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A Call for Help from Beach Care Services

BY ED OFFLEY

For 27 years, the nonprofit organization Beach Care Services has assisted Panama City Beach residents facing short-term financial emergencies.

But today, says its director, Earl Miller, the organization is asking the community for help. Current economic trends are causing donation shortfalls that threaten to reduce the number of people Beach Care Services can aid, he said.

Founded in 1999 by Beach restaurateur Bill Buskill, the founder of Pineapple Willy's and Wicked Wheel, Beach Care Services relies on a volunteer staff of 12 to assist clients. Its 18-member board of directors is all volunteers as well.

The organization's mission is "to provide short-term emergency assistance to people who live or work in Panama City Beach, and when they require long-term or more specialized assistance, refer them to other social services agencies." Categories of assistance include rent,



utilities, medical expenses and reliable employment transportation expenses, said Donna Cherry, a volunteer administrator standing in for Miller after minor surgery.

In 2025, Beach Care Services had a budget of \$220,000, of which all but \$1,760 (for utilities and insurance) went directly for client assistance to 792 people

in need. "That is probably the highest return [of donations] of any nonprofit on the Beach," Miller said.

From 2021-2025, the organization provided financial aid to 3,218 people. Its goal for this year is to be able to help around 800.

Although Buskill passed away five years ago in November 2021, his charitable

nonprofit, Pineapple Trust LLC, recently made a major contribution to Beach Care Services. It purchased an empty 1,000-square-foot office building at 540 Richard Jackson Boulevard, formerly used as a police substation, for a permanent facility. Other than the \$250,000 purchase price, the restoration and repair of the building was carried out by a company of volunteers from the nonprofit and Pineapple Willy's staff.

"Beach Care Services has finally found its forever home," Miller said.

In addition to ongoing fundraising outreach, Beach Care Services holds four major fundraising events each year. They include:

- * The Beach Care Golf Tournament was held at Camp Creek Golf Club last month. "It was a great success, although not as great as last year," said Christine Bennett, the office administrator.

- * The annual Duck Races will be held at Laketown

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The Hope of Easter

BY GUEARY CLENDENING

I have spoken at many funerals, offering hope and comfort to grieving relatives and friends. Yet the reality cannot be denied—there will be an empty place at the table tomorrow and in the days ahead. The absence of a loved one leaves a hole in our hearts that words often cannot fill, and sometimes the pain feels unbearable.

Years ago, just a few days after my wife passed away, I visited her grave. I found myself in tears, my emotions completely frayed. No one was around, and I began to pray aloud, pouring out my heart and my sorrow to God.

Suddenly, as I prayed, a bird

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 Community

BEACH CARE

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Wharf on May 12. It features competitive, large, human-powered inflatable ducks with food, drinks, prizes and a silent auction benefiting the organization.

* A miniature golf 18-hole tournament at Goofy Golf at 12206 Front Beach Road, the date to be announced

* The annual Beach Care Dinner on the Beach, to be held in late fall; details to be announced.

In the meantime, Cherry said that she and the other volun-

teers are striving to raise public awareness of the services that their organization can bring to those in financial need.

“Our fundraising events have come up flat,” she said. “We desperately need donations. We have no shortage of clients.”

To make a donation or request help, contact Beach Care Services during office hours at their new location at 540 Richard Jackson Blvd. in Panama City Beach. They’re open Monday-Thursday 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Call (850) 235-3002 or email www.bcspcb@knology.net for more.



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EASTER

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in a nearby tree began to sing. Whether others might believe this or not, I felt deeply that this moment was sent by God, a quiet reminder that He is always near, even in our darkest hours.

When I stopped praying and looked up into the tree, the bird fell silent, and moments later, it flew away. I left the cemetery uplifted in spirit, feeling a sense of peace that I had not experienced in days.

In the Bible, First Thessalonians 4:13–14 speaks of hope. It acknowledges our sorrow when someone close passes, but it reminds us that we should not grieve as people without hope. If we believe that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, died for our sins and rose again to intercede for us before His Father in heaven, then we have hope in God’s promise: Christ is coming again, bringing with Him all who have trusted in Him.

Verses 16 and 17 continue: “For the Lord Himself shall de-

scend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of God, and the dead shall rise first. Then we who are alive at that time shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall ever be with the Lord.”

This is the hope of Easter, promised by God—a hope that comforts our hearts, strengthens our faith, and reminds us that life does not end with death.

As John 3:16 reminds us: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not

perish, but have everlasting life.”

This is God’s Word for anyone willing to open their heart and receive Christ. Through Him, we experience forgiveness for the past, healing for our pain, and the beginning of a new, eternal life filled with joy and purpose.

Embrace the hope of Easter that God has for you, and let it transform your heart and your life.

Happy Easter!







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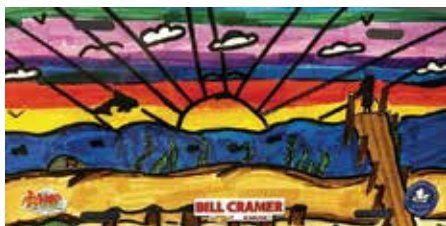
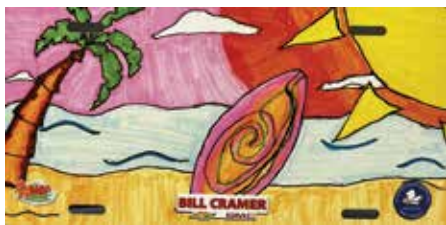
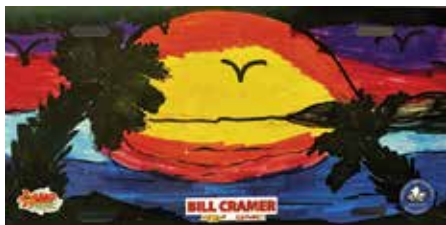
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Kids Tag Art Initiative Pours Back into Local Classrooms

Creativity is making its way onto the roadways of Bay County, and the community is invited to help support it.

The Bay County Tax Collector's Office recently completed its first year participating in the Kids Tag Art program. Kids Tag Art allows fifth-grade students to design their own colorful vanity-style plates, which family members and community supporters can purchase and display on vehicles, in homes, or offices. Funds raised go directly back to school art programs to help purchase supplies and support creative learning opportunities.

Originally launched in 2002 in Polk County, the initiative has grown to include 15 tax collectors across Florida



L to R: School Board Chairman Steve Moss, Tax Collector Chuck Perdue, Ashley Williams of Deer Point Elementary, Jessica Hughson of Patronis Elementary, Jennifer Hill of Hutchison Beach Elementary, Will Cramer of Cramer GMC, and Josh Balkom with Bay District Schools.

and has raised more than \$2.5 million statewide for school art programs.

Last year was the pilot year for Kids Tag Art in Bay County and more than \$7,000 was raised for local elementary school classrooms. Proceeds from community business sponsorships and the sale of student-designed decorative license plates sup-

ported art departments at Deer Point Elementary, Hutchison Beach Elementary, and Patronis Elementary.

This year, the program is continuing to grow locally with five Bay County schools participating: Breakfast Point, Deer Point, Hutchison Beach, Patronis, and Tommy Smith Elementary.

Local businesses have played

an important role in helping the program grow. Community sponsors such as Bill Cramer GMC, Panhandle Engineering, Perry & Young Law, and PNC Entertainment helped make the pilot year possible.

Community members can continue supporting the young artists by purchasing a Kids Tag Art plate. Each purchase helps ensure that local classrooms have the materials students need to explore their creativity.

For families, friends, and community supporters, it's a simple way to showcase local talent while investing in arts education.

To view student designs or purchase a plate, visit BayCountyFLTax.gov/KidsTagArt.

If you're a business interested in being a sponsor for the Kids Tag Art program, please reach out to Kids Tag Art Coordinator Kara Stallings at (850) 248-8515.

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Community



By DR. KAREN DEVORE, TORTOISE CLINIC

We live in a culture that glorifies speed — fast food, fast results, fast fixes. But true longevity doesn't come from rushing. It comes from consistency, balance, and tending to the body with intention over time.

Longevity isn't simply about

adding years to your life. It's about adding life to your years. Through an integrative and holistic approach to medicine, we focus on optimizing how you feel today while protecting your health for decades to come. Here are the five keys I believe are foundational to living longer and living well.

The 5 Keys to Longevity

1. Reduce Inflammation at the Root

Chronic inflammation is one of the most significant drivers of aging and disease. It's linked to heart disease, diabetes, autoimmune conditions, cognitive decline, and chronic pain.

In integrative health, we don't just suppress symptoms. We ask why inflammation is present. Is it driven by diet? Stress? Gut imbalance? Environmental toxins? Hormonal shifts?

By identifying and addressing root causes through anti-inflammatory nutrition, targeted supplementation, acupuncture, stress management, and lifestyle modifications, we can reduce the internal "fire" that accelerates aging and instead create an environment where the body can repair and regenerate.

2. Support Metabolic Health

Your metabolism is far more than calorie-burning. It's the foundation of energy, hormone balance, blood sugar stability, and long-term vitality.

Insulin resistance, blood sugar spikes, poor sleep, and chronic stress all impair metabolic function and accelerate aging. Supporting metabolic health through whole-food nutrition, strength training, adequate protein intake, sleep optimization, and strategic supplementation helps maintain muscle mass, protect brain function, and reduce risk for chronic disease.

Longevity isn't about restrictive dieting. It's about nourishing your body in a way that supports resilience and strength at every stage of life.

3. Balance Hormones Thoughtfully

Hormones regulate nearly every system in the body from mood and metabolism to bone density and cardiovascular health. As we age, shifts in estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, thyroid hormones, and cortisol can significantly impact how we feel.

An integrative approach to hormone health looks at the full picture. We assess lifestyle, stress patterns, nutrient status, gut health, and detoxification pathways before determining whether bioidentical hormone therapy or targeted nutritional support is appropriate.



Balanced hormones can improve sleep, mental clarity, libido, energy, and muscle preservation, which are all essential components of aging well.

4. Prioritize Nervous System Regulation

You cannot out-supplement chronic stress. The nervous system plays a powerful role in longevity. Persistent sympathetic ("fight or flight") activation increases inflammation, impairs digestion, disrupts hormones, and accelerates cellular aging.

Practices that activate the parasympathetic ("rest and repair") system such as acupuncture, breathwork, meditation, time in nature, meaningful social connection, and restorative sleep, allow the body to heal.

Neuro-acupuncture and integrative therapies are especially powerful for supporting neurological resilience, reducing chronic pain, and optimizing brain health as we age. A regulated nervous system is one of the most underestimated keys to long-term vitality.

5. Invest in Preventative, Personalized Care

Longevity is proactive, not reactive. Rather than waiting for lab values to reach "abnormal," integrative medicine focuses on optimal ranges and early intervention. Advanced lab testing, nutrient analysis, gut health assessments, and comprehensive evaluations allow us to personalize care based on your unique biochemistry.

No two patients age the same way and they shouldn't be treated the same way. Preventative care might include optimizing vitamin D levels, improving gut microbiome diversity, supporting detoxification pathways, ad-

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30A Escapes

Along Florida's Emerald Coast, 30A Escapes has become known for a people-first approach to vacation rental management, one shaped as much by its team and culture as the homes it represents across Panama City Beach and Scenic Highway 30A.

The company was founded in 2011 during a time of uncertainty along the Emerald Coast. What began with just two properties and a vision for a more thoughtful approach to property management quickly grew as homeowners recognized the value of hands-on care, consistency and elevated service.

While the company has evolved significantly since those early days, that original mindset remains foundational to how 30A Escapes operates today.

At its core, 30A Escapes has always been about relationships between homeowners, guests and the local community. That focus is carried forward by a team that brings both professionalism and personal investment into everything they do. Each home is managed with intention, and every interaction reflects a level of care that goes beyond expectation.

The culture within the company reflects its people first phi-



losophy. Its core values are not simply words on paper. They shape the way the team works together and the way they care for others. From employee ap-

preciation efforts to a collaborative environment built on trust, 30A Escapes places a strong emphasis on supporting the people behind the brand.

That same mindset extends beyond the company and into the community. 30A Escapes believes in being a good neighbor and an active participant in the place its team calls home. The company supports local initiatives such as Food For Thought and has contributed to community efforts, including donations to Walton County Parks and Recreation and the Schools of Walton County. These efforts reflect a broader commitment to preserving and strengthening



the communities that make this area so special.

Today, 30A Escapes manages a thoughtfully curated collection of homes across Panama City Beach and 30A, offering both guests and homeowners a relationship driven experience grounded in local expertise and high standards of care. The team remains committed to staying ahead of industry trends, continuously refining operations and service to meet the evolving expectations of both travelers and homeowners.

At its heart, 30A Escapes is not simply a management company. It is a team of people who take pride in what they do, care deeply about where they live and are committed to creating meaningful experiences for everyone they serve.

To learn more about 30A Escapes, visit www.30aescares.com or call (850) 608-1031.

Six Members Recognized at Beach Chamber Awards Dinner

The Panama City Beach Chamber of Commerce's celebratory Annual Awards Dinner presented by Noble Public Adjusting Group was a night of recognition as they honored six of their outstanding members on Thursday, February 26, at Edgewater Beach & Golf Resort.

This prestigious event acknowledged members for their dedication and accomplishments in the community and with the Panama City Beach Chamber. Awards included the Young Professional of the Year, Ambassador of the Year, Business Excellence, Humanitarian of the Year, Community Impact, and a dedication to the Chamber's 2025 Chairman.

"Our Awards Dinner is an evening dedicated to celebrating members who have made a lasting impact on both the Beach Chamber and our wider community. Tonight, we are honored to recognize our recipients for their selfless volunteerism, their commitment to those in need, and their vital contributions to our regional economy. Congratulations to each of our distinguished winners," said President/CEO, Kristopher McLane.

The 2025 Young Professional of the Year Award was presented to Jacob Willard with Panhandle Credit Union. His ambition to see young professionals like



himself thrive within the community played a key role in promoting the Young Professionals program and growing its membership.

The Ambassador of the Year Award winner was Rob Griffith of Hutt Insurance. His devotion to the Beach Chamber's growth and influence has truly gone above and beyond since joining the Ambassador team.

The Business Excel-

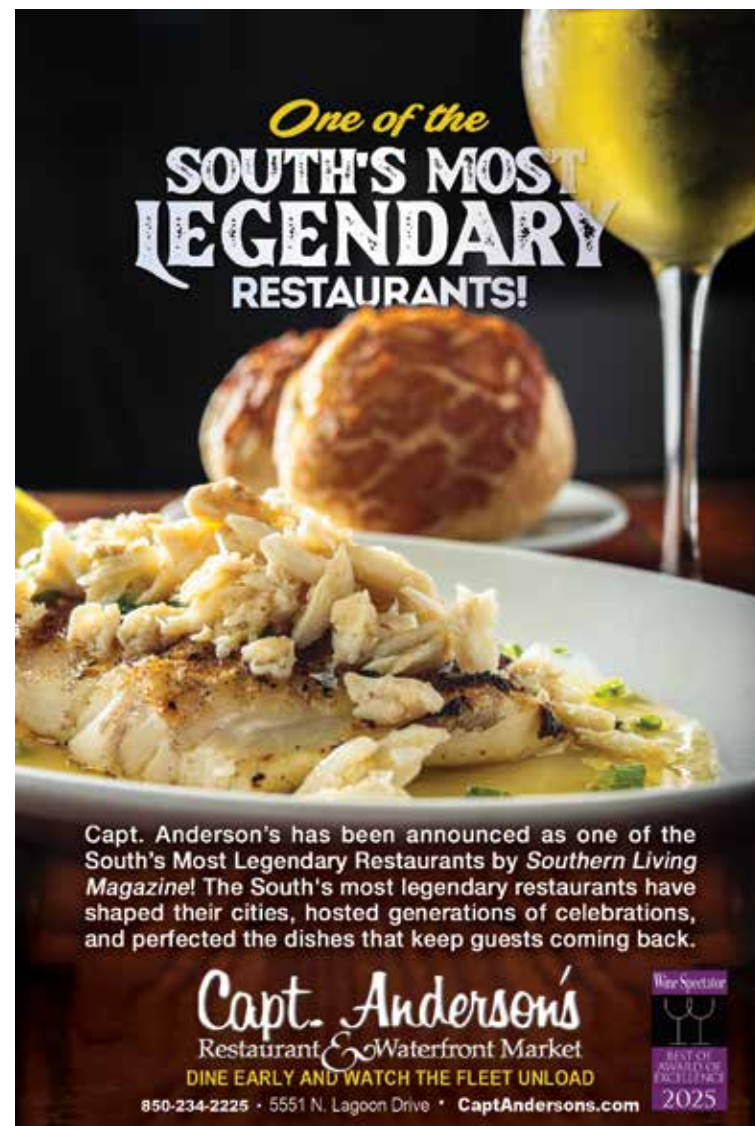
lence Award was awarded to Ms. Newby's Liquors and accepted by Charlotte Newby's sons, Will and Wesley Pickenpaugh. This organization joined the Chamber nearly 30 years ago and has since proven to be an exceptional member and partner in our community.

Humanitarian of the Year Award was given to The Women's Civic Club of Panama City Beach for their generosity and commitment to improving our area and the future generations to come. Throughout the years, they have hosted many impactful "give-back" events that directly benefit our community and the organizations that work tirelessly to serve others.

The Chamber awarded its 2025 Community Impact Award to Andrew Starr with Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare for their vision, compassion, and lasting impact on health in the community.

The Past Chair Award was given to 2025 Chairman of the Board, Ryan Mulvey. His commitment to leading the Beach Chamber helped grow the membership to over 1,500 members.

Congratulations to all award winners and thank you to everyone that made the 2026 Annual Awards Dinner a huge success.



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PCB Chamber Spotlight



Patriot Pilot Academy

Soaring above the white sands of the Emerald Coast, a new standard for aviation training is taking flight. Founded in September 2023, Patriot Pilot Academy was born from the idea that flight training should be personal, professional, and student-centric. The Academy grew from the realization that there was a significant gap between technical skill and genuine student support in the flight training industry, and our mission is to close that gap for every student who walks through our doors.

Our team brings a wealth of expertise to the cockpit, fueled by a mission to transform the training experience into something truly impactful. Patriot Pilot Academy was established to move past inconsistent, impersonal methods, creating a school where students feel supported rather than just processed. Together, our administrators and flight instructors provide a standardized and professional training environment with a personalized touch, ensuring no



student is ever just a number on the schedule.

We specialize in our all-inclusive career pilot program, which is designed to take students from zero experience to being ready to take flight with a fruitful career in aviation. We pride ourselves in exposing our career pilots to many different aviation career pathways, not only the airline

industry. However, we also provide comprehensive training for personal and business goals and everything in between. To fit the unique needs of every pilot, we offer package rates, pay-as-you-go options, and accelerated finish-up training for all ratings. Whatever your aviation needs may be, we meet you where you are at and take you higher.

Choosing the Panama City Beach area as our home base was a deliberate decision and a total no brainer for our leadership. We love this region for the welcoming community, the stunning coastal landscape, and the strong military influence that shapes our surroundings. The values of this area align perfectly with our own: we foster a culture of hospitality found in our local community, the spirit of adventure inspired by our coast, and the unwavering discipline reflected by our military.

We take pride in attending local events, high school and college outreach missions, employing local residents, collaborating with other local small businesses, and hosting commu-

nity fundraisers. For us, serving the area means being a reliable partner to the greater Panama City Beach area, fostering excellence, and opening the door to flight for everyone in our backyard. We look forward to further connecting with the Panama City Beach community and continuing to grow alongside the residents and businesses that make this area so special.

We are building the future of aviation and would love for you to be a part of it. We invite anyone to stop by for a tour of our facility, schedule a discovery flight, or chat directly with our director about your future at Patriot Pilot Academy. Be sure to check out our social media pages to stay up to date on the adventures at our academy, student successes and upcoming events!

For more information, visit our website, www.patriot-pilotacademy.com, or phone (850) 900-9191. We can also be reached via email at fly@patriotpilotacademy.com.



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Gulf Coast Jam 2026 Brings Star Power, Theme Nights and High-Energy

One of the Gulf Coast's most anticipated music events is gearing up for another unforgettable year as the 14th Annual Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam returns May 28-31, 2026, at Frank Brown Park in Panama City Beach. Recently named by Billboard as one of "The 10 Best Country Music Festivals," the four-day celebration promises chart-topping performances, themed nights and a high-energy coastal vibe that continues to draw fans from across the country.

Headliners **Post Malone, Chris Stapleton, Keith Urban and Riley Green** will lead a lineup of more than 20 artists performing across the Country On The Coast™ experience. The festival has seen tremendous momentum in recent years, selling out with crowds of 30,000 the past two years and earning recognition as the No. 1 festival in Music Festival Wizard's Top 50 Most Popular Fests In The World 2024 - Voter's Choice poll, along with top honors among beach

music festivals in 2025.

A Star-Studded Lineup

The festival kicks off Thursday, May 28, with Keith Urban headlining alongside Treaty Oak Revival, Wyatt Flores, Cooper Alan, Walker Montgomery and Gannon Fremin. Friday night brings powerhouse vocals from Chris Stapleton, joined by Marcus King, Jackson Dean, Brent Cobb, Cole Goodwin and Hueston.

Saturday's high-energy lineup features Riley Green, Koe Wetzel, Ole 60, Josh Ross, Ashland Craft and Hannah McFarland. The weekend wraps Sunday, May 31, with genre-blending superstar Post Malone, plus Muscadine Bloodline, 49 Winchester, Elizabeth Nichols, Them Dirty Roses and Skeez.

Theme Nights Add Extra Fun

Beyond the music, Gulf Coast Jam's fan-favorite Theme Nights are returning bigger than ever, giving attendees a chance

to dress up and lean into the festival spirit each evening.

Thursday's Neon Night invites bright colors and glowing outfits as Keith Urban launches the weekend. Friday's 'Merica Night celebrates country pride with red, white and blue flair during Chris Stapleton's headlining set. Saturday turns to Camo Night for Riley Green's high-octane performance, while Sunday's Rhinestone Cowboy Night encourages fans to shine alongside Post Malone for a sparkling finale.

Whether guests go all out in themed attire or add a simple nod to the night's vibe, organizers say the goal is to create shared memories and a fun, welcoming atmosphere.

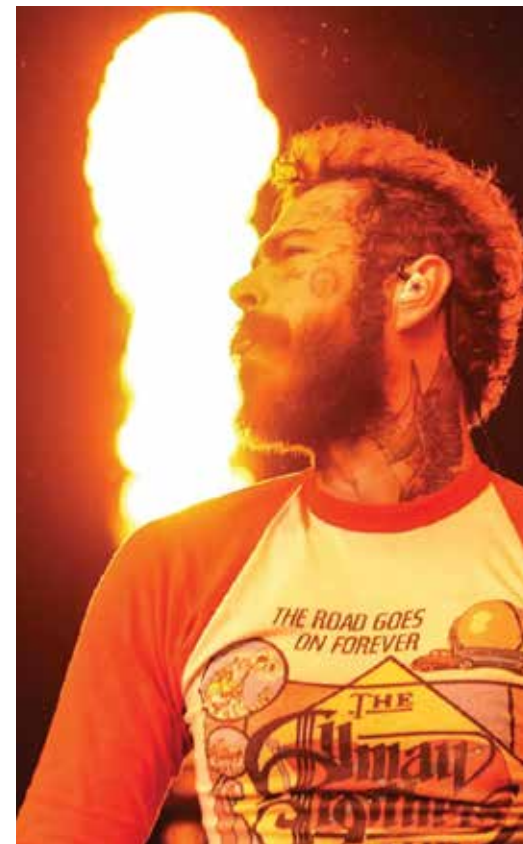
Passes and Packages Available

A variety of pass options are currently on sale, including General Admission, Military, College and First Responder passes, Caymus Vineyards VIP Pit experiences and hotel

or lodging packages. Premium offerings such as Skyboxes, Luxury Suites, Super VIP, Side Stage access, The Overlook Club and the new Eagles Nest have already sold out — a testament to the festival's continued popularity.

Payment plans are available for all pass levels, making it easier for fans to secure their spot early.

Jammers are encouraged to follow Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam online and on social media for lineup updates, special announcements and festival news as the countdown to Memorial Day weekend begins.



For tickets and details, visit www.GulfCoastJam.com.

5 KEYS

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dressing subtle thyroid dysfunction, or implementing strength and mobility strategies before decline begins.

Small, consistent interventions compound over time, much like investing in your retirement account. The earlier you begin, the greater the return.

Longevity is a Lifestyle

True longevity isn't found in a single supplement, procedure, or bio hack. It's built through daily choices that support inflammation control, metabolic resilience, hormonal balance, nervous system regulation, and personalized prevention.

Aging is inevitable. Decline is not.

When we work with the body, honoring its signals, supporting its systems, and addressing root causes, we create the conditions not just to live longer, but to live stronger. Because wellness, like life itself, is not a sprint. It's a marathon and it's worth pacing yourself well.

Savvy Leigh PHOTO

Local, professional photographer specializing in families, weddings, and events. My passion lies in creating lasting memories through photographs, and I cherish the opportunity to be part of such meaningful moments!

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Community

Fishing, Cruising & Barbecue at Capt. Anderson's Marina!

By PAM ANDERSON

Warm weather-woohoo! Aren't we Florida folks ready?!? And ready to go fishing!

This time of year, some of the most popular species of fish are not available, but don't be discouraged. There are still plenty of fish in the Gulf that are fun to catch and great to eat.

Here is a list of most of the fish you will see coming in during the spring months:

- Vermilion Snapper
- Mangrove Snapper (Black)
- Triggerfish
- Scamp (grouper)
- Spanish Mackerel
- King Mackerel
- Dolphinfish
- Almaco Jacks
- Blue Runner
- Porgy-3 types
- Banded Rudderfish
- Tomtate Grunt

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- Red Grouper
- Vermilion Snapper
- Mangrove Snapper (Black)
- Triggerfish
- Scamp (grouper)
- Dolphinfish
- Almaco Jacks
- Porgy-3 types
- Banded Rudderfish
- Blue Runner
- Tomtate Grunt
- Bonita

Charter Boats

- Red Grouper

Guide Boats

- Red Drum (Redfish)
- Black Drum
- Speckled Seatrout
- Flounder
- Sheepshead
- Spanish Mackerel
- King Mackerel
- Mangrove Snapper (Black)
- Bluefish

So when you've caught those fish and find yourself wondering what to do with them in a hotel room, good news! Anderson's Seafood Market on the dock will clean and filet them for you

and Capt. Max's Bar & Grill will cook them up for you with all the trimmings!

Speaking of Capt. Max's Bar & Grill, the new Chef Timm will be opening an outdoor kitchen early April with a Blackstone grill and smoker, cooking up some great barbecue! Come check it out! He is really outdoing himself on the new menu!

Sea Patriot Jet Boat will begin its season this month as the water gets warmer. Check out this exhilarating thrill ride!

Fishermans Walk's That Ship's Store not only has a great variety of really nice nautical gifts, but will offer a unique line of Patriotic shirts and blouses celebrating our Nation's 250th anniversary! There's a limited supply, so check them out soon. Patriotism is always 'in season'!!

The Event Center is bustling with weddings, seminars, busi-



ness meetings, retirement parties and the like. What a beautiful waterfront view of Grand Lagoon! Make plans now for your special event.

This month, The Event Center has a unique group scheduled: Panama City Beach Pop Up Consignment. Come out to shop April 9-11. It's free to the public! Get more info or sign up to consign at: <https://myconsignmentmanager.com/sellerapp/events.mycm?If-Code=growingthroughtheyears>

Red Snapper season opens June 1. Boats are filling up-call

soon! They always book up early.

The dolphins are certainly itching to see the Shell Island boats this time of year. I think they enjoy watching us as much as we enjoy watching them!

More and more folks are coming to enjoy all that beautiful Grand Lagoon has to offer here on Panama City Beach. We welcome you all! You won't find an area of the beaches that has more local family-owned businesses all nestled in one place as you will here in the Grand Lagoon area and all along Navy (Thomas) Drive.

Come see us! The family experiences on the water are great memories in the making!

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

Easter... A time to remember the ultimate sacrifice made for your eternity and mine. Have a blessed Easter!

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Local Conservancy Saves Land for Future Generations

Conservancy? Is that a place where you study music? (No, that's a conservatory!) Bay County Conservancy is a Panama City-based organization that formed in 1998 to take title to 30 acres of wetlands located in Panama City's growing commercial area around 23rd Street. That 30 acres is now surrounded by intense business development like Walmart and Gulf Coast Hospital, and it provides a refreshing green space in the

midst of traffic, a place where you can walk down a boardwalk to observe seasonal changes in a remnant swamp and maybe spot a colorful bird or butterfly. It is known as Audubon Nature Preserve, and it supports native wildlife as well as being a balm to the human spirit.

Over the years, Bay County Conservancy has acquired over more acres of land in preserves ranging from the 92-acre Tumble Creek Preserve in Washing-



The Entrance to Audubon Nature Preserve on State Avenue in Panama City, with benches, boardwalk, and informational kiosk.

ton County to the Mary Ola Miller Preserve in downtown Panama City, a "pocket park" that serves as a demonstration garden for native plants. In fact, the organization added "The Land Conservancy for Northwest Florida" as a subtitle to its name because it now owns preserves in Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington Counties. As a non-profit corporation, BCC's goal is to keep some portions

of land unspoiled for nature so future generations can see what Florida used to look like.

You are invited to visit some of these preserves. You can find a list of them on the website baycountyconservancy.org, along with other information about the organization, plus an opportunity to join and/or volunteer. The president of BCC, Candis Harbison, welcomes your phone calls at (850) 381-7500.

6th Annual Club 360 Awards Dinner

The Club 360 Annual Awards Dinner, held on March 9 at Destination Panama City, was nothing short of spectacular this year. The Club has had a busy year of achieving its four pillars: Educating our youth about career choices; Providing Scholarships for students; Fundraising through our various events and programs; and Supporting and building up this network of like-minded women.

A big Congratulations goes out to our 2025 Winners:

The Full Circle Award, which went to Sabara Quinn, is awarded to an active member of Club 360 who embodies the mission of Club 360 in all they do and has made an impact on women and girls.

The Business Award, awarded to The Willis House at Greenwood Oaks Manor, is awarded to a local business that members of Club 360 would like to thank for their support in the previous year. This business does what it does because of its team and leadership, and because of their giving—of time and talent, not just treasure.

The Founders Award, going to Amanda Jowers, is nominated by the Club President and is awarded to a woman who has contributed and assisted in the successful activities of the organization in 2025.

At the dinner, Club 360 awarded checks to two local charities from funds raised at Cocktails For A Cause held at Panama City Center for the Arts in December 2025. The Executive Director and a Board member from Girls Inc. of Bay County and Development Director for Anchorage Children's Home accepted the donations.



Club 360, whose tagline is Women Giving Back Full Circle, was formed in October 2019 as a charitable organization that offers female leaders in the community an opportunity to give back, beginning with educating the youth on career opportunities and ending with providing scholarships and networking with like-minded women. "We are truly blessed to be surrounded by such amazing women who build each other

up and want to help our youth in their professional journey," says Founding Member Irene Field. "The work that this Club performs elevates so many individuals with kindness, genuine concern, and love."


To learn more about Club 360 please contact the organization at (850) 769-3357, visit the website at www.club360bay.org, or email club360bay@gmail.com.



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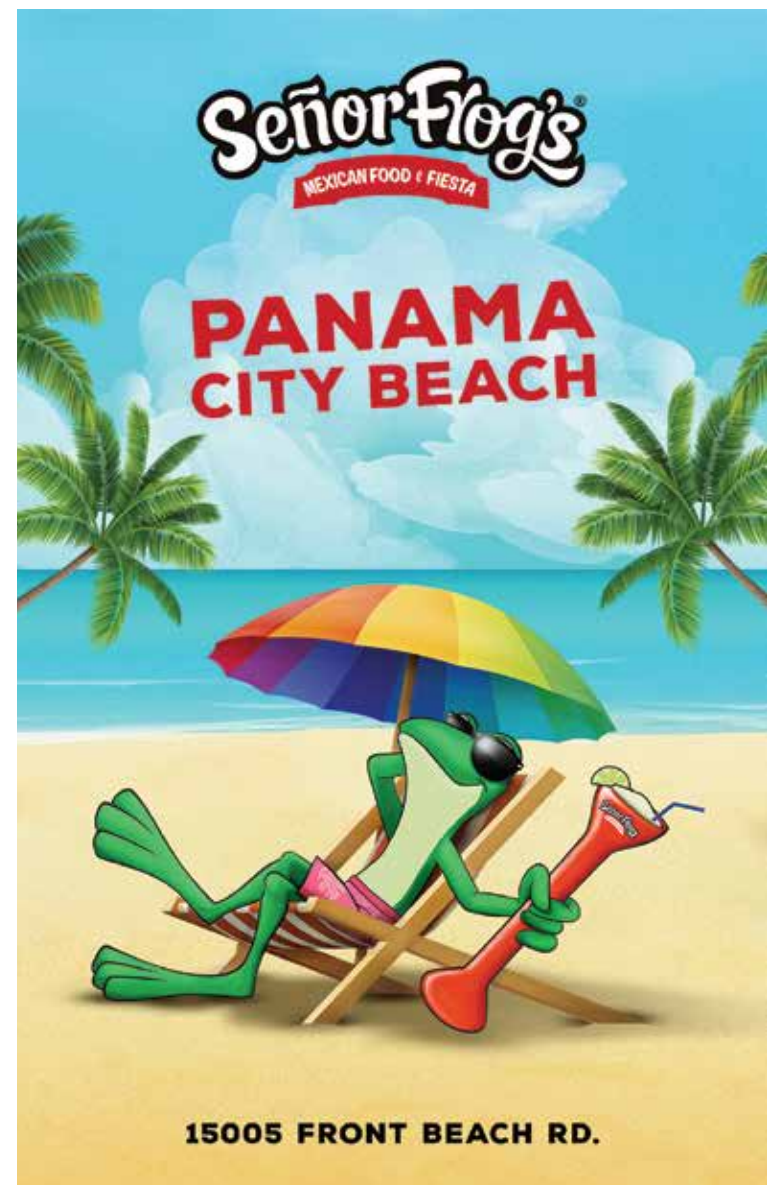
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 Community

Spring is Here and So Are The Mosquitos!

BY CINDY MULLA, PUBLIC RELATIONS & EDUCATION, BEACH MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT

Well, to be honest with you, the mosquitoes have been present all winter long. What!?

Even if you live in an area where there are months of extreme weather conditions such as deep freeze or drought, mosquitoes persist. Insects like mosquitoes have amazing strategic adaptation methods that help them survive even the harshest of weather conditions. There are four stages in the mosquito life cycle: egg, larva, pupa, and adult, and the first three stages are water-dependent. Only three parts of their life cycle can survive winter successfully. The name of this significant metabolic reduction of growth is diapause. It is a temporary suspension of development or dormancy from one stage to the next and triggered by environmental factors such as temperature, amount of daylight and stress on the insect.

As fall arrives, only a select few species of adult females will

go into diapause. These mosquitoes will search for a damp, warm location like a sewer, basement, barn, or hollow log to rest and use their stored fat for energy. Even gravid mosquitoes with eggs will survive. Male mosquitoes will not go into diapause and will die off. Remember, it is only the female that bites and takes a bloodmeal. She uses the protein from the blood meal to develop her eggs. From just one drop of blood, each female mosquito can produce a clutch of 250 to 300 eggs at once and can lay twice during its lifetime. Certain genera of mosquitoes will lay their eggs individually, in smaller batches, in multiple locations, and these can survive up to a maximum of two years. The aquatic larval stage will also enter diapause to survive. During this stage, the larvae's metabolic rate, which includes heart rate and respiration, will slow down, stopping further development. Their food source will come from stored nutrients. As soon as environmental temperatures rise, and days become longer, these three stages of de-

velopment will resume as normal. Temperature is a key factor for controlling the rate of development for mosquitoes. The higher the water temperature is, the quicker the development turnaround time is from egg to adult.

Not to gross you out but... Did you know that when she stealthily bites you, she must first inject her saliva into your body to function as an anticoagulant so she can successfully take a blood meal from you? Yuck! Before you realize it, there is a raised, red, and itchy bump. This is an allergic reaction to her saliva. How nasty!

No matter what blood type you are A, B, or O, positive or negative, she will still find you! She prefers a warm blood meal and can sense body temperature. She loves stinky smells. This little vampire certainly is attracted to sweat (It contains lactic acid that makes us all smell unpleasant), the scent of the bacteria on your skin and especially the moist carbon dioxide we exhale too. Unfortunately, we cannot win! She also

loves sweet smells like perfumes, colognes, and deodorants. She is a tiny pollinator, loves nectar from flowers and gets her energy from carbohydrates.

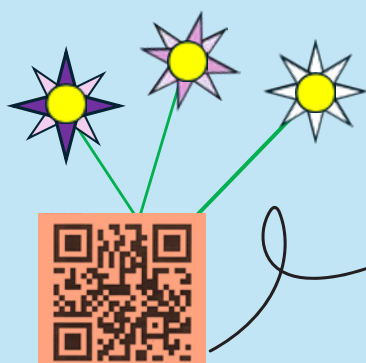
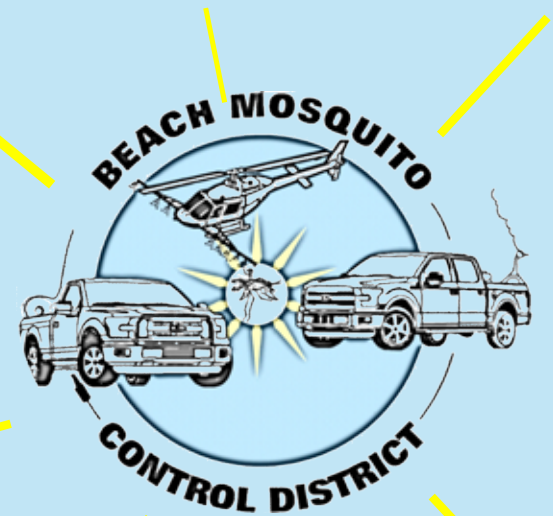
Please, take precautions to avoid being bitten by the female mosquito. She is the queen for being the most dangerous living creature on earth due to the life-threatening diseases she can transmit. Only infectious females can transmit disease when they bite. Viruses found in Florida include Chikungunya (CHIKV), Dengue (DENV), Zika, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEEV), St. Louis Encephalitis (SLEV), and West Nile Virus (WNV). Chikungunya, Dengue and Zika are traditionally imported infections with possible local transmissions that can occur. All can be transmitted to humans. There are no preventive vaccines available for humans. It can take from 2 to 15 days after receiving a bite from an infected mosquito for illness symptoms to appear. They usually mimic flu symptoms such as fatigue, fever, headache, dizziness, muscle weakness, joint

pain, or a rash. If you or anyone you know is experiencing these symptoms, please seek medical treatment promptly. A physician can order a laboratory test to determine if the illness is caused by an arbovirus (a virus transmitted by an insect or tick). However, most people infected with an arbovirus do not even become ill.

Regardless, please always take preventive steps against the bite of the female mosquito. Wearing light colors will help because it is much easier for her to see darker colors due to her eyesight. When outdoors, always use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved registered product and follow the label instructions. The smell of the repellent confuses her sent receptors located on the antennae and throws her off our natural attractants. Try to stay indoors during dusk and dawn hours. These times are the active peak mosquito transition feeding times and especially for the key mosquito species that

Continued on page 15

Stay indoors from dusk to dawn
Protect yourself from mosquito bites
Remember, wear repellent
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Community

Know Your Neighbor: Thom Kindos

BY MICHELE HARDMAN

Thom Kindos was born into a strong Greek family. His grandfather came to New York City from Greece, and as a kid, Thom remembers being completely immersed in the Greek culture. They went to Greek festivals, attended Greek Church, and ate Greek food. He and his parents moved to Florida in 1986 when Thom was 11, and opened a restaurant in Panama City Beach in 1989. It was located on Front Beach Road, where the former Eldorado Motel was. After a year and a half, another restaurant owner over in Inlet Beach was retiring and asked Thom's parents if they'd be interested in buying her out. They did. For the next 30 years, they continued to build relationships with the locals, knowing practically everyone by name who came through the door each week and striving to offer a superior level of food quality, presentation, and service. Thom remembers working with his grandmother in the kitchen at a young age, even before he really began helping in his par-



ents' restaurants. He credits those years with making him an excellent potato peeler now.

At age 19 or so, Thom felt the need to break away on his own. He thought pretty seriously about going to school to be a physician, but decided his grades really weren't quite good enough for that. One thing he already knew how to do, though—and do it very well—was cook. So he went off to West Palm Beach and graduated from the Florida Culinary Institute.

He feels like book knowledge is great, but you'll never learn as much as you will from actual hands-on experience. He worked in a few restaurants over the next several years, but the



combination of prolonged stress and many 18-hour days started causing him both physical and emotional pain. This eventually led to some issues with alcohol abuse. After a while, it began to affect his ability to work or even keep a job. He's very thankful for all the people who planted seeds, encouraging him to reprioritize his life and make changes. He's now been sober for eight years. His recovery has been a big part of his personal journey and he's very open to helping anyone else who might

need someone to talk to or share resources to help them. He feels like he's been given a brand new life now.

In 2021, he decided to take the necessary classes to get his real estate license—after a friend and local realtor “double-dog-dared” him to. Thom now represents Beachy Beach Realty in Panama City Beach and enjoys helping people solve problems. Every day is different and presents new challenges, and Thom has brought many of the things he learned from his

parents' successful restaurant business—like customer service and building relationships—to his current career. He still loves to cook, though, and now teaches cooking classes 2-3 times each month at Somethin's Cookin' Downtown. You can watch him work and ask questions while he fixes a variety of appetizers, main courses, and desserts. You can also catch one of his videos when you search “The Realtor Chef” on YouTube.

When Thom isn't in the kitchen, you might find him on a golf course, out on the water fishing, hanging out on Shell Island, or getting back into playing the trombone (which he did from middle school through early college). One of his favorite things to do is relax in the backyard at his new home, whether he's doing landscape projects or just enjoying the peaceful atmosphere. It's his personal retreat.

To find out how to make Thom's favorite stuffed flounder or crab cakes, or to connect with him about any of his other ventures, you can email him at thom@beachybeach.com.

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Florida Friendly Landscaping and the Law



BY JON CARROLL

There are many signs of spring in the air; crowded beaches, the sound of lawnmowers starting up after their winter hiatus, new blooms and accompanying allergies. As you begin your spring plantings, did you know that Florida Statute (F.S.) protects Florida-friendly landscaping in Homeowners Association neighborhoods?

Under F.S. § 373.185, Homeowners Associations may not enforce covenants which prohibit property owners “from implementing Florida-friendly landscaping on his or her land.”

The statute defines “Florida-friendly landscaping” as “quality landscapes that conserve water, protect the environment, are adaptable to local conditions, and are drought tolerant. The principles of such landscaping include planting the right plant in the right place, efficient watering, appropriate fertilization, mulching, attraction of wildlife, responsible management of yard pests, recycling yard waste, reduction of stormwater runoff, and waterfront protection.”

The governing documents of my own neighborhood’s HOA even contain a provision on Florida Friendly Landscaping. According to the community’s charter, the HOA “shall encourage best management practices cited by the University of Florida in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences’ “A Guide to Florida-Friendly Landscaping” for landscape installation, irrigation, and fertilizer and pesticide applications as to the Units...”

However, as with anything, the devil is in the details, and F.S. § 373.185 is not a carte blanche pass allowing homeowners to completely ignore an HOA’s rules regarding landscaping.

HOAs may still place restrictions on the manner and

appearance of Florida-friendly landscaping, so long as those restrictions do not effectively prohibit it altogether. For example, associations may adopt reasonable guidelines regarding design, placement, and maintenance, including requirements for neatness, defined borders, or approval of a landscaping plan before installation. HOAs may also regulate issues such as visibility at intersections and drainage concerns. In practice, this means that while a homeowner may have the right to incorporate native plants or reduce turf grass, they are not free to create an unmaintained or aesthetically inconsistent yard that conflicts with legitimate community standards. The balance struck by the statute allows for environmentally conscious landscaping while preserving an association’s ability to maintain a cohesive and orderly neighborhood appearance.

In situations where an HOA wrongfully denies a homeowner’s landscaping application, the unfortunate reality is that potential litigation costs may dissuade homeowners from exercising their rights to Florida-friendly landscaping. Even when a homeowner is legally in the right, the prospect of hiring counsel, responding to enforcement actions, or pursuing declaratory relief against an HOA can be both time-consuming and expensive. Additionally, under Florida Statutes § 720.305, the prevailing party in an HOA dispute is entitled to recover reasonable attorney’s fees and costs. While this allows a successful homeowner litigant to recover litigation costs, the prospect of having to pay the association’s costs, if the homeowner were to lose, could serve as a deterrent to pressing one’s rights.

If you are interested in learning more about Florida-friendly landscaping, there are many excellent resources available. Organizations such as the Florida Native Plant Society provide education, plant guides, and local chapter support focused on using native species. For those looking for inspiration and practical guidance, Backyard National Park promotes the idea of turning residential landscapes into thriving habitats for wildlife. Locally, nurseries like Sand-



hills Native Nursery specialize in plants that are well-suited to

Bay County’s soil and climate conditions. Homeowners can also consult the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, which offers research-based publications and often hosts workshops through its county extension offices. Together, these resources can help ensure that your landscaping choices are not only compliant with Florida law, but also sustainable, attractive, and

beneficial to the local environment.

Jon Carroll is a licensed attorney. The information in this column is provided for educational and informational purposes only, and does not constitute legal advice, nor establish an attorney client relationship. Consult a qualified attorney in your jurisdiction for legal advice specific to your situation.

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Calls for Artist Applications for 31st Festival of The Arts

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation’s Festival of the Arts is one of the Southeast’s premier festivals and showcases more than 100 artists from across the U.S. The Festival is a celebration of art, music, food, and family fun and features a live music lineup, Cuisine on the Green, a wine and beer garden, art activities for kids, merchandise, and more.

The 31st annual Festival will be held on Saturday, Oct. 24, and Sunday, Oct. 25 in the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin, Florida.

This is a juried show that

includes artists in the categories of Acrylic, Clay, Pen & Ink, Mosaic, Watercolor, Metal, Jewelry, Sculpture, Photography, Collage, Printmaking, Fiber, Glass, Wood, Mixed Media, Pottery, Resin, Pastels, Ceramics, Pencil, Oil and Original Digital Art.

Artists display their pieces and compete for \$10,000 in cash award prizes. Participating artists must pay a \$30 non-refundable jury fee. Booth fees are from \$350.

“Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation is a champion for arts and culture and the Festival

of the Arts helps to build that creative community. This festival attracts artists from across the country and has become a popular annual fall event with locals and visitors alike,” said Deb Nissley, director of operations for Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation.

The application deadline for both Artist Exhibition and Poster Art is July 1, 2026. Visit www.mkaf.org for Artist Application, Rules of Participation, and Poster Art entry forms. Call (850) 650-2226 or email mkaf.org for more information.

Save the Date!

VETERANS & FIRST RESPONDERS APPRECIATION LUNCH

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Niceville Community Center
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 Community

FSU PC Ascent Program to Host All-Ages Tech Expo Event April 25

The fourth annual ASCENT Technology Expo will take place on Saturday, April 25, at Florida State University Panama City.

“We have Challenger Learning Center coming over from Tallahassee, and they are bringing their big new planetarium, which will be set up in the atrium,” said Suzanne Remedies, Ph.D., the ASCENT interim director. “There will be activities for students of all ages, and it is free and open to the public.”

The Tech Expo will be from 9

a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Holley Academic Center, 4750 Collegiate Drive, Panama City. Visitors can check out hands-on STEM activities, technology and engineering demonstrations, and much more. Sessions will include bottle rocket building and launching; Ozobots; Minecraft competitions; Robotic Indy Cars; SpheroBots; and an Integrated Tech Club Showcase. Food trucks will also be on site.

ASCENT (Advancing Science and Career Education in



New Technologies) is a 10-year, \$23 million project partially funded by Triumph Gulf Coast Inc., designed to contribute to the development of a strong, regional workforce in cybersecurity and new technologies. Projects focus on increasing the interest of K-12 students in engineering, computer science, information technology and cybersecurity fields; expanding undergraduate degree programs at FSU Panama City; and delivering training courses and testing

to meet the workforce needs of the community.

This year, ASCENT is expanding its reach to include a second Tech Expo in Walton County from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 2, at the Magnet Innovation Center, 133 Watersound Parkway in Watersound. Expo funding is provided by the St. Joe Community Foundation.

For more information about ASCENT, visit pc.fsu.edu/ascent. For more on the expo, visit teched.fsu.edu.

Promotions/Giveaways at all Bay County Libraries

Spring Reading Challenge April 1 - 30

Check out items in April to be entered in a raffle prize drawing! (1 entry per person) There will be one small prize for kids, one for teens, and one for adults.

Find a Flamingo April 19 - 25

Flamingos have flocked to

the library! During National Library Week, keep your eyes open as you browse the stacks. You might just find a flamingo! If so, the flamingo is yours to keep and you can visit the circulation desk for another small prize. (while supplies last)

Library Members April 19 - 25

All library card members who visit during National Library Week will receive an NWRLS-branded book bag! All NEW library card members will receive the branded tote and an NWRLS keychain! (while supplies last)

Panama City Beach Public Library April Programs

Book Babies (Ages 0 - 2) Tuesdays through May 26 at 10 and 10:30 a.m. CT (same class)

Stop by for delightful stories, songs, play! (Space limited to 24 people per class)

Sail Into School (Ages 3 - 5) Thursdays through May 28 at 10 a.m. CT

Get ready to learn with engaging stories, songs, and crafts! Visit the front desk for an entry

ticket. (Space limited to 24 people)

LEGO Club (Ages 7 - 11) April 14 at 3:30 p.m. CT

Make new friends while creating cool, themed LEGO builds! *Registration begins on the 1 of the month

Sea Needles Fridays at 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. CT

Join us and make new friends as you work on your own sewing project. Stop by our display case to see some of the beautiful, finished projects.

Movies @ the Park: Zootopia 2 (PG) (OFF-SITE)

Friday, April 17 at 7:30 p.m. CT

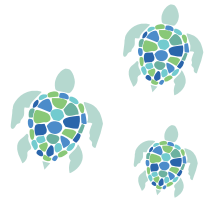
Harder's Park, 8110 John Pitts Rd, Panama City, FL

Join us for a free family movie night at Harder's Park! Attendees will even be entered into a

raffle to win a small prize! This community program is brought to you by Bay County Public Library and Bay County Parks & Recreation. This event is partially funded by the Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries and the St. Joe Foundation. Don't forget to bring a blanket or chair for seating!

WJHG Chapter Chat April 28 at 2 p.m. CT

Join Jessica Foster from WJHG News Channel 7 to discuss our monthly read! Follow Facebook and WJHG for the title of the month. Refreshments provided. Extra copies of the monthly title are provided by the Bay County Public Library Foundation.



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We Love Snakes!



By HELEN PETRE

I volunteer at the E.O.Wilson Biophilia Center, helping Turtle Bob teach fourth and seventh-graders about snakes and turtles. When the students enter the Turtle Bob room, some are terrified. By the time the class is over, Turtle Bob has convinced even the most uneducated that snakes are our friends. All the snakes the students hold are non-venomous and accustomed to being held. We teach the students that they will encounter snakes in the wild if they go outside.

Most of our snakes in the Panhandle are non-venomous, but a few, like our common cottonmouth, are venomous. Even so, if you wear shoes and keep your hands where you can see them, you will be fine. Venomous snakes do not chase you down or attack you unless you try to kill them, step on them in bare feet, or pick them up. Like bears and bobcats, give them room, do not threaten them, and you will be fine. Any snake will bite if threatened. Any human probably will, too.

Eastern cottonmouth (Agkistrodon piscivorus piscivorus)

The cottonmouth is our most common venomous snake. It swims well, lives near water, and opens its mouth when threatened. Cottonmouths sometimes shake their tails when threatened, sort of like rattlesnakes.

They are just trying to let you know they are there, and they hope you will go away. When cottonmouths are swimming, you can see their entire body on the surface of the water, unlike other water snakes.

Cottonmouths have big heads and skinny necks. They are very thick snakes with very thick tails. They look scary, but unless you step on them in bare feet or try to kill them, they will not bite. Venomous snakes use venom to subdue prey. You are not prey. You are way too big to swallow. Bites are last resorts to make you go away.

Contrary to public opinion, cottonmouths are not aggressive. I almost stepped on one wearing flip flops (which is not a good idea), and the snake just sat there with its mouth open. Yes, I was terrified, but it did not bite. Bites are very uncommon, and although they are not fun, they are very rarely fatal.

Cottonmouths are food for eagles, owls, herons, alligators, kingsnakes, and snapping turtles. They eat fish and frogs. They are important members of an ecosystem that we want to preserve.

Banded watersnake (Nerodia fasciata)

Some snakes look like venomous snakes, and they do that on purpose. The banded watersnake is a common snake that lives near water like the cottonmouth, but it is not venomous. The banded water snake hopes you will think it is a cotton-



Cottonmouth. Wikipedia.

mouth and leave it alone. Sometimes that works. The difference is that banded watersnakes have long, pointed heads (not triangular), round eyes, they do not open their mouths when threatened, and you cannot see their entire body when they swim, only their heads. They, and especially their tails, are much thinner than those of a cottonmouth. They also have dark, vertical lines on their heads that are visible in the photo below and can be seen from a safe distance.

When a banded watersnake is threatened, it flattens out its head, but don't be fooled. The head looks flat, not blocky like a cottonmouth.

Red rat snake (corn snake, oak snake) (Pantherophis guttatus)

Red and gray rat snakes are also called oak snakes and corn snakes. They look alike except some are red and some are gray, or brownish. Red corn snakes



Turtle Bob and a gray rat snake, or oak snake (Pantherophis spiloides)

are expert climbers. Some people think they look like copperheads, but copperheads are rare in the Panhandle.

Red and gray rat snakes are constrictors, but have no fear, they are way too small to strangle you. They constrict around a mouse, or other rodent when it exhales, and then it cannot inhale. It sounds terrible, but death is quick. Rat snakes are useful to control rodent populations and are beneficial to humans because rodents carry ticks and disease and spoil human food. Rat snakes live about 15 years in the wild in palmetto flatwoods and forests.

Black racers (Coluber constrictor)

Black racers, or black snakes, are probably the most common urban snake. They are active during the day, so they are often seen. Black snakes live around freshwater and under shrubs. They eat insects, frogs, and toads. They are also slightly hyperactive and large, so they tend to move quickly and scare people. They do not do well in captivity because they cannot

tolerate life in a small box.

What to do if you see a snake

Nothing. Move away. Give the animal room and take a deep breath. The snake does not want to chase you, bite you, or eat you. It wants you to go away. So go away.

There is no good reason to kill a snake, and if you try, it might not end well for you. If you have snakes in your yard, it is probably because there is food: rodents, bird seed, or pet food. Remove the rodent food and the rodents and the snakes will leave.

Snakes are assets to our environments. They eat mice, rats, and other things that we do not want around our yards. Snakes are food for owls, herons, snapping turtles, and alligators. Like all wild animals, they were here first, and despite the Adam and Eve story, they do not tell us to do bad things. They just want to be left alone to enjoy the sun and rodents. We love snakes at the Turtle Bob room, and we hope you love them in your yards and in the wild.

Helen Petre is a retired USDA biologist and college biology instructor. Turtle Bob is the turtle guy at E. O. Wilson. We both hope to share our passion for the longleaf ecosystem with all the wonderful people who live here. If you have any questions about science, nature, or the wild world of Florida's Panhandle, email petrehel@gmail.com

MOSQUITOES

continued from page 10

are notorious for transmitting disease. It is also especially important to get rid of all standing water on your property to eliminate mosquito breeding sites. If you have exhausted all your strategies and are still having mosquito problems and live in the Panama City Beach area, contact Beach Mosquito Control District. We encourage you to contact us. We will inspect, treat, and share preventive strategies with no additional cost.

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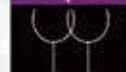


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Skill and Expectations

(Or How Golf Can Be a Cruel Mistress)

By ALAN M. WATSON,
PRESIDENT, GOLF+ PCB

I've often said that I don't think I could break par on 18 holes even if you let me tee off from the Ladies' (forward) tee box. I think I'm right. I have shot many rounds through the years in the 70s, and I've shot even par a handful of times. I once had my handicap index down under 4. However, the reality is that golf is hard. Very hard. And even with a huge tee box advantage, I would still have to chip, putt, and make shots. Sure, the driver would be pretty much eliminated and for some golfers, that should surely help improve their score. But there's more to consider. These days, my skill level is what it is, and since I rarely practice and don't play as much as I used to, my expectations have gone away too.

I'm not being self-deprecating for the fun of it. I'm just being honest. I remember one time at a Robert Trent Jones Trail course in Muscle Shoals,

Alabama, the starter said to my group that if we wanted to have fun, we should play from certain tee boxes based on how far we hit our driver, not necessarily our skill level. That course had many hazards, and driving distance kept some of those course issues at bay. If you didn't listen and you tried to outsmart or outplay the course beyond your skill, you would probably lose a lot of golf balls and have a high score as well.

Most golfers can't break 100 if they play from the appropriate tee box and play by all the legal rules of golf. That's just a fact. Most male golfers in America only drive the ball about 225 yards. That's also a fact. So if our skill levels are so poor on average, why are our expectations so darn high? Probably because the game seems so simple on its surface. Hit the ball as far as you can. Hit it again. Find the green. Find the hole. Putt it in. What could be simpler? Much like bowling 300 or hitting bull-



seyes in darts, golf puts a mental strain on us on top of the physical side of the game. We hit a bad shot and it takes us two holes to get over it, and we make more mistakes while we are still ruminating about the bad shot three holes ago. We miss a simple putt and, rather than take our time to hole out, we get frustrated, hurry and miss the comebacker as well. Oops. We have a score picked out in our mind at the beginning of the round that we are unlikely to shoot, and we hold ourselves to this high

standard, or in the case of golf, a low standard, and it's frustrating.


So, score aside, maybe there is a better way to enjoy the game. What if we had some goals or benchmarks for each round that could

give us a level of satisfaction beyond just breaking 70, 80, or 90 on the scorecard? For example, you might say I want to make 6 pars today. Or you might make a goal to get out of every bunker in one shot. Another thought would be to try and not lose more than one golf ball. Whatever the case may be, having some more attainable goals might give the round meaning when chasing a score might not.


For me, I always look at driving stats. Any round where I miss no more than 2 fairways is a good one. No three putts is another thing I certainly strive for. I always try to beat my previous round score as well and use that score as a benchmark, versus using a made-up score that I just hope to shoot.

Whatever you choose to do, I hope you enjoy the game for the game itself and not just based on score. After all, we all have a certain level of skill and we need to keep our expectations somewhere close to that. I mean, hey, it's great to dream. But if we don't have the time to practice, the money for lessons, or the God-given ability, then most of us will be around bogey golfers for life. And that's okay. I hope you get better. I really do. I hope you play your best. But let's manage our expectations and alleviate all the pressure we keep putting on ourselves and actually enjoy the round rather than worrying about what could have been.


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Popular Entertainer, Neal James, Adds To His List Of Accolades

Neal James is a nationally recognized songwriter and producer who, when not performing live in the Florida Panhandle, namely Panama City Beach, spends his time in major recording studios in locations such as Nashville and Atlanta.

He has now been recognized by Governor Andy Beshear of the great state, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, for outstanding accomplishments by producing Kentucky recording artists, singers and songwriters, etc., as well as producing music videos and television pilots featuring beautiful landscapes and locations throughout Kentucky. Because of this, and for his support and for honoring our military Veterans at all his live

shows, Governor Andy Beshear has appointed and commissioned Neal James as a Kentucky Colonel.

A Kentucky Colonel receives this commission from the Governor for services to the community, state and nation. Colonel is a title of honor awarded for noteworthy accomplishments and outstanding achievements. Kentucky Colonel is the highest award that can be given by the state. Colonel is an official document awarded by the Governor and is a lifetime commission.

Upcoming local shows:

- Saturday, December 13: Wreaths Across America, at Kent Forest Lawn 23 St., Pan-



L to R. Gregory Bethards, Kentucky Veteran of the Year. Middle. Neal James, and Heather Campbell, Senior Director of Colonel Relations.



Neal James in front of the Kentucky State Capitol.

ama City. 9 a.m. Singing our national anthem.

- Tuesday, December 16: Benefit for Hope Project. Gary's Oyster Shack, Tyndall Pkwy, Panama City, 6 p.m.

- Saturday, December 20: Veterans' Benefit at American Legion Post 375, 12507 Hwy 77 SouthPort/Panama City, 6 p.m.

La Vie en Rouge Raises \$75,000 for ECTC Education Programs

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) celebrated a vibrant evening of entertainment, cuisine and community at its annual La Vie en Rouge gala, raising more than \$75,000 to support children's education programming across the Emerald Coast.

Held at ECTC in Grand Boulevard and presented by Blue Water Oral Surgery Center, the Paris-inspired event brought together supporters, chefs, artists and community leaders. Guests enjoyed specialty cocktails,

gourmet tastings from a dozen local restaurants and live entertainment, along with a silent auction featuring experiences such as 30A staycations and a chance to perform in Mystic Pizza. "La Vie en Rouge is such a magical night for our theatre and our community," said Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director of Emerald Coast Theatre Company. "It's an experience unlike any other—our professional performers singing just steps away from an aerialist soaring overhead, while Allison

Wickey creates a live painting before your eyes. At the same time, our incredible restaurant sponsors are handcrafting sushi and mixing cocktails right in front of guests. The generosity we witnessed throughout the evening will support our educational programs, performance opportunities for young artists, outreach initiatives, along with continuing to bring the best performers, teachers, and equipment through the doors of ECTC."

Attendees enjoyed perfor-

mances throughout the evening while sampling cuisine from local favorites including Swiftly Catered, AJA 30A, Cantina Laredo, Grimaldi's Pizzeria, Kilwin's, Wine World, Ovide, Vin'tij, Beignets & Brew, Fleming's, P.F. Chang's, Fish On Seafood House, Charcuterie by Shelli and Let's Say Graze 30A. The silent auction played a key role in raising funds to expand youth theatre programs, scholarships, camps and outreach.

"La Vie en Rouge continues to grow each year thanks

to the incredible support of our community," said Anna Fisher, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Emerald Coast Theatre Company. "The funds raised will help ensure that students and families throughout our region have access to meaningful arts education and professional theatre experiences."

Proceeds will support ECTC's year-round educational programming, including after-school classes, summer camps, workshops and outreach initiatives.

Why Learning to Play an Instrument Is Your Only Hope Before the Robots Take Over

An urgent and slightly hysterical call to arms (or at least to keyboards, guitars, and drumsticks)

BY MICHAEL AUSTIN

Let's face it: Humanity is teetering on the edge of a technological revolution where robots are poised to take over everything from our jobs to our deepest secrets, like who really finished all the Oreos. But there's one battleground nobody's talking about: music. Yes, fellow humans, the time is now—before Siri and her soulless metal friends force-feed us their favorite playlists of “binary beats” and “electric hum jams”—to learn how to play an instrument.

lic overlords inevitably rise, the only way to preserve the soulful, quirky, occasionally off-key magic of human music is for every single person (yes, even you, Rick from accounting) to pick up an instrument and get jamming.

Because Robots Don't Understand the Power of the Air Guitar

To a robot, the air guitar is just wasted kinetic energy. But to us, it's a vital part of expressing the universal human condition—especially when paired

to rally the troops than with the primal power of a distorted electric guitar or the soothing sound of a ukulele that's only slightly out of tune? The robots may have algorithms, but we have heart—and questionable rhythm.

Yes, You Can Learn—And There's Still Time at Austin Music Co.

Before you panic and start Googling “how to become a robot's favorite pet,” relax. There's still hope. Learning to play an instrument is easier (and way less existentially fraught) than ever before. At Austin Music Co., the friendly, not-at-all-robotic staff can help you go from total beginner to passable

campfire guitarist, aspiring jazz saxophonist, or even interpretive triangle artist.

Picture yourself in a world where you're the one setting the musical mood, not the AI DJ spinning its latest track, “Algorithmic Lullaby, Op. 404.” Austin Music Co. offers lessons, gear, and, most importantly, the reassurance that you're doing your part to keep music gloriously, messily, beautifully human. Bonus: You get to tell everyone you're preparing for the robot apocalypse, which is sure to be a hit at parties.

Don't Let Robots Write the Human Soundtrack

Learning to play an instrument isn't just a hobby; it's a

statement. It's about preserving the very soul of humanity—or at least making sure that the next generation knows the difference between “Bohemian Rhapsody” and “Bohemian RAM-sody.” So, whether you're destined for fame or simply looking for a way to drown out the neighbor's singing Roomba, pick up an instrument today.

And remember, time is ticking. The robots are coming for our music, but if we act fast (and in rhythm), we can ensure that the soundtrack of the future has a little less circuit board and a lot more soul. Start your musical journey now at Austin Music Co.—before it's too late!



Imagine a future where you walk into a coffee shop, and instead of a human strumming a guitar softly in the corner, you're greeted by a six-foot-tall robot named XJ-9000 playing its new single, “010101 (Love Is a Circuit).” Chilling, isn't it? Robots may never have to breathe, eat, or explain to their spouses why they bought a third ukulele, but do we really want their mathematically perfect, emotionally vacant compositions to be the soundtrack of our lives?

This is precisely why learning to play an instrument is not just a fun hobby—it's a matter of survival. When our metal-

with a well-timed hair flip. And don't even get me started on the triangle. No robot will ever truly grasp the satisfaction of nailing that single, perfect “ding” in the school orchestra (or the endless bragging rights that come with it). In other words, music isn't just notes—it's nostalgia, rebellion, and, at the very least, a way to annoy your siblings.

Musical Instruments: Humanity's Last Defense

When the Singularity arrives and Alexa starts writing breakup songs about you, what will you do? Join the resistance, of course. And what better way

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April Schools Update

FROM THE DESK OF
SUPERINTENDENT MARK
MCQUEEN

April is the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize and celebrate the resilience, strength, and sacrifice of the young people who grow up in military families. In Bay County, this recognition carries special meaning. With the presence of both Tyndall Air Force Base and NSA Panama City, our schools proudly serve many students whose families dedicate their lives to protecting our nation.

Military children often navigate challenges that many of their peers never experience. Frequent relocations, chang-



ing schools, long separations from parents during deployments, and the uncertainty that can come with military life all require a remarkable level of adaptability and strength. These students learn early how

personal to me. I grew up in a military family as an “Army brat.” My father served 30 years in the United States Army as an infantry aviator, and during my K–12 years, I attended 10 different schools, including four different

to make new friends, adjust to new communities, and carry on with courage and determination.

Supporting military families is something that is deeply personal

high schools. Those experiences gave me firsthand insight into both the challenges and the resilience that come with growing up in a military household.

Later, I followed a similar path, serving 39 years in the United States Army after completing ROTC at Auburn University. Those experiences shaped my understanding of just how important stability and strong schools are for military families and their children.

That’s one reason I’m so proud that Bay District Schools has been named a Purple Star School District of Distinction, one of only five districts in Florida to receive this recognition

for our commitment to supporting military-connected students and families.

On April 17, our schools took part in Purple Up Day, when students and staff across the district wear purple to honor military children. The color purple represents all branches of the military coming together in support of these remarkable young people.

To our military children and families: thank you for your sacrifice, your strength, and the role you play in serving our nation. We are proud to support you here in Bay District Schools.

From Rams to Marlins: Arnold High School Welcomes New Principal Dr. Todd Mitchell

A new chapter is on the horizon for J.R. Arnold High School and Panama City Beach as Bay District Schools announces Dr. Robert Todd Mitchell as the school’s next principal. Mitchell

will step into the role following the retirement of longtime principal Britt Smith, bringing with him a track record of academic growth and a deep commitment to students.

Currently serving as principal of Rutherford High School, Dr. Mitchell has spent the past several years leading meaningful improvements in student achievement and school culture.

Under his leadership, Rutherford’s graduation rate climbed from 77 percent to a school-record 94.3 percent. The gains were particularly notable among key student groups, including English Language Learners, whose graduation rate rose from 45.5 percent to 90.9 percent, and students with disabilities, whose rate improved from 67.6 percent to 96.4 percent.

“Dr. Mitchell has demonstrated an ability to bring people together around a shared vision for student success,” said Bay District Schools Superintendent Mark McQueen. “He understands the importance of strong instruction, supportive relationships, and clear expectations, and I’m confident he will continue building on the great work already happening at Arnold High School.”

Dr. Mitchell has worked in education since 2009, serving as a teacher, dean, assistant principal, and principal. Colleagues describe him as a thoughtful and steady leader who believes strong schools are built on high expectations, great teaching, and meaningful connections with students and families.

Originally from Montgomery, Alabama, Mitchell holds both a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. His ties to Bay District Schools run deep. His wife, Tricia, is a



Title I teacher in the district, and the couple will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary this March. Together they have six children, four of whom graduated from Bay District Schools, and three grandchildren, with two more on the way.

Mitchell says he’s eager to join the Arnold High School community and continue the tradition of excellence at the Panama City Beach campus.

“Arnold High School has a proud tradition and a strong community behind it,” Mitchell said. “I’m honored to have the opportunity to serve as principal and look forward to working alongside the faculty, students, and families to support every student’s success and help them reach their full potential.”

While his official start date is July 1, Dr. Mitchell will begin transitioning into the role as early as April, giving him time to meet with Arnold’s students, staff, and families as he prepares to lead the Marlins into the future.

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Why Everyone Needs to Talk About Colorectal Cancer Screening at 45

BY KUNAL JANI, MD, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER, ASCENSION SACRED HEART BAY AND GULF

Last month was Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, but it's not too late to prioritize your health by scheduling a screening. Increasing access to critical testing, including colonoscopies, is one of the reasons we opened our GI clinic, Ascension Sacred Heart Gastroenterology - Bay.

We are seeing more young people diagnosed with colon cancer, including actor James Van Der Beek, best known for his leading role in the 90s television series Dawson's Creek. Van Der Beek announced his stage 3 colon cancer diagnosis in 2024 and died last month at the age of 48.

Addressing the rising rates of colorectal cancer in younger adults, the U.S. The Pre-

10 to 15 years for a polyp to develop into cancer, providing a significant window for intervention.

Rising Cases in Younger Adults: We are seeing an increase in colon and rectal cancer in patients younger than 50. In fact, about 10 percent of new colon cancer cases now occur in younger patients.

When Should You Get Screened?

Based on these trends, medical boards have updated their recommendations for first-time screenings.

Start at Age 45: For most people, colon cancer screenings should now begin at age 45.

Individual Risk Factors: If you have a personal or family history of polyps or colon cancer, inflammatory bowel disease

ing a healthy weight through regular exercise, eating a vegetable-heavy diet with less red meat and limiting alcohol consumption.

Schedule your screening

In Florida, roughly 30% of people who should be tested have not been. Our new GI clinic is here to bridge that gap.

Talk with your doctor about

colon cancer screening; making that appointment could be a life-saving decision.



ventative Services Task Force changed screening guidelines by lowering the recommended starting age for average-risk adults from 50 to 45 years old in May 2021. In Bay County, 42 people died from colon cancer in 2024, three of them between 45 and 50 years old.

Why Screening Matters

Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death for both men and women. However, it is also highly preventable.

Early Detection Saves Lives: Finding colorectal cancer early, when it is most treatable, increases the survival rate by 90 percent.

Prevention: Screenings can find and remove polyps before they ever have the chance to turn into cancer. It can take

or a genetic syndrome, you may need to start even earlier.

Follow-up: After your first colonoscopy, most people only need to be screened every 10 years.

Warning Signs and Prevention

Colorectal polyps and cancer do not always cause symptoms, especially at first. This is why regular screening is critical. However, you should talk to your doctor immediately if you experience:

- A change in bowel habits.
- Blood in or on your stool.
- Persistent abdominal pain, aches or cramps.
- Unexplained weight loss.

Beyond screenings, you can reduce your risk by maintain-



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Curing the Roommate Syndrome: How the AMITY Code Reconnects Couples



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PhD
Working professional couples and couples with children in their busiest seasons of life are susceptible to a common mar-

riage pitfall called the Roommate Syndrome. That's why I created the AMITY Code.

Couples afflicted by the Roommate Syndrome seem happy on the surface but have drifted apart emotionally. They are adept at the logistics of running their home, like paying bills, meal planning, chores, and parenting. Although their daily interactions may be civil, they focus on "to do" lists, rather than meaningful conversations.

Roommate Syndrome Causes and Effects: Couples don't drift apart because of a single explosion or a lack

of love. They start living parallel lives because they've allowed work priorities, parenting responsibilities, or hobbies to take priority over their time for romantic connections, difficult conversations, or maintaining their intimate friendship.

To remain functional, time-stressed couples fall into predictable habits and routines. And they avoid discussing issues that might lead to conflict. For these couples, it is easier to "keep the peace" than it is to work things out.

A temporary bout of Roommate Syndrome is common for

working professionals and exhausted parents. But couples should not let the symptoms go unaddressed. Extended periods of living like "married roommates" can cause partners to feel alone in their own home. They stop sharing intimate thoughts, ideas, or concerns with each other, and often seek emotional support from friends or colleagues instead. If not addressed, this can lead to affairs, permanent emotional disengagement, and divorce.

AMITY Cures the Roommate Syndrome: Couples trapped in the Roommate Syndrome should take deliberate steps to rebuild the amity between them.

In marriage, "amity" is an intentional, intimate friendship grounded in genuine goodwill for each other. As they rebuild amity, couples will replace indifference with interest, emotional detachment with empathy and warmth, transactional exchanges with meaningful conversations, and routine touch with physical intimacy.

My AMITY Code guides couples as they transition from married roommates back to romantic partners and it all begins with the Daily Connections Framework.

The Framework: AMITY for Connection

A — Attention: Show attention to your partner through your daily conduct and by setting aside time for fun and intentional reconnection. Do small things often. Include consistent, small actions in your daily life that make your partner feel noticed, valued, and supported. Institute a Date Night that suits your interests and your budget.

M — Mutual Respect: Mutual respect fosters trust and a secure connection, two integral parts of amity in marriage. To display respect, be reliable. Be fully present during conversations (get off your phone). Listen carefully to what your partner says without interruption or formulating a rebuttal. Be curious about what matters to your partner and validate their feelings. Openly express your admiration for your partner. Support their independent dreams and

goals. Speak kindly. Instead of avoiding conflict, use a 'soft-start-up' and be honest about your feelings.

I — Intentional Touch: Re-introduce small, non-sexual touch to signal affection and lead you back to physical intimacy. Start with holding hands and long hugs. Then replace the perfunctory peck on the lips with a 6-second kiss. Just six seconds is long enough to release oxytocin, the "bonding hormone," which strengthens emotional connection and deepens intimacy. A 20-second hug has the same effect.

T — Transition Talks: Create rituals of connection. In the morning, connect for at least two minutes in undistracted, face-to-face conversation. And save time for that six-second goodbye kiss. When you reunite at the end of the day, find and greet each other positively before getting tasky. Include a long hug and a six-second kiss, whenever you can. Identify a routine time to set aside 15-20 undistracted minutes for a daily de-briefing conversation.

Y — Yielding to Gratitude: Adopt an attitude of gratitude. Train yourself to focus on what your partner did right rather than what they did wrong. Explicitly thank your partner for the small things they do to break the feeling of being "unseen".

Whether you are looking to cure the Roommate Syndrome or simply want to deepen your relationship connection, you can use the AMITY Code - Daily Connections Framework to build a marriage grounded in lasting amity. I hope it works for you.

Let me know if I can help.

Jamie C. Williamson, PhD is a FL Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator and Member of the Gottman Referral Network, with a Certificate in the Science of Wellbeing and Happiness from the Harvard School of Medicine. She is an owner and partner at Amity Mediation Workshop, a mediation practice specializing in "friendly divorce" mediation and psycho-educational couples counseling. Dr. Jamie speaks frequently on relationship topics and authors the blog "Work it Out." You can find her online at amitymediationworkshop.com.

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BY BRIDGET SULLIVAN, PA-C, COASTAL SKIN SURGERY AND DERMATOLOGY

As we are approaching the summer months, it is important to use sunscreen daily, but to make sure we use it correctly. Sunscreen is the most important step in our daily routine to pre-

Ten Tips to Know About Sunscreen

vent premature aging and skin cancer. This article will go over some tips on using sunscreen properly.

1.) Apply Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher and make sure it is broad spectrum (protects against UVA and UVB)

2.) Reapply every 90 minutes

3.) Wear water-resistant and sweat-resistant sunscreen if you will be outdoors, on the beach, or swimming.

4.) Don't forget your ears, lips, tops of feet, and hands. These are common areas people miss during application and are common areas for skin cancers.



5.) Apply 15 minutes before going outside to ensure the sunscreen has absorbed into your skin.

6.) Make sure your sunscreen is not expired. Expired

sunscreen is not as effective in protecting your skin.

7.) Avoid leaving sunscreen outside in high temperatures for prolonged periods. The heat can slowly break down some of the active ingredients that protect your skin.

8.) If you have sensitive skin, rosacea, or acne-prone skin, consider purchasing mineral sunscreen over chemical sunscreen.

9.) Use enough sunscreen. For full protection, adults typically need one ounce (a shot glass full) to cover the entire body.

10.) Cloudy skies do not mean there are no UV rays. Up to 80% of UV rays can pass through clouds. Sunscreen should still be applied even on overcast beach days.

Sunscreen is one of the simplest ways to protect your skin—but small mistakes can significantly reduce its effectiveness. By applying enough, reapplying regularly, and covering often-missed areas, you can greatly reduce sun damage. Apply your sunscreen this summer to prevent skin cancer and keep your skin healthy and beautiful!



BY MICHAEL McMANUS, LCSW, LICENSED PSYCHOTHERAPIST

Most of us were never taught how to handle our own emotional pain. We were told to push through it, stay busy, or wait for it to pass. But what if those quiet moments of sadness, loneliness, or emotional heaviness are not signs of weakness — but messages worth listening to? You are not broken. You are not alone. And you do not have to keep carrying this by yourself.

You Don't Have to Feel This Way Forever

What your sadness, loneliness, and heaviness are trying to tell you — and what to do about it

Ask Yourself These Honest Questions

Before anything can change, it helps to simply get honest with yourself. Take a quiet moment and consider:

- How long have I been feeling sad, low, or emotionally flat?

- Am I withdrawing from people or activities I used to enjoy?

- Do I feel like a burden to others — or like no one truly understands me?

- Am I sleeping too much, too little, or using food, screens, or substances to cope?

- When did I last feel genuinely at peace or joyful?

If these questions hit close to home, that is not a reason to



feel worse — it is a reason to pay attention. Awareness is the very first step toward change.

What Depression and Loneliness Are Actually Saying

Depression is not a character flaw or a permanent state. It is often the mind and body's signal that something important is out

of balance — unprocessed grief, unmet needs, disconnection from purpose, or old wounds that never properly healed.

Loneliness, too, is more than missing people. It is often a deep ache for being truly seen and understood — sometimes even in a room full of others.

These feelings are not your enemy. They are invitations.

Practical Things You Can Do Right Now

You do not have to wait until things are unbearable to take action. Here are steps that genuinely help:

- Name what you feel. Simply saying 'I am sad' or 'I feel alone' begins to release the grip

those feelings have on you.

- Move your body. Even a 20-minute walk changes brain chemistry. It is not a cure, but it is real.

- Reach out to one safe person. You do not have to explain everything — just make contact.

- Limit isolation. The pull to withdraw feels protective but deepens depression. Resist it gently.

- Write it down. Journaling even a few sentences a day creates clarity and emotional release.

- Be compassionate with yourself. You would not shame a friend for struggling. Extend

Continued on page 25



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Wellness



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

You turn over for the third time, looking over at the clock. 2:13 a.m. Your heartbeat

matches second hand as a thin layer of sweat cools on your skin. You turn to the window, pulling the covers back, then lie awake for an hour replaying the day—emails, errands, the list that never ends and the sleep won't come. Nights like this are the new norm – a few hours of rest followed by morning fog, and the slow erosion of patience and energy. It feels like stress, but lately it's been more—hot flashes, night sweats, and a rest-

lessness that started when the seasons and hormones shifted.

Sound familiar? Bioidentical hormone pellets are the straightforward and lasting solution you need. At The Hormone Restoration Center we use bioidentical hormone pellets to optimize hormone levels—so nights stop sabotaging your days.

For thousands of patients, when estrogen and testosterone are where they should be, sleep is just better. These hormones

help your body make melatonin - the hormone that tells your brain it's time for bed. They support GABA - the calming brain chemical that relaxes you at night.

They also keep serotonin steady, improving mood and sleep quality. They help lower cortisol so you're not wide awake at 3 a.m. Finally, they stabilize body temperature so night sweats don't keep kicking the covers off. When hormones are low, people often describe their sleep as "fragile"—light, restless, and easy to interrupt, with lots of tossing, turning, and clock-watching.

How hormone therapy helps:

Hormone therapy in the form of pellets helps, because it delivers hormones in a slow, steady way. No daily creams. No spikes and crashes. Just consistent support that eliminates hot flashes and night sweats, helps you stay asleep and wake up rested and excited to start your day. Progesterone has a naturally calming effect that helps quiet a racing mind at bedtime. As hormones rebalance, everything else just works. Melatonin and serotonin can do their jobs again, and cortisol settles down. The result? Better nights—and better days. When you're sleeping well, your mood, focus, and energy improve, which makes it easier to wind down the next night.

What people usually notice:

Most patients feel the benefits within the first few weeks and reliable improvement by week six as hormone levels stabilize. Hormone pellet therapy eliminates hot flashes, night sweats, and hormonal swings. If sleep still isn't right after treatment,



then other issues like sleep apnea, restless legs, iron deficiency and other concerns often reveal themselves.

What a hormone consultation and follow up looks like:

Patients can expect a thorough baseline evaluation before starting therapy, including blood testing of sex hormones and key metabolic markers along with a comprehensive symptom review. The insertion procedure itself is brief, performed in the office and involves minimal downtime.

We don't set it and forget it—follow-up is integral to safe, effective care. After insertion we check labs to make sure your levels are optimal. Dosing is adjusted based on lab results and symptom relief. Our team stays in touch between visits for any questions you may have, or needed tweaks in treatment. Routine reviews ensure your plan evolves with your needs so you get steady relief without surprises.

A simple, practical plan:

We combine hormone therapy with lifestyle guidance, including supplements, so changes stick. So, if you're tired of counting sheep, call The Hormone Restoration Center. We listen, run the right tests, and build a personalized plan aimed at getting you sleeping through the night again – and so much more! Call (850) 837-1271 to schedule a consultation.



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A Minister's Message: What Does it Mean to be Born Again?



BY KERRY KNIGHT,
MINISTER, EMERALD BEACH
CHURCH OF CHRIST

conclusion that God must be with Him, a teacher who has come from God. At that point, Nicodemus was told, "You must be born again." The Pharisee did not understand Jesus, so the Lord probed deeper. Jesus said that a man must be born of two things: water and Spirit. To be born of water is a reference to water baptism. To be born of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) requires following the teachings of the Holy Spirit (God's word) and obeying the Gospel, thus receiving the Holy Spirit as a gift (Acts 2:38).

Jesus answered and said to him, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3).

Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' (John 3:5)

We have all heard the expression, "born again Christian." A Christian, by design and definition, is one who follows Christ. Is adding the words "born again" a redundancy? Let's look at the meaning of these two words. In the account of Jesus meeting with Nicodemus (John chapter 3), this Pharisee was curious about the power of Jesus to work miracles. He had come to the quick



When the Lord was giving the Great Commission to His apostles, just before He ascended back to the Father in heaven, *He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'* (Mark 16:15-

YOU DON'T

continued from page 23

that same grace inward.

When It's Time to Talk to Someone

Self-help strategies are valuable — but there are times when the weight you are carrying is simply too much to shift alone. That is not failure. That is wisdom.

Therapy gives you a private, judgment-free space to finally say the things you have been holding inside. It helps you understand why you feel the way you feel, break old patterns that no longer serve you, and build a life that genuinely feels like

yours again.

People often say they wish they had come sooner.

If any part of this article resonated with you, I invite you to take that first step.

I am Michael McManus, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and psychotherapist with 40 years of experience helping people find their way through exactly what you may be feeling right now. My practice is a warm, confidential space where real healing happens. For more, find me on Instagram @Michaelmmanustherapy, online at www.psychotherapy30A.com, or you can call/text (850) 837-0123. You deserve to feel better. Let's talk.

16).

Being "born again" is the creation of a new person. Nicodemus had to have faith and to turn from sin through repentance to the living God. Then

he was prepared to have his sins washed away in baptism, just like the apostle Paul in Acts 22:16. Being born again describes a person who has exercised their faith in obedience to

the will of God. They are now Christians, abiding in Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. (II Corinthians 5:17)

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 Musing

Sean of the South: Dispatches Del Camino

BY SEAN DIETRICH

"We have no rooms," the innkeeper says over the phone.

"None?" I say.

"We are full."

My wife and I are sitting on the ancient steps of la Iglesia de Santiago. The Church of Saint James. We are dusty and sweaty, and one of us smells like a giant armpit. (Moi.)

The stone doorway arch above us features carvings of angels and demons which date back to Roman times. Eight angels surround Christ, who is looking straight at me as though He is saying, "No room' at the inn?—Now where have I heard THAT before?"

"Please," I say to the innkeeper. "My wife and I are exhausted, there are no rooms anywhere."

"I said no room." And the woman hangs up.

It is late siesta in Spain. No traffic on the highways. No pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago. Streets are vacant. Most pilgrims have already found lodging for the evening and are already getting their complimentary massages.

At least that's what I imagine. Because we have been hunting for a room all day, and there are no vacancies for another 20



miles. It is Holy Week, and the Camino is packed with hikers. Finding a room is like trying to locate a porta john at a bluegrass festival.

All day we have been seeing pilgrims turned away from hostels. Some, we learn, have been forced to sleep outside on doorsteps.

I am still staring at the call-ended screen. "She hung up on me," I say in mock disbelief.

So, I take a moment. I need

to get my head together. I need to figure out what we should do. Otherwise we're sleeping on church steps tonight.

I wander into the church while Jamie sits on the steps watching our backpacks. I cross myself. I take a pew.

Tomorrow is Good Friday. And I am looking at a sculpture of Christ on a cross.

My entire evangelical childhood featured imagery of the crucifixion. We sang cute little Sunday school songs about it. We wore tiny crucifixes around our necks. We had paintings portraying the crucifixion. Jesus always had great abs.

But right now, in light of Good Friday, I'm thinking about what it truly means to truly die by crucifixion.

First, you're stripped nude. You are not a fitness model. You are a 30-something male who eats a lot of bread and drinks wine with every meal. And it shows in your midsection.

Then, a crowd watches as a group of 18-year-old soldiers with egos to prove kick the proverbial excrement out of you. Next, they place you on timbers.



They mutilate your hands with nails. Romans didn't always use just one nail per hand.

Then, you just hang there.

It's gross. It's raw. There are no orchestras playing an overture. No cinematic key lighting. Your cross stands erected on Main Street. Your basic human reflex is to shield your nudity. But you can't.

The boy-soldiers beneath your cross are screwing around, engaging in locker room banter, shooting craps, seeing which one will win your shoes.

You can't breathe. Your lips are turning blue. Your arms are numb, devoid of circulation. Your serratus muscles and shoulders are torn from struggling against your own body weight.

The worst part is, almost none of your friends are here. Few are brave enough to attend your last hours. Doesn't anyone care? Isn't anyone going to say goodbye? Aren't you important in anyone's life?

Meantime, there are four other guys crucified alongside you. Hollywood films, and various evangelical bumper stickers will depict only three crosses on

this fateful Friday. But in reality, there are five crosses, and you're just one of them.

In other words, you are not given special treatment. No sacred ceremony. Charleston Heston does not attend your death scene. You are just another state inmate on the roadside. No big deal.

Most people who are crucified will hang for entire days before finally dying. Crucified persons do not receive burial, either. Usually, Romans let birds pick their skeletons clean. In simple terms, you are trash.

And you know what hurts most? It's that people did this to you. Not wild animals. Not an act of nature. Fellow human beings.

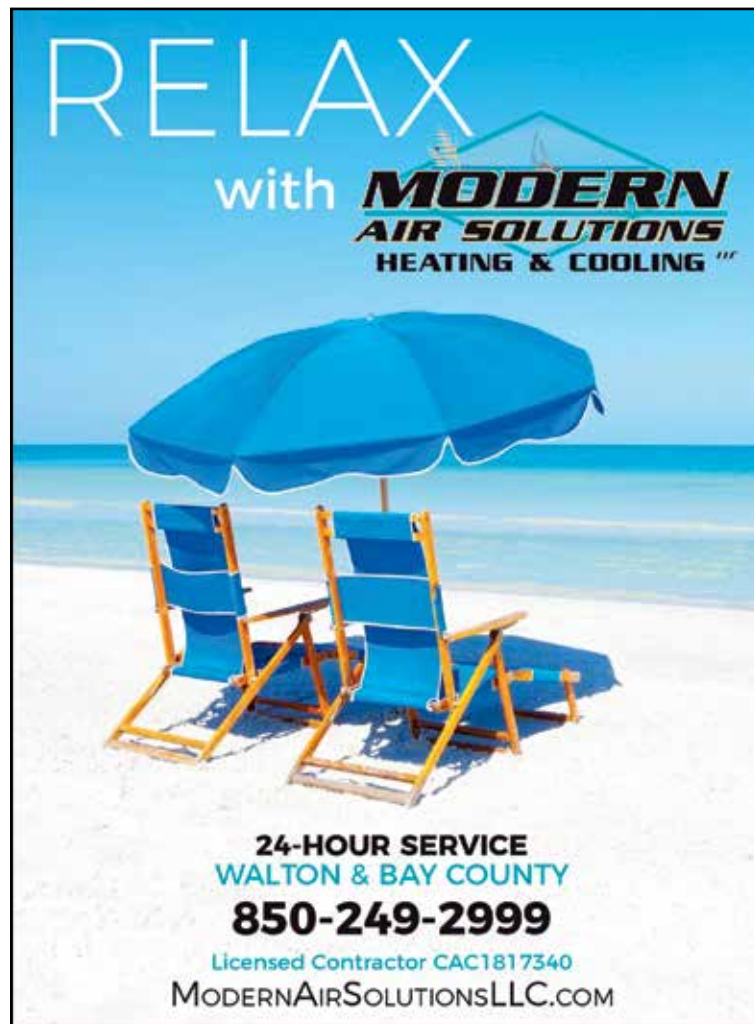
Because the harsh truth is, people are not always nice. People hate. People start wars. People hurt each other, and often for no reason. They posture, they compete, they gossip. They invent rules and dogmas so they might force others unto their will.

And in this moment of nude agony, you see all these failings of human nature beneath you. You watch it all, with human eyes. And you forgive them. For we are fools who know not what we do.

I cross myself and exit the chapel.

My wife is sitting on the steps with our bags. We still have no rooms. We are low on food. We are in a foreign country, and we have a long way left to walk. But I think, perhaps, I've just remembered why I'm walking.

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Design and Culture: **Countertops, The Details**

Countertops are a fabulous investment for any space, and surprisingly, may be one of the few products that are not inflated right now in terms of price. If you are interested in renovating or are building a new home, we are here to help and discuss all the current trends going on in the most beautiful beaches in the country with countertops. As color and pattern are the

edge profile, is by far the most common countertop edge, but we have seen a small revival of the ogee edge in baths. The mitered edge has become increasingly popular for kitchens, kitchen islands, baths, and outdoor kitchens. A mitered edge is a lovely detail and creates a bold statement in any space. If you are interested in a mitered edge, 2 inches to 2 1/2 inches is a good

6-inch to 8-inch backsplash with a stone cap shelf, are increasingly in demand. As these details have always existed, they are becoming more and more desirable as clients veer away from grout lines or hard-to-clean surfaces in their homes. The final product is stunning. When considering this application, there may be coordination and planning required to achieve some



Melanie Turner Interiors, Henderson Construction



Tassels Interiors, Panama City Beach



most important when selecting a countertop that works best with your space, there are a few small details you can consider when it comes to edges and backsplash to give your space, whether small or big, that extra special touch.

The standard edge profile, also referred to as a flat eased

range to consider.

When it comes to stone backsplash, 4" is the standard height, but different heights are becoming increasingly popular as designers push the boundaries of stone applications. Full-height backsplash, backsplash to the ceiling with floating shelves mounted on the stone, and

of these options. A fabricator will be able to assist you with any questions you might have.

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Built to Last: Why Durability Is the Real Secret to a Sustainable Home

By AUBRIE BAILEY, MARKETING COORDINATOR, FLOORING DEPOT OF PANAMA CITY

When most people think about making their homes more environmentally friendly, they picture things like recycling, switching to LED light bulbs, or using reusable grocery bags. While those habits certainly matter, one of the biggest sustainability decisions homeowners make often goes overlooked: the materials they choose for their homes.

This Earth Day, it's worth considering a simple but powerful idea — the most sustainable products in your home are the ones that are built to last.

The Problem with “Disposable” Home Products:

In today's fast-paced world, many products are designed with short life cycles. Trends change quickly, and some materials simply aren't built to hold up to everyday life. When products wear out, they end up being replaced sooner than expected,

creating more waste and more demand for new raw materials.

Flooring is a perfect example. In many homes, flooring experiences constant wear from foot traffic, pets, spills, and daily activity. If the material isn't durable enough, it may need to be replaced far sooner than homeowners originally planned.

When that happens, the old flooring often ends up in a landfill, and new materials must be manufactured, transported, and installed. All of that adds up to a larger environmental footprint.

Why Durability Matters:

Choosing durable flooring is one of the smartest long-term decisions homeowners can make — both for their home and for the environment.

Floors that are designed to withstand daily wear and tear can last for many years, sometimes even decades, with proper care. That longevity means fewer replacements, less waste, and fewer resources used over time.

Durable flooring also tends



to perform better in busy households. Whether you have kids, pets, or simply an active home, high-quality materials are built to handle real life. Instead of worrying about scratches, dents, or water damage, homeowners can enjoy their space with confidence.

In other words, durability doesn't just protect your floors — it protects your investment and reduces the need for con-

stant updates.

Quality Over Trends:

Another way to create a more sustainable home is by choosing styles that will stand the test of time.

While bold trends can be fun, flooring is one part of the home that benefits from timeless design. Neutral tones, natural textures, and classic patterns tend to remain appealing year after year. By selecting a style you'll love long-term, you're less likely to feel the need to replace it simply because trends have changed.

Pairing timeless design with durable materials is the perfect recipe for a floor that stays beautiful and functional for many years.

Proper Installation Makes a Difference:

Even the highest-quality flooring performs best when it's installed correctly. Professional installation ensures that materials are placed properly, seams are secure, and the flooring is prepared to handle

daily use.

When flooring is installed the right way from the beginning, it helps maximize the lifespan of the product. That means fewer repairs, fewer replacements, and less waste over time.

It's another reminder that sustainability often comes down to making smart decisions from the start.

Caring for Your Floors:

Maintenance also plays a role in how long flooring lasts. Simple habits like using entry mats, cleaning spills quickly, and using proper floor cleaners can go a long way in preserving the look and performance of your floors.

Taking care of your flooring doesn't just keep your home looking its best — it also helps extend the life of the materials, which is a key part of reducing environmental impact.

A Smarter Approach to Sustainability: This Earth Day, sustainability doesn't have

Continued on page 31

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Panama City Beach Reports Continued Tourism Growth Through November and December 2025

November Up 7%, December Up 10.7% as Destination Reports Nearly 8% Fiscal Year Growth

The Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) and the Bay County Tourist Development Council (TDC) announce collections for the month of November 2025 were up 7% compared to November 2024, followed by a 10.7% year-over-year increase in December 2025. The destination is now up 7.8% for the fiscal year to date, which began in October 2025, reflecting sustained momentum through the late fall and early winter months.

“Seeing visitation growth in months traditionally considered a shoulder season across Florida reaffirms our long-term tourism strategy,” shares Jayna Leach, Senior Vice President and CMO of Visit Panama City Beach. “By driving national and regional visitation year-round, we’re strengthening the economic vitality of our community and creating meaningful im-

pact for local businesses. We’re excited to build on this momentum as we welcome new and returning visitors throughout 2026 and beyond.”

The November increase reflects a diversified approach to visitation, driven by both large-scale events and lifestyle programming designed to extend the season. Sports tourism continued to contribute to the destination’s success, with major tournaments and events bringing teams and families to Panama City Beach during traditionally quieter travel weeks.

Meanwhile, seasonal initiatives like Beach Home for the Holidays—a program characterized by festive décor, community events and beachside programming—enhanced quality of life for residents while welcoming winter residents and extended-stay visitors. Together, these efforts encouraged longer



stays, repeat visitation and sustained momentum throughout the late fall and early winter months.

The December increase was further supported by holiday travel and signature winter events such as the annual Beach Ball Drop, which once again ranked among the top 10 in USA Today’s 10Best Readers’ Choice Awards for New Year’s

Eve Beach Ball Drops nationwide.

Back-to-back monthly growth and nearly 8% fiscal year-to-date gains underscore the effectiveness of the TDC and CVB’s efforts to appeal to locals, families, winter residents and extended-stay visitors.

The Tourist Development Tax is a five percent tax on short-term rentals including ho-

tels and condominiums. The tax funds are used for marketing and promotional activities led by the Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau. It is also used for beach cleaning and grooming, product improvement and beach renourishment. For more information on Panama City Beach visit www.visitpanamacitybeach.com or the Bay County Clerk website <https://tdc.baycoclerk.com/TouristTax/> to learn more about the bed tax.

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 Business


Spring Maintenance Checklist: Don't Overlook Your Community Internet

BY DON CARTER, SECUREVISION

Spring along the Emerald Coast is when communities prepare for the busy season ahead. HOAs and condo associations begin their annual maintenance routines. Landscaping is refreshed, roofs are inspected, pools reopen, and common areas are prepared for residents and guests.

These efforts protect property values and keep communities looking their best.

However, one critical system is often left off the checklist: in-

ternet service.

Today, reliable connectivity is just as essential to a community as water, electricity, and security. Residents depend on it for remote work, streaming, smart home devices, and staying connected with family and friends. In larger condominium communities and master-planned developments, where full-time residents, seasonal owners, and vacation guests all rely on the same infrastructure, connectivity issues can quickly impact hundreds of people at once.

Spring is the ideal time for boards to review their internet service before peak season arrives.

Many associations remain in contracts that automatically re-

new year after year, even as the number of connected devices inside each home continues to grow. A service level that worked five years ago may no longer meet the expectations of today's residents. An annual review gives boards the opportunity to confirm service levels, evaluate pricing, and ensure providers are delivering the performance the community expects.

Equipment should also be part of the conversation. Routers, switches, and wireless access points do not last forever. Older hardware can struggle during periods of high occupancy, particularly during spring break and summer when usage spikes dramatically. Reviewing equipment before the busy season

helps prevent slow speeds and outages when demand is highest.

Planning ahead also reduces resident complaints. When connectivity problems appear during peak occupancy, boards often face urgent decisions and limited options. Communities that evaluate their network in advance are able to address issues strategically instead of reacting under pressure.

Network structure and security are equally important. Guest networks should remain separate from resident and administrative systems, firmware should be current, and modern security practices should be in place. These details may not be visible to residents, but they play

a significant role in performance and reliability.

For Emerald Coast communities, spring preparation sets the tone for the entire year.

Adding an internet service review to the annual maintenance checklist helps boards enter the busy season with confidence, fewer disruptions, and better service for residents and guests.

SecureVision works with HOAs and large condominium communities across the Emerald Coast to evaluate contracts, network infrastructure, and managed WiFi systems. A proactive review today can prevent major connectivity issues tomorrow and help ensure residents stay connected all season long.

Things You Learn After Talking to 100 Business Owners

BY TIPP SPRADLIN

One of the best parts of my work is getting to sit down with local business owners and hear their stories. Every business is different, every path to ownership is different, and every owner has a slightly different definition of "retirement."

After enough conversations, though, you start to notice patterns. Here are a few things you only really learn after talking to a lot of people who run businesses.

1. Every owner has a "junk drawer" in their financials.

It's never actually called a

junk drawer, of course. It might show up as "miscellaneous," "supplies," or the always mysterious "other expenses." But every business has a handful of charges that make the owner pause, squint at the report, and say something like, "You know... I'm not entirely sure

what that one was."

Things happen. Receipts get fuzzy. Decisions get made quickly. It's part of running a business.

Pro tip: Start itemizing personal expenses that run through the business. Clean financials can make a big difference when it comes time for a valuation.



2. Nobody ever feels completely ready to sell.

I've rarely met an owner who wakes up one morning and confidently declares, "Today feels like the perfect day to sell my business."

Most conversations actually start with something closer to:

"I don't have to sell, but..."

That's often the best time to talk. When an owner says "I don't have to sell, but..." what they're really saying is they want data and guidance to help them make a smart decision about the future.

Pro tip: Plan 3-5 years before your retirement goal. A good financial advisor and an experienced business broker make a powerful team when it comes to building a smooth exit strategy.

3. The Vacation Metric.

You might assume the most successful owners are the ones working 80 hours a week and never taking a vacation. Those owners are certainly dedicated

Continued on next page

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Around the Beach

The City of PCB Now Accepting Applications for 2026 Citizens' Academy

The City of Panama City Beach is now accepting applications for the 2026 Citizens' Academy program. Citizens' Academy is a nine-week educational program designed to give residents an inside look at City government operations. The academy aims to engage citizens by providing in-depth information about their local government, helping them expand their knowledge and potentially prepare for future roles as board members, commissioners, or elected officials.

The program will take place on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. from June 3 through July 29. Participants will gain valuable insight into how decisions are made and be honored with the official title of "City Ambassador". They will receive a certificate and a PCB Citizens' Academy shirt upon completion.

Panama City Beach residents ages 18+ may apply online through April 24. Class size is limited to 20 participants on a first-come, first-served basis. For more details on the program and to apply online, please visit: <https://www.pcbfl.gov/427/Citizens-Academy>

Registration is Open for GCSC's 2026 Summer Youth Programs

Gulf Coast State College is excited to announce that registration for the 2026 Summer Youth Programs is open.

Through these programs, GCSC offers a variety of academic enrichment camps and activities for youth ages 4-16 who live in Bay, Gulf and Franklin counties. Each program is designed for kids who are enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn and participate in fun, hands-on and challenging activities. Programs vary to cover different topics of interest, such as environmental science, engineering, biology, robotics, technology, and unmanned vehicles.

The College will host athletic and culinary camps as well.

All summer camps will be offered at the Panama City Campus of Gulf Coast State College with camps beginning in June. Please check the specific camp information for the exact dates and topics. To register your student for GCSC Youth Programs, visit: gulfcoast.edu/youthprograms.

For additional information, please contact Katie McCurdy at kmccurdy2@gulfcoast.edu or (850) 872.3814.

Mr. William C. Cramer, Jr. Establishes \$300,000 Scholarship Preservation Fund at GCSC

Gulf Coast State College (GCSC) announces a \$300,000 gift from Mr. William C. Cramer, Jr. to establish the William C. Cramer, Jr. Scholarship Preservation Fund, ensuring continued support for hundreds of GCSC students. The contribution was made following a recent review of scholarship award allocations for the upcoming academic

year, during which the recommended scholarship payout exceeded the Foundation's endowment distribution policy. While the increased awards reflected the College's commitment to expanding student access and opportunity, the overage required additional funding to maintain longterm endowment sustainability. "Mr. Cramer's generosity ensures that our scholarship program remains strong and sustainable," said Ashlin Glatthar, Executive Director of the Gulf Coast State College Foundation. "His commitment allows us to uphold our stewardship policies while continuing to make meaningful investments in the lives of our students." Mr. Cramer's \$300,000 gift fully offsets the projected overage and preserves funding for 784 scholarship opportunities. "A scholarship forever changed my father's life. I've had the privilege of serving nearly forty years as a member of the Gulf Coast State College Foundation, watching it do the same for thousands of students," Shared Mr. Cramer.

er. "This gift supports general scholarship funding for the coming year so that every eligible student continues to receive the support they need." Gulf Coast State College extends its sincere appreciation to Mr. Cramer for his leadership and dedication to student success.

Seabreeze Jazz Festival April 23-26

Named a "Top 10 Jazz Festival in the USA" by JazzIZ Magazine and recently nominated as "Best Jazz Festival" at the Oasis Smooth Jazz Awards, the Seabreeze Jazz Festival at Aaron Bessant Park combines the top national smooth jazz artists with a full weekend of fun, sun, great beaches, and good times - all on the west end of Panama City Beach. The event now attracts over 20,000 fans from the USA, Canada, and Europe for the ultimate performance-packed weekend of jazz.



THINGS YOU LEARN

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but often exhausted.

In reality, the strongest businesses are usually the ones where the owner has built systems, trained managers, and can step away for a week without the place falling apart.

Pro tip: Don't wait until burnout to ask for help. There are many professional services designed to help businesses grow and run more efficiently.

4. Every business has a story behind how it started.

Some begin with careful planning. Others start with a moment of opportunity or des-

peration.

Many businesses along the Emerald Coast started with someone simply deciding to take a chance. A contractor who went out on their own. A couple who opened a shop after moving here for a different lifestyle. A hobby that grew into something bigger than expected.

And my personal favorite: someone who thought, "I could do this better."

Pro tip: Share your origin story on your website and social media. People love knowing the story behind the business.

5. Owners rarely give themselves enough credit.

Running a business requires resilience, creativity, and the

ability to solve problems every single day. When owners tell their story, they often downplay it. They'll say things like, "We just kept at it," or "It's nothing special."

But building something that lasts, especially in a town that changes as quickly as Panama City Beach, takes determination.

Behind every storefront, service truck, and restaurant sign in Panama City Beach is someone who took a risk and built something meaningful. Spend enough time talking with business owners and you quickly realize this town runs on their grit.

BUILT TO LAST

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to mean completely overhauling your home. Sometimes, it's simply about choosing products that are designed to last and investing in quality materials that will serve your home for years to come.

By focusing on durability, timeless style, and proper instal-

lation, homeowners can make choices that are better for both their homes and the planet.

At Flooring Depot, helping customers find long-lasting flooring solutions is part of what we do every day. Because when it comes to sustainability, the best floors aren't just beautiful — they're built to last.

If you're considering new flooring, we invite you to visit

our showroom at 1310 W 15th St in Panama City to explore our wide selection and speak with our team about options designed to stand the test of time. And right now, with 24-month special financing available, it's a great opportunity to invest in quality flooring that will serve your home for years to come.

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