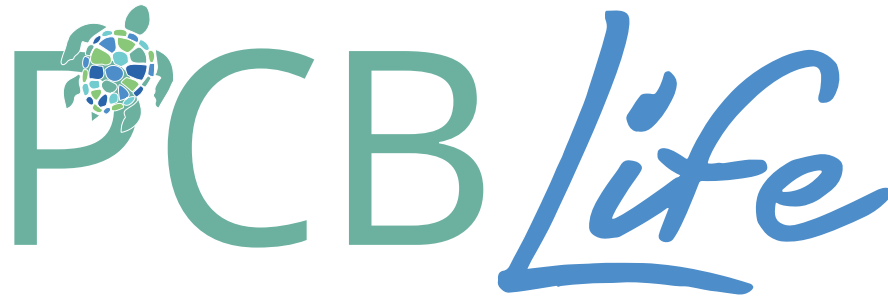




AUGUST 2026
VOL. 7, NO. 1



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Postal Customer Local

Two New Attractions for Pier Park

BY ED OFFLEY

The summer of 2026 has brought several new businesses to Panama City Beach – and a firm City Council push to ensure one particular business never comes to the city.

Pier Park will soon have expanded dining and entertainment attractions thanks to two planned projects on Panama City Beach Parkway.

The developers of Pirates Voyage are planning to build a 4.5-acre amusement park adjacent to the dinner theater that will provide “an additional entertainment facility” for its customers, the developers told City Council during a hearing for a conditional use permit on July 9.

When constructed, the Bonny Read Fun Park will include a one-story amusement arcade, an outdoor electric go cart track and an eighteen-hole miniature golf course.

No date has been announced for the groundbreaking and planned opening. Developers Pier Park Holdings LLC and WCI Holdings LLC could not be reached for contact.



Just several hundred feet to the est, construction crews are building a new Ruby Tuesday restaurant on a 1.35-acre lot at the southeast corner of Pier Park Drive and Panama City Beach Parkway. The developer of the project is JMK Development LLC of Plano, Texas.

No opening date has been announced for the restaurant.

In a separate move, City Council on July 23 took the first steps in enacting a ban on AI data centers within the city.

After a first reading, Council voted 4-0 (Councilman Mike Jarman absent) to enact Ordinance No. 1687, which will amend the land development code to ban AI data centers requiring five megawatts of electricity.

“I don’t think they [data centers] are a good use for the city’s limited land,” Mayor Stuart Tettemer told PCB Life. “They use a lot of power and create no jobs.”

Council agreed to modify the proposed ordinance to remove other “large [electrical]

PIER PARK
continued on page 2



Panama City Symphony is Busy This Fall!

A Look at the First Three Events of the 31st Season

Panama City Symphony is gearing up for a busy 31st Season, kicking off fall with our first three events. Opening Night takes place on Saturday, September 19 at the Barbara W. Nelson Fine Arts Center (Bay High School), 1200 Harrison Ave. in Panama City, featuring **Antonin Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9, “From the New World.”** This symphony is a breathtaking fusion of European tradition and

PC SYMPHONY
continued on page 2



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Community

PIER PARK

continued from page 1

load customers” from the text after Councilwoman Mary Courn noted that future projects like the new FSU Health medical center at Ward’s Creek could inadvertently fall under the ban. Council is expected to hold a second hearing on the ordinance



and formally enact it this month. The city’s move comes just weeks after the Bay County Commission and Panama City Commission enacted twelve- and six-month moratoriums, respectively, prohibiting AI data centers pending enactment of formal ordinances banning the facilities.

PC SYMPHONY

continued from page 1

the soul-stirring melodies of American spirituals and Native American folk music. From the haunting English Horn solo of the Largo—the melody that became the legendary “Goin’ Home”—to the thunderous, cinematic brass of the finale, the “New World” Symphony is a celebration of exploration, nostalgia, and the pioneering spirit. The show begins at 7 p.m.

On Friday, October 30, the Ultimate Halloween Fusion happens when the annual **Re-naissance to Rock-n-Roll** returns to Capt. Anderson’s Event Center, 5550 N. Lagoon Drive in Panama City Beach. This fan-favorite show returns

for its third year with a wicked twist, moving to October for a hauntingly immersive Halloween experience. Concertmaster Erika Sciascia, clarinetist John Divine, pianist Ani Mouradian, and bassist David Goldflies from Panama City Symphony will perform alongside local favorite, The Will Thompson Band, whose versatility in genres and styles spans Classic Rock to Motown and beyond. Soloist Charles Sciascia returns to center stage to lend his vocals and guide you through the evening as our Master of Ceremonies. The event takes place from 6 to 9 p.m.

On Saturday, November 14, patrons will experience a fiery, rhythmic journey to the Southern Hemisphere with **Astor Pi-**



azzolla’s The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires, taking place at St. Andrew Baptist Church,

3010 W. 15th Street in Panama City. This masterpiece reimagines the spirit of the tango through a sophisticated classical lens. From the brooding intensity of “Winter” to the explosive energy of “Summer,” join us in this vibrant new setting for an unforgettable evening that bridges the gap between the concert hall and the streets of Argentina. Come early and enjoy refreshments in the foyer. Showtime begins at 7 p.m.

For more information on Panama City Symphony’s upcoming 31st Season, including Core Concerts, Special Events, the Black-Tie Bella Notte Fundraiser, and our two Christmas Concerts, visit PanamaCitySymphony.org.



PCB Life

Published Monthly
Direct Mailed to
Panama City Beach
Circulation: 12,000 Households

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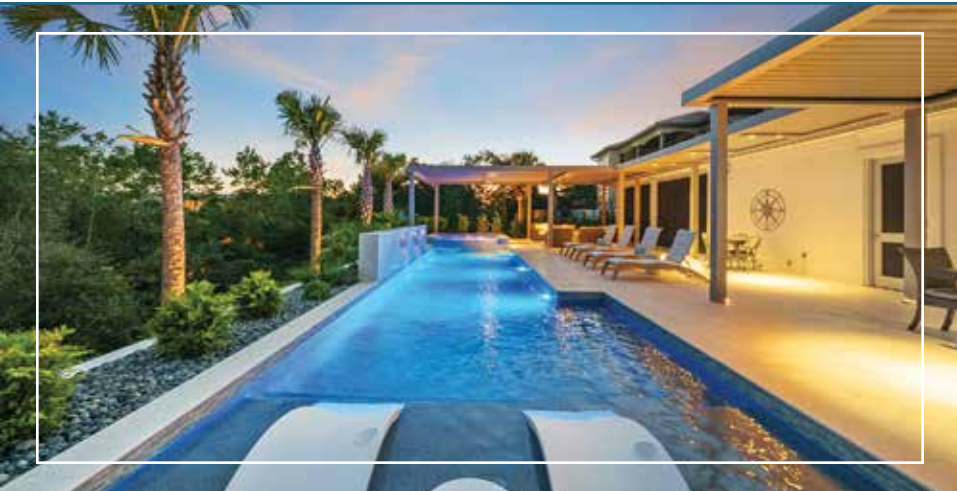
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PCB Chamber Spotlight



HOTWORX PCB: Fitness That Fits Your Life

At HOTWORX Panama City Beach, we believe fitness should be convenient, effective, and something you actually enjoy. That's why we've created a one-of-a-kind workout experience that combines infrared sauna technology with virtually instructed workouts, allowing our members to maximize results in as little as 15 minutes.

Located in Panama City Beach, HOTWORX is a 24/7 infrared fitness studio offering 12 different isometric workout options—including Hot Yoga, Pilates, Barre, Stretch, Core, Bands, and more—as well as three high-energy cardio workouts. Members also have access to our functional training open gym, giving them the perfect balance of strength, cardio, and recovery all under one roof.

Unlike traditional saunas, our patented infrared saunas gently heat the body from the inside out. This allows members to work up a sweat more efficiently while supporting calorie burn, better circulation, muscle recovery, less inflammation, and overall wellness. Whether you're a



busy professional, a parent juggling family life, an athlete looking to recover faster, or someone just beginning their fitness journey, HOTWORX was designed to help you achieve your goals on your schedule.

As a locally owned business, we are passionate about serving Panama City Beach and the surrounding communities.

Our mission extends far beyond fitness—we're committed to building relationships, supporting local schools and businesses, participating in community events, and creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels encouraged to become the healthiest version of themselves.

Our members love the flexibility of being able to work out anytime, day or night, without waiting for equipment or trying to fit into crowded class schedules. With workouts ranging from 15 to 30 minutes, it's easier than ever to stay consistent, even with a busy lifestyle.

We invite everyone in the community to experience the HOTWORX difference firsthand. Whether your goal is to lose weight, improve strength, increase energy, reduce stress, or simply feel better every day, our team is here to support you every step of the way, and your first session is completely complimentary! Use the QR code to book now.

Come see why so many people are making HOTWORX

part of their daily routine. Your first workout could be the beginning of a healthier, stronger, more energized you.

HOTWORX Panama City Beach is located in Pier Park next to Target and open 24/7 for members. Call (850) 399-

1332 or visit www.hotworx.net/studio/panamacitybeach for more information.

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Free City Pier Access for Bay County Residents in August & September

In honor of America's 250th Anniversary, the City of Panama City Beach City Council voted to approve free, all-day spectator access to the Russell-Fields City Pier for all Bay County residents from August 1 through September 30, 2026.

Residents will need to show a valid Bay County ID for entry which verifies their residential address and zip code. Eligible zip codes include: 32404, 32405, 32444, 32401, 32407, 32408, 32413, 32466,



32456, 32409, 32438, 32403, 32410.

Daily fishing passes are not included in the promotion.

The Russell-Fields City Pier is located at 16201 Front Beach Rd, Panama City Beach, FL and is open from midnight to midnight.

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Founded by Dr. Jon Ward in 2006 and joined by partner Dr. Michael A. Stickler in 2007, Dermatology Specialists of Florida is proud to be a physician-owned practice led by two board-certified dermatologists and board-certified Mohs surgeons who continue to care for our Florida Panhandle community. Their commitment to providing compassionate, patient-centered care has shaped the personalized experience our patients have come to expect.

Offering comprehensive dermatologic care remains at the forefront of our mission, allowing us to bring physician-guided expertise to patients at every stage of life. Whether you need a routine skin exam, treatment for a chronic skin condition, advanced skin cancer surgery, or cosmetic services to help you look and feel your best, our Panama City Beach team provides personalized care tailored to each patient's unique needs.

With our brand-new Panama City Beach West office located at 1002 N. Arnold Road (Highway 79), Suite 106, we're making expert dermatology care even more convenient for patients on the west end of the beach and in surrounding communities, including Latitude Margaritaville and Watersound. Led by Racquel Marin, PA-C, the new office expands access to trusted dermatology care for patients throughout Panama City Beach.

Racquel Marin, PA-C's patient care philosophy is built around providing compassionate, comprehensive, and personalized treatment. She prides herself on actively listening to each patient's dermatology concerns and addressing them with understanding, expertise, and empathy. Racquel is a certified physician assistant through the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants and a licensed physician assistant in the state of Florida. She is also fluent in Spanish, allowing her to better serve our Spanish-speaking patients.



Panama City Beach residents seeking dermatology care can now schedule appointments with Racquel Marin, PA-C, at our new Panama City Beach West location. She is currently accepting new patients and provides care for a wide variety of dermatologic concerns. Her commitment to building trusting, compassionate relationships with her patients reflects Dermatology Specialists of Florida's continued dedication to delivering outstanding patient care throughout the communities we serve.

The Panama City Beach West office is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Located at 1002 N. Arnold Road (Highway 79), Suite 106, Panama City Beach, FL 32413, the office offers convenient access to expert dermatology care. To schedule an appointment with Racquel Marin, PA-C, or learn more about the services offered at Dermatology Specialists of Florida, visit mydermspecialists.com/locations/florida/tmh-medical-campus-pcb-west, or call (850) 233-3376.

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Frogs of the Panhandle



BY HELEN PETRE

Throughout the long summer here in the Panhandle, we have frogs. Most of us will probably hear more frogs than see them, but here are a few of our common frogs, just in case you see them. If you want to learn their calls, the Florida Museum at the University of Florida has a great website with calls. Frogs usually call when they are mating and they are usually mating in spring.

Terrestrial frogs live under logs, plants, and other cover, and have dry, bumpy skin. Terrestrial frogs include toads. All toads are frogs. Not all frogs are toads.

The most common toad in Florida is the **Southern toad** (*Anaxyrus terrestris*). They eat bugs and snails, and burrow into soil. They are common near either permanent or temporary freshwater and can be found on well-watered lawns in evening.



Southern toad. Wikipedia.

Most call in spring.

Eastern narrow mouthed toads (*Gastrophryne carolinensis*) are only about one inch long, but they have a really big call. They eat insects, including termites, and live burrowed in soil in sandhills, pine, oak and scrub forests, or roadside ditches. These toads are often found floating in swimming pools in the morning.

Arboreal frogs live in trees and have large, sticky, toepads for climbing.

Cope's gray tree frog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) is a quite common frog that is only about an inch long and can be gray,



Green tree frog. Wikipedia.



Barking tree frog. Wikipedia.

green, or brown, but all have bright orange inner thighs. They eat roaches and other insects, and live in hardwood forests near marshes, bogs and swamps, and in wet backyards.

Green tree frogs (*Hyla cinerea*), although only about an inch long, eat stinkbugs and other invertebrates. They live in trees near permanent water bodies, even those with fish, including marshes, bogs, swamps, ponds, lakes, and ditches, and in urban areas. They are sometimes found on the side of houses, or at night, around porch lights,



Southern cricket frog. Wikipedia.

eating bugs. They have a white stripe down the side of the body.

Barking tree frogs (*Dryophytes gratiosus*) can be gray, green, or brown. They live high in treetops or burrowed in sand. They breed in fish-free wetlands, such as bogs and ditches. Barking tree frogs are large and colorful.

When barking tree frogs feel threatened, they inflate themselves, so they appear too large to swallow. Individuals live ten years.

Aquatic frogs spend most of their time in the water and have webbed toes.

Southern cricket frogs (*Acris gryllus*) can be green, gray, brown, or tan, with warty skin. They have a Y-shaped line on the back and a dark triangle on the head. Cricket frogs have tiny

toepads and a pointed snout. They eat leafhoppers and other invertebrates.

Southern cricket frogs live in bogs, ponds, roadside ditches, lakes, and potholes. The call sounds like marbles hitting against each other. Even though they are aquatic frogs, they stay on shore. If they get scared, they will go in the water, but they do not put their heads in, and when the coast is clear, they come back ashore. This is the call most often heard around ponds in the evening.

There are many more frogs here in the Panhandle. These are just a few of my favorites. The volunteer coordinator at FFW-CC, Adam Lache, is coordinating a Frog Watch program which includes frog call workshops and field herp walks. Come join us! Enjoy the warm evenings and the calls.

Helen Petre is a retired biologist out there enjoying nature in the Panhandle. If you have any nature questions or suggestions for articles, email: petre-helen@gmail.com.



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 Community

Panama City Woman's Club Wins International Award

Following on the heels of their State win last month, the GFWC Woman's Club of Panama City has gone on to win a top award at the GFWC International Convention, held this summer in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The Club has been awarded First Place for their 2025/26 Community Impact Program, which focused on the refurbishment of the six family rooms at the Salvation Army's Domestic Violence Shelter here in Panama City.

Upon learning of their award yesterday, project Chair Kathryn Bryan noted, "We are all simply



thrilled to have put Panama City on the map at the international level, and to have been recognized for all the hard work that went into refurbishing the Shelter."

Mrs. Bryan went on to say, "GFWC is committed globally to Women's issues, and in particular Domestic Violence, which remains a top priority for every administration. So, choosing the



local Salvation Army Shelter as our community project last year, was a perfect fit for us. The award is certainly meaningful, but the project itself, and the positive impact the renovated house has had on the women who shelter there, is our true reward."

The Club will officially receive its award, and an accompanying check, at the GFWC Florida Convention in September.

The General Federation of Women's Clubs is an international organization dedicated to improving local communities through volunteer service. GFWC has state federations in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. There are 21 International Affiliate Clubs in 12 countries worldwide. GFWC members are community leaders who advocate for domestic violence awareness and prevention programs, and efforts to support children. Volunteers work locally to impact their communities by supporting the arts, preserving natural resources, advancing education, promoting healthy lifestyles, and encouraging civic involvement.

Invasive Plants Removed from Nature Preserve

BY CANDIS HARBISON

A collaborative effort resulted in the removal of masses of harmful Water Hyacinth from the drainage ditch that forms a border of the King Family Preserve in Panama City. Water Hyacinth grows faster than any other plant of its type, doubling its population in 6-18 days. It was introduced from Asia because it was considered beautiful, but like many so-called "beautiful" plants, it quickly proved to be an ugly visitor! It clogs waterways, uses up oxygen, and displaces beneficial native plants.



King Family Preserve is owned by Bay County Conservancy, which is developing a "Wildlife Walk" along the levee that runs alongside the drainage ditch, previously clogged with

hyacinth. They arranged for volunteers from GulfCorps, a workforce development opportunity that provides jobs for young people on the Gulf Coast, to carry out their mission of treating and removing invasive plants. Sponsored by federal and private organizations, GulfCorps performs tasks that benefit the public while also giving young people skills training and offering them scholarships for further education.

These brave and hardy young men and women pulled on their chest-high waders and plunged into the waters of the ditch, pulling out masses of Water Hyacinth to dry out on the levee. Then, volunteers from Bay County Conservancy and Sandhills Nursery loaded the hyacinth onto wheelbarrows and dumped them in piles on Wood Avenue. Panama City's

Solid Waste Division pitched in and picked up the piles of weeds for disposal. Now, the challenge will be to keep the ditch from filling up with weeds again! A grant has been obtained for a weed barrier to be strung across the ditch, and continued surveillance as work continues on the "Wildlife Walk" will hopefully keep the ditch clear and flowing.

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BY DR. KAREN DEVORE

The first week of school has arrived. The backpacks are packed, the lunches are made, and after one last search for a missing shoe, everyone heads out the door. Then, just as you're reaching for the car keys, your child quietly says, "My stomach hurts."

For many parents and caregivers, this scene is as much a part of the back-to-school season as shopping for school supplies and navigating busy car lines.



The child who seemed perfectly healthy all summer suddenly doesn't want breakfast, complains of a stomachache before school, or makes repeated trips to the bathroom. Naturally, families wonder: Are they getting sick?

Sometimes they are. But sometimes, the stomach is simply the first place the body speaks.

The brain and digestive system are in constant communication through what scientists call the gut-brain axis. When children experience change, whether it's a new teacher, new classmates, academic expectations, a disrupted routine, or the excitement and uncertainty that naturally come with a new school year, the digestive system may respond before children have the words to describe what they're feeling.

Sometimes, the gut speaks first. That can look like stomachaches, nausea, constipation, diarrhea, changes in appetite, or even changes in bowel habits. The question isn't whether these symptoms are real; it's why they're happening.

One of the most helpful things parents and caregivers can do is look for patterns rather than focusing on a single episode.

Does the stomachache happen only before school? Does it improve later in the day? Does it appear before a test, after a difficult interaction with friends, or on Sunday evenings before the week begins?

Patterns like these may suggest the nervous system is playing a role, but they don't rule

developing nervous system. For some children, those demands may show up in the digestive tract long before they have the words to explain what they're experiencing.

What Can Parents and Caregivers Do?

If a child says, "My stomach hurts," and otherwise appears well, the first response doesn't always have to be finding the medicine cabinet. Instead, create a

few minutes of calm.

Turn off the television or music. Set aside phones and other screens. Sit together quietly. Offer a reassuring hug, hold their

Continued on page 31

When the Gut Speaks First: Understanding the Back-to-School Stomachache



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Red Snapper Fishing Continues

BY PAM ANDERSON

Opportunities to catch Red Snapper will continue throughout the fall. The for-hire, Charter boat and Head Boat season will continue through October 31!

The Private recreational anglers' Red Snapper season, with their own boats or fishing from piers, jetties, or shore, will end July 31 temporarily, then reopen September 1 through October 4 plus 3-day weekends for the rest of the year. For more information on Red Snapper and other species, download the app, Fish Rules. I don't think there is a fish in the sea that isn't mentioned there!

As you can see from the pictures, the 8-hour night trip on Capt. Anderson V has had some really good trips. The timing is great. On a 4 p.m. to midnight trip, it is cooler, you get to see the sunset over the Gulf of America, and you have some great family fishing experiences. Just like any fishing trip, whether private or charter or head boat, *catching* fish can't be guaranteed because they just might not be

hungry, but you can bet that the captains in our area will do their utmost to put you on fishing spots that will provide *opportunities* aplenty to catch them.

Our BCARA friends have been busy planning to deploy a great number of artificial reefs this fall and winter. They are working on a tugboat and several more items that will enable them to deploy many reefs if all goes as planned. Check out their updates at <https://bcara.us/> and on Facebook!

Be sure to thank them for all their efforts to enhance the fishing habitat off of Bay County when you have a chance. They are spending a lot of personal time on these projects that make our fisheries better for all anglers.

Capt. Max's Bar & Grill will be humming with all the popular football games on their TV screens starting in August... America's favorite pastime — *except for fishing, of course!*

Christmas in August? Not Christmas, but for planning your Christmas party, it's definitely not too early to reserve



The Event Center at Capt. Anderson's Marina. It's beautiful and the waterfront view overlooking Grand Lagoon cannot be beat!

Save the date! The **Annual PCB Fishing Rodeo** starts Friday, October 2 and ends with the **PCB Seafood Festival** on October 9 through 11. For more information, contact them at info.pcbeachfishingrodeo@gmail.com or check the festival website at www.pcbseafoodfestival.org.

Shell Island/Dolphins, Fishing, Capt. Max's Bar & Grill, That Ship's Store for souvenirs, the Ice Cream shop, and the beautiful waterfront venue, The Event Center at Capt. Anderson's Marina all await you!

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Let's Get Growing: Avoid AI-Generated Plant Scams



BY LAUREN GOLDSBY

In recent months, I've noticed an increasing number of AI-generated plant photos being shared on social media. These posts feature plants that seem to have stepped out of a dream rather than a garden. Orchids shaped like cats, elephant ears as tall as your house, and neon-colored variegated plants.

What is an AI-generated photo? These photos are generated using artificial intelligence programs instead of being captured by a camera. These programs can produce images based on a user's description or request, generating realistic or abstract photos. Scroll through the comments on these images and you'll see a mix of reactions. Some love the photos, asking where they can find these plants. Others are quick to point out that they aren't real. For the most part, these images are harmless and potentially inspire people to spend more time outdoors with their own plants.

However, these AI-generated photos are also being used to market the sale of seeds and cuttings for plants that do not actually exist. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of discovering a new plant you've never seen. To avoid being scammed online, look out for these signs of AI-generated photos.

Blurred backgrounds: Close-up shots with a blurry background are frequently used in these listings. This blurring is used to hide inconsistencies and

reduce the visibility of errors in these photos.

Inconsistent photos: Check all photos in the listing for similarities and differences. Large inconsistencies between photos in the same listing could point to the use of AI. Plants may appear similar at first glance but have leaves with different shapes and color patterns. Leaf shapes and patterns are typically similar but not identical. AI-generated plant photos often have leaves and patterns that are either identical or differ more than a living plant would. To help differentiate between real and AI-generated images, watch for repetitive patterns that appear perfect, or identical

on leaves. In nature, there are subtle differences within patterns and shapes that we expect to see.

Growing practices: Not all plants can be successfully grown from seeds. Some tropical houseplants, like the calatheas, typically produce sterile seeds and have specific production requirements. Orchids can be grown from seed but must be grown in a nutrient-rich gel and a sterile environment. This process takes years to produce full-sized plants. Don't be fooled into purchasing seeds for plants that cannot be grown in a home environment!

Before purchasing, search for more information about the advertised plant.

Check for reputable vendors: If no other trusted vendors are selling it, it's likely not real.

Search for additional listings and compare descriptions and photos. Don't forget to read reviews!

Look for botanical names: The botanical name can be used to find out more information about the advertised plant. You can use resources

like Plants of the World Online (<https://powo.science.kew.org/>) to search for more images and information.

Use trusted sources: Avoid using social media and other unreliable sources to get more information on these plants.

If you're still unsure, reach out to us at the extension office for help determining if the plant is too good to be true.

Lauren Goldsby is Extension Agent I, Commercial and Environmental Horticulture for UF/IFAS Extension Bay County.





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Why Michael Petty for Bay County School Board District 2?

When people think about public schools, it's easy to assume they only matter to families with children currently in the classroom. The reality is that strong public schools benefit every resident of Bay County. Whether you're raising children, retired, or simply invested in the future of our community, the quality of our schools affects us all.

That is why Michael Petty is seeking to serve on the Bay County School Board.

With a career dedicated to education and public service, Michael believes the School Board has a responsibility not only to support students and educators but also to serve every taxpayer with honesty, accountability, and transparency.

One of Michael's top priorities is protecting your tax dollars. Every resident contributes to our public schools, and every taxpayer deserves confidence that those dollars are being spent wisely. Michael will ad-



vocate for responsible financial stewardship, clear budgeting, and accountability at every level so that resources are directed where they matter most: supporting students and classrooms.

Michael also believes government should never operate behind closed doors. Greater

transparency builds trust, and trust is essential to effective leadership. As a School Board member, he will work to make District operations more open and accessible by providing clear communication about important decisions, budgets, and District initiatives. Parents, employees, and taxpayers alike deserve timely, accurate information that helps them understand how decisions are made and how public funds are invested.

Relationships are another cornerstone of Michael's campaign. He understands that successful schools are built through partnerships among families, educators, students, businesses, and community members. Rather than creating division, Michael believes in listening first, communicating openly, and bringing people together to solve problems. He is committed to building strong

relationships throughout Bay County because lasting progress happens when everyone has a seat at the table.

Keeping citizens informed is equally important. Michael believes community engagement should not begin and end at School Board meetings. He will advocate for better communication, meaningful opportunities for public input, and easier access to district information so residents can stay informed about issues that affect their schools and their community.

Ultimately, Michael's guiding principle is simple: **Kids First. Always.** Every decision should be measured by one question: Will this improve opportunities and outcomes for students? By focusing on student success while remaining accountable to taxpayers, Michael believes Bay County can promote schools that prepare students for college, careers, military service, and life.

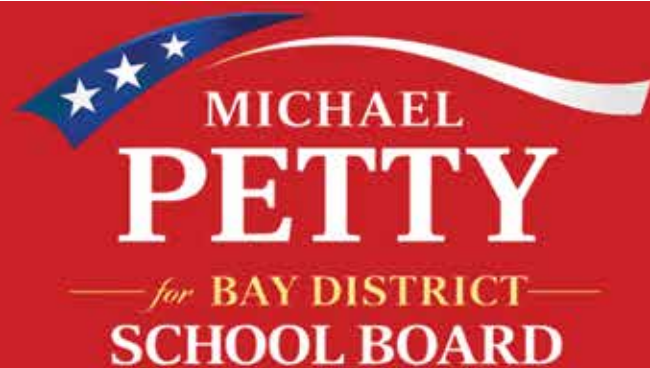
Strong schools help at-

tract families and businesses, strengthen our local workforce, support property values, and contribute to a safer, more prosperous community. Investing in education is not simply an investment in today's students, it's an investment in Bay County's future.

Michael Petty is committed to leading with integrity, increasing transparency, building meaningful relationships, keeping citizens informed, and ensuring every decision reflects what is best for students and our community.

When you vote, Michael respectfully asks for your vote for Bay County School Board District 2. Together, we can build a stronger future by putting Kids First. Always!

This primary election is very important! Early voting is August 8-15. To confirm your polling location, call (850) 784-6100 or visit <http://bayvotesfl.gov>. Don't forget to bring your acceptable ID!



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Aug 8-15

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Straight to The Point

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

Mosquitoes make it their *point* to let us know that they are present and can adversely impact our outdoor fun.

That darn female mosquito is responsible for leaving the unkind reminder of her visit by leaving a small raised, annoying itchy bump after her blood-thirsty feast. However, are you aware that they could possibly affect your health too? Yes, this is true. During her unwanted visit, she possibly can transmit a mosquito-borne illness (arbovirus) through her bite and impact your health. Bay County has approximately fifty different species of mosquitoes. Only fourteen of these species have the potential of spreading an arbovirus. However, most mosquito bites do not transmit disease, but certain mosquito species can carry viruses that circulate between mosquitoes and host animals such as birds or horses and other mammals. Viruses found in Florida include Chikungunya (Chikv), Dengue



Virus (DenV), Zika, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEEv), St. Louis Encephalitis (SLEv) and West Nile Virus. Chikungunya, Dengue, and Zika are traditionally imported travel-related viral infections with some local transmissions possible. All can be transmitted to humans. It can take two to 15 days after receiving a bite from an infected mosquito for symptoms to appear. They may include fatigue, persistent fever, headache, dizziness, muscle weakness, joint pain and sometimes a rash. Unfortunately, many of these symptoms mimic the flu. If you or anyone you know is experiencing these

symptoms, please seek medical treatment promptly. A physician can order a laboratory test to determine if the illness is caused by an arbovirus (a virus transmitted by an infectious insect or tick). There are no cures for arboviruses, so seeking medical attention

for these symptoms is important. If left unattended, a person can possibly develop more severe life-threatening health issues. However, most people infected with an arbovirus do not even become ill. Malaria is not a viral infection; it is the transmission of a specific parasite and is a recurring illness. Another difference between the other mosquito-borne illnesses is that malaria and Zika virus can be transmitted from human to human.

Can mosquito bites harm your pet?

Yes, a mosquito bite can

transmit dog heartworm, a potentially fatal disease to your dog(s) and cat(s). Please remember to keep your pets safe by administering monthly veterinarian-approved preventive heartworm protection products. Annually, many horses contract and or die from EEEv in the Florida Panhandle region. Be a responsible pet owner; have your pet(s) routinely examined by a licensed veterinarian and ask for prevention advice.

What are the most effective measures to reduce your risk of being exposed to mosquitoes?

- Use an Environmental Protection Agency-approved registered insect repellent with DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus and PMD (p-methane-3,8 diol). Read and follow the label instructions. Reapplication is key when wearing repellent. It's recommended that a child be three years old before wearing Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. The American Academy of Pediatrics does

not recommend the use of DEET for children younger than two months old.

- Dress the part, wear loose-fitting clothing, long sleeves and pants for extra protection.
- Eliminate standing water around your home or business property.
- Limit outdoor exposure at dawn and dusk when mosquito activity is at a high level.
- Travelling nationally or internationally? Always know before you go. Mosquitoes are a global public health problem. Visit the Centers for Disease (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov. Do not let one bite impact you for life. Pack and wear repellent wherever you travel.

Are mosquitoes still a problem? Contact your local mosquito abatement program. Your tax dollars fund these programs to serve you.

Please make it a point to protect yourself from mosquito bites!



Know Your Neighbor: Stephanie Slack

BY MICHELE HARDMAN

I met Stephanie Slack through another mutual friend, who had contacted me, saying Stephanie needed some occasional help in her vendor booth at the PCB Market. I had become sort of a floater at the Market, filling in for several of the vendors from time to time when they needed some time off. I agreed to stop by and meet Stephanie and see how I could help her. Her warm smile, southern accent, and welcoming personality instantly drew me in, and we quickly became friends. Her booth was filled, and I mean filled, with beautiful handmade home décor items, including paintings, mosaics, jewelry, and blankets, and I learned that she loves to pick things up at thrift shops and discount stores and refurbish them, giving them a whole new life.

Stephanie had been making craft-oriented things since the 1990s and used to spend hours watching videos on all sorts of different projects. Her personal faith walk had gotten much stronger during the past four or



five years, and one day she just felt led to start creating some of the things she'd been passively watching. At first, she just gave many of the things as gifts to family and friends, but she was getting lots of positive comments from it. Add to that the fact that after a while, she says her house started looking like a hoarder's paradise, so it seemed time to do something about all of this. She opened up her booth at the PCB Market—called Crafted Serenity. Very fitting name. She also chose to use the Bird of Paradise flower as part of her logo, since



it was her late mother's favorite flower. She uses her weekend vendor booth as a ministry of sorts. Stephanie never pushes religion or her personal beliefs on anyone, but instead, offers her gift of being easy to talk to as a time to listen to people and offer any resources or help that she can. The last time I was talking with her at her booth, I was getting ready to embark on some stressful new events in my life, and before I left, she took my hands and prayed for me right there at the market. How comforting! Another cool aspect of her booth and ministry is the fact that she freely gives out Bi-



bles to anyone who wants one. After a little over a year now, she's thrilled to say that she's given out roughly 70 of them.

For over 20 years, Stephanie's day jobs have included working at local law firms, plus a short stint selling high-end furniture. She feels very blessed to have had such wonderful leaders and mentors through her bosses, who have encouraged honesty and strong ethics. The staff has also become family to her over all of these years, which she's truly thankful for, too.

Stephanie Slack was born

and raised right here in Panama City. Even though crafting and creating her many one-of-a-kind pieces is very relaxing for her, when I asked her if there was anything else she enjoyed doing, without hesitation, she said her favorite thing in the whole wide world to do is go catfishing. Especially with her dad, whom she's always been very close to. She says whether she catches any fish or not, she still has a wonderful time just being there, enjoying nature, and spending quality time with a person she loves. She prefers to use crickets over worms for bait, and recalled how she and her brothers used to put a stick into the ground and pound on it, which would simulate the vibrations of a thunderstorm and cause the worms to come to the surface to then easily be collected for fishing bait. See the interesting things I learn from people? Stop by and chat with Stephanie at the market on weekends, and maybe even swap a few fishing stories.



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Need a Notary? Florida’s Remote Online Notaries Bring the Office to You



By JON CARROLL

Most people will need a notary public at some point in their lives. In fact, my neighborhood Facebook page regularly includes requests for notary services. A Florida notary public is a state-appointed official whose role is to verify the identity of the person signing a document, confirm that the signer is acting willingly, and help deter fraud by ensuring the proper execution of important legal documents.

There are many options for individuals requiring notary

services. Often banks will provide notarial services for their customers. One can also obtain a notary at a Bay County Library for certain documents, and there are many private notaries as well. But did you know that Florida law also allows for Remote Online Notarization (RON)?

Florida was one of the first states to authorize remote online notarization. Since January 2020, Florida statute has allowed qualified notaries to perform most notarial acts using secure audio-video communication technology instead of requiring everyone to be in the same room. So long as the online notary is physically located in Florida and all statutory requirements are met, the signer and any witnesses may be located elsewhere, including in another state or even another country.

Local notary, Marlene Culpepper, owner of Trio Signing Solutions, has seen firsthand

the benefits of RON. “Remote online notarization has made the signing process faster, easier, and far more accessible to anyone regardless of where they are in the world.” There is no need to travel across town, rearrange work schedules, or coordinate multiple people to meet in one location. Individuals with mobility challenges, busy professionals, military members stationed away from home, college students, seasonal residents, and family members living outside Florida can often complete the notarization from the comfort of their own homes or offices. Marlene has also witnessed the benefits of RON for businesses. “Only remote online notarization offers the transcript of who signed what when, video recordings of how the meeting was conducted, and an immediate return of signed documents. For many of our clients, it is revolutionary in improving their workflow with no more tracking packages in the mail or waiting until a client returns a contract to begin the work.”

Florida law contains important safeguards designed to protect signers. Before complet-



ing an online notarization, the notary must verify the signer’s identity through certain approved methods. The notarization is conducted through secure, two-way audio-video technology, and online notaries are generally required to maintain electronic journals and retain recordings of the session. Despite the safeguards in place, some institutions may prefer, or have internal policies which require in-person signings to protect against sophisticated identity fraud scams. Ultimately, the required measures provide protection against fraud while preserving the convenience of remote service.

RON is convenient, but as

such it may also be a more expensive option for those needing notary services. Florida requires certain platforms be used for RONs, and the notary must pay for the platform use. This cost is passed on to the signer. The number of witnesses required also contributes to the cost of the service.

As technology continues to simplify everyday life, remote online notarization provides Floridians with a secure, efficient, and legally recognized way to complete many important transactions. Whether you’re finalizing an estate plan, signing real estate documents, or completing business paperwork, remote online notarization can save time while providing the same legal protections required under Florida law.

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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The Future of Golf: Tours, Retail and On Course Play

BY ALAN M. WATSON,
PRESIDENT, GOLF+ PCB

This article would be so much easier to write if I had a time machine and could go twenty years into the future. In lieu of that, I will do my best Nostradamus impression and boldly attempt to tell you the future of golf on three fronts: Tour, Retail, and On-Course Play.

I will start with Tour golf as LIV recently made the not-so-surprising announcement that the PFI has pulled funding after the 2026 season. Could the tour continue? It is possible, but without major funding efforts, these pro golfers who have made LIV their home for the past few seasons will be looking to rejoin the PGA Tour or the DP World Tour. And some honestly may not be able to find a home and may have to look at lesser tours like Canada, South America, or even pulling out their diploma from college to see what that will get them in the job market.

Why this all matters is that since LIV became a reality, we

have had a less-than-star-studded cast in every professional golf tournament sans the majors. Sure, there are still plenty of stars on the PGA Tour, but without Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau, among others, the leaderboard was missing some star power. Imagine if Tom Watson, Lee Trevino, and Tom Kite had defected from the PGA Tour during Jack Nicklaus's heyday. We would say, "Oh, well sure he won, but he didn't even have to face some of his stiffest competition!"

Hopefully, LIV will go away permanently and all the stars can rejoin the PGA Tour. Then we can have full fields of stars playing golf week in and week out. My prediction: LIV is over after 2026 and Bryson wins another major in 2027.

As for retail, the golf landscape is and has been changing for years now. The rise of giant stores like PGA Tour Superstore has happened alongside the cultivation of more boutique fitting shops like mine - GOLF+. Big stores with 2,000-square-foot



are putting in greens in one town, and more simulator bays than you can shake a stick at, and in other towns, expert fitters, club-building craftsmen, and mom-and-pop golf retail locations remind golfers that retail isn't dead yet, just because Amazon exists.

I've been in golf retail since 1988. It isn't easy. It's damn hard. And with the ease of getting a better selection on things like shoes and clothes online, smaller stores like mine have had to focus on what you can't get from a website, which is proper fitting and great club repair. And honestly, I don't mind. I would rather do a few things really well than a whole lot of

things halfway. I think our customers appreciate the attention to detail and the level of expertise we bring to help them with their game. Even if we don't have 5,000 pairs of shoes or a putting green that's bigger than many people's homes. My prediction is that large golf shops will stall out and smaller, fitting studios will be the norm for most golfers out club shopping. And while website shopping won't go away, things like social shopping on TikTok Shop and Whatnot will take over as the place golfers go to daily to get their fix for shopping and entertainment.

So the elephant in the room with golf in 2026 has to be on-course play. Why, you ask? Well, that is due to the continued expansion of home-based golf simulators that are affordable and the continued growth of simulator room businesses like The Back Nine (which is a franchise with over 217 locations nationwide). Many simulator room businesses choose a theme like a private club, a sports bar, or a hang out spot for casual golfers. Some are franchises, but

most are not. Many offer 24/7 access to bays with technology that most golfers can't afford to put in their homes. The best feature of these facilities is that they are semi-private and air-conditioned. Many new golfers feel less intimidated to go to an indoor room than a course. And the cost is often much less than outdoor golf as well. While I feel like most golfers still prefer outdoor golf if the option exists, many will choose the air-conditioned, no way to lose a ball, data provided by the simulator, takes less time option of a simulator room business in the future. My prediction: In 2027, more facilities will open up to cater to golfers and this will actually expand golf, not hurt it, as more people will be able to play more rounds, although some of those rounds will be digital.

The future of golf is bright but not set in stone. I can't wait to see what happens!

For more information on Golf +, visit www.gogolfplus.com or stop by the store in Panama City Beach located at 541 N Richard Jackson Blvd.



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From São Paulo to Panama City: The Journey of Chef Alan Oliveira

Born and raised in São Paulo, Brazil, Chef Alan Oliveira began his culinary journey at the age of 26 in a small Japanese restaurant. His first tasks were simple—washing rice, cleaning fish, and learning the discipline and patience required in Japanese cuisine. But he carried a dream much bigger than the kitchen where he started: one day becoming an international chef.

Determined to grow beyond his comfort zone, Alan left Brazil and moved to Dublin, Ireland, for a six-month English exchange program. Living abroad opened his eyes to new cultures, flavors, and culinary

traditions. It was his first experience discovering how food could connect people from around the world.

After Ireland, Portugal became the foundation of his professional career. There, he studied at the internationally recognized Nagoya Sushi School, where he refined traditional Japanese techniques and deepened his respect for the art of sushi. Portugal would become the birthplace of much of the knowledge and discipline that shaped him as a chef.

From there, Alan never stopped exploring. His passion for food led him through Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland,



Ireland, Denmark, and Japan, constantly learning from different cultures and ingredients. Along the way, he developed his own culinary philosophy: cre-

ating dishes that evoke memories while combining flavors from different parts of the world.

Throughout his career, he worked in prestigious hospitality establishments, including the five-star Tivoli Hotels and the renowned Vila Vita Parc Resort & Spa in the Algarve, Portugal, one of Europe's most celebrated luxury resorts and consistently recognized among the world's finest hotels. He also gained experience at the Sheraton Cascais Resort in Portugal and Hôtel Opéra in Paris. (World Travel Awards)

Today, Alan calls Panama City, Florida, home. He hopes to spend the rest of his life and career there, contributing to the local culinary scene and building a new vision of fine dining—one that brings together American, European, Latin American, and Japanese influences.

For Chef Alan Oliveira, cooking is more than preparing food. It is telling stories, preserving memories, and bringing cultures together through every plate he creates.

"I started washing rice with a dream. Today, I continue chasing that dream—one dish at a time."

Emerald Coast Theatre Company Opens Registration for Fall Education Programs

Following another successful summer of camps, Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is excited to welcome students back for its 2026 Fall Education Programs. As the summer concludes with performances of *Something Rotten Jr.* on July 30 and 31, registration is now open for a wide variety of classes designed for students of all ages and experience levels. This fall's lineup offers something for every young performer age 5-18 yrs. old, including *Trolls Jr.*, *Legally Blonde Jr.*, Broadway dance styles, beginning and advanced tap, first steps ballet, ballet and jazz, vocal technique, acting and improv, playwriting, middle and high school competition travel troupes, and much more!

Education Director Adam Day Howard and Education and Outreach Coordinator Mallory McGill are the dynamic new team leading ECTC's educational programming. Howard brings extensive experience as a university theatre educator, director, and music director whose work spans regional theatre, Off-Broadway, and international productions. McGill, a Destin native, is an award-winning theatre educator and professional actress with more than 15 years of teaching and coaching experience with hundreds of actors

whose work has appeared on Disney, Nickelodeon, and more, plus credits in hit shows such as *90210* and *The Suite Life: On Deck*. Together, they are committed to providing exceptional theatre education for the Emerald Coast.

From first-time performers to experienced young artists, ages 5-18, ECTC's Fall Education Programs provide a supportive environment where students can develop lifelong skills. Through hands-on instruction, rehearsals, and training, students gain far more than on-stage experience. They develop confidence, communication, teamwork, creativity, and leadership skills that extend well beyond the theatre. What sets ECTC apart is its commitment to treating every educational production with the same level of professionalism, creativity, and attention to detail as its main stage productions. Students rehearse and perform using professional-quality lighting, sound, costumes, and sets, while learning from experienced theatre professionals, including a new education staff, who are dedicated to helping every student succeed.

"Our goal is to create an environment where our students feel supported and inspired while developing their artistic abilities and skills that will serve

them for years to come," said Anna Fisher, ECTC's Associate Artistic Director. "We approach every educational production with the same standard as our professional productions, from choreography to costumes, because every student deserves that experience. Whether they dream of performing profes-

sionally or just want to explore a new creative outlet and make friends, ECTC offers a place where every student is encouraged to grow, create, and shine."

ECTC is now proud to accept Step Up For Students scholarships, making high-quality theatre education more accessible for families throughout the Em-

erald Coast. Families can learn more and apply for the Step Up For Students scholarship by visiting emeraldcoasttheatre.org/scholarship.

For class schedules, tuition information, and registration, visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org or contact the box office by calling (850) 684-0323.



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 Arts & Music

Seashells, Second Chances and a New Calling:

How One Latitude Margaritaville Resident Turned Retirement into Art

By STEVEN LAWRENCE

For many people, retirement is a time to slow down. For Susan Stoler, it became an opportunity to reinvent herself.

After spending years as a corporate manager with JCPenney, Susan traded sales meetings and business strategies for seashells, creativity and coastal inspiration. Today, the Latitude Margaritaville Watersound resident is known throughout the community for her handcrafted artwork made from shells collected along the Emerald Coast.

Each piece begins with a walk on the beach.

"I've always loved the Gulf," Susan says. "There's something special about finding a shell that has been shaped by the water and imagining what it can become."

Using shells of different sizes, colors and textures, Susan carefully arranges them into coastal scenes, from sea life and mermaids to lighthouses and a colorful array of stunning dec-



orative designs. Every piece is unique, reflecting both the natural beauty of the Gulf and the patience required to transform simple shells into works of art.

Her transition from corporate management to artist wasn't something she planned during her working years. Like many retirees, she wanted a hobby that was both relaxing and meaningful. What began as



a creative outlet soon became a passion.

Friends and neighbors admired her work and began asking to purchase pieces for their homes. Before long, Susan's artwork became a familiar sight throughout Latitude Margaritaville Watersound, where many



residents proudly display her creations.

Her artwork reflects the lifestyle that draws so many people to Northwest Florida—a love of the beach, nature and coastal living. Rather than painting on canvas, Susan uses materials gathered from the shoreline, giving each piece a genuine connection to the Gulf.

Residents appreciate not only the beauty of her work but also the story behind it. Every shell has its own history, and every finished piece represents hours of careful planning and craftsmanship.

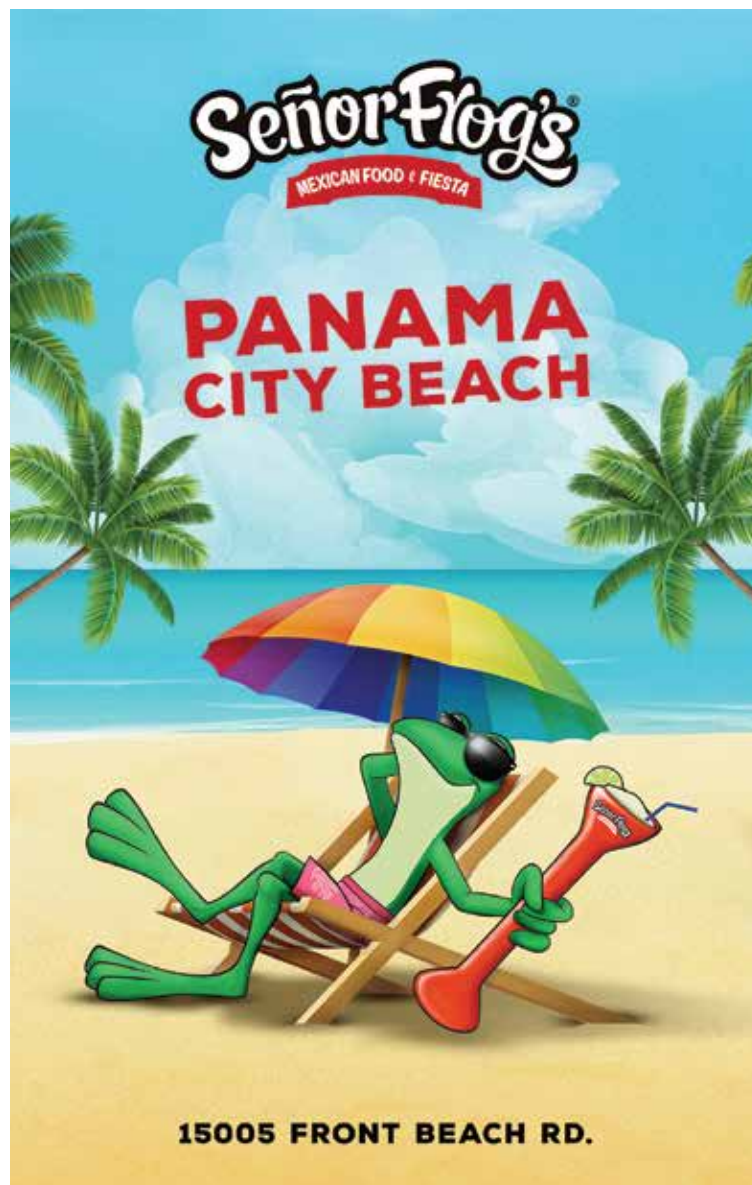
Susan says one of the greatest rewards has been seeing her

artwork become part of her neighbors' homes.

"It's wonderful knowing something I created brings people joy every day," she says.

For Susan, retirement hasn't been about leaving a career behind. Instead, it has been about discovering a new purpose—one that combines creativity, community and a lifelong appreciation for the beauty of our Emerald Coast.

Her story is a reminder that life's next chapter can be every bit as fulfilling as the first. Sometimes all it takes is a walk along the beach, a handful of seashells and the imagination to see art where others simply see sand.



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

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



BY MICHAEL AUSTIN

Let's face it: Humanity is teetering on the edge of a technological revolution where robots are poised to take over everything from our jobs to our deepest secrets, like who really finished all the Oreos. But there's one battleground nobody's talking about: music. Yes, fellow humans, the time is

matically perfect, emotionally vacant compositions to be the soundtrack of our lives?

This is precisely why learning to play an instrument is not just a fun hobby—it's a matter of survival. When our metallic overlords inevitably rise, the only way to preserve the soulful, quirky, occasionally off-key magic of human music is for every single person (yes, even you, Rick from accounting) to pick up an instrument and get jamming.

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

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

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

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

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

from total beginner to passable campfire guitarist, aspiring jazz saxophonist, or even interpretive triangle artist.

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

Don't Let Robots Write the Human Soundtrack

Learning to play an instru-

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

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



now—before Siri and her soulless metal friends force-feed us their favorite playlists of “binary beats” and “electric hum jams”—to learn how to play an instrument.

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

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

Musical Instruments: Humanity's Last Defense

When the Singularity arrives and Alexa starts writing break-up songs about you, what will you do? Join the resistance, of

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 Arts & Music

KAPOW! Comic Art and More Exciting Exhibits Await

Center for the Arts Hosts Pen, Paint, POP! Comic and Cartoon Exhibition

As summer draws to a close, there's no better way to celebrate the season than with a vibrant lineup of new art exhibitions opening August 7 at the Center for the Arts. Local artists from across the region were invited to have their comic and cartoon pieces exhibited for the Pen, Paint, POP! Exhibition. Eric Darnell's Battle Bulbs and other keepsakes from Eric Darnell's collection will take over the Miller Gallery. The Higby Gallery, now an immersive projection gallery, will display projections from the visual art fashion show Eco-Couture. The public is invited to the opening reception Friday, August 7 from 5-7 p.m.

Comic artists and cartoonists, both amateur and professional, were invited to submit their work for this year's Pen, Paint, POP! exhibition, opening Friday, August 7.

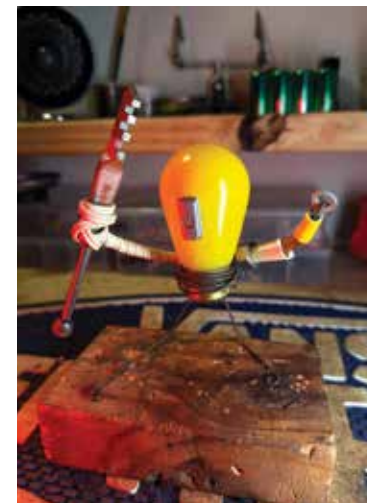
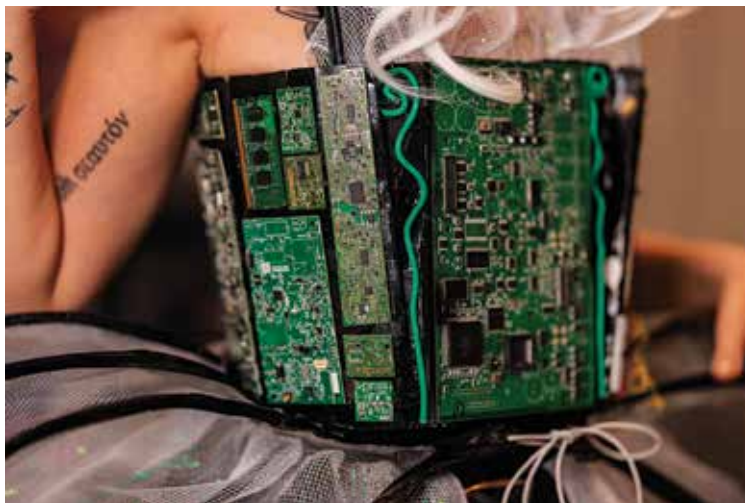
"This exhibition highlights the wide range of styles and creativity that make illustration such an exciting art form, showcasing the talent and imag-

ination of artists working across the medium. From superheroes and fantastical creatures to thought-provoking visual narratives, we can't wait for everyone to see the talents our community has to offer," says Jayson Kretzer, Executive Director, Bay Arts Alliance.

Pen, Paint, POP! will be on display August 7 - September 19.

Eric Darnell loves transforming junk into art. For his exhibition in the Miller Gallery, he has made 200 tiny robots out of lightbulbs, vacuum tubes, rusty wire, and spare electrical parts. He's also displaying a collection of things he loves, like a trout he caught in the '80s, old signs, knick-knacks, and other weird keepsakes. 50% of the proceeds from this art show go directly to the Center for the Arts in support of its vision of putting Art on Every Corner. The Battle Bulbs will be on display in the Miller Gallery August 7-29.

The immersive Higby Gallery will feature projections from Eco-Couture, a stunning visual



to commemorate such a special moment and provide a peek for those who could not make it to the fashion show.

Trash Market, established on Earth Day in 2023, is a grassroots effort to promote sustainability through fun and creative ways. From the very beginning, in the back alley market days,

there were whispers among the artists about creating an eco-friendly fashion show.

After three years, Eco-Couture came full circle and became a very proud moment for the Trash Market community. The hope is to inspire others to see the vast potential in items already in existence and too often deemed "trash". Everyone is invited to join this movement in exploring creative sustainability. Eco-Couture will be on display August 7-29.

The Center for the Arts is free to visit Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. Open until 7 p.m. on Fridays.



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A New School Year, A New Opportunity



FROM THE DESK OF
SUPERINTENDENT MARK
MCQUEEN

As we begin another school year in Bay District Schools,

I can't help but feel optimistic about what's ahead. There is something special about August. It's a fresh start, a chance to set new goals, build new friendships, and create opportunities that can shape a student's future.

This year feels especially meaningful as our nation reflects on 250 years of American history. While we celebrate the remarkable journey that brought us here, we are also reminded that the next chapter is being written today, in classrooms across Bay County. The students walking through our doors this month will become

tomorrow's teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs, healthcare professionals, first responders, and community leaders. Investing in their success is one of the most important things we can do.

As superintendent, I couldn't be prouder of what our schools accomplished last year. Across our beach communities, Breakfast Point Academy and West Bay Elementary both improved to an "A" school grade, joining Patronis Elementary and Hutchison Beach Elementary as four "A" schools serving our beach area. Arnold High School and Surfside Middle School

also continued to demonstrate strong performance, earning "B" grades. These achievements reflect the dedication of our students, teachers, staff, and families who work together every day to make learning a priority.

While we celebrate those accomplishments, we also know that success doesn't happen by accident. It begins with showing up.

Regular attendance remains one of the greatest predictors of student achievement. Every lesson, every conversation, and every opportunity to grow matters. Arriving on time, prepared

to learn, and dressed for success helps establish the habits that will serve students well throughout their lives.

To our families, thank you for trusting Bay District Schools with your children. Your partnership makes all the difference. To our students, we are excited to welcome you back and can't wait to see what you'll accomplish this year.

Here's to a school year filled with learning, growth, and endless possibilities. Together, we're not just preparing students for the future; we're helping them create it.

Brooke Loyed Leads with Heart, and Florida Took Notice

When Brooke Loyed walked across the stage at the Florida Teacher of the Year Banquet on July 22 to accept the 2026 Florida Principal of the Year award, it marked the culmination of months of recognition... and years of quiet, consistent leadership.

First announced as the statewide winner in late April, Loyed officially received the honor from the Florida State Board of Education during the annual celebration recognizing Florida's outstanding educators. The award, the highest honor a principal can receive in the state, also marked a historic first for Bay County.

But ask Loyed about the recognition, and she'll likely shift the spotlight somewhere else: to her students, her fellow admins, her teachers, or the families who make Patronis Elementary School feel more like a community than a campus.

That approach has become her trademark.

While impressive academic results have certainly helped earn statewide recognition, those who know Loyed say her greatest accomplishment has been creating a culture where students are excited to learn, teachers feel supported, and families know they belong.

Under her leadership, Patronis Elementary has earned an "A" school grade for five consecutive years. In 2026, 75 percent of students achieved proficiency in English Language Arts and



75 percent in mathematics. The school has also been recognized as a Purple Star School for its commitment to supporting military-connected students and their families.

Walk through the halls of Patronis, however, and you'll quickly discover that numbers tell only part of the story.

Students proudly celebrate becoming "Millionaire Readers," a milestone recognizing those who read more than one million words in a school year. Teachers are encouraged to innovate, collaborate, and build meaningful relationships with students. Every success, whether academic, artistic, athletic, or personal, is viewed as something worth celebrating.

"Brooke Loyed is an incredible leader, and her impact goes far beyond performance data," said Bay District Schools Superintendent Mark McQueen. "She leads with both heart and

purpose, creating a school environment where every child is supported and encouraged to



succeed. This recognition is a testament to the difference she makes every single day."

For Loyed, the Florida Principal of the Year award isn't

simply recognition of one school's success. It's a reflection of an entire community working together on behalf of children.

As the first principal from Bay County to earn the distinction, she has given the community another reason to celebrate and reminded educa-

tors across Florida that the most powerful leadership begins with something remarkably simple: putting students first.



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By JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PhD

Happy couples know a love hack that you can learn: They notice each other's good intentions and give credit where credit is due.

This simple love hack increases happiness and produces higher levels of relationship wellbeing.

Interestingly, the impact of

Look for Good Intentions:

A Simple Love Hack Promotes Happiness and Relationship Wellbeing

your partner's good deeds depends largely on why you think they tried to do something good for you. We call this an "attribution" of cause.

And, what you see as the cause of their kindness depends mostly on what you look for.

The good news is that you can train yourself to pause, look for the good in your partner, and appreciate their contribution to your relationship wellbeing.

How Giving Due Credit Works

Let's say your partner made the bed while you were in the shower. There are four basic casual attributions you could make for this small kindness, and they result from Internal vs External causes and from Stable versus Temporary causes.

My Partner made the bed for me because:

- ...he is kind and routinely finds ways to make my life easier (Internal, Stable attribution)
- ...he is feeling guilty about coming home late last night (Internal, Temporary attribution)
- ...his sister always tells him he should help more with housework (External, Stable attribution)
- ...his first appointment was a Zoom from home, so he just had

extra time. (External, Temporary attribution)

People in healthy, satisfying relationships routinely make Internal, Stable attributions (#1 – an admirable character trait) for their partner's positive acts. These attributions increase happiness about the behavior and promote the relationship's well-being over time.

People in distressed relationships often make External, Temporary attributions (#4 – a self-serving opportunity) for their partner's kindness. These attributions diminish happiness about the behavior and erode relationship satisfaction over time.

If Lauren believes that Peter combined his work trip with her birthday gift to save money and reacts through that lens, she will be unhappy with his effort, and they will experience relationship distress. Lauren won't hear Peter's alternative explanations because, in her view, the gift is a convenience to him, not a gift to her at all.

If Lauren believes that Peter combined his work trip with her birthday gift with good intentions, inspired by his work ethic and his dedication to her, she will be happy with his effort to please her, and their relationship will be enhanced. Lauren won't see an alternative explanation because she only sees a good deed and gives Peter credit for it.

Pause, Think and Stay Happy

Let's consider a grand gesture: Peter got a work promotion to a larger, new sales territory. He planned a meet-and-greet trip to Orlando during his first week in the new job, which happened to include his wife Lauren's July birthday. With his boss's permission, he invited Lauren to join him for his stay in Orlando at a luxury hotel, as a surprise birthday gift. He told Lauren that, although he would be working several hours each day, they could sleep late, have every evening meal together, and Lauren could enjoy well-deserved R&R as a special birthday treat. He knew that Lauren, a middle school teacher, had the summer off.

Fortunately, Lauren, who looks forward to celebrating her birthday with family and friends every year, paused to consider alternative reasons why Peter combined a work trip with her birthday celebration.

...he is a hard-working man who is motivated to make her happy (an Internal, Stable Attribution)

...he planned the trip before he realized it interfered with her birthday, so he just did the best he could to make up for it. (an Internal, Temporary Attribution)

...his clever assistant suggested it was the way to keep both his boss and his wife happy. (an External, Stable Attribution)

...his boss gave permission, so he could pay for her birthday trip with his expense money. (an External, Temporary Attribution)

The Love Hack Learned

Notice when your partner does something good for you and remember that what you see depends on what you look for.

If you look for Internal, Stable causes for your partner's good deeds, then you will easily see your partner's admirable character and positive intentions. This will enhance your positive regard for your partner and improve your relationship quality over time.

If you look for External, Temporary causes for your partner's good deeds, you will see self-serving motives and make critical interpretations. This will have a negative impact on your happiness and degrade your relationship over time.

I recommend you pause and try this simple, positive Love Hack instead.

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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Integrative Dermatology: Beyond Prescriptions



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

Integrative dermatology is an approach to skin care that combines standard dermatology treatments with evidence-based lifestyle, nutrition, and complementary therapies. Integrative dermatology is intended to complement, not replace, proven medical treatments. Clinicians and patients will experience better outcomes when thinking about and treating “the whole patient” and not the specific medical condition alone.



Including factors such as diet, lifestyle modifications, and daily routines can lead to a healthier lifestyle and a healthier patient. This article will review a few recommendations that I believe can benefit a person’s skin health and reduce inflammation.

1.) Wash your pillowcases - Wash your pillowcases every 1-2 weeks, particularly if you have acne-prone skin. Pillowcases can accumulate skin oils and debris that can cause skin irritation and contribute to acne. Also, don’t forget to wash your face every night before going to bed.

2.) Avoid extreme temperatures when taking a

shower or bath - most people enjoy a very hot bath or shower, but lukewarm water is best. Extremes of temperature can impair the skin barrier and can lead to dryness, itching, and increased inflammation.

3.) Smoking Cessation - Smoking cessation not only improves our lung health and life longevity, but it also improves the reduction of inflammatory skin conditions like psoriasis and hidradenitis suppurativa (HS). Stopping smoking also helps with surgical wound healing and scar outcomes and improves our skin quality and cosmetic concerns.

4.) Mediterranean Lifestyle Diet - This diet includes high fruits and vegetables, fish (omega-3 fatty acids), nuts (almonds and walnuts), and fermented foods (yogurt). This diet helps with reducing inflammation and improving metabolic health. This can help with conditions like acne, psoriasis, and rosacea.

5.) Daily Skin Moisturizers - Moisturizers containing the ingredients of: ceramides, glycerin, colloidal oatmeal, hyaluronic acid and petroleum can improve skin barrier function, hydration, and symptoms of itching and dryness. Examples include Aveeno, Cerave, Vaseline, and Vanicream. It is best to apply moisturizers right after getting

out of the bath or shower. Daily moisturizer use can improve chronic inflammatory skin condition outcomes.

6.) Silicone gel and sheets for scars - best for raised scars and keloids. May reduce redness, itching and scar thickness. Best outcomes if used and applied for several months.

7.) Red light therapy face mask - this is an “at home” anti-aging device that can be used in conjunction with other important skin care products and treatments. Look for the red wavelength of 630-660 nm and near-infrared wavelength of 810-850 nm. Examples of FDA-cleared masks include Omnilux, Currentbody, and Therabody.

Consult with your dermatology medical provider before purchasing and treatment to make sure you are the right candidate and that you do not have any contraindications for its use.

8.) Salicylic Acid for warts - requires daily application for several weeks.

9.) Toenail Fungus - some at-home tips that can help reduce the risk and help in the treatment of toenail fungus include white vinegar soaks, keeping nails trimmed short/

thin, change socks regularly, and avoid walking barefoot in the gym or sauna.

10.) Sleep Optimization - 7 or more hours of sleep per night on a regular basis are recommended. Getting enough sleep has been shown to help aid in decreasing inflammation, increase our skin barrier repair, accelerate wound healing, and improve immune function. Beauty sleep is more than just a saying!

Lifestyle modifications in our

diet, daily routines, skin care products, and sleep can help improve our skin health and overall well-being and immune system. The skin is not separate from the person—it is a reflection of the internal health, lifestyle, environment, and experiences that shape us. As always, please reach out to your medical provider if you have any questions or concerns regarding your skin health and wellness.

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Finding Your Way Back to Calm Through the Breath



BY MICHAEL McMANUS,
LCSW, PSYCHOTHERAPIST

In nearly four decades of clinical practice, I've watched people spend years searching for relief from anxiety and depression before discovering that one of the most powerful tools was something they'd been doing, unconsciously, their entire lives: breathing.

Breath is unique among our bodily functions because it oper-

ates both automatically and voluntarily. We don't have to think about breathing, but we can also choose to change it, and in that choice lies real therapeutic power. When we're anxious, our breath tends to become shallow and rapid, living high in the chest. This isn't just a symptom. It's a feedback loop. Shallow breathing signals to the nervous system that danger is present, which produces more anxiety, which shallows the breath further. Depression often shows the opposite pattern: breath that's constricted, sighing, or barely present at all, as though the body has quietly given up asking for more air than it needs to survive.

This is why breathwork isn't just relaxation. It's a somatic intervention. The body holds what the mind sometimes cannot yet name or process. Work-

ing with breath allows us to reach nervous system states that talk therapy alone often can't touch directly. When we slow and deepen the breath, we activate the vagus nerve and shift the body out of sympathetic "fight or flight" activation and into the parasympathetic state, where healing, digestion, and clear thinking become possible again.

One of the most accessible techniques is **box breathing**, the method used by Navy SEALs to stay focused and steady under extreme pressure. It's simple. Inhale for a count of four, hold for four, exhale for four, hold for four, and repeat. The symmetry itself is grounding. There's something in the equal, structured rhythm that gives an anxious mind a place to rest. I recommend it often to clients before difficult conversa-

tions, during panic, or simply as a daily practice to build resilience over time.

There are other approaches worth knowing. **Diaphragmatic, or "belly," breathing** retrains the body to breathe from the base of the lungs rather than the chest, and this alone can lower baseline anxiety. 4-7-8 breathing, which means inhaling for four counts, holding for seven, and exhaling for eight, uses an extended exhale to trigger the body's relaxation response, and I often suggest it for sleep difficulties. More activating practices, like certain rhythmic or cyclic breathing patterns, can help move stuck grief or numbness when depression has flattened a person's emotional range.

What I find most meaningful, both as a clinician and simply as a person who has practiced

this myself for years, is that breathwork asks nothing of you that you don't already have. It requires no equipment, no appointment, and no permission. It meets you exactly where you are and offers a doorway back into your own body.

Anxiety and depression can make us feel exiled from ourselves. Breath is often the shortest way home. I'd encourage you to try one of these techniques this week, even for just a few minutes, and notice for yourself what shifts. Sometimes the most meaningful change starts with a single breath.

Michael McManus, LCSW, is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. Reach out for a free 10-minute consultation at (850) 837-0123 or contact by text or website: psychotherapy30A.com.

Understanding Aortic Dissection: One Patient's Story Of Survival And Recovery

Jeremy Ridley woke up confused in a hospital room at Ascension Sacred Heart Bay. He knew he'd been in a wreck, but not that he was fighting for his life. The collision had crushed his pelvis and broken nine ribs. Inside his chest, his aorta had torn open, a trauma that can claim lives in an instant.

"A heart attack is a plumbing problem. Something is clogging



the pipes," explained Dr. Richard Eubanks, a cardiothoracic surgeon at Ascension Sacred Heart Bay. "A dissection is the pipe splitting open."

The surgical team had to act fast to save Jeremy's life. Dr. Eubanks and his team chose a minimally invasive approach. They threaded a specialized stent through the groin to seal the tear from the inside, allowing a faster recovery from the procedure.

Due to multiple severe traumatic injuries, Jeremy spent months in the hospital and rehabilitation. He had to relearn to walk. Although his recovery was long and difficult, he persevered, running 5K races as soon as he was physically able.

"I can see God's hands in everything," Ridley said. "He put us in the right place at Ascension

Continued on page 26

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Michael McManus LCSW

Never Take Counsel of Your Fears



By KERRY KNIGHT, MINISTER,
EMERALD BEACH CHURCH OF
CHRIST

During World War II, a military governor met with General George Patton in Sicily. When he praised Patton highly for his courage and bravery, the general replied, “Sir, I am not a brave man. The truth is, I am an utter craven coward. I have never

been within the sound of gunshot or in sight of battle in my whole life that I wasn’t so scared that I had sweat in the palms of my hands.” Years later, when Patton’s autobiography was published, it contained this significant statement by the general: “I learned very early in my life never to take counsel of my fears.”

What a lesson for Christians! When we start focusing on our fears, we make God very small. Listen to what David said in Psalm 34:4: “I sought the Lord, and He answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.”

We find strength by giving

our fears up to God. Paul spoke to his spiritual son, Timothy and offered him the greatest encouragement ever. “For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love; and of a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7).



Bay County Sheriff’s Office Warns Public of Increase in Scam Calls

The Bay County Sheriff’s Office is warning residents about an increase in sophisticated warrant scam calls.

Callers impersonate members of the Bay County Sheriff’s Office and often possess personal information about their intended victims, including their name, place of employment, and family details. To make the call appear legitimate, scammers use technology known as “caller ID spoofing,” which can cause the victim’s phone to display the Bay County Sheriff’s Office’s actual phone number.

The scammer typically tells the victim they failed to report for jury duty and that a warrant has been issued for their arrest. They then claim the warrant can be resolved immediately if the victim sends money through a Bitcoin ATM, purchases gift cards, or uses another form of electronic payment.

This is a scam.

The Bay County Sheriff’s Office will never call an individual and demand payment to avoid arrest, clear a warrant, or resolve a criminal matter. Deputies and Sheriff’s

Office personnel do not accept payment through Bitcoin ATMs, gift cards, wire transfers, or any similar methods.

Residents who receive one of these calls should:

- Hang up immediately.
- Do not provide personal or financial information.
- Do not send money in any form.

Contact the Bay County Sheriff’s Office directly at 850-747-4700 and ask to speak with the Warrants Division if they have questions about the legitimacy of the call or believe they may have an active warrant.

The Sheriff’s Office encourages everyone to discuss these scams with family members, friends, and neighbors. Especially older adults who are frequently targeted by fraudsters. Public awareness remains one of the most effective ways to prevent additional victims.

Anyone who believes they have been targeted by this scam or has suffered a financial loss should report the incident to the Bay County Sheriff’s Office as soon as possible.

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Sean of the South: Ball Games



BY SEAN DIETRICH

I remember going to a ball game with my old man. I remember the smells. Stale beer, human sweat, and the odor of unnaturally pink hotdogs that turned your bowels into stone.

I remember before the game, things got very quiet. All 30-odd thousand people rose. The throngs of stadium chairs creaking sounded like the world was splitting.

Everyone’s dad put down his non-evangelical beverage, SLOWLY, careful not to spill. Thousands of American grandpas removed lit cigars and balanced them, with surgical-like care, onto armrests.

The anthem was played.

Back in those days, the anthem was handled differently than it is today. Back then, guest artists did not take the mound, wearing asymmetric haircuts and crotch-revealing trousers. Neither did singers demonstrate

10 minutes of vocal gymnastics until their anthem performance resembled a febrile seizure.

No. Back then the organ played. And everybody sang.

We used to be a nation of singers. Remember that? Singing was just normal for us. Our childhood classrooms had upright console pianos, and our teachers knew how to play them. Mrs. Moore would bang out “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” before each class. Mrs. Smith played “This Land is Your Land” every Friday after the Pledge.

Well, that was a long time ago.

Recently, I attended a modern baseball game. It was a very different experience. My wife and I ordered \$34 nachos from a kiosk, and the cashier asked whether I wanted to leave a 25-percent tip. Beers were \$18 apiece.

During the game, a huge LED timer runs between pitches so TV producers can fit in more commercials on broadcasts. The bases are now bigger; the distance between bases is now shorter. They’re changing our game.

But none of that bothered me. Not really. A Major League park is what it is. Get over it. At a ball game, you get what you get, and you don’t pitch a fit.

What I was most interested

in, truthfully, was the anthem. I was curious about it. I wondered: Do people still sing together the way they did 40 years ago?

After all, our world is nothing like it was. Our current world, for example, is almost devoid of classroom pianos. In 1938 the New York Times reported that 5.8 million pianos were sold in America each year. Whereas last year we barely sold 30,000.

So anyway, the moment of truth arrived. The announcer asked everyone to rise for the anthem.

People stood. Chairs creaked. Dads placed beers beneath seats. People who were vaping expelled a final blast and hid their devices from security.

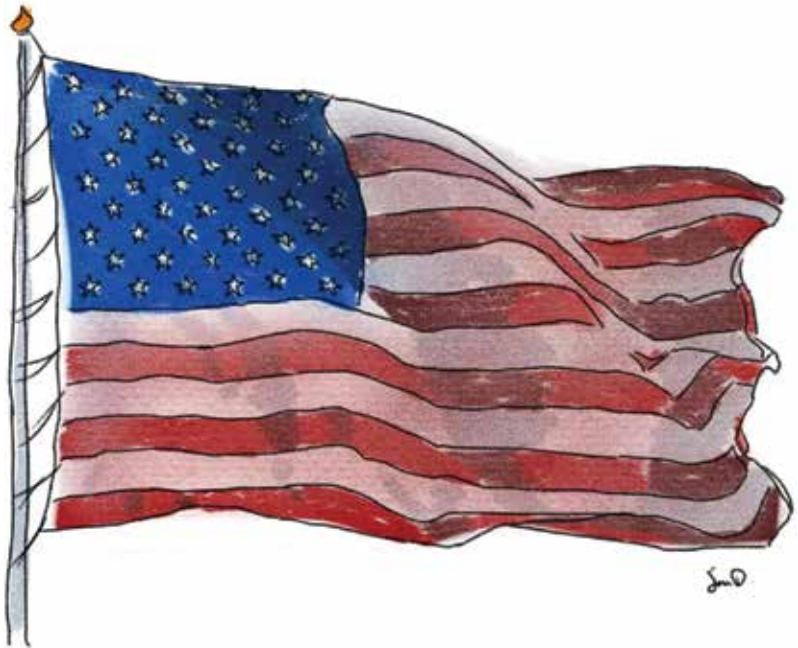
Everyone looked at the flag. The music began.

And...

Everyone knew the words. Everyone sang. The stadium sounded like it was going to crumble beneath the volume of mass singing.

The boy next to me held his hat over his heart, singing so loudly the vein in his head showed. The old man beside the boy was singing even louder.

But when the song finished, the people were not. In fact, the crowd was only just getting



warmed up. They kept cheering. For whole minutes, they cheered.

Fists pumped into the air. People were hugging. A flag waved on the mega-tron screen. The sound of unified voices was engulfing. Fighter jets flew overhead. Fireworks. People were amazingly, wholeheartedly, demonstratively together. Even if only for a few seconds in time.

And in that beautiful moment of oneness, that moment of palpable joy, do you know something?

Nobody seemed to care about Cracker Barrel’s sign.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and

novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in *Southern Living*, *The Tallahassee Democrat*, *Good Grit*, *South Magazine*, *Alabama Living*, the *Birmingham News*, *Thom Magazine*, *The Mobile Press Register*, and he has authored seven books.

ONE PATIENT

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Sacred Heart Bay, and gave the care team the wisdom to save me. I wouldn’t be here without them; it’s just amazing.”

Jeremy’s recovery is remarkable, but aortic dissections occur more often than most people realize. Dr. Eubanks treats roughly 15 to 25 cases in this region each year. High blood pressure is the primary driver of this condition. He urges adults to target a blood pressure below 130/80.

“Know your numbers,” Dr. Eubanks advised. “Use a home blood pressure cuff and keep a simple log to track trends.”

Unlike a heart attack that builds slowly, a dissection feels like a light switch. Pain hits maximum intensity in an instant. Because the aorta runs the length of the torso, symptoms often confuse patients. While some might feel back pain or stroke symptoms, another feels chest pressure.

If you or someone else experiences sudden tearing pain, don’t drive. Call 911 immediately. Untreated, the risk of death from aortic dissection increases every hour.

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Wise Investment



BY RICK MOORE

An older pastor was having a late Sunday lunch with a new pastor who had just moved to town. The older pastor asked the younger pastor how it was going. He responded, “Great! We had three people commit their lives to God at church today. How about you?” The older pastor responded, “Very well. We had two and a half people commit their lives to God at church today.” The younger pastor scratched his head for a moment. What is half of a person? As soon as he felt he had figured out the riddle, he yelled out, “I know; you had two adults and one child. That makes it two and a half.” The older pastor said, “No, it was two



children and one adult.” You see, many adults only have half of their life before them once they see the light. But a child has his entire life before him. The greatest potential for a great return will always be investing in people when they are young. Remember, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

A church I was working at in New England had just built a state-of-the-art children’s auditorium, and the date of their

grand opening was the Sunday before VBS (Vacation Bible School). Over five hundred children signed up for a fun week of sports, crafts and bible studies. During the VBS, we accepted suggestions from adults and children to determine what the name of the auditorium should be. The Monday morning after VBS was over, while I was helping tear down the sets and props in the children’s theater, I was told there was an urgent phone call

for me at the front desk. A lady I did not know asked me to come to the emergency room and pray for her son. He was run over by a car and was in critical condition. Neither she nor her son showed up in our church database. After praying for the boy who was in the ICU, I went to the waiting room to speak with his mom and his little brother. She had never been to our church, and her son, who was run over by the car, had never been to our church. However, the little brother who witnessed the accident attended VBS every day. The mother said

she did not know who I was, but that the little brother kept saying, “You have to call Pastor Rick to come pray.” After that, we knew for sure what the name of that auditorium should be... The Lighthouse. When the storms of life come, the church stands as a lighthouse, even to those who have never walked through its doors.

There can be times it may seem as if teaching a child doesn’t pay off. Often it is because they do not understand how much you care and want the best for them. Sometimes children do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. It may be you have to quit focusing on what you want them to learn and try new ways to show you care. If you spend time showing a child how to make a kite or paint a canvas with a palette and brush, suddenly that child’s ears start listening to what you have to say. When you have an opportunity to invest by spending more time with your own children, or volunteering to help other children, just say yes.

Rick Moore is Communication Pastor at Destiny Worship.

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Why You Keep Second-Guessing Your Flooring Decision (and How to Feel Confident in Your Choice)

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

Choosing new flooring should be exciting. You're transforming one of the largest surfaces in your home and creating the foundation for your design. But for many homeowners, excitement quickly turns into uncertainty.

You find a flooring style you love, then start questioning every detail. Does it work with your cabinets? Will it still feel current in a few years? Is there another option that might be better?

If you've found yourself stuck between samples or wondering whether you're making the right choice, you're not alone. Flooring is a long-term investment, and choosing the right option requires more than just picking what looks good in a showroom.

Understanding why you're second-guessing your decision is the first step toward feeling confident in your choice—and

moving forward without hesitation.

You're Trying to Plan for Every Possible Future

One of the biggest reasons homeowners hesitate is because flooring feels permanent. Unlike paint or décor that can be changed more easily, flooring impacts your home for years, which can make the decision feel overwhelming.

Many homeowners start thinking through every possible scenario:

"What if my style changes?"

"What if this trend goes away?"

"What if I choose the wrong color?"

While it's smart to consider longevity, trying to predict every future design choice can make the process more stressful than it needs to be—and often leads to unnecessary second-guessing.

Instead, focus on how you use your home today. The best flooring choice is one that com-



plements your lifestyle, supports your daily routines, and feels right in your space now.

You're Not Seeing the Full Picture

A flooring sample can look completely different depending on where you view it.

Showroom lighting, natural light, wall colors, cabinets, and furniture all influence how flooring appears. A style that catches your eye in a showroom may feel different once it's placed next to your existing finishes at home.

That's why it's important to consider flooring as part of the

entire space—not as a stand-alone sample. Looking at it in context helps eliminate doubt and gives you a clearer sense of how the finished result will feel.

Too Many Options Can Make the Decision Harder

Having options is helpful, but too many can quickly lead to decision fatigue.

When every sample feels like a possibility, it becomes difficult to determine what is actually the best fit. The key is not finding more options—it's finding the right ones for your home and narrowing your focus.

Start by identifying what matters most for your home. Durability, style, and maintenance should guide your decision and help you eliminate choices that don't align.

Great Design Isn't About Matching Everything Perfectly

Another common reason homeowners second-guess flooring is the idea that every-

thing needs to coordinate perfectly.

While flooring should complement your finishes, a well-designed space isn't created by making every element identical. The most thoughtfully designed homes include contrast and variation that make each room feel intentional and visually balanced.

Choose What Works for Your Home—Not Just What's Trending

It's easy to get caught up in what's popular, especially when you're surrounded by inspiration online. But trends come and go, while your flooring becomes part of your everyday life.

Instead of asking, "Will everyone like this?" ask, "Will I love living with this?"

Your home should reflect your lifestyle and your needs. The right flooring is the one that feels both functional and right

Continued on page 31

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Design and Culture: **What's New in Countertops**



Scandi Blue by Vadaara Quartz



Cristallo Maestro Quartzite



Waterfall edge with detail by Granite Plus

It has been very exciting in the world of countertops in the last year with lots of new colors. Inspired by natural stones and with a shift into more color, designers are pushing the limits of stone, now adding it in collaboration with cabinet fronts and adding extra details to backsplashes and waterfalls.

Quartzite continues to be the most popular natural stone with its variety of colors and patterns. Quartzite just has that essence of vibrance and depth that just can't be captured by something manmade. At Granite Plus we have a wide selection of quartzites to choose from. We also have distributors all over the country to help you find exactly what you're looking for.

Vadara quartz is a wonderful quartz and has a limited lifetime warranty. They have added six new lovely colors that are inspired by Calacatta Marble: Scandi Blue, Terra Vista, Desert Blush, Moonlit Lace, Desert Blush, Safari Delta, Gassomer Sands and Golden Scribe. These are all beautiful selections for our coastal homes. Vadara Quartz is an excellent choice if you are doing a waterfall edge. One of their classic colors is White Aurora which really has those Calacatta marble characteristics with grey and gold tones

and soft veins. You can find out more at Vadaraquartz.com or stop by our showroom to see samples.

Viatera Quartz released some colors inspired by Quartzites which are elegant and charming, Macaubus Bianco and Gemini. Viatera has always had some lovely Calacatta colors and now they have added Their Suprema collection which is elegant and timeless. Most colors of Viatera Quartz are manufactured in Adairsville, GA. If you would like to learn more, you can visit LXHausys.com to view their Viatera collection or stop by our showroom to view samples.

These are just a few of the new quartz collections out there. You can contact us at Granite Plus and we can assist you in finding that perfect countertop for your space. Our showroom is located at 17801 Ashley Dr. Panama City Beach FL 32413. You can also give a call at (850) 236-6363. We look forward to meeting you!



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BY TIPP SPRADLIN

Fighter pilot John Boyd developed a decision-making framework called the OODA Loop: Observe, Orient, Decide, Act. The idea is that the faster you can cycle through these four steps, the faster you can move. But if you get stuck in any one of them, you're paralyzed.

I've been watching this play out with FSBO buyers lately (that's For Sale By Owner; pronounced 'fizz-bo'). And they're all stuck in the same place of knowing they don't know how to buy a business. Many of them turn to AI for help.

Starting in Observe mode, they ask AI how to value a business. How to structure a deal. What to watch out for. What

financials to request. What legal documents matter. How to find out if the price is fair. And AI gives them answers. Lots of them. Frameworks. Checklists. Rabbit holes. AI can be a useful resource, but it's designed to give the user a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' experience that has no ending until they run out of usage credits. Or hopefully a loved one pulls them away from the brink before their brain glitches and face melts.

Then they try to Orient themselves with all that information. Here's where AI becomes a liability: it only has access to open-source information and whatever the user feeds it. It doesn't have access to the confidential data that actually matters, like recent business sales, actual multiples paid, what healthy cash flow looks like for a specific market, or buyer trends. That data lives safely offline, in the broker's experiences, files and closed deals. It's intentionally private.

That doesn't stop AI from confidently giving answers based on incomplete information presented as facts. It generates checklists and structures offers that feel comprehensive but miss the context that would actually help them Decide. They end up with a mountain of information and a sea of confusion.

Now they're stuck. They know what to ask, but not why it matters. They don't know which questions move the needle and which ones are academic. They can't Decide because there's not enough context to evaluate the mountain of information.

They're no longer in a productive decision-making loop; instead, they find themselves in Observe, Overwhelm, Brick Wall, Stuck. Getting smarter without getting wiser. So they don't Act.

A broker doesn't remove the work. We don't skip any steps in your OODA Loop. But we compress the timeline and clarify the

context. We've Observed lots of transactions and understand what it takes to close the deal. We know how to Orient you to what matters like a well-written purchase agreement that protects all parties. We can help you Decide faster because we've seen what happens with an inflated valuation during due diligence. This knowledge empowers you to Act on solid ground.

That's not handholding. That's the difference between Information and Knowledge.

If you're looking at a FSBO business and you're feeling para-

lyzed and drowning in questions and data but unable to move, it's time to talk to a human. Specifically, a human business broker who can help complete your OODA loop.

Reach out. Let's get you Oriented.

Tipp Spradlin is a Human Business Sales Advisor with First Choice Business Brokers, NW Florida, helping buyers navigate business transactions with clarity and confidence. Reach her at tipp.spradlin@fcbb.com or 850-532-8882.

Information vs. Knowledge: Why FSBO Buyers Get Stuck

FLOORING

continued from page 12

for the way you live—something you'll appreciate every day, not just when it's new.

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ideal-LIVING Magazine Names Latitude Margaritaville Communities Among Top 100 Best Places to Live

Latitude Margaritaville communities in Panama City Beach, Florida, and Hilton Head, South Carolina, have been recognized by ideal-LIVING magazine among the Top 100 Best Places to Live across the nation and abroad. Selections are in the magazine's annual "Best Places to Live" Summer 2026 issue.

Best Places to Live communities are selected based on extensive reader surveys to identify most desired community amenities and lifestyle preferences. These carefully curated communities are distinguished by their top-tier offerings, including a diverse array of amenities such as golf courses, tennis and pickleball courts, watersports facilities, extensive hiking and biking trails, state-of-the-art fitness centers, luxurious spas, marinas, and inviting pools.

They are also chosen based on fostering a strong sense of community, promoting healthy living through walkable environments, and often providing the peace of mind that comes with gated security and numerous social clubs. Many offer the convenience of self-contained living with access to restaurants, grocery stores, and crucial proximity to quality medical centers,



alongside the appeal of maintenance-free living with beautifully maintained homes.

Latitude Margaritaville communities are developed by master developer Minto Communities under license from global lifestyle brand Margaritaville Holdings. Latitude Margaritaville Daytona Beach, the first of these communities, sold out in 2025 — more than five years ahead of projections. The second is Latitude Margaritaville Hilton Head in South Carolina. The third, Latitude Margaritaville Watersound, is near Panama City Beach on Northwest Florida's Emerald Coast. It is being developed through an expanded collaboration that also includes the St. Joe Company. Plans are currently underway for additional Latitude Margaritaville communities in Naples, Florida and Texas with others planned for more of the nation's most popular destinations.

For more information on Latitude Margaritaville and to sign up to receive regular development updates, visit www.LatitudeMargaritaville.com.



BY DON CARTER,
SECURE VISION

Every HOA board faces the same challenge: delivering high-quality services while remaining a responsible steward of community finances.

Internet service is often one of the largest technology expenses within a community, yet it is also one of the most visible services residents use every

day. The question is no longer whether communities should invest in connectivity. The question is how to maximize value while maintaining exceptional service.

Many communities still operate with a fragmented approach, where individual residents select their own providers and infrastructure evolves over time without a long-term strategy. While this may appear flexible, it often creates inconsistent experiences, duplicate infrastructure, and higher overall costs.

A community-wide approach can deliver significant advantages.

By planning connectivity at the property level, boards can often achieve:

- More predictable budgeting
- Consistent service levels throughout the community
- Reduced infrastructure duplication
- Better long-term scalability
- Improved negotiating leverage with providers

The goal should not be finding the lowest-cost internet option. The goal should be finding the best value.

A properly designed network can often deliver better performance while reducing operational complexity. Modern

managed Wi-Fi solutions, enterprise-grade equipment, and centralized network management allow communities to support increasing bandwidth demands while maintaining reliability.

This becomes especially important in resort and coastal markets where occupancy can fluctuate dramatically throughout the year. Networks must be designed to perform during peak demand periods while remaining cost-effective during quieter months.

Boards that take a proactive approach to connectivity planning often discover opportuni-

ties to improve resident satisfaction while gaining better control over long-term costs.

Like any critical infrastructure investment, internet service delivers the greatest value when it is approached strategically rather than reactively.

The communities seeing the best results today are not necessarily spending more. They are simply planning smarter.

Secure Vision works with associations throughout Gulf Shores to design, implement, and support connectivity solutions built for modern demand.

GUT SPEAKS

continued from page 7

hand, or simply be present. Children often take emotional cues from the adults around them, and a calm presence can be incredibly grounding.

Encourage slow breathing. A simple technique such as box breathing can help calm the nervous system: inhale through the nose for four seconds, hold for four, exhale gently for four, and pause for four before repeating. Younger children may enjoy imagining they're smelling a flower on the inhale and slowly blowing out birthday candles on the exhale.

Offer a few small sips of water and allow the moment to slow down.

These simple steps aren't meant to replace medical care. They create an opportunity to observe whether symptoms begin to settle while helping children reconnect with their bodies.

If stomachaches have happened around previous school years, don't wait until the first

difficult morning to talk about them. A relaxed conversation a few days before school starts can go a long way.

Ask open-ended questions: "What are you most excited about this year?" "Is there anything you're a little nervous about?" "I remember your tummy bothering you before school last year. How are you feeling about going back?"

Sometimes children don't know exactly what's bothering them until they're given a safe space to think about it. If this has been a recurring pattern, consider letting your child's teacher or school staff know ahead of time. A little extra reassurance or simply having another trusted adult aware of the situation can make the transition easier.

Supporting the whole child also means supporting healthy daily habits. Consistent sleep, balanced meals with protein and fiber, regular movement, outdoor play, hydration, and opportunities for meaningful conversation all help children adapt more effectively to change.

Not every stomachache is re-

lated to the nervous system, and it's important not to assume it is. If stomachaches become frequent, interfere with school or daily life, or are accompanied by concerning symptoms, reach out to your child's pediatrician. They know your child's medical history and can help determine whether additional evaluation or treatment is needed.

Perhaps the most important takeaway is this: Symptoms are information.

Rather than asking only, "How do we make this go away?" it can be equally valuable to ask, "What might this symptom be trying to tell us?"

Sometimes the answer lies in the digestive system. Sometimes it's the nervous system adapting to change. Often, it's a combination of several factors.

As another school year begins, remember that children don't always have the words to explain what's happening inside.

Sometimes the gut speaks first.

When families respond with curiosity instead of assumptions, they become better equipped to recognize when a child simply needs reassurance, when they may need a little extra support, and when it's time to partner with their pediatrician. Because every symptom has a story, and sometimes, listening is the first step toward understanding it.

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