1972.



While more than 111 countries recognize Father's Day on different dates, the U.S. plus 92 other countries celebrate this special day on the third Sunday in June.

Below are great Father's Day stories to put you in the mood:

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Family by Rachel O'Connor, Westtown, New York

"Linda, look at the map!" My father slammed on the brakes, glaring at my mom. He did not believe in excessive planning, and so each summer we embarked on a spontaneous family road trip that didn't always go smoothly. There were lots of late-night panics to find hotels, stops to ask for directions, and elevated tempers. One night, we picked up a hitchhiker somewhere in Kentucky. As we blasted the radio and my dad bought us all ice cream, the hitchhiker told me he'd give his life to have what I had.

First In Flight by Kay Lockridge, Santa Fe, New Mexico

The little Cessna had just cleared the pattern in its climb to 1,500 feet when my father said,



"OK, we can land now." With my newly minted private pilot's license in hand, I had wanted him to be my first non-instructor passenger. I'd planned to circle the Michigan State University campus and come back to the university-owned airport. I reminded him of this, and I'll never forget what Dad said, more than 40 years ago: "I'm not fond of small planes. I just wanted you to know that I have confidence in you."

Still Here by Mary Ellen Raneri, Latrobe, Pennsylvania

My dad sat straight up in bed and smiled at me. Even though his mouth was crusted with fever sores, he grinned a big grin from his unshaven face. Dementia had completely taken him from me—or so I thought, until he spoke to me. "Honey," Dad almost seemed to sing the words. "What are you doing here?" My throat muscles ached from trying to talk and not cry. Choking back my tears, I half-sobbed, "Daddy, I'm here to especially see you. I love you, you know." "Me too, honey," he whispered. Then, still smiling, Daddy fell asleep.

Travel News Update:

Cruising from the U.S. is back and expected to start this summer. Vaccines will most likely be required at first with some protocols still in place which are expected to be relaxed in the near future. Changes are happening daily.

Alaska: Some cruise lines will sail from Seattle in summer 2021 fully vaccinated.

Israel: Tourism is back and will be welcoming guests beginning this month.

Many countries have been welcoming tourists for some time. But, before you go, make sure you know the entry requirements for each country including the Bahamas, Jamaica, Turks, Caicos and the Caribbean.

We will be hosting a 9-night Painting with a Twist cruise on Celebrity to include an incredible rate and extra perks, sailing from FLL September 17, 2021. We will be going to Grand Cayman, Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire with 4 wonderful days at sea. This a great post-Covid, girlfriend getaway or a romantic cruise for two. Call me to book your space now!

Happy Father's Day including fathers to be out there! Kick back, relax and start planning your next trip. My husband, Dave, will be a great grandfather next month-a baby girl to be born to grandson Colin and his wife, Savannah.



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Destin Diving, Entertainment, Specials



AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Since 1984, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From our humble beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trailer on the Destin Harbor, AJ's has grown to four locations along Florida's Emerald Coast, serving the freshest seafood, best live music and most exciting water activities in the Destin area. Serving up delicious daily specials and entertaining live music every night, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar is where you want to be.

(850) 837-1913 116 Harbor Blvd., Destin ajsdestin.com

Austons on 98

Offering a raw bar, happy hour and live music, Austons is home of the 102-foot bar including 32 beers on draft. Some of the specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail! Sports fans, Auston's is ready for you. There are big screen TV's all around, so not a bad seat in the house. Auston's on 98, of Nashville roots, also features its very own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce!"

Check out more specials, beer selections and a full menu at austonson98.com.

SPECIALS

Endless Mimosa and Bloody Mary Brunch featuring our amazing chicken and waffles every Saturday and Sunday from 11am - 3pm.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT Live music every Sunday Noon-3pm.

(850) 842-3200 125 Poinciana Blvd.,

Miramar Beach Austonson98.com

Boathouse Oyster Bar

Destin's best kept secretit's where the locals go with live music every night! Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in making oysters a delicacy. Boathouse's Gumbo recipe was written by Mama Gumbo herself. And, of course, the oysters are raw, steamed or baked just the way you like 'em! The first Friday of every month the Boathouse hosts locals on the Destin Harbor from 5pm - 7pm. Who wants a free keg? Bring a donation for the Emerald Coast Foundation to qualify for entry.

SPECIALS

- Daily Lunch Specials M-F \$9.99
- Slacker Sunday Oyster Brunch – 11am
- LIVE ENTERTAINMENT DAILY
- See ad for bands and times. Music schedule subject to

change. Follow us on FaceBook for updates! Enjoy... (850) 837-3645 288-B Harbor Blvd., Destin boathouseoysterbardestin.com

Bric a` Brac Restaurant & Night Club

Now celebrating seven amaz-

ing years in the Destin community, colorful, eclectic fun is to be had at Bric a` Brac! They can help with your parties, promotions, birthdays, business events or really any private event! Voted "Best Crab Cakes in Destin" five years in a row, Bric a` Brac is the *Continued next page*



(850) 842-3200 | 125 Poinciana Blvd | Miramar Beach | austonson98.com



Destin Nining, Ente



true definition of something for everyone-a family friendly, kid friendly, American-style restaurant well known for its tasty and colorful food selections served up in a fun, artsy atmosphere by professional and friendly staff. Locally-owned and operated since 2014 by twin brothers Rodolfo and Fernando Petit, their hands on, fun loving style, engaging charisma and true passion set them apart. But it doesn't stop there. Enjoy delicious locally-approved entrées while you listen to some lively tunes, dance or sing along. There's something for evervone!

SPECIALS

11pm - 4am Latin Night Fridays & Saturdays - Music and Dancing upstairs/downstairs. 18+ to enter, 21+ to drink. GUYS \$10, LADIES \$5.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT Thursday: Live Music from

6pm to 9pm

Friday: Jones & Co from 7pm to 10pm

Saturday: Live Music from

Voted Best

6pm to 9pm (850) 424-6369 Shoreline Village Plaza, 824 Hwy 98 E, Destin Bricabracdestin.com

Café Destin

Café Destin offers an expanded menu serving breakfast staples such as pancakes, waffles with Nutella, omelets, Eggs Benedicts, biscuits & gravy and more. For a lighter take, they also have a variety of Fancy Toasts (avocado, salmon and more) along with pastries and muffins. For lunch, choose from a variety of burgers. sandwiches and salads. You will love the full-service coffee shop, offering everything from hot or iced fresh, local Amavida coffee to espresso and lattés. And there's diverse fresh fruit smoothies and a variety of tantalizing teas. Open for breakfast and lunch 7 days a week from 7am-2pm. and has free WiFi, encouraging you to bring your laptops and work during the day. There's also a conference room available

for small groups, and the dining area can be rented for larger groups for networking, luncheons and more. If you haven't stopped in recently to check out the new menu, be sure to make breakfast or lunch plans soon! And don't forget the coffee!

(850) 424-6777

985 US-98 E. Destin cafedestin.com

Island Wing Company Grill & Bar

Voted "Best Wings" four years running, Island Wing Co. is calling your name. NOTHING is fried! Everything is baked, grilled or steamed! Come in and find your favorite beer among the 58 selections on tap or enjoy a cocktail and savor some of the tastiest food you've ever eaten. Are you ready for some sports? With Big screen TVs situated all around the bar and restaurant, Island Wing Company invites you in to watch, cheer and enjoy the 2021 season. Need to feed the whole family? Family meals to go with curbside delivery has you covered. Your Island awaits you...

SPECIALS

Daily Happy hour 3-7pm and 7pm-close. Happy Monday! Kids eat free. (Free kids meal with adult entrée purchase) and Happy Hour All day long. TWOsday was made for TACOS! Enjoy two tacos with reggae rice for \$8.95 Choose from Jah'mon Jerk, Maui Wowwie Mahi, Buffalo Chicken and Baja Fish. Wednesday is flatbread special day. Enjoy \$3 off their five famous flatbreads. Pairs well with \$3 house wine or ¹/₂-priced bottles.

(850) 837-2999 981 U.S. Hwy. 98, Destin islandwing.com

Landshark's Pizza

Hey Sports Fans... Hungry, Thirsty, maybe a little of both? Come in and visit Landshark's Pizza. Owners Brian and Sue Hassmann have created the locals' favorite pizza, buffalo wings and sports pub and bar that serves great pizza AND awesome wings plus many other scrumptious eats for folks of all ages. There's plenty

of seating for everyone and TV's galore, plus fun and games all week long. Sports fans from all over come and watch all their favorite teams on countless regional and national sports networks including College and Pro Football, Basketball and more. And there's a fully stocked bar with 95 different bourbons and 30 beers on draft! **SPECIALS**

Weekly specials include music bingo on Tuesdays at 7pm; Wingsday and Bourbon Club Wednesdays! Award-winning wings all you can eat for \$.99 cents each, and \$2 off top shelf bourbon selections!

(850) 424-6743 300 Harbor Blvd., Destin landsharkspizza.com Continued next page





1/2 Rack \$12.95 | Full Rack \$21.95 172 Harbor Blvd. Destin (850) 650-1200 | TailfinsDestin.com



BREAKFAST SERVED DAILY 7 Days a Week, 8 am until 11 am

rtainment, Specials

Mi Gente' Supermarket & Taqueria

Open for breakfast every Saturday & Sunday and lunch and dinner 7 days a week, Mi Gente' is one of Destin's hottest dining spots for the whole family and friends to enjoy. With fresh ingredients and homemade recipes, this fun and festive restaurant will instantly capture your heart. Serving up huge portions, you can choose from an incredible select menu offering a diverse selection of delicious food from different Latin-America countries. Taqueria Mi Gente' is a treat you just have to experience for yourself. Enjoy a drink from the cantina, try a few tasty dishes on the menu such as rich and flavorful! Quesa-Birria Tacos topped with fresh diced onion, cilantro and a squeeze of lime juice served with the broth on the side to dip your tacos! Take a walk through their

amazing and diverse supermarket and fresh meat department where you can buy a variety of Latin America groceries to take home. Get your fresh Tamales here! Open 7 days, 9am-9pm daily.

SPECIALS

Chili Relleno Tuesdays! Menudo Domingo

de

Menudo Sundays! (850) 842-2992

733 Harbor Blvd., Destin

www.restaurantji.com/fl/destin/ mi-gente-taqueria-and-supermarket-/

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Announcing Tailfins Sushi & Raw Bar, now open. Watch our world famous Sushi chef create right in front of your eyes! If you haven't tried our Sushi yet, you're missing out...absolutely the best in town! Featuring multiple levels of indoor and outdoor dining overlooking the Destin Boardwalk and harbor, Tailfins is your go-to destination. With Huge Big Screen TV's everywhere you look you can watch your favorite teams all season long while enjoying some of your absolute favorite food and drinks all summer long. Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast every day from 9am - 11am! Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs or add a little flair to your morning with Chicken & Pancakes, a Seafood or Cajun Omelette and even a Kids Smiley Pancake! **SPECIALS**

Happy Hour Sushi: \$5 Sake Bombs and \$7 Select Sushi Rolls!

Scrumptious Early Bird Dinner Specials M-F from 4-6pm. Happy Hour from 4-6pm Mon. Fri. featuring \$17 Domestic Bottle Buckets and \$7.99 Pitchers, \$5 House Wines and Well Drinks and \$5 Long Island Iced Teas.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Rusty Hammerstrom performs every Monday, Wednesday & Friday. Daniel Boone is live every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday.

(850) 650-1200 On the Harbor in Destin 172 Harbor Blvd. tailfinsdestin.com

Tequila's Sports Bar & Grill EAT, DRINK, FIESTA!!

There's always a sport in season all year long! Tequila's is open and ready for you so on game day or any day, stop in. Ready to shake it up a little? And we mean literally - Tequila's Sports Bar and Grill has quickly become a local favorite. Let them serve up some of their world class, jumbo sized Margaritas, sure to set the mood to watch your favorite game. Tequila's has some of the best seats in the neighborhood.

Everyone's got a favorite...find your Mexican food fave here inspired by years of tradition and authentic spices such as the Tequila's Plate, Chili Con Carne, The Three Amigos and the new MASTER PARRILLADA-a unique fusion of sports bar food and delightful Mexican dishes. **SPECIALS**

Celebrate Taco Tuesdays with 2-4-1 Margaritas!

Lunch specials offered daily Monday - Friday for \$8.99. Open seven days a week for lunch, dinner or call ahead to place your take out and to-go orders.

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BY SUSAN BENTON, 30Aeats.com

Lionfish is a sweet, light, white, flaky fish that has a firm texture and has a taste somewhere between grouper and mahi mahi. The fish itself has venomous spines, but the meat is not poisonous. I really enjoy it lightly fried; its incredible flavor is ideal for fish tacos. Unless you are a pro diver or fisherman who is trained to spear lionfish, your best bet is to buy it from your nearest seafood dealer. I was ecstatic to find local lionfish in our Whole Foods sustainable seafood section.

Lionfish Tacos Ingredients

2 pounds lionfish (skinned, boned and cleaned) cut into 1-ounce strips

2 cups all-purpose flour

3 eggs, lightly beaten

3 tablespoons cold water

2 cups fine panko bread

crumbs Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Vegetable oil, for frying 1/2 head purple cabbage,

finely shredded 1 bunch cilantro, leaves picked

1 bunch chives, chopped

Eat Lionfish 3 limes, cut into wedges for

garnish Cotija cheese crumbled (optional)

Preparation

Whole Foods will clean the lionfish, fillet it, remove the bones and even cut it into 1-ounce strips for you. They made cooking this lionfish recipe a breeze. How-



ever, if you would like to purchase the whole fish and clean it yourself, I would suggest you visit https://lionfish.co/cleaning-andpreparing-lionfish-to-eat.

Cut the pieces of fish into 1-ounce strips. Set up a cooking station of flour, lightly beaten eggs with water added, and then Continued on next page

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🔅 Off the Hook

Divers and Fishermen Enjoying New Artificial Reef! Okaloosa County Sinks Retired U.S. Air Force Vessel

A large 93-foot U.S. Air Force steel-hull water training vessel, BIG DAWG, was sunk to the seafloor in 104 feet of water, 14 miles southwest of the Destin Pass on May 7. The vessel was offered to Okaloosa County Staff in June 2020, soon after the official request was made. The county worked with Hurlburt Field and a local contractor to transport the BIG DAWG to its final resting spot at the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.

In the months before the reef was deployed, Okaloosa County worked with DreadKnot Charters in transporting BIG DAWG to Choctawhatchee Bay for deployment preparations following National guidance of preparing artificial reefs, County processes for vessel deployment and guidelines specified in the Army Corps of Engineers permit. Once regulatory agencies were notified of final preparations, a 14-day pre-deployment notice was issued, providing the opportunity for final inspections. A pre-deployment survey was conducted of the seafloor to ensure there were no natural bottom features, historic resources or existing artificial reef material.

Alex Fogg, Okaloosa County Coastal Resources Manager with Destin-Fort Walton Beach TDD managed the acquisition, preparation and deployment. After many months of



preparation to ensure the vessel was clean and environmentally friendly, a local contractor, DreadKnot was hired to prepare (clean), tow, cut holes and pump water into the vessel sinking it to the bottom.

Once the mission was complete, divers inspected the new reef and reported a perfect, upright landing with sea life already starting to gather.

Okaloosa County's artificial

reef program creates excellent sites for fishing, diving and snorkeling activities that are easily accessible to us locals as well as visitors. Our area's artificial reefs consist of anything from concrete piles to specifically designed modules and even large shipwrecks.

With Destin-Fort Walton Beach being home to the nation's largest charter fishing fleet, it's no wonder that we have one of the most active artificial reef programs in the nation. Every year more artificial reefs are deployed off our coast.

You can select a pin and explore artificial reefs sites at destinfwb.com/explore/ecotourism-hotspots/artificial-reefs/. Each pin will display the exact coordinates of the reef site as well as helpful information and instructions for each reef.

"Our destination is unique and we're fortunate to have the opportunity to offer diverse recreation options for our citizens and visitors, through the Artificial Reef Program," said Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners Chairman Carolyn Ketchel.

Additional agencies onsite for the deployment included representatives from Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Hurlburt Field, Eglin Air Force Base, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and US Coast Guard.

10,000 Lionfish Removed During Recent Lionfish Tourney

In May, the Emerald Coast Open, the world's largest lionfish tournament, saw 10,250 lionfish removed—a nearly 8,000 lionfish in the tournament's two-day period and 2,505 lionfish removed during the pre-tournament competition. Locally-based scuba divers, as well as those throughout the country, descended on Destin for the tournament, which is hosted by Destin-Fort Walton Beach and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

145 individual hunters competed for over \$48,000



PHOTO: JENS PETERSEN

in cash prizes and \$25,000 in gear prizes.

The winning team was Capt. Josh Livingston (DreadKnot Charters) and Team Florida Man. Dread-Knot hauled in 1,371 lionfish in just two days and won the \$10,000 top prize for Most Lionfish. Team Bottom Time won the Largest Lionfish prize of \$5,000 bringing in a lionfish that was 440 mm, or 17.32 inches. The Smallest Lionfish was 41mm, or 1.61 inches caught by team Into the Clouds and was the smallest lionfish caught in Emerald Coast Open history.

EAT LIONFISH

continued from previous page the seasoned bread crumbs. Season each station with salt and pepper. Dredge the pieces of fish in flour, egg, and then bread crumbs and set aside on a clean dish. Once all the fish is breaded, deep-fry in small batches in (375 degrees F) vegetable oil, and set fish on paper towels on top of a brown paper bag. (Tip: I keep my Whole Foods brown paper bags for this purpose. Great to absorb oil when frying bacon too.) Keep warm until ready to serve.

Serve the tacos family style where everyone can add as much or as little to their taco as they wish. Assemble the fish in a pile on a plate; some chile sauce in a bowl; the Cotija cheese in a bowl; and salsa in another. Set a pile of shredded purple cabbage, cilantro leaves, chopped chives and lime wedges next to the fish. Toast the corn tortillas lightly over an open flame, or warm in a skillet and serve.



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	8pm Austin Jennings
Fridays:	4pm Jason Findley
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Saturdays:	12pm Kelly Byrd
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Sundays:	12pm Kelly Byrd
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Off the Hook



BY CALI HVALAC, TO DO IN DESTIN

There are two types of locals in Destin: Those that live on land, and those that live in the water. Those in the water were here first, but graciously share this area with us humans who reside here and who vacation here.



It doesn't take long once arriving in Destin to spot a pod of dolphins. They hang out in the Harbor, in the Destin Pass, in the Bay and in the Gulf of Mexico. You'll see them cruise around, popping up to say hello, chasing fish, and, if you're lucky, even doing tricks like jumping out of the water and putting on a show.

The most popular type of dolphin you'll see here is the Bottlenose dolphin. There are more than 10,000 that reside in the Gulf of Mexico! They range from 6-13 feet long, weight 300-1400 pounds and live 40-60 years. They are light gray to white on their belly, can swim

Off the Hook: Dolphins in Destin up to 20 m.p.h. and surface two-to-three times a minute to

breathe. Dolphins are also considered one of the most intelligent animals. They learn quickly, socialize and play, and can also recognize themselves in the mirror. Another fun fact is that they have two stomachs; one to hold the food and one to digest it.

On top of being intelligent, they can communicate with each other, give each other names,

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and use whistles and clicking noises to communicate to each other. Ask anyone who is on the water every day, and they'll tell you that the dolphins know who they are; they remember them and come straight to the same boats daily.

While a lot of people want to swim with dolphins when they visit Destin, the dolphins are protected by the law. It is illegal to feed or touch a dolphin in the wild, for the safety of you and the animal. The only way to swim with a dolphin would be in protected water of a water park or training facility.

If you're a local or looking to see some while you're visiting, Destin offers a variety of dolphin tours, excursions and more to see these beautiful creatures. They are most playful in the late mornings, and sometimes late afternoon through sunset, but can be spotted most any time of day. They respond to verbal

noise like cheering or clapping, and slapping the water if you're able to get close to it. Most days, you can even see them while lying or walking on the beach...if you're looking.

Keep your eyes peeled, as these amazing creatures are everywhere, and seeing them is exciting, no matter how many times you have before.







What To Do Where with Dad on Father's Day

Here's to all the great Destin Dads out there with some ideas you can really use!

Take Dad to dinner for some fresh seafood or one of his favorite dishes! Then hang out for live music and fun! Check out the music and entertainment schedule and dinner specials in the Dining, Music and Entertainment Guide in this Destin Life issue, pages 21-23.

Show your Dad a new view with an exciting helicopter ride! Check out destinhelicopters.com or call (850)774-0991 to book your very own Destin beaches helicopter tour for magnificent views of emerald green waters and sugar white beaches from the Harbor east along the coast! 15 miles – \$89 per person. Don't forget the 10% locals discount!

Go Fishing. Destin isn't named the World's Luckiest Fishing Village for no reason. With one of the largest charter fishing fleets in the country, take your pick of near shore and deepsea fishing opportunities for you and dad. Some recommendations include Outta Line Char-



ters (charterboatouttaline.com) and Lionstale Adventures (lionstaleadventures.com) for your dad's deep sea fishing experience!

Go Boating. With the Gulf of Mexico to the South and the Choctawhatchee Bay to the north, there is an abundance of waterways to explore. There are several boat rental companies in Destin that carry Pontoon to speed boats.

How About Dolphin Watching? A 90-minute Dolphin Cruise with Destin Snorkel begins with a cruise of the Destin Harbor and then out the Destin Pass to the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way, you should see dolphin playing alongside the boat. Dolphin Rates (tax included) are Adults: \$20, Children



(ages 4 – 12): \$15 and Toddlers (3 and under): \$5. Located at Harborwalk Village in Destin, book online at http://destinsnorkel. com or call 850-269-2329.

Snorkel with Dad: With a two-stop snorkeling tour, in three hours, you'll get to look for shells on the beach and shallow water of the grassy flats in the Bay, witness crab life, small fish, sea horses, baby shrimp and a variety of sea life. Rate: \$45. Located at Harborwalk Village in Destin, book online at http://destinsnorkel.com or call 850-269-2329.

Throw an Ax with your Dad: The latest trend, at the Gulf Coast Axe House in Miramar Beach you can throw an ax from 11 a.m.-midnight. No experience needed; coaches teach you how to throw. For those 21 and over, you can bring your own beer and wine if you want. Ages 13+ are permitted. Open daily, one hour of ax throwing is \$30 per person. Message Facebook. com/GulfCoastAxeHouse, email at Info@GulfCoastAxes.comor call 850-842-2890 to reserve your lane.

Take in a Father's Day Film. For a relaxing wind-down from Father's Day weekend, bring your lawn chairs out to Baytowne Wharf's Events Plaza Lawn at Sandestin and settle in for a free film of "The Secret Life of Pets 2" at 8 p.m. Sunday.

Go Stand Up Paddling Boarding. Take dad on a calming, nature-based water experience. On a Stand Up Paddle Board, you all can paddle out in the Gulf to one of the new artificial reefs or paddle a peaceful coastal dune lake in the Bay. Dad might just slow down a little and enjoy this paddle boarding experience so conducive to our area, but especially if it's with you!

Book an Electric Bike Tour. These fun pedal-assisted bikes tap into a battery pack that will give your dad and you added speed and endurance. For a Dad who likes to be shown around, gift him with one an Eventure Tour focusing on history, art and cuisine. Visit eventuretourco. com.

Is Your Dad Young At Heart? With mini-golf, go-karts or bumper rides and big thrills like bungee jumping and sky flying, you'll have plenty of time to be a kid again at The Track Family Recreation Center. Visit funatthetrack.com, Destin location or call (850) 654-4668.

Create an Old-Fashioned Memory with Ice Cream. Take you dad out for the ultimate ice cream sundae! Or start the day off with Parler doughnuts located at The Market Shops. There's definitely one to fit your dad's tastes with coffee as well!

And last, but definitely not least, spend time with your dad on the golf course, beach or in the water! Destin has some of the finest courses around. Have **a picnic, go for a walk, splash in the waves, rent a jet ski or go parasailing**...throw down a good time!



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💮 Wellness

How Exercise Can Help Pain Management

BY AMY MILLIGAN, CRYO850

When you're in pain, the last thing you want to do is to move around- especially for a workout. However, movement is likely the exact thing you need. Staying sedentary results in stiffer joints and limbs, thus increasing pain and making it more difficult to recover. It can be a vicious cycle. Gentle exercise like stretching or therapeutic yoga can help keep your joints moving so your body can heal. Here are a few benefits of mild exercise as it relates to pain management:

Helps Circulation

Waking up stiff or in pain, the first few movements are always the hardest, but if you can get your body moving and get your blood pumping, you will inevitably start to feel better. Moving your joints and limbs encourages blood circulation, which can ease pain related inflammation and help expedite the healing process.

Strengthens Muscles

Strengthening your muscles will not only help to speed along



recovery but also help prevent injury. Since muscles take much of the load off your bones and spine when it comes to supporting your weight, strengthening muscles helps to cushion hard movements. The stronger your muscles are, the more you'll be able to withstand.

Releases Endorphins Exercise releases endorphins,

Exercise releases endorphin

the body's natural painkillers. Science shows an increases your endorphin levels helps reduce pain levels and also improves mental health.

Reduces Weight Gain

If you're recovering from an injury or set back with a recent chronic pain condition, you're likely less active than usual. A reduction of activity can cause weight gain weight, which can sometimes exacerbate inflammarise can help prevent

tion. Exercise can help prevent weight gain and limit inflammation.

Exercise is commonly recommended as a natural treatment for pain. Be gentle with yourself and don't push too hard, but stay moving when you can. During these trying times, make sure to take the time for selfcare. There are thousands of resources on the internet for free home workouts. Email info@ resources based on your specific cryo850.com if you would like needs.



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Wellness

Accentuate the Negative



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This will be the ONLY time I encourage you to focus on the negative. Bing Crosby sings about accentuating the positive, which is superior advice for your mental outlook, but not necessarily when it comes to training your muscles.

If you want to get the most out of your toning and strength workouts you will need to focus on "the negative." The negative, when training, is the part where you resist the weight back to

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starting position; hence why we call it "resistance training." The positive is the first part of each movement; so, the negative is the second part. Like Newton's 3rd law of motion, for each action there is an equal (in size) and opposite (in direction) reaction.

By definition, there are two types of moving contractions: Concentric (the positive) and Eccentric (the negative). In a concentric contraction, the muscle tension increases to meet the resistance as the muscle shortens. During the eccentric contraction, the muscle lengthens while it's still contracted and resisting the workload. It is the breaking force that directly opposes the shortening of a muscle. The easiest understood example is a biceps curl. As you lower your arm in a biceps curl, that lengthening movement would be considered eccentric or negative. The lifting of the weight is concentric/positive. Other examples are: the downward motion of a squat, lowering the body in a pull-up, downward motion of a push-up, lowering the weight during a shoulder press, lowering your body during a crunch, unfolding your leg during a hamstring curl.

Negative training is safer on the joints, because the muscle is contracted and protective. If you want substantial gains in muscle strength and size, then you can have a partner or trainer help you with the lifting phase; then you control the neg-



ative yourself resisting a weight you couldn't lift alone—but that is on the extreme side.

A safer way to use negative focused training is to slow way down on your negative contraction. For example, in the biceps curl, curl the weight up one second, then take three to five+ seconds to lower it. Controlling the weight back to starting position is the key. Negative/eccentric workouts are used a lot in rehabilitation and safer for the older population as well. ACL injuries, patellar tendonitis, muscle-tendon injuries, Osteopenia, Sarcopenia, Tendinosis and other repetitive stress injuries are some common medical ailments that benefit from negative focused training. Another benefit is weight-loss by raising your metabolism. According to research from Wayne State

INTRODUCTORY ONE-HOUR

 $\bigcap R$

University, a full-body eccentric workout increased the resting metabolism in athletes by nine percent and for no less than three hours following the exercise. So Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Negative, instead of the Positive—but only in this case!

A TRIBUTE TO MY **DAD:** I believe that if it weren't for my sister, Lori, and my dad, I might have done something different for a living. My dad passed last year from complications from a simple colon surgery, but at the age of 84, still worked out in his basement workout area. I feel he was an encouraging factor for keeping at it at any age and any limitations. Thank you, Dad! Happy Father's Day to all the men out there that exercise with your kids! Make it a point for them to see you in your healthy lifestyle routine. You make a bigger impression than you probably realize.

Lisa Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the bodies and minds of others. With more than 20 years' experience as a group exercise leader and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, she is diverse and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation.



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Wellness

Are You Happy with Your Testosterone Shots?



By Dr. Richard Chern, M.D.

Testosterone shots for men have been used to treat testosterone deficiency for many years. There has also been a lot of bad press about using "testosterone" in men, because previously, many men abused testosterone and later faced consequences such as heart attacks, strokes, pulmonary embolisms, sudden death and other health problems. We've all heard about "Roid Rage" and have seen reports of domestic abuse, murder and suicides all associated with testosterone. So, how is it possible that testosterone is good?

There are several issues to keep in mind with testosterone use in the past. First, these issues often occurred with dosages as high as 20x the natural levels found in humans. Second, all of these reports are associated with the use of synthetic versions of testosterone. The medical community has known for decades that any synthetic testosterone is associated with adverse effects such as strokes, heart attacks, sudden death and more. This includes the most commonly prescribed testosterone cypionate. Third, breakdown products or metabolites of testosterone are also hormones that can have major effects on the body in both beneficial and detrimental ways. Many of the issues that occurred were because of over-dosing and a lack of understanding of the metabolism and full effects of synthetic testosterone in the body.

Many men use weekly testosterone cypionate injections to maintain their testosterone level. While this provides some benefit, most men complain about the common issues shots have. Shots are absorbed based on time rather than blood flow. So, the first days after a shot are typically amazing and most guys feel like superman because of overly high levels. Unfortunately, this only lasts for a day or two and these overly high levels are not only bad for us but they also rapidly decrease. These days are typically followed by two days where guys feel good. Then, the last few days are nearly always nonproductive and include increasing moodiness, fatigue and a lack of desire to engage in the world. Next, because of these swings in testosterone, estrogen quickly becomes difficult to control. The hormonal ups and downs cause mood swings, tear-fullness, irritability, anger and other emotional disturbances. Levels on either side of optimal can cause erectile dysfunction. So, these swings often lead to additional medications such as anastrazol, Viagra, or other medications to control issues that just don't happen with pellet therapy. Then, of course, there are the general issues of remembering to take your weekly injections, constantly going to the pharmacy, multiple doctor

appointments, lab draws, etc.

With pellet therapy, we see our guys about two times a year and once we get your dosing dialed in, we only need labs once a year. Hormone levels are consistent every day and it's unheard of to need additional medications once optimized. So, are you REALLY still happy with your testosterone shots?

Dr. Richard Chern, M.D. and Sue Griffin, ARNP specialize in hormone therapy for both men and women. D.r Richard Chern, M.D. is the only BioTE Platinum provider in the area and has been providing BioTE hormone pellet therapy longer than any other provider in the region. He has been asked by BioTE to teach providers across the country on how to provide proper hormone therapy for both men and women. Dr. Richard Chern, M.D. is currently accepting new patients so call today at 850-837-1271 for an appointment.



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Wellness

Diabetes: Ways to Manage and Prevent It



By KAY LEAMAN. HEALTH ARCHITECT

Most of us know that diabetes = insulin resistance. But what does that really mean? What is happening inside our bodies and what can we do to stop it?

Let's start with descriptions. Type I Diabetes is when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin to push the glucose into the mitochondria of the cell to be used for energy. Type II is when the insulin receptors become 'rusty' or 'misshaped' and the glucose is unable to enter the cell.

Everyone has heard of antioxidants. These are the combat troops that fight the enemy of oxidation or oxidative stress. Simply put, this occurs when molecules with unpaired electrons (known as free radicals) steal electrons from other cellular structures. And oxidative damage and inflammation are the underlying pathology to nearly every chronic degenerative disease such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's etc. It depends on which tissues and organs are being damaged.

Now, it's time to paint a picture in your mind. Picture a cell with a little key hole or door (receptors) and keys, which are the insulin being released from the pancreas. When we eat, these keys take the glucose and unlock the door, so the glucose can enter the mitochondria in the cell and turn it into energy. However, when these key holes are damaged due to oxidation the key can no longer open it. In other words, the key hole becomes rusty or misshaped. This process is known as insulin resistance. When the majority of receptors are damaged, Type II Diabetes occurs.

Here's the bad news. Drugs are given to reduce blood sugar levels, or insulin is injected to overwhelm the keyholes in order to force the glucose into the cell. And, any rapid rise of insulin either from an injection or eating a high glycemic meal causes more oxidative damage.

Now for the good news. Our cells are continually making new insulin receptors (key holes)! This means that a diagnosis of Type II Diabetes does not have to be permanent if we do our part. So, what can we do to help our bodies in the fight against oxidative stress?

• Lower intake of high glycemic foods: Breads, pretzels, crackers, bagels, etc.) Flour products are not our friends.

Soda drinks

- Candy
- Most cereals and pastas
- Corn, potatoes and peas
- Chips and Ice Cream
- Dried Fruit and snack bars

• Take a full-spectrum of high-quality vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids and antioxidants every day (nutraceuticals) • Exercise

- Reduce stress • Get adequate sleep

Remember, our health journeys are about progress, not perfection. It's not a matter of 'I can't'. Everything we do is a CHOICE—so, choose wisely. Please contact me, Kay Leaman, if you have any questions at HealthyDay HealthyLife, succeed@healthydayhealthylife. com.

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Self-Care Corner: Why Men Should Visit the Spa

By Krisy Anderson

In today's world, it's a myth that a spa is just for the ladies. In more recent years, approximately 47% of spa-goers were men! Males have finally realized that grooming and taking care of their appearance is a means of style. Trimmed facial hair, clean cut nails and hair, you name it, men are all for it.

More and more, men are flocking to the spa for male-specific options, such as scrubs and waxing. Waxes for the chest, back or face are one of the top choices for a men's spa trip. It lasts longer than shaving and gives your body a cleaner, more



defined look. It also allows more time to do other things, like work or go to the gym or meet with friends, rather than stuck in front of the bathroom mirror tediously shaving away. Unique and ultra-defined facial hair is another favorite trend for men right now. Waxing gives them the option of fine-combing the



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shape of their facial hair with razor-sharp precision.

Massages are not just for women; your dad, husband or brother deserves an unwind, too. A massage has incredible benefits for your physique and soothes your sore muscles more than just stretching after a workout.

The now-dubbed "manly-cure" is another spa treatment that's gaining ground with the guys. Clean, cut and shaped nails on both hands and toes are both professional-looking and help with your cuticle health.

Scrubs for men are an excellent way of maintaining clean and healthy skin with exfoliating dead skin cells from the body. Men, in particular, are drawn to this spa treatment. Not only is it a pleasant feeling to have clean, smooth skin, but it's also great for confidence and physical mentality.

For Father's Day, pamper your dad, brother, husband or son at the spa! Drop into Beverly Hills Day Spa or visit online and purchase a gift certificate available for pickup during normal business hours. Visit www.beverlyhillsdayspa.com or call me at (850) 654-8544. 114 Palmetto Dr., Suite 6, Destin, 32541, on Tuesday - Saturday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.



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🐲 Wellness

Here We Go Again



By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

Last Spring brought a slower pace, uncertainty, space and more time at home. This Spring has brought the return to many things that have been on indefinite pause including back to the office, back to the school building, back to sports, back to in person church. And while it was strange figuring out how to navigate the slower pandemic pace of life, it's also strange suddenly finding yourself busy, wishing for more down time, and emotionally fatigued from adjusting back to significantly more in person interactions.

When you were stuck at

home, all you wanted was to get out and about. And perhaps now that life is returning to a busy pace, you may find yourself wishing for some relax time at home. It's easy to feel enslaved to your circumstances, wishing things could be different, but feeling out of control of how you live out your time and priorities. What if there was a way to take the lessons from the slower pace of life and apply them to create a more balanced life now? What can you do to find the balance you're looking for?

5 Ways to Create Intentional Life Balance:

Notice and name stressors: Notice tension or upset in your body. This could be muscle soreness, headaches, stomachaches, tight chest, fatigue, irritability. Slow down and identify the source of tension. Your body is trying to communicate with you. Are you over scheduled? Are you isolated? Are you making decisions out of either fear or rebellion? Are you at odds in your important relationships?



Are you saying yes when you want to say no? Are you making decisions to please others? Are you doing too much of something or not enough of another?

Give yourself permission to evaluate: What did you love about having to slow down during the pandemic? What did you find relaxing and life-giving? What did you miss? What were the top priority activities you returned to as soon as possible? What were the very last things you returned to and why?

Sort your yes and your

no: As you reflect on your stress patterns and what was life-giving to you at a slower pace of life, sort your current life priorities/ activities into yes and no categories. Remember that sometimes you may believe everything has to be a yes because people are counting on you. However, you will be more likely to show up as a better, more present, enjoyable version of yourself if you limit your life commitments to things that are most important to you.

Create space for feelings and honesty: Letting go of some activities can feel hard and sad. It's ok to grieve the reality that you aren't superhuman and have time and energy limits. Try reminding yourself that everyone has limits and a lower stress life brings goodness to your physical/emotional health, your relationships, and your overall enjoyment of life.

Live out your yes and no: As you step back from excessive activity/obligations and begin to say no, give yourself time and freedom to live into the space you've created. Slow down, relax, breathe deeply, and be present in the moment. Detoxing from busyness might be uncomfortable at first, but your life will thank you.

Try to suspend judgment and offer yourself grace as you decide what pace of life feels best to you in the coming weeks and months. And, remember that what works for someone else may not be the path that works for you. You can connect with us at journeybravely.com as you move along your journey.

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Business

Leveraging Your Time

By Ricky Harper, C12

Theophrastus said, "Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend." Last summer I attended the 2020 GLS (Global Leadership Summit) which is a two-day simulcast conference held every August and attended by more than 400,000 people around the world. The GLS is a conference that I consider essential to re-charging my leadership batteries during our long hot summers.

One of the speakers was Rory Vaden, noted consultant and bestselling author of Procrastinate on Purpose, Five Permissions to Multiply Your Time.

In his presentation, Mr. Vaden outlined four basic steps of time management; he said that when a new task hits your desk always ask yourself four questions...

Can it be eliminated? If you

can live without it, eliminate it. Can it be automated? Leverage technology to free up time.

Can it be delegated? You are a leader; lead by doing the important stuff and delegate the rest.

Does it have to be done now? If not, recycle it back to step 1.

Much has been written and said about steps 1, 3 and 4. The first and last steps are simple matters of priority whereas step liferation of apps and relatively inexpensive technology available to businesses.

Good business leaders think of time in the same way they think of money. Benjamin Franklin said, "Time is money." So, what is the value of freeing up time? The question you should ask is, what is the value of lost time?

Rory Vaden put it this way, "Automation is to time what compound interest is to mon-



three, delegation, is a deep and often misunderstood topic that I will dive into another day.

Of automation Mr. Vaden says, "Always ask yourself if something you are tasked with can be automated?" That is a challenging thing to ask business owners and leaders to do. Automation takes time, planning and money so leaders may expect the ROI on that decision to be minimal. But that may be a short-sighted view of automation, especially given today's proey." Wow! Think about that. You would never invest money for simple interest when compound interest is available. Think of time in the same way. By freeing up your time, you are getting dividends on the time saved, several times over. Now think about freeing up your time, your C-staff's time, your admin's time, your employees time.

So, why are you not finding ways to automate? And please don't tell me it's because you don't have time! "The key is in not spend- —Stephen Covey ing time, but investing it."



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🍻 Business

Owner of AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar Ranked One of the Country's Most Influential Restaurant Executives

In 2020, readers of "Nation's Restaurant News" had a chance to weigh in on who they considered leaders in the restaurant industry. The people have spoken and Destin's own Alan Laird, owner of AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, ranked number 37 out of 500 submissions in the category for "Most Influential Restaurant Executives in the Country" on its "Power List 2020."

"Nation's Restaurant News" released its selections for its annual "Power List Reader Picks" in February 2021 and Alan was thrilled and honored to be recognized and to join some of the top players in the restaurant industry. This year's list focused on leadership and nominees ranged from restaurant CEOs and chefs to store managers who are making an impact through innovation.

So, what's Alan secret to success? It's a pretty simple formula. Alan believes that it all hinges on good communication between staff and being polite to customers and each other.

"When customers come in, say 'hello.' Thank them for coming in when they're on their way out and ask if they enjoyed everything. Invite them to come back in," he says.

Alan has remained true to this basic philosophy since opening his doors in 1984 and apparently, it's paid off.

"I wouldn't be here today



Alan Laird, Owner, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar DB, MSB of Destin LLC



without this great team behind me," he says. "I appreciate that they have helped me to continue to stand out among restaurant executives across the country."

Alan, a Florida native, was born and raised in the state's panhandle, and has worked in restaurants all his life. In 1984, he opened the first AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar in Destin. It started out as a small burger and oyster joint that sold beer. Today, he has four restaurant locations on our beautiful Emerald Coast, and a 55-acre farm where he raises Black Angus, Waygu cattle and seasonal produce that he uses in these restaurants. The latest addition is a public market in Destin, AJ's Specialty Meats and Gourmet Market, that sells locally-sourced meats and produce.

Alan has also broken out into beverage branding over the past



few years and is excited about AJ's branded vodka and two different beers brewed exclusively for AJ's by Props Craft Beer based in Ft. Walton Beach and Niceville. These products are available at all AJ's locations, as well as local restaurants and stores throughout Northwest Florida.

About AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar serves the freshest seafood and mixed drinks along the beautiful Emerald Coast. It has live entertainment seven days a week and has been recognized on many local lists that include "Best of the Emerald Coast," and "Best of South Walton." It's also received national recognition from "Nightclub and Bar Magazine" as one of "America's Top 100 Nightclubs in the United States."

For more information about AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, visit ajsdestin.com.

For more information about "Nation's Restaurant News" Power List 2020, visit www. nrn.com/people/most-influential-restaurant-executives-country-chosen-nation-s-restaurant-news-readers.



Business

"The Gabby Bruce" Award: You Make a Difference

By Donna Montalvo

Many locals will remember long-time Destin resident and friend Gabby Bruce. A2Z (A2Z Specialty Advertising, Inc.) is continuing to keep his memory alive, celebrating his life by giving back to our community.

Gabby was all about making a difference in our community, and we want to continue his legacy by helping businesses who have been there for others. Gabby served on many boards throughout the years, carved turkeys on Thanksgiving at Harbor Docks to serve meals to the community, was the emcee at the Mullet Festival for 35 years and worked with many non-profit organizations.

For these reasons and many more, we are launching "The Gabby Bruce You Make A Difference" recognition program. We will celebrate 12 local businesses during 2021 that have made a difference in our community in Gabby's honor.

These businesses will be recognized for delivering high performance to their customers and going above and beyond to help other businesses and/or non-profits.

Each month the A2Z Team will select a local business to recognize its impact on our community. They will receive "The Gabby Bruce You Make A Difference" award and a \$300 credit for promotional products of their choice. We will also highlight their business on our social media including pictures, information about their business, and what they have done to support our community. Their business will be highlighted in Destin Life each month and announced on Cumulus Radio as well as an interview with Diamond Dan.



Twisted Grape Café & Wine Bar

Our first "Gabby Award" winner was Twisted Grape Cafe & Wine Bar in Shalimar. They are all about Good Wine, Good Food & Good Friends! Another passion is their local fund raising as Twisted Grape has continuously given back to the community over the years. They have raised money for PAWS, SOCKS, Shelter House and Food for Vets (to name a few).





Simple HR

Our second "Gabby Award" winner went to SimpleHR in Destin. SimpleHR has served the communities along Florida's Emerald Coast for 18 years. They continue to focus on giving back through volunteerism, corporate philanthropy and knowledge-based resources. Giving back is business as usual for them and the people who work there. Beyond their volunteerism, SimpleHR delivers comprehensive human resource solutions and administrative relief for busy business owners who wish to spend more time on their core business and less time on employer obligations. SimpleHR provides human resources, benefits, payroll administration, workers' compensation, affordable care act guidance, safety consultation, talent acquisition, payroll taxes and corporate filings for its clients, always keeping in mind their mission to maintain the highest standards in all they do.

We look forward to announcing more "Gabby Award" winners. Stay tuned on how you can nominate a business by listening to Cumulus Radio during the week on NASH 105.5, Coast 93.3 and NewsTalk 1260.

"Team Gabby" is so excited about this new program as it gives Gabby Bruce's A2Z Specialty Advertising, Inc. a way to continue to make an impact with our local businesses in the community he loved so much.

We were all lucky enough to always have Gabby out there making an impact in so many, many ways!



Perry (Gabby) Lloyd Bruce III – Gabby L. Bruce, 76, died March 7, 2020. Following a love of music, a magnetic personality and an unmistakably distinctive voice, Gabby found himself on the Emerald Coast dredging a 30-year path in the radio and music industry where his accomplishments and ventures included: host of a number one rated morning show, producer and co-writer of several billboard charting songs, emcee and organizer of the Mullet Festival, and even served as a location scout and publicist for the movie Jaws 2, leading many to refer to him as a "local legend," which he would always shrug off, but absolutely embodied. During his career in the entertainment business. Gabby met and married Deborah Bourque Bruce, with whom he spent the remaining 34 years of his life happily married. In 1997, sensing the forthcoming changes in terrestrial radio, he changed career paths and purchased A2Z Specialty Advertising, Inc. which he owned for the remainder of his life, designing and producing shirts, koozies, keychains and any other promotional products available to local businesses. In addition to his wife, he was survived by his daughter, Patti Duckworth, of Athens, Georgia; Sister-in-law Pam Schweickert and her husband Bud, niece Kelby Cramblet and her husband Jared, and in-laws Ray and Joanne Bourque, all of Destin.

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Business

Local Pro: Dana Jolman, The Porch Life Boutique

By Lori Leath Smith

Dana Jolman and her husband, Dustin, (also her high school sweetheart) found their way to our area when stationed here at the beginning of Dustin's career. As a military wife and mom of four, Dana and her family have come full circle after having been transferred several times now, relocating to South Dakota, Germany, Ohio and back, and luckily for us, have decided to stay in the area.

Dustin has served almost 20 years in the EOD field and Dana's interests include keeping up with the kids. Beyond that, she thrives on caring for indoor plants as well as tending to outdoor gardening. "I pretty much enjoy any craft; some of my creations are actually in the store."

As Retail Manager and social media marketing manager for The Porch Life Boutique, her job is multi-faceted. "I get to utilize so many aspects of my personal loves such as creativity with setting up our unique displays and my business degree training by doing the managerial tasks," says Dana.



But what Dana really likes the most about her job is servic-

ing The Porch Life customers and really getting to know them

on a personal level. "Most people will tell you I've never met a stranger. So, to be able to interact and help others be creative is a dream for me, and I'm so grateful that this small family

owned business let me infiltrate their circle. They are a joy to work for."

Founded in 2016 by owners Kenny and Jennifer Bray, this unique Boutique carries a wide array of classy, sometimes whimsical and specialty products for the home and garden. "We offer handmade furniture, hand poured candles, pillows, rain gauges, wind spinners, indoor and outdoor plants, bird feeders and houses, and tons of decorative pots, planters and huge outdoor statues that are scattered throughout our nursery," says Dana. "We also offer different gift ideas than just your regular run-of-the-mill items and we try to keep it eccentric. We want you to have a unique yard compared to your neighbors. So, we don't we don't order in bulk from the big box stores, because we want everyone's space to be uniquely theirs."

The idea for the Boutique came from Jennifer and their daughter, Jessica. Kenny owns the parent company, K&R Cuts Landscaping and felt a showroom would be valuable to his customers; there they could display ways to spruce up your porch after landscaping work was completed. "They started it as a way to showcase ideas for others, and that was the beginning of it all," says Dana. "Now, everyone that works here is super creative and just wants to share their knowledge on decorating, plants or just offer ideas for your home.'

The Porch Life Boutique is also involved in the community helping to support other small businesses. For example, handmade furniture as well as the Boutique's hand poured candles are purchased from a local artist in Panama City with much of the artist's proceeds funneling back into the community to continue to help rebuild after hurricanes. "We want to help other small businesses thrive," says Dana.

Dana says she hopes readers will seek out local shops, including theirs. "I promise you," she says, "you won't be disappointed; we are different from your larger stores with new offerings all the time. So, come in, stroll the store, head out to the nursery and ask all the questions you need to find the perfect gift, plant or other item. We love getting to know our customers and even just one visit makes you a part of The Porch Life Family." Open 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. weekdays; 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Saturdays; and 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Sundays. 100 Old Milligan Rd., Crestview 32536. (850) 689-1497.

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🐞 Business

Filing an Insurance Claim DIY #ClaimHacks



By Matthew Vanderford, Claimology

Filing claims isn't a hard thing to do. I mean people file claims all the time without help or guidance and feel they've been taken care of. That's AMAZING! So, why would I say that being a public adjuster? Because the role of a public adjuster is primarily to act as a bridge or conduit between two parties helping them reach an amicable resolution. And, if two parties come to an amicable solution without the need of my services, then that really is AMAZING!! That means they're happy (hopefully)!

In the insurance world, most of the people I meet want claims paid out quickly and fairly. Because that's what makes people happy – quick and fair treatment. Issues tend to come up when claims get lost or mis-



handled, underpaid or denied. So, here's a little #CLAIM-HACK for all you claim filing DIY'ers out there:

Take contemporaneos claim notes.

Contemporaneous Definition: adjective: contemporaneous

existing or occurring in the same period of time.

"Pythagoras was contemporaneous with Buddha"



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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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This hack can save your claim from so many issues that could come up at any given time. A good claim can fall off the rails real quick. The work on this is simple and easy - get yourself a claim diary and use it every time you have a conversation with anyone in the claims process. The key however, is that this needs to be done in real time, as the conversation is happening, making it contemporaneos. A pen and paper work best, but you can use your smartphone, too - place the phone on speaker or use a headset and use whatever app you like to take notes with. Just make sure to save your notes with a photo back up, email them to yourself and save it to the cloud somewhere (that's triple redundancy for the real safety freaks out there!) Also, send an email to the other party to recap what the conversation was about, asking them to clarify any discrepancies or to explain things further.

Hope this little hack helps you. Because this hack is the only thing that's helping an insured I know navigate a claim that was filed correctly, but went way off track – so far off track it's taken almost two years to resolve. And that's only because the notes have helped this insured keep their claim alive after repeated attempts of the carrier to shut it down.

So, here's to good claims being filed with very happy outcomes for those that need it most – you – the insured!

"Looking at reflections one can cast their own shadow waiting watching for the neverchild to emerge from the room within," mmi





BY SEAN DIETRICH

On my kitchen counter is a pound cake, sitting on a pedestal, beneath a glass dome.

Pound cake is the food of summer. It can make or break the entire season. A summer without pound cake is like church without singing. Or Monet without color. Or Andy without Barney.

When I was a younger man, my soon-to-be wife and I went through mandatory marriage counseling at our church. It was miserable. The minister was so uptight that he could have carried a corn cob without using his hands.

The pastor asked me what my "love language" was.

"My what?" I said.

"Your love language," he said. "How do you receive love?"

"Come again?"

"Food," my wife interjected. "Sean's love language is pound cake, and so is mine. We speak Food."

That preacher looked at us like we had june bugs crawling out our noses. And I never forgot that.

Because my wife was right. We speak Food. Food has always helped me through life. I use fried chicken to fend off existential doubt. Pimento cheese gives me courage. And pound cake restoreth my soul.

And yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of High Cholesterol, I will fear no egg yolks, for Thou art with me.

Speaking of food, right now I smell steaks cooking on a grill. My neighbor, Tom, is having a holiday cookout and he is speaking my "love language" fluently.

It's Fourth-of-July week and every house on our street has a driveway full of cars. There are American flags flying on every post, mailbox, and car antenna.

People linger on porches, holding bottles and aluminum cans, eating ridiculous amounts of goodies and laughing a lot.

The sun is low. I hear firecrackers in the distance. They sound like bottle rockets.

If you are, or you have ever been a boy, you know a bottle rocket simply by its sound. Fireworks are expressly male items. If you don't believe me, visit YouTube and type in "bottle rocket tricks."

What you'll find are millions of videos featuring death defying stunts by young people who—how do I put this?—are only knitting with one needle.

What you will not find among these videos are females. Girls are too smart to mess with gunpowder.

When I was a boy, we fooled with bottle rockets all summer long. We would travel to the county line and spend big money on bundles of barely legal bottle rockets. We would waste the entire summer developing strange and exotic ways to harm each other with explosives.

I hear a mother down the

4th of July

street, yelling at her children. "Be careful!" she shouts. "Don't blow yourselves up! Supper's almost ready!"

Next, I hear the sound of bicycle gears clicking, and skateboards. Is that the sound of a big wheel? The kids kick up a cloud of dust behind their tires.

"You're not faster than me!" shouts one child.

"Yes I am!"

"No you're not!"

"Yes huh!" "Nuh uh!"

"Yes huh!"

"Nuh uh!"

They pedal hard until dusk. And just when you don't think they can pedal any faster, their mother calls them for supper.

No matter how many light years away from home children are, the mere mention of food makes them fly homeward faster than Chuck Yeager drinking Mountain Dew.

Soon, I hear the sound of ceramic casserole dishes on their porch. And the happy chatter of voices. And the sounds of forks and spoons.

This is a cross-section of old-fashioned America to me. Casseroles, kids, and laughter.

A radio accompanies their supper. The sound of the Temptations, singing "I Heard it Through the Grapevine."

And I remember when my mother once danced with me on the porch to this very song. She spun me around, and showed me how to move my feet. We really cut a rug. You don't get over memories like that.

On a day like today, I am left wondering how it happened. How did I get middle-aged? Where did my life go? Once, I used to be a boy, fearless, fast, with a hollow leg. How did I develop love handles, old-man toenails, and a bad back?

Sometimes I miss childhood afternoons, lying in the grass beneath a sprinkler. I miss fishing with earthworms. I miss warm tomatoes, stolen from my mother's garden

mother's garden. I miss playing with explosives.

I am interrupted.

My wife walks onto our porch. She is carrying a pedestal with a golden cake beneath a glass dome. She cuts two slices and serves them with fresh strawberries, and pours iced tea into jelly jars.

We don't speak to each other because we're too busy eating. We only smile with our mouths full, then touch the rims of our jelly jars together.

It's a holiday, and there's no



need to say much today. After all, I know what she's saying, and she knows what my heart is saying back.

She's saying, "The pound cake came out good, didn't it?" And I'm saying, "I love you so

much it hurts." I know all this because, like

my wife told the man, we speak Food.

Happy Fourth of July.









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What Ever Happened to Patriotism?



We are in the of celebrating two verv patriotic holidays, Memo-

rial Day and Independence Day. Memorial Day commemorates the men and women who have died in military service for the U.S. Independence Day (Fourth of July) celebrates the birth of American independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776. We also celebrate Veterans Day in November, honoring all persons who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

If you go in order, The Declaration of Independence precedes all of these holidays. This declaration led to our Constitution which guarantees our freedoms, including the Bill Of Rights. The final version of our Declaration

The Genuine. The Original.

By Myrna of Independence declares: "We middle

hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Our freedoms were fought for from the very beginning and have been fought for ever since. These men and women were and are the ultimate Patriots. Patriotism, however, shouldn't just be attributed to those who have served in our Armed Forces. Patriotism should be practiced by EVERY citizen of the United States.

The definition of Patriotism is "devotion to and vigorous support for one's country. A patriot is a person who is on the side of his or her own nation or its leaders." To support one's country doesn't mean you have to agree with everything the current po-



litical leaders endorse What is does mean is that you support and stand up for the freedoms that our country represents.

The freedoms that make our country different and stand out among all others are stated in The Bill of Rights. Those include: Freedom of Religion; Freedom of Speech; Freedom of The Press; Freedom of Assembly; Freedom of Petition; The Right To Bear Arms; 'No-Quartering" Right; The Right To Equal Justice, The Right To Own Private Property. The 10th Amendment includes: freedom to live or travel anywhere in our nation; freedom to work at any job for which we



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disturbing statistics in this poll, however, were that between 2013 and 2018 all age groups under the age of 50 went down significantly in their pride in being an

American. Those are troubling and sad statistics. Why this drop in patriotism? I believe a lot of it comes from the lack of accurate knowledge about our country's history and the moral fiber our country can qualify, freedom to marry



and raise a family, freedom to

receive a free education in pub-

lic schools, and freedom to join

a political party, union or other

legal group. Aren't you thankful

for these freedoms? Let's never

33% of Americans aged 18-29

said they were proud to be an

American, while 60 % of those

age 50+ expressed extreme pa-

triotism. The surprising and

In a 2018 Gallop Poll, only

take them for granted.

When searching for statistics on how many Americans have read the Constitution, the numbers were between 15% and 37%. So, when the majority of our people have never even read the Constitution that our country was founded on and what all who serve swear allegiance to, why should we be surprised that patriotism is on the decline.

When I was in school we stood, with our hands over our heart, and all quoted the Pledge of Allegiance. We all knew the words and no one even thought about refusing to do this. Today we see people refusing to stand and pledge allegiance to our flag. Kids in school, people in sports, many of those in the media and entertainment industry stay seated or take a knee when saluting our flag or speak disparagingly about our country.

Freedom is not something to

take for granted. We all enjoy the picnics, fireworks and fun when celebrating these holidays. But let's never fail to acknowledge the sacrifices that secure our freedoms. People throughout the history of our country have left home and family, bled and fought under extreme circumstances, seen and experienced horrific things and even died for our freedom.

I belong to a family with strong military ties. My father-inlaw was a prisoner of war in Japan in WWII. My husband, his brothers, my brother, and many of the next generation of our family have served in the military. We have seen, first hand, the cost of freedom. That's why when we see a flag waving in the wind or hear the National Anthem, our hearts swell and we proudly salute the flag that represents the "land of the free."

While our country is not perfect, what has made our country different and great is its stated commitment to liberty, justice and equality for all.

Be Aware:

Be more aware of the cost of freedom in our country.

Know and understand the principals and foundations our country was built upon. www.archives.gov/founding-docs.

Think about some of the things you have had to give up during COVID-19 and give thanks daily for some of the freedoms we have regained in our nation.

Ask yourself how quickly and at what costs you would be willing to give up your freedom?

Be aware of any negativity you might have toward our country and find ways to change that.

Be Intentional:

Read more about the history of our country and make sure your children are aware of our nation's history.

Celebrate our country's holidays, not just with fun and food, but with remembrance and appreciation.

When given the opportunity to salute our flag, think of all that it has cost those in our military to insure our freedoms and stand proud!

Find ways in the community to thank and support those serving our country.

Thank God every day for the freedoms you enjoy. Never take them for granted!

Editor's Note: While this was printed in the June 2020 issue of Destin Life, we felt is so relevant, we wanted to reprint it again this year.

🀞 Musing

A Pastor's Ponderings: It Happened One Summer



He lived deep in the desert. We were roofing the addition to the house he shared with his new wife. The sun blistered us with 105 degrees of pure hell as I slapped down the black shingles and Dad nailed them to their resting place.

Dad stopped for a moment to wipe the sweat from his face and said, "I'm sure a 14-year-old boy would rather be out having fun, but I love doing this." He picked up his hammer and continued pounding nails. He was rightthis wasn't how I pictured visiting Dad

"Who is this strange man? Who could love sweating like a pig roasting over a barbecue pit? WHO is this man I call Dad?

I longed for his approval my whole life. The absence of his demonstration of how a man

BY DAVE

It

acts left a crater-like hole in my soul. Psychologists say that chilhapdren who grow up in a one-parone ent home fill that empty space summer day with anger. I am living proof of when I was at that adage.

Dad moved out when I was age 5. Afterwards I saw him once or twice a year after. As a teenager, I often imagined how I was going to tell him off when he came to visit at Christmastime. But the moment he walked in the door, all that anger evaporated and I ran to him. An hour after he left, my old friend depression crept back in with his evil twin resentment.

Thirty-five years and thousands of miles of distance did little to soothe our strained relationship, until my nephew asked me to perform his wedding. The family all traveled to Colorado for the weekend of festivities. My sister Linda randomly won the Coca-Cola Challenge and three tickets to a Colorado Rockies baseball game two nights before the wedding.

Dad, Linda and I went to the

game with the requirement that one of us run in the Coca-Cola Challenge. I was the only one healthy enough to compete.

A beautiful Rockies official escorted me to the team's bullpen and prepared me for the Challenge during the seventh inning stretch. "By the way, this game is being televised nationally," she said. She also explained the contest involved running from the left field wall, tagging second base, and continuing to the first baseline in less than 25 seconds to win.

Boom! Blasted the starting gun. My forty-eight-year-old legs struggled mightily. The crowd of 35,000 people roared their encouragement as the TV cameras rolled. I won with my lungs sucking air like a lung-cancer survivor and the crowd cheering wildly.

As beautiful Rockies' representative escorted me back to my seat, the jumbotron scoreboard replayed my victory run. It all felt surreal as we approached my seating section. I could see Dad watching the jumbotron and waving his ball cap excitedly from his wheelchair. My mind raced back to my little league days as a ballplayer. Hundreds of times I had looked toward the stands, longing to see Dad, only to be disappointed at his absence. Now, here he is.

Dad casually mentioned on the ride home from the stadium that this was the first time he attended a baseball game. I realized then how much he had missed. Under the cruel shadow of divorce, son missed father and father missed son.

The rare air of tranquility enveloped us as we each accepted the journey of our lives. We loved each other despite it all and, in the end, that's what matters. Reconciliation has to do with accepting your losses and kicking anger to the curb. Resentment and regret only steal your joy. Forging a new future based on peace allows love to emerge.

Similarly, humanity lost itself in all the crap of life. Alienated from God the Father, we had no path to return to Him. Until Jesus came and dealt with the vast void of sin at the cross. Christ created a new beginning based on peace, "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." Romans 5:11, (NIV.)

1 John 4 further explains, "This is love: He loved us long before we loved Him." And concludes, "Everyone who loves is Fathered by God."

I've come to appreciate my Dad, but Father God is the daddy I never had. My heart is whole and filled with the love of God and love for my Dad.

Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin. He recently released his new devotional-Bible study based on the Gospel of Luke titled "Extraordinary Jesus: Ignite Your Season of Miracles." You can get a copy of this book from his website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon. com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach in churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidvHolland54(a) gmail.com.



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Meet Todd Wilkinson, MKAF's Music Man



By Zandra Wolfgram

They say music makes the world go 'round. If that is true, then Todd Wilkinson is surely the man giving the globe a big ol' spin.

Wilkinson, a realtor and environmental consultant, is entering his third year as chairman of the eight-member concert committee for the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation. Long before he started his six-year stint on the committee, Wilkinson and his wife, Chris, were concert goers. They are 16-year veterans, in fact.

Clearly, a "music man," Wilkson was playing the saxophone at the tender age of 10. Through high school and college, he was part of progressive rock band (think Genesis). When he wasn't rocking out complicated beats and rhythms, he was one of voices heard over the crackly college air waves at Florida Institute of Technology. And while in grad school at Loyola University, he hosted a radio show on WWOZ, the public radio station in New Orleans.

"It was very late, I'm sure no one was listening," Wilkinson jokes, which he does often.

Each season the committee programs a series of summer and fall concerts called Concerts in the Village (CIV). They



are held al fresco on the Village green on Thursday evenings. Cloth-covered VIP tables have priority seating just beyond the grassy "dance floor," otherwise bring a beach chair or blanket.

The gate opens at 6 p.m. and the concerts start at 7 p.m. You can bring along a picnic or enjoy dinner from a tasty food truck or local restaurant and bring some cash for the weekly raffle drawing. This year, the 10-concert line-up kicks off April 22 with The Music of Queen tribute band (accompanied by the Sinfonia Gulf Coast orchestra!) and continues weekly through June 24.

The magic behind the music is a lot of hard work. Careful planning begins about six months before the first show starts.

"We truly work as a team and are tasked with all things related to the concerts. We identify the bands, handle booking them, negotiating fees, arranging se-



curity and the food trucks. The only thing we don't handle is the raffle," he explains.

The MKAF CIV concerts date back to 1995, and stand as the first and longest running concert series in Destin, perhaps Northwest Florida. As with any longtime tradition, locals are bound to have opinions about it.

"We try to have something for everyone, we book all sorts of genres from rock and pop to funk and soul," Wilkinson explains. "We don't repeat too much, but we do bring back some bands simply because they are audience favorites."

What makes for a great music concert? Wilkinson says there is recipe for success:

"A combination of the right atmosphere, the right audience that creates a high level of energy. When enthusiasm is there between an audience and performer, they feed off each other and it inevitably turns into amazing event."

Wilkinson should know. The MKAF Dugas Pavilion isn't the only venue he books. This concert connoisseur often hosts "house party" concerts in his Niceville living room. Shannon Labrie, Kyshona Armstrong and Jay Clemons, who played sax in Bruce Springsteen's band, are just a few of the musicians who have performed for the Wilkinson's and their friends.

"We've met a lot of great artists and some of them have become friends and hang out with us when they pass through town," he says.

As the committee chair, Wilkinson recognizes pleasing everyone means programming a broad range of music, but he personally prefers to hear singer/songwriters, saying, "original music is art."

But no matter your taste in music, Wilkinson says there are plenty of reasons for everyone to come out to the MKAF Concerts in the Village.

"It's a great venue, a great space and a great audience, and always great music," he says. "It's a perfect way to spend an evening in Destin and it's just fun."

MKAF Concerts in the Village are free to MKAF members. For more information on the many MKAF Membership levels and all the concert details, visit MKAF.org.

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Saturday Night-**Date Night!**

Never stuffy or routine, you can include everything you love about regular dates — your favorite BYOB beverages and finger foods, plus the fun that comes with trying something new. You'll take home a great painting and even better memories. You and your partner will create a complementary set of masterpieces-together. Upcoming date nights include Beach Buddies. On Sunday, Jun. 27 from 6 to 8 p.m. and Lovers Paradise Saturday, Jun. 26 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Girls' Night Out!

Right when you thought you were out of girls' night out ideas - you found the most creative one yet! BYOW (bring your own wine)* to a paint party that's a toast to your girl gang.

Family Fun Events all Summer Long!

Bring your whole crew for a unique family outing they'll never forget. You focus on quality time and we'll handle the rest! Set your kiddo's creativity free with a new twist on fun! Book a birthday party, kids camp or Mommy & Me event!

Paint a Turquoise Turtle on Wood Board or Canvas with your Dad (Father's Day) Sunday, Jun. 20 from 6 to 9 p.m.

On Wed., June 30, get Patriotic with a Pre-Firework Paint Party!

Paint in the dark under black light at Black Light Events! Thurs., Jun 10, 6:30 p.m.

Paint Your Pet-Your furry (or scaly) friends deserve some love, too! Turn your pet's photo into a portrait with step-by-step instruction from our amazing artists. On Wed., Jun 16 at 1 p.m.



Pop Art Paint Your Own Pet for Kids! Ages 8+. On Sun., Jun. 27 from 2 to 5 p.m., paint your pet for ages 18 and up Trivia Nights--From wizards

90s coffeehouse trivia, cheers to a little friendly competition Thursday, June 17 from 6 to 9 p.m.

and zombies to space nights and

Special for the 4th of July!

On Wednesday, June 30 from 6 to 8 p.m., paint Stars, Stripes & Fireworks! Canvas or Porch Leaner.

The June calendar offers a variety of paintings- from seasonally-inspired landscapes to decorative DIY wood board signs, funny self-portraits, and more! Find a paint night theme that fits you, then sign up at paintingwithatwist.com/ studio/fort-walton-beach/ calendar.

ECTC Presents Summer Camps! 10 Different Programs, 12 Artist Experts, a Full-Length Musical and More

Share the spotlight with the likes of Matilda, Alexander Hamilton, Harry Potter, SpongeBob, Dr. Seuss, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and others

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) presents 10 different Summer Camp programs including popular musicals like "Hamilton," "Puffs (Harry Potter), "Sponge Bob," "Seussical" the staging of a fulllength musical, "Matilda," plus hands-on workshops for theater "techies" and film buffs.

Altogether there are 16 ECTC program sessions ranging from one-, two- or threeweek camps that will be held during the summer (May 31 to August 1) for all ages-from rising kindergarteners to rising high school seniors.

For the first time, ECTC will stage a full-length musical production as part of its summer educational program-Roald Dahl's "Matilida the Musical."

Another first is the recruitment of 10 performing arts "experts"-including theater professors and professional Broadway actors, singers and producers -who will join ECTC's artist/teacher production team to offer a wide range of performing art lessons and workshops including vocal, song and monologue coaching; audition and acting techniques; Laban efforts, movement, dance, choreography and even stage combat.

"The Musical Theatre Intensive is our response to our students' growing desire to be challenged in the craft of theater," ECTC co-founder and producing artistic director Nathanael Fisher says. "This opportunity

to work alongside ECTC professionals and professional guest artists is a special and unique experience."

For more information on the ECTC Musical Intensive "experts" visit www.emeraldcoast-



theatre.org/musical-theatre-intensive.

Summer Camp locations are ECTC, 560 Grand Boulevard (upstairs) in Grand Boulevard at Sandestin in Miramar Beach; Seaside Neighborhood School

in Seaside; and the Amelia Center Theatre Lab at Gulf Coast State College in Panama City.

ECTC's 2021 Summer Camp line up:

• Mini Player Camp (ages 5-7, rising kindergarteners)

· "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (grades 2-8) • "SpongeBob: The Musical"

and "Hamilton"-Musical Teen Cabaret Intensive (grades 6-12)

• "Puffs: The Play" (grades 7-12).

• "Seussical the Musical Jr."

(grades 2-8)

• Techies Rule (grades 5-12)

• Film Camp (grades 5-12) • Matilda The Musical

(grades 6-12)

• Private Vocal Lessons with Peter Lake (grades 5-8)

Scholarships are available for select summer camps, apply online at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org/scholarship. Discounts offered for multiple registrations.

For more information or to register for an ECTC Summer Camp offering, visit www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org or call (850) 684-0323.



View the calendar at PaintingWithaTwist.com 255 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, Suite B - 8, Fort Walton Beach • (850) 226-7218

You paint and party... we clean up the mess!

Around Town

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Around Town



It was a record setting evening raising \$500K for the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) at its 22nd annual signature "Bow Ties & Bling" Gala at the Hilton Sandestin. In what became the first matching funds occasion for ECCAC, the Jim Pierce Family, for whom the Pierce Family CAC is named

after in Walton County, stepped forward to offer to match the guest Paddle Raise. As it turns out, the Paddle Raise amounted to \$100K, then Jim and Tammy Pierce matched that for a total of \$200K raised for that alone. An additional \$300K was raised via the non-profit's live and silent auctions and a wine pull. With Centers in Okaloosa and Walton County, in ECCAC's 21-year history, right at 15,000 children have received more than 150,000 services at no cost to include mental health therapy, crisis intervention, referrals to other community providers,

interviews and medicals. Visit www.eccac.org or call (850) 833-9237, Ext. 283.

The Destin Chamber's annual standup paddle board race is back — Paddle at the Park Sponsored by Destin ER. The event is moving to Henderson Beach State Park; hence, the name change! Formerly known as Paddle at the Porch, this event, now in its 9th year, will be held on Aug. 21, 2021. It features 1- and 3-mile recreational races and a 6-mile elite race, to be followed by awards, food and fun! Paddle at the Park Sponsored by Destin ER targets locals and visitors interested in the rapidly growing standup paddle board sport. Open to the public, it is being held in partnership with BOTE and Henderson Beach State Park. Want to sponsor? Email cassy@DestinChamber.com.

Destin Rotary's recent Annual Cajun Crawfish Bash held at The Towne Centre at Seascape with co-host Mezcal Mexican Grill raised an approximate record-breaking \$15,000! Event proceeds are benefitting Food For Thought, Harvest House, Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's community outreach initiatives and The Rotary Club of Destin's Scholarship Fund.

Trees on the Coast recently planted two oak trees at Destin Elementary School. Future plans included cleaning up the corner of Kelly and Beach (on the school side) and planting an "Honor Tree" there for Kohltan.

Ask Destinites

By PATRICIA LEE Beach Flags & Turtles, Oh My!

For the past month I have seen a lot of talk in our local Destinites Facebook Group about how crowded we are and the lack of beach flag and turtle awareness. More people means more water rescues and more trash left behind. Many residents and business owners are stepping up with ideas to help in these areas. Read about some of those ideas below and see if you can join in to help or come up with an idea of your own.

Flags: Visitors walk right by the flag charts and sigs at the beach entrances. We have to be more creative to get their attention. Here are some things currently being done. Some businesses are flying colored flags in coordination with the color of the beach flags. If all businesses would do this, visitors would notice and ask what it is all about. Some restaurants actually print the flag chart on their togo bags. Little things like this could make a big difference if all businesses would participate. One citizen recently started an awareness campaign with volunteers wearing flag awareness T-shirts on the beach during red or double red flag days. Another citizen has started a wristband campaign where the colored bands coordinate with the colors of the flags and info is inserted into each package. Hotels, resorts and condo owners are buying these to give out to their guests.



Turtles: We all know that more needs to be done to help visitors be aware of our turtles nesting and the importance of them being able to get from the beach to the water at night. Here are some suggestions made by Destinites. 1. Resorts should hand out packets of turtle info including red stickers to cover flashlights. 2. Resorts who have beach patrol should hand out fines when they see people leaving their trash, chairs, toys, etc., on the beach. 3. Beach rules/turtle info should be included in the contract the visitor signs with the resort or condo owner. 4. Small, colorful turtle signs should be placed around the dunes and beach entrances. 5. Hotels and Condos could provide turtle shaped soaps in a gift basket along with awareness info.

If you would like to know more about any of the campaigns mentioned and how you can get involved, email me at DestinitesFounder@ gmail.com or join us at www. Facebook.com/groups/Destinites (locals only, please). Thank you and remember to also visit us at www.Destinites. com.



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