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# PCB Life

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## Christmas at The Wesley House

The year 2024 marks Walton County's bicentennial, and one fine way to commemorate this is with a visit to the Christmas celebration at the stately Wesley House in Eden Gardens State Park. This annual event has become a welcome herald of both the holiday season and Walton County's rich history. While the end of the year is a hectic time for many, this holiday celebration offers the opportunity to experience a treasured part of our community's past and present.

Wesley House's legacy is long. Initially built as a Victorian-style home in 1897, it was later converted to Antebellum. It was the home of the Wesley Family, including nine children, and their business was lumber. There were three mills located in the Tucker Bayou which adjoins the park. Mrs. Wesley was the last of the family to occupy the house, dying in 1953. Over the next ten years, the house fell into ruin. Neighborhood children would play in the rooms, and even goats took up residence!

In 1963, Ms. Lois Max-

on bought the house, having "found her Eden." She paid



\$12,500 for 10.5 acres and then proceeded to change the house to an Antebellum style, furnishing the rooms with valuable antiques, and spending over a million dollars on the restoration. Ms. Maxon did not get to live in her Eden for long due to poor health, but was generous enough to leave the house and grounds to the State of Florida. That

transfer took place on Christmas Eve, 1968. We hope she

would approve of our efforts to commemorate this most extraordinary gift by coming together as a community each year around the holiday to celebrate.

If you have not taken the opportunity to enjoy this tradition, please consider doing so this year. The Wesley House will be decorated and ready for guided tours by

November 16, 2023. These tours are available Thursday

through Monday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on an hourly basis. The public is invited to enjoy the themed rooms throughout the house, with the theme this year being "A Victorian Christmas." In addition to The Friends of Eden, who spend months planning this

**WESLEY HOUSE**  
*continued on page 3*

## Beach Home for the Holidays Nov. 24-25

Santa Claus is coming to town for the eighth annual Beach Home for the Holidays in Panama City Beach! This Thanksgiving weekend, Visit Panama City Beach invites families to kick off the most wonderful time of the year with a magical celebration at Aaron Bessant Park, featuring carol-themed concerts, s'mores, appearances by Santa, nightly fireworks, the lighting of the destination's 36-foot-tall Christmas tree, and more. This year's event will also include live performances by all-vocal country music sensation Home Free, and the Panama City Symphony Orchestra.

"We are thrilled to welcome new and returning families to Panama City Beach for a spectacular holiday celebration this Thanksgiving weekend," says Dan Rowe, president and CEO of Visit Panama City Beach. "With two days of festive activities, exceptional musical performances, and an abundance of holiday cheer,

**BEACH HOME**  
*continued on page 3*

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Community

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- DEC. 26-30: NIGHTLY ENTERTAINMENT AND BONFIRE!
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### BEACH HOME

continued from page 1

this year's Beach Home for the Holidays is sure to be a memorable event for all ages."

The festivities begin on Fri-



day, November 24 with campfires, delicious s'mores, and the opening of Santa's Village. At 6:00 p.m., headliner Home Free will take the stage at Aaron Bessant Park's open-air amphitheater for a must-see holiday concert. Named "Country music fans' favorite a cappella group," the nationally acclaimed per-

formers have ventured on extensive international tours, amassing over 1.6 million subscribers and an astounding 630+ million views on YouTube.

To see a full schedule of events, please visit <https://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/beach-holiday>.

### WESLEY HOUSE

continued from page 1

event, many other invaluable volunteers contribute including Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Daughters of the American Revolution West Florida Chapter, Green Thumb Garden Club, Historic Point Washington Association, Ladies of Impact 100, RMA Consulting and Design, Seaside Kids, Seaside, The Garden Club, South Walton High School, and The Friends of Eden.

The House will remain decorated until January 9, 2024. Visitors are invited to vote on their favorite room. The competition among the decorators is quite real! Of course, the month wouldn't be complete without the evening of Luminaries, scheduled this year for December 9 from 5 to 8 p.m. with a rain date for December 16.

The Park area will be illuminated with candles, the House open, and the decorated trees lit for the event. The Friends of Eden will provide light refreshments in the Pavilion; all are invited to attend. A shuttle will be offered for transportation into



the Park on that evening, and there is no entrance fee. Consider making this a part of your holiday tradition, whether you are a resident or a visitor. It will be memorable.

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## Introducing: SYNC Diagnostics and SYNC Laboratories

BY GREGG RENNER

“Where are patients able to get *same-day testing and results* for radiology and bloodwork that don’t require a trip to the emergency room?” That is a question that emergency room physicians ask themselves many times over. As ER physicians with decades of experience our founders saw countless examples of Florida patients who needlessly came to the ER only because they needed the diagnostics and answers quickly.

So they decided to do something about it. They founded SYNC Diagnostics and SYNC Laboratories, now located right next door to each other in Panama City Beach. These two affiliated locations operate independently but work in tight collaboration to provide fast, efficient answers to patients and to the physicians and providers who serve them. Clients who arrive are now able to get both lab tests and radiology tests in one convenient visit.

These first locations, opened in August, are equipped with some of the latest testing and



analytics technology available. SYNC Diagnostics offers a wide range of CT Scan, Ultrasound and X-ray testing. Their state-of-the-art Philips 128 slice scanner allows them to capture images at a much faster speed, minimizing the patient’s time on the table. In fact, many of the tests take less than 3 minutes of operation to complete, so patients are tested and on their way quickly.

On the SYNC Laboratories



side, the analysis equipment on-site is equipped with a wide array of test capabilities, enabling them to complete most of their tests on the premises, and on the same day that the blood samples are drawn. So for patients and physicians looking for fast answers, they offer an almost unparalleled local capability. Locals have already seen the benefits of this affordable alternative.

Physician Dr. Jonathan Jung recently wrote:

“As a physician ... I send spe-

cial cases over here due to the professionalism that was shown to me. Trudy and Dr. Rich have been absolutely amazing to me. Dr. Rich went over complex cases with me that I found to be extremely helpful. Lastly, it’s extremely helpful that they are bilingual in Spanish and English because 50 percent of our patients are Spanish speaking.”

And Megan Sweeney, a recent patient posted this:

“...the two ladies that were working the front desk and that performed my ultrasound were

some of the nicest that I have met in the medical profession. They worked so well and waited for a referral from my doctor... to try and save me money. If you were paying out of pocket, their prices are very good. I will go by and see them again and again!”

Recently SYNC Laboratories also added the capability to do mobile phlebotomy. That means if you are an organization or a business that has a need for group or recurring testing they will send the phlebotomist to your location, collect all the samples, and then return the results for all the most common tests the following day.

Their stated mission is: “To deliver financially responsible, industry-leading diagnostics with compassion, trustworthiness, and expertise that will accelerate patient care, wellness, and well-being.”

Based on the reviews, they already seem to be doing a great job. When you need testing and diagnostics with a fast turnaround, the Emerald Coast now has a new solution.

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## Introducing: **Sugar Sands Sweets**

### A Little Story of How Sugar Sands Sweets Came to Be

BY SHAY KRAFFT

The old saying is “life happens,” and after many years of chasing the corporate ladder, well, layoffs also happen. While it felt icky in the moment, it allowed me the time to reflect on what inspires me, what energizes me, and what I wanted to do with all that corporate knowledge.

I was organizing the kitchen in our home – what else to do while I continued to ponder my next chapter – when I happened across some old baking and decorating recipes. It conjured up memories of the fun I had long before corporate life - you know, the creative, fun things we did when we didn’t have to worry about mortgages, car payments, and retirement savings. I thought it might take my mind off landing another job in the layoff frenzy world.

So, I quietly baked and decorated about 4 dozen cupcakes in one day. It was the happiest “work” feeling I had experienced in a while! Why couldn’t I do THIS for a living?! No really, why couldn’t I do this? Of course, about an hour later my practical side kicked in. I had convinced myself that I was free floating in dreamland and



Sugar  
Sands  
Sweets

Sweet Treats Inspired By the Beach

there was no way I could support us - I had clearly baked this idea during a sugar high. When I started to share my idea with my husband, I was already prepared for all the practical reasons why it wouldn’t work, pretty much had debated every thought during my one-sided conversation with him. Instead, his response was “Of course we have to do this, just look at your excitement and passion!”

So here I am, hoping you en-

joy all the work being put into these handcrafted treats. It’s just the start of the journey so check back as we keep you updated on our ups and downs (yes there will be downs). I hope you will drop me a note if we hit or

miss the mark. And I welcome all ideas and suggestions. Maybe one day you all will love our treats enough that we can open a storefront so I can visit with you while you enjoy the sweets! In the meantime, call us at (850)

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Community

# Sheriff Tommy Ford Receives 2023 LeRoy Collins Lifetime Achievement Award

Gulf Coast State College proudly nominated and congratulates Sheriff Tommy Ford, a distinguished former student of the institution, on being honored with the 2023 LeRoy Collins Lifetime Achievement Award.

The LeRoy Collins Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by The Association of Florida Colleges, recognizes individuals who have attended a state college and have made outstanding contributions on both the state and national levels.

The awards are held biannually and serve as a platform for

Florida's state colleges to honor exceptional alumni whose achievements inspire and uplift our communities. Sheriff Ford's dedication to public safety, and his distinguished career accomplishments, have rightfully earned him this recognition on behalf of Gulf Coast State College.

"The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a true and lifelong success story in a state or national arena," said Greg Williams, President of the Association of Florida Colleges. "Sheriff Ford has dedicated his life to serving and protecting his

community. He has shown exceptional leadership, integrity, and compassion across the state of Florida."

Sheriff Tommy Ford's remarkable journey includes several standout achievements, including an 18-year career with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, during which he specialized as a Special Agent investigating violent crimes, major drug crimes, public integrity issues, and officer-involved shootings. He was elected as Bay County Sheriff in 2016 and reelected in 2020, both times unopposed.



Sheriff Ford has also held other leadership roles throughout his career as Operations Commander and Chief Deputy for the Bay County Sheriff's Office, highlighting his dedication to serving his community.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Sheriff Ford remains actively engaged with the community, serving as a board member of the Gulf Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Chairman of the Florida Sheriff's Task Force, member of Governor DeSantis' Public Safety Transition Committee, and Statewide Opioid Task Force, Co-Chair of the Northwest Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force, member of the statewide Domestic Security Oversight Council, and Chairman of the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission.

In his nomination letter,

Gulf Coast State College President Glen McDonald wrote, "I strongly endorse Sheriff Ford for the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award. I believe his professional and community contributions make him the best candidate." He added, "His professional achievements and civic service embody the values, vision, and mission of Gulf Coast State College. Sheriff Ford has a clear mission of his own that is evident through his commitment to keeping his community safe."

Sheriff Tommy Ford's recognition with the 2023 LeRoy Collins Lifetime Achievement Award is evidence of his remarkable achievements and his dedication to public service. Gulf Coast State College takes pride in celebrating his accomplishments and is honored to have him represent the institution on this level.



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# New Beach Homes Have Unique Design

By ED OFFLEY

When Wesley DeFoor prepared to develop a new vacation housing project on Front Beach Road last year, he opted to try something radically different.

With nearly a quarter-century of real estate experience in Florida and Georgia, DeFoor could easily have erected a four-story condominium cube on the empty 3/4-acre tract on the north side of the 17000 block of Front Beach Road just east of the Splash Beach Resort. Under its Commercial High-Density zoning, the property could accommodate up to 33 condo units.

Instead, DeFoor told PCB Life, he turned to architect Wade R. Squires and said, “Design me ten single-family dwellings on this [property] that make sense.” Currently practicing in his hometown of Mt. Vernon, Iowa, Squires is no stranger to the Florida Panhandle. He spent seven years in Walton County designing resort homes and condominiums in high-end communities including Seaside, Watercolor and Rosemary Beach.

Nine months after the project broke ground last January, the Villas at Laguna Beach development is presenting a stark new silhouette compared with the typical cubic beach houses and condos along the Gulf beachfront.

Each of the ten houses consists of a four-story structure measuring only 25 feet wide and 37 feet deep, but rising forty-five



feet up. The ground, second and third floors contain five full bedrooms and baths, with a full kitchen, dining room and living room on the fourth floor. In addition, the flat roof features a 25 by 25-square foot deck with a covered bar and wide-screen TV. A large media room is on the ground floor.

Other features include a dumbwaiter elevator (for lifting luggage and food supplies) in nine of the ten units, with a full elevator in the tenth to accommodate visitors with limited mobility. Each house will have a 10 x 10-foot “plunge pool,” plus two parking spaces.

Each house will accommodate up to ten people at a time, DeFoor added.

Panama City Beach planning director Mel Leonard said DeFoor’s approach to a relatively



small tract is “kind of unique ... going as high as they can to make sure they have enough space for parking” required under the zoning law. “They are well below the [maximum allowed] density for that site,” he said.

“This is a really unique design,” DeFoor agreed. “He [Squires] utilized every square foot.”

DeFoor said the homes will be utilized as short-term vacation rentals, with a local property management firm supervising the complex. Rental rates will be commensurate with similar-sized properties in the area, he said.

The Villas at Laguna Beach is scheduled for opening next March.

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## Bay County Sheriff's Office Airs New Podcast

Take a look “Behind the Star” with the Bay County Sheriff’s Office! “Behind the Star” is the new BCSO podcast now available on YouTube and Facebook. The podcast will feature dash and body cam footage, video from the Air Unit, and a step-by-step breakdown by the Episode guest.

Episode one features a conversation between Public Information Officer Ruth Corley, Deputy Jake Navarro, and Sheriff Tommy Ford. Sheriff Ford recounts the

many challenges he has faced since becoming Sheriff in 2016 including an active shooter, a category 5 hurricane, spring break, and a pandemic during his first term alone. But from each challenge came positive changes in policing for Bay County.

“Behind the Star” is now available on Facebook at [https://fb.watch/o2F\\_gieGvz/?mibextid=Nif5oz](https://fb.watch/o2F_gieGvz/?mibextid=Nif5oz) and YouTube. New Episodes will be uploaded every two weeks.







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 Community



# Let's Get Growing with Julie: Native Sunflowers

By JULIE MCCONNELL,  
UF/IFAS EXTENSION

Bales of hay, pumpkins, college football, and sunflowers are all iconic signs of fall. It is hard to not be awed by rows of

giant sunflowers, but few yards have the space for that type of showstopping display. Luckily, we have more native sunflower options that are great for low maintenance Florida land-



Beach Sunflower

scapes with limited space! Two of my favorite native plants are in the same genus as the Annual Sunflower (their showy cousin mentioned above) and will fit tough conditions in your garden. The first is beach sunflower and the second one is swamp sunflower – already sounding pretty Florida, right?

feet and spreads the same distance. This informal sprawling habit is great on slopes or in an informal landscape bed. Beach sunflower will spread by underground runners and seed but is easy to thin out if it outgrows the intended area. Plant in full sun for the most prolific flowering which occurs throughout the spring and summer.

### Swamp Sunflower (Helianthus angustifolius)



Swamp Sunflower

Swamp sunflower is one of those plants that you might forget you have because most of the year it is comprised of simple green foliage. Suddenly in late summer it sends up tall branching stalks full of 2- to 3-inch-wide bright yellow flowers. Found naturally along streambanks and in areas prone to flooding, swamp sunflower can tolerate wet soil that alternates with dry conditions. Although it tolerates some shade, for best flowering locate in full sun. In full bloom, this perennial reaches 6 feet tall, making it perfect for adding a punch of color to the back of flower beds or along fences lines when little else is blooming. Swamp sunflower forms clumps that can be easily divided and shared with friends and family or you can let it fill in a bare area.

scapes with limited space!

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### Beach Sunflower (Helianthus debilis)

As the name implies, beach sunflower is perfectly suited to landscapes that are on or close to the Gulf of Mexico or saltwater bays. They love well-drained sandy soil and are tolerant of salt spray and wind. This plant's growth habit is a little hard to define; most publications list it as a groundcover, but it does have some upright growth, so don't let that category fool you. In Northwest Florida, beach sunflower grows to a height of 3-4

To learn more about sunflowers in Florida gardens visit <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/sunflowers.html>

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# Know Your Neighbor: Jennifer Vigil

BY PAUL BONNETTE

Panama City, the city where life sets sail, is home to world-class fishing, boating, hiking, and sightseeing, and a four-season paradise for anyone who enjoys the water. As president and CEO of Destination Panama City, Jennifer Vigil's job is to showcase all that Panama City has to offer. For Vigil, this is less of a job and more of a passion.

Less than a decade ago, Destination Panama City as a marketing organization did not exist. The tourist organization was only formed in 2015, and Vigil was selected to develop strategies designed to drive tourism to the area. With an MA in public administration, Vigil originally had no intention of working in the tourism industry. "I always say that I affectionally started on the dark side, remembers Vigil. "I thought that I wanted to be a City Manager. I made it all the way up to the City Clerk. I had basically reached the pinnacle of what I wanted to reach. I backed away from a regular

government job and did a bunch of freelance work, and ended up being offered a position at Visit South Walton as the Director of Administration which was incredible. Visit South Walton is one of the top ten destination organizations in the state of Florida so the opportunity to come into the industry at one of the top ten was pretty fabulous."

As the Director of Administration for Visit South Walton, Vigil realized that her background made her uniquely suited to driving tourism to the area by studying [the] behavioral patterns of visitors. "I think a lot of people think that tourism is just making commercials and ads," says Vigil. "With tourism, the personal satisfaction I get out of it is the science behind it. Tourism is



"I was always up for a challenge, and I couldn't think of anything more exciting than building a destination marketing organization from the ground up. For me there always has to be a little bit of a challenge... I am always a proponent of growth," she explains.

However, building Destination Panama City as a world-class destination organization would be met with numerous challenges such as Hurricane Michael and the COVID-19 pandemic. For Vigil, each challenge would be an

exceptional lives, not acceptable lives."

Today, Destination Panama City has evolved and cemented itself as a cutting-edge destination marketing organization, bringing in thousands of visitors from all over for the fishing, shopping, and dining, but for Vigil, it's the satisfaction of showcasing the importance of tourism that drives her.

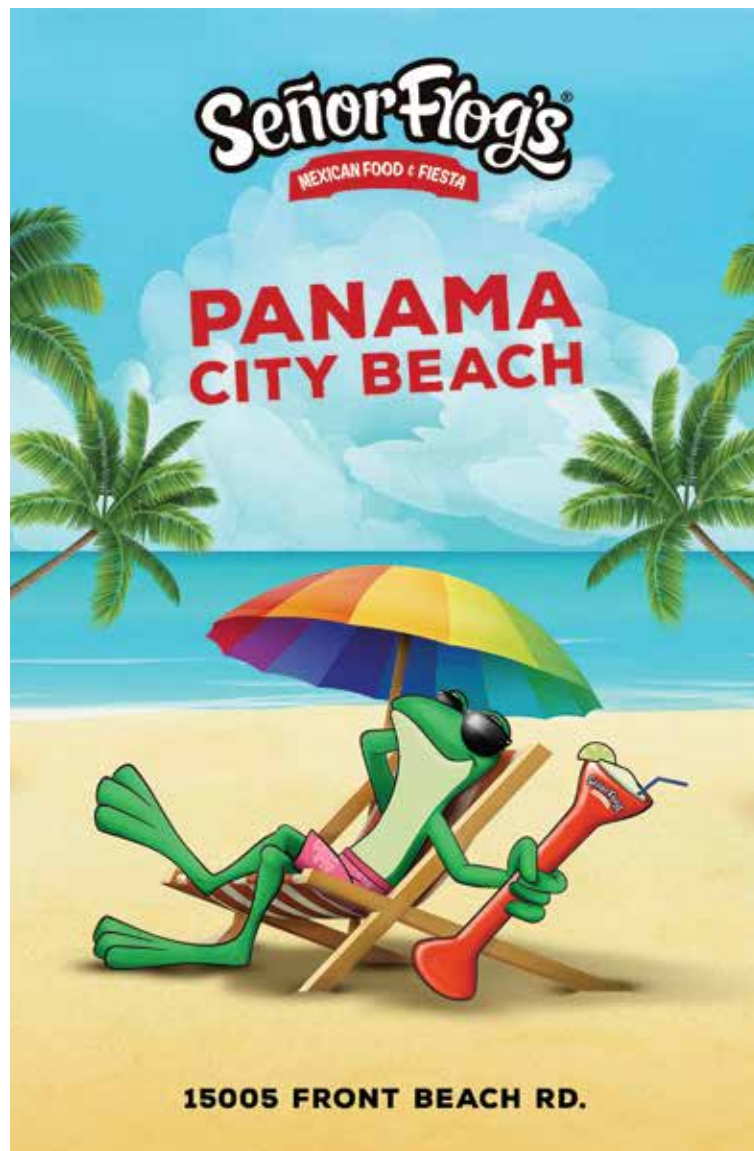
"It's a personal satisfaction for me to do work that I find interesting... Bay County tourism is the number one economic driver. After the hurricane (Michael), tourism was one of the first things that came back. Tourism sustained our community through the pandemic."

Having completed the Southeast Tourism Society Travel Marketing Professional Course as well as the Certified Destination Management Executive Course, Jennifer Vigil has no intention of slowing down she tells PCB Life. "I plan on taking everything that I've learned and continuing to grow, making sure that tourism destination management has a seat at the table."

complete behavior analysis. It is finding out who is coming, how they are spending money, how they are learning out about us and really using technology, especially with this generation."

When the City of Panama City formed the brand-new destination marketing organization, Vigil knew it would be a challenge worth taking on.

opportunity to move forward. "I think in life there is no choice but to keep putting one's foot in front of the other. You wake up every day with the opportunity to decide whether to do that in a positive or negative way. The biggest hurt somebody can do to themselves is not moving forward. My dad's favorite thing to tell us was that we had to live

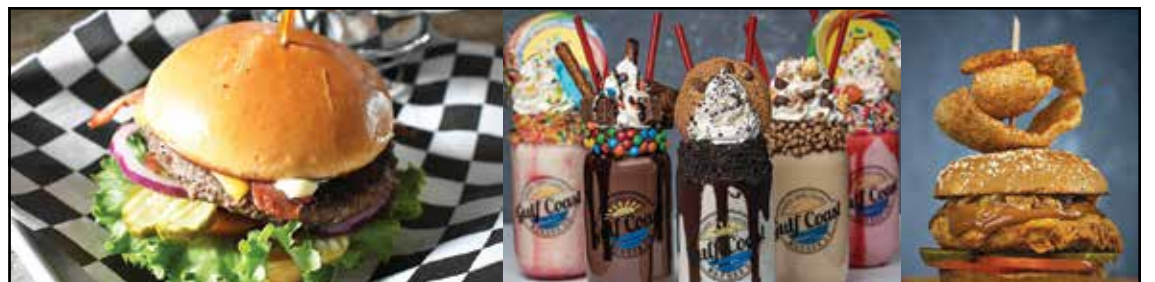


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# Off-the-Chart Personalized Carts That Fit Your Personality!

When you come into Cruzin30A, you're going to have an experience you can't get anywhere else. Be Unique, Buy Unique.

BY MARTA ROSE-THORPE

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Mark Wilson is an entrepreneur with a background in business and art. He studied business courses in college in Ohio, then headed south to Florida in the early 90s to work in the sign industry. "My father was a former Disney artist, so the artistic DNA is there," he laughs. This color and design background allowed him to launch his golf cart company, NasCarts, in 2014, specializing in customized electric golf carts.

Three years ago, Mark relocated to the Emerald Coast to open another NasCarts in Sandestin, FL. He fell in love with the area, setting up his home in Santa Rosa Beach, and couldn't help but notice that the electric bike industry was ex-



ploding all around him. Panama City Beach, with its many new communities and developments all over Bay County, was adding more bike trails. So, when he sold NasCarts in Sandestin and prepared to launch Cruzin30A in Pier Park, he saw the opportunity to offer both electric golf carts and electric bikes. "Where we're located is perfect," he offers. "Drop your car off at Pier Park in the morning, take out a bike all day, and bring it back by 6 p.m. We also deliver and pick up bikes all over the Panama City Beach area."



What makes Cruzin30A unique and different from any other golf cart company? Many things! "We're more of a transportation company," explains

pre-owned golf carts, and electric bikes. But one of the biggest features that sets this company apart from the rest is their cart maintenance.

"We provide a mobile service, whether or not you purchase your cart from us," explains Mark. "I would hope that someone would purchase a golf cart knowing that whoever is selling it, they're going to service it too." He explains that there are 12 points on the mechanical end that they make sure are brand new. They right-align all the metals that are on the carts. New bushings. Brand new solenoid (which powers up the cart). New braking system. One-year warranty, bumper to bumper. "Then finally, we get



to the 'Build-a-Bear' phase!" he exclaims.

Designing the golf cart with

the customer and the design team is clearly Mark's favorite part of the process, and you can feel his excitement as he begins describing the creative and fanciful land of Golf Cart Customization. "I love customization! ...it goes back to my art background," he shares. "People purchase a golf cart based on their personality. A favorite sports team. A 'Pirates of the Caribbean' golf cart or 'It's Five O'clock Somewhere.' And having the ability to go custom doesn't necessarily mean more expensive; our custom carts are

Certified Pre-Owned and are probably still 30% less than it would be for a brand-new E-Z-GO. After all the bells and whistles are installed, and maybe a new radio, you'll be at \$13K... the same price as a new cart built outside of the U.S."

Be Unique, Buy Unique is Cruzin30A's slogan. Visit them in Pier Park at 15600 Starfish Street, on the corner across from Dillard's. For more information, call Mark at (850) 803-2278 and visit them online at [cruzin30a.com](http://cruzin30a.com).



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Community

# Veterans, Fishing, and Thanksgiving

BY PAM ANDERSON

The Grand Lagoon area stays busy with festivals and special events throughout the winter. Coming up, the Capt. Anderson family will host its 50th Annual Veterans Day Freedom Celebration November 11th at the marina. All who wish to honor our service men and women come out and join us at 9:30 a.m. as Neysa Wilkins, news anchor at WJHG-TV emcees the event. Following the celebration, veterans, current military of U.S. and allied forces and their immediate family are treated to a Dolphin Encounter Cruise-reservations required with Military I.D.



Because so many have stepped up to serve their country, our country, over the generations, we need to set aside time to say 'thank you'. It's the least we can do. Freedom isn't free. We are proud to show our gratitude for those who keep our Nation free.

We, like many of you, are praying for peace in the Middle East.

Speaking of being thank-

ful, this is the time of year set aside to reflect on our blessings. Yes, we have high fuel prices, inflation, high food costs and more, but even the least fortunate among us are considered wealthy when compared to the rest of the world. We are thankful for our families, for a caring community that goes to great lengths to be compassionate to the less fortunate or those affected by tragedies; we are thankful for the beautiful place where we

all live, and the bountiful fishing we all enjoy. We are also thankful to God for keeping His steady hand of protection on our Nation even when we don't deserve it.

As for fishing.... While the main season for fishing and Shell Island trips is closed October 31st, there are still plenty of opportunities to get out and wet a line this winter. Grand Lagoon is home to the best fishing guides and captains in



Northwest Florida! Guide Boats and most Charter Boats operate year-round, not to mention our friends at Treasure Island with their headboat, the Jubilee. Winter fishing on cool, crisp mornings is very different; watch the sun rise, hardly any boat traffic-feels like you're out on an island somewhere. It's beautiful!

If you haven't secured your

place for an office or family Christmas party, Capt. Anderson Marina's Event Center still has some openings in December. Call soon to book your date! (850) 234-3435.

Bethlehem Christmas Village will be each evening 5:30 'til 8 p.m., Wednesday, December 13 through Saturday, December 16. Each night we will host different local school choirs performing their Christmas programs before and after the presentation of the Live Nativity. Come join us for this special event.

As always, when planning your fishing trip, remember Capt. Anderson's Marina... home of 30 private Charter Boats, ten Guide Boats and four Dive Boats, three large Headboats and Shell Island/Dolphin Cruises. (Headboats & Cruises available March through October.)

*Capt. Anderson's Marina... Where the fish are always biting, and the kids are always smiling. www.CaptAndersonsMarina.com.*

**FREE EVENT**

Capt. Anderson's Marina Celebrates the 2023

# BETHLEHEM Christmas Village

*Imagine walking through ancient Bethlehem...being present as Isaiah, Mary and Joseph learn and tell others of the coming of the Christ child. Follow the path they trod as they strolled through town looking for a place to sleep. Celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Son of God*

Live Music | Live Nativity | Toy & Food Drive | Food & Gift Merchants  
Stable with petting animals | Storytellers of that Wondrous Night

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# Happy Thanksgiving from Studio 237 Music

*"We've come to the time in the season,*

*When family and friends gather near,*

*To offer a prayer of thanksgiving,  
For blessings we've known through the years"*

These are the opening lines of "Thanksgiving Prayer," written by Josef Anderson and performed by national legend Johnny Cash in the 90s TV show Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. Though Johnny's music is usually described as country, he did not like it to be genre-defined. His music brought together fans of all ages and many different genres such as country, rock and roll, blues, folk and gospel.

Here at Studio 237 Music, we believe that's what music is all about - coming together to build a loving community to share in the joy of music and happiness of others, no matter their background. Music is for

everyone, and without a community to share it with, music just would not exist.

As there's only a short while before Thanksgiving is with us once again, we wanted to take this time to reflect on the hard work of all our students and teachers, celebrate their successes, and give thanks to everyone and their families for their supportive and encouraging atmosphere as students continue on their musical journey.

First, let us reflect on the progress our students have made since they began their studies in August. When they first started out, the process of pushing down the piano keys or plucking a guitar string seemed so strange and unfamiliar, yet now they are readily performing holiday songs and gearing up to approach more challenging musical material. Let us celebrate their dedication, perseverance and enthusiasm towards learn-

ing and growing a new gift.

Let us also be thankful for our team of knowledgeable and talented teachers who are leading the way for students to reach their highest potential, as well as providing a safe and motivating environment for students to continually work on their musical abilities. The teachers' job is by no means an easy one - they must pass on the traditions of many, many past generations of musicians (music has been around for a very long time, after all) for future generations to continue on.

There is no doubt that the families and wider community around us should also be cele-

brated. We are very thankful to the many families who support and encourage students, take them to their music lessons, help them with instrument care and maintenance, and never get tired of their home practice sessions (hearing the same song over and over again!).

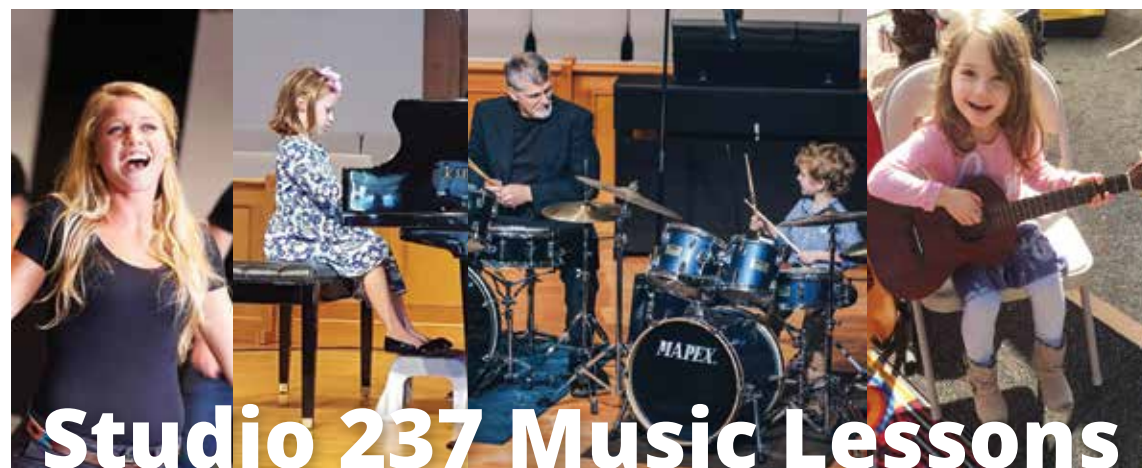
We are grateful for all the teaching and learning resources we have at hand to help us in achieving our future goals. We are grateful to God for providing us with abundance, and for guiding us throughout all of our lives and on into the future. And of course, we are grateful to our musicians for sharing their hearts through music with ev-

eryone around them.

We wish you all a happy and blessed Thanksgiving!

If you'd like to hear Johnny Cash's full performance of "Thanksgiving Prayer," you can find a copy of the recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egIB7tYW80M>.

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



## Studio 237 Music Lessons

**Piano • Voice • Guitar • Bass • Drums  
Ukulele • Song Writing and More**

**Call today for your appointment (850) 231-3199  
237 Dawson Road, Santa Rosa Beach**

**Visit [www.Studio237Music.com](http://www.Studio237Music.com)**

## Bay County Public Library to Help Bridge the Digital Divide

As part of AT&T's support for improving digital literacy nationwide, the company is helping the Public Library Association (PLA) bring free, in-person digital literacy workshops to more than 200 libraries across 45 states, including the Bay County Public Library.

### Upcoming Adult Digital Literacy Classes:

#### Computer Basics (Registration Required)

Tuesday, November 14 at 10 a.m. CT OR Tuesday, December 12 at 10 a.m. CT. The Computer Basics class is for those who are new to using a PC or want to build more confidence using the Windows 11 operating system.

#### Internet Basics (Registration Required)

Tuesday, November 14 at 11:30 a.m. CT OR Tuesday, December 12 at 11:30 a.m. CT. The Internet Basics class is for those who are new to the internet or want to build more confidence finding information online and navigating websites.

#### Mobile Device Drop-in

Tuesday, November 28 at 11:30 a.m. CT OR Tuesday, December 19 at 10 a.m. CT. Reference Staff will be located in the BCPL Meeting Room from 10 - 11 a.m. This digital literacy class will be conducted as a drop-in. Be sure to bring your fully charged smart device and any questions you have. Android phones, iPhones, Kindles, tablets, and iPads welcome! No registration required for this quick tutorial on your device.

The Bay County Public Library is located at 898 W. 11th Street, Panama City. The hours are Monday - Wednesday (9 a.m. - 7 p.m. CT) and Thursday - Saturday (9 a.m. - 5 p.m. CT). For more information about the Digital Literacy classes, call the Reference Department at (850) 522-2107 or view library events on [www.nwrsl.com](http://www.nwrsl.com).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, about 16 percent of U.S. adults are not digitally literate. Advancing these skills is crucial to helping bridge the digital divide.

## Looking for the perfect seafood dinner?

### Your ship just came in.

Located under the mighty oaks on the Intracoastal Waterway just 5 minutes from the beaches in West Bay, Boon Docks offers a delicious array of fresh local and regional seafood. Take in the history of our 1941 West Bay landmark... the old fish house, the Buchanan home and the old bait store are all now part of the restaurant.



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RESTAURANT**

14854 Bay View Cir, PCB  
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[www.boondocksfl.com](http://www.boondocksfl.com)



 Music & Arts

## Gifts

BY ANNA FISHER, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, EMERALD COAST THEATRE COMPANY

In my hazy childhood recollections, there's one Christmas memory that is a little more clear than the others. It was 1980, and five-year-old me had requested what, in my mind, was quite an unachievable Christmas list: a dollhouse with tiny furniture, pink ballet shoes with a fancy carrying case (Barbie if possible), and a Kermit the Frog plush with long velcro arms. Each one of these items in itself was a lofty hope, a far-away dream that perhaps with enough nice behavior might materialize on Christmas morning. I went to sleep on that eve with visions of Kermit dancing in my head, maybe even wearing those pink ballet shoes with the tiny elastic bows at the top. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that all three of those



gifts—and more—were waiting for me the next morning: the pink ballet shoes and vinyl case that I know my Mom had to drive to Fort Walton to find, the Kermit plush and the sweet, two-story dollhouse that my Dad had been building in secret for the past month. It was joy upon joy, and I remember spending hours that day and the days afterwards playing with each gift to my heart's content. I even brought

my pink ballet shoes for show and tell on that first school day back from Christmas break.

The gifts I treasure now are more intangible, and one of the greatest gifts I receive as an adult is realization. The most dynamic illustration of this is in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. A timely visit from those Three Spirits is just the terrifying realization that Scrooge needs to turn his life around. What feels like a nightmarish inventory of his life becomes the Christmas gift that he didn't know he needed. The realization that the most wonderful parts of life don't carry a price tag, that time with your family and friends is more precious than gold, and that life is short and each moment is a gift in itself. One of the gifts of becoming older and wiser is that we often come to these realizations through the spirits of experience and circumstance, which

hopefully land more gently than Scrooge's visitations.

When I think back upon that glorious Christmas morning full of so many beautiful things, it's not the pink ballet shoes or the dollhouse that I remember the most. It's the feeling that I was special and loved and important to my family. That feeling is why we give gifts to the people we love, and put so much care and effort into choosing and wrapping and situating it just so under the tree. Once we come to this gift of realization, we understand, just as Scrooge does, that "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

My grown up Christmas list now looks much more like the eponymous song, with wishes like world peace, kindness and unity. It feels like any wish is possible during the holiday season when the air becomes electric with that almost tex-

ured magical quality. If I was to define that feeling I would say it comes from all of us being a little more generous and a little more hopeful.

It's the feeling I know you'll have when you come to see any of our holiday shows at Emerald Coast Theatre Company this season. In addition to *A Christmas Carol*, our talented Junior Company teens are performing *Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus*. We are also offering *A Jingle Jangle Christmas* musical revue, complete with all of the warmest holiday classics.

There's a little bit of that magic sprinkled into each of these shows and each one is a gift of shared experiences with family and friends. I hope you'll take a moment to spend with us in real time this holiday season, because one of our greatest realizations is that you are the heart of ECTC.

## ECTC Presents Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) presents *Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus*, December 1 - December 9, 2023. Two compelling stories come together in this heartwarming play inspired by the famous editorial *Yes, Vir-*

*ginia, there is a Santa Claus*. On Christmas Eve, in New York City, eight-year-old Virginia is left pondering whether or not Santa really exists after a series of unhappy events. Meanwhile, a young newspaper editor also struggles against tough holiday

times as he is faced with losing his job if he can't find his writer's voice by morning. Even though they don't know each other, the spirit of Christmas is about to bring these people together, creating in the process an unforgettable and cherished

part of classic Christmas folklore.

*Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus* will be performed by ECTC's talented teen Junior Company players and staged in ECTC's main space located on the second floor of 560 Grand Boulevard in Grand Boulevard Town Center in Miramar Beach. The Junior Company high school troupe is part of ECTC's Rising Stars educational program.



\$26 depending on the show time/day. There is an additional processing fee for ticket purchases. Purchase tickets online at [www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org](http://www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org). You can now choose your seats when you purchase your tickets.

Become a VIP! Membership support allows ECTC to offer a variety of high-quality productions for audiences of all ages as well as reach hundreds of children through our Educational Theatre programs and field trips. Each VIP Membership includes tickets to shows as listed with each membership level, a VIP name tag, early access to reserved seats, access to the VIP Lounge, eight complimentary drinks (wine, beer, or water) for the season, recognition on the ECTC website and in the printed programs, and 10% off all classes, camps, and additional tickets for shows. The VIP Membership is a special community of supporters for ECTC.



**ON STAGE**  
**DECEMBER 1 - 9**

**YES, VIRGINIA,  
THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS**

Two compelling stories come together in this heartwarming play inspired by the famous editorial "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus."

**ON STAGE**  
**DECEMBER 8 - 22**

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

Make ECTC's holiday show a Christmas tradition as you spend time with friends and family while being warmed and inspired by this classic holiday story.



**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**





Tickets or Info, call 850.684.0323 or visit  
[EMERALDCOASTTHEATRE.ORG](http://EMERALDCOASTTHEATRE.ORG)



# PCB *Flavor*

THE BEST OF LOCAL DINING

## IN THIS ISSUE

ISO: PCB's Best Burger

Taste Budz Review

## ISO: PCB's Best Burger

By JACK SMITH

Hamburgers may well be considered America's favorite food, but the origins of the hamburger are fuzzy at best.

The Germans claim it started in Hamburg (hence the name, hamburger), influenced in turn by 12th century Mongolians' steak tartare. In the 19th century, beef from German Hamburg cows was minced and combined with garlic, onions, salt and pepper, then formed into patties (without bread or a bun) to make Hamburg steaks. Given the quality of Hamburg beef, these early burgers were considered gourmet and were pricey. When German immigrants arrived in New York and Chicago, many opened restaurants and featured the Hamburg steak, an Americanized version of the German offering.

Fletcher Davis claims to have invented the hamburger, putting ground beef between two pieces of Texas Toast when one of his customers was in too much of a hurry to sit down for a meal. The customer walked away with his hamburger steak and seemed so content that "Old Dave" offered his new carryout meal as a staple menu item at the end of 1880 in Athens, Texas.

The Library of Congress credits Danish immigrant Louis Lassen of Louis' Lunch, a small lunch wagon in New Haven, Connecticut, with selling the first hamburger and steak sandwich in the U.S. in 1895.

Whatever the truth, the staff of PCB Life sure has enjoyed going in search of PCB's "Best Burger," with lettuce and tomato. See next page for our winners.

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## Capt. Anderson's Restaurant

5551 N Lagoon Drive, PCB | (850) 234-2225

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

While the young ones are enjoying a burger on the kids menu, the adults can sink their teeth into our signature steak... the Grilled Churrasco! A perfectly seasoned Nicaraguan Cut Tenderloin with grilled Bermuda Onions. Deliciously paired with a bottle of Penfolds Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz.

## Boon Docks

14854 Bay View Circle, PCB | (850) 230-0005

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

Located under the mighty oaks on the Intracoastal Waterway just 5 minutes from the beaches in West Bay, Boon Docks offers you a delicious array of local and regional seafood prepared in a variety of ways. We use a special blend of spices that gives our grilled items a taste like no other! Looking for something different? Try our fried or grilled shrimp burger.



## The Wicked Wheel

10025 Hutchison Boulevard, PCB | (850) 588-7947

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

Take a bite out of the best burger on the beach at The Wicked Wheel - the Candied Bacon BBQ Burger! This classic Burnout Burger is grilled and smothered in cheddar cheese, caramelized sweet onion, barbecue sauce, & homemade candied bacon. Wash it all down with an ice-cold Gasoline Tea from the bar!

## American Charlie

473 Richard Jackson Blvd., PCB | (850) 238-8340

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

American Charlie serves the biggest, juiciest burgers in town. Each patty is formed by hand and seasoned and grilled to perfection for maximum flavor. We use only the freshest lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, premium quality cheeses and homemade sauces. The entire burger is served on a warm, toasted sesame seed bun and with a heaping side of our famous fries. Each bite is more delicious than the last, so stop in and try it today!



## San Marcos Mexican Grill Pier Park

101 Bluefish Drive, Suite 105, PCB | (850) 708-3097

[www.sanmarcosmexicangrillpierpark.com](http://www.sanmarcosmexicangrillpierpark.com)

Beef tacos are always a winner! San Marcos Mexican Grill is a family-owned and-operated Mexican restaurant. The family is committed to serving authentic Mexican and Tex-Mex fare including handmade corn tortillas and homemade, tableside-prepared guacamole! Pair the delicious dishes with a range of margaritas, or a draft or bottled beer. You can even have your furry friends join you on the pet-friendly patio! Any day is a good day to chill at the grill.



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

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Try our Beef Yaki Udon! We offer authentic and delicious tasting Japanese cuisine. A convenient location and affordable prices make our restaurant a natural choice for dine-in or take-out meals. Our restaurant is known for its variety in taste and high quality fresh ingredients. Come and experience our friendly atmosphere and excellent service. You can also order online for pickup or delivery.



## Señor Frogs

15005 Front Beach Road, PCB

[senorfrogs.com/panama-city-beach](http://senorfrogs.com/panama-city-beach)

We're a restaurant where the perfect mix of fun and flavor converge, just like the sand and the aquamarine sea. Have a great time with your family and friends while enjoying delicious dishes and the iconic Señor Frog's yards. Try our delicious beach burger: 7 oz. Black Angus beef patty served on a brioche bun with choice of side. Add cheese or bacon and make it your own personalized burger heaven.



## Gulf Coast Burger Company

10031 Hutchison Blvd., PCB | (850) 775-1312

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

We serve the most innovative and delicious burgers on the beach! Wash it all down with a tasty Cat 5 shake! Our goal is for you to leave full, happy, and create memories you'll never forget! Come by and see us today.



# Restaurant Review: Captain Anderson's

BY MARTA ROSE-THORPE

Our recent evening at Capt. Anderson's Restaurant & Waterfront Market was spectacular! But then again, I honestly can't remember a time when a visit to Capt. A's wasn't. I've dined and attended various functions at this revered establishment many times since first encountering Panama City Beach, Florida in

1982 as a student. And on each visit the food, service, and ambiance has been consistently outstanding.

Back in 1967, Capt. Anderson's was a small eatery serving breakfast and classic Gulf Coast fare, catering heavily to the local fisherman with bagged lunches to take out on the boats with them. Through the years it has

slowly expanded, winning the loyalty of millions of customers and friends along the way. The menu now offers a substantial collection of seafood, steaks, and house classics (there are so many "Classics" that the fifth edition of the Capt. Anderson's Cookbook, "Captain's Classics," is now available), gluten-free items, a chil-

dren's menu, desserts, cocktails, specialty drinks, after dinner drinks, domestic and imported beers, and the massive (and I do mean massive) Captain's Cellar Wine List. Four levels of Wine Club membership are available: Capt.'s Cellar, Grand Cuvée, Private Reserve, and Admiral's Locker. (Go to [captanderson.com/wine/wine-club.htm](http://captanderson.com/wine/wine-club.htm) for

Wine Club details.) The restaurant's space has grown to 725 seats with two private rooms, the Flying Fish Lounge, and a gift store that sells Capt. Anderson's House Seasoning, Capt. Anderson's Greek Dressing, and fresh seafood, among many other things. Capt. Anderson's

*Continued on next page*

 Dining

**CAPT. ANDERSONS**

*continued from previous page*

currently employs a 177-member staff with the average length of employment exceeding 25 years. This landmark restaurant even started a local tradition years ago, of “Dining early and watching the fishing fleets unload their catch.”

Capt. Anderson’s has won numerous esteemed awards through the years, including Southern Living’s #1 Seafood Restaurant, Wine Spectator’s ‘Best Of’ Award of Excellence, Restaurants & Institutions’ America’s Top 50, the Travel Channel’s Best Seafood Restaurant, and Florida Trend’s Hall of Fame & Golden Spoon (the highest honor Florida Trend can bestow upon a Florida restaurant).

My recent visit to Capt. Anderson’s was quite different from all the other visits. That evening we had the opportunity to dine with one of the family members, Anna Patronis Moon, who shared some of Capt. Anderson’s background and history as well as a few great behind-the-scenes secrets with us. Like, What’s a great appetizer? For starters, Anna recommended the Sesame Crusted Ahi Tuna.

Fresh, rare ahi tuna medallions, encrusted in crunchy, toasted sesame arrived in a beautiful lineup accompanied by wasabi, fresh ginger, soy and the specially imported Terry Ho’s Yum Yum sauce. A basket of warm Rice Rolls – our favorite – arrived, and Anna explained what makes them so lovely. Before baking, the yeast rolls are dipped in rice flour, which gives the top of this soft roll a wonderful crackling sensation when bitten into.

Along with the bread, most entrees come with a soup of the day or salad, potato or veggie, and a dish of warm, homemade hush puppies always makes its way to the table. Wine recommendations for many of the dishes adds a nice touch. “May we suggest a bottle of Beringer Luminus Oak Knoll Chardonnay, Napa Valley, with the fresh seafood selections? May we suggest a bottle of Lanson Brut Black Label Champagne with the fried seafood selections, or a bottle of Somona-Cutrer, RRV Chardonnay with any of the pasta dishes?”

A round of Greek Salads arrived at the table, large bowls filled to the rim with fresh, cold, crisp iceberg lettuce (just



the way I like it), ripe and juicy, thick-sliced tomatoes, Greek ripe olives, Salonica peppers and Feta cheese. The “Famous Greek Dressing” was savory and delicious (Anna told us all salad dressings are made daily from scratch). My son enjoyed the evening’s featured soup, Chicken Noodle, also homemade from scratch with lovely, delicate noodles in a thick, rich broth. And then the entrees. Anna shared that the two most popular items on the menu are the Seafood Platter, which my husband ordered, broiled, and the Greek Style Grouper Imperial, which I ordered. (During the summer months, the most-ordered item is the Jumbo Fried Gulf Shrimp.)



The seafood platter included shrimp, scallops, fresh grouper, and fried stuffed deviled crab. Everything looked ridiculously fresh and smelled heavenly. And that deviled crab... Anna

told us the secret recipe: shredded blue crab blended with onions, scallions, red and green peppers, relish, and Ritz crackers, all stuffed into a crab shell and cooked. My Grouper Imperial was prepared on an open hearth and charcoal broiled, served with lemon butter, olive oil, chopped spring onions and parsley. Perfectly grilled, tender fish drenched with an out-of-this world Imperial sauce with large chunks of tender lump crab meat. Our son had the Grilled Churrasco Steak, which was tender, juicy, and perfectly cooked. Anna ordered an off-the-menu secret – the Churrasco steak topped with lump blue crab meat drenched in a creamy, sweet she-crab sauce. The evening’s featured vegetable was broccoli... fresh and perfectly cooked al dente, then lightly tossed in seasonings. Our giant baked potatoes’ skins were brushed with butter and sea salt, making the exterior a rich, textural delight.

And after all of that, was there any room for dessert? You bet there was! We all sampled the Peanut Butter Pie – a creamy, peanut-buttery concoction in a graham cracker crust (as Anna put it, “Like Reece’s Cups on Steroids”), and the Key Lime Pie, a cool, silky sensation of tart citrus in a graham cracker crust. All desserts are made in house, from scratch, daily, as with just about everything.

Capt. Anderson’s is open Monday through Saturday at 4:30 p.m. and closed on Sunday. It is located at 5551 N. Lagoon Drive, Panama City Beach, FL 32408. For more information call (850) 234-2225 and visit [captandersons.com](http://captandersons.com).

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## BOLT Program Nurtures Leadership and Life Skills



BY MARK MCQUEEN,  
BAY DISTRICT SCHOOLS  
SUPERINTENDENT

In a world where the virtues of respect and leadership are becoming increasingly vital, an inspiring initiative at Hutchison Beach Elementary School is paving the way for the leaders of tomorrow. The Boys On the Leadership Team (BOLT) program, under the extraordinary guidance of Principal Glenda Nouskhajian, is setting new standards for excellence in education. I am so proud of this program and the members of our Team of Teams who are making it happen.

The BOLT program is a testament to the power of investing in the future. These remarkable 4th and 5th graders, hand-selected for their exceptional qualities, are given the tools they need to flourish as ambassadors for their school and community. The entire initiative transcends traditional educational boundaries and ensures our young Dolphins are equipped with essential life skills and values that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Principal Nouskhajian, the driving force behind this program, is committed to the concept of leadership skills and training for her students and that fits perfectly with our vision for ALL BDS students. Nurturing positive leadership from a young age is pivotal to developing well-rounded individuals. Fortunately, several schools in our district have their own versions of programs like BOLT so that a plethora of students can benefit from learning qualities like respect, responsibility, and teamwork.

One unique aspect of the BOLT program, however, is the emphasis on presentation and conduct. These young leaders



are taught that leadership goes beyond words; it's also about how you present yourself to the world. When visitors come to the school or when the BOLT members are out in the community, they are dressed in sharp dress shirts and ties. This attire is symbolic of their commitment to excellence, their desire for high personal standards, and their readiness to represent their school with pride and professionalism. The dress code isn't about superficiality; it's about teaching students that discipline, respect and professionalism are important at all levels and in all settings.

The BOLT program at Hutchison Beach Elementary School is a shining example of what right looks like in education today and how our classroom instruction can extend

beyond academics. But programs like these aren't funded through traditional means, and I'm sharing their story with our community to both highlight and support the members of this program. The boys have an ongoing need for support in procuring their dress attire and funding field trips out into the community where they can learn from, and interact with, other community leaders.

If you'd like to help reinforce the values and leadership principals in this amazing program with a donation of dress shirts and ties, or funds for field trips, please reach out to Principal Nouskhajian today at [nouskgt@bay.k12.fl.us](mailto:nouskgt@bay.k12.fl.us) or (850) 767-5195. Also, our BOLT leaders are always looking for community leaders who want to come and visit with the boys to share their leadership stories and/or skills.

Thank you for continuing to do such a fantastic job supporting not only our beach schools but all schools within the Bay District Schools network.

## Breakfast Point Academy Aims for 100

By Clint Whitfield, Principal, Breakfast Point Academy  
"100 Percent, 100 Percent of the time!" This is our creed for the 2023-2024 school year for our administrative team, our teachers, and our students. It may not sound like much, but if you think about it, why can we not always give 100 percent, 100 percent of the time? What are we missing out on if we do not at least strive for that? This is a message that we are dedicated to every day! Our students hear it, our teachers hear it, and we as Stingrays live it! Although we are one school as a K-8, I will highlight our elementary school in this section.

Breakfast Point has the honor of working with, engaging and educating students from all beach schools in need of the specialized skills our autism cluster program provides. Currently, we have five classes in elementa-

ry school, and we are proud to teach and learn alongside this group of students. We have highly skilled and specialized teachers and paraprofessionals who work daily on thinking outside the box to help these unique students thrive. We provide an inclusive environment for them to grow while still immersing them in all of our school functions. In addition, we are proud to have the only sensory room at a public school in Bay County. This provides an opportunity for our students to engage in activities that are unique to them as well as allowing kinesthetic learning opportunities.

This year, we are excited to welcome back our music program after a three-year hiatus. Although we hated to see our STEM program go, we welcome the fine arts back into our elementary school. We are looking forward to our annual music programs coming back, as well

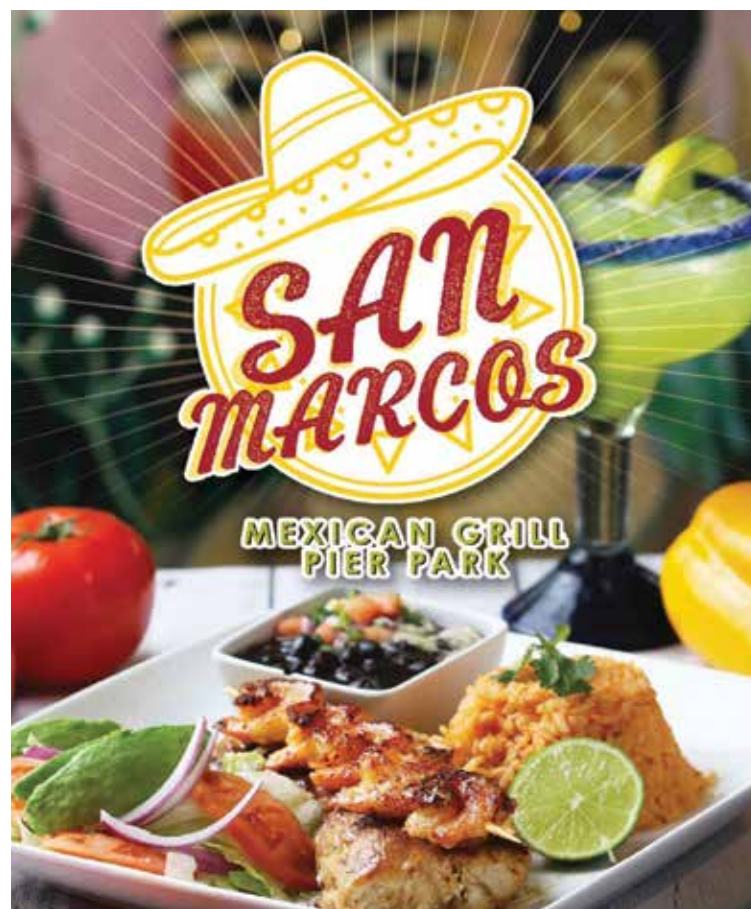
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 Wellness

# Medicare Open Enrollment is Here!



By DIANA BROWN  
Medicare's annual open en-

rollment period began on Oct. 15 and the kind of questions I generally get asked the most are, "Do Florida Blue Medicare plans cover dental, or eyeglasses, or over-the-counter medications, etc.?" The answer is yes, we do!

However, many times the most fundamental questions about our Medicare products are never asked, and that is "How is the medical coverage under your plans?"

Florida Blue, Florida's Blue Cross and Blue Shield company, has been providing health insurance to residents of Florida for more than 75 years. Driven by its mission of helping people and communities achieve better health, the company serves more than 5 million healthcare members across the state.

Also, Florida Blue has an extensive network of doctors and hospitals – the largest in the state. At least one Medicare

plan is offered in every county of the state and, depending on your plan, you can link up with 48 out of 50 other states.

Many doctors will agree that Florida Blue is likely to approve a new procedure or allow a new medication if the member needs it. Those are the things that are not as apparent as dental or eyeglasses on a plan but are very important.

So, the short answer is yes – Florida Blue has an excellent reputation for health care. But let's talk about another matter – service!

Many times, when a person calls one of those "Joe Namath" type commercials, they are actually calling a clearinghouse, which in turn will sell your information to agents for a fee, resulting in a ton of phone calls after that. And, if you sign up with an agent over the phone, that is most likely the last time you will speak to that individual. You will be sent instead to a service center manned by peo-

ple with hard-to-understand accents – probably not in Florida and possibly not even in the country.

Florida Blue agents are local to the community and know the doctors and hospitals in your area. We undergo basic Medicare and product training every year to stay on top of an ever-confusing industry. But the most important thing is this – we encourage you to call us with questions and offer great service after the sale.

If you haven't tried Florida Blue yet, give us a try this year. Once on our plans, members usually stay. Give me a call, I'd be glad to hear from you and go over our products!

*Diana Brown is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector, your local agency for Florida Blue, providing Medicare plans throughout the State. She has been licensed with the State of Florida for over 25 years. She can be reached at (850) 819-4135.*



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## BREAKFAST POINT

*continued from previous page*

as our 5th-grade choir participating in the annual choral festival. We were able to secure a young, energetic music teacher, and we cannot wait for the

we celebrate the positive behaviors of our students each month through celebrations. Our school expectations revolve around our RAYS pledge, which is that Rays are Responsible, Accountable, Young Leaders, Showing Respect. This message



amazing performances that are forthcoming!

We also have much to celebrate reflecting on last year, including some of our proficiency scores in state testing. We saw amazing growth among our students, and our 5th-grade Science scores were the highest among ANY school in Bay County. It was a new test for all of our elementary students, but the teachers and students worked hard in the classroom, and the data showed!

BPA is also a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) school where

is repeated every day, and it is posted everywhere throughout the school as we strive to promote these values within our students to help them succeed academically, socially, and behaviorally!

Our community partners have been so helpful with providing incentives for student learning as well as some of the needs of our students. We cherish our community because we serve our community.

We are looking forward to another great school year and all of the successes that come with it! #RaysRise

October 15 — December 7

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# Practicing Gratitude Leads to Happier Marriages



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PhD

In this season of Thanksgiving most of us become more intentional about practicing gratitude. We ought to do this all year long, however, because feeling and expressing gratefulness makes us happier and more resilient, improves our relationships, and even boosts our psychological and physical health.

Focusing more on gratitude in your marriage also has positive effects. Couples who practice gratitude together have happier marriages than those who do not practice gratitude. Research shows that couples who mutually express gratitude to each other strengthen their relationship, enhance the levels of perceived intimacy and mutual care, reinforce their sense of belonging, and bolster their levels of marital satisfaction.

Conversely, people who initiate divorce often do so because their spouse is overly critical, takes their contributions to their marriage and homelife for granted, and doesn't seem to value who they are as a person, outside of the tasks they perform in the relationship.

You and your partner can protect your marriage from this type of erosion by practicing reciprocal expressions of gratitude.

Look for reasons to say "thank you". Pay attention to the contributions your partner makes to your daily routine such as cooking, making the bed, paying the bills, grocery shopping, loading the dishwasher, house cleaning, laundry, yard work, gassing up the car, and all the other little favors that make your day easier.

Stop taking these contributions for granted and instead acknowledge, value, and appreciate your partner's role in making your life together work well. It's as easy as saying "thank you" sincerely and frequently.

Show that you appreciate who your partner is to you, not just what your partner does for you. Compliments are meaningful when they focus on behaviors and even more meaningful when they highlight the receiver's core values. So, of course,



it is important to be thankful for your partner's hard work and acts of service to your relationship, but it is even more important to praise your partner's virtues.

Is your partner smart, well-organized, a good storyteller, patient, empathetic, honest, funny, a good friend? Pay attention to how your partner lives out important values and express appreciation for the kind of person your partner is to you and others.

Avoid public criticism and give public praise. One of the fundamental rules in relationship communication is to never criticize your partner in public. To do so is disrespectful, embarrasses and demoralizes your partner, and erodes relational trust, intimacy, and satisfaction.

Praising your partner in public has the opposite effect.

Expressing appreciation for your partner publicly shows respect and pride, and will make your partner feel appreciated, important, and loved. As a happy by-product, your partner will feel enhanced warmth toward you and your relationship.

So, take advantage of opportunities to thank or congratulate your partner in front of your children, extended family, and friends. You might even create a social media post showing your partner's good qualities or sharing news of your partner's success.

Act grateful and show appreciation every day. Do small things often, rather than just isolated grand gestures. These small loving actions speak louder than words when it comes to making your partner feel loved and appreciated.

Bring your partner a cup of coffee. Make her favorite meal. Send a text message of encouragement when you know your partner has a presentation, an important meeting, or a long day. Send heart emojis when you text the grocery list. Draw

a heart on a post-it and leave it on your partner's windshield or stick it on the bathroom mirror. Look for ways to do little favors for your partner every day.

Small, from-the-heart expressions of love and support send consistently authentic messages of love and appreciation and so they mean much more than a once-a-year candlelit dinner or perfunctory bouquet of roses on special occasions

These four approaches to practicing gratitude will help you and your partner avoid taking each other for granted and keep you on a satisfying relationship path. So, as you begin the season of Thanksgiving this year, why not incorporate them into your holiday preparations. If you do, you'll more likely experience the true measure of Thanksgiving.

Let me know if I can help.

*Jamie C. Williamson, PhD is a FL Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator and Couples Counselor. She is an owner and partner at Amity Mediation Workshop, a mediation practice specializing in "friendly divorce" mediation and psycho-educational marriage revitalization sessions for couples. Dr. Jamie speaks frequently on relationship topics and authors the blog "Work it Out". You can find her online at [amitymediationworkshop.com](http://amitymediationworkshop.com).*

## Happiness: Pursuit or Practice?



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

When did you last feel genuinely happy? Was it an ideal vacation, a family event where everyone behaved, the day your team won the big rivalry, a day at the beach when conditions were just right? The bar for happiness can feel high and difficult

to obtain as you move through a world where so much is out of your control. Flights are delayed, family members aren't behaving, injuries happen, and the weather does what it wants. You hear the consistent cultural message, "Pursue happiness," but what does that even mean and how do you arrive at happiness when it feels so elusive?

It's common to hear happiness discussed as a destination. When you can get into this house, this job, this car, this college, this group...then you will be happy. Happiness is often discussed as an absence of stress, sadness, pain or grief. When you can get past this work season, this move, this parenting season, this

*Continued on next page*



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 Wellness


DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

I meet new people often and after the “What do you do?” a discussion about hormones typically occurs. From men I usually hear, “Well I don’t have a problem in that department.” And from women I hear that they are just fine without sex. These comments are to be expected but still frustrate me.

I understand that hormones imply sex or sexual health. The truth is this is a minor part of

what hormones do. Hormones regulate many processes in the body, and I would guess even most physicians don’t have a clue how beneficial hormones are in our bodies. I frequently have new patients tell me their doctor told them hormones are bad. They cause cancer and disease and should be avoided.

How does that even make sense? How many teenagers get cancer, have heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, diabetes? Teenagers are healthier than any other age group and happen to have the highest hormone levels of any age group. Doesn’t it sound a bit suspicious? Instead, disease starts when our hormones start leaving. After forty our hormones are already low enough to cause problems. After

fifty they are pretty much gone. Guess what? That’s when we all start getting diseases and we start slowing down and gaining weight. That cancer, those heart attacks and strokes - they happen after the hormones are no longer there to protect us.

Well, that’s why I’m here. By adding bio-identical hormones we reduce disease. Sugar levels are higher in people with lower hormones. Blood pressure is higher in patients with low hormones. Breast cancer risk is higher in women who don’t have hormones. Prostate cancer is more severe in men without hormones. Osteoporosis is worse in women without hormones. Alzheimer’s occurs more frequently in people with low hormones. Heart attacks, strokes, and cholesterol

are all worse without hormones. What else do you want to hear?

To me, it’s obvious that bio-identical hormones are beneficial for health. They reduce disease, reduce inflammation, and reduce all causes of mortality for both men and women. That’s why I started treating patients with bio-identical hormones over ten years ago. We are the largest clinic in the southeast and one of the largest in the country. We are the ones who train the other doctors. We have more experience, we treat more patients, and we have more success than nearly every other BioTE provider in the country.

Do bio-identical hormones help with libido? Yes. Do bio-identical hormones help with erectile dysfunction? Yes.

But this is not the reason to come in and get treated. This is just the cherry on top.

*Dr. Richard Chern, MD provides hormone therapy to men and women from across the country.*

*He is also on staff at BioTE Medical and teaches hormone therapy to new providers including providers right here in our local area. Dr. Richard Chern, MD treats countless doctors, medical providers and first responders in the area as well. Dr. Richard Chern, MD is a platinum BioTE provider and runs one of the largest BioTE hormone clinics in the country right here in Miramar Beach. Call Dr. Richard Chern, MD today for an appointment at The Hormone Restoration Center at (850) 837-1271.*

## HAPPINESS

*continued from previous page*

test, this break up, this illness... then you will be happy. People talk about happiness as though it’s dependent on someone or something external. I’ll be happy when I get the recognition I deserve, when my kids start listening, when my partner does the work to understand me, when others agree with me. With all of these happiness narratives swirl-

ing, you can feel discouraged and hopeless that happiness will ever be more than brief moments of relief from stress that exists beyond your control.

What if you could shift the happiness narrative? What if happiness is not something to chase or pursue? What if happiness is something to practice? What if happiness can have internal origin instead of you waiting for all of the circumstances to line up perfectly? What if

happiness does not only exist externally where comparison to others creates jealousy, scarcity and insecurity? What would that be like?

While different definitions of happiness exist, many suggesting circumstantial satisfaction, I prefer defining happiness as the practice of finding gratitude, joy and contentment while placing focus in the present moment. So, what does the practice of happiness look like practically?



### 5 Ways to Begin Practicing Happiness

**1-Acknowledge your current reality honestly.** Not everything feels good, light and happy. Acknowledge what feels good right now. Acknowledge what feels hard right now. Acknowledge feeling hurt, excited, jealous, sad, inspired, fearful, etc. Give space to all of your feelings and remind yourself feelings are normal and they guide your attention to important insight even when they are hard.

**2-Step outside black and white thinking.** Everything is not either wonderful or terrible. You are capable of holding the tension of some things in your life feeling hard while some things are going well. You don’t have to pretend the hard things aren’t hard. You also don’t have to exclusively focus on the negative. You can give meaningful attention to what is good even in the face of the hard.


**3-Reserve space for daily gratitude.** Try setting reminders in your phone throughout the day to focus on 3-5 things you appreciate. Anything counts including spiritual things, relationships,

material things, weather, feelings, books, shows, positive test results, a laugh, etc. Try inverting your frustrations with gratitude. Stuck in traffic can become gratitude for a car, gas, a/c, music, a moment to breathe.

**4-Focus on the present moment.** You don’t have to be anywhere other than where you are right now. Try doing one thing at a time and noticing what you see, hear, feel, taste, observe happening around you right now. Remember you are in this moment for a reason. Use it with intention. The next moment will wait and you can be in that moment when it arrives. Download a mindfulness app and try beginning a practice.




**5-Define happiness internally.** Notice where you are making happiness contingent on others and circumstances. Remind yourself gently that your happiness does not have to wait for everyone and everything to go your way. Remind yourself of what is good, what has been given to you already, and what can be enjoyed now even when life is complicated and messy.

Be kind to yourself and others as you practice shifting happiness from an external pursuit to an internal practice. Your internal work around happiness has the potential to change your daily mood and approach to life in meaningful ways. As you walk along your journey, connect with us for coaching and counseling at Journeybravely.com.




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# THANKSGIVING TIPS FOR THOSE WITH HEARING LOSS

## DRESS FOR HEARING SUCCESS AT HOLIDAY GATHERINGS

No matter how formal or informal the Thanksgiving gathering, wearing your hearing aids is always the right choice. Hearing aids make it easier for you to participate in social situations. With your hearing aids, you can enjoy conversation in a group or at the dinner table with less effort. Even in noisy situations, with multiple people speaking, your hearing aids let you hear what you want to hear so you don't miss out on a minute of holiday fun.

## SAFE TRAVELS WITH HEARING LOSS

Thanksgiving is one of the most traveled holidays of the year. If you're traveling home for the holidays, pack your hearing aid charger or extra hearing aid batteries in your hand-held luggage. If your baggage goes missing, you won't miss out on the holiday fun. Driving to your destination? Many hearing aids can be



used as wireless headsets for easy, hands-free calls from modern mobile phones, including iPhone® and Android™ smartphones.

## CHOOSE THE BEST SEAT AT THE TABLE

Along with turkey and pumpkin pie, conversation around the dinner table is a highlight of Thanksgiving gatherings. Choose a seat that lets you see faces while people are speaking. A spot with your back to the wall will help cut down on distracting background noise. Avoid conversations with people at a distance. You'll be more relaxed chatting with the people seated closest to you. Advanced Rx hearing aids give you access to all sounds in the environment. Even at a noisy dinner table with multiple people speaking, you can hear what you want to hear.

## TAKE A BREAK WHEN YOU NEED IT

Keeping up with the conversation in noisy holiday settings can be challenging for everyone, but especially for people with hearing loss. Take a break from the crowd for a one-

on-one conversation with someone you don't see often enough. Can't find a quiet spot for your chat? No worries. A remote microphone accessory can help when you're trying to hear speech in a noisy place. Simply hand the remote microphone to your friend or loved one for clear speech streamed directly to your hearing aids.

Call Hear Again America today to learn about all the great benefits of the latest advanced Rx hearing aids.



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Article Source: Oticon. Excerpt from "Thanksgiving tips for those with hearing loss" <https://www.oticon.com/your-hearing/getting-help/thanksgiving-tips-with-hearing-loss>. Accessed 18 October 2023.

[www.HearAgainAmerica.com](http://www.HearAgainAmerica.com)

 Musing

# Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

You probably didn't hear about it. But yesterday, God visited earth.

Contrary to what you've heard, God is a big fan of people. He's a huge fan. In fact, that's why he came.

His visit was an under-the-radar thing. It was non-publicized. God wasn't in it for press.

First, he came to Birmingham, Alabama. Of all places.

He stepped into a sleepy hospital corridor last night, and wandered the aisles barefoot. He stopped in the room of a little girl with terminal brain cancer.

The little girl was sleeping. He touched her bald little head. She never even knew he was there. All she knew was that she was dreaming of "angels and stuff."

When the little girl awoke, something wonderful had happened. Something almost too impossible to believe.

Her mother was seated beside her bed. Asleep in her chair. The little girl sat upright. She stretched her arms. She yawned. She remarked how good she felt. Doctors checked her out. They couldn't believe she felt "good."

Because for the last six months, the child has felt like heck. For the last six months, the little girl has been dying. But today, something had shifted. All the treatments. All the therapy. Something was working.

Turns out, the scans the doctor sent away had come back all clear. The child okay. Not just a-little-bit okay. She is totally fine. No traces of cancer. Not a single bit. This child will live.

"My baby will live," said her mother.

After that, God went to Oklahoma City. It's not clear how he got there. Maybe he took a Greyhound. Maybe he flew. Maybe God doesn't take public transportation. Maybe he just did the Star Trek thing, and beamed himself up.

Either way, he landed in a little town outside Oklahoma City. A dusty town which shall remain nameless, because it is small, and everyone knows everyone's business.

There was an old man who was suicidal. He is Cherokee. He was locked in his bathroom. He had the gun. He was going to do it. Really going to do it.

But then something warm washed all over him and told him, in an audible voice, "Don't do it. Rachel drew you a picture."

He stepped out of his bathtub when he heard the phone ring. It was his granddaughter. She was Facetiming him.

"Hey Grandpa," said the 6-year-old child. "I called because I just drew you a picture."

Her name is Rachel.



Then God then traveled to Oregon. The 33rd state. A state with rainforests, mountains and harsh deserts. God must have taken a pretty fast plane because he got there in just the nick of time.

There was a young man named Rob who was having a heart attack in his home. Rob is 26. He was standing in his hallway, and he was so scared. It's not every day a 26-year-old collapses in his hallway, clutching his chest in terror.

"Don't let me die, God," Rob uttered.

When he woke up, he was in the ICU. The doctors said he had been dead for several minutes before they revived him.

His mother, who was sitting beside his hospital bed asked what he'd seen when he was clinically dead.

Rob said, "I just met my father."

The young man's father has been dead since he was a toddler. He's only seen pictures.

"What did he say to you?" his mother asked.

the kid asked.

"I never told you this, but your father asked me to marry him in Baltimore."

Listen, I don't know where this letter finds you tonight. I don't know what you're doing right now, or where you are spending Thanksgiving.

I don't know whether you're happy or sad. I don't care whether you're religious or not. Thanksgiving is days away. And I don't give the tiniest crap what you've heard, I want you to know that no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, God is your biggest fan.

I hope you have a happy Thanksgiving this year.

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# A Minister's Message: Why Can't We Get Along?



BY DR. KERRY KNIGHT,  
EMERALD BEACH CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

"Pursue PEACE with all people and holiness, without which no one will see God."

Hebrews 12:14

The war that rages in Israel with the deaths of thousands is a certain sign that many are sadly

lacking in their pursuit of peace in the world. Young and old have suffered great loss. Torture, brutality, and rape have shaped an ugly picture of what evil can create.

Jesus said, in John 16:33, "In me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Jesus was the Prince of Peace. He can stop the carnage if we will only listen to Him. "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Satan has come to steal, to kill, and to destroy. Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Let us take Jesus Christ into our hearts and stop the killing of innocents. Remember what He has given us in His holy word:

It is a dire warning  
...Without which NO ONE will see God!

Emerald Beach Church of Christ is located at 310 Alf Coleman Road, PCB. Phone (850) 235-7992

## The Hope, by Herman Wouk

REVIEWED BY JACK SMITH

Herman Wouk is one of the greatest historical novelists ever. It began with "The Caine Mutiny" and continued with "The Winds of War" and "War and Remembrance". He saved his greatest work for last though: "The Hope" and "The Glory". These novels chronicle one of the most thrilling events of our time, the modern birth of Israel. After World War Two the Jews had had enough. They demanded their own homeland, Israel. This is the story of the Jewish migration and settlement of

that country. Balagan is a Hebrew word that can be translated as chaos or fiasco, and it's a word that comes up again and again in the novel set amid the several wars that forged the state of Israel. Instead of Roosevelt, we have Ben-Gurion, Israel's Churchill. Instead of Eisenhower, we have Moshe Dayan. The miracles of military ingenuity, raw courage—sheer Chutzpah—have become the folklore of the Israeli Defense Forces. For example, when the army needed to find a road in order to break the Siege of Je-

rusalem in 1948, an American Colonel (made commander of the Jerusalem front by Ben-Gurion) managed to save the city with a barely passable, last-ditch road carved through winding mountains along old animal paths that bypassed enemy lines, bringing desperately needed supplies to the besieged city. Anticipating the next war, the undersized Israel air force bombed all of Egypt's runways keeping its planes out of the fight. This is the study of the world's largest underdog and its refusal to surrender. I once had the occasion

to speak to a Special Forces operator from Israel and asked why they fought so hard. He gave me a one-word answer in Hebrew that sounded like "Embara".

He later translated the word to mean "no choice" If the Arabs lose the war, they go home, if we lose we go into the sea.

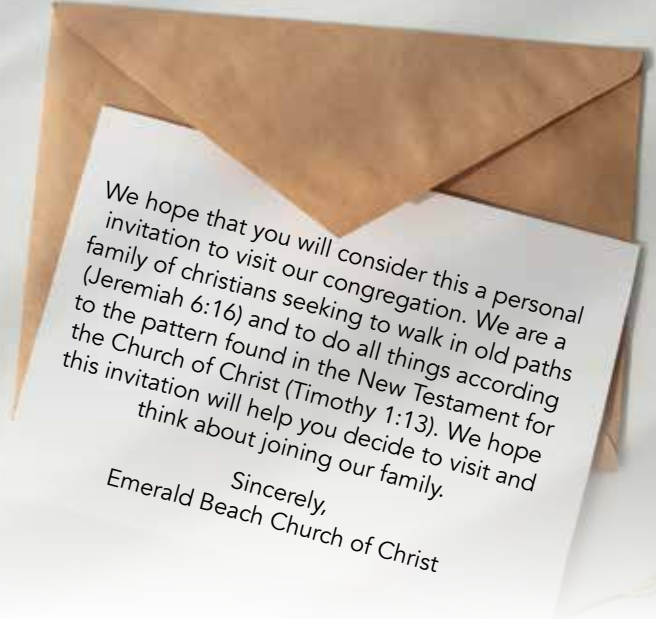
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## Cabinets: The Heart of Your Kitchen

BY AUBRIE ROUNDS,  
MARKETING COORDINATOR,  
FLOORING DEPOT OF PANAMA  
CITY

The kitchen is the heart of the home. It's a special place where many spend hours crafting beautiful meals and gathering with family. It's a place where memories are made, and to many, it's the most important focus when searching for the perfect home.

When designing your perfect kitchen, it's important that your space feels functional, beautiful, and enjoyable. A great kitchen starts with great cabinets, so what factors should you consider when picking your cabinetry?

Your cabinets aren't going to change frequently. So, choose something that you can live with—for a long time. Solid wood boxes will give you the function and longevity that you will need in a highly-used kitchen. You should also consider the style of doors your cabinets will have. The doors of your cabinets can alter the mood of the entire kitchen changing it from casual to elegant to modern,

so it's crucial to consider the overall aesthetic you want your kitchen to have when picking out cabinet doors.

Styles of cabinet doors include shaker, contemporary, flat panel, glass front, and traditional, just to name a few.

Shaker-style cabinets are a popular choice right now for their classic but modern design and are a great option for those looking for a cozy farmhouse feel in their kitchen. It's also a classic design for coastal kitchens so it's easy to see their appeal here in Florida. Flat panel cabinetry, on the other hand, provides a sleek, mid-century modern feel.

Looking to spice up your kitchen? Mixing cabinet styles is also a fun way to do that. A mix of open shelving and shaker cabinets, or even mixing rustic and contemporary styles can help your kitchen stand out from other cookie-cutter kitchens. If you're a little indecisive about the style of your cabinets, try mixing styles to get the best of both worlds!

The finish of your cabinets



can also add to the overall mood of your kitchen. Lighter cabinets are great for a traditional or coastal style. It will also make the space look brighter and more open. Darker cabinetry is excellent for creating a warm, cozy environment and is a wonderful contrast to lighter floors and walls. Colored cabinetry is also becoming more popular and can create a dynamic look for your kitchen. Cabinet style and color are more personal than you think, so make sure to give it plenty of consideration when designing your kitchen.

If you think you're done when you've chosen the style of doors, think again. Your cabinetry hardware is also a great way

to individualize your personal style in your kitchen. Cabinet hardware is usually an afterthought when designing a kitchen, but the right hardware will create a stunning visual impact as well as promote functionality. From handle pulls to knobs to cremone bolts, there are a variety of styles to dress up your cabinets.

Textured and curved silhouettes tend to work better with more traditional style kitchens, while those with clean edges and a sleek profile tend to lean more modern. Just like mixing cabinet styles, mixing hardware styles can be a way to make your cabinets stand out. Don't be afraid to mix metals and style, as

“breaking the rules” can reflect your personality and make your kitchen unique, just like you!

Function is another important factor to examine when choosing your cabinets. Your organizational style is an important factor in creating a functional kitchen personalized to you.

How much storage do you need? What appliances do you want more easily accessible than others? How many drawers do you need to accommodate your utensils? Do you have an antique glassware collection you would like to showcase? These questions will help you design a kitchen that works for your life and will keep you from getting frustrated in the kitchen.

If you're interested in designing and purchasing cabinets or if you have any questions about cabinets for your home, rental, or business, stop by one of our two Flooring Depot of Panama City locations. We would love to help you design your dream kitchen. Call us at (850) 785-2216 or visit our website at [flooringdepotofpanama.com](http://flooringdepotofpanama.com).

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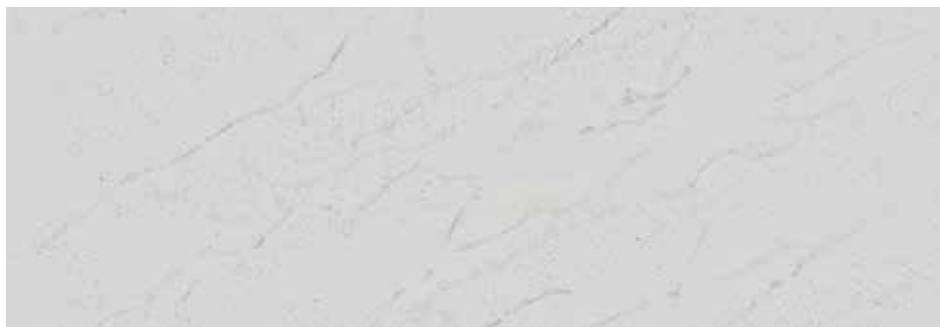
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# Design and Culture: Quartz Countertops, What's the News?

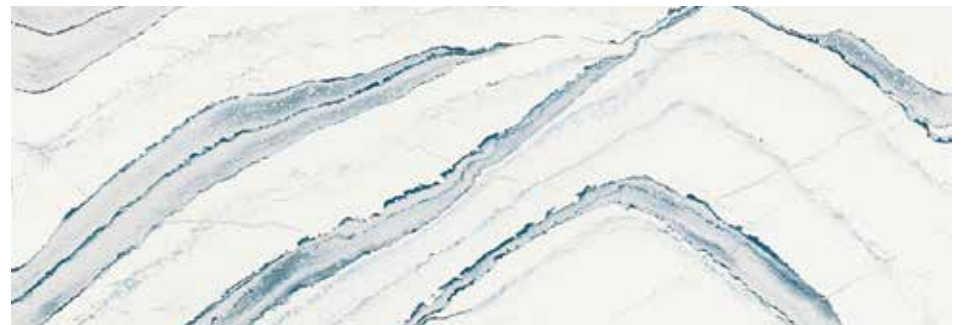
It has been an exciting year in Quartz countertops and there are many new colors to choose from! Silestone, Cambria and MSI have released some lovely new designs we'd like to share with you. Also, some styles are getting resurrected. The look of recycled glass is making its way back into our coastal homes. There are multiple options available out there for interior and ex-

terior countertops when it comes to this style. If you are interested in countertops with recycled glass, I would highly suggest visiting your fabricator as pricing can vary greatly and they can assist you in finding a selection that works for your budget. Granite Plus is one of the oldest fabricators in Bay County and can assist you with your project, whether it's new construction, a remodel

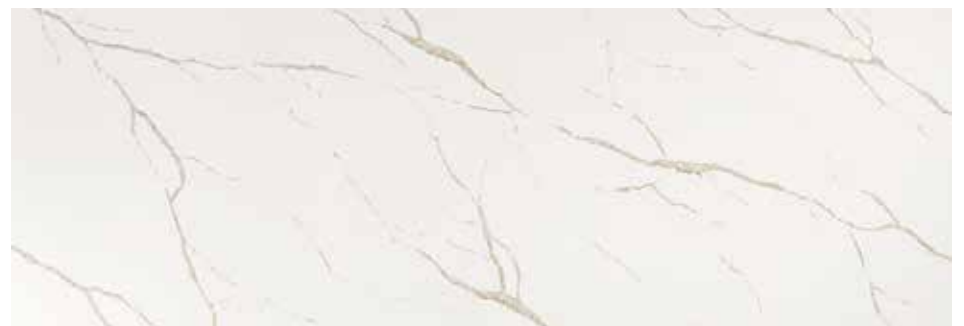
or commercial. If you would like to see samples of any of these projects or you would like a sample shipped to you, give us a call. We are family-owned and operated and have a wonderful team of project managers to assist you. Our showroom is located at 17801 Ashley Drive and we hope to see you soon!



Silestone has just released their "Le Chic" collection Inspired by Natural Stones, with subtle veins and a little bit of sparkle. To really appreciate and view the aesthetics of this collection you can visit [www.cosentino.com/usa/silestone/le-chic/](http://www.cosentino.com/usa/silestone/le-chic/). On the left is Eclectic Pearl, available in polished or suede, and on the right is Parisien Bleu, available in polished.



New from Cambria Quartz, Windsor Brass (left) and Inverness Bristol Bay (right) are both new and stunning. Windsor Brass has warm and cool tones, and touches of brass. Its movement is stunning and warming with its soft movement and soft veins. If you are looking to add blue into your home, Inverness Bristol Bay is a lovely choice, the pattern a whimsical blend of blue and greys perfect for our coastal homes. To find out more information you can visit [CambriaUSA.com](http://CambriaUSA.com).



MSI Surfaces "Calacatta Laza" has been a longtime loved color by our customers standing the test of time and continuing to be a favorite. MSI Surfaces recently added their House of Laza Collection, Calacatta Laza Grigio (left) and Calacatta Laza Oro (right), elegant additions to world of countertops. Calacatta Oro bringing the same sense of luxury, just adding some of those warm tones that are trending right now. Calacatta Laza Grigio is bringing us a whole new look as clients look for something new and exciting. Visit [MSISurfaces.com](http://MSISurfaces.com) to find out more information.



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 Business

# The Aspen Institute Names GCSC as Top 150 U.S. Community College Eligible for 2025 Aspen Prize

\$1 Million Prize Recognizes Excellence in Equitable Outcomes for Students in and after College

On October 31, 2023, the Aspen Institute named Gulf Coast State College as one of the 150 institutions eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among two-year colleges. The institutions selected for this honor stand out among more than 1,000 community colleges nationwide as having high and improving levels of student success as well as equitable outcomes for Black and Hispanic students and those from lower-income backgrounds.

"It is an incredible honor to be recognized as one of the elite community colleges in the nation, competing for the pres-

tigious Aspen Prize. At Gulf Coast State College, our unwavering commitment is to put student success at the heart of every decision we make and action we take. This recognition reaffirms the positive impact we have on the lives of the students we serve and underscores the dedication of our entire community in paving the way for a brighter future." says Glen McDonald, President of Gulf Coast State College.

The Aspen Prize spotlights exemplary community colleges to drive attention to colleges achieving post-graduate success for all students and is a central way Aspen researches highly effective student success strategies that are shared with the field. The 150 eligible colleges



have been invited to submit student success data and narratives about strategies to achieve better and more equitable student outcomes as the next step in an intensive review process that culminates in the naming of the Aspen Prize winner in spring 2025. The eligible colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector. Located in urban, rural, and suburban areas across 30 states, these colleges serve as few

as 169 students and as many as 49,619.

"The Aspen Prize is rooted first and foremost in an assessment of whether colleges are walking the walk," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "As community colleges face enrollment variations, enroll students with pandemic-related learning loss, and graduate students into a rapidly changing labor market, it is easy to lose track of what matters most. The best community colleges are continuing to focus on advancing the core mission: making sure as many students as possible graduate with credentials that lead to fulfilling careers and reflect the development of diverse talent that communities, states, and our nation need."

While community colleges are an essential contributor to our nation's success, student outcomes vary substantially among institutions. Aspen measures

those variances using multiple data sources and honors colleges with outstanding achievement in six critical areas: teaching and learning, certificate and degree completion, transfer and bachelor's attainment, workforce success, equitable access to the college, and equitable outcomes for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

In this first round, eligibility for the Aspen Prize is based on publicly available data. Colleges must show strong, improving, and equitable student outcomes in first-to-second year retention, credentials awarded, and completion and transfer rates. Nationwide, about 15 percent of community colleges have been invited to apply (150 of just under 1,000 public two-year colleges assessed for Prize eligibility).

For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions and more information, visit [higher.ed.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize](http://higher.ed.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize).

## Club 360 Hosts The 12 Purses of Christmas

**12 Days. 12 Designer Purses. 12 Winners.** Club 360 is giving away a designer purse every day between December 1 and 12, in this holiday season's newest and most exciting fundraiser, The 12 Purses of Christmas. Designer purses being given away are valued between \$250 - \$500 and include Kate Spade, Michael Kors, and Coach, to

name a few. The cost of tickets is 1 for \$20 or 7 for \$100. Seven tickets provide 84 chances to WIN a Designer Purse!

Do you know a Club 360 Member? Tickets are available from Club 360 Members as well as online at Ticketleap. Online tickets will be mailed to the address provided. Additional information is available at [Club360Bay.org](http://Club360Bay.org) including a

full List of Rules.

The funds raised in this holiday event will fund Club 360 programs that benefit our youth through career programs and scholarships. To learn more about Club 360, please contact the organization at (850) 769-3357, visit the website at [www.club360bay.org](http://www.club360bay.org), or email [ifield@club360bay.org](mailto:ifield@club360bay.org).



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# Property Tax Notices Mailed November 1st

## Tips for Easy and Quick Payment

payment option is online payment with an electronic check (e-check). All you need is your checking account number and routing number to pay online with an e-check. Online payment allows you to add multiple properties to your shopping cart and pay all in one transaction. There is no wondering if your mail payment made it to the office on time. Once paid, you can print out your statement with payment information printed at the bottom to serve as your receipt. The QR code below can be used to access our tax software to look up your account and pay online.



Property tax notices were mailed on November 1 and the property tax roll is officially open for collection. You can now pay property taxes online, by drop box, by mail or by visiting a tax collector's office. If you haven't received a physical tax notice, notices can be accessed online at BayTaxCollector.com. Accounts can be searched by property owner, address, or property tax account number.

Here are a couple of tips for customers who want to make paying property taxes as simple as possible:

**Pay Online with an E-Check:** The quickest, easiest, and most cost-effective

**Drop Box Payments:** Drop boxes are located at each of our offices and are a convenient option for individuals who want to physically deliver their payment to the office, but don't want to spend time in our busy

lobbies. If you provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your payment, we will also mail you a physical receipt or you can go online and print your statement once your payment has been processed. The payment information will print at the bottom of the statement. Please do not include cash in any drop box transactions.

**Reminder for Owners of Escrowed Properties:** If your property is escrowed, your mortgage company will pay your taxes by the end of November allowing you to take advantage of the 4% November discount. You will receive a courtesy copy of your tax notice that will read "This is not a bill." This notice is simply for your records, please do not send in payment.

**Payment by debit/credit**

**cards:** Credit and debit cards can be used online or in-person to pay your property tax bill, but please note there is a 2.5% convenience fee on all credit card transactions, with a minimum of \$2.50 and a \$2.50 fee for debit card use. Florida law requires the tax collector to pass on any payment processing fees directly to the customer choosing to use the service. This fee is collected by the card processor and not the tax collector's office.

**Assessed Value/ Exemptions:** If you have questions related to the value of your property or your property tax exemptions, please contact the Property Appraiser's Office at (850) 248-8401 or (850) 248-8470.

**Millage Rates/Special Assessments:** If you have questions related to the millage

rate or any special assessment, please contact the taxing district directly.

If you find that you need to visit one of our offices during the busy months of November and December, we strongly encourage you to schedule an appointment or join the line virtually before you arrive to minimize your wait. Use the QR code below to schedule an appointment or join the line.



Please visit BayTaxCollector.com for more information related to property taxes and the other services provided by the Tax Collector's Office.



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## The Marshmallow Experiment

BY RANDY LOCKLIER,  
PRESIDENT, GULF FINANCIAL

Don't we all love smore's? I do! On a recent mountain trip, we enjoyed them by the firepit. Melting chocolate and marshmallow oozing over a warm graham cracker is so delicious. Could you resist?

In 1972, an experiment was conducted at Stanford University. Children were brought into a room one at a time and sat down at a table. On the table was a marshmallow. The researcher told the children that he was leaving the room for 15 minutes and that if they did not eat the

marshmallow, they would get a second one upon his return. A simple choice: one treat now or two later. Only 1 in 3 could wait. The really interesting part came later. Stanford researchers studied these children for 40 years (That's right!) and made an amazing discovery. Over and

over again, by any measure, the children who waited succeeded in life at a much higher rate than those who didn't wait. Higher SAT Scores, graduation rates, income, job performance, net worth as well as overall life and relationship satisfaction were the norm in this group. Is there a message here for us?

True happiness, said Aristotle (c. 300 BC) is about developing daily spiritual habits and surrounding yourself with people who grow your soul. At the center of the spiritual life is the concept of delayed gratification. Delayed gratification is an essential element of self-control. When you disavow immediate pleasure to seek a long-term higher-value goal, you are practicing delayed gratification. It is here that we will move toward our greatest potential in this life. Studies have shown, like the Marshmallow Experiment, that deferred gratification is one of the most effective personal traits of highly successful, happy people. People who learn to manage their need to be satisfied in the moment thrive more in their careers, relationships, and finances than people who give in to it.



Food, drugs, gambling, alcohol (ever had a hangover?), sex, screaming in anger, or overusing our credit cards don't necessarily bring out the best in us, they just ease our discomfort or satisfy our desires for a moment. Our modern society is one in which instant gratification is glorified and obtainable, becoming a barrier to many seeking the spiritual life. To some, these temptations open the door to turmoil, addiction, and death.

Jesus teaches us not to store up treasures on earth, but to store up our treasures in heaven. For where our treasure is there



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This seems to be proof of a path to an abundant and fulfilling life in this earthly realm. What of the spiritual realm? One must have faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. It is this Faith, this hope for the future that gives us the strength to deny ourselves, pick up the cross daily, and walk in the will of our Maker. A life aligned with the will of God creates real joy that keeps our happiness meter on high!

Just think for a moment about some of the things in life that bring us immediate pleasure but can impose upon our physical, spiritual, and mental health.

will our hearts be also. A person will never be successful on a spiritual walk without knowing how to say no to temptation and the pleasures of this world. Delay a little gratification and you will draw close to God. Say no to sin and temptation and they will flee from us. Believe that the promises of Christ are true and the promises will come to pass in our own lives and the next.

That's good news for us all!

Great to be with you again. Until next time be happy, be safe, and be blessed.

Visit [gulffinancialgroup.com](http://gulffinancialgroup.com) or call (833) 403-4041.

# From the Office of Congressman Neal Dunn

The House finished October with a new Speaker of the House and restored vigor to keep our commitment to America. October also included some significant moments for Florida's Second Congressional District.

October 10 marked five years since Hurricane Michael devastated much of our district. Somehow, that storm feels like it was both yesterday and decades ago. In the past five years, we've rebuilt many structures destroyed by the storm. Mexico Beach no longer looks like a war zone, and we've welcomed the F-35 Lightning II to Tyndall AFB, which will significantly boost our local economy. I'll never forget the resilience and selflessness displayed in the weeks and months following the storm. That same generosity is still being displayed following Hurricane Idalia. If we've proven anything since 2018, it's that this district is one-of-a-kind and will always fight back when faced with adversity.

The truth is, in Florida, we do things differently. We're not

afraid to roll our sleeves up and get things done. My office, Governor Ron DeSantis, and the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) are doing just that while helping Floridians evacuate Israel. Last month, Governor DeSantis announced that Florida was offering flights for Floridians stuck in Israel. This outstanding operation ensured the safety of hundreds of Floridians, including families from our district. I can't thank Governor DeSantis and FDEM enough for putting Floridians first and ensuring they're out of harm's way.

While the FDEM flights cost Floridians nothing, the U.S. State Department flights involve repayment. Americans can contact the federal government for help returning to America from dangerous situations; however, once brought to safety, they're hit with a bill for the services. I introduced a bill that seeks to waive this cost for these individuals and any American who needs evacuation from a warzone. No American should have to hesitate to ask for help

when they are escaping terrorist attacks.

Towards the end of October, I joined Eastern Shipbuilding in celebrating the launch of the U.S. Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Cutter Argus. The story of this cutter is truly unique and one of perseverance. In the days that followed Hurricane Michael, not only did neighbors lean on neighbors, but Eastern Shipbuilding workers returned to their yard with shovels and saws in hand to do their part. Eastern's leadership self-funded temporary homes for employees impacted by this once-in-a-generation storm. This offshore patrol cutter means so much more than many realized. It's a reminder of how proud Eastern Shipbuilding and Florida's Second Congressional District should be. I have no doubt this cutter will protect our homeland admirably. Thank you, Eastern Shipbuilding, for allowing me to be a part of this momentous occasion!

For regular updates about what I'm doing in Congress, follow me on Twitter, Threads,

Facebook, and Instagram at @DrNealDunnFL2.

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