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# PCB Life

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## Point Washington Medical Clinic Opens New Facility

The Point Washington Medical Clinic (PWMC) is pleased to announce the official Ribbon Cutting and Reception of its new stand alone 4,750 sq. ft. facility located at 1321 N. County Hwy 395 in Santa Rosa Beach. The press and public are invited to attend the event beginning at 4 p.m. with a ribbon cutting on Thursday, January 25, 2024. Following the ribbon cutting there will be a reception with live music and tours of the building.



Founded by Drs. Hillary Glenn, DNP, APRN and Patsy Vargo, MD, Point Washington Medical Clinic provides free medical care to those who need it thanks to their dedicated team of volunteers, from doctors and nurses to various community members who assist with health education, translation, and administrative tasks.

Their new facility, beautifully situated on the Point Washington United Methodist Church campus in Point

Washington, was designed by architect Zack Quinn with interior design by Suzanne Rester Watson. Woodruff Construction handled the construction and Bradford Davis Landscape Architect the environs.

Co-Founder and Executive Director Dr. Hillary Glenn, DNP shares, "This building is by the community, for the community. We wouldn't be here without the many contributions of our generous supporters, and we're incredibly

excited to expand our services and hours to serve our neighbors even more. Designed with the patient in mind, the building's intentional details are all planned to ensure privacy and provide a calming comfortable environment, as well as being organized so the volunteers and team are able to easily access the tools they need." Dr. Glenn continues, "Unique attributes of the facility include a children's educational play area, a state of the art classroom with a teach-

ing kitchen, and a meditation prayer garden. To support the calming environment, we leaned into the natural landscape. This is seen with the oversized windows in the lobby looking out over the beautiful native forest, the dental operatories line up with large windows so patients will be looking out at trees while being treated and our partnership with the CAA and their

**PT. WASHINGTON**  
*continued on page 2*

## Americana Concerts Back at the Lodge

Presented by the Friends of Camp Helen and Visit Panama City Beach, Americana Concerts in the Lodge at Camp Helen State Park are back for another year of wonderful music every other Saturday from January 6 through March 3.

The ticket link and event info will be posted on the website and the Friends of Camp Helen Facebook page and will be available for purchase starting Friday, December 15. The \$15 ticket price includes a general admission seat, plus complimentary food and beverages.

There will be limited seats available for each show so they will book quickly and only two reservations per email are allowed. NO exceptions will be made.

The series kicks off on January 6 with Sam Robbins. This New Hampshire native and current Nashville resident is a rare soul whose music has depth and integrity. Smooth-faced with a voice to match

**AMERICANA**  
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Community

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Arts in Public Spaces program will enhance the interior beauty

by bringing in works from local artists of our local environment inside.”

The new clinic will provide more space for volunteers who serve the clinic in various administrative, clinical and hospitality roles. It will also include six exam rooms including a pediatric exam room, an increase from two in the current pop up clinic. This means the team will be able to serve 850+ patients a month in the future, an increase of 300%. The clinic will expand its preventive and primary care services with the addition of dentistry, mental health services and expanded onsite lab testing. Wellness, nutrition and educational classes will now be possible because of the new teaching kitchen and meeting space. This will enable the PWMC to further its mission of building a



stronger and healthier community by providing high-quality primary health care regardless of the patient’s means or access.

The PWMC staff, Board of Directors and volunteer team are all excited for what the new facility means for the growing roster of patients as well as the greater Northwest Florida region. For the past six years, operating only two days a week, they have provided over \$3.5 million in healthcare services on site and have had over 15,000 patient visits.

Once the volunteer-driven clinic is able to expand their service hours, they expect to be able to see close to 10,000 patients annually providing over 1 million dollars in healthcare services per year.

A fundraising campaign continues to support construction. Those interested in volunteering or contributing to the building campaign can visit thepwmc.org/donate to learn more and make a donation.

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AMERICANA  
continued from page 1

his original songs are now, in the present but evolved from so much rich musical history!

Coming on January 20, the FOCH will welcome Bradford Loomis to the Lodge. This is a giant of a man with the soul to match. His beautiful voice floats

through his original music like the ethereal ghosts of past melodies! His music is larger than life!

On February 3, Flagship Romance makes their debut. Shawn Fisher and Jordyn Jackson are a sweet duo with big voices and powerful harmonies. Based in Louisville, Kentucky they are always a great show!

Tom Kimmel, a poet and one of the finest human beings on the planet will perform on February 17. His songs have been covered by Joe Cocker, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings and Linda Ronstadt, to name just a few stellar performers! He is a rare find in the music world today!

Wyatt Espalin closes the series on March 2. There is no finer performer, musician and songwriter performing in the country today... and he clogs... and plays the fiddle. He is a one-man dynamo. He is a crowd favorite!

Camp Helen State Park is located at 23937 Panama City Beach Parkway (Highway 98),

of the Lake Powell Bridge.

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<b>FEB 3</b> FLAGSHIP ROMANCE	<b>FEB 17</b> TOM KIMMEL
<b>MARCH 2</b> WYATT ESPALIN	

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# Bay County Sheriff's Office Reflects on 2023 and Sets Goals for 2024

As we clean away the wrapping paper, put away the last Christmas ornament, and finish ringing in the New Year we find ourselves taking a little time to reflect on 2023 and set goals for 2024.

In 2023, the Bay County Sheriff's Office fed about 2000 families through Operation ThankFULL during Thanksgiving. We provided toys to more than 700 needy children in Bay County and gave Skip Bondur of Stuff the Bus a few extra toys we had. We were glad to help. There is no competition when it comes to helping children.

All of that would not have been possible without the generous spirit of the people of Bay County. And we are so appreciative of your often sacrificial giving and support.

As far as 2024, our primary goal to ensure the safety and



security of the people of Bay County remains at the forefront of everything we do. Equally vital is the importance placed on service. We will continue to serve with integrity and professionalism. High standards and a commitment to training help keep us focused on our goals.

Training is an ongoing responsibility at the Bay County

Sheriff's Office with not only state-mandated curriculum, but also enhanced training in specific areas that Sheriff Tommy Ford believes vital. This includes Active Shooter training and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, equipping deputies to respond appropriately to special needs subjects and those facing mental health crises. Job-specific training will continue at the BCSO.

Providing deputies with cur-

rent training and updated tools and equipment increases the safety of responders as they go to a dangerous incident, and provides the public with a well-trained, well-equipped response force to keep them safe.

The development of the Bay Real-time Operation Center, BayROC, will continue in 2024. Sheriff Ford, with the support and participation of city police departments, is harnessing

the latest in technology to fight crime in Bay County. And it is paying off every day, but perhaps most visibly with precise, effective responses during potentially volatile times such as Spring Break.

We pledge to serve, ensure safety and security, and search for even better ways to accomplish these goals for the people of Bay County during 2024.

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## Introducing: **Driftwood Drafts**

Embark on an unparalleled beverage journey with Driftwood Drafts, a trailblazing mobile self-serve tap teardrop trailer revolutionizing event experiences. Seamlessly blending coastal aesthetics with self-pour taps, our premier trailer offers a stylish way to savor diverse beverages. Nestled between Destin and Mexico Beach, FL, we draw inspiration from sun-soaked shores and the laid-back spirit, crafting a mobile tap bar that encapsulates the soul of the beach.

At Driftwood Drafts, we go beyond pouring beverages – we pour happiness. Our self-serve taps foster mingling, laughter, and genuine connections, delivering the essence of carefree coastal living in each sip.

Our services cater to various events, including corporate gatherings, weddings, birthdays, retirements, baby showers, bridal showers, bachelorette/bachelor parties, backyard soirees, festivals, BBQs, engagements, graduations, real estate functions, and more. Driftwood Drafts isn't just a beverage pro-



vider; it's a catalyst for unforgettable moments.

Imagine your corporate event elevated by our mobile tap trailer, fostering team bonding over perfectly poured drinks. Envision a wedding where guests enjoy a seamless self-serve experience, creating an atmosphere



of joy. Birthdays become memorable with our versatile tap offerings, ensuring a delightful experience for every guest. Retirement parties, baby showers,

and bridal showers transform into stylish events reflecting the relaxed coastal spirit.

Bachelorette and bachelor parties take on a new dimension as friends gather around our teardrop trailer, toasting to upcoming nuptials with hand-picked beverages. Backyard

parties gain sophistication as guests indulge in the freedom to pour their preferred drinks. Festivals and BBQs come alive with Driftwood Drafts, offering a unique beverage experience to attendees. Engagement parties and graduations become special with our presence, ensuring a seamless and stylish beverage service that complements the celebratory atmosphere. Real estate functions benefit from our distinctive offering, creating a memorable ambiance for networking.

Contact us at [driftwood-drafts@gmail.com](mailto:driftwood-drafts@gmail.com) or (850) 739-2228 to secure our services

and let Driftwood Drafts be the highlight of your gathering, elevating it with the spirit of the beach. Cheers to creating enduring memories in the company of those who matter most.

## New PCB Chamber of Commerce Members

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# Established Member: A Superior Air Conditioning Company: Vets Helping Vets & First Responders

For years Jimmy Thorpe had felt the urge to give back. A veteran, Jimmy had served as a young man in the U.S. Army for eight years and had always held the highest regard for the men and women who serve our country and keep us safe. This group also includes first responders – the men and women who keep our communities safe. So how would he give back? In 2014, he created the tagline “Vets Helping Vets” – later elevated to “Vets Helping Vets & First Responders” – and decided to start giving what he had to give: HVAC units. Jimmy owns A Superior Air Conditioning Company, a local business he launched in 2003.

In the beginning, Jimmy and his team decided to give away eight units per year. Vets and first responders were encouraged to apply online at [ASuperiorAC.com](http://ASuperiorAC.com); the giveaway was



open to all who have served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and all first responders including EMT/Medics, Police, Sheriffs and Fire Fighters. American Legion Post 392 in Panama City met and voted on all submissions each quarter, selecting one veteran in need and one first responder in need to be awarded the units.

In 2015 the giveaway began taking the form of a quarterly appreciation lunch at Harley-Davidson of Panama City

Beach... local musician Neal James opened the lunches with the National Anthem and played background music while Texas Roadhouse catered. The first event hosted around 40 guests and several local businesses co-sponsored. The next lunch brought in a few more guests and sponsors, and the Vet Center and other veteran-related organizations joined in. As word continued to spread, the guest list grew. By Fall 2017 the event moved to Texas Roadhouse and

it's been there ever since, now maxing out the restaurant at 380+ guests.

But Jimmy still wanted to reach and help more veterans and first responders. In November 2019 Pastor Dave of Faith Assembly Church in Miramar Beach (affectionately known as “The Rock & Roll Church”) invited Jimmy to launch a quarterly appreciation lunch there, thus reaching vets and first responders in the Walton/Okaloosa area. The appreciation lunch

has taken place there ever since, slowly growing in attendance and giving away one HVAC unit per quarter, for a total of 12 HVAC units given away per year.

“I feel that giving back to veterans and first responders is like taking the time to help my father,” says Jimmy, whose father served in the U.S. Marines. “It’s something that comes second nature; it’s instinctive and something that’s driven in me.”

Please help Jimmy and his team spread the word to the Vets and First Responders that you know. The next Veterans & First Responders Appreciation Lunch will be held at Texas Roadhouse in Pier Park North at 11:30 a.m. on January 16, 2024. Vets and First Responders may register to win an HVAC unit at [ASuperiorAC.com](http://ASuperiorAC.com).

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Community

# PCB Gains Three Major Projects in '24

By Ed Offley

Panama City Beach will see significant gains in sports, entertainment and culture as three new development projects get underway this year.

Superstar entertainer Dolly Parton is bringing her Pirates Voyage Dinner & Show to the city with the construction of a 60,000 square-foot indoor theater complex that will seat more than 1,000 at a time. Entertainment will include live performances where the Crimson and Sapphire pirates battle on deck, in the water of the 15-foot-deep lagoon, and in the "sky" above two full-sized pirate ships that serve as the stage.



"I'm so excited about bringing this show to such a great destination," Parton said in a mid-December announcement. "With pirates, mermaids, exciting acrobatics, pyrotechnics and even a few songs that I wrote,

it's a show that is perfect for all ages." This marks the third Pirates Voyage project Parton has created; the other two are in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

The \$60 million project

will be constructed in a western extension of Pier Park on the south side of Panama City Beach Parkway, with groundbreaking scheduled this month. When open later in 2024, it will create 300 jobs.

"It's another great family entertainment venue that's chosen Panama City Beach as its destination to house its business," said PCB Mayor Mark Sheldon. "Dolly is really excited about it, and we're excited to bring in a world-class entertainment destination for our community.

This year will also bring a treat to golfing enthusiasts. On December 14, City Council approved a conditional use permit for the St. Joe Company to build a 38,000 square-foot large golf-entertainment facility to be built on an 11.3-acre tract west of Powell Adams Drive and south of a planned extension of L.C. Hilton Drive.

The Topgolf facility will include a two-level golf driving range, restaurant and meeting spaces. It will feature 72 hitting bays, and a miniature golf course.

Construction is expected to start in several weeks, with a grand opening anticipated in early 2025. The project will create about 300 jobs and gener-

ate approximately \$750,000 in annual tax revenues, according to Topgolf representative Todd Waldo.

"I think it brings great diversity, and I'm very excited to see this project move forward," City Council member Mary Coburn said after the vote.

A third development announced for the city this year will end a 13-year drought for Beach book lovers.

The St. Joe Co., which owns the Pier Park North retail center along with joint venture partner Casto, announced on December 14 it will open a new Barnes & Noble bookstore sometime in early spring. When the Borders bookstore at Pier Park closed in 2011, it left city residents without a bookstore.

"Pier Park North has a strong collection of retail, dining and service businesses, and we are thrilled to add a Barnes & Noble bookstore to the mix," said Samantha Walton, Director of Commercial Sales and Leasing for St. Joe. "We're confident that there is truly something for everyone here, and we're happy to be able to add to the variety of options for shoppers."




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# Know Your Neighbor: Scott Fester

BY PAUL BONNETTE

Although Christmas may have come to an end and the lights are being put away, for Scott Fester, putting away the decorations gets a bit more complicated. When it comes to decorating for the holidays Scott Fester goes all out. For thousands of Bay County residents and visitors, his display at Grace Presbyterian Church on Airport Road has become a holiday tradition. Filled with almost a million lights, a walk-thru igloo, visits from Santa, hot cocoa, Disney displays, miniature villages and snow, this Christmas display garnered national attention in 2021 after competing on ABC's "The Great Christmas Light Fight."

For Scott, this love of decorating started at a very young age.

"It all started with me and my dad when I was ten, doing Christmas lights outside. We would go outside, decorate and my dad would say that was enough, and I would want to keep on going. So, I would be outside late at night putting up more Christmas lights on our house and in our yard. It started as a little display and just grew, and we got to 750,000 lights for "The Great Christmas Light Fight" show."

Although Scott did not take home the Grand Prize, his display has continued to grow to include more lights, 250 Christmas trees, interactive activities, a water feature, character visits,



"I've always been like that fun, entertaining type of person doing weird crazy stuff. I went to Disney a lot and they have their performers there and I thought maybe I could do that also. So, I got a pair of stilts and trained and started walking in the Christmas parade with my church. It was just me having a good time and exploring new opportunities."

For the past decade, Scott has been entertaining people by making balloon animals and stilt walking, however when the opportunity came for Scott to expand, he jumped on it.

"It all started about ten years ago when I started doing entertainment work, making balloons for Margaritaville and I got hired on as a stilt walker. Entertainment has always been something I did. That branched out into many more opportunities, so I created my own entertainment company, which is Beach Stilts Entertainment from the experience I had. Now I have

and plans to keep expanding for the future.

"In the next five years of my Christmas display, I'd like to make it bigger and better and add a drive-thru portion of the lights and add another bigger location."

When he is not decorating for the holidays, Scott also runs Beach Stilts Entertainment which features stilt walkers, balloon artists, face-painters and more. Scott and his team can be found all over Bay County at numerous restaurants and hotels bringing smiles to members of the entire family. For Scott, entertaining is something that has always come naturally.

face painters, balloon artists, stilt walkers, magicians, anything party related."

Whether you know him as a stilt walking balloon artist or a Christmas display enthusiast, for Scott Fester it's all about bringing people together and

putting smiles on faces.

"What I love about performing is seeing people smile back at my humor. It's just about the smiles and people laughing. I'm a goofball and that's what I love about performing is seeing people respond to what I do."



On Tuesday, Nov. 28, Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) volunteer "elves" decorated the home of local veteran Marcello Centaure. FPL partnered with Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10555 to bring holiday cheer to the Centaure family in the form of energy-efficient décor comprised of thousands of

LED lights, solar-powered decorations and gifts for the entire family. An annual tradition, this celebration marked the 16th consecutive year of FPL's holiday program, which gives back to local heroes for their incredible commitment to this nation and the community.

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 Community



# Let's Get Growing with Julie: Pots of Potatoes

By JULIE MCCONNELL,  
UF/IFAS EXTENSION

Growing vegetables in containers can increase flexibility of location selection and help the gardener to overcome pests and

poor soil conditions. One of my favorite vegetables to grow in a pot are Irish potatoes also known as “new potatoes” which should be planted by mid-February in Northwest Florida.



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Potatoes need full sun, well-drained soil, and regular water and fertilizer to perform at their peak. Seed potatoes should be planted about 4-inches deep and 6-8 inches apart, and soil may need to be added if potatoes start to push to the surface. Consider all of these when selecting the container or raised bed. Ensure your container has adequate drainage holes, as potatoes are prone to rot in saturated soils. Recycling a nursery pot from a large shrub or tree is a great way to keep your cost low if you have any on hand. Be sure to clean any pots that have been used previously with a 10% bleach solution then rinse well before adding new potting soil. Commercial potting mixes are recommended to prevent introduction of weeds, pests, or disease.

For best results purchase seed potatoes from a reputable source. Varieties recommended for Florida include white-skinned LaChipper, Sebago, and Yukon Gold; red-skinned include Red LaSoda, LaRouge, and Red Pontiac. Once you receive your seed potatoes you will need to cut them into egg sized pieces containing at least one eye each. Allow the cut pieces to heal for a couple of days in a cool, dark location before plant-

ing to reduce the risk of rot.

The growth of the potato plant generally takes 80-115 days. During this process, the plant will get very bushy and just before the foliage starts to die it should bloom indicating maturation. If these steps do not occur naturally, you can kill the top portion of the plant by cutting it off at the soil line. Once the vegetative portion has died, the tubers will need to stay planted for 2-3 more weeks to bulk up. Cover any potatoes near the surface with a layer of soil.

Harvest potatoes by gently digging them up and store in a cool, dark place with good air flow for 10-14 days. This will give them time to heal over any wounds created when harvesting. If washed before storing allow them to dry thoroughly first. After this initial temporary storage, they can be refrigerated or moved to cooler storage to prevent sprouting.

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UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Andra Johnson, Dean. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.*



# 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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# Customize the Cruzin 30A Way

Discover the unmatched experience of golf cart customization and service at Cruzin 30A. Our team takes pride in transforming your golf cart into a personalized masterpiece that reflects your unique style and taste. In the last issue, we discussed window tinting, rims,

wheel covers, and tires. Let's examine some other customizing tips.

**Custom paint and wraps** are a popular way to customize the appearance of your golf cart. We've done everything from favorite sports teams to Parrothead tributes. Custom

wraps are another way to individualize your cart. These wraps provide a cost-effective way to change your cart's looks.

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your cart a rugged, sporty look.

**Bumpers and Bumper Pads** also add extra protection and are a must if you plan to use your cart off-road.

Next month we will discuss lighting. Please drop by and visit us at our new location in Pier Park next to Dillard's. We have just added a new line of

golf carts, Royal Carts. These are said to be the Rolls Royce of carts and come with everything but a high price. These carts offer 20-plus color options and enough other features that allow you to customize your cart into a kind of masterpiece.

# Plenty of Fish for All!

BY PAM ANDERSON

January is usually when we locals have our eyes on finding someplace warm and cozy. But for all of you who like to get out in the chilly but sunny weather here in NW Florida, there are plenty of fish to catch and keep this time of year. And plenty of experts to help you find them!

Charter boats and guide boats in Grand Lagoon offer some great opportunities to get out and catch your favorites. And, they are all certainly the most experienced captains and guides in NW Florida!

This time of year, in our bays and bayous and along the jetties and piers, Flounder, Redfish (Red Drum) with a slot limit of 18"27", Spotted Sea Trout with a slot limit of 15-19", Triple Tail and Sheepshead are there for the catching. Sheepshead, by the way, make great fish chowder!

In Federal waters, Greater Amberjack season is opening January 1 through August 24 this year; Lesser Amberjack is open year-round.

Year-round in the Gulf you

can catch Snapper - Cubera, Mangrove(black), Mutton, and Vermilion. Red Snapper, of course, are catch and release until June 1st. Be sure to release them right so they are there for another day.

For grouper, Black Grouper (not Gag), Red Grouper, and Scamp are all open January 1-31 and will reopen later in the spring. King Mackerel, Spanish Mackerel, and Cobia are open year-round but you usually see the latter two a bit later in the spring.

Other species that are really tasty and available year-round are Speckled Hind, Yellow Edge Grouper, Almaco Jack and Banded Rudderfish. Jacks make great 'tuna' salad. Or you can fire up the smoker and have a very special treat.

For up-to-date regulations on all species in State and Federal waters, you can purchase the 'Fish Rules App'. It has a lot of great information.

Did you know that on Thomas Drive in the Grand Lagoon area there are more than 25 family-owned and operated



restaurants open and ready to serve you local seafood, Southern specialties, Cajun, Italian, Chinese, Mexican, Cuban, and more?! Check them out this winter before the spring crowds come in. Several offer 'hook & cook,' cooking your catch for

you and providing the sides at family prices.

Valentine's Day is just around the corner! Make your reservations soon for cruises on the Capt. Anderson III on February 14. The cruises are scheduled from 12 noon until 1:30

p.m. and 4:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. You can make reservations online at [www.captandersonsmarina.com](http://www.captandersonsmarina.com) or in person or by phone.

Fisherman's Walk at Capt. Anderson Marina offers a gift shop, ice cream, and the new Capt. Max's Bar & Grill where you can sit inside, outside or on the upper deck bar as you watch the boats come in with their catches. There are some fun games for the kids too!

When planning your fishing trip, remember Capt. Anderson's Marina... home of 3 large head-boats, 38 private charter and guide boats, and 4 dive boats... and Shell Island/Dolphin Cruises, all available March 1-October 31.

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

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 Music & Arts

# Center for the Arts Begins New Year with Two Exciting Collaborative Exhibitions

The Panama City Center for the Arts opens the new year with two new exhibitions beginning on Friday, January 19, 2024. The Main Gallery features Bay Reflections featuring over a dozen artists from across Bay County. Local artists Helga Letourneau and Janis Hannon join creative forces for their duo show, All About Birds in the Miller Gallery. The public is invited to the opening reception on Friday, January 19 from 5-7 p.m.

Over a dozen artists from all over the county come together to present their works in an exhibition called Bay Reflections, a collaborative art exhibition curated by Olga Guy. Bay Reflections will be on display in the Main Gallery beginning Friday, January 19.

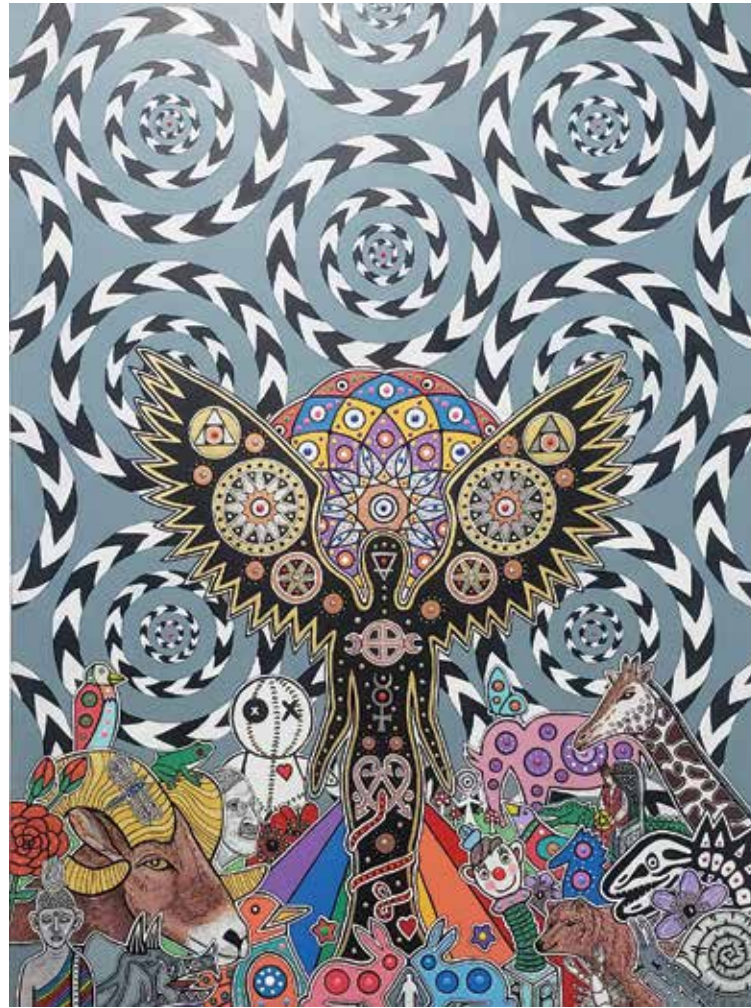
“Organizing art exhibits allows me to foster a sense of community by promoting the practice of local arts through interaction and exhibition,” said Olga Guy. “It’s a powerful way to connect artists with their

audience, providing a platform for creative expression and cultural enrichment. I am incredibly grateful to the Panama City Center for the Arts for their unwavering support of local artists and for hosting this vital exhibit. Their commitment strengthens the art community, making these exhibits a meaningful and enriching experience for both artists and audiences alike.”

Featured alongside Olga Guy are Brianna Bennett, Sarah Burris, Deblyn Ceeley, Amanda Fagan-Hansel, Mary Kay Griffith, David Hansel, Terry Knight, Heather “Heddy” Podnar, Jerrod Schonfeld, Pat Syfrett, Aida Torres and Jeannie Whitworth.

Bay Reflections will be on display in the Main Gallery January 19 - February 10. The public is invited to attend the opening reception on Friday, January 19 from 5-7 p.m.

Helga Letourneau, one of two artists featured in the Miller Gallery, is a lifelong artist who has traveled extensively while her husband served in the mili-



She Came to Us in a Dream, Terry Knight

tary (including to Panama City), giving her exposure to a variety of mediums such as metal fabrication and welding, pottery, neon art, and painting.

Helga’s love for birds birthed the curation of All About Birds, and from her experience living

on three continents, she wanted to showcase birds that we might not normally see in North America. “Birds are funny; they come in all sizes and colors,” said Letourneau. “Many look absurd, others stunningly beautiful! I hope you enjoy this

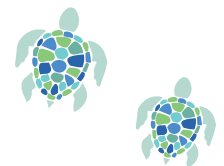
exhibit and will catch a little of the love I have for birds and the important roles they play in our lives!”

Helga partnered with Janis Hannon, who was born in DeFuniak Springs, Florida and started creating from an early age. After a long hiatus from art to raise her family, work, and travel with her military spouse, she was able to continue creating, and now serves as vice president for the Walton County Art League, Inc. and as treasurer for the Chautauqua Porcelain Artists.

Jan enjoys painting in several media including oils, acrylics, glass, and porcelain, as well as her favorite, soft pastels. She enjoys painting a variety of subject matters and particularly enjoys birds and lighthouses as subjects in pastels, a medium unrivaled for their brilliance and layering.

All About Birds will be on display from January 19 - February 24. The public is invited to attend the opening reception on Friday, January 19 from 5-7 p.m.

The Center for the Arts is open Tuesday–Thursday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. - 7 p.m., and Saturday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.



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# Embrace Musical Theatre

Attending musical theatre can offer a wide range of benefits for all ages, embracing both entertainment and personal development. Here are some key advantages:

**Cultural Enrichment:** Musical theatre often explores diverse themes, cultures, and historical periods, providing audiences with a broader understanding of the world. This includes music, dance, and storytelling.

**Artistic Appreciation:** Attending musicals or operas allows individuals to appreciate various art forms, including acting, singing, dancing, set design, and costume creation.

**Emotional Connection:** Musical theatre has the power to evoke strong emotions. Whether it's through a heartfelt ballad, a comedic number, or a dramatic scene.

**Entertainment and Escapism:** Live performances offer a unique and immersive experience, allowing the audience to escape from everyday life and be transported into the world of the story.

**Social Experience:** Going to musicals is often a social activity, providing an opportunity



to share the experience with friends, family, or fellow theatre enthusiasts. Discussing the performance afterward can enhance the enjoyment and create lasting memories.

**Educational Value:** Musical theatre can be an educational tool, especially for younger audiences. It introduces them to various art forms and can stimulate interest in history, literature, and different cultures.

**Supporting the Arts:** Attending musical theatre helps support the performing arts industry. Your attendance contributes to the success of the production, encourages the growth of the arts community, and supports the livelihoods of performers, directors, designers, and other professionals.

**Live Performance Experience:** Unlike recorded entertainment, musical theatre is a live performance, and each show is a unique experience.

**Stress Relief:** The combination of music, storytelling,

and visual spectacle can provide a welcome break from the pressures of daily life, offering a chance to unwind and recharge.

Overall, attending musical theatre can be a multifaceted and rewarding experience for

both children and adults, providing entertainment, cultural exposure, and personal enrichment.



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## Emerald Coast Theatre Company Presents The Marvelous Wonderettes - Caps and Gowns

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) presents **The Marvelous Wonderettes - Caps and Gowns, January 19 - March 3, 2024.** We're back in 1958, and it's time for the Wonderettes to graduate in this delightful sequel to the smash Off-Broadway hit! Join Betty Jean, Cindy Lou, Missy, and Suzy as they sing about their final year in high school, celebrate with their fellow classmates and teachers, and prepare for their next step toward a bright future. Act II zooms ahead to 1968, where the girls perform as bride and bridesmaids to celebrate Missy's marriage to Mr. Lee! Featuring "Rock Around the Clock," "At the Hop," "Dancing in the Street," "River Deep, Mountain High," and 25 more hits, The Marvelous

Wonderettes - Caps & Gowns will have the audience cheering for more!

Nathanael Fisher, co-founder and producing artistic director of ECTC says, "This one really takes you back... Back to an easier time when singing and dancing in the street was just a part of life!"

The Marvelous Wonderettes - Caps and Gowns will be staged in ECTC's main space located on the second floor of 560 Grand Boulevard in Grand Boulevard Town Center in Miramar Beach. Tickets range from \$30 - \$50 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.

## Looking for the perfect seafood dinner?

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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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 Music & Arts

# What Could Go Wrong?

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

In 2012, The Mischief Theatre Company dreamed up a worst-case scenario play where absolutely everything that can go wrong, does go wrong. It is the stuff that us theatre-makers have nightmares about, like set malfunctions, missed cues, and actors getting bonked on the head. It first premiered at the Old Red Lion Theatre in London and due to its success eventually moved on to the West End. Coincidentally, film

and TV director JJ. Abrams had been filming Star Wars: The Force Awakens in London in 2014 when, on a day off, he popped into a West End theater to see The Play That Goes Wrong and absolutely loved it.

“I just became obsessed with this idea of trying to help in any way that I could if it were ever to move to Broadway,” Abrams said, adding that he soon teamed up with veteran theater producer Kevin McCollum (Rent, Avenue Q) to do just that.

In 2017, The Play That Goes Wrong premiered on Broadway

with Abrams making his theatrical debut as director.

From London, to New York, and now Emerald Coast Theatre Company in Miramar Beach, FL, this show is like the “Little Engine That Could.” The humor, the writing, and the over the top scenarios make it such an audience favorite that it has won multiple awards including a Tony and Drama Desk Award. I am thrilled to say that we open what The Times calls a “masterpiece of malfunction” next month in January.

As if that wasn’t exciting

enough, we are also opening The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps and Gowns in January. This is the follow up show to ECTC’s The Marvelous Wonderettes which you may have had the pleasure of seeing in Season 9. The four friends are now at their 1958 high school graduation and beyond, performing all of the favorites like “Rock Around the Clock” and “At The Hop.”

And since it’s kind of cold in January and February, ECTC has a third offering to keep you indoors and entertained. Pulit-

zer prize winning play Crimes of the Heart opens in February. This darkly comic show is about three eccentric sisters and a murder charge in a small southern town. We are going to make everything go right for The Play That Goes Wrong and these other fabulous winter offerings January through March. I hope you’ll join us for some good stories, warm coffee, and a laugh or two, because the heart of ECTC is you!

## Nathanael and Anna Fisher of Emerald Coast Theatre Company Win The Florida Theatre Conference 2023 Distinguished Career Award

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is proud to announce that founders Nathanael and Anna Fisher have been awarded The Florida Theatre Conference 2023 Distinguished Career Award in the professional category.

In 1986, the Florida Theatre Conference began recognizing individuals in the state of Florida that had made a contributing

effort in the area of Community Theatre, Professional Theatre, University/College Theatre, Theatre for Youth, and High School Theatre. Each year the Board solicits names from the general membership for these awards. Over the years, these awards have been given to persons in the state of Florida that have made a difference in their area.

Nathanael and Anna say, “We are so honored to receive this recognition from the Florida Theatre Conference! We have always seen ECTC as a land of opportunity...opportunity for creative people and for the children, families, and adults of our community.”

Nathanael and Anna were honored at this year’s Florida Theatre Conference Award



Nathanael Fisher, Anna Fisher and Marci Duncan.

Ceremony in Winter Haven Florida at Theatre Winter Haven Mainstage Theatre on November 4, 2023.

President of The Florida Theatre Conference Marci Duncan stated, “Emerald Coast Theatre Company gives professionals an opportunity to create and shine. We honor you for your dedication to excellence in the state of Florida.”

A special thanks to ECTC’s Major Sponsors of the 2023-2024 season: Grand Blvd at

Sandestin, St. Joe Community Foundation, Howard Group and Visit South Walton.

To make a tax-deductible donation, volunteer or learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, call (850) 684-0323 and visit [www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org](http://www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org). Engage with ECTC as well on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.



**ON STAGE**  
JANUARY 19 - MARCH 3

**MARVELOUS WONDERETTES**

Featuring “Rock Around the Clock,” “At the Hop,” “River Deep, Mountain High,” and 25 more hits, The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps & Gowns will have you bopping down memory lane and “Dancing in the Street!”



**ON STAGE**  
JANUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 4

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Called “the funniest play Broadway has ever seen,” this classic murder mystery by award-winning Mischief is chock-full of mishaps and madcap mania! This hilarious and unique show will have you laughing for days.









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# PCB *Flavor*

THE BEST OF LOCAL DINING

## IN THIS ISSUE

ISO: PCB's Best  
Dessert

Mardi Gras

Restaurant Review

## ISO: PCB's Best Dessert

The word dessert comes from the French word *desservir*, which translates to “to clear the table.”

Sweets were fed to the gods in ancient Mesopotamia, ancient India and other ancient civilizations. Dried fruit and honey were likely the first sweeteners used in most of the world. It was the spread of sugarcane that brought about the popularity of the dessert. In the 17th century, vast sugar plantations in the New World allowed sugar costs to go down. Sugar could be used abundantly for sweet foods.

Ice cream can be dated as far back as 3000 BC and perhaps was the first “dessert” in the sense in which it is known today. The ancient Egyptians are thought to have created the first cake. Apple pie is believed to be brought to America by Swedish, Dutch, and British immigrants, which quickly became a part of American culinary tradition. We thank them all for bringing us the delicious experience of desserts.

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

After enjoying a gourmet meal, treat yourself to our all American dessert - Cheesecake! Salted caramel enhances the sweetness and adds a savory element.

## American Charlie

473 Richard Jackson Blvd., PCB | (850) 238-8340  
[americancharlie.com](http://americancharlie.com)

After your meal, please try our Mississippi Mud Pie. This five layer chocolate extravaganza is sinfully delicious.



## The Wicked Wheel

10025 Hutchison Boulevard, PCB | (850) 588-7947  
[thewickedwheel.com](http://thewickedwheel.com)

Try our wickedly delicious Limoncello Cake with raspberry drizzle. Our Chocolate Peanut Butter Pie or Bourbon Pecan Pie are also local favorites. The kids will love it here, and we know you will too!

## Boon Docks

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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! Top off your meal with one of the most decadent, delicious and unhealthy desserts in the world: our Crème Brûlée. With heavy creme, an insane amount of egg yolks and a pile of sugar, it's the best it can get.







## Capt. Anderson's Restaurant

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

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

Capt. Anderson's may be known for their fresh seafood, but you can't finish your meal without Feud Cake, their equally famous dessert! Made with finely chopped pecans and slightly sweetened whipped cream its nutty flavor pairs perfectly with a rich dessert wine or cognac.

## Teddy's Spaghetti and Pizza

7010 Thomas Drive, Panama City | (850) 234-5000

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

At Teddy's, fresh ingredients are coupled with decades of tradition. The lasagna is a family recipe taught by the owner's mother. The recipes used to create the house made pizza dough date back more than 40 years. After a delicious meal, try our Bananas Foster Dessert Pizza! It's amazing - trust us - you don't want to miss this. 10" pizza with brown sugar, cinnamon, bananas and a drizzle of icing.



## San Marcos Mexican Grill Pier Park

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

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

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 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.

# Panama City Beach Mardi Gras and Music Festival Returns January 26-27

Visit Panama City Beach invites visitors and residents to revel in the spirit of Mardi Gras Real. Fun. Beach. style at the annual Panama City Beach Mardi Gras and Music Festival, taking place on January 26-27, 2024, at Pier Park. Combining the excitement of an authentic Mardi Gras celebration with spectacular views of sugar-white sand beaches and emerald-green waters, the two-day festival features parades, live music, and much more for the entire family to enjoy.

"We look forward to welcoming locals and visitors to Panama City Beach for our annual Mardi Gras and Music Festival, held just steps away from the destination's beautiful beaches," says Visit Panama City Beach President and CEO Dan



Rowe. "With incredible live performances, festive parades and endless entertainment, this year's Mardi Gras celebration is sure to be a memorable event for all ages."

In conjunction with the Krewe of Dominique Youx's



great Mardi Gras at the Beach parade, the free event features a jam-packed schedule of entertainment for families, including a kids fun zone and festival village, kids parade, a 5K run, fireworks and more. Enjoy a must-see performance from



headliner and award-winning country music artist Mark Wills, an acclaimed vocalist who has amassed 19 Billboard-charting singles across seven albums throughout his career. Additional notable music acts throughout the weekend include Chubby

Carrier & The Bayou Swamp Band and Curley Taylor & The Zydeco Trouble at the Celebration Stage in Pier Park.

To see a full schedule of events, please visit [www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/mardi-gras](http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/mardi-gras).

Dining

# Welcome Home to Teddy's Spaghetti and Pizza

By PAUL BONNETTE

The oven-fired scent of fresh baked pizza wafts through the air as friendly folks greet you eagerly as if they had been waiting for you to arrive. It's tough to write a "Restaurant Review" about a place that is less like a restaurant and more like being welcomed into someone's home as they unveil and try out dish after dish of Italian cuisine for you to enjoy. That being said, welcome to the "Home" review of Teddy Spaghetti and Pizza.



From the moment I sat down to look over the menu, I noticed a pattern. Hungry, but happy patrons, most of whom walked through the door for takeout, came in not only to pick up their meal, but to let the owners know how much they loved the food. Orders were being delivered all the way to Chipley and Youngstown some thirty miles away, clearly demonstrating that the pizza I was about to try was something special (and it truly was). Teddy's Spaghetti and Pizza offers something that the myriad of other Italian restaurants do not. Weird & Wacky.

Yes, you read that correctly. Are you in the mood for Dill Pickle Pizza? How about Taco Pizza or Spaghetti Pizza? Oh, how I wish that I could tell you that I am adventurous when it comes to dining, however this is far from the truth. I stuck with my tried-and-true pepperoni (and added grilled chicken to be slightly more adventurous) and it was glorious. The spaghetti dinner that my wife ordered was also impressively delicious complete with salad and garlic bread. For those who have a few more mouths to feed, they offer family



feasts that include 1/2 gallon pasta, salad, sub, garlic bread and soda. For dessert, we could not resist trying the monthly special which happened to be Bananas Foster. Their specials change month by month which means I will be frequenting this establishment regularly to try their newest creations.

decided to enjoy a well-deserved retirement, allowing Ted and Julie to open their restaurant while still maintaining that famous forty-year-old crunchy pizza dough. To create the perfect pasta sauce, Ted and Julie hosted a taste testing event at their home trying out six different sauces just to make sure they chose the best one. Even now, as they are constantly trying out new recipes and unveiling new specials, it's hard not to notice the indelible feeling of being welcomed home to try out some of these new dishes.



Teddy's Spaghetti and Pizza is the type of restaurant that you stroll into after a long day to enjoy a delectable Italian meal that the entire family will enjoy, which is exactly what owners Ted and Julie Nitz were going for. Five years ago, Ted and Julie Nitz created Teddy's Spaghetti because they wanted a local favorite pasta restaurant just like they enjoyed with their family back in the Midwest. The opportunity to make that dream a reality appeared when the owner of Marcus' Gulf Pizza

When they are not cooking up a storm... Ted and Julie have been focused on giving back to the community by volunteering at Lucky Puppy Rescue and sponsoring the Arnold High School Marching Band. If you ask Ted however, it's all just part of the mission. "When we came

back, this is one of the ways we decided we were going to set some roots. We love this town, and we are happy to just add a different dynamic and serve this town."

Whether you are in the mood for weird and wacky or a pasta combo to feed every member of your crew, Teddy's Spaghetti and Pizza has it all. They are located at 7010 Thomas Drive on Panama City Beach and open from 4 p.m. - 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Enjoy!

*Enjoy Fine Italian Food*

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# GCSC Inducts Public Safety Heroes into Hall of Fame

On Monday, December 11, 2023, Gulf Coast State College inducted its third class into the Public Safety Hall of Fame, recognizing five individuals who have demonstrated commitment and service in public safety.

These five individuals were nominated by their peers from various agencies in Bay, Gulf, and Franklin Counties. Today, we celebrated them for their selfless contributions that went above and beyond the call of duty.

**The following individuals were honored:**

**Major Rick Anglin, Bay County Sheriff's Office**

Major Anglin Rick Anglin is a lifelong resident of Bay County and began his service in the Corrections field in 1990. He started his career with the Florida Department of Corrections as a Probation Officer, and was promoted through the ranks at several prison facilities, eventually serving as a Correctional Services Administrator in the Central Office. After serving as Assistant Warden at Jefferson Correctional Facility, Rick was promoted to Warden at Washington Correctional Facility. For the past fifteen years, he has served Bay County, first as the Corrections Manager, and then as Warden of the Bay County Jail, rising to the position of Major of Judicial Services. He graduated from Mosley High School, is a Gulf Coast graduate, and holds two degrees from Florida State University, where he earned a B.S. in Criminology and an M.S. in Executive Management. Rick is known for his commitment to excellence and continued dedication to public safety.

**José A. Cantres, Bay County Emergency Medical Services**

José A. Cantres retired from Bay County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in 2023 after twenty-four years of service, and has been a resident of Bay County since 1996. Before pursuing his EMS career, he served twenty-one years in the United States Air Force, rising to the

rank of Technical Sergeant. After graduating from the Gulf Coast EMS Program, José began his service as a Bay County Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), where he also served as a field training officer for new EMS employees, and mentored EMT students who followed in his path. José is known for his long-time commitment to fellow first responders as a peer-support advocate, which was exemplified by his service on the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team. José is an outstanding public servant who served both his community and his country.

**Chief Michael "Mike" Jones, Bay District Schools Police Department**

Mike Jones began his career as an officer with the Panama City Police Department in 1976. He held several roles in law enforcement during his career, working with the Bay County Sheriff's Office from 1999 until 2001, and with the Cedar Grove Police Department from 2001 until 2006. Mike became the Chief of Police for Bay District Schools in August 2006, where he remained until retirement in May 2022, having served more than forty-six years as a law enforcement officer. Mike is known throughout Bay County as "Salvage Santa" for his service over the past thirty years of restoring bicycles and providing them to underprivileged children. Mike is also known for his selfless heroism: In 2010, he successfully thwarted an active-shooter event during a Bay District School Board meeting.

**Carrie Lindsey, Springfield Police Department**

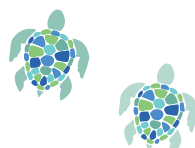
After moving to Bay County in 1982, Carrie Lindsey began her career in telecommunications the following year with the Springfield Police Department, where she served as the Telecommunications Manager until her retirement in March 2020. Carrie also served her country as a member of the United States Army Reserves for fourteen years. During her thirty-seven-year public safety career, Carrie embodied the spirit of commitment and compassion

to the Bay County community, especially during the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. Her spiritual beliefs are reflected in her becoming an ordained minister, and her belief in personal growth and education are evidenced by her earning a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from Troy University. Carrie is known by her former co-workers for her kindness, and by the community as a lifeline for the many people she served during her tenure with the City of Springfield.

**Chief Robert "Bobby" Richardson, Sr., Panama City Fire Department**

Robert "Bobby" Richardson, Sr., was born in Millville and served this community for thirty-three years with the Panama City Fire Department, where he was Fire Chief from 1974 to 1994. At the time of his appointment, he was the youngest fire chief in Florida. The Chief's guidance and vision brought about the establishment of the Panama City Fire Training Academy. His mission was to ensure that firefighters were equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to protect their community, its citizens, and themselves. Chief Richardson was a member of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association, and received gubernatorial appointments to the State Fire Board and to the Florida State Building Codes and Standards Division. During his career, he was recognized as Bay County Firefighter of the Year, Florida's Firefighter of the Year, and later as the State's Fire Chief of the Year. His involvement with the Panama City Exchange Club, the Rotary Club, and the Boy Scouts further reflected his dedication to Bay County.

Gulf Coast State College congratulates these exceptional individuals for their unwavering dedication to public safety and community service.



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 Education

# Make a Difference in 2024: Give Back to Bay County With Elevate Bay

Elevate Bay, now entering its seventh year, is Bay District Schools' mentor initiative. This grass roots program was created in response to the growing need in our community for positive role models in the lives of so many of our students. Although our initial focus was elementary school, following the unexpected events of the last several years, we now serve all Bay District Schools non-charter public schools (grades K-12.) We realize that early intervention is key and yet we know that EVERY student can be successful when

provided the right support and tools. Our hope is to instill hope in EVERY student, particularly those who face extreme obstacles in both their home and academic lives.

Despite the challenges, we have been so blessed with community members willing to share their time and energy with our students. We have a very aggressive goal of 1,000 mentors for our student population. We have currently been able to match 35% of our students on our waiting lists with mentors! Many of our men-

tors have continued from year to year with their students and are seeing great success. And while we are so grateful for their continued support, we are always excited to have new mentors join us on our mission. Although our primary focus is our students, we can never underestimate how the support our mentors provide also impacts our teachers. We are very aware of the increasing workload our teachers carry every day. Our mentors are an amazing support and work to lighten the load in many ways but primar-



ily with their consistent support of their students and classroom presence. We believe together we can achieve amazing success and become the brightest and best Florida has to offer! Without a doubt our mentors bring value through their vast life experience as well as their success stories and challenges overcome along the way. We are confident that the examples provided with our young students can and will change the trajectory of their lives. The knowledge and wisdom shared with our students brings our great big world to life and offers possibilities many never knew existed. Whether we're learning about banking, construction, a local trade or serving our country across the globe - NOTHING is wasted! Regardless of their profession or age, we are confident that every mentor has something to contribute to the future success of our student body.

We are very appreciative for the business and community partners who have come alongside us and never wavered in their support. Their willingness to share our opportunity with their employees and members is a driving force in our recruiting efforts.

If you're looking for a way to engage in Bay County and make a difference for the future, please consider Elevate Bay! Our school based mentor program offers several options (One-on-One, Classroom & Lunch Buddy). We currently have over 350 students on wait-

ing lists across the district. The variety of options allows for flexibility for mentors and teachers while offering an opportunity for our community members to make a tangible difference in both the daily activities as well as the future. Mentors are given the opportunity to select their preferred school site and their mentoring option. This means you can select your community school, your alma mater or select a school close to your work/home to make the process more conducive to scheduling. Unlike many mentor programs, our mentoring takes place during the school day and on school property and is supervised by teacher/school staff.

Our simple two step process includes a simple application followed by a New Mentor Orientation session. Once both pieces have been completed, mentors will be connected with the school liaison and will be ready to begin supporting their partnership. With our entry level commitment of two visits (thirty minutes each) we are confident we have an avenue for everyone to invest in their community without proving to be overwhelmed by a new process. Please consider our opportunity when looking for a way to give back to Bay County! We know our students would be so grateful.

Please contact Stacey Legg, Program Coordinator, at [LEGGSL@bay.k12.fl.us](mailto:LEGGSL@bay.k12.fl.us) or call (850) 767-4128 for more information.

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# Backpack Blessings



BY MARK MCQUEEN,  
BAY DISTRICT SCHOOLS  
SUPERINTENDENT

As we embark on a new year, I am eager to draw your attention to a remarkable organization that significantly impacts our community—Backpack Blessings.

This organization, true to its name, is a blessing in our community. Their dedication to ensuring our students in Panama City Beach are fed and encouraged is truly commendable. At Bay District Schools, we deeply appreciate their unwavering support.

Backpack Blessings, a 501c3 tax-exempt non-profit organization, operates seamlessly through our schools in Panama City Beach. Their mission

is clear: providing nutritious weekend meals to students facing desperate circumstances. To identify those in need, they rely on the expertise of our incredible teachers and counselors.

Unfortunately, some of our district's families are grappling with the harsh reality of student hunger. While school lunches sustain them during the week, the challenge persists over the weekends and extended holiday breaks. Backpack Blessings, recognizing this gap, provides crucial weekend support ensuring our beach students have access to nourishment during these holidays and school breaks. A plethora of other organizations, churches and individuals support our students in the rest of Bay County, but Backpack Blessings has generously taken on the responsibility of supporting all of our schools on the beach.

Since its founding in 2011 by a group of concerned parents/guardians and volunteers, Backpack Blessings has been a shining example of individual citizens stepping up for our children. During the past 12 years, they've provided more than

1,899 children in Panama City Beach with more than 72,247 meals, thanks to the collaborative efforts of their dedicated team, volunteers, community members, local businesses, organizations, and churches.

Despite their impactful work, the challenges persist, and this year, they've identified the highest number of students in need across all their years of service. As we usher in the new year, let us commit to supporting organizations like Backpack Blessings — financially or through volunteering. With its spirit of resolutions, January provides a perfect opportunity to make a

difference.

To contribute, please consider monetary or food donations or even just volunteer your time to help pack some food bags. \$7 feeds a child for one week but \$250 covers an entire school year (every little bit helps): [https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted\\_button\\_id=NEA3DLR72WK8W](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=NEA3DLR72WK8W). You can also become a community partner: <https://www.backpackblessingspcb.com/sponsorships/>. Follow them on their Facebook page at Backpack Blessings PCB or email them at [backpackblessings@gmail.com](mailto:backpackblessings@gmail.com) for more information.

Acknowledging the prevalence of students in our district who face food instability is dis-

heartening. Yet efforts like these fill me with gratitude for Backpack Blessings and their dedicated efforts to address this critical issue. While their operations focus on Panama City Beach, the positive impact reverberates throughout our entire district.

Healthy food and steadfast support are essential for our students' academic success and well-being. Backpack Blessings endeavors to provide both to those in need across Panama City Beach. Together, let us forge ahead into the new year, making a meaningful difference to ensure that no student within our district goes to bed hungry.

Wishing you all a prosperous and compassionate New Year.



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Go to our website [www.wccpcb.org](http://www.wccpcb.org)  
or scan the qr code



## Resolving to Be Happy Might Require the Courage to Divorce

By JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PhD  
More than half the U.S. population makes New Year's resolutions. But people rarely actually include "get a divorce" on their list.

Instead, divorce becomes the unhappy by-product of resolutions like this year "I'm going to have the courage to change the things I can"... Or "I'm going to

start focusing on my own needs and quit trying to get my spouse to change"...Or "I'm going to stop playing these games and start a new life"...or some other version of: "This year I'm going to find a way to be happy."

These are familiar resolutions, with the thought of divorce often hidden by the worthy intentions to make a better

life. So, it follows that divorce filings peak during the post-holiday season, particularly in January and March. The January spike derives from couples who do their best to get through the holidays for the children's sake, and then act on their joint decision to divorce after the holidays. The March uptick can be traced to individuals who decide

they want a divorce before or during the holiday period but choose not to tell their spouse until after the holidays.

Sometimes people hang on to their last bit of optimism and hope that the holiday spirit will rekindle their marriage. But that rarely happens. Instead, fake holiday warmth and cheer provides a stark contrast to true happiness. By mid-January many distressed people decide to take action or to resign themselves (and their spouse and children) to another game of charades or worse yet, family feud.

If you have resolved to create a better life for yourself and your family, you may have also reached the painful conclusion that getting a divorce is the best (and maybe only) option that will promote your future emotional and psychological well-being, and that of your spouse and children.

And, if you have reluctantly decided to divorce, you may be dreading a long, painful process that drains family financial resources and pits you and your spouse against each other as if you are enemies. But it doesn't have to be that way.

A pre-suit, pro se divorce (a friendly divorce without lawyers) could be a relatively inexpensive, good option for you if you and your spouse:

- Want to remain friendly, especially if you will continue being Parenting Partners.
- Have typical assets and liabilities that can be equably distributed without complicated legal transactions.
- Would rather reserve family resources so that you and your spouse have the money you need to start over and build a stable future for yourselves and your children.

- Want to move forward deliberately and begin building a happy, stable future now, rather than be stuck in limbo for a year or more rehashing the past.

In the "Friendly Divorce" Pre-Suit, Pro Se option mediators facilitate the required (and sometimes emotional) discussions and then empower you to reach mutual agreement on all your current issues. The mediator also prepares your Marital

Settlement Agreement, and if needed, your Parenting Plan, and Child Support Guidelines Worksheet. Many mediators also provide assistance with preparation and filing of all required documents.

The "Friendly Divorce" Pre-Suit, Pro Se process typically involves a one-hour planning session and two mediation sessions. This means you could resolve all your issues and be ready to file for a non-contested divorce in about one month. By contrast, the average attorney-driven divorce process in Florida is 15 months.

Divorce is demoralizing and stressful for sure. Still, most couples and families truly value peaceful resolution of issues with as little hurt to those involved as possible. To accomplish this, try to remain friendly and embrace an optimism about what you and your spouse can do with and for each other if you each are simply willing to focus on finding solutions that are good for you AND for the others involved, especially children.

My hope is for all couples and families to stay together happily. But my own new year's resolution is to help people eliminate distress in their relationships and maintain peace, whether they stay together or not.

If you have decided to divorce, talk to your spouse about the "Friendly Divorce" option. And, let me know if I can help.

*Jamie C. Williamson, PhD is a FL Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator and Gottman Methods Couples Counselor. She is an owner and partner at Amity Mediation Workshop, LLC, a mediation practice specializing in "friendly divorce" mediation and 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 amitymediation-workshop.com.*

*You'll find me at Amity Mediation Workshop where we conduct Pre-Suit, Pro Se Divorces in an amicable environment. Our approach to Divorce Mediation helps you to resolve your issues without another fight and to build a stable future for all involved, especially the children.*



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# Intimacy Over 50: Embracing a Fulfilling Love Life



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN M.D.

Intimacy over 50 remains a topic shrouded in unnecessary mystery. As age encroaches, couples often retreat from discussing or embracing their changing sexual health needs. Dr. Richard Chern, MD, situated in the heart of Miramar Beach, Florida, is championing a new narrative – that intimacy and fulfillment are not exclusive to youth, but are vibrant at any age.

Understanding the physical shifts that come with age is paramount to sustaining not just sexual health but the deeper emotional bonds that thrive on intimacy. Women may grapple with the repercussions of menopause, while men might confront testosterone decline, with both scenarios impacting confidence and the intimate dynamic of a relationship. Recognizing these shifts and addressing them head-on is where Dr. Richard

Chern, MD, and his team excel.

Routine lab work is the cornerstone of Dr. Richard Chern's practice, providing crucial insights into hormone levels and overall health, which in turn produces personalized treatment plans. This proactive approach can dispel myths surrounding the inevitability of diminished intimacy with age.

Dr. Richard Chern's clinic offers more than just medical evaluations; it provides a holistic approach to intimacy post-50. With a compassionate, knowledgeable team, inclusive of Sue

Griffin, ARNP, the clinic fosters an environment where sensitive discussions are met with expertise and care. Their dedication to health and vitality is reflected in the clinic's platinum status with BioTE, signaling a premier standard in hormone therapy and patient satisfaction.

An invitation is extended to all ages especially those over 50 in the Miramar Beach area and beyond: embrace the possibility of a rich, fulfilling intimate life with the support of Dr. Richard Chern, MD. It is never too late to address sexual health, to

rediscover connection, and to experience the joy and pleasure of closeness. With two decades of military precision and a commitment to education and excellence in hormone therapy, Dr. Richard Chern's clinic stands apart as a sanctuary for those seeking to reclaim or enhance their intimacy.

The clinic's pledge is to guide each patient through the nuances of aging with grace, care, and the latest in medical advancements. Visiting Dr. Richard Chern, MD, is not just about getting lab work; it's about taking a definitive step towards a

rejuvenated intimate life. Here, in the tranquil surrounds of Miramar Beach, the golden years can indeed be golden, filled with health, happiness, and heartfelt connections.

Don't let misconceptions dictate the course of your intimate life. Reach out to Dr. Richard Chern's clinic, where your journey to a vibrant, intimate future is just a phone call away. Schedule your appointment at (850) 837-1271 and open the door to a chapter of life where intimacy continues to flourish, proving that love knows no age.

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 Musing

# Sean of the South: A New Year



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Long ago, my college professor told us to choose a poem to recite in class. Students chose lofty selections from the greats. Whitman, Dickinson, Frost. I consulted Daddy's Hank Williams songbook.

10:40 P.M.—New Year's Eve. Hank Williams is on my radio. My wife is sleeping in the passenger seat. My coonhound is in the backseat. To bring in the year, we've gone for a drive on county roads that weave along the Choctawhatchee Bay. There are no cars out. The highway is vacant—except for police cruisers. I've never welcomed in a year like this. As a boy, my father and I brought in holidays with shotguns. We'd march to the edge of creation and fire twelve gauges at the moon. Then, I'd sip Coca-Cola; he'd sip some-



thing clear. Another year goes by without him.

11:02 P.M.—my tank is on E. I stop at a gas station. The pump card-reader is broken. My wife is still out cold. I go inside to pay. The clerk is a young girl with purple hair. She wanted to be with her kids tonight, but someone called in with a sinus infection. I buy a Coca-Cola in a plastic bottle. I also buy a scratch-off lotto ticket. The last few minutes of the year, I'm feeling lucky. I use my keys to scratch the ticket. I win five bucks. So, I buy another two. I win another dollar. "Lucky you," the cashier says. "Wish I could buy one, but

it's against store policy." To hell with policy. It's New Year's Eve. I buy her one. She swipes a coin from the take-a-penny tray. She scratches. She wins ten bucks. We high-five. It's only ten bucks, but seeing her win makes my year.

11:28 P.M.—I'm driving. My wife is still sawing pinelogs. I'm riding through the North Florida woods, sipping Coke. Trees grow so high you can't see the moon. It's almost like poetry. Long ago, my college professor told us to choose a poem to recite in class. Students chose lofty selections from the greats. Whitman, Dickinson, Frost. I

consulted Daddy's Hank Williams songbook. He'd given it to me before he died. He'd wanted to be a guitar player once upon a time, but he was god-awful. He gave the instrument to me. I recited, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and made a D. I wasn't doing it for the teacher.

11:40 P.M.—my Coke is almost

empty. I'm parked on the edge of the bay to watch fireworks. My coonhound is looking at me with red eyes. And I'm writing you, just like I do every day. Listen, I don't remember how I started writing, or why. I have nothing valuable to say, I don't know any big words, and I'm as plain as they come. But I won't lie to you, it has been precious to me. And so have you. These are my last words of the old year, my first words of the new: I love you. Happy New Year.



## Library Hosts West African Harp Performances in January

Sean Gaskell will provide a performance and educational demonstration on the kora, an ancient 21-stringed harp from West Africa. He will feature traditional songs that are the heart and soul of the kora's musical repertoire. No registration required. Performances are free and open to the public to attend. Seating is first come, first served.

The performances will take place at the following locations and times:

**Tuesday, January 9 at 2 p.m.** at Corinne Costin Gibson Public Library, 110 Library Drive, Port St. Joe. Program sponsored by the Friends of the Gulf County Library at PSJ.

**Wednesday, January 10 at 10 a.m.** at Panama City Beach Public Library, 12500 Hutchison Blvd, Panama City Beach. Program sponsored by the Panama City Beach Public Library Foundation.

**Wednesday, January 10 at 3 p.m.** at Bay County Public Library, 898 W. 11th Street, Panama City. Program sponsored by the Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries.

Sean Gaskell features songs on the kora, a 21-stringed West African harp. As a student of the instrument, he studied under the instruction of two musicians at their home in Brikama, Gambia, over multiple extensive visits. The kora is traditionally played by oral historians known as Griots. Many songs featured on the kora preserve an 800-year history dating back to the founding of the Mande empire. Gaskell has presented adult, youth and family programs at over 350 libraries and a multitude of k-12 schools, colleges, universities and assisted living facilities throughout the United States and Canada. Visit [www.seangaskell.com](http://www.seangaskell.com).



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# A Minister's Message: The Year of "Fear Not"

BY DR. KERRY KNIGHT,  
EMERALD BEACH CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

*And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.*

*And the angel said unto them, "FEAR NOT."*

*Luke 2:9-10*

Fear seems to be the trap-pings of our upcoming year. With fighting in the Middle East, which has brought a new level of uneasiness, threats of nuclear attacks from leaders that seem to be power hungry, and major powers that want to control the world, courage and contentment could be in short supply.

The angel that appeared to the shepherds around Bethlehem offered hope to the world. The first century people had been waiting for the coming Messiah for hundreds of years. The angels in the book of Luke offer a firm commitment. God

is still in control. Paul writes in Galatians 4:4 that God did send His Son in the fullness of time. I am sure that hope had been dashed many times for the people of ancient Israel, thinking that God had forsaken them. But He is always going to choose the perfect time to reveal

His will. That has not changed through all the millennium.

The Emerald Beach Church of Christ will be celebrating the phrase "Fear Not" all year long in 2024. Sermons will be selected and classes taught on that theme throughout the coming months. It is time for Christians

to take courage.

*"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My Righteous right hand."*  
*(Isaiah 41:10)*

## Mystery Dinner Theater Fundraiser Feb. 17



The Friends of Bay County Public Libraries are thrilled to announce their upcoming fundraising event, "Decked Out for Death." This entertaining mystery dinner theater, produced by Act4Mystery, is scheduled for Saturday, February 17, 2024, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. The event promises an evening of suspense, fun, and great food as guests help solve a captivating murder mystery.

Set against the backdrop of a delicious dinner catered by One Thirty-One Events by Trigo, "Decked Out for Death" offers a perfect blend of culinary delights and theatrical entertainment:

The mystery begins with the Captain of this chaotic cruise having his hands full! It's a cruise that promised love was in the cards, but the hot tub isn't working, the speed dating session got cancelled, and bingo and shuffleboard seem to be the highlight of the trip. Join the

crew and find out what what's in store for all these singles "looking for love." They might find it... or they might not!

Celebrate Valentine's Day with us and immerse yourself in a world of crime and intrigue.

Tickets for this fundraising event are \$100 per person (plus processing fees) and include dinner and entertainment. Beer and wine will be available for purchase.

The event will be held at One Thirty-One Events by Trigo at 131 Harrison Avenue, Panama City, FL. While there is no dress code for the event, guests are welcome to dress glamorously as if they were dining on a cruise ship.

For event tickets visit bay-countylibraryfriends.org.

*The Friends of Bay County Public Libraries, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has been dedicated to enhancing the services provided by the Bay County Public Library since its*

## THIS YEAR, MAKE A RESOLUTION ABOUT YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH.

*New Years' Resolutions*

1. Re-dedicate my life to Christ.
2. Return to church.
3. Visit the Emerald Beach Church of Christ.

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# Your Guide to Flooring Trends in 2024

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

For many, a new year means out with the old and in with the new. Maybe it's trying to replace a bad habit with a healthy one, a closet refresh, or even an attitude reset. We make New Year's resolutions because we want to improve an area of our life and the new year is the perfect time for a fresh start.

Personally, one of my goals this year is to make my home a beautiful, functional, serene space that is a true escape from the busyness of life. First on my to-do list is to update my floors, which is a hefty decision. I decided I needed guidance from those who know flooring trends best—the flooring experts at Flooring Depot of Panama City.

From my research, I put together a comprehensive guide of the 2024 flooring trends for those who also wish to upgrade their floors in the new year.



## Natural Design & Sustainability

One trend we can expect to see more in 2024 is the incorporation of biophilic elements, or nature elements, in building design, especially in flooring. Rather than our house being an escape from nature, we are seeing design lean into the connectivity of the natural environment and home.

Not only is the influence of natural elements in homes growing in popularity, but so

is eco-friendly and sustainable options. People are becoming more conscious of their environmental footprint and the initiative to be green is reaching as far as the flooring industry.

Both the rising popularity of biophilic design and sustainable options makes tile a great choice for flooring in 2024 and beyond.

"Tile is created using raw, natural products and there are endless options of color and style," says Kristen Carter, sales manager at Flooring Depot of

Panama City. "The manufacturing process of tile produces very little waste and tile can be recycled, making it an environmentally friendly flooring choice."

From pebble-style to wood-look, tile offers endless options to those looking to bring the outdoors in.

## Statement Floors with Bold Patterns

The second trend—statement floors with bold patterns.

This trend has become a transformative element in interior design, injecting personality and vibrancy into living spaces. Statement floors demand attention and redefine the aesthetic of a room. They serve as more than just a functional surface; they are the focal point, creating a visual narrative that reflects the homeowner's unique style.

"Bold patterns such as herringbone, chevron, and basketweave, not only add a dynamic layer to the design but also evoke a sense of creativity and individuality. These statement floors are an exciting departure from traditional design norms that we will be seeing more of in 2024," says Carter.

## Large Format Tiles & Planks

The third trend—large-format tiles and planks. These tiles have become a hallmark of contemporary interior design, captivating homeowners with their transformative impact. These expansive surfaces redefine the

*Continued on page 28*

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# Design and Culture: **Baby, It's Cold Outside**

There is nothing like a warm fire this time of year to warm our homes. If you are building a home with a fireplace or have a fireplace that you would like to update, We have some local resources to assist you with your project and some information on what's available out there for a fireplace surround.

If you are looking for someone to handle the whole project, Linda Mugglin, the owner of Tassels Interiors, has worked in Bay County for over 30 years from new construction to remodeling. Tassels Interiors has all the resources you need locally to either design or reface a fireplace and they can manage the project to get everything that you need from start to finish whether you choose masonry or tile. They also work with local carpenters for any woodwork if you are thinking about a wood mantel or shiplap.

When selecting a surround there is lots to consider such as if you are considering shiplap, you will still need some type of fireproof material around the firebox. Natural Stone is a wonderful option for a fireplace surround and depending on the aesthetic of your fireplace and the style you are looking for will depend on your selection. If you would like something seamless and modern, stone or porcelain slabs will achieve this look. You can visit a local countertop fabricator for a wide range of options as most countertop fabricators do fireplace surrounds as well. Quartzite, Marble, Soapstone, Granite and Dolomites can all be used for this application. Another option for this look, which is a more recent technology, is porcelain slabs and it is available in some beautiful options that emulate natural materials such as Calacatta marble. This is a wonderful advantage as the cost of Italian Marble, due to its exotic characteristics, is very high. If you are under new construction, whether you use natural stone or porcelain, it is a good idea to connect with a local fabricator or a designer during the beginning stages as these slabs vary in size. They can guide you through this process to be sure you get the end product you imagine.

Granite Plus is a local fabricator with a showroom located at 17801 Ashley Dr. If you are interested in porcelain or natural



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## Is a Roth IRA Conversion Right for You?

By RANDAL LOCKLIER,  
PRESIDENT, GULF FINANCIAL

It's no secret that it's a good time for Roth IRA conversions. We are doing a lot of them. Current Trump era personal income tax levels are some of the lowest in history. It's also no secret that taxes could increase significantly

in the future. Does it make sense to pay income taxes on Qualified assets (IRA) now while they are low? For a lot of folks, that answer will be yes. Especially if you are already in retirement and at relatively low earned income. One way to see if a conversion is right for you is to run a mock tax

return. Our tax team can work with you to determine the taxes owed ahead of time. Isn't that a smart move? Being tax efficient will increase your income and improve the longevity of your portfolio. TAX SMART. That's the Gulf Financial way.



### Keep in mind the following KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You can convert all or part of the money in a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA.
- Even if your income exceeds the limits for making contributions to a Roth IRA, you can still do a Roth conversion, sometimes called a "backdoor Roth IRA."

• You will owe taxes on the money you convert, but you'll be able to take tax-free withdrawals from the Roth IRA in the future.

• Be aware that withdrawing converted funds within five years of the conversion will trigger a 10% penalty.

• Roth IRA conversions may not make as much sense for individuals nearing retirement; for that group it may be more advantageous to simply pay taxes over time via traditional IRA withdrawals. Open and fund a Roth if you are still working.

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

*Investments involve risk unless otherwise stated. Consult with a licensed Investment or Tax Advisor and read the prospectus prior to making any investment. This article is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information on the subject matter covered.*



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or visit [gulffinancialgroup.com](http://gulffinancialgroup.com) to schedule your free consultation in Destin or Panama City Beach.



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Mobile: 803-403-4041  
[randy@gulffinancialgroup.com](mailto:randy@gulffinancialgroup.com)

Investments involve risk and are unless otherwise stated are not guaranteed. Past performance is not an indicator of future results.

## FLOORING TRENDS

*continued from page 26*

aesthetics of a space, offering a sleek and modern appeal.

The inherent beauty of large-format tiles and planks lies in their ability to create an illusion of spaciousness, seamlessly extending visual boundaries and producing an air of sophistication. The oversized elements reduce the prominence of grout lines, offering a clean and uniform look.

The versatility of large-format tiles and planks allows for diverse design expressions, from minimalist elegance to bold patterns and textures. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, large format flooring has practical benefits, including reduced maintenance efforts and a quicker installation process.

As contemporary design continues to evolve, large-format tiles and planks stand as a timeless choice, bridging form and function in a way that enhances the overall ambiance of any interior space.

## Retro Carpet

Lastly, with the renewed love for vintage interior design, retro carpet styles are making their way back into our hearts and homes.

"Get ready to see classic patterns of carpeting make its resurgence in 2024. We will be seeing more people step away from gray carpeting and lean toward shades of browns, beiges, and blues, which will bring a lot of interest and character back into homes," says Carter.

Retro carpets are growing in popularity for living spaces in which warmth and coziness is desired and will be a unique way to showcase your style in the new year.

If you're interested in updating your floors or if you have any questions about flooring for your home, rental, or business, stop by one of our two Flooring Depot of Panama City locations. We would love to help make your vision come to life. Call us at (850) 785-2216 or visit our website at [flooringdepotofpanama.com](http://flooringdepotofpanama.com).

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TO READ THIS ISSUE ONLINE

# Panama City Beach Set to Welcome Back Winter Residents for 2024 Season

As temperatures continue to drop farther north, Visit Panama City Beach is ready to once again welcome winter residents to the destination's 27 miles of sugar white sand beaches and emerald green waters. With a full calendar of exciting social events scheduled to kick off in 2024, the welcome mat is being rolled out for "snowbirds" searching for a sunny beach getaway this winter.

"We are thrilled to welcome both first-time and returning visitors to our beautiful beaches to create lasting memories this

winter," says Visit Panama City Beach President and CEO Dan Rowe. "Our winter residents have become a treasured part of the Panama City Beach community, and we look forward to hosting a lineup of special events throughout the season."

Among the highly anticipated events are the annual Homecoming Dance and Social at Laketown Wharf on Wednesday, January 10, and the Winter Resident Senior Prom on Wednesday, February 7, at Edgewater Beach and Golf Resort. One of the most popular events of



the season, the Winter Resident Senior Prom, features a new theme each year. The festivities conclude on Wednesday, February 21 with the Winter Resident Grand Finale, a farewell and appreciation event for those who choose Panama City Beach as

their home away from home.

On Winter Resident Appreciation Days, visitors can connect over complimentary coffee, donuts and giveaways at Laketown Wharf on January 8, February 5, and February 19. A great time to learn more about the destination's seasonal activities, everyone is encouraged to stop by for a chance to mingle with friends both old and new.

For winter residents looking for a challenge, the Panama City Beach Mystery Challenge offers the opportunity to win prizes that include rounds of

golf, entertainment tickets, special event opportunities and a chance to taste cuisine from the destination's finest eateries.

For more information on winter resident events, discounts and deals taking place in Panama City Beach, visit [www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/events/winter-residents](http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/events/winter-residents). Tickets to the Homecoming Dance and Social, Senior Prom and Grand Finale events can be purchased at Winter Resident Appreciation Days at Laketown Wharf from 8:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

# Governor Appoints Sheriff Ford to State Council

Governor Ron DeSantis recently announced the appointment of Michael Kraynick and the reappointment of Eugene "Tommy" Ford to the State

Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision.

**Eugene "Tommy" Ford:** Ford is the Bay County Sheriff. He currently serves as Chair of

the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission and as the Co-Chair of the Northwest Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force and is

a member of the Gulf Coast Children's Advocacy Center Board of Directors. Ford earned his bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of West Florida.

**Michael Kraynick:** Kraynick is a Judge for the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court. He serves

as a Coach, Trial Team Coordinator and Faculty Advisor for the Barry University School of Law Student Trial Advocacy Team. Kraynick earned his bachelor's degree in real estate and finance from Florida State University and his juris doctor from Barry University.

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# College Cost Data Released for 2023-2024



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

Every year, the College Board releases new college cost data and trends in its annual report. The figures published are average cost figures based on a survey of approximately 4,000 colleges across the country.

Over the past 20 years, the average price for tuition, fees, and room and board has increased 38% at public colleges and 29% at private colleges over and above increases in the Consumer Price Index, straining the budgets of many families and leading to widespread student debt.

Here are cost highlights for the 2023–2024 year.

## Public four-year: in-state

Tuition and fees increased

2.5% to \$11,260

Housing and food (formerly room and board) increased 3.7% to \$12,770

Total cost of attendance\*: \$28,840

## Public four-year: out-of-state

Tuition and fees increased 3.0% to \$29,150

Housing and food increased 3.7% to \$12,770 (same as in-state)

Total cost of attendance\*: \$46,730

## Private four-year

Tuition and fees increased 4.0% to \$41,540

Housing and food increased 4.4% to \$14,650

Total cost of attendance\*: \$60,420

\*Total cost of attendance includes direct billed costs for tuition, fees, housing, and food, plus indirect costs for books, transportation, and personal expenses. Many private colleges are at or approaching \$80,000 per year in total costs.

## Sticker price vs. net price

The College Board's cost figures are based on published college sticker prices. But many



Over the past 20 years, average costs for tuition, fees, housing, and food have increased 38% at public colleges and 29% at private colleges over and above general inflation.

families don't pay the full sticker price. A net price calculator, available on every college website, can help families see beyond a college's sticker price. It can be a very useful tool for students who are currently researching and/or applying to colleges.

A net price calculator provides an estimate of how much grant aid a student might be eligible for at a particular college based on the student's financial information and academic record, giving families an estimate of what their out-of-pocket cost — or net price — will be. The results aren't a guarantee of grant aid, but they are meant to give as accurate a picture as

possible.

## Student loan payments resumed in October

Student loan payments resumed in October 2023 for millions of federal student loan borrowers after almost three-and-a-half years of payment pauses. In connection with the restart of payments, the Department of Education launched a new income-driven repayment (IDR) plan called Saving on a Valuable Education, or SAVE. The SAVE Plan, the most generous to date, includes multiple new benefits for borrowers, some of which take effect now and others that are scheduled to take effect in July 2024 when the

plan is fully implemented, including monthly payments that are capped at 5% of discretionary income for undergraduate loans and at 10% of discretionary income for graduate loans.

Federal student loan interest rates for the 2023–2024 school year are the highest they've been in years: 5.50% for undergraduate Direct Loans, 7.05% for graduate Direct Loans, and 8.05% for graduate and parent Direct PLUS Loans.

## 2024-2025 FAFSA delayed until December

Typically, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, commonly known as the FAFSA, opens on October 1 for the upcoming school year. This year, however, the 2024–2025 FAFSA has been delayed until December due to the most significant overhaul in decades.

The new, much shorter FAFSA contains a number of changes, including:

A new "student aid index" (SAI) will replace the current "expected family contribution" (EFC) terminology in an effort to frame the resulting figure as a yardstick measuring a student's financial aid eligibility, rather than what a family will pay.

For parents with multiple children in college at the same time, the new FAFSA will no longer provide an advantage in the form of a reduced parent contribution. This change has the potential to significantly decrease aid eligibility for middle- and high-income students who have one or more siblings in college.

Cash support and other money paid on a student's behalf, for example a gift of money from a relative or a distribution from a grandparent-owned 529 plan, will no longer need to be reported on the FAFSA.

Remember that the 2024–2025 FAFSA will rely on income information from two years prior on your 2022 federal tax return (referred to as the "base year" or the "prior-prior year") but will use current asset information as of the date you submit the form.

Sources: College Board, Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2023; U.S. Department of Education, 2023



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## Gulf Coast State College's Law Enforcement Academy Application Deadline Approaching

The Gulf Coast State College Law Enforcement Academy is currently accepting applications for the Spring 2024 cohort until Monday, January 15, 2024.

Students of the Law Enforcement Academy receive the crucial skills and training necessary to become effective and responsible officers, including de-escalation techniques, emergency response, and understanding the law. The Law Enforcement Academy certificate program is 770 contact hours that can be applied to 15 credits toward an A.S. degree in Criminal Justice Technology, furthering the education and training of

law enforcement professionals.

### Spring 2024 Law Enforcement Academy important dates:

Application deadline is January 15, 2024 at 4 p.m. CST

Mandatory orientation for students is January 4, 2024 at 9 a.m. CST in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Room 105 on the North Bay campus

Classes are held Monday through Friday from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m. CST at the GCSC North Bay campus. For more information, please contact Daryl White at (850) 769-1551 ext. 5613 or dwhite6@gulfcoast.edu.

# From the Office of Congressman Neal Dunn



Happy New Year, Florida's Second Congressional District! The House has a busy schedule set for 2024, and I'm feeling positive about what's to come.

December was full of some very important votes that included many benefits to those throughout our district. For starters, my bill that would improve the Food and Drug Administration's review process for generic medications was passed as part of the Lower Costs, More Transparency package. Branded drugs currently account for 82% of the total drug spending in the U.S., and Americans deserve options. With many households struggling with inflation, the more money we can help patients save, the better. I'm thrilled that Americans are

one step closer to having ample access to safe, affordable medications!

Additionally, the House passed the FY2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The bill includes \$252 Million for Natural Disaster Recovery Construction at Tyndall Air Force Base, \$17 Million for the Tyndall Fire Station, a 5.2% increase in servicemember basic pay (the largest pay raise in over 20 years), a provision that protects current servicemembers and provides a path back to service for those discharged for not taking the COVID-19 vaccine, and full funding for the deployment of National Guard troops in support of Border Patrol activities at the southwest border. We must always take care of our service members.

With this said, the Senate did Americans a disservice by deceptively including a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) extension in the NDAA. Allowing the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to illegally spy on Americans is un-

constitutional and unfair to you. Fortunately, the FISA extension will only last until April 2024 – only a few months. I will be demanding a new FISA in April with guardrails that will prevent bad actors like the DOJ and FBI

from persecuting Americans by illegally using this program for corrupt motives.

Thank you all for another year of representing this beautiful district in Washington, D.C.! May you all have a safe and

prosperous New Year!

For regular updates about what I'm doing in Congress, follow me on Twitter, Threads, Facebook, and Instagram at @DrNealDunnFL2.

## Scam Alert for Bay County

A common scam is increasing in frequency in our area and the scammer is using familiar names to lend credibility to his fraud.

The scammer uses the phone to make contact with his intended victim, informing the victim they have missed jury duty and now have a warrant out for their arrest. The scammer has done their homework and is claiming to be a law enforcement officer with the Bay County Sheriff's Office, using the names of real law enforcement officers at the BCSO. Scammers are "spoofing" the real number at the BCSO, making it look like the scam call came from the actual

offices of the BCSO.

The victim, feeling anxiety, is offered a simple solution to the problem: pay a fee and there will be no embarrassing arrest. All the victim must do is purchase green dot cards, or gift cards, at a store and give the scammer the code on the card so the scammer can get the money from the card, and, like magic, the warrant goes away.

But the message is a fraud. Magic is not real. There is no missed jury duty and no warrant. When the victim calms down and realizes what has happened, the money is gone and the scammer is already on to another victim.

The Bay County Sheriff's Office will NEVER call to inform someone they have a warrant. And the BCSO will NEVER offer anyone the chance to pay money by buying gift cards in lieu of arrest. If you receive this or any other scam call, simply hang up.

If you have been victimized, please contact us to report this crime at 850-747-4700. You may feel embarrassed but be assured it is happening every day to many people. We will do what we can to help you. Please pass this information on to someone else. Information is power and only by education can scams be prevented.

## Hey Buckaroo, think I'll mosey on over to The Powder Room.



Whether you mosey, lope, trot or gallop, get on over to The Powder Room and check out the great deals on the world's finest firearms.



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