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# PCB Life

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Postal Customer Local

## A Café for Cat Lovers in PCB

BY ED OFFLEY

Friends of felines in the Panama City Beach area now have a place to call their own.

The Central Purr is open for business next to Suncoast Pets at the Beachwalk Center Shopping Plaza, located at the western corner of US 98/ Front Beach Road and Navy Boulevard.

While visitors can buy coffee and cookies for snacks, the main mission of Central Purr is to provide a comfortable place where people can interact with and enjoy the resident cats, said staff member Derrol Fulghum. “They are all rescue cats.”

He reached down and picked up a male cat named Luke and gave him a hug. “He looks like a piece of rye bread.”

The spacious room is arranged with tables and chairs, and a pair of sofas, where the human visitors can sit and be jumped on, climbed over or rubbed against by the four-legged residents.

The idea for Central Purr arose last fall with a small group of Beach residents who



volunteered at Suncoast Pets to help customers who were looking to adopt cats at the store. When the adjoining storefront became vacant, Suncoast Pets owner Natalie Stokes alerted her friends. Geri Laws and Crystal Dillon quickly established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, leased the space, and prepared it for opening. Fulghum, a retired

Army journalist who had wanted to start a cat café for six years, quickly joined the group.

Central Purr can accommodate up to fifteen cats, said staffer Deb Pearson. The all-volunteer staff coordinates with area rescue agencies around Bay County and a number of volunteers who have made foster homes

for stray or abandoned cats. Once a cat has become used to being around people, it is eligible to become the next resident of Central Purr.

“We never like to say no” when a rescued cat is offered to the café, Fulghum said.

Since the organization ex-

**CENTRAL PURR**  
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## Powerade® to Title Sponsor the 2026 PCB Marathon

The Panama City Beach Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce Powerade® as the title sponsor to become the Powerade® Panama City Beach Marathon, presented by Visit Panama City Beach.

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**MARATHON**  
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Community

MARATHON

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about bringing our community together, and we can't wait to see everyone at the starting line and cheer them on throughout the race," said Paul Corbin, Sales Center Manager, Coca-Cola United.

As the Powerade® Panama City Beach Marathon boasts its twelfth year, it has brought

event. As an industry-leading brand, their commitment to quality and innovation aligns with our vision, helping us elevate the race experience here at home while extending our reach and impact across



in runners from all fifty states and four countries, as well as an overall economic impact during the shoulder season. This family-friendly event offers not only a full, Boston-qualifying marathon, but a half-marathon, 5K, and kids' fun run.

"We're proud to welcome Powerade® as a long-term partner and greatly appreciate their support of this signature

the running community nationwide," said Kristopher McLane, President/CEO of the Panama City Beach Chamber.

By popular demand, this year the event will add 100 additional spots, jumping from 1,700 to 1,800 runners. For more information about this race, or to register to run, visit pcbmarathon.com.

CENTRAL PURR

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clusively relies on donations, Central Purr charges visitors a modest fee to hang out with the cats: \$5 for 30 minutes, \$10 for an hour, and unlimited visiting for \$30 per month. Reservations can be booked at the café website, www.centralpurrpcb.com.

But what Fulghum, Pearson and the other volunteers really want are for their cats to find a forever home. "All of the cats are eligible for adoption," Fulghum said.

In the first three weeks of operation after a soft launch on March 29, the café has been fully booked during its current hours of 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Fridays through Sundays, he said. "We have already had seven cats adopted by people who came to visit."

Central Purr is also hoping to expand its volunteer staff.

To celebrate its formal grand opening on Saturday, May 9, Central Purr and Suncoast Pets will hold a "Pets Gone Wild" festival with vendors and giveaways. The event will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



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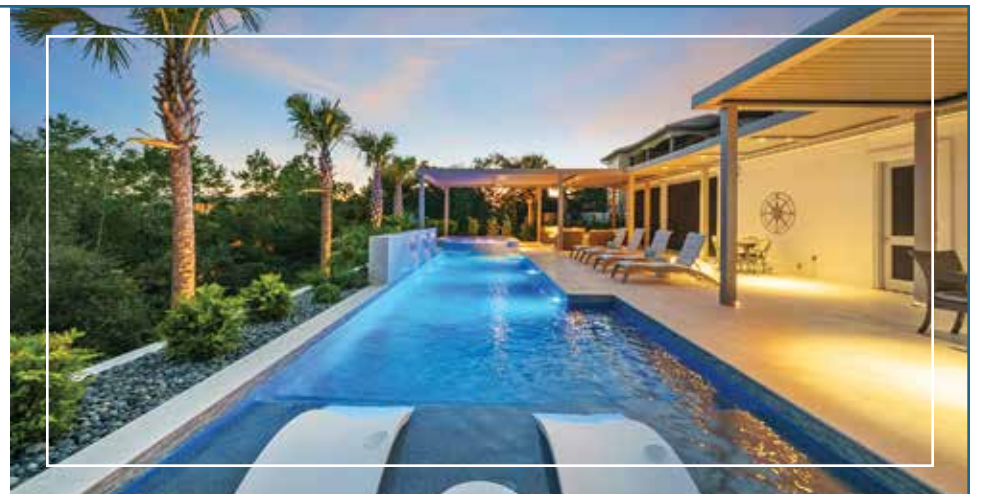
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# Duck Habitat in the Middle of Panama City

BY CANDIS HARBISON

Yes, we can still see wildlife right in town if we make room for it. Bay County Conservancy (BCC), the local land trust, owns a 27-acre wetland called King Family Preserve that is right in the middle of one of the busiest commercial areas of Panama City. Otters, beavers, hawks, owls, and many other birds have been seen there. In order to increase the number of beautiful Wood Ducks living at this swamp, Dr. Joe Bob Harbison donated two nesting boxes, complete with predator guards, which were installed by his grandsons. It is hoped that the ducks flying overhead as the boxes were being installed liked what they saw and will nest in them this year!

Bay County Conservancy is in the process of creating a "Walk on the Wild Side" at King Family Preserve. A drainage ditch bordered by an elevated levee runs across the landscape



Jake and John Parker Harbison installing two Wood Duck nest boxes at King Family Preserve.



and provides a perfect path as long as it is mowed regularly. Efforts to mark the path, add more native plants, eliminate harmful invasive plants, and erect informational signs are underway. Even before these efforts are completed, the public is invited to walk along the levee to observe nature's ever-chang-

ing panorama. The preserve is located on both sides of Wood Avenue, between 15th and 19th Streets. Parking is allowed alongside Wood Avenue.

More information about Bay County Conservancy/The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida can be found at baycountyconservancy.org.

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## Hutt Strategic Communications: Lifelong Storyteller Brings Strategic Marketing & Communications Home

Cara Hutt's first job wasn't bagging groceries or waitressing — it was writing obituaries for the News Herald while she was still in high school.

"I loved to write, so my dad suggested I apply for a summer internship," she said. "They needed help on their obituary team, so that was my focus. Eventually, they let me do other things, but I will always be grateful for that assignment because it taught me how to tell someone's story with care, accuracy, and respect."

That early experience sparked an interest in journalism — and in understanding how words shape how people are remembered and understood.

That interest eventually led her beyond Northwest Florida. Over nearly two decades, Cara built a communications career



ership messaging, and digital content strategy — often in fast-moving environments where clarity and credibility were essential.

But Northwest Florida was always home.

"I grew up here, and I care deeply about this community and its future," Cara said. "I'm so excited to see all the growth and evolution happening, and I want to support it. After years of working at

in Washington, D.C., Jacksonville, and Atlanta, working with organizations like CNN, Cox Automotive (including Kelley Blue Book and Autotrader), Chick-fil-A, Inc., and Genuine Parts Company (NAPA Auto Parts). Her work spanned journalism, media relations, lead-

scale, I wanted to bring what I'd learned to local organizations, especially small- and medium-sized businesses."

That realization led her to launch Hutt Strategic Communications, a firm dedicated to helping businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations

communicate clearly, consistently, and with purpose.

Rather than focusing only on individual tactics, Cara works with leaders to clarify the story behind their organization, including who they are, what they stand for, and where they're going. From social media and digital content to public relations and broader communications strategy, her approach blends creative instinct with disciplined planning to deliver communications that support real business goals.

Even the company's visual identity reflects Cara's philosophy. She chose her dogs, Ruby and Glory, for her logo and as brand ambassadors.

"Not only are they great co-workers, they are a constant reminder of what drives effective communications strategy," she said. "They act with instinct,

precision, adaptability, and discipline — all while keeping a constant sense of play."

Today, Hutt Strategic Communications partners with organizations of all sizes across Northwest Florida and beyond, helping them strengthen how they show up, connect, and influence in a rapidly growing region.

"I was drawn to communications because I'm naturally curious, and I love learning about people, organizations, and what makes them tick," Cara said. "Shaping an organization's story and strategy is one of the most impactful ways to help it succeed — and when local organizations succeed, the whole region benefits."

*Learn more at [huttstrategiccomms.com](http://huttstrategiccomms.com).*

## Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau Names Griff Griffiths as President & CEO

The Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) today announces the appointment

of Griff Griffiths as President and Chief Executive Officer of Visit Panama City Beach.

Working alongside the Bay County Tourist Development Council and local partners, he

will lead the organization's strategic vision, focused on driving year-round visitation, strengthening economic impact and enhancing quality of life for residents through thoughtful tourism development.

With more than four decades of experience in the hospitality industry, spanning operations, guest experience and long-term business development, Griffiths has gained a deep understanding of what drives a successful tourism economy. His career began in the hotel industry, where he spent 45 years building and managing hospitality businesses, including operating a Panama City Beach-based hotel. He also previously served on the Bay County Tourist Development Council, providing direct insight into how tourism is developed, funded and managed to support responsible growth.

Griffiths brings extensive public service experience to the role, having served as Bay County Commissioner for District 5, representing all of Panama City Beach, as well as in the Florida House of Representatives. His time in these roles positions him



to navigate the intersection of government, industry and community, and how local tourism efforts connect to broader policy decisions.

"Panama City Beach is my home; as a third-generation Bay County resident, I have a deep love for the community and am honored to join a talented team of people who truly love this destination and want to see it succeed," said Griffiths. "I look forward to advancing the important work this organization has been doing for decades."

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# PCB Chamber Spotlight



## The Mom NP

Lisa O'Neill, APRN-C, is the founder of The Mom NP, a women-centered Direct Primary Care practice redefining how healthcare is delivered to women and mothers along Florida's Emerald Coast. Built from both personal experience and clinical insight, The Mom NP was created to address a gap many women know all too well - the feeling of being rushed, dismissed, or unsupported within the traditional healthcare system.

Lisa's journey into nursing was shaped by firsthand exposure to the challenges women face when access, education, and continuity of care are lacking. As she advanced into her role as a nurse practitioner, she found herself consistently drawn to women's and maternal health - particularly the pivotal transitions of pregnancy, postpartum, and perimenopause. It was during this time that she recognized a recurring pattern: women navigating complex physical and emotional changes with limited time, fragmented care, and little ongoing support.

Rather than working within those limitations, Lisa chose to build something different.

The Mom NP operates on a Direct Primary Care model that removes many of the traditional barriers to care. For a simple monthly membership, patients receive unlimited visits, direct access via text, same or next-day appointments, and no copays or surprise bills. Care is all-inclusive - incorporating lab work with mobile draw options, point-of-care testing, and many medications - allowing women to receive comprehensive care without the added stress of navigating multiple systems or unexpected costs.

What truly sets The Mom NP apart is its emphasis on continuity and whole-person care. Services extend beyond traditional primary care to include hormone optimization, postpartum recovery, metabolic health, and integrative wellness offerings such as IV therapy, red light therapy and holistic facials. Postpartum care, in particular, is designed to fill a critical gap, offering ongoing visits, lab support, supplement guidance, postpartum nurse home visits, and coordinated access to pelvic floor therapy, mental health services, and lactation support.



Lisa describes her practice as a "village of support," a place where women are not only treated, but truly known. By creating a model that prioritizes time, access, and relationship-based

care, The Mom NP allows patients to feel heard, supported, and empowered in their health decisions.

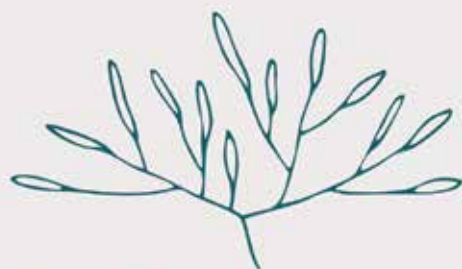
Through this innovative approach, Lisa is not only caring



for individual patients, but also strengthening families and re-shaping expectations of what women's healthcare can and should be - accessible, personalized, and deeply supportive at every stage of life.

Learn more at [www.NPforMoms.com](http://www.NPforMoms.com) or on Instagram and Facebook @TheMomNP.

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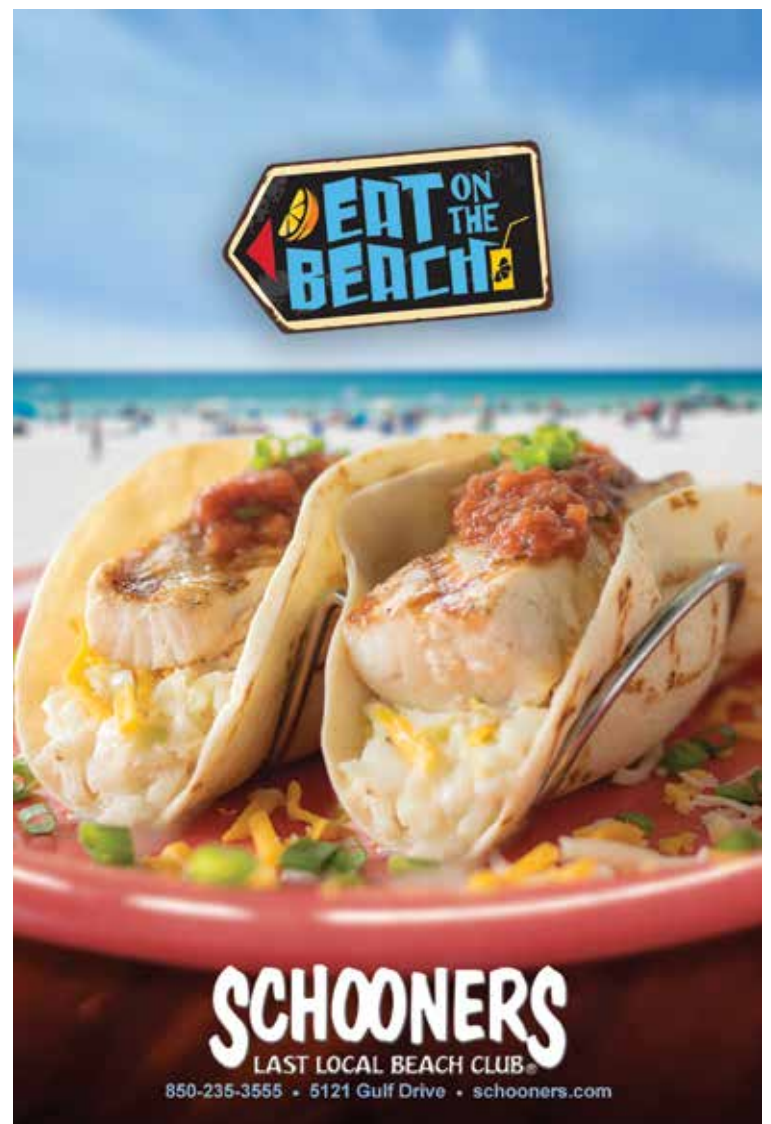


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# Ascension Sacred Heart Launches Free Mammogram Program for Uninsured Women

Initiative provides potentially life-saving breast cancer screenings to uninsured women 40 and older across Northwest Florida

Ascension Sacred Heart has launched a new free mammogram program to provide critical breast cancer screenings to uninsured women across Northwest Florida. Uninsured residents over 40 years old are eligible for the screenings. Funding for the program comes from generous donors to the Sacred Heart Foundation.



“Sacred Heart Foundation is committed to ensuring no woman goes without an essential breast health screening,” said Adrienne Maygarden, President of the Sacred Heart Foundation. “Too often, women, especially mothers and caregivers, put their own health on hold. With more than one-third of women behind on critical appointments like mammograms, the need is real. Thanks to the support of our community, we are helping

remove barriers and provide access to potentially life-saving care.”

According to the American Cancer Society, when breast cancer is detected early and remains localized, the five-year

relative survival rate is 99 percent. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in Florida, with more than 17,000 new cases diagnosed each year. But only about half of the women over

40 living in Bay, Walton, Okaloosa and Gulf Counties get an annual screening as recommended.

The free mammogram program is available to women who:

- Are 40 years of age or older
- Are uninsured
- Are seeking a preventive screening and have no current breast health symptoms
- Have seen a primary care provider within the last 2 years

The screenings are conducted at four locations in the area:

**Walton and Okaloosa County residents**

Ascension Sacred Heart Women’s Diagnostic Center - Emerald Coast in Santa Rosa Beach 850-278-3980

Ascension Sacred Heart Women’s Diagnostic Center -

Watersound Origins 850-278-3441

**Bay County residents**

Ascension Sacred Heart Women’s Diagnostic Center - Bay in Panama City 850-804-3909

**Gulf and Franklin County residents**

Ascension Sacred Heart Women’s Diagnostic Center - Gulf in Port St. Joe 850-229-5680

Women seeking a free mammogram can call their nearest location above to schedule an appointment. To find the location near you, visit [ascension.org/sacredheartmammogram](http://ascension.org/sacredheartmammogram). To support this program with your generous donations to the Sacred Heart Foundation visit [givesacredheart.org](http://givesacredheart.org).

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## ECP Thanks Community for Supporting TSA Officers During Partial Federal Shutdown

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) thanks the community for its overwhelming support of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers during the partial federal government shutdown that left many officers working without pay for 45 days.

As TSA officers at ECP continued reporting for duty during the busy Spring Break travel season, the Airport asked the community to help by donating essential items, including dry goods, baby food, pet food and gift cards for gas and personal necessities. The goal was simple: help relieve the burden on local TSA officers and their families so they could remain focused on their mission of keeping travelers safe.

The community responded with generosity and compassion.

Donations poured in from individuals, businesses and community partners across the



region. In addition to food and gift cards, several local businesses donated meals for TSA officers who continued to report for duty each day despite the financial uncertainty.

ECP also extends special thanks to Bill Cramer Chevrolet for providing a convenient local donation drop-off location. Airport staff coordinated daily pick-up and delivery

of donated items directly to TSA, helping ensure support reached those who needed it most.

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport extends its sincere thanks to every individual, business and organization that contributed to the effort and helped support ECP’s TSA team.



# The Menopause Conversation Every Woman Needs (But Rarely Gets)

BY DR. KAREN DEVORE,  
TORTOISE CLINIC

What if I told you there would be a period in your life, one that could last up to 10 years, that would fundamentally shift how your body feels and functions?

Imagine a season marked by persistent fatigue, disrupted sleep, weight gain that no longer responds the way it once did, and emotional shifts that feel unfamiliar. And that you would be expected to carry all of this

ance, this phase can shift from something reactive and uncertain to something far more stable and intentional.

Here's what I would share with every woman, regardless of where she is in her transition:

### Build Your Team

You do not have to navigate this phase alone. When you understand what is happening in your body, your decisions, and your outcomes, improve. Your health deserves the same level of support as every other area of your life.

Build a team that will explore this transition with you—one that listens, collaborates, and individualizes your care. The right

### Rethink How You Fuel Your Body

Hormonal shifts increase sensitivity to blood sugar fluctuations, driving energy instability, cravings, weight gain, and brain fog.

Focus on stability: prioritize protein and hydration, include healthy fats and limit highly processed carbohydrates. When blood sugar is stable, energy, mood, and metabolic function follow.

### Build Strength—Not Just Endurance

Muscle becomes increasingly important during this phase of life. Hormonal changes contrib-

*Continued on page 25*



while maintaining a career, supporting a family, and showing up for your community. For many women, this isn't theoretical. It is the reality of perimenopause and menopause.

For years, this transition was rarely discussed openly. That is changing, as it should. Many women are still navigating this blindly without understanding what is happening, what to expect, or what options they have to support themselves.

This is a natural progression, but it is not always easy, and most women are never taught how to navigate it. With the right understanding and guid-

support shifts this experience from reactive to intentional.

### Explore Your Options

Menopause is not a uniform experience, and your care should not be either.

Support may include nutrition and lifestyle changes, targeted supplementation, hormone therapy when appropriate, and restorative therapies. The goal is not to push through symptoms. It is to understand them and respond appropriately. If something feels off, it is worth addressing.



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# Springtime Fishing Is Great!

BY PAM ANDERSON

As the fishing season has gotten underway in March and April, we have seen some of the largest Vermilion Snapper catches we've seen in a while-and good-sized ones, too! Whether they were five, six, or 10-hour trips, our anglers on Capt. Anderson, Capt. Anderson IV, and Capt. Anderson V outdid themselves! Kudos to the captains for finding those great fishing spots.

Now there are plenty of fish left in the sea for you, so come to Grand Lagoon and choose your favorite fishing boat, whether a head-boat, charter boat, or guide boat. We are bragging about having the most expert captains in NW FL right here in Bay County. Many folks have already reserved for the first few weeks of Red Snapper season. Be sure to reserve your date soon.

This year's season for Federal For-Hire Vessels, like our head-boats and most charter boats, has increased since we underfished the NOAA quota in the 2025 season. It is sched-



uled from June 1, 12:01 a.m., through October 25 at 12 a.m. The bag limit remains two fish per person with a 16-inch minimum size limit.

The State Red Snapper season has not been set as of this writing, but check out the App: Fish Rules. It will give you the latest information if you have a private boat.

Capt. Anderson III is busy at this time of year with school field trips. It's a great opportuni-

ty for our children to experience the beauty of St. Andrews Bay, spotting some lively dolphins and seabirds, as well as learning some local history! The May schedule will increase to seven days per week, Shell Island-Dolphin trips at 1 p.m. and Sunset Dolphin Encounters at 6 p.m. This 75-year tradition never gets old. Shell Island is beautiful with its sugar-white sand, the Gulf with its pristine emerald green waters that always seem

cooking up some special events for May, so be sure to check them out on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CaptMaxsBarGrill/>. Remember that you can have your catch of the day cleaned at Anderson Seafood Market on the marina and then have it cooked at Capt. Max's!

From weddings to retirement parties to concerts to business meetings to church events, The Event Center has been found to be the best waterfront venue for special occasions. Be sure to plan your event soon, and it's not too soon to reserve a Christmas party! Check it out on the virtual tour at <https://captain-andersonseventcenter.com/>!

That Ships Store is celebrating our Nation's 250th Anniversary with an array of patriotic shirts and blouses-check them out!

And remember, it's fishing time all the time!

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# GCSC and BDS Employees Selected for Prestigious Educator at Sea Program

Gulf Coast State College (GCSC) and Bay District Schools are proud to announce that two of its employees, Crystal Wielenga and Katie McCurdy, were selected to participate in the Navy League's esteemed Educator at Sea program. They joined ten other STEM teachers from across the country for this unique oppor-

tunity aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), from March 30-April 2, 2026. The Navy League has been a valued partner in GCSC's STEM Summer Youth Programs for several years, and their involvement has been instrumental in enhancing the curriculum offered to students. The collaboration has garnered recognition in the SEAPOWER magazine, the official publication of the Navy League of the United States, showcasing the impactful educational initiatives taking place at GCSC.



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Crystal Wielenga, a Master Science Teacher in Bay District Schools as well as an instructor for the GCSC Summer STEM program, along with Katie McCurdy, GCSC's Executive Director of Community Engagement and Director of the Summer STEM programs, embarked on a journey to enrich their understanding of naval operations and the vital role of

the Sea Services. They had the incredible opportunity to fly on and off the USS Roosevelt on an Osprey. During their time aboard the USS Theodore Roosevelt, they gained first-hand experience of the ship's operations, exploring the hangar, flight deck, catapult system, jet engine machine shop, galley, medical facilities, and the

Bridge. They also had the opportunity to meet CMC Wright, CAPT Silver (XO), and share meals with Officers, Chief Petty Officers, and crew members. The experience concluded with an overnight stay in the ship's staterooms on the ship.

The Educator at Sea program aims to empower STEM educators by providing them with insights into the complexities of naval operations. This immersive experience will enable Wielenga and McCurdy to provide students with real-world examples that enhance the STEM concepts that are taught at the STEM program, demonstrating how these principles are applied in practical situations.

Katie McCurdy expressed

her enthusiasm, stating, "This incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunity allowed us to bring back invaluable experiences and knowledge to share with the youth of our community. We are

excited to share the real-world applications of STEM concepts and inspire the next generation of innovators and leaders."

Gulf Coast State College and Bay District Schools remain

dedicated to fostering innovative educational programs that prepare students for success in the ever-evolving fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.



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# A Natural Attraction to Divert Disease

BY TEAHNA STEPHENS, DIRECTOR, BEACH MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT, AND CINDY MULLA, PUBLIC RELATIONS/ EDUCATION, BEACH MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT

In the ongoing fight against mosquito-borne disease, innovation is no longer optional - it is essential. This spring, our program took a significant step forward by launching an eight-week Sterile Insect Technique (S.I.T.) trial targeting *Aedes aegypti*, one of the most medically important mosquito species in the world. *Aedes aegypti* is known for carrying dengue, chikungunya, yellow fever, and other vector-borne pathogens.

*Aedes aegypti* is an old-world mosquito, believed to have arrived in the United States on board slave ships. In the 1980s, another mosquito, the *Aedes albopictus*, entered the United States from overseas in cargo ships and outcompeted *Aedes aegypti* — pushing them south. Over the last four to five years, *Aedes aegypti* has slowly been showing up in traps set by our surveillance teams and spread-

ing throughout the Panama City Beach area.

These mosquitoes can turn into a big problem for our local area. They are urban mosquitoes that lay eggs around people's homes. The females prefer to feed on humans for their blood source and prefer to bite during the daytime. Studies have also shown that they are becoming more or more resistant to mosquito control insecticides. Mosquito control districts all over the state have been investigating other techniques to combat these potentially dangerous mosquitoes.

Another eco-friendly method is the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT). It is a **non-GMO** (Genetically Modified Organism) ecological safe pest control method that uses sterilized male mosquitoes. Why male mosquitoes? Because they do not bite or spread disease. It is the female that requires a blood meal to develop her eggs. How do the males become sterile? They go through a special machine, exposed to a low dose of radiation like an x-ray machine, and become



sterile. It is the same concept of neutering a dog to prevent puppies.

The next step is the release of sterile male mosquitoes into predetermined areas where we located *Aedes aegypti* during our routine surveillance sessions. The males will mate with wild females, producing nonviable eggs that do not hatch, reducing population density. It specifically targets disease-carrying species like *Aedes aegypti*. The Sterile Insect Technique does not kill mosquitoes, but it does prevent them from reproducing successfully.

have shown promising results, with significant reductions in *Aedes aegypti* populations. Locally, this pilot program represents an opportunity to evaluate how SIT performs under our specific environmental conditions and operational framework. This trial is more than just a short-term project; it is part of a broader movement toward sustainable, science-driven vector control. Sometimes, the most effective way to fight mosquitoes is not by increasing chemical applications, but by outsmarting their biology. By ensuring the next generation never hatches, sterile insect techniques may help redefine the future of mosquito control - one release at a time.

Beach Mosquito Control District is dedicated to keeping everyone safe through education and mosquito prevention. Panama City Beach residents remember that your tax dollars support this service. To place a service request for all your mosquito concerns, contact us at (850) 233-5030 or visit [www.pcbeachmosquito.org](http://www.pcbeachmosquito.org).

Early in April 2026, our team received its first batch of sterile male *Aedes aegypti* and initiated weekly releases as part of the trial. This effort marks a shift toward integrating advanced biological control methods into routine mosquito management. The control method of larval habitat reduction, ovitrap surveillance, and targeted treatments remains essential. The purpose of Sterile Insect treatments is to serve as a proactive layer, reducing populations before they reach levels of public health concern.

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Community

# Know Your Neighbor: Amanda Blyth

BY MICHELE HARDMAN

When I moved to Panama City Beach about a year and a half ago, I started looking for a local massage therapist. A friend had recommended Amanda Blyth over in Lynn Haven, so I scheduled an appointment. I'm so glad I did. In talking with Amanda, it quickly became apparent that she's doing exactly what she was meant to do. So she was gracious enough—after a little coaxing—to sit down with me and share some helpful info.

When Amanda was in high school, she decided she wanted to become a nurse and started making plans. From grades 9-12, she took classes and eventually got accepted into a nursing program that would continue once she graduated. But during all of this, her life took a slightly different turn. You see, Amanda had suffered from severe migraines for years. She had been taken to allergy specialists and chiropractors and had numerous tests and treatments with no improvement. One day, she was at a hair sa-

lon and was having yet another bout with a strong migraine. It just so happened that there was a massage therapist in the salon, and Amanda told him about her struggles. He began working on the base of her skull, massaging and using pressure points, and literally within about five minutes, she started noticing her headache was drastically subsiding. She was amazed! From that moment, she decided to change her career path from nursing to massage therapy. She wanted to be able to help others get the same pain relief that she had now discovered.

Many people view massage as a guilty pleasure or a luxury that only the wealthy enjoy. But there are so many benefits from it that it should be viewed instead as personal maintenance. So what are some of those benefits other than migraine relief? TMJ symptoms can be reduced. Sinus pressure can be released through facial massage. Hip, neck, and lower back pain can be lessened. It can ease depression and anxiety, lower stress hormones, and improve sleep.



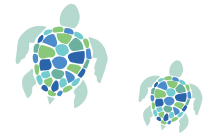
Pinched nerves in the neck will respond wonderfully to massage. Massage acts as a total

body reset. It causes your blood to flow through your system 10 times faster while releasing serotonin. It also loosens up toxins inside of us, which is why therapists strongly recommend you drink lots of water afterwards, to help flush all of that junk out of you. Our nervous system plays an important role in our health, and massage is known to help regulate that as well. Amanda prefers to work at a slightly slower pace, stretching muscles and focusing also on the fascia, which is the connective tissue surrounding the

muscles and organs. Her number one thing is listening to her clients so she understands her

needs on that particular day. The human body is so complex that your elbow might be hurting, but the actual root cause may stem from a constricted muscle in your neck. It's fascinating! And don't forget about your feet. They're a roadmap of your entire body too, with certain points correlating with many of your inner organs, such as your kidneys, colon, lungs, liver and digestive system. For example, did you know the pressure points for your sinuses are located on the tips of your toes, and your spine runs along the side of your foot? How cool!

*Massage is great for any age group, and Amanda offers sessions from 30 minutes to two hours. The best way to schedule an appointment with her is to call Faith Family Wellness in Lynn Haven at (850) 788-3120. You invest money in numerous things in your life—be sure to also invest in yourself.*



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# Land Trusts and Conservation Easements – Tools to Preserve Florida’s Past for the Future



BY JON CARROLL

Growing up in Southwest Florida, one of the most memorable trips I ever took was a canoe and camping trip through the Ten Thousand Islands. Not only has the challenge of paddling against the current in the open gulf stuck with me, but so has the pristine beauty of the preserve. Florida is filled with many such areas of natural beauty. According to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, in the 13 counties (including Bay) that border Flor-

ida’s “forgotten coast”, there are 10 aquatic preserves, 36 state parks, the Gulf Islands National Seashore and the 234,000-acre Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve.

In addition to these large-scale preservation efforts, the Bay County Conservancy – The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida, manages and owns approximately 409 acres across eight counties. The Bay County Conservancy is a land trust “dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Northwest Florida.” But what is a “land trust?”

Florida Statute § 689.071 recognizes this distinct legal structure known as a land trust. This statute allows real property to be held by a trustee, while the beneficiaries retain control over how the property is used and managed. A land trust can be used for conservation purposes when voluntary restrictions on use are included within the trust



agreement itself. For example, the trustee can be directed to prohibit subdivision, limit development, preserve timber resources, or maintain the land in its natural state.

Traditionally, an arcane legal principle called the Rule of Perpetuities (the bane of every law student’s real property class existence) limited the length of time a trust could exist to a “life in being plus 21 years.” Without getting into too many weeds, a basic land trust is not impacted by the time limits on a trust. However, even if a more complex land trust does trigger such a time constraint, the Florida legislature has significantly expanded the amount of time property can be tied up in a trust.

Land preservation efforts

may involve combining a land trust for control and management with a conservation easement. Conservation easements are authorized under Florida Statutes § 704.06, and allow landowners to permanently limit development

while retaining ownership and traditional uses of their property. Because these easements “run with the land,” they bind future owners and ensure long-term protection of the property.

A conservation easement does not mean land is forever locked away from all human use. Such an easement is designed to preserve the land’s natural or agricultural character while allowing continued traditional uses that are consistent with that goal. The statute expressly allows easements to be tailored. This means landowners can reserve rights such as hunting, fishing, timber harvesting, farming, ranching, and recreational use. In many cases, these activities are not only permitted but encouraged, so long as they are conducted in a way

that does not impair the conservation values being protected. For example, a family may continue managing timber or using the land for seasonal hunting while restricting subdivision or commercial development. The key is that the easement defines what is allowed and what is limited, striking a balance between preservation and practical, ongoing use of the property.

Land trusts and conservation easements offer Florida landowners a way to preserve the character, beauty, and function of their land while still maintaining meaningful use and control. Whether protecting a family homestead, working timberland, or sensitive coastal habitat, these tools allow individuals to ensure that the landscapes we value most remain part of Florida’s story for generations to come.

*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.*

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 Community

# Let's Get Growing: Make the Grass Greener on Your Side of the Fence



BY LAUREN GOLDSBY

We get a lot of questions at the Extension office about lawns. Most people have one and take great pride in how it looks. Irrigation is one of the most important practices for maintaining a healthy lawn. Many of the problems we see can be traced back to improper watering. Most people tend to overwater their lawns, which can lead to shallow root systems, increased weed growth, and more disease issues. Watering only when your lawn needs it can also reduce how much money you spend on water and fertilizer. It also helps keep nutrients from washing out

of the soil and into nearby waterways. Overwatering can rinse fertilizer away before plants can use it, allowing it to run into natural water systems.

There are a few key things to think about when irrigating your lawn. Three of the most important are how often to water, how much to water, and the best time of day to water.

How often you need to water depends on several factors and will change with the seasons. Grass type, shade, and soil type all play a role. Don't worry, you don't need to be a soil expert to know when to water. It is helpful, though, to learn how to spot signs that your lawn is dry. These signs tell you when it's time to turn your irrigation system on. Common signs of a dry lawn include grass blades that fold in half lengthwise. This is the plant's way of conserving water. The lawn may also appear blue-gray instead of green. One of the easiest tests is to walk across your yard. If your

footprints stay visible instead of springing back, your lawn likely needs water.

When you see these drought signs in about 30% of your yard, it is recommended to apply  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of water. Then wait until you notice signs of dry turf again before watering. This approach encourages deeper root growth and helps reduce weeds and disease problems. To know how much water your irrigation system is applying, it's a good idea to calibrate it once a year. To calibrate your irrigation system, place several small containers of the same size throughout an irrigation zone. Turn the system on and let it run for 15 minutes. Afterward, use a ruler to measure how much water collected in each container. Add those measurements together and divide by the total number of containers to find the average amount of water applied. Use this information to determine how long you need to run your sprinkler system to apply the recommended  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of water during each watering cycle.

A common misconception is that lawns should be watered in the middle of the day when temperatures are the hottest. Watering at this time can lead to water loss from evaporation. Plants also take up water less efficiently when they are already stressed by heat. The best time to water is early in the morning. Watering in the evening can increase how long moisture sits on the grass overnight, which can encourage fungal and bacterial diseases. As we ease into sum-

mer, rainfall is expected to increase. Until that happens, these guidelines can help take the guesswork out of watering your lawn and keep it healthy while conserving water.

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*ricultural Sciences, Andra Johnson, Dean. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices. Contact our office at (850) 248-8091 or email legoldsby@ufl.edu. Follow us on Facebook @bayifas and Instagram @ufifasbay.*

## PCB Public Library May

### Children's Programming

**Book Babies (Ages 0 - 2):** Tuesdays through May 26 at 10 & 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):** May 12 at 3:30 p.m. CT. Make new friends while creating cool, themed LEGO builds! \*Registration begins on the 1st of the month

**Mother's Day Card Station:** May 1 - 10. Create a handmade Mother's Day card at the library!

### Adult Programming

**Mahjong Meetup:** Tuesdays from 12 - 3 p.m. CT. Learn, play, and meet other Mahjong players!

**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.

**Beach Book Club:** Wednesday, May 6 at 10:30 a.m. CT. Title: Daisy Jones and the Six by Taylor Jenkins Reid. New members are always welcome. Email Sharon Hill at shill@nwrlls.com for more information. Extra copies of books provided by the Bay County Public Library Foundation. Check with PCB Library to see if a copy is available!

**WJHG Chapter Chat:** May 26 at 2 p.m. CT. Join Jessica Foster from WJHG News Channel 7 to discuss our monthly read. Follow the PCB Library Facebook or WJHG Chapter Chat to learn the monthly book title! Refreshments provided. Extra copies of the monthly title are provided by the Bay County Public Library Foundation.

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# Flora and Fauna of the Historic Gulf Cemetery

BY HELEN PETRE

South of 98, on 293, almost to the beach, is a cemetery on 40 acres of pristine wild land. The cemetery offers burial sites, but it is also a unique ecosystem that is rare among the housing developments that surround it. Established in 1914 by Woodrow Wilson, the Choctawhatchee sand pines and gopher tortoises have been relatively untouched by human development or fire for an exceptionally long time.

The Historic Gulf Cemetery covers 40 acres of low hills and mature trees that make up a unique ecosystem dominated by Choctawhatchee sand pine (*Pinus clausa immuginata*). Sand pines grow on entisol soils, which are about 90% sand, and strongly acidic (pH 5). The soil is low in nutrients, lacking ammonium, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, and contains only about 1% organic matter, making it perfect for sand pines, but not for most other plants. Sand is excessively drained, making the soil very dry, even when it rains.

Choctawhatchee sand pines grow only on the coast of the Gulf of America, mostly in Walton and Okaloosa counties. In fact, they only grow within one degree of latitude. Most of their preferred habitat has been lost to development, making the cemetery habitat unique.

The sand in the cemetery, and along the Gulf coast, is of marine origin and was deposited in the Pleistocene as a series of ancient shorelines, forming long, gentle hills and flat ridge tops. This is a distinct community that is strikingly different than longleaf pine communities, which are higher in elevation and have more organic matter.

Since the cemetery is relatively protected from fire, Choctawhatchee sand pines thrive. The natural ecosystem, without fire, has an open canopy with sparse understory. Turkey oak, prickly pear cactus, wildflowers, and broadleaf grasses are the predominant plant species. Lichens are present in dense clusters on the infertile soil surface.

## Lichens (*Cladonia species*)

The lichens in the cemetery are commonly called deer moss; large, puffy, gray-green fruticose lichens. They are a mutualistic relationship between a



Deer moss and Choctawhatchee sand pines in the Historic Gulf Cemetery. W. Keyes

blue-green algae and a fungus, and look like pale green, round sponges. There are no roots, so the lichens just sit on top of the ground.

## Fauna

The sand pine ecosystem provides abundant food and cover for wildlife. Wild turkey, gray squirrel, and mourning dove eat the seeds of Choctawhatchee sand pine. The open canopy provides habitat for woodpeckers, squirrels, and birds of prey. When I was there in March 2026, I saw an eagle, along with many songbirds and squirrels. There are bluebird boxes throughout the cemetery, and most are occupied.

## Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)



Gopher tortoise. W. Keyes

The gopher tortoise is an important resident of the Historic Gulf Cemetery. I saw three burrows in March 2026. Gopher tortoises are threatened by habitat destruction and need a very sandy substrate to dig burrows. They also need an open canopy in order for their preferred food, grass, to grow. About 75% of their diet is grasses. Gopher tortoises also eat wiregrass, gopher apple, blackberries, and palmet-

to berries, all present close to the burrows.

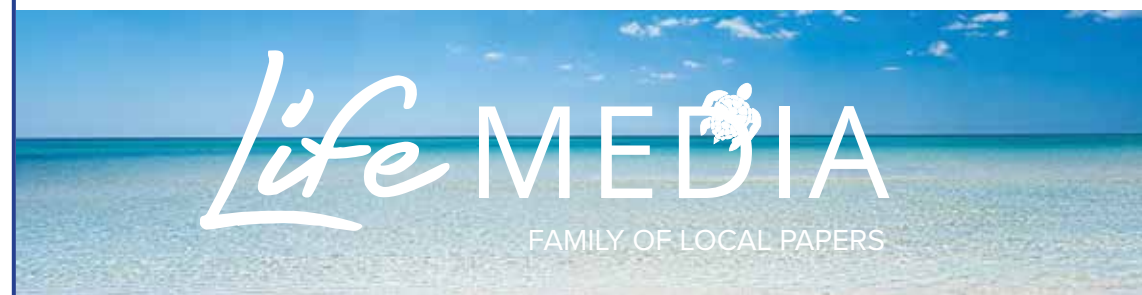
Gopher tortoises are seldom seen, as they spend 80% of their time in their burrows. Burrows average 15 feet long and six feet deep, and protect the tortoises from heat, cold, fire, and predators. The burrow provides homes for commensal species, including Florida mice, gopher frogs, and eastern indigo snakes. Gopher tortoises live for about 40 years.

The sand pine ecosystem in the cemetery is a uniquely wild environment that provides habitat and food for many species. A walk through the cemetery is peaceful and reflective, but it also allows visitors to experience a rare ecosystem in contrast to the surrounding housing and commercial developments. It is a special, protected home for some of my favorite native plants and animals. I am grateful there is a peaceful place for

them to live quietly and respectfully, among a place for humans to rest in peace.

*Helen Petre is a retired biologist enjoying her time in nature along the Gulf of America. If you have any nature questions, or suggestions for articles about our bio paradise, email [petrehelen@gmail.com](mailto:petrehelen@gmail.com). William Keyes is the President of the Board of Directors of the Historic Gulf Cemetery.*

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# Twice As Nice For Rory

By ALAN M. WATSON,  
PRESIDENT, GOLF+ PCB

To win one green jacket would be a career milestone for any professional golfer. Winning at Augusta – The Masters – the first major of the year – the one everyone dreams of is and always will be a career-defining achievement. Now Rory McIlroy has done it twice, and in back-to-back years no less. He joins only Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, and Sir Nick Faldo in this illustrious club.

Sure, he will have to pick up the tab for a second year in a row at the Champions Dinner. Sure, he couldn't put the green jacket on himself. Sure, he overcame one of the worst driving performances in major history. And on and on and on. We all feel sorry for Rory.

No, we don't. I jest. Rory is a great champion with many worldwide wins to his name. When he donned the green jacket in 2025, it was the final piece in his career grand slam. But two in a row. Well, that's just special. Rory is living in rarified air in this era of two tours (LIV

and PGA). He's beaten world number one Scottie Scheffler two years in a row at Augusta, along with a host of other recent winners like Justin Rose, Cam Young, and J.J. Spaun. Rory is doing what Rory does. Winning!

We celebrate this accomplishment not only because it's a known figure in the world of professional golf but also because the pressure was on. He clearly put a pile of it on himself to repeat, as is evidenced by the fact that he admitted he had spent quite a bit of time in Georgia playing the course weeks before the tournament. Was this an unfair advantage over the other players? Maybe. But come tournament time, everyone has to play the same course under the same conditions. And the 2026 Masters was pretty benign as weather goes. No rain, and no heavy winds. The greens were a little firm and maybe even crispy due to the lack of rain, but again, everyone plays the same course. And while many great players had their chances to take it to the course, Rory was just one shot better in the end.



PHOTO CREDIT WIKIPEDIA

Rory McIlroy wins the Masters two years in a row.

came into the correct spot on the green. Long iron play was another place where Rory had a slight edge over the field. With his amazing height, his shots don't move as much as some people's when they land. Rory could have lost it with the driver as in some stretches he was not hitting fairways; however, when it counted, his driver was solid enough, and he found ways to escape the trouble when he did go wayward.

Now the talk is three-peat, and for me, I say let's put a pin in that. Maybe it's just too early to be talking about next year. What I will wonder about though, is if Rory can win another major tournament this year in the 2026 season. Can he win enough to overtake the world number one spot? Can he win the FedEx Cup? Those are more pressing issues for 2026, but if this Rory keeps showing up to play, then the other pros are in for a long year.

Congratulations, Rory McIlroy, on your second Masters win! You deserve it.

And that's all it takes.

So how did he do it? Putting for the most part. His putter was deadly on many holes and even

when he missed, he missed close for the most part. His wedge game was solid as well. Lots of chips and full wedges that



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# WMRF Announces Expanded Celebration of Life Tributes Honoring Legendary Navy Divers with Living Artificial Reef Memorials

The Warrior Memorial Reefs Foundation, a veteran-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring fallen warriors, first responders, and their K9 partners through sustainable underwater memorials, is proud to announce a series of meaningful Celebration of Life events. These extraordinary tributes feature the deployment of cremated remains into specially designed artificial reefs in the Gulf of America, creating vibrant marine habitats that serve as eternal, visitable tributes while supporting ocean restoration.

The upcoming events highlight the legacies of distinguished Navy divers whose service advanced underwater operations, explosive ordnance disposal, and human endurance beneath the sea.

The series begins, in unison with the Man in the Sea Museum, with salt urn tributes to two icons of naval diving history:

On May 2, 2026, SEALAB Legend Bernie Campoli will be honored, the last surviving member of the historic SEALAB I underwater habitat team. A renowned underwater photographer and diver, Campoli documented the U.S. Navy's early saturation diving missions in the 1960s, capturing award-winning images that advanced man-in-the-sea programs, naval special warfare photography, and ocean exploration. His con-

tributions extended to support for NASA, Ocean Systems Inc., and Naval Special Warfare. He earned the Meritorious Civilian Service Award and remained a senior board member of the Man in the Sea Museum until his passing.

One week later, on May 9, 2026, Legion of Merit Recipient Master Diver Ronald William Mebust, a highly decorated Master Chief and Navy Master Diver whose exemplary career included leadership in underwater operations at Submarine Development Group 1 and beyond, will be placed at the foot of the Military Diver Memorial.

Bernie Campoli's event will be an all-day celebration, beginning at approximately 7:30 a.m. at the Man in the Sea Museum (17314 Panama City Beach Parkway, Panama City Beach, FL), the world's oldest military diving museum, and a fitting tribute site, given Campoli's deep personal connection as a senior board member and SEALAB pioneer. A formal escort will depart the museum around 8:30 a.m., arriving at the Point South Marina at Bay Point at approximately 9 a.m. for boat departures to the Gulf deployment sites. Due to the expected large gathering honoring this legendary figure, attendees are encouraged to arrive early.

Ronald Mebust's tribute will follow the same schedule and



coincide with the Master Diver Reunion. The Foundation warmly invites community participation through lining the escort route, joining the memorial gathering, or gathering along the harbor to sound horns and fly flags high in salute to these fallen warriors.

"These... Navy divers dedicated their lives to service under some of the most demanding conditions imaginable, all while pioneering saturation diving,

clearing ordnance, and pushing the boundaries of human capability beneath the waves," said Joe Theodorou, Founder and President of the Warrior Memorial Reefs Foundation. "Through these Celebration of Life tributes, we honor their sacrifices by creating living memorials that families and the diving community can visit for generations. At the same time, we restore marine habitats in the Gulf they loved. This work

blends remembrance, healing, marine conservation, and community connection in a truly unique way."

The Warrior Memorial Reefs Foundation operates as a 100% volunteer organization, relying entirely on donations, sponsorships, and grants to create and maintain these eco-friendly memorials at no cost to families. Previous partnerships include collaborations with the Man in the Sea Museum for the military diver memorial, underscoring the Foundation's commitment to preserving diving history, while honoring our Military Veterans and advancing ocean conservation.

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# Austin Music Co. Presents: The Real Crossroads Story!

## Why Robert Johnson Was Actually Just Out for Music Lessons (And You Should Be Too!)



By MICHAEL AUSTIN

If you're a music lover in Panama City Beach, FL, chances are you've heard the legend of Robert Johnson and that mysterious crossroads. Picture this: it's midnight, the moon is shining, and Robert Johnson is said to have struck a deal with some pretty spooky characters to become the greatest blues guitarist of all time. Well, we hate to break it to you, but that story might just be a bit of bluesy hogwash—and we're here to spill the real beans for you!

The Real Crossroads Secret: Music Lessons!

Forget the smoke and mirrors, folks. The truth is, Robert Johnson wasn't out conjuring up any supernatural deals at those crossroads. Nope, he was sneaking out for music lessons! That's right—while everyone else thought he was meeting with some dark forces, he was actually brushing up on his scales and learning how to play the guitar with his local teacher. Maybe he even had a little help with fingerpicking from an Austin Music Co. instructor—hey, you never know!

Imagine if Johnson lived today. Instead of a shadowy pact, he'd be signing up for a six-week beginner's course and picking out a shiny new guitar at Austin Music Co., right here in Panama City Beach. He'd tell his friends, "I didn't sell my soul—just bought some lessons and practiced!"

Why Music Lessons Are the Real Magic

Let's be honest: while legend has it that Johnson's fingers danced across the fretboard thanks to supernatural powers, we know the real secret is practice and great instruction. You may not wake up suddenly able to play the blues backwards, but you'll definitely impress your



friends (and maybe your cat) when you finally nail "Sweet Home Alabama" or master a slick jazz riff.

Taking music lessons isn't just for aspiring blues legends. Whether you're a total newbie, a shower-singing superstar, or someone who tried to play trumpet in the third grade and scared the dog, Austin Music Co. has teachers who can help you hit all the right notes—without any ghostly interference. And the best part? You don't have to sneak out at midnight; just show up during business hours!

Try a New Instrument: It's More Fun Than Making Deals at Midnight

At Austin Music Co., you don't need to risk your soul—just pick up an instrument and start playing. Our friendly staff will pair you with the perfect guitar, piano, ukulele, or even harmonica, so you can discover your inner bluesman (or blueswoman!). Not sure which instrument is your spirit animal? We encourage you to try them all—no crossroads required.

Our top-notch instructors are ready to help you learn, laugh, and grow as a musician. Whether you're interested in one-on-one lessons, group classes, or just want to jam with fellow music lovers, Austin Music Co. is your crossroads for musical adventure. Who knows? You might make your own legendary leap from beginner to blues legend—minus the spooky folklore.

Don't Wait for Midnight—

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Robert Johnson's real secret

wasn't magic, but music lessons—and you can start your



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**May 2026**

<b>THURSDAY 14</b> BAY VIRTUAL SCHOOL 5:00 PM Gretchen Nelson Scott Fine Arts Center at Mosley 501 Mosley Dr., Lynn Haven, FL	<b>WEDNESDAY 20</b> ARNOLD HIGH SCHOOL 7:30 PM CAVLAK STADIUM 550 Alf Coleman Road, Panama City Beach, FL
<b>FRIDAY 15</b> ROSENWALD HIGH SCHOOL 7:00 PM Tommy Oliver Stadium 351 E. 13 <sup>th</sup> Street, Panama City, FL	<b>THURSDAY 21</b> MARGARET K. LEWIS SCHOOL 10:00 AM Margaret K. Lewis School 203 N. East Avenue, Panama City, FL
<b>MONDAY 18</b> BAY HIGH SCHOOL 7:00 PM Tommy Oliver Stadium 351 E. 13 <sup>th</sup> Street, Panama City, FL	<b>THURSDAY 21</b> RUTHERFORD HIGH SCHOOL 7:00 PM Tommy Oliver Stadium 351 E. 13 <sup>th</sup> Street, Panama City, FL
<b>TUESDAY 19</b> MOSLEY HIGH SCHOOL 7:30 PM Tommy Oliver Stadium 351 E. 13 <sup>th</sup> Street, Panama City, FL	<b>FRIDAY 22</b> BOZEMAN HIGH SCHOOL 7:00 PM Tommy Oliver Stadium 351 E. 13 <sup>th</sup> Street, Panama City, FL

PUTTING THE 'A' BACK IN BAY

FROM THE DESK OF SUPERINTENDENT MARK MCQUEEN

As we turn the page from April into May, I want to take a moment to reflect on what makes Bay District Schools so special. Last month, we proudly celebrated the Month of the Military Child, honoring the more than 3,000 military-connected students in our district. Their strength, resilience, and adaptability inspire us every day, and we are grateful to be part of a community that wraps its arms around military families in such a meaningful way.

is underway, and every instructional minute counts. Consistent attendance can make a significant difference in student confidence and performance, and we encourage families to make attendance a priority as we finish the year strong. The last day of school is May 28, and we want every student to cross that finish line with success.

For our youngest learners, it's not too late to take an important first step. If you have a child who will be four years old before September 1, 2026, you may be eligible for our Voluntary Pre-K program. Bay District Schools



Now, May brings one of the most exciting seasons of the school year: graduation. Across Bay County, seniors will soon walk across the stage, marking the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. These ceremonies are more than traditions; they are powerful moments that reflect years of hard work, growth, and determination. One of those special nights will take place on Wednesday, May 20, at 7:30 p.m. at Gavlak Stadium, where Arnold High School's Class of 2026 will celebrate their achievements. This class will also be part of an exciting transition, as they help welcome Dr. Robert Todd Mitchell as Arnold's new principal next school year.

While we celebrate our graduates, it's important to remember that May is also a critical time for all students. State testing

still has VPK spots available, and this is truly one of the best investments you can make in your child's future. VPK helps build early reading and math skills, but just as importantly, it teaches children how to learn, how to listen, follow routines, make friends, and feel confident in the classroom.

And while you're planning ahead, don't wait until the last minute to register your child for kindergarten. Avoid the rush and take care of it today by visiting [www.bay.k12.fl.us](http://www.bay.k12.fl.us) to learn more.

From our youngest students just beginning their journey to our seniors preparing to take their next steps, this is a season of growth, celebration, and opportunity. Thank you for continuing to support our schools as we keep putting the "A" back in Bay.

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# Leading with Heart and Excellence: Patronis Principal Brooke Loyed Among Florida's Top Three

In a state with more than 67 counties and thousands of school leaders, one name from Bay County is rising to the top. Brooke Loyed, principal of Patronis Elementary School, has been named a Top 3 Finalist for Florida Principal of the Year, an honor that recognizes the very best in educational leadership and shines a spotlight on the excellence found within Bay District Schools.

Loyed leads Patronis with a rare and powerful balance of compassion and high expectations. Her philosophy is simple but impactful: every child

reaching 79% proficiency and Math at 75% in 2025. In several grade levels, achievement has climbed even higher, peaking at 81% proficiency. These results are driven by a strong focus on data-informed instruction, where teachers take ownership of student growth and continuously refine their practices to meet the needs of every learner.

Beyond the numbers, Loyed has created an environment that truly feels like family. She prioritizes relationships, celebrates success, and ensures that every student has opportunities to shine. One standout example

meaningful partnerships with local businesses, churches, and community organizations.

Equally important is her investment in her staff. Loyed is known for growing future lead-

ers, fostering trust, and building a culture of professional excellence that empowers educators to thrive.

As a Top 3 finalist, Brooke Loyed represents not only Pa-

tronis Elementary, but the very best of Bay District Schools, and a community committed to putting the "A" back in Bay.



should be known, supported, and challenged to succeed. That belief has helped shape a school culture where students feel valued, teachers feel empowered, and families feel connected.

Under her leadership, Patronis Elementary has earned four consecutive "A" school grades, a reflection of sustained academic excellence. Student performance continues to impress, with English Language Arts

is the school's recognition of 65 "Millionaire Readers," students who have read more than one million words in a single year, a milestone celebrated with pride across campus.

Loyed's leadership also extends beyond the classroom. She has championed support for military-connected students, helping Patronis earn its Purple Star School designation, and has strengthened the school through



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## How to Stop Cheating Before it Starts



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PhD

You may have heard the adage “cheating is a symptom of relationship problems, not the cause of it.” With notable exceptions for certain pathologies, this statement is generally accurate.

So, the time to protect your relationship from an affair is long before your partner feels the need to seek attention or support outside your relationship.

Current research shows that between 20 and 26 percent of married men cheat and between 10 and 19 percent of married women cheat. These numbers have remained consistent over the last twenty years.

The difference now is that relationship partners have a lower tolerance for cheating because attitudes about marriage have changed. As more women earned higher education and entered the workforce, married couples began looking

for their spouse to be their best friend, confidante, parenting partner, homemaking partner, wage-earning partner, AND an amazing lover.

This is a lot to ask of one person. Even strong marriage partnerships can cascade downward to a betrayal if the couple is not vigilant about turning toward each other in response to daily bids for connection and, especially, when repairing their relationship after regrettable incidents.

Couples who successfully protect their relationship from an affair understand how to bolster trust to prevent a betrayal. Trust is built on a solid, reciprocal foundation of predictability,



dependability, and faith – the three building blocks of trust. When trust is fully present in a relationship, partners perceive that they will behave in a consistently positive manner toward each other, that they will be reliable when it counts, and that they will continue to be responsive and caring to each other, which includes “turning toward” each other’s bids for attention AND not doing things that they know will hurt the other’s feelings.

Happily married couples expect each other to work on maintaining relationship trust. However, they also accept that they will let each other down from time to time. When these regrettable incidents happen, happily married couples “turn toward” each other and work together to repair the damage. This repair work involves fully processing the negative event and the feelings around it. As such, it lets the couple move past the incident, close their discussion about it, rebuild trust, and remain close.

Couples who “turn away” from each other after a regrettable incident don’t fare as well. Instead of showing empathy, regret, and forgiveness, couples who turn away from each other place blame, become defensive, and hold a grudge. As a result, the regrettable incident becomes an open sore between them and festers. This creates negative feelings that infect the couple’s reactions to other issues, and leads to flooded arguments, contempt, and “turning against.”

Sometimes the “turning away” is less obvious and involves simply avoiding any discussion of the incident. Avoiding discussion of important negative incidents may initially seem to keep the peace, but soon the unprocessed negative feelings coalesce into either (a) surprisingly negative reactions to other unrelated issues or (b) avoidance of other issues, and

eventually avoidance of the other partner, intimacy decay, and loneliness.

Both types of “turning away” lead to relationship decline, create emotional distance within the relationship, and serve to justify the conclusion by one or both people that the other is “not there for me.” This often prompts people to begin comparing their partner to real or imagined alternatives and asking, “Would I be happier with someone else?”

And here is where the cascade from unrepaired broken trust to outright betrayal often begins.

It’s a long path from “turning away” from your partner when regrettable incidents occur to actively “turning toward” others to have your needs met or to find what is now missing from your relationship. Nonetheless, the tumble to real betrayal begins when couples fail to “turn toward” each other, especially in the aftermath of a regrettable incident, large or small.

Turning toward each other to meet each other’s daily attempts to connect and especially after a regrettable incident, establishes trust and allows couples to remain close. So, then, they either never ask the question, “Would I be happier with someone else?” Or if they do, the answer is a resounding “no way.”

If you and your partner have let each other down and need to repair the trust in your relationship, summon the courage to turn toward each other and process your negative feelings with all the honesty, empathy, regret, and forgiveness required to truly put the incident behind you. Take action to stop cheating before it starts.

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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# May is Melanoma Awareness Month



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

Every year, the month of May is recognized as Melanoma Awareness Month, a time dedicated to educating the public about melanoma, a serious form of skin cancer. Melanoma

develops from melanocytes, the pigment-producing cells in the skin, and although it accounts for a smaller percentage of skin cancer cases, it causes the majority of skin cancer-related deaths. Increased awareness, early detection, and preventive measures can significantly reduce the impact of this disease.

Annual skin cancer screenings are essential for prevention and early detection. When detected and treated early (Stage 0-I), the five-year survival rate is very high, often around 99%. There are also pre-cancerous

moles that can be detected and treated before evolving into a melanoma skin cancer. During a skin cancer screening and when doing self-exams at home, you should be looking out for the ABCDEs of melanoma.

- **A – Asymmetry:** one half of the mole does not match the other
- **B – Border:** edges are irregular, scalloped, or poorly defined
- **C – Color:** uneven colors such as shades of brown, black, red, or white.
- **D – Diameter:** great-

er than about 6 mm, which is about the size of a pencil eraser

• **E – Evolving:** any change in size, shape, color, or symptoms

Other signs and symptoms include moles or growths that itch, bleed, or hurt. A mole that stands out from the rest of your moles and a mole that changes quickly.

Prevention and protection against melanoma also include sun protection and decreased UV exposure. This includes wearing an SPF 30 or higher sunscreen, avoiding peak hours

of sunlight, and wearing sun protective clothing.

Melanoma Awareness Month serves as a reminder that protecting our skin is an important part of overall health. By practicing sun safety, checking our skin for changes, and seeking medical evaluation when concerns arise, we can help reduce the burden of melanoma and improve outcomes for those affected. Awareness and prevention remain powerful tools in the fight against skin cancer.

# What Marriage Counseling Really Looks Like and Why It Works



BY MICHAEL MCMANUS,  
LCSW, PSYCHOTHERAPY 30A

In nearly four decades of sitting with couples in my office, I have yet to meet two people who stopped caring about each other overnight. What I do see, again and again, is two people who have been hurt, who have grown tired, and who have quietly stopped reaching for one another because they are not sure the reach will be met. That is usually what brings a couple through my door. Not hatred. Exhaustion.

People come to marriage counseling for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes there has been a betrayal of trust and they are trying to figure out whether the relationship can survive it. Sometimes the arguing has become so predictable and so painful that they have just stopped talking altogether. Sometimes life has simply gotten in the way. A new baby, a career change, aging parents, financial pressure. The intimacy fades gradually and one day they look at each other across the dinner table and realize they feel like strangers. Whatever brings a couple in, I have rarely met one that could not benefit from the work.

A lot of people are nervous

about starting. They worry that therapy will become a place where old wounds get reopened, or that the therapist will take sides, or that talking about their problems will only make things worse. In my experience, the opposite tends to be true. What happens in a good couples session is that two people begin to actually hear each other, often for the first time in years. Not just the words, but what is underneath them. The hurt, the longing, the fear of being left or unloved. When that kind of understanding starts to happen, something shifts.

The practical side of the work matters too. Couples learn concrete ways to communicate


that do not escalate into fights. They learn how to recognize when a conversation is starting to go sideways and how to slow it down before real damage is done. They work on rebuilding trust, on rekindling physical and emotional closeness, and on getting back on the same team when it comes to parenting, finances, and everything else that life throws at a marriage.

Research tells us that more than seventy percent of couples who commit to the process see real improvement. In my own practice, I would say that number feels about right, and I would add that the couples who do the best are almost always the ones who came in before things

got truly desperate. Most people wait far too long. If something feels off in your relationship right now, that feeling is worth paying attention to. You do not have to wait until you are standing at the edge before asking for help. The door to my office is open.

To learn more, contact Psychotherapy 30A by phone at (850) 837-0123 or visit their website, psychotherapy30a.com.

*Michael McManus, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice along the 30A/South Walton corridor with nearly 40 years of clinical experience. He works with individuals, couples, and offers concierge in-home therapy.*



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your boss/clients/students/patients. Mother's Day is for the flowers, but every day you show up — lifting groceries, carrying kids, steadying loved ones — you're asking a lot from your bones. This Women's Health Week (May 10-16), let's celebrate all women (the nurturers, the bosses, and everyone in between) by protecting those quiet workhorses. At The Hormone Restoration Center, we use bi-identical pellets as our method

of hormone therapy — here's how pellets can help keep your bones strong.

### Why Pellets — And Why Hormones — Matter

Estrogen slows the breakdown of old bone and supports new bone formation. When estrogen drops around perimenopause and menopause, bone loss can speed up, making fractures more likely over time. Testosterone and progesterone help too,



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by supporting muscle and balance so you're less likely to fall. Pellet therapy delivers bio-identical hormones under the skin in a slow, steady stream — avoiding daily highs and lows — and helps preserve bone.

Steady delivery: Pellets release hormones continuously for about 3–6 months, depending on dose and metabolism. No daily dosing to remember.

Follow-up: We monitor symptoms and labs, adjust dosing as needed.

### How Pellet Therapy Helps Bones

By keeping hormone levels steady, pellets can slow or even reverse bone loss for many women, especially when started near the time of menopause. Over time, the benefits of pellet therapy reveal themselves as improved bone density and, importantly, a lower risk of fractures. Pellets often also ease hot flashes and improve sleep and energy — benefits that help with strength and fall prevention.

### What To Expect

You won't "feel" bones strengthening day-to-day, but many patients notice fewer menopausal symptoms, better sleep, and steadier energy within weeks.

Pellets are one tool in a practical plan: individualized HRT when appropriate, adequate calcium and vitamin D, resistance and balance exercise, fall-proofing your home, and regular bone checks.

### What The Pellet Process Looks Like

Consultation: We review your health, family fracture history, lifestyle, and order baseline labs.

Placement: A brief in-office procedure places small, sterile pellets under the skin. Minimal downtime and a small dressing afterward.

*You carry everyone else — let's help your skeleton keep up. If bone health is on your mind, call The Hormone Restoration Center. We'll review your history, run the right tests, and build a personalized pellet plan so you can keep lifting, hugging, and showing up for the people who matter most. Call (850) 837-1271 to schedule a consultation.*

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# A Minister's Message: Is the Bible a Divine Volume?



By KERRY KNIGHT, MINISTER,  
EMERALD BEACH CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*  
2 Timothy 3:16

The word “inspiration” in the original Greek text, *theopneustos*, means “God breathed.” That puts the Bible into a class of its own. No other book has ever proposed its author to be of divine nature. The very reason we can take the Bible to be true, authentic, and genuine is the nature of its words. In totality, it IS the Word of God.

### The Bible Carries “Power”

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than

any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

### The Bible Carries “Purpose”

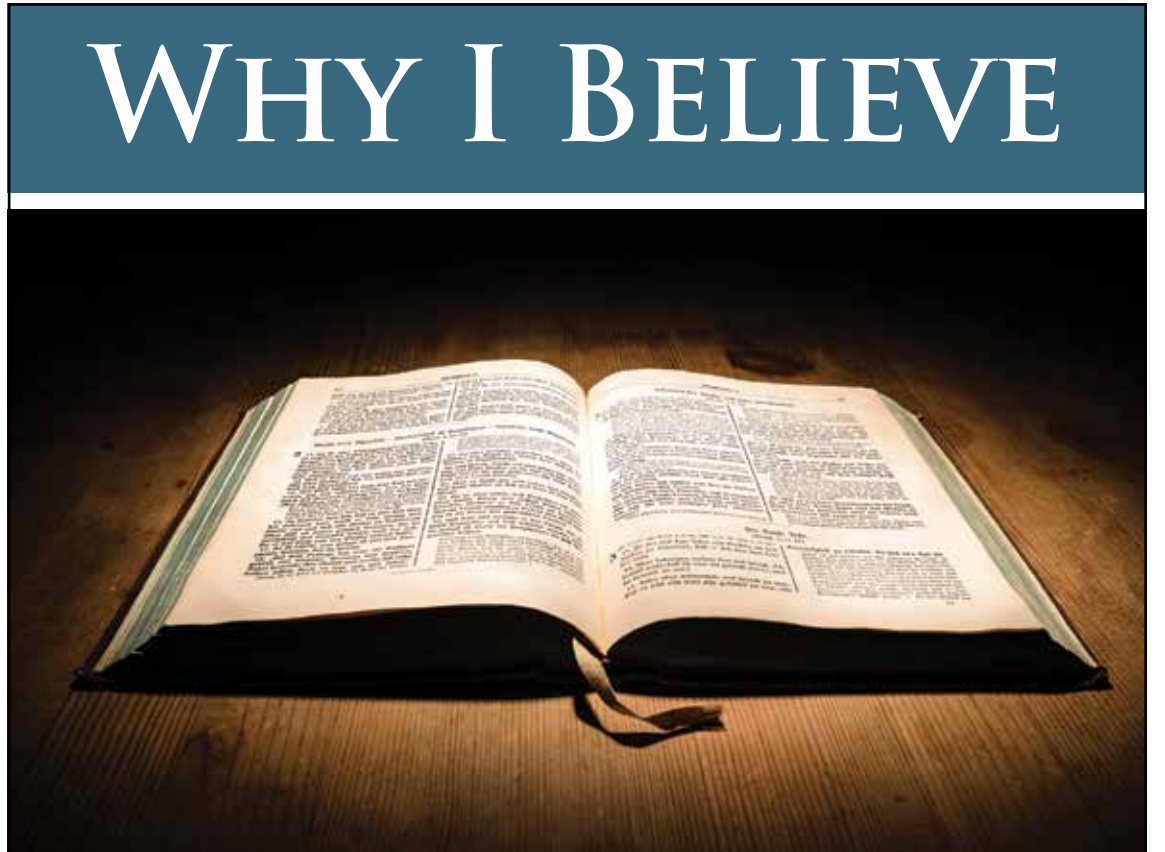
“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

### The Bible Offers “Perfection”

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who trust in Him” (Proverbs 30:5). “The law of the Lord is PERFECT, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

May we read it with respect and study it with diligence, for it IS God speaking to us.

*Emerald Beach Church of Christ is located at 301 Alf Coleman Road in Panama City Beach.*



## MENOPAUSE

*continued from page 7*

ute to muscle loss, reduced bone density, and slower metabolic function. Resistance training is one of the most effective ways to counter this.

Build up to strength training 2–4 times per week. This not only preserves muscle, but it places necessary stress on long bones, helping maintain bone density and reduce the risk and progression of osteoporosis.

### Address Sleep Directly

Sleep disruption is common and often one of the most impactful symptoms. Difficulty falling asleep, waking during the night, and non-restorative sleep affect everything from mood to metabolism. Support sleep with a consistent routine, a cool, dark environment, and mindful use of caffeine and alcohol.

For some women, declining progesterone may contribute to sleep disruption. In those cases, targeted support, including progesterone when clinically ap-

propriate, can help restore more consistent, restful sleep. Quality sleep is a cornerstone of hormonal and cognitive health.

### Support Your Nervous System

This transition affects both hormones and the brain. Increased anxiety, irritability, and emotional variability reflect real neurological shifts. Daily regulation, through movement, time outdoors, breathwork, or meaningful connection, supports resilience and emotional stability.

These are not luxuries. They are essential tools for navigating this phase well.

Menopause is not the end of your vitality. It is a significant physiological transition that deserves attention and support, not dismissal. These changes are not random. They are signals.

When you understand what your body is doing and respond accordingly, you move through this phase with greater stability, clarity, and long-term health in mind.

## Join Us for May Sermons

**Theme: The Truth Will Make You Free (John 8:32)**

**May 3:** You Shall Know The Truth

**May 10:** The Unchanging Christ

**May 17:** Freedom in Christ

**May 24:** Satan's Lies

**May 31:** The Simplicity That is in Christ

**Please be our honored guests.**

The presentations will be at 10 a.m. for each worship service.

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Bible Study 7 pm

Musing

# Sean of the South: Enough



BY SEAN DIETRICH

What if I told you that you are enough?

Moreover, what if you woke up this morning and, for the first time ever, you actually felt like enough. What if you loved yourself? And I mean really loved yourself.

Do you love yourself? Let's find out.

Are you a perfectionist? No? Yes? Have you ever asked WHY you're a perfectionist? Have you ever wondered why you strive to be flawless so that nobody will find a reason to judge you?

Or are you a people pleaser? Ever wonder why? How did you become a doormat? Why

do you fall all over yourself to ensure everyone will like you? Would showing them the real you be that bad?

Or maybe you're critical. Maybe you nitpick those you love. Heck, maybe you nitpick yourself. Maybe you look in the mirror and think, "I'm so fat and ugly."

Perhaps you see photos of yourself and react with true disgust, thinking, "I'm so old and

wrinkled. Look at all this flab underneath my neck, jiggling like Jello salad."

Maybe you don't like your nose. Or your teeth. Or the shape of your bootymus maximus.

Then again, maybe you dislike yourself in much simpler ways. Maybe you're embarrassed about your bank account. "Omigod. Is this ALL you have in savings? What a loser."

Maybe you don't like where you are in your career. What a freaking disappointment you are. You should've been MUCH further along in your field by now. Instead, you're just a supporting actor in someone else's made-for-TV drama.

Maybe you don't feel smart enough. Maybe you are socially anxious. Maybe you think you're too much of an introvert. You're a classic procrastinator. You feel invisible. You hate your hair. You wish you were prettier. Skinnier. Funnier. Happier.

Either way, your inner critic is always screaming, "You're not enough!" You've tried to shut up this blowhard for years. But it doesn't work. The inner critic just keeps talking smack.

"You're simply not enough," the critic keeps saying.

This is shame you feel. You might not be aware that it's shame, but it is. You don't feel shame because of something you've done. You feel shame over who you are.

You dislike the real you. And thus, you've formed a persona to hide the real you. And hopefully, everyone will like this persona because, God knows, you work really hard building it. You built this persona because the real

you is not worthy. The real you just isn't enough.

But...

What if I told you that you don't have to feel this way anymore? What if I told you that you ARE enough? What if I said that you are so insanely beautiful as a human being, just the way you are in this moment. Moreover, what if I am not prodigiously and majestically full of bovine ordure?

There is a way to never feel ashamed again. You will not find the answer through rituals and creeds, nor through the oppression of pious dogmas. You will not find answers in internet videos or poorly written articles on the internet—such as the one you are currently reading.

I have been ashamed of myself for my entire life. Because of childhood trauma, I became the essence of shame itself. But if I have learned one truth in my short life—if you get nothing out of what I've written you today—I hope you understand one thing, because the entirety of reality rests upon it:

The only way to love yourself is to first love your neighbor. And the only way to love your neighbor is to love the One who made them.

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# Design and Culture: **Modern Storage Solutions**

BY AMANDA KITCHENS

Are you shopping for cabinetry? There is a checklist you are going to want to have when you're ready to build or remodel your kitchen and baths. First and foremost, it's always a good idea to get a kitchen designer at the beginning of your project whether you're building a new home or rebuilding to ensure your dream results. Wood type, color or stain and door style are next on the list and then comes functionality and organization for our busy modern lives. New and exciting modern storage solutions are being created every day.

There are so many options to organize and create not only a beautiful but also functional space. Standard cabinetry will usually come with shelving and unless requested, lower cabinets will not have full depth shelves. Roll out shelves are our favorite accessory for storage in lower base cabinetry and pantries. I know most of us have found items in the back of our lower cabinets or pantries that we forgot we had or maybe expired, lol. Roll out shelves come in all different sizes and variations for organizing food items, pots and pans, Tupperware, etc. and they will change your life. No more lost items in the back of those base cabinets! That is why it is one of our favorite storage solutions. Deep drawers are another great functional option to add to your base cabinetry. Partitions, shallow roll out shelves, peg boards, and two tier cutlery trays can be added to deep drawers to add functionality and improve organization.

Now if any of you are like me, spices are one thing I need



organized in my next kitchen. My husband loves to cook, and we have an astronomical collection of spices. I can't wait to remodel and add some spice organization. There are different options depending on the layout of your kitchen and where you would like your spices to be. Vertical pull out spice racks are a good option. These can flank your range with one on each side, either in the base cabinet or you can flank your range hood




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in the upper cabinets. Another option is a cabinet with a door rack. The shelving is shallower, and racks are added to the door for options to organize. If your kitchen has a corner cabinet, turntables create functionality for those hard-to-reach areas.

Don't forget about your vanities when thinking about storage. One of our favorite storage cabinets is a vanity grooming rack. Roll out trays are another option

for bath vanities.

I've only touched on a few of the modern storage solutions available, so for more ideas visit [www.durasupreme.com/storage](http://www.durasupreme.com/storage) and [www.hardwareresources.com](http://www.hardwareresources.com) to view options and inspiration for your new kitchen available at Granite Plus. Or, you can stop by or give us a call and we will come to you and discuss your new kitchen and baths.



# The Foundation of Outdoor Living: Why Your Flooring Choice Matters More Than You Think

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

In Florida, outdoor living isn't just a seasonal luxury—it's a lifestyle. By the time May rolls around, patios turn into dining rooms, backyards become gathering spaces, and pool decks essentially become extensions of the home. While furniture, décor, and landscaping often get the spotlight, there's one foundational element that determines how successful the entire space truly is: the flooring.

Outdoor surfaces do more work than almost anything else in a home. They endure intense sun, heavy rain, high humidity, sand, foot traffic, pool water, and in many areas, salt exposure. Because of that, choosing the right material isn't just a design decision—it's a durability, safety, and long-term investment decision.

## Florida Weather Demands More from Your Floors

Florida's climate is beautiful, but it's also demanding. High humidity can cause warping and moisture damage in the wrong materials. UV exposure can fade finishes and weaken surfaces over time. Afternoon storms can create standing water that challenges both drainage and slip resistance.

This is why outdoor flooring in Florida has to be more than visually appealing—it has to be built for performance. Materials that work in other parts of the country often don't hold up the same way here.

Traditional wood decking, for example, can look beautiful initially, but it typically requires ongoing sealing and maintenance to survive Florida conditions. Even with care, it may still crack, fade, or warp over time due to moisture and heat exposure.

That's why more homeowners are shifting toward durable,



low-maintenance solutions designed specifically for coastal and high-humidity environments.

## The Rise of Durable, Low-Maintenance Materials

One of the biggest trends in outdoor living is the demand for

materials that combine beauty with resilience. Homeowners want spaces that feel elevated without constant upkeep.

Porcelain pavers are a standout option, offering the look of natural stone or wood with superior resistance to moisture, staining, and fading. They also

tend to stay cooler underfoot than many darker or denser surfaces, making them ideal for Florida heat.

Concrete pavers remain another popular choice thanks to their versatility in color, shape,

*Continued on next page*



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# Know Your Local Business: **A.E. Wright Investigations**

BY ASHLEY WRIGHT,  
INVESTIGATOR/AGENCY  
OWNER OF A.E. WRIGHT  
INVESTIGATIONS



I started my career in the Metro Atlanta, Georgia area. I was abruptly “released,” shall we say, from a job that I had left a good career job, to go to as a change in careers. Back to square one or press the reset button, as they say. So I sat down and did some self-examination and decided that being a process server was gonna be it. I got appointed in several court jurisdictions, started mak-

ing phone calls, and Peachstate Legal Support was born. Then, I met a person who suggested I do some skip tracing, locating people who had not shown up

for a court date. Boom, I was an Officer of the Courts, both Civil and Criminal. I was serving papers or taking them to jail. You don’t get a lot of dinner invites when you knock on doors with the good news that the resident is being served or better yet, going to jail.

Fast forward, and after moving to the Florida Panhandle, I drove a truck for a local company, retiring after 13 years. Sitting around one day, I realized, damn, I sure do miss the legal genealogical research, if you will, that I used to do. I took

the test, passed, then applied and was issued my Pl. License, then opened my own agency. I learned quickly that you become a counselor so you can console a client, a decipherer of facts, and spend hours behind a computer, then hours sitting in a car, not always getting the results that you wanted. It turns out, being a P.I. is not as glamorous as Tom Selleck in Magnum P.I. makes it out to be. But we pride ourselves on getting the information that is needed. It may not always be what the client wants, but we gather it up and present it to

them.

If you feel the need to hire a private investigator, call me and let’s see what I can do for you. My name is Ashley Wright, Investigator/Agency Owner of A.E. Wright Investigations, serving Panama City Beach and surrounding communities. (Investigator Lic C 3500002, Agency Lic A 3500007, Notary Commission: HH 773783.)

For more, call (850) 588-9275, email [aewrightinvestigations@gmail.com](mailto:aewrightinvestigations@gmail.com) or visit our website at [aewrightinvestigations.com](http://aewrightinvestigations.com).

## FOUNDATION

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and layout. When properly installed, they offer excellent durability and natural drainage benefits.

Even interior flooring trends are influencing outdoor design, with many homeowners prioritizing continuity between indoor and outdoor spaces for a more seamless, modern feel.

### Comfort and Safety Matter Outdoors

A beautiful outdoor space loses its appeal quickly if it isn’t comfortable or safe. In Florida, that means paying close attention to heat retention and slip resistance.

Lighter-colored surfaces help reflect sunlight and reduce heat absorption, keeping patios and pool decks more comfortable during peak summer months. Textured or slip-resistant finishes are also essential in wet areas to help prevent accidents around pools and outdoor living zones.

These practical considerations are just as important as aesthetics when creating a space that will actually be used and enjoyed year-round.

### Creating a Seamless Indoor-Outdoor Flow

One of the most popular design trends right now is blurring the line between indoor and outdoor living. Instead of treating the backyard as a separate area, homeowners are designing spaces that extend naturally from the interior.

This often starts with flooring choices. Coordinating indoor and outdoor materials creates a continuous visual flow that

makes the entire home feel larger and more connected. Large sliding glass doors or open transitions further enhance this effect, turning patios into true extensions of the living space.

The result is a home that feels more open, more functional, and better suited for entertaining and everyday living.

### Outdoor Living Is an Investment in Your Home

Outdoor upgrades are often thought of as cosmetic improvements, but in reality, they can significantly increase both prop-

erty value and quality of life. A well-designed patio, pool deck, or outdoor kitchen transforms how a home is used day to day.

Families spend more time outside. Entertaining becomes easier. Even simple moments like morning coffee or evening relaxation feel more intentional and enjoyable.

But the key to long-term satisfaction is starting with the right foundation. Choosing high-quality, durable materials from the beginning helps avoid costly repairs and replacements later on.

### Bringing Your Vision to Life

If you’re planning an outdoor upgrade, now is the perfect time to start your project. At Flooring Depot, we are currently offering 24-month financing to help make your dream space more affordable and accessible—without compromising on quality or style.

Whether you’re looking to upgrade a patio, redesign a pool deck, or create a full outdoor living space, our team can help you find materials that fit both your vision and your lifestyle.

We invite you to visit our showroom at the corner of 15th Street and Lisenby to explore flooring, tile, and outdoor living options in person. Seeing the materials up close can make all the difference when planning a space that will be part of your home for years to come.

Because when the foundation is done right, everything built on top of it becomes easier, more beautiful, and more enjoyable.

Visit [flooringdepotofpanama.com](http://flooringdepotofpanama.com).

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# Scenic Walton Strengthens Leadership with New Board Appointment and Officer Elections

Shannon Richmond joins the Board of Directors as current board members Bruce Naylor and Matt Milliron are elected to key leadership roles.

Scenic Walton is pleased to announce the appointment of Shannon Richmond, Vice President and Director of Membership Services for the Panama City Beach Chamber of Commerce, to its Board of Directors. The organization also announces the election of Bruce Naylor as Vice President and Matt Milliron as Treasurer, further strengthening its leadership during a time of continued growth and opportunity across

Walton County. Richmond brings nearly a decade of experience connecting businesses and fostering community engagement through her work with one of the most active chambers in the region. A longtime Panama City Beach resident, her passion for supporting local communities is both professional and deeply personal. Known for her energy, relationship-driven approach, and commitment to champion-

ing local businesses, Richmond adds a valuable regional perspective to Scenic Walton's mission.

"Joining Scenic Walton is an incredible opportunity to be part of something that truly shapes the future of our communities," said Richmond. "This region is so special, and I'm passionate about preserving what makes it unique while supporting thoughtful, responsible growth. I'm excited to work alongside this dedicated group to continue making a positive impact."

In addition to welcoming Richmond, Scenic Walton has elected Bruce Naylor as Vice President. A long-time DeFuniak Springs resident and owner and broker of Naylor Realty & Associates, Naylor brings more than three decades of experience in real estate, marketing, and community leadership



for SavATree in Santa Rosa Beach, Milliron brings a strong background in environmental stewardship, urban forestry, and sustainable land management. His experience spans wild-fire management with the Florida Forest Service, ecosystem restoration, and municipal arboriculture, providing Scenic Walton with valuable expertise in preserving and enhancing

natural landscapes. His deep understanding of the region, combined with his longstanding commitment to preserving its character, makes him a natural fit for this leadership role.

Also elected to a leadership position, Matt Milliron will serve as Treasurer. An ISA Certified Arborist and Branch Manager

throughout Walton County. "As Walton County continues to grow, it is more important than ever to have strong, thoughtful leadership guiding our efforts," said Leigh Moore, Executive Director of Scenic Walton. "Shannon, Bruce, and Matt each bring a unique perspective and a deep commitment to this community. Together, they strengthen our ability to advocate for projects and initiatives that protect our scenic beauty, enhance safety, and ensure a high quality of life for residents and visitors alike."

These leadership additions reflect Scenic Walton's ongoing commitment to collaboration, regional engagement, and proactive planning. By bringing together expertise in business development, real estate, and environmental stewardship, the organization is well-positioned to continue advancing initiatives that support both economic vitality and the preservation of Walton County's distinctive character.

*For more information about Scenic Walton and its initiatives, visit [www.scenicwalton.org](http://www.scenicwalton.org)*

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# If I Could Get You to the Closing Table in 90 Days... Would You Close?



BY TIPP SPRADLIN

It's a simple question, and most business owners answer with an emphatic yes.

Until I slide a purchase

agreement across the table for their signature.

That's when the hesitation shows up. Because as much as they want to sell, they're not always emotionally prepared to follow through.

Selling a business isn't just financial. It's years of work, identity, and control. Walking away takes clarity about what's next—and confidence in the decision.

It's not all that different from retiring after a long military career. There's a transition plan. Structure. Support. Small business owners don't get that built-

in support.

Most are left to figure it out in real time, and for many, it becomes a strange mix of excitement and pressure all at once.

Knowing what your business is worth is usually the first step. But it only answers half the question. If the number makes sense, then yes—you're open to selling.

The 90-day question answers something different. It tells you when you'll be ready.

That's one of the main reasons a good business broker won't rush you to market. Most of the real work happens on the

front end—sometimes years before a business is ever listed.

We reach out early on purpose and by design. Not to sell you something—but to start the process before you need to sell.

Think of it like a NASCAR pit crew boss.

Your business is the car. It's built to run, to perform, to keep making laps. Our job isn't to wait until something breaks—it's to keep everything dialed in while you're still running strong and figuring out what your next chapter will be.

We're checking the financials, tightening operations, making

small adjustments along the way, so when it's time to come off the track, you're not limping across, you're finishing exactly how you planned.

If selling is even a "someday" thought, it's worth getting ahead of it now. Reach out and let's have a real conversation about what that could look like for you.

Tiphany "Tipp" Spradlin is a Business Sales Advisor with First Choice Business Brokers of NW Florida. [Tipp.Spradlin@fcbb.com](mailto:Tipp.Spradlin@fcbb.com) or (850) 532-8882.

## Events Around the Beach

### Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally April 29 - May 3

A full-throttle event packed with hundreds of national vendors, renowned bike shows, amazing entertainment and beautiful riding along the World's Most Beautiful Beaches. The Rally hotspots are spread across four official thunder beach venues and three official partner venues. Visit [thunderbeachproductions.com](http://thunderbeachproductions.com) for details and schedule of events.

### Gulf Coast IRONMAN 70.3 May 9

Full of thrill and adventure, Visit Panama City Beach IRONMAN 70.3 Gulf Coast is also home to over 42 years of speed and beauty, setting the perfect stage for those chasing their first IRONMAN 70.3 finish line or those more experienced looking for a personal record. Visit [www.ironman.com/races/im703-gulf-coast](http://www.ironman.com/races/im703-gulf-coast) for details.

### Florida Jeep Jam May 14-16

Get ready for an exciting event with thousands of Jeep owners and hundreds of Jeep clubs in Panama City Beach. Find out what makes Florida Jeep Jam the top Jeep beach destination location across the southeast. Experience a Jeep owners dream with more than 2,000 Jeeps, and be a part of the Jeep invasion of Panama City Beach.

Put your Jeep to the chal-

lenge on our Obstacle Course, explore the natural habitats of North Florida during a Dunes Day Off-Road Excursion, check out the latest Jeep accessories – Jeep parts and Jeep gear from top vendors, cruise the sandy beaches during our Topless for Turtles Jeep Beach Krawl, and enjoy some of the many other Jeep events featured during this annual Jeep Week celebration. Visit [www.floridajeepjam.com](http://www.floridajeepjam.com).

### Gulf Coast Jam May 28–31

One of the country's most popular beach music festivals returns May 28–31 as Gulf Coast Jam brings four days of live country music to Frank Brown Park in Panama City Beach. Headliners Post Malone, Chris Stapleton, Keith Urban and Riley Green lead a lineup of more than 20 artists performing throughout the high-energy Country On The Coast™ weekend.

Fans can enjoy multiple stages, food vendors, bars and interactive fan experiences while soaking in the coastal festival atmosphere that has drawn sellout crowds of more than 30,000 in recent years. Pass options currently available include General Admission, Military, College and First Responder tickets, VIP experiences and lodging packages. Several premium viewing areas have already sold out.

Payment plans are available. Follow festival updates online. Visit [GulfCoastJam.com](http://GulfCoastJam.com).



### Panama City Beach Summer Concert Series Thursdays June 4-August 6

Hot summer nights are made for music, and the Summer Concert Series has become a beloved summertime tradition in PCB. Enjoy a FREE concert in the park every Thursday at Aaron Bessant Park Amphithe-

ater — bring your lawn chairs and blankets and enjoy the sounds of summer music; coolers, food and pets are welcome.

June 4: J and the Causeways (Modern Soul, Funk, R&B)

June 11: Goodbye to Sunshine (Bluegrass)

June 18: Dave Jordan & the NIA (Roots Rock, Americana)

June 25: Shelby Kemp and the Galbraith Sisters

July 2: Body Double (80's Rock)

July 9: The Lee Boys (Sacred Steel - 25th Anniversary Tour)

July 16: Sons of Saints (Party Rock)

July 23: Will Thompson Band (Variety)

July 30: John "Papa" Gros (NOLA Funk and R&B)

August 6: Gage Cowart Band (Country)

### Single Mingle @ Neons Bar 72 Tuesdays

Single? Perfect. Tuesday night just found you. Single Mingle is happening every Tuesday from 6–8 p.m. Come grab a drink, meet some new people and see where the night goes. First drink is on us.

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