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FWB Life

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Moving Kids from Hunger to Hope

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

In April, local business F45 hosted a “Playoff” event to raise money for the 4th Annual Hope for the Hungry Emerald Coast packing event taking place August 6. No small feat, on this day, community volunteers are planning to pack 300,000 meals at the Emerald Coast Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach.

Though local, the August 6th event has global impact; packed meals will go directly to Haiti to feed hungry children. Hope for the Hungry Emerald Coast partners with an organization called Mission of Hope to make it happen. Mission of Hope partners with several meal-packing organizations, which procure the bulk food, transport food to the event, provide all packing equipment and secure shipping to Haiti. Donations of any amount are donated to the Mission of Hope foundation.

The reality is that millions of kids in Haiti do not know where they will get their next meal.

Mission of Hope is current-



ly feeding more than 100,000 kids a day through a network of schools and orphanages, but have about 73,000 more children on a wait list.

Last June, local volunteers packed 250,000 meals that ended up in Haiti right around the time of the August earthquake. The meals provided some relief for those

impacted by the earthquake. “Our relatively small community also holds the record for the most meals packed on a single day in a single location in the U.S. (through Mission of Hope),” said Kim Bauman, a volunteer. On Saturday, August 6th, there will be over 800 volunteers at the Emerald Coast Convention Center

who will pack a goal of over 300,000 meals for kids in Haiti. “Our community donated \$100,000 over the past year to make this happen,” said Kim.

Mhari Turner and her son, Bryson, are the heartbeats behind this cause and head up

HOPE

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Meet Jeff Powell of Veterans 48: Keeping It Real



BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

“Twenty-two veterans take their lives every day. We are just trying to reduce that 22 by giving them more purpose and giving them a distraction if nothing else.”

~ Jeff Powell

Our Hometown Hero Jeff Powell is the founder and President of Veterans 48, a 501c3 non-profit organization, whose goal is to build modified bikes for wounded veterans. Jeff himself spent 30 years serving in the air force, and upon retiring, realized he was missing a critical piece of his life from being active

VETERANS 48

continued on page 2

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SATURDAYS 12PM



SUNDAYS 12PM

 Community
VETERANS 48*continued from page 1*

duty: The camaraderie he had enjoyed being part of a community of military men and women. When he retired, Jeff missed the people who spoke the same language, understood the experiences he'd had, and the bonds that were formed from lives unique to warriors. When he left a distinguished military career there was a deep sense of loss as the call signs, stories, and nicknames ended.

"After that much time, culturally, socially, you pick up habits. Separating from that culture, that environment, even though it's a positive retirement, it still leaves you isolated and feeling without purpose. I tried the contractor thing, but I didn't feel fulfilled. I worked for Tesla and that

was fun for a while, but it was too physical. So, I bought this building. I always loved riding; so did my friends. We call ourselves Wild Hogs. There's a sense of freedom when you ride, but you're also trying to survive, just trying not to get hit and keeping it between the lines. It lets you get out of your head. I want to give that back to guys who have lost a leg."

Many men and women who leave the military tend to retire at their last assignment. As friends move on from the base, however, loneliness sets in for those who have left the life and still remain. It can especially take a toll on soldiers who have come back from combat. The isolation can jeopardize their mental well-being, particularly if they have come back from combat with life-changing injuries. Jeff and his

wife, Jackie, also a retired vet decided to build a community that these vets could be a part of, and Veterans 48 was born.

"Twenty-two veterans kill themselves every day so we are just trying to reduce that 22 by giving them more purpose and giving them a distraction if nothing else."

Jeff and Jackie are avid motorcycle enthusiasts and it was bike building that became the "excuse" for their fellow vets to gather. Their building at 50 Hill Ave., just outside the back gate of Hurlburt Field, is the clubhouse in which he invites vets to come, gather, tell their stories, and rebuild the community they left behind. At Veterans 48, they can have a cup of coffee, listen to music, and settle in for great conversation where "we understand us," says Jeff.

Veterans 48 strives to help those who, for example, have been removed from combat due to injuries or other reasons. Funds are raised for parts, and Jeff is working on a program whereby there will be parts and instructions on building a bike in a week — a hands-on wrench-therapy bike where the vet will be the one building the bike. The goal for builds done through Jeff's organization is that each bike has authentic, brand-new parts. Then they will be able to present a working bike ready to go.

Jeff stresses that this isn't just for people who love motorcycles. There was even a single mom who is a gunsmith and veteran, who fixed and restored guns. He's excited about all the activity that happens in his building.

"It's about the connection.

Get off the couch and come to the shop. Not the clinic at the VA, not the doctor, not the bar. Come to this healthy environment where we joke and kid and tease each other, just like we do in the military, and get back to that camaraderie you miss when you get out. This is for the military who want to find that community again."

For more information, visit Veterans48.org and to donate, veterans48.org/donate. Jeff says the Crestview American Legion just donated \$6,000, the largest single donation yet. "When you donate, 100% of donations goes to building bikes," says Jeff.

Michelle Ruschman is a local writer, artist, jewelry artisan and speaker. Connect with her at michelleruschman.com, on Insta @michelle_ruschman_art, and on her Facebook group, The Prodigal Artist Gallery.

HOPE*continued from page 1*

the efforts in our community.

On January 12, 2010, a devastating earthquake hit Port-au-Prince Haiti. At just 3 years old at the time, Bryson spent the next year praying for Haiti daily. In 2014 and 2015, Bryson

and his family were able to go on a mission trip with Mission of Hope to visit the country that had been on his heart for so many years. "It was amazing watching him with the kids in Haiti," said Mhari. "We had no idea what God was planting in his heart and how it would turn into literally leading a commu-

nity into packing hundreds of thousands of meals."

The Hope for the Hungry event got started after young Bryson's two trips. Only age 8 after the second trip, he and Mhari knew they had to do something about it. "Seeing Haiti, the poverty and everything about it, there's just no way to not do



anything about what you see," said Bryson.

After that second trip, Bryson began continually asking about raising money to host a food packing event to help Mission of Hope to feed kids in Haiti. By 2019, through many fundraising efforts, Bryson raised \$6,000 and packed 22,000 meals. In the fall of 2020, they packed another 40,000. In June of 2021, Bryson, his family, several local churches, and the greater Destin community came together to pack a full container of food which was 250,000 meals!

This August, volunteers will pack 300,000 meals with the help of the community and businesses such as F45. "This really is a local event that has a global effect," said Bryson.

You can volunteer on August 6th to help pack meals: missionofhope.com/Hope-for-the-

hungry. For more information, visit the Facebook page: www.facebook.com/hopeforthehungryEC.

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Tax Relief for Floridians

By JIM JAQUESS

Governor DeSantis recently signed into law more than \$1.2 billion of tax relief for Floridians. The new law creates 10 sales tax holidays for a variety of items commonly purchased by Florida families, including fuel, diapers, disaster supplies and tools.

“Florida’s economy has consistently outpaced the nation, but we are still fighting against inflationary policies imposed on us by the Biden administration,” Governor DeSantis said. “In Florida, we are going to support our residents and help them afford the goods that they need. Florida has been fiscally responsible, so we are in a good position to provide meaningful relief for families, right now.”

The 10 tax holidays are:

A one-month **Fuel Tax Holiday from October 1-31, 2022**, saving Floridians \$200 million by lowering the price of gas by 25.3 cents per gallon.

A 3-month sales **tax holiday for children’s books from May 14 through August 14, 2022**, providing \$3.3 million in tax relief.

A one-year sales tax holiday from **July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, for baby and toddler clothes and shoes**, providing \$81.5 million in tax relief.

A one-year sales tax holiday from **July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, for children’s diapers**, providing \$38.9 million in tax relief.

A 14-day **Back-to-School sales tax holiday from July 25 through August 7, 2022**, for clothing, shoes, backpacks and school supplies, providing \$100 million in tax relief.

A 7-day **Tool-Time sales tax holiday from September 3-9, 2022**, for tools and other home improvement items, providing \$12.4 million in tax relief.

A two-year sales tax holiday from **July 1, 2022, through**



June 30, 2024, for impact resistant windows, doors and garage doors, providing \$442.8 million in tax relief.

A one-year **Energy Star Appliances sales tax holiday from July 1, 2022,**

through June 30, 2023, for washing machines, clothes dryers, water heaters and refrigerators, providing \$78.5 million in tax relief.

A 7-day **Freedom Week from July 1-7, 2022**, provided

a sales tax exemption for specified admissions and items related to recreational activities, providing \$70.6 million in tax relief.

For more information, visit floridarevenue.com.

Are You Prepared for a Hurricane?

Okaloosa County has produced a limited supply of Okaloosa County Hurricane Guides. For convenience, the hurricane guides have been distributed to various pickup locations across the county. As hurricane season began June 1 and ends November 30, the county has also pub-

lished an online version which will remain available year-round at myokaloosa.com.

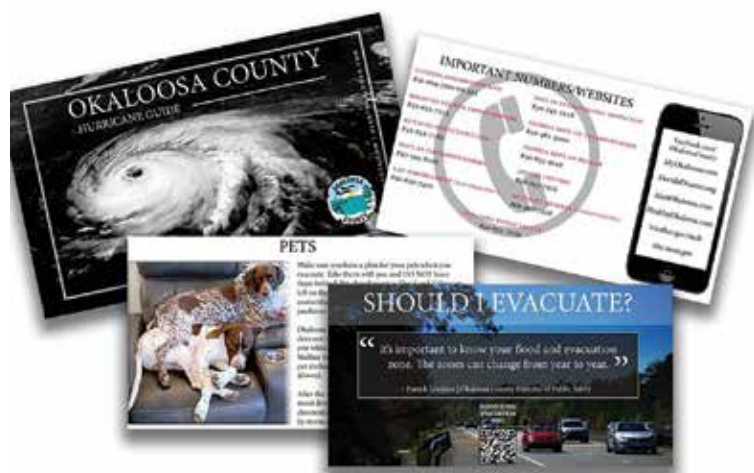
Preparedness is key to successfully weathering the storm. Residents are encouraged to download the online resource to their device or print one to use as a guide before, during and

after the storm. Find the publication at myokaloosa.com/ps/emergency-management.

While supplies last, physical copies of the publication will be

available at all six area libraries in the Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative and in our area at the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce

and the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners office at 1250 Eglin Parkway, Suite 100, in Shalimar.



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Around Town



Local **Sheryl Rohan** has been selected to receive a **\$2,000 non-traditional scholarship from the Republican Women of Okaloosa Federated** to apply to her major field of study at the college of her choice. She is pictured with RWOFF members: Bottom row from left: RWOFF President Deborah Stone; Sheryl Rohan-2022 scholarship recipient; 2022 Scholarship Chairman Billie Chappell. Send row from left: 2022 Scholarship Committee members Linda Gail Martin and Karen Neighbors. Top row: 2021 Past Scholarship Chairman Linda Flowers.

Chief George Darrel Welborn, Chief of Emergency Medical Services with Okaloosa County, was recently presented

the **H.E.R.O. Award from Okaloosa County** staff for his incredible response during an emergency in June. Long-time employee Chief Welborn jumped into action on June 3, 2022, when a man with a machete attacked a couple visiting the Okaloosa Island boardwalk. Chief Welborn's actions distracted the suspect from charging other civilians in the area until Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office deputies arrived on the scene. The County established the H.E.R.O. (Humanitarian Efforts Recognized by Okaloosa County) Award to recognize employees who not only go above and beyond the scope of their job description, but who do something that is considered to be of a humanitarian or heroic in nature.

The **Downtown FWB Farmers' Market** is open the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month, year-round, from 8 a.m.-1 p.m. and is held at the Fort Walton Beach Landing Park, 139 SE Brooks St. in



Fort Walton Beach. Vendors offer an array of locally grown and handmade items such as fresh produce, local honey, farm fresh eggs, fresh dairy products (milk, cream, cheeses, ice cream) grass fed beef, fresh pork, fresh roasted coffee, Italian ice, home-grown herbs, baked goods, handmade pastas, jams, jellies, salsas, dips, pickled veggies, infused vinegars, soaps, crafts, and tons more! Interested in becoming a vendor? Please read the guidelines and fill out the application here: <https://forms.gle/nAeAtZHhagxuhPmd6>

With hurricane season upon us, **Florida Power & Light Company** partnered with Feeding the Gulf Coast to distribute hurricane meal kits to homebound residents in DeFuniak Springs. Together, FPL, Florida Council on Aging and Feeding the Gulf Coast are distributing more than 150 hurricane preparedness kits to seniors in Walton County to ensure they have access to water and nutritious food for up to three days following a storm.

Registration for the **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast 2022-2023 After School Program** began July 11. All registration will take place in person at your local Club (not online). Okaloosa County After School Program begins August 10, 2022 and ends May 25, 2023, 2 - 6:30 p.m. (All Clubs). Have questions? Call at (850) 862-1616.

This fall, **University of West Florida** (UWF) is offer-

ing a **creative writing class** at the Emerald Coast Campus in Fort Walton Beach. Writers and students interested in exploring narrative fiction should enroll now for this course. Advanced Creative Writing 3110 84857 is a workshop course in narrative fiction, taught by Diana Jernigan that helps creative writers explore fiction through developing plot, characters, setting, point of view and other elements of fiction, with an eye toward publication. Starts this fall, August 22—Tuesday nights starting at 5:30 p.m. 1170 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd. in Fort Walton Beach. Diana Jernigan is a consultant with UWF who also teaches for the College of Business and for the Department of English. The university offers tuition waivers for senior citizens in some cases. Get started here:

<https://uwf.edu/offices/emerald-coast/> Or contact Andrea Rymer at 850.863.6569 or arymer@uwf.edu.

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Turn to Your Real Estate Agent for Lender Recommendations



BY MELISSA FORTE-LITSCHER

Everybody wants the best mortgage rate they can get, even when rising rates aren't in the news. But with rates going up lately, people are desperately searching for the best deal.

Shopping for the best rate is a smart thing to do, but you should also pay attention to whether or not that lender with a sweetheart rate can get you to the closing table! Lenders look at your credit history, your ability to keep a job, and your financial stability, but often home buyers don't think about whether the lender is reliable and a

good risk. And yes, the lender you choose to go with is a risk in any market, but all the more so lately.

Some lenders have hired too many people to keep up with increased demand over the past few years, have poor management, or just can't handle the market shift. Many mortgage lenders are laying off employees, if not entirely going out of business. This is leaving buyers in the lurch in the middle of buying a home, and sometimes just days before their closing.

Imagine being totally qualified and going through the majority of the application and underwriting process, then bam, a day or two before closing, your lender reveals they're going belly up and won't fund anymore loans. Or suppose hearing your buyer, days before closing, needs to find a new lender because theirs closed up shop, and after 30-45 days under contract, you may have to put your house back on the market. While that isn't

the norm, it can and does happen. There's a simple solution: turn to your real estate agent for advice and connections in the industry. Go with a lender your agent trusts, can get on the phone, have open lines of communication with, and ultimately push for resolutions when there's an issue. Your agent isn't recommending someone because they get a piece of the action; there are laws in place to make sure agents aren't recommending a lender for their own financial gain.

Of course, you should shop for the best rate possible. Just make sure you're doing so with lenders that are solid and well respected by your local professionals. This is timeless advice, but all the more critical now. Many homebuyers are tempted to shop only online for the lowest mortgage rate and trust the one who entices them with a tempting rate. Unfortunately, not only do they often switch the initial rate they quoted (or



just stuff hidden fees in to make up for the lower rate), there's a chance the lender can't get the loan closed. That's especially possible now, with so many lenders laying off employees and some going out of business entirely.

Ask your favorite Realtor® for his or her list of recommended local lenders. The lenders they tend to recommend:

- Have proven they're reliable and get their clients' loans approved and closed in a timely manner.
- Will honor the rate and terms they quoted.
- Offer competitive (if not the

lowest) rates compared to only online lenders.

- Communicate with them and their clients, and are responsive when there are issues.

Going with a local lender your agent recommends could easily be worth more to you than a slight potential savings you may (or may not) get from another lender.

If you'd like a recommendation or for any information, you can contact me at 850.496.7444 or Melissa@NextHomeCornerstone.com. You can also visit <http://destin-fwbrealtor.com>. I look forward to helping you.

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Community

Living Hope

BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

Cindy Smith has taught child abuse prevention in schools since the 1990s. This earlier work led her to become an advocate, author, speaker and founder of Living Hope for Today, whose mission is twofold: to teach our kids, even as young as age 3, how to deter a potential sex offender through the X Zone Body Safety Program and to remove the shame of abuse. Cindy knows firsthand the damage generational abuse can have on a family and is now working to be part of the solution.

"I married the wrong man," she said. "He was physically abusive, and we were only married for three and a half years. When I left him, my children were 18 months and my eldest daughter just turned 3. When she was 3-and-a-half, I found out through things she was saying and doing that he had sexually abused her.

"My daughter, who's now 40, doesn't remember the details of what happened and has left my granddaughter alone with my ex-husband. He's charismatic

and manipulative. So, although she knows something happened to her, she says it couldn't have been him. I have told her, 'But I'm the one who lived it with you and chose to believe you. I'm the one who was with you through the daily nightmares and acting out. I'm the one that was there when you spoke to the counselor.' We knew what happened to her.

"When I found out my 4-year-old granddaughter was being left alone with my ex-husband, I decided I needed to get a book to teach my granddaughter body safety rules."

When Cindy looked, however, she was unable to find a resource that would make sense to young children, and she desperately wanted to give her granddaughter a tool she could use.

With a counselor's guidance, Cindy wrote her children's book, "Isabella's Treasure," which teaches specific words and actions to deter a potential perpetrator, especially when the potential victim is prompted to keep the abuse a secret. One of the strategies in the book en-



ories from childhood, the first people I told were my husband and my pastor. It was freeing to know I could talk about it and people weren't going to reject me. I felt like I'd done something wrong, and I was full of shame, that something was wrong with me. When you talk about it, and people respond by sharing their own stories, or by offering you support and encouragement, those chains break off. That's why we need to talk about it."

Because child sexual abuse prevention isn't being taught in most schools, Cindy is pas-

courages the child not to keep these "sad secrets." The significance of this comes from studies that reflect that an abuser is deterred when they know a child will tell.

Now including a music video, the book has become part of the "X Zone Body Safety Program."

Just as important, Cindy wants to support those who, like

herself, live with their history of being sexually abused. In her novel for adults, "Whispered Truth," Cindy shares her abuse through the characters and storytelling. She understands firsthand how important it is for victims to have an outlet for their stories.

"For me, it was very freeing," she said. "When I first started dealing with my repressed mem-

Continued on page 8

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From the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Brian Muhlbach Appointed to Serve as Community Resource Deputy

One of Okaloosa County Sheriff Eric Aden's top goals is enhancing communication to build even stronger relationships between the citizens of Okaloosa County and our Deputies. One way of accomplishing this is through promoting the concept of community policing and establishing Community Resource Deputies throughout the county.



Community policing is a strategy of policing which focuses on strengthening bonds or partnerships with community members. In the OCSO Central District, which encompasses the southwestern portion of Okaloosa County

including Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Shalimar, Cinco Bayou and Hurlburt Field, Brian Muhlbach was recently ap-

pointed to serve as the Community Resource Deputy. Deputy Muhlbach began serving in law enforcement in 2004 and joined the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in 2018. He has served in several roles throughout his career, giving him the ability to explain the ins and outs of how local law enforcement operates. Deputy Muhlbach's primary focus is establishing and facilitating programs which build trust and understanding between our citizens and the Sheriff's Office. He is responsible for addressing quality of life issues such as ongoing nuisance issues, educating the public, and serving as a liaison for the many programs and

services offered by the Sheriff's Office.

One way of promoting communication and transparency is with routine town hall style forums and Neighborhood Watch meetings. Through collaboration with the Crime Prevention Unit, Deputy Muhlbach meets with groups to inform them on issues facing our community and to discuss ways to prevent criminal activity. Undoubtedly, one of these issues involves vehicle burglaries. Approximately 95% of the vehicle burglaries reported to the Sheriff's Office involve unlocked vehicles. Citizens are reminded to LOCK your car, TAKE your keys and

firearms and HIDE any personal belongings.

Other programs offered by the Sheriff's Office include active shooter, workplace violence and personal safety training and security surveys for churches, homes, condominiums and businesses. These programs are offered at no cost and on an ongoing basis. Neighborhoods or groups interested in hosting a community meeting, or those interested in the programs mentioned in this article are encouraged to contact Deputy Muhlbach at (850) 651-7410 ext. 2539 or by email at bmuhlbach@sheriff-okaloosa.org.

AROUND TOWN

continued from page 4

On June 2, **Gov. Ron DeSantis** signed the roughly \$112 billion State Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget, confirming the funding for projects totaling nearly **\$8 Million to benefit Okaloosa County.**

- Approved projects include:
- \$2 million for a US 98 Bridge-to-Bridge Multi-Use Path from West Okaloosa Island to Destin
 - \$750,000 for Overbrook Area Stormwater Improvements;
 - \$300,000 for Cinco Bayou Glenwood Park Water Quality Improvement;
 - \$3 million for County Road 2 Road Safety and Upgrades to Big Horse Creek and Yellow

River Bridges

- \$1.5 million for Niceville College Boulevard Multi-Use Pathway
- \$350,000 for the continued support of the Pretrial Mental Health Diversion Program.

Two County projects were vetoed, including \$1.5 million for a Florosa Water Storage Tank and funding for US 90 at Jericho Road Improvements within the Shoal River Ranch Gigasite for \$1 million. An alternate funding source for the Florosa tank will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners in July, as part of the upcoming 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.

Though the US 90 and Jericho Road Improvements were not approved as part of the State's annual budget process,

DeSantis awarded \$3.2 million to Okaloosa County through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund to expand infrastructure, including roads, at the Shoal River Ranch Gigasite.

HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital has received two **American Heart Association Get With The Guidelines achievement awards** for demonstrating commitment to following up-to-date, research-based guidelines for the treatment of stroke, ultimately leading to more lives saved, shorter recovery times and fewer readmissions to the hospital. Get With The Guidelines puts the expertise of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association to work for hospitals na-

tionwide, helping ensure patient care is aligned with the latest evidence- and research-based guidelines. As a participant in the Get With The Guidelines program, HCA Florida Fort

Walton-Destin Hospital qualified for the award by demonstrating how its organization has committed to improving quality care.

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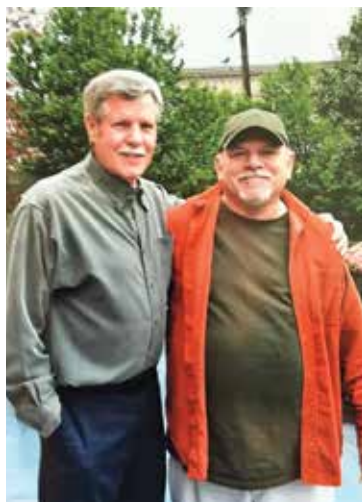
Alzheimer's Disease: Combating the Stigmas

By HANNAH WHITE

Local resident Butch McKay has witnessed first-hand the consequences of stigmas and misconceptions about Alzheimer's, a progressive and fatal brain disease affecting more than 580,000 Floridians.

When Butch's partner of 40 years, Darrel, became lost and confused after dropping Butch off one day, Butch began to suspect something was wrong. Following this first incident, he began to notice other warning signs in his partner, such as Darrel frequently forgetting things and repeating himself. Knowing that Darrel's parents had both been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Butch urged him to visit his doctor and get evaluated for the disease. However, despite the warning signs, Darrel was in denial of the idea and firmly refused evaluation, even when his doctor also advised him to come in.

It took an entire year before Darrel finally consented to going in for an evaluation and getting officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's. He lived six years following his diagnosis, passing



away in 2017.

This story is sadly an all too familiar experience for many Florida families. However, there are things you can do to ensure loved ones enjoy their life as much as possible. For Butch, it was important to be accepting and to come to terms with the changes, to not resent the new person Darrel had become.

"I did his eulogy and spoke about saying goodbye to two fantastic men who were both named Darrel and shared the same body," Butch remarks.

This June, during Alzheimer's

& Brain Awareness Month, it's vital to recognize the signs of Alzheimer's and understand how to communicate with your loved ones living with the disease. Right now, more than 6 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's. Society's stigmas, stereotypes and misconceptions about Alzheimer's add yet another layer of hurt to this already difficult disease.

Stigmas about Alzheimer's can also create rifts in the personal relationships of a person living with the disease, shaking up their support network during a time when it is desperately needed. Friends and family members may struggle with denial of the diagnosis or avoid interacting with their loved one living with Alzheimer's.

Misconceptions about Alzheimer's can discourage both those living with the disease and their loved ones from addressing the disease and having the best quality of life possible, so it's important to combat stigma and stereotypes.

The Alzheimer's Association shares these five tips to combat

stigma associated with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia:

Educate yourself. Learn the facts about Alzheimer's and other dementia, including symptoms, disease progression and challenges facing caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association website alz.org offers robust disease-related information. The association also offers online and in-person education programs and other helpful resources. Once you've learned more, share your knowledge with others, and don't be afraid to challenge misinformation.

Don't make assumptions. Alzheimer's and dementia affects each person differently. A diagnosis doesn't mean the person will have to stop their daily routine or favorite activities immediately. If someone says they have been diagnosed with dementia, take them at their word, no matter their age. Recognize that "Alzheimer's is only for old people" is another common misconception.

Continue to show support. People living with dementia don't want to lose their

friends or stop doing activities they enjoy. Be supportive and stay connected. Social engagement can contribute greatly to a person's well-being and lets people with dementia know you care.

Support the caregiver. Caregivers need support, too. Knowing more about what they go through is a good start – most caregivers wish that more people understood the realities of caring for someone living with dementia. If you know someone who is caring for a person living with dementia, show understanding and offer help. They will appreciate it.

Remember the person inside. Above all, remember that people living with dementia still have hopes, dreams, and aspirations like the rest of us. If you have a loved one diagnosed with dementia, know that feelings of loss and grief are normal, and will likely grow more intense as the disease progresses. However, it's possible for the person to live well with dementia, and maintain their quality of life for as long as possible. And you can help that person

LIVING HOPE

continued from page 6

sionate about training parents, guardians and professionals how to recognize signs of abuse.

If a community decided to make an impact on prevention, the fruit of those efforts would grow exponentially. The results

would include better mental health, less addiction, fewer kids in foster care and fewer adults in jail. Cindy Smith will be a guest

speaker at the Back to Homeschool Convention at the Crestview Community Center Aug. 13 and 14 from 9 a.m. To 4 p.m. Visit the event's Facebook page for details. Cindy can also be booked for "Stewards of Children: Darkness to Light" training or other presentations with your school, company, church or organization by calling (513) 505-3690 or emailing clsmith@livinghopefortoday.org. Visit www.livinghopefortoday.org to purchase "Isabella's Treasure" and "Whispered Truth" and to find additional resources. The best way to support Cindy and her efforts is by connecting her to those who can help children through the education she offers.

Statistics reflect that many reading this article know a victim or, perhaps, are one. The most common perpetrator is someone who is known by the victim, not a stranger. Cindy's efforts show that we are not helpless and, together, we can equip our children.

For additional resources, go to www.livinghopefortoday.org.

Not to be Missed – PRESTO!

On May 19, 2022, PRESTO! opened its doors and began dazzling attendees. The pop-up magic show features five internationally-renowned acts. Audience members have described the show as “a treat for the entire family” and “a must-see performance.”

One act that audience members can’t get enough of is that of Chris Cox, PRESTO!’s resident mentalist. Cox’s mind-reading skills have amazed more than 750,000 people worldwide and Cox stands as the only mind-reader in history to have performed on Broadway, at the Sydney Opera House and in London’s West End.

Cox, the charmingly nerdy mentalist, has captivated audiences of all kinds with his incredible mind-reading stunts and his charisma. Spectators gasp with surprise when he randomly selects an audience member and tells them the most intricate details about themselves, from their wedding anniversary to a celebrity they are thinking about. The stunned reactions

aren’t always from people in the audience as celebrities and magicians are left scratching their heads when they meet Cox and witness what he is capable of.

Cox is a self-proclaimed “mind-reader-who-can’t-read-minds.” When doing his act, Cox brings the hilarity to the stage as he presents the perfect combination of witty chit-chat, psychology, and magic that leads you to believe Chris has fully entered your mind and knows what you’re thinking.

While those in the audience will enjoy a variety of acts of illusion and showmanship, Cox refers to his specific act as “magic of the mind.” He enjoys connecting with the audience and using the many techniques he has learned over the years, including body language, influencing and “devilish good looks.”

Cox describes how proud he feels to be where he is today. “If you asked me at 6 years old what I wanted to do more than anything in the world, my answer would’ve been to entertain peo-



ple,” he said. “I love to entertain people, amaze them and make them realize how incredible our human minds are.”

Joining forces with some of the world’s most talented magicians, Cox is now gracing the stage of The Magic Parlor, an antique theater from Belgium, which appeared almost overnight at Destin Commons in early May.

See more information on PRESTO! by following on Facebook and Instagram. To purchase tickets, visit prestodestin.com or call PRESTO! box office at (850) 688-1201.



PRESTO! Loves Locals Offer

Locals with Okaloosa, Santa Rosa or Walton county IDs can purchase 2 for 1 tickets at the box office for any performance. Locals will receive one (1) ticket of equal or lesser value for each individual ticket purchased in any seating section/price range. To take

advantage of this exciting offer, locals can head over to the box office at 4100 Legendary Drive, West Lot, Destin from 1-9 p.m. Tickets can be purchased in advance or day of performance by showing local identification.

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Featuring Artists from Hollywood’s Magic Castle & America’s Got Talent

Performances Nightly this Summer at

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PRESTO!

— AT THE MAGIC PARLOR —

prestodestin.com



 Education


Superintendent Marcus Chambers

From the Okaloosa County Superintendent Okaloosa is an A+ District Once Again

in Algebra, Geometry, Biology, U.S. History and middle school Civics.

School and district grades were released by the Florida Department of Education. Statewide assessment results are a major component in the calculation of school grades. Middle and high schools also have an academic acceleration component for students who are successful in advanced classes or who earn industry certifications. High schools have a graduation rate component as well.

Statewide assessment scores were released recently for Florida's public-school students in English Language Arts (ELA) Grades 4-10, Mathematics Grades 3-8, Science Grades 5 and 8, and End-of-Course exams

Okaloosa received an overall grade of A, one of 14 districts in the state to earn the highest

rating. Superintendent Marcus Chambers was pleased with the results overall, considering the challenges experienced over the last two years. "Okaloosa joins St. Johns and Sarasota as the only three counties in the state to earn an A rating every year since the baseline year for the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in 2014-2015. That's something of which we can all be very proud!"

Individual school grade results are as follows:

- 17 schools maintained their grade from the last time it was reported for the 2018-2019 school year
- 11 schools fell one letter

grade from either A to B or B to C

- 5 schools fell two letter grades from A to C

- 3 schools, Fort Walton Beach High School, Choctawhatchee High School, and Crestview High School, received an "I" for incomplete. District staff are working with the Department of Education to resolve that issue.

- No schools received a D or F

Chambers noted that the last two years have been unprecedented in public education. "We felt that coming through the last two years of COVID could definitely have an impact on student performance and school grades, particularly in the elementary level where 3rd grade students have only known going to school in an abnormal environment. Four of the five schools that fell two letter grades were elementary schools. We are excited to see how quickly these schools rebound to their former performance levels."

While it is expected that high ranking districts such as Okaloosa outperform state averages, which it did in every tested category released, Superintendent Chambers highlighted a few areas in which he was particularly proud of student performance. "We continue to do very well in Algebra I with 65% of our students proficient compared to the state average of 54% and in Geometry with 65% proficient compared to the state average of 50%. In middle school Civics, 74% of students were proficient compared to the state average of 69%, and in US History, 73% were proficient compared to the state average of 65%. US History and Civics are a very important part of our curriculum, and we want to continue to excel in this area."

Secondary science was also a strongpoint with Grade 8 science results showing 60% of students proficient compared to the state average of 45%. In Biology, which is tested in Grade 9, 69% of students were proficient compared to the state average of 61%.

Grade 7 and 8 Mathematics results showed 62% and 54% of students proficient, compared to state averages of 46% and 42%, respectively.

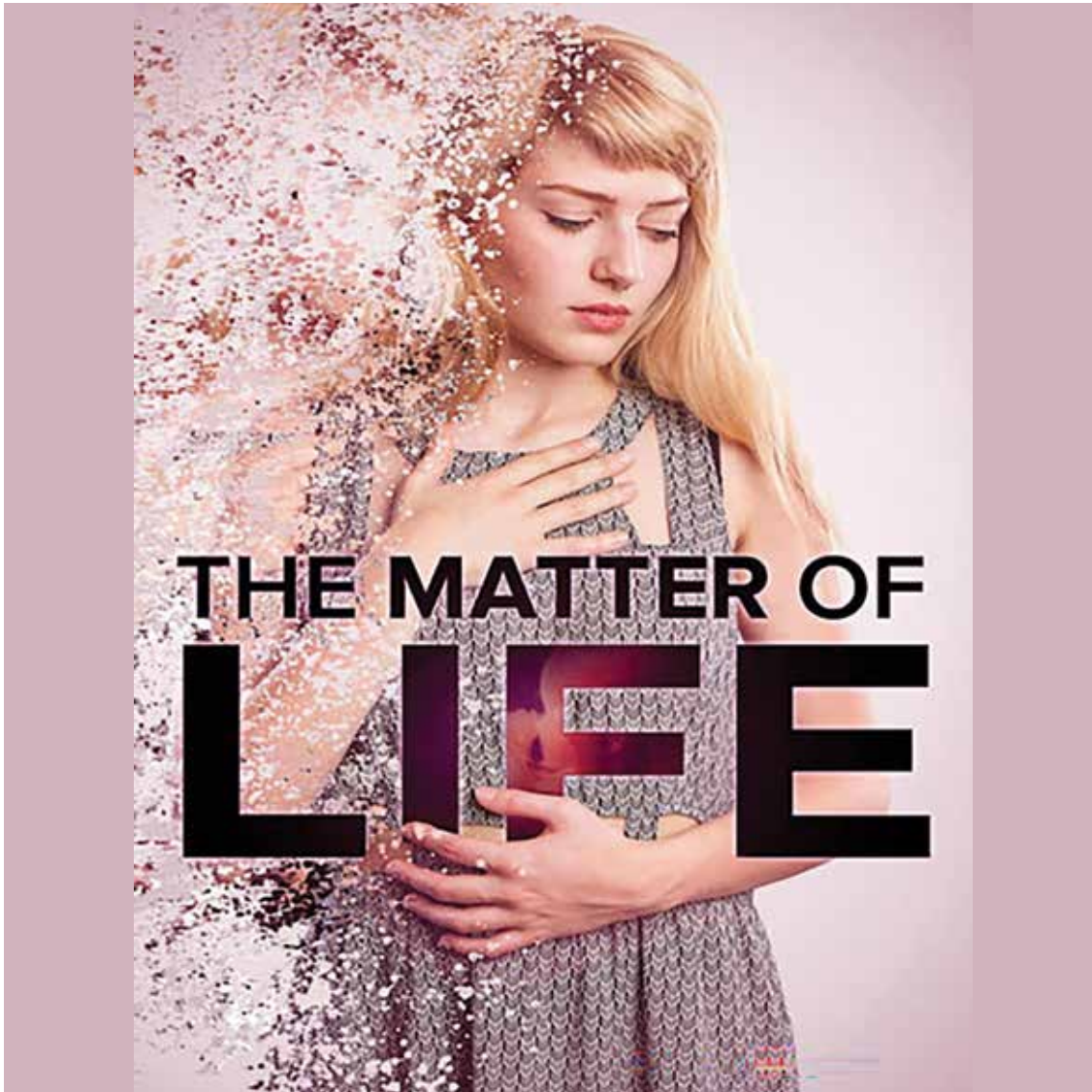
"While celebrating the success achieved by our students as a whole, we will re-focus efforts in certain areas such as early elementary ELA and in schools where we did not see the results we anticipated." The district earlier reported that Grade 3 proficiency had dropped from 63% to 58%. Grade 4 ELA had a 58% proficiency rate, one point above the state average of 57%.

Those efforts began with an expanded Summer Intensive Studies program this year that served not only retained elementary students who were working to earn promotion to the next grade level but also any student having academic need. At the middle and high school levels, students used the summer program to retake coursework that was not passed during the year and completed 2,345 semester courses in total which helped keep them on track for graduation.

This is the last year that the FSA will be given. New legislation authorizes the replacement of the year-end FSA with the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), a progress monitoring approach that will provide teachers and parents with statewide assessment information throughout the school year rather than only during the summer.

The 2022-23 school year will begin for students on Wednesday, August 10. Parents enrolling their students and are NEW (K-12) to the Okaloosa County School District should enroll by creating an account in the FOCUS Parent Portal at <https://okaloosa.focusschoolsoftware.com/focus/auth/>.

For questions, visit www.okaloosaschools.com/focus. You can also email FOCUSHELP@okaloosaschools.com or call the enrolling school with your questions. School contact numbers can be found at www.okaloosaschools.com in the Schools link.



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This documentary compels us to understand what it means to be **pro-life** and form our own individual beliefs based on more than what is said in the media.

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TO READ THIS ISSUE ONLINE**

Coastline K9's New Location Provides Specialized Dog Training

By LORI SMITH

Congratulations to veteran-owned and operated Coastline K9 on its recent grand opening in Fort Walton Beach! With an elite team of prior military, Special Operations and Law Enforcement K9 handlers, Coastline K9 is a business that provides customized training for dogs and world-class protection dogs for family and other needs.

The trainers work with any breed, any age to be obedient. "But we're not your average protection dog company," said Byron. "Our leadership team is made up of special operations K9 handlers who have trained and utilized protection dogs in some of the most dangerous and demanding circumstances ever." He said because of that, the team understands the importance of security and protection in ways that many have never experienced. "These K9's serve as a personal security guard for you and your loved ones, a loyal companion that can go anywhere with you, and a highly intelligent asset that can adapt and learn new skills," said Byron. "You can enjoy the life you've created for yourself while your protection dog takes on the responsibility of being hyper-vigilant."

"The dog thing found me," said Byron. In fact, Byron, a local who grew up in Destin and Pensacola, joined the military in 2001 and served our country

as a Special Ops Army Ranger. While serving, he risked his life to protect ours, as do so many others. "That's why dog training is such a perfect fit," says Byron. "Anything can happen to anyone, and we train our dogs to handle it. That gives me a lot of satisfaction and also utilizes my experience and knowledge."

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

Serving clients throughout the U.S., Byron expanded Coastline K9 to our area. The business originated in Naples where the non-profit RESCUE 22 Foundation 5013{c} was also founded.

"The first step is to evaluate your individual needs to find the right dog and then provide customized training to suit your unique lifestyle," said Byron. He further stated the majority of K9s are imported from Europe, where the world's best K9s have been bred for decades. "We hand-select the pedigree for excellent temperament—a balance between being loving, loyal and protective—and security attributes to perfectly suit an owner's



personality, lifestyle and protection requirements."

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

The new Fort Walton Beach location, the largest on the East Coast, is a host each month to educational seminars for dog



trainers that are open to the public. Along with the daily business, it is also a local Rescue 22 Foundation partner and has become a local law enforcement police dog trainer.

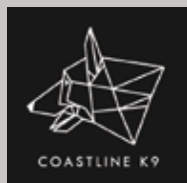
Visit coastlinek9.com, facebook.com/CoastlineK9 or give Coastline K9 a call at (850) 428-0121. 819 Navy Street, Fort Walton Beach 32547.



**Dog behavior problems? Considered dog training?
Need more information? Let's talk.**

Our team is composed of Special Operations Veterans who have trained and handled K9s in the world's most dangerous and demanding conditions.
Anything can happen. Our dogs are trained to handle it.

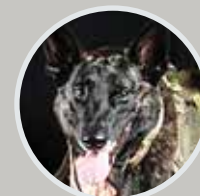
**Family Protection Dog Sales • Behavior Modifications
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www.coastlinek9.com

Instagram: instagram.com/coastline_k9



 Dining

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Holi is a unique combination of Indian Cuisine and Indian heritage bringing you a variety of dishes from different regions of India. The menu contains both vegetarian and non-veg-

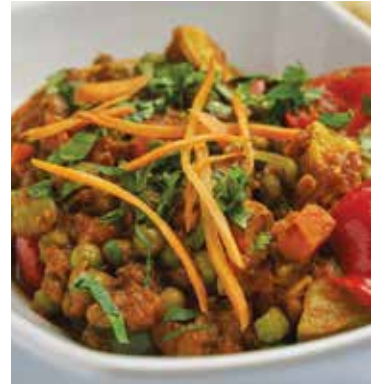
etarian dishes. For those with pure food indulgence in mind, sate your desires with Holi's ever changing, internationally and seasonally inspired small plates. Holi not only uses authentic Indian spices, but also customizes

the spice level for greater experience. The menu is available online with orders available for takeout or pickup.

holirestaurants.com
280 Eglin Pkwy. NE, FWB
(850) 362-6077

AJ's on the Bayou

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HoliRestaurants.com



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ing the Cinco Bayou. AJ's on the Bayou serves brunch and bottomless Mimosas with food purchase and weekday lunch specials for \$10.95. Serving up delicious daily specials and entertaining live music all month.

ajsonthebayou.com
200 NE Eglin Pkwy., FWB
(850) 226-7579

AJ's Oyster Shanty - Okaloosa Island

Located on Okaloosa Island, AJ's Oyster Shanty serves up fresh seafood, cold oysters and the best live music on the Island. Don't miss the Thursday Prime Dinner Special—enjoy a 10 oz. cut of prime rib served with baked potato and choice of side salad or cup of French onion soup every Thursday at 4 p.m. Combine with live music nightly at 7 p.m. on the outdoor stage and it's a combination you can't resist!

ajsoystersshanty.com
108 Santa Rosa Blvd., FWB
(850) 226-8108

One Woman's Journey: How Restaurants Can Help Save Sea Turtles

BY HEATHER BENNETT

Long before people were enjoying the white sand beaches and emerald green waters along The Emerald Coast, sea turtles were coming ashore to nest their eggs. They now share the area with around 500,000 people. That number surges as tourists flock to the area. What we do affects the life of the sea turtle. The trash we leave behind, specifically plastic, has been dangerous to their health.

One thousand sea turtles die annually from digesting plastic. Plastic stays in the stomach of the turtle, and as it builds up, the brain thinks the stomach is full, but in reality they aren't getting the nutrients that they need. The mortality rate of a sea turtle that ingests 14 pieces of plastic jumps to 50%.

Straws are the most commonly found plastic materials by our volunteers on the beach. Americans discard 500 million straws per day. With all of the restaurants along the coast where we can get our smoothies, iced coffee, sweet tea, and cocktails, you can imagine how many straws end up on our beaches and in the Gulf. Straws find their way into the water and can be mistaken by the sea turtles as food.

There are a few alternatives to plastic straws. Paper and other plant-based straws are passed off as biodegradable, but contain polyfluoroalkyl substances known as "forever chemicals" that have an extreme resistance to environmental breakdown. These can also lead to adverse health effects in humans at low levels. Reusable straws are popular, but people don't always remember to bring them, and they are hard to keep clean and sanitary on the go.

A great alternative to these is 100% organic Bamboo Straws. Walton County resident and entrepreneur Khuyen Bui is the principal behind Econet Green Products working to make bamboo straws affordable and available along The Emerald Coast. The 100% organic Bamboo Straws are produced in a small village in Vietnam, cut from living bamboo branches, cleaned,



post to 20,000 followers.

If you are interested in helping prevent plastic straws from harming our sea turtles by purchasing these 100% organic Bamboo Straws, please contact Econet Green Products at 850-287-8415 or Life Media at 850-399-0228. For more information, visit the Econet Facebook Page at Facebook.com/econetgreen, or their Website at www.econetco.com for your order. If you are a consumer and would like to see your favorite restaurant carry organic Bamboo Straws, please let them know.

The carbon footprint we leave behind is a constant threat to sea turtles and other marine life that are vital to our fragile ecosystem. Let's do our part to keep the Emerald Coast green, by becoming trailblazers in the use of Bamboo Straws, leading other coastal communities to join a positive environmental impact.

sanitized and individually paper wrapped for single serving usage.

Instead of customers receiving a free plastic straw the restaurant has to purchase, restaurant owners can purchase bamboo straws for 10 cents each and resell them in their restaurants. Organic bamboo straws available now in online stores, are reusable and unwrapped, and cost almost \$1 each. They are more expensive and unsanitary com-

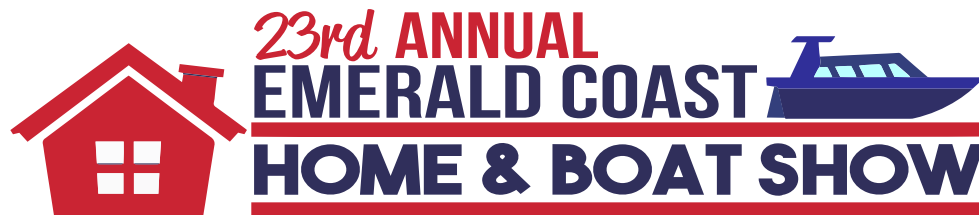
pared to the Bamboo Straws sold by Econet.

"Why not offer an affordably priced organic bamboo straw that enhances your product, will pay for themselves, and more importantly, support the environment?" Khuyen said. Restaurants can ask customers to pay pennies on the dollar to help keep our beaches plastic straw free. Khuyen also said "the price can be lower than 10 cents each, if we can gain significant community

support and work together for a non-plastic future."

Life Media is supporting the purchase of these 100% organic bamboo straws by offering marketing incentives. Any restaurants that purchase the Econet bamboo straws can get a featured story in Life Media Newspapers (80,000 in circulation), recognition in a dedicated page of South Walton Life promoting use of organic straws for protecting the sea turtles, and a monthly Facebook

BOOTH SPACE AVAILABLE NOW



**Saturday & Sunday, September 24th and 25th
at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center**

The largest, best and only combined **free admission** to the public Home & Boat Show in the State of Florida – the 23rd Annual Emerald Coast Home and Boat Show will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 24 and 25, at the beautiful Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center.

This year's Post-Covid event will be the biggest and best ever, featuring over 100 vendors in many different categories offering Home Show Specials, Mortgage Info, Realtors, AC, Plumbing, Electrical, Windows and Doors, Remodelers, Roofers, Insurance, Kitchens and Baths, Blinds and Shades, Painting, Foundations, Security, Outdoor Buildings, Restoration and other Service Industries. Plus, Retail and Home-Based Business Vendors, Health Care Evaluations, Non-Profit Organizations - and an **end of the season Boat Show and sale** sponsored by Captain's Choice Boats, Bluewater Bay Yachts, Florida Airboat Partners and Blue Coral Sport Fishing Towers.

The vendors will also give away over \$20,000 in door prizes and Free Swag. Home Show Sponsors include Floridian Brand, Ecoview Windows & Doors, Defined Interiors, Horizon Improvements, 1st Choice Painting, The Final Touch Design Studio, Scentsy, Freeman Roofing, Life Media, Cumulus Radio and Omni Broadcasting.

More info at the website www.paradisepromotionsfl.com/home-show

Off the Hook

COURAGEOUS Deployed

On April 28, the Air Force Research Laboratory and Eglin Air Force Base's Integrated Test Team demonstrated a new low-cost, air-delivered capability for defeating maritime threats, that successfully destroyed a full-scale surface vessel in the Gulf of Mexico. The vessel was the COURAGEOUS and our Coastal Resource Team was on hand to assist with the mapping data. The plans are to add these coordinates to our artificial reef system demonstrating how the results of Eglin's testing can benefit our coastal environment. In addition to providing new places to dive, the artificial reefs allow for a healthy ecosystem. The QUICKSINK program, a Navy partnership, aims to provide options to "neutralize surface maritime threats." Check out an amazing 3D interactive model of the COURAGEOUS on the web

page about Artificial Reefs, courtesy of ReefSmartGuides.com.

Upcoming Deployments

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism's Coastal Resource Team is in the process of acquiring several new vessels for deployment. Dates and locations TBD.

- CORDONAZO Sailboat within 45 days (67 feet)
- MISS NELLIE tugboat within 60 days (62.5 feet)
- RV Dolphin (178 feet) + Manta (180 feet) before October 1, 2022
- Atlantis (125 feet) + Cyclops (110 feet) before October 1, 2022
- AJ's Blackbeard Sailboat within 120 days (64 feet)
- Deployment of secondary use material
- FAD redeployment in the next 120 days



Artificial Reef directional signs were installed on Okaloosa Island beach access 2, 4, 6 and Beasley Park. These reefs are swimmable from the shore and allow for easy access for snorkeling the reefs.



PHOTO SCOURTESY OF DESTIN-FORT WALTON BEACH FL

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SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

Collecting school supplies and donations to give to local schools

Event at AJ's on the Bayou on Friday, July 29th from 12-6

Collect supplies the entire month of July and come drop them off the day of the event.

SUPPLY LIST:
 Paper: lined paper, copy paper, construction paper, spiral notebooks, composition books, index cards
 General Supplies: blue or black pens, #2 pencils, colored pencils, erasers, crayons, pencil sharpeners, pencil cases, markers, highlighters, dry erase markers, report covers, pocket folders, rulers, protractors, glue sticks, scissors
 Classroom Staples: calculators, staples, staplers, paper clips
 Things you can't have too much of: tissues, sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizer, paper towels, gloves, BACK PACKS

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Limestone Coral Reef Deployed in Gulf

In celebration of World Coral Reef Awareness Day, Starborough Wine partnered with Reefmaker, the largest reef builder in the U.S., to deploy its first limestone reef two miles off the coast of Fort Walton Beach in June. It is designed to help maintain and rebuild ocean habitats off the coast of Florida.

To combat and help protect reefs across the country, Reefmaker has deployed over 50,000 reefs made of Florida Limestone which are comprised of ancient clamshells that perfectly match a natural reef in PH and substrate. Starborough's artificial reef is located two miles off the coast of Florida and weighs 18 tons, stands 15 feet tall, and is 19 feet wide. The structure is able to withstand storms with up to hurricane 5 force winds and waves, providing a safe habitat for all forms of marine life.



Starborough also partners with Oceana, the largest international ocean conservation organization, and has donated over \$100,000 to the organization since 2020. In August, Starborough will donate \$1 from every wine bottle sold, up

to \$50,000, to Oceana to continue supporting their efforts in protecting ocean habitats. As the world's largest international organization focused solely on protecting our oceans, Oceana helps restore and protect the biodiversity, abundance, and

equilibrium of our oceans.

Starborough invites locals to play a role in a second coral reef deployment by engaging with their Instagram channel. If Starborough reaches 100,000 engagements (likes, comments, shares and new followers), the

brand will deploy a second limestone reef. For more information on Starborough's ocean conservation efforts, visit www.starboroughwine.com/inspiration/oceana-partnership.php and follow Starborough on Instagram @starboroughwine.

Locals Gain Free Day Use Park Admission

Do you have a library card? Use it this summer to check out a day pass to your favorite local Florida State Park. The Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services, in conjunction with public libraries across Florida, has partnered with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida State Parks, to offer State Park Day Passes to library patrons through The Real Florida Reader Day Pass initiative.



PHOTO COURTESY FLORIDA STATE PARKS

perfect opportunity for Floridians to get out this summer to explore Florida's natural treasures."

Find your local library and a state park by visiting the Real Florida Reader at www.floridastateparks.org/RealFloridaReader Info.Florida.gov/

RealFloridaReader.

Participants are also encouraged to share their stories on social media using RealFloridaReader.

Each library location will receive an allotted number of passes. They do not include entry to federal parks, national for-

ests or national wildlife refuges. They are for day use access only and don't include camping or any other fees.

For more information, visit FloridaStateParks.org/RealFloridaReader.

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Hormones Aren't For Me



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

Have you or a friend tried hormone therapy in the past and had no results or minimal results? Worse are the patients who have tried hormone therapy and had bad results. It's not uncommon for us to hear this from patients who have tried hormone therapy with other providers in the past.

Fortunately, in medicine there is an enormous amount of training involved to become a provider. Unfortunately, once you are a provider, it can be easy to add treatments and procedures to your clinic with minimal or no training. I know some doctors who have learned how to do pellet therapy from watching videos on the internet. The same is true for Botox and fillers. Just because someone can perform a procedure does not always mean they are capable or should be performing that procedure.

Hormone pellet therapy is more than just an algorithm and more than just a procedure. There are a lot of seemingly minor details that are vitally important to proper dosing. Many clinics have a dosage based on



weight only or a standard dosing that just doesn't work for a good portion of patients. Some patients may want something their insurance will pay for, something closer to their home or perhaps something cheaper. Some providers incorrectly counsel against hormone ther-

apy, because of decades old, dis-proven and incorrect information. I wish we could get patients to our clinic first, but this is an impossible task. Thankfully, most patients who get their hormones from someone else will eventually find us.

Whatever your previous ex-

perience, don't give up on hormone therapy. I'm certain we can help you feel better than you are feeling now. Come see us and give us a chance to give you the symptom relief you deserve.

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Do It Right! Hips & Thighs



BY LISA LEATH TURPIN, HEALTH & FITNESS COACH/CONSULTANT

Happy to introduce the second in a series of tips to effectively and safely exercise various areas of the body (Check out June edition: "Core/Abs").

There is a lot going on in the lower body. That old song (hip bone's connected to the thigh

bone...) is true; everything is connected and can affect the entire chain of movement. To stay healthy, you must look at balancing your muscle groups to avoid imbalance that leads to weakness and injuries. Importantly, acknowledge that some muscles are meant to be stronger due to their function,

so weight load for your exercises should reflect that.

The lower body muscles work synergistically and only a couple can be isolated. The gluteals (butt), quadriceps (front thigh), hamstrings (back thigh), calves (back lower leg), abductors (outer thigh) and adductors (inner thigh) all comprise the lower body.

A **squat** is a prime example where all the muscles are incorporated, and a very functional movement for everyday life. Squat safety – bend at the knees (knees must bend for proper ROM: Range-of-Motion), sit back on heels, lower butt down, chest and head up, drive your heels into the floor to push up to standing. The toes are for balance so, to protect the knees, use them lightly. Work on getting deeper to get stronger through the entire ROM.

To address knee issues, start light, assist your weight by holding on to something if you haven't been training. Track your knees in the direction your toes are pointed to keep them aligned. Butt is always way lower than your chest! Knees never move forward past the toes. Squats help you remain self-sufficient for getting yourself up and down.

Your knees will get stronger if you progress through consistency with ROM & safety. Babying

them will make them weaker. Plus, bending and weight bearing the knees will produce synovial fluid to lubricate the joint.

Variations – Basic squat, heels are shoulder width apart, toes and knees slightly turned out to 11 and 1 o'clock. Focus on gluteus maximus and quadriceps, some hamstrings. Wide squat, heels are outside of shoulder width, toes and knees are pointed roughly 10 and 2 o'clock (key, start your turnout at the hip joint so that thigh, knee, shin and toes are all pointed outwardly the same). Focus on gluteus medius, quadriceps, adductors, some abductors.

Close Stance squat, (i.e. back squat), toes face forward, feet close together, sit back almost like you are going to fall back. In yoga, some go all the way to the floor (Malasana). Focus mainly on center quads and glutes.

Protecting our knees is very important because they are vulnerable in all lower body exercises. Imbalanced muscles, where a muscle is strong but the opposite muscle is weak, can be detrimental to any joint. For a balanced lower body workout, think of working around the whole circumference of the leg.

Quads and Hamstrings should be equally conditioned, which doesn't mean they have

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Continued on next page

Plastics, from Storage Ware to Water Bottles



BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTH ARCHITECT

Do you know what the two most toxic plastics are that can be found in most kitchens today? Wait for it... plastic wrap and silverware.

How many plastic storage containers do you have and how many of them come from restaurant leftovers, the deli or the 24 container box deals?

One of the most toxic products we come in contact with is styrofoam. In one study, eggs that were stored in a styrofoam container were tested. After several

hours they found that the chemicals from the styrofoam had leached through the shell into the egg.

Now, back to plastic.

Many of us are familiar with the term BPA-free and even though this is a good thing it does not mean that it is healthy or safe. Here are some lingering dangers of plastics:

Dioxin production: Direct exposure to the sun. Such heating (including microwave) releases a toxin called dioxin, which, when consumed, can accelerate breast cancer.

BPA generation: Biphenyl A is an oestrogen-mimicking chemical that can lead to a lot of health problems like diabetes, obesity, fertility problems, behavioural problems and early puberty in girls. It's better not to store and drink water from a plastic bottle.

Impact immune system: Our immune system is immensely affected when we drink water in plastic bottles. The chemicals from plastic bottles are ingested

and tend to disturb our body's immune system.

Liver cancer and reduced sperm count: Because of the presence of a chemical called phthalates in plastic, drinking water from plastic bottles can also lead to liver cancer and a reduction in sperm count.

A recent study done by the State University of New York in Fredonia shows that there are excessive levels of microplastics in bottled water, especially in popular brands. Microplastics are small plastic debris pieces measuring 5 millimetres or smaller. Microplastic is found in over 93 percent of bottled water and while The World Health Organization says that there is no evidence consumption of microplastics affects your health, it is still an area of concern.

Here is a mini guide to plastic bottles and other plastics. The numbers refer to the number in the triangle on the bottom of the container.

1 - PETE or PET (polyeth-



ylene terephthalate)

2 - HDPE (high density polyethylene)

3 - V (vinyl) or PVC

4 - LDPE (low density polyethylene)

5 - PP (polypropylene)

6 - PS (polystyrene)

7 - Other or miscellaneous

The safest numbers are 1, 2, 4, or 5. Number 3 is the worst followed by 7. As a rule of thumb, the softer the plastic the more likely than leaching will occur.

So, what can we do? Begin by replacing water bottles with a stainless steel water bottle. When plastic bottles are a necessity (a long road trip or a day on the boat) ensure the bottles stay cool

and out of the sun. If you're on a trip, bring the water into your hotel room for the night and never leave a water bottle in your vehicle.

For the kitchen, begin replacing food storage containers with glass. When using plastic wrap, either place parchment paper under the plastic wrap or ensure the wrap does not touch any food. Finally, NEVER heat food in the microwave in a plastic container or plastic wrap.

Here's to health.

Kay Leaman
Health Architect
HealthyDay HealthyLife
succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

DO IT RIGHT

continued from previous page

to lift the same weight. Hamstrings perform more isolated movements. They can move independently of the rest of the lower body. Named the biceps femoris, it flexes the knee joint the same as the biceps in the arm. But quad exercises, such as the squat, are assisted by the glutes, making them a true powerhouse. But the key is to give them equal workout attention. Don't forget the leg extension. Also an isolated move targeting one of the quad muscles, done properly it will make a huge difference in knee stability and thigh shape. Abductors and Adductors are knee and hip stabilizers. Exercises that move the legs out or in (leg lifts or band work) are what you do to strengthen those. Throw in your calf raises on your bottom stair and you will be complete from hip to toe!!

Have questions? Join my class at Destin Health & Fitness or write: BeActive850@gmail.com.

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted

her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fitness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers'

Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She

is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training,

group exercise and post-rehabilitation. Have a fitness question for Lisa? Email BeActive850@gmail.com.



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Is this Contraction or Capitulation?



on what strategies and allocations meet their objectives, time frame and risk tolerance. Nonetheless, some of the media leave people wondering if things are contracting or if the sky is finally falling. We think it is a contraction and that the sky is not falling. It's not different this time and the past keeps happening in the present.

What then is driving the contraction?

The current drivers are inflation (caused by very expansive monetary policy and the pandemic), the fall for housing from rising rates (more than 2.5 times higher to borrow now than in January), the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and stubborn supply chain issues. Wages have risen (although up over 5% they still are not matching inflation) and that adds to production costs. What is all adding up to the markets – traditionally a forward predictor of the economy – is that stocks and bonds were overvalued relative to where we were headed, and the sell offs began. What accelerated that was the Federal Reserve raising its short term rate and, we

think most importantly stopping the buying of bonds and hence shrinking the amount of money or liquidity that was out there.

Elevated risk and or speculative investments (like cryptocurrency) have been significantly impacted on the negative side. Add to that many technology stocks (over 25% of the market's value is in technology stocks) may have little to no earnings and investors bought those stocks in hopes for future growth vs current earnings. The fallout has been brutal for the tech heavy NASDAQ.

The Business Cycle Considerations

So, while this may help explain a lot, what else might be important to consider? We suggest that investors look at the business cycle. In a recent issue of Utility Forecaster, they point out that there are four phases: early, mid, late and recession. They suggest that the current environment of rising rates, inflation, higher energy prices all point to late or recession. That makes a lot of sense to us and therefore we think the current environment (while the inputs may look different) is no different from past environments and that the past keeps happening. We think investors should take that into consideration at times like these.

Lastly, the energy scenario

Raymond James projects that a barrel of oil will be selling around \$90 a year from now and \$80 two years from now. In either scenario that is well above the approximate cost of less than \$40 a barrel for most domestic producers. With world demand restored and growing, the legacy energy sector has continued to show strong revenues and earnings. That is for exploration and production companies. Also consider that refineries have less capacity (and little to none planned) and therefore the competition for a gallon of gas remains high and keeps gas prices high. Despite that, inflation, ex food and energy, has declined to approximately 6% from 6.2% as recently reported.

These are the times that test investors' will, confidence and patience. We urge investors to reflect on the past, think about the present and continue to pre-



pare for the future. There is a book out on the life of former Secretary of the Treasury and of State James Baker, (The Man Who Ran Washington by Peter Baker and Susan Glasser) and we reflect on a quote on something he learned early in life which he applied throughout his career in law and government (the five Ps): Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.

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

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

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Your usual?

Familiarity bias means sticking with what you know – but there may be a lot that you don't. Familiarity might be playing a role in some of your decisions.

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- Take the time to consider your motivations for selecting certain investments or strategies.
- Don't rule out an investment or financial strategy because it's foreign to you.

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Maurice Stouse
Financial Advisor

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Florida Insurance Market Conditions Deteriorate



BY JOE CAPERS,
INSURANCE ZONE

The unpopular, but familiar topics and headlines continue. Florida now has the highest premiums in the nation. It has been two and a half years since we started to feel the impact of the changing (hardening) insurance marketplace in our state. Because we are nearly surrounded by water with the possibility of storms and other natural disasters so evident, the market cycles here are much more pronounced.

Florida's hard insurance market is tougher than any other market cycle in most other states. The challenges are exacerbated by other "unique" market conditions such as natural disasters, litigation, fraud and increase in claims frequency and severity. In this hard market, premiums increase while capacity, or the ability to write more premiums is diminished. These past two years for the Florida insurance market have certainly been one for the records. Higher premiums, more stringent underwriting and less competition is playing into the advantage of insurance carriers, and make it difficult on consumers.

Just in this past week alone, another Florida property insurance company went into receivership, a roofing industry lawsuit was dismissed, Citizens Property and Casualty had its rate hikes trimmed and it's official, Florida now has the highest homeowner premiums in the country. Southern Fidelity was ordered into receivership and this makes the fourth insolvency this year. Efforts failed to find other carriers to take some of the 78,000 homeowners' policies in Florida, and another 69,000 in Los Angeles, Mississippi and South Carolina. Some of these poli-

cies will be picked up by Citizens Property Insurance, our state backed insurer of last resort, and the Florida Insurance Guarantee Fund is now having to pay their outstanding claims.

Citizens, who continues to lose about \$100 million a year, has its policy count driven up to 900,000 due to the recent insolvencies. This is up from slightly over 400,000 in late 2019. Although Citizens asked for a 15% rate increase, the Office of Insurance Regulation has approved an increase of 6.4% to be effective September 1.

The biggest loser in all are the approximately 7.5 million property insurance policyholders. The average policy is \$4,231, almost three times the national average, and up from \$2,505 just two years ago, for reasons other than the exposure to hurricanes and named storms. Most of the cost can be attributed to a lot of needless litigation and many fraudulent schemes.

In many cases, frivolous claims are creating unnecessary litigation. One recent study shows that 8% of all homeowners' claims nationwide are in the State of Florida, but 76% of all homeowners' claims lawsuits are in the State of Florida!

Fortunately, one of the lawsuits filed by the roofing industry was dismissed. They were claiming that SB 76 infringed on First Amendment free speech rights. The legislature last month passed SB 2-D which gives clarity to the law, so the case is now moot.

COVID and inflation have definitely impacted the insurance industry as well. The pandemic has certainly highlighted coverages that are included in contracts. Insurers have seen an increase in insurance claims while suffering investment losses.

Many carriers are still working through their losses from the natural disasters, and the major storms of Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Michael in 2018. These two events had a major impact on the rising reinsurance costs. When reinsurance costs go up, your insurance premiums go up. However, reinsurance is an essential product, purchased by insurance carriers to mitigate catastrophic exposures.

Whether you are seeking personal or business insurance, navigating the market can be

challenging. The bottom line for the Florida insurance market right now is that the industry is on life support and consumers are still facing double digit rate increases. Policyholders are paying more money for less coverage. Regardless of what you're after, it's important to find an insurance professional who can

help you manage your insurance program during the market cycles. This is a good time to have a comprehensive insurance review.

Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is a full service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar

Beach, Santa Rosa Beach (30A), Niceville, Valparaiso, Fort Walton Beach, Freeport and Inlet Beach. Visit their Video Library on www.ins-zone.com and watch several informative videos on 'Homeowners, Condo, Business and Umbrella' or call 850.424.6979.

LiveOak Fiber to Invest \$100M in Okaloosa County Fiber Network

LiveOak Fiber, a newly formed broadband service provider, is investing \$100 million to construct and operate a next-generation high-speed fiber optic network in Okaloosa County. The new network will bring alternative options to underserved regions of the county, ensuring access to affordable and reliable digital infrastructure for businesses and residents in the area.

As it stands, around 2.7 million Floridians lack access to reliable broadband internet with Okaloosa County facing some of these biggest challenges. When complete, LiveOak Fiber's network will provide fiber-based broadband internet and communications

solutions to serve homes and businesses who need it most. Residents can expect a robust internet service with 10G per second - the fastest speeds in the U.S.

LiveOak Fiber is committed to providing communities with necessary internet services that are designed to enable social and economic growth and with plans and commitments to hire locally, they expect the project to create 50 new jobs in the County over the next three years.

"Okaloosa County residents and businesses need the critical infrastructure and services to support a growing population and attract new investment," said Jody Craft,

President of LiveOak Fiber. "Bringing high-speed fiber and the modern services it enables to these communities changes lives, improves education, advances healthcare options and grows local businesses."

Construction on the project is planned for later this year. LiveOak expects to begin connecting its first customers as early as February 2023. With plans and commitments to hire locally, the company expects to create 50 new jobs in Okaloosa County over the next three years.

One Okaloosa EDC assisted LiveOak with the community review and data gathering efforts that led to the company's favorable decision.



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Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

It was an average Thursday night. The crowd waiting to get into Truist Park was a biblical mass. There were too many people to comprehend.

Everyone was sweating through their undergarments. The smell of human armpit odor was in the air.

It was a sold-out game. Forty-odd thousand baseball fans stood waiting for the sacred gates to open. There wasn't a frown in the bunch. Almost everyone in this crowd was cheerful.

That's baseball for you.

At its heart baseball has always been about fun. Plain and simple. At ballgames, most people are glad to be there.

You'll see kids in jerseys, laughing with each other. Mothers smiling, bouncing babies on hips. Old men with bright eyes, wearing leather mitts that predate the Eisenhower presidency, telling stories about "the Say Hey Kid" and "Hammerin'

Hank" to their grandchildren.

And that's the beauty of this game. It is one of the only American institutions remaining wherein people of different persuasions, ages and creeds can find a common bond, and boo in unison at the same umpire.

A place where all God's children can come together and pay \$18 for a beer.

That's probably why I love the game so much. Because there are no divisions in a ballpark. Here, you'll see all cultures. All classes. All kinds.

Guys who drive Peterbilts brush shoulders with men who drive Range Rovers. Bankers and attorneys stand alongside millworkers and pipe fitters and cheer for the same home run.

A home run which was launched by a 24-year-old Afro-Dominican who earns more money per fiscal year than Pope Francis.

The gates opened.

Children in line started vibrating with enthusiasm. Parents hoisted toddlers onto shoulders. And the throngs began moving toward the City of Joy.

Truist Park, 10 miles north of Atlanta. A 1.1-billion-dollar ballpark and real-estate development that makes Disney World look like a trip to the gastroenterologist. This place is nothing but a fun zone.

Even the guy scanning tickets was having fun. He scanned my ticket and said, "You ready to kick butt tonight, boss?"



"I'm ready to win," I said. "That's my man," he shouted.

Then he high-fived me.

It was a firm, strong high-five. The kind that you remember for several minutes thereafter.

In real life, you don't get many high-fives. But you get them in ballparks.

My first beer of the evening was purchased from a vendor who carried a heavy ice chest over his head.

"ICE COOOLD BEEEEER!" he shouted to each passerby.

I asked how he liked his job.

"Man, I walk eight to ten miles every game. I run up bleachers all night until my legs burn. I work like a mule. But people are so generous. They tip me better than any job I ever had. I'll make more money this week than I made all month last year. I love it here. You don't meet any sad people at a baseball game."

And he was right. I was look-

ing around and I didn't find a single long face.

So it was an all-around great night. But frankly I don't remember much about the game. Not because I don't love the Braves. I do.

I've been rooting for the Braves since I was a young guy and the Superstation broadcast their games for free.

I loved Dale Murphy, I remember the Sid Bream slide, the 78-pitch game thrown by Greg Maddux, and I recall with fondness almost every time coach Bobby Cox threatened an umpire.

But the reason tonight's game was so good has nothing to do with nostalgia. Not for me. Tonight's ballgame was a great experience because I rarely see so many joyous people in one place.

There was the "Kiss Cam," when the jumbotron showed images of random people in the ballpark kissing.

There was the booty-shaking contest, when my wife and I bounced our hindparts together, high in the bleachers, along with thousands of others who danced to Bill Haley and his Comets singing "Shake, Rattle and Roll."

There were the crummy hotdogs. The overcooked hamburgers. The stale French fries. The tasteless nachos, served in a plastic batting helmet.

And there was the height of the evening.

It happened during the seventh-inning stretch. And it happens at every Braves game.

This anomalous event occurs when 42,000 stand to sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

These are ordinary humans. People who disagree on virtually everything within our society. These are people who would rather eat dirt than find common ground.

But tonight, the entire stadium took to their feet, cheered and made music together. Everyone hollered. Everyone knew the lyrics.

Some raised plastic cups into the air as they sang. Little girls sat on the shoulders of old men. Teenage boys bellowed alongside their dads. Strangers high-fived hard enough to break their wrists.

And for a very brief moment on an average Thursday night, everything was okay in America.

And well. That's baseball for you.

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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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A Pastor's Ponderings: The Bait



BY RICK MOORE

An attention getting picture with an enticing headline is often called click-bait. Here are a few of the most viewed click-bait statements on the internet: *These Photos Will Make You Think Twice, Here Is What They Look Like Now, You Won't Believe What She Said*, and the list goes on. Choosing to fall for certain click-bait can lead to your computer being infected, and even worse, it can lead to an infection of your mind. No one ever plans to get hooked on bad things, but one click leads to another, and pretty soon, addiction sets in.

George was a ten year old

who loved to fish. His family reunion was only a day away, and he was determined to catch a larger fish than anyone else in his family. He woke-up before the break of dawn to start digging for worms. George would shovel in the rich dirt along the banks of the water for night-crawlers. The lid to his mason jar had holes in it to preserve the worms he would catch. As he was just about to finish filling his jar and walk to his favorite fishing hole, he saw it. There it was, in the corner of his eye. It was the biggest, the longest, the juiciest worm he had ever seen. He scooped it up, placed it in the jar and said out loud, "This worm is going to catch me a big one!"

Now, let me tell you about Sammy. Sammy was a fish, and his family was also starting their family reunion that morning. Relatives from all over the lake swam to Sammy's for the big day. Sammy noticed his grandfather had a big scar on his lip. His grandfather said it happened when he was a young fish just like Sammy. He was swimming around with his friends, when out of the corner of his

eye, he saw it. It was the biggest, the longest, the juiciest worm he had ever seen. Grandpa said he swam up to it and gave it a nibble just to make sure it wasn't a trick. He swam around it once, swam around it twice, and on the third time, bit down on the worm as hard as he could. When he did, he felt an awful pain in his mouth. He was hooked! He called for his friends to help, but they just swam away. He was being pulled to the top of the water, when he tugged as hard as he could. That is when the hook went right through his lip. Sammy said, "That's horrible, but I'm glad it will never happen to me."

Tired of hanging around old people, Sammy and his friends swam off to play. That is when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw it. It was the biggest, the longest, the juiciest worm he had ever seen. Sammy wanted to make sure it wasn't a trap. He swam around it once, swam around it twice, and on the third time, bit down on the worm as hard as he could. When he did, he felt an awful pain. He was



hooked! He called for his friends to help, but they just swam away. His grandfather had just warned him moments ago, but he didn't heed the warning. As Sammy was being pulled to the top of the water, he remembered how his grandfather was able to yank real hard and get off the hook, but Sammy was not as fortunate as his grandfather.

Back to George. That day he was smiling from ear to ear be-

cause George caught the biggest fish of them all. Before his father cleaned and fried it for lunch, George took a picture with the fish and named it Sammy. Sammy had ignored his grandfather and fallen for the bait. If only we...I mean he would have listened.

Rick Moore is Communications Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.

Savvy Leigh

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Arts & Music

Arts & Design Society in Action!

ADSO July Speaker

Renee Broxson, artist, tennis teaching professional and animal rescue supporter, spoke at the Arts and Design Society Luncheon in July. Introduced to art at an early age by her artist mother, Renee's love of art quickly developed, but she did not immediately take up painting. In 2018, she completed the Creative Visionary Program at Art2Life and has never looked back. She uses a variety of materials to add texture and interest to art influenced by childhood memories and everyday experiences. Her goal is twofold: to continue developing her



artistic skill and capture interest in her art from collectors so that she can donate a large portion of her proceeds to animal rescue efforts in Northwest Flor-

ida. She serves on the Board of Directors of Dog-Harmony, Inc., in Santa Rosa Beach.

ADSO Window Gallery Display: July

To provide a convenient Art Gallery for the Community, the Arts and Design Society presents month-long free exhibits in their studio windows, facing First Street, at 17 First Street, SE, Fort Walton Beach. In July, the featured artists are Trisha Gladney and Sherry Cooler, both of whom



work in clay. Trisha's work, in the left window, and Sherry's work, on the right, are colorful and unique. Both are teachers in ADSO's twice-weekly pot-



tery classes. Contact ADSO at adso@artsdesignsociety.org or go by the office, Tuesday-Friday, noon-4 pm.

Okaloosa Public Arts Call to Artists!

BY TONI DINEEN,
OPA SECRETARY/HISTORIAN

Okaloosa Public Arts (OPA) has many exciting opportunities for artists to share their talents in the upcoming months including our annual "Artists Choice" show at the Okaloosa County Administration Building, High School Art Banner Competition, Middle School Art Competition and the new "Happy Heron" project. All initiatives take place in Okaloosa County and support OPA's mission of "Providing exceptional and meaningful art in our public spaces through private donations."

The first event takes place in September as we refresh art on all three floors of the Okaloosa County Administration Building in Shalimar. OPA invites all

artists to submit up to three works of art depicting your choice of subject matter to be professionally judged and exhibited from September 6, 2022 through September 2023. \$3600 in prize money will be awarded. For registration information, visit our web site <https://www.okaloosapublicarts.org>.

The next event is our yearly High School Art Banner Competition coordinated with Okaloosa County Art teachers. Our seven county high schools each hold a competition to have students represent their school with four pieces of art to be hung on banners in Cinco Bayou. If you are driving on Eglin Parkway, you will see the beautiful entries we received



Current OPA Board. First row: Elia Saxer, Toni Dineen, Rick Otoupalik. Second row: Linda Kernick, Linda Carr, Anne Johnston, Thalia Newton. Third row: Pat Roberts, Ruta Kanaporis, Charlotte Arnold, Bernadette Sims, Pam Folse, Helen Harris.

in the 2021 competition. In addition to the banners students also receive a financial reward.

A new addition this year is a middle school art show. 7th and 8th graders from each middle school in Okaloosa County will be invited to enter artwork for a show at the Fort Walton Beach Public Library. These shows will be held in coordination with the art departments at each school.

Finally, we are extremely proud to announce the "Happy Heron" project. If you are familiar with the "Pensacola Pelicans," you will be happy to know Okaloosa County will now have its own beautiful Heron statues.

Twenty artists will be selected to paint 5-Ft. Herons to be placed throughout Okaloosa County. We are currently working the details with Okaloosa County Commissioners and will have more information distributed in the coming months.

Okaloosa Public Arts (OPA) began as a group of ladies who enjoyed meeting together and discussing art. Early meetings were at individual homes or local restaurants for lunch. Although the setting was casual, the meetings became more formal and more business-like. In early 2011, this group of friends decided to create a "committee" to put art in public places in Okaloosa County. Thus, OPA was born. Eventually the group formed a 501 (c)3 charity and

was selected to become a charity organization sponsored by Jay Ghosh Enterprises and Mary Esther Bingo.

The first project sponsored by OPA was the Courthouse Annex art project. This included a "heritage hall" with photographs of the old courthouse in Crestview and other historical photos. A statue of "Lady Liberty" was also proposed and eventually donated by Judge Stone. A mural was designed by Elia Saxer and placed on permanent display. The first OPA juried show was held at the Courthouse Annex in Ft Walton Beach in September 2011. 84 local artists participated with a variety of media.

Since 2011, OPA has sponsored more than 20 art shows at locations including the County Courthouse Annex, NWF State College, UWF Library, Destin Library, NWF Ballet, NWF Regional Airport, FWB Landing, Okaloosa County Admin Building, and Cinco Bayou. OPA has donated over \$100,000 in art scholarships, art supplies, and awards to local artists and art programs including area High Schools, NWF State College, Arts and Design Society, Emerald Coast Science Center, NWF Ballet, and After School Program in Reaching Excellence (ASPIRE).

To learn more about OPA, visit our Facebook Page, Okaloosa Public Arts, and website www.okaloosapublicarts.org.

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We Are the Emerald Coast Chorus!

BY DON LAMBERT,
ECC MEMBER

Singing has the power to make individuals and communities healthier and happier! And we are blessed to have The Emerald Coast Chorus (ECC), a singing organization based in Fort Walton Beach that serves communities throughout the Florida panhandle.

The chorus has been a chapter in the Sunshine District of the Barbershop Harmony Society since 1978. A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, its members enjoy sharing four-part barbershop harmony with the residents of our communities. The Barbershop Harmony Society, and by extension, the Emerald Coast Chorus, preserves and extends the reach of Barbershop harmony—an American close harmony acapella musical art form whose roots lie in African-American improvisation and European harmony traditions through active programs in music education, publishing, performance and outreach. The benefits of singing, and music more specifically, harmonizing, have long been explored.

Group harmonizing can help improve physical and emotional health, build healthier communities, young people become healthier adults, forge inter-generational bonds, reduce barriers across diverse cultures and groups and build healthy self-identities.

Members of the Emerald Coast Chorus believe that the



gift of harmony is too wonderful to keep to ourselves,” said. “It is a gift that we are compelled to share with everyone. We need to share it with young and old, with people of every color and every strata, with city people and country people and everyone in between, because the world needs what we have.”

One example of the sharing of this gift of music with others is the annual Joe Breedon Retreat, which is held each fall at Camp Timpoochee in Niceville. The Camp Timpoochee retreat weekend is the only acapella music festival in the Florida Panhandle and southern Alabama. Its uniqueness attracts many out-of-town visitors and generates revenue for Camp Timpoochee and other local restaurants and businesses. Approximately 35% of all attendees, and over 50% of the adults are from outside Okaloosa county. In the process, participants contribute significantly to the arts opportunities in the area. The project is designed and planned as a regional festival, and the chorus brings in nationally renowned coaches

and teachers. They are leading musicians certified by the Barbershop Harmony Society. Participants, especially high school students, sharpen their presentation, music and singing skills in a low-stress, supportive learning environment. Over the years, the chorus has developed a close and unique relationship with several high school music directors. They have come to rely on the chorus both for availability of acapella music and for coaching student quartets and ensembles. We keep the music teachers informed throughout the year of upcoming Youth Harmony Workshops and the Harmony Explosion Camps. Furthermore, we contact school music directors in the spring so they can make plans prior to school starting in the fall. As soon as school starts, we begin to work with the students in developing quartets. We offer classroom visits, coaching, and free sheet music. We let the students know there are local chapters they can join if they wish to experience more acapella and barbershop singing. The teachers attend our weekend retreat year after year. Students

Joel Abrahams, Executive Director in Axient’s Niceville office (2nd from right), presents an Award check from Axient in Action to Jeff Buehler, Director of the Emerald Coast Chorus (far left), Scott Smith, President of the Emerald Coast Chorus (2nd from left) and Don Lambert, Axient employee and Immediate Past President of the Chorus (far right). Axient in Action is Axient’s official employee-run and funded 501(c)(3), which allows employees to give back to their local communities. Axient in Action is open to all employees to be able to donate with pre-tax dollars and matched dollar-for-dollar by Axient.

experience barbershop chords (many for the first time), learn from excellent music coaches, and get to perform and perhaps even compete in a low-stress environment. Many students build on this experience as they attend college and sing acapella, with some students even continuing to pursue musical careers.

A local defense contractor at Eglin Air Force Base—Axient LLC—has recognized the value of encouraging its employees to actively give back to the community as the Emerald Coast Chorus does. Axient recently awarded the chorus a grant to assist in the execution of its mission.

The Emerald Coast Chorus Calls all gentlemen who might be interested in singing, having fun, learning to sing barbershop four-part harmony, sharing an art form with the community

and did we mention having fun! If this sounds like something you might be interested in, please visit. We meet every Thursday night at 6:30 pm in the Choral room of Shalimar Methodist Church at 1 Old Ferry Rd, Shalimar, 32579. You don’t have to know how to read music. We can provide you with professionally-made learning tracks that are part-specific for all of the songs we know and are learning. Why not hire Emerald Coast Chorus to entertain at your next event? We can perform at corporate functions, charity events, community entertainment events, birthday parties, Christmas parties, awards nights, weddings, engagements, anniversaries, engagements, and even funerals and memorial services. And it’s a lot of fun!

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