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From Hope to Healing: Changing the Narrative on Pancreatic Cancer

BY DEBORAH THURMON,
ECPCI BOARD MEMBER,
AND DEBRA TAYLOR, ECPCI
ASSOCIATE BOARD MEMBER

Sometimes the most meaningful journeys begin with words no one ever expects to hear: "You have cancer."

In September 2014, Doris Bowdoin had just celebrated her 70th birthday surrounded by family and friends. She felt healthy, active, and full of life, with no reason to believe anything was wrong. Then one morning, Doris looked in the mirror and noticed that her eyes had turned yellow. Within days, she received a devastating diagnosis: Stage III pancreatic cancer.

Pancreatic cancer can be difficult to detect early because symptoms may not appear until the disease has progressed. For Doris, jaundice was the first warning that something was wrong. Still, she was determined to fight. Doris and her family began researching treatment options, and that search led her



to the University of Alabama at Birmingham and pancreatic surgeon Dr. Sushanth Reddy. On October 31, 2014,

Halloween Day, Doris underwent the complex Whipple procedure.

The surgery saved her life,

but recovery brought complications, chemotherapy, hospitalizations, and months of healing. Eventually, her treatments ended and her scans became clear. More than a decade later, Doris remains a Stage III pancreatic cancer survivor.

Her story is also a reminder of why early detection and continued research are so important. Scientists are exploring new ways to detect pancreatic cancer earlier and developing more personalized treatment approaches. Advances in blood-based testing, genetics, targeted therapies, and other areas of research are bringing renewed hope to patients and families.

For Doris, however, surviving pancreatic cancer was only the beginning. After her recovery, Doris and four of her closest friends became increasingly aware of other families facing the same frighten-

HOPE

continued on page 2



Pirates of the High Seas & Renaissance Fest Returns Oct. 9-11

All mateys, fair maidens and swashbucklers are invited for the Oct. 9-11 return of the annual Pirates of the High Seas & Renaissance Fest in Panama City Beach. During this free three-day festival, attendees can show out in their best pirate and Renaissance garb and enjoy fireworks, live mermaid shows, a fire circus, parades and additional high-seas revelry, including sword demonstrations and a Pirates Pub.

For the little members of the

PIRATES

continued on page 2



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Community

PIRATES

continued from page 1

krewe, the Kid’s Zone: The Lil’ Swashbuckler’s Playdeck offers plenty of kid-friendly ways to join the adventure, including caricature artists, friendship bracelet making, foam hats and swords, and other hands-on activities.

At the heart of the festival is a tale rooted in local history: the story of Dominique Youx and his krewe of buccaneers who proudly defended Panama City Beach from treasure-seeking invaders in the early 1800s. Throughout the festival, storytelling, lively performances and other adventures bring guests back to the days when pirates sailed the Gulf.

“Pirates Fest is a signature event that has grown immensely over the past few years, much to the delight of visitors and lo-



cal,” said Griff Griffiths, president and CEO of Visit Panama City Beach. “It combines history and family-friendly entertainment in a way that is unique to Panama City Beach, inviting guests of all ages to become part of the adventure.”

The Renaissance portion of the festival brings knights, gentry and old-world festivities to

the destination.

Pirates of the High Seas & Renaissance Fest would not be complete without the return of Panama City Beach’s own Pirates of the White Sands. Led by Captain Ransom (Del) Mayhem (Mcree), this krewe volunteers its time every year to bring this rich history to life through photo opportunities, music, interactions

with pirates and games that immerse visitors to the days when buccaneers ruled the Gulf.

Throughout the event dates, visitors will have the opportunity to kick off the day with Breakfast with Pirates, offering an opportunity to meet festival pirates, take photos, and enjoy a fun, family-friendly experience before heading to the festival. The breakfast is free to attend.

Breakfast with the Pirates Schedule:

Hyatt Place Panama City Beach | Friday, Oct. 9 from 8-10 a.m. | Open to hotel guests only
Margaritaville Beach Cottage Resort | Saturday, Oct. 10 from 8-10 a.m. | Open to the public
Embassy Suites by Hilton | Sunday, Oct. 11 from 8-10 a.m. | Open to the public

For the full schedule of events, please visit <https://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/pirates-of-the-high-seas-fest>.

HOPE

continued from page 1

ing diagnosis. They understood the emotional, physical, and financial challenges pancreatic cancer can bring, and they

wanted to do something.

Inspired by Doris’s survival and the fact that her life-saving surgery took place on Halloween, the friends embraced a playful witch theme. In 2017, they founded the nonprofit

Witches of St. Andrews, Inc. and created what would become one of the community’s most recognizable annual traditions. Participants dressed as witches and warlocks walked the parade, rode decorated bicycles,

and drove decorated golf carts through Historic St. Andrews to raise awareness and money for pancreatic cancer.

What began as a small group

Continued on page 4



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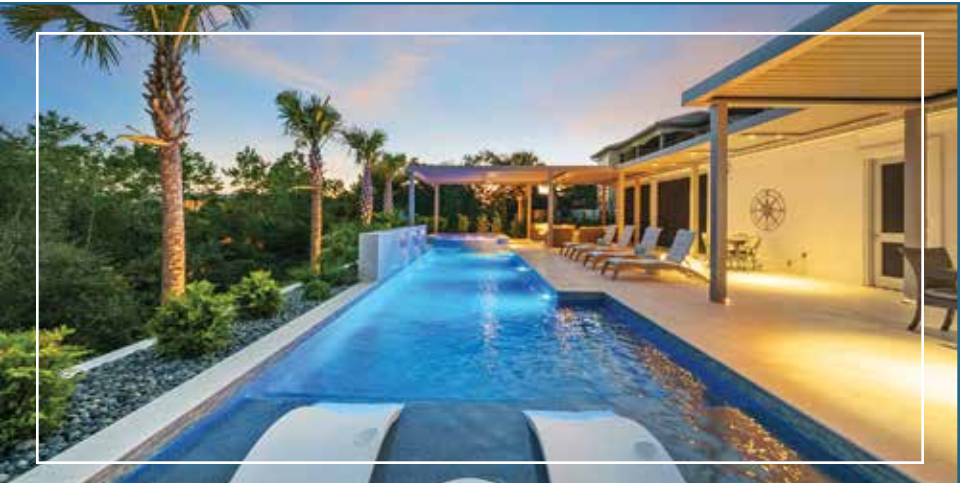
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Amendment 3 and Impacts on Florida Library Funding

The Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries encourages residents to research and understand the likely impacts on Florida library funding if Florida's Amendment 3: Homestead Tax Exemptions, Property Assessments, and Spending Restrictions Amendment passes in November. Although the amendment has not yet been voted upon, the Bay County Public Library's book budget has already been reduced by over 40% (\$90,000) and library open hours cut to 5 days a week for the 2027 Fiscal Year[1]. A hiring freeze is already in place. While there is the final Budget Meeting on September 25, these cuts are most likely to stay as stated. If Amendment 3 passes by a 60% vote, even greater cuts to the library budget are likely. If Amendment 3 passes, the impact to Bay County will likely be a decrease of \$36 million[2] in tax revenue. The Bay County Public Library will pay the price and will no longer be able to provide its current level of exceptional services to the community.

The Northwest Regional Library System library card is free for residents of Bay, Gulf and Liberty counties. Our library community depends on a stable local tax revenue to provide new books and materials, public computers, Wi-Fi, early literacy and children's programs, adult programming, job seeker support, meeting rooms, mobile library services, trusted reference support and a vibrant space for life-long learners of all ages. Diminishment of these services would be detrimental to the well-being of our thriving community, currently and for future generations. Libraries are now more than ever relevant to a growing and productive community.

Florida's Amendment 3 will detrimentally impact libraries across the state of Florida. While each library maintains its own unique budget, many libraries are funded largely by their local County or City General Fund generated by Property Taxes. Other than property taxes, there are no alternative funding sources to cover these

costs at this time.

The passage of Amendment 3 means Florida libraries will lose book funding; some will lose staff, which may reduce library hours, and some libraries will close completely in 2027. Immediate library closures are most likely to occur in smaller municipalities and counties where there is less funding available. Each library funded by property taxes will face more dire budget challenges in the future years to come, permanently transforming the landscape of Florida libraries forever. Once a library closes, the likelihood of it reopening is unknown, unpredictable, and may take years to return, if ever.

The Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries is a 501(3)(c) nonprofit organization that supports the programs and activities of the Bay County Public Libraries. This effort is to help educate the public about the dire impact on libraries if Amendment 3 passes. The Friends encourage each voter to do their own research – know before you vote. Libraries are



PHOTO CREDIT: LOU COLUMBUS
Sarah Burris, President of the Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries.

investments in a community's future. Below are a few Bay County Public Library community voices who value the library and support library funding.

<https://www.baycountycl.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21090/FY-2027-Tentative-Budget-Commissioner-Book---09-15-26>

2. <https://www.baycountycl.gov/829/Understand-ing-Amendment-3>

Some Bay County Public Library Community Voices:

"Libraries are lifelines from providing access to the internet to discovering the book needed at the right time. Nationwide, literacy levels are

low. Access to a wide selection of books and early literacy programs help a child start on the right track for all families. Libraries are for everyone. As a stay-at-home mom, I save hundreds in one library visit with picture books alone."

- Sarah Burris, President of the Friends of the Bay County Public Libraries

"Losing funding for our library will hurt our community's access to culture, knowledge, and stories. We must protect funding to ensure our libraries stay strong so everyone can enjoy this incredible resource."

- Hung Tran

"We use this library. We went yesterday to get more books, and there are so many things happening there that people probably don't even realize. Books, children's programs, computers, educational resources, community programs and so much more. I'm all for saving people money. Lord knows we all need it. But I also think we need to understand where that money is coming from and what we could lose along with it. Support your local library. These places matter."

- Steph Kelly & Shanda Walker

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PCB Chamber Spotlight



Tangerine Express: Global Innovation, Local Commitment

Some businesses begin with a storefront. Others begin with an idea. Tangerine Express began with technology, family, and a vision that eventually led to Panama City Beach.

The story began in 2024 with Miguel Vargas, creator and developer of Que Pedimos, an innovative bilingual ordering and restaurant-management platform. Miguel worked with his son, Johan Sebastian Vargas, to integrate Que Pedimos directly into Clover as a native application, laying the foundation for a broader technology and payment-services company.

That technology was already taking shape when Canadian entrepreneur Wessel "Wes" van Loenen became an investor, co-owner, and managing partner. His connection to the company is also a family one: Wes's wife, Diana, is part of the Vargas family, bringing two families



together through both business and personal relationships.

Wes and Diana invested in the company and came to Florida with their two children, drawn by Panama City Beach's entrepreneurial spirit, economic opportunity, and strong sense of community. Their vision is to build a company that grows alongside the community around it.

Today, Johan serves as founder and general manager, bringing his technology experience

and knowledge of Que Pedimos to the company. Wes is preparing to help lead the company's next stage of growth, including its brand, operations, and expansion of local services.

Supporting the company's current operations are Sophia Espinal, administrator and project manager, and Dawson Venable, technical support and customer care specialist. Together, the local team helps clients from their initial consultation and onboarding through installation,

employee training, and ongoing support.

Tangerine Express serves restaurants, cafés, bakeries, food trucks, retail stores, and other small businesses with Clover and iMin point-of-sale equipment, payment processing, Que Pedimos software, online ordering, delivery-management tools, installation, training, and technical support.

But technology is only part of the story. The other part is people.

Tangerine Express takes the time to understand how each business operates and what its owners actually need, rather than simply selling equipment and moving on. The company is also proud to provide bilingual English and Spanish support, helping bridge language barriers for business owners throughout Panama City Beach and the Florida Panhandle.

As the company grows, Wes and Diana envision creating additional local jobs, including opportunities for motivated sales professionals to help expand Tangerine Express and build relationships with businesses throughout the region. Diana also plans to join the company's sales and marketing team once authorized to work in the United States. Tangerine Express also looks forward to supporting fellow Chamber members and participating in community initiatives.

For the family behind Tangerine Express, this is about more than technology. It's about building relationships, creating opportunity, and growing something local with a global vision.

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HOPE

continued from page 2

of friends quickly grew. More witches and warlocks joined, more walkers took part, decorated bicycles and golf carts filled the streets, businesses became sponsors, and families came to cheer them on. Behind the costumes and fun was always a serious purpose: supporting pancreatic cancer patients and their families, raising awareness, and helping fund research focused on earlier detection and a cure.

As the nonprofit's mission expanded, its leaders realized its name needed to grow with it. In March 2026, Witches of St. Andrews, Inc. became the Emerald Coast Pancreatic Cancer Initiative, Inc., or ECPCI Cares. Today, ECPCI provides financial assistance to pancreatic cancer patients and families throughout the Emerald Coast, promotes awareness, and supports promising research. Most importantly, the organization wants families facing pancreatic cancer to know they do not have to face it alone.

Ten years later, the Ride has become a celebration of survival, remembrance, community, and hope. The witches and warlocks, however, are not going anywhere.



On Saturday, October 24, 2026, the community will celebrate the 10th Anniversary Ride for the Cure for Pancreatic Cancer, with Panama City native and U.S. Congressman Jimmy Patronis serving as Grand Marshal. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Captain's Table Fish House Restaurant on Beck Avenue, with the parade beginning at 10:30 a.m.

So grab your witch hat and join us! Walk the parade, ride a bicycle decked out for the oc-

casion, or join the fun in a festive golf cart. Prefer to watch? Cheering from the sidelines is free and everyone is welcome. Want to join the celebration at Captain's Table? Tickets are \$48 and include lunch, live music, a remembrance ceremony, and access to the silent auction.

Come for the fun. Join the cause. Help us make a difference.

To register or learn more, visit www.ecpcicare.org/registerfortheride.

PCB Chamber Spotlight



Mythic Group: Building the Future from Panama City Beach

For Napoleon “Nap” deCiutiis and his wife Denise, Panama City Beach is more than a place they live. It’s home.

Both long-time residents of Panama City Beach, they have always valued the community, lifestyle, and people that make this area special. The DeCiutiis family spends time on the water, walking the beach, and enjoying creating quality memories with their five children. Upon retiring after a 24-year career as a U.S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Master Chief (EODCM), Nap chose Panama City Beach as the place to continue serving, this time by building a company focused on innovation, technology, and creating opportunities within the community.

That company is Mythic Group, Inc.

Mythic Group was founded by a team of five partners who share a vision of bringing advanced manufacturing capabilities to Panama City Beach and the Gulf Coast region. Each partner brings a unique background and expertise, combining decades of experience in leadership, engineering, manufacturing, technology development, business operations, and strategic growth.

Mythic is a Panama City Beach-based advanced material science and manufacturing company specializing in large-format additive manufacturing (LFAM), composite materials, and mobilized manufacturing solutions. The company is focused on changing the way large-scale products are designed, engineered, and manufactured by combining advanced materials with next-generation 3D printing technology.



The company’s work includes applications in marine systems, unmanned platforms, infrastructure, and other areas where stronger, lighter, and more adaptable products are needed. Mythic’s goal is to help bring advanced manufacturing closer to where it is needed while reducing traditional production timelines.

Behind the scenes, Denise has been an important part of the journey. While Nap locally manages growth, partnerships, and technology development, Denise has supported the countless hours and decisions that come with building a company from the ground up. Together, they have built a family that values service, hard work, faith in the process, and being involved in the community they call home.

That commitment to community extends beyond the company itself. Mythic welcomes students from Bay County schools, Florida State University, and Gulf Coast State College to tour the facility, learn about advanced manufacturing, and see how engineering, robotics, and material science come together in a real-world environment.



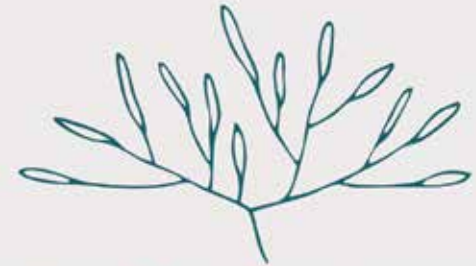
For Nap, service has always been a way of life. His military career was built around leading teams, solving difficult problems, and finding solutions in challenging environments. Those same values guide Mythic today: integrity, innovation, education, and doing things the right way.

The deCiutiis family believes businesses have a responsibility to be good stewards of the communities they call home. For Mythic, that means investing in Panama City Beach, creating opportunities, supporting local partnerships, and showing that advanced technology can grow right here on the Emerald Coast.

“Bay County has given our family so much,” Nap said. “We want to give back by building something our community can be proud of.”

For more information about Mythic Group, Inc., visit mythicgroupinc.com.

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A Surprisingly Stable 2026 PCB Tourism Season

By ED OFFLEY

Despite nagging inflation nationwide and local gasoline prices topping \$4.00 per gallon, Panama City Beach has enjoyed a relatively stable 2026 tourist season, according to Tourist Development Council President Griff Griffiths.

“It has been a great season,” said Griffiths. In addition to weathering those economic headwinds, PCB – like the rest of Florida – has been blessed with the slowest hurricane season since 1960.

Last year, total visitation to the Gulf beachfront city exceeded 5 million people. A more precise measurement of tourist activity comes in the monthly tally of revenues from the 5-cent bed tax levied on tourist accommodations, Griffiths said.

Bed tax collections for the ten months ending on July 31 were \$32.5 million, up 7 percent over the \$30.4 million collected during the same period a year ago, he said. Monthly tax revenues for July 2026 were \$8.4 million, up 13 percent over July 2025.

Another indicator of the



area’s resiliency is the steadily increasing volume of travelers using Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, which is projected to surpass 2 million people this year, he said.

One reason for the stability, Griffiths told PCB Life, is that the area is still considered “an affordable destination, a very



attractive destination for families.” The bulk of tourism is still centered on the five-hour “drive market” spanning Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana (six hours if you include Kentucky and Tennessee).

Even though Labor Day has come and gone, the TDC is anticipating a robust fall and winter tourist season with eight major events planned between now and New Year’s, Griffiths said.

“We have a very strong [fall and] winter market,” he said. “We have all of our winter events planned.” They include:

October 9-11: Pirates of the High Seas and Renaissance Fest at Pier Park and Aaron Bessant Park;

October 16-18: PCB Oktoberfest at Aaron Bessant Park;

October 21-25: Thunder Beach Fall Motorcycle Rally at Frank Brown Park;

November 7: Visit Panama City Beach Ironman Florida at Pie Park;

November 12-14: Emerald Coast Cruizin’ Car Show at Aaron Bessant Park;

Thanksgiving weekend: Beach Home for the Holidays at Aaron Bessant Park;

December 5: PCB Marathon and 5K Race, Pier Park;

December 31: New Year’s Eve Beach Ball Drop, Pier Park.

Griffiths was appointed to replace longtime TDC President Dan Rowe last March in the aftermath of a fraud scandal involving two senior staff members. To restore credibility with county residents and tourism business leaders, the TDC transferred financial oversight of its \$54 million annual budget to the Bay County Clerk of Court, whose office also serves as comptroller for the county’s \$700 million budget.

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Needles, Fire and Herbs: The Not-So-Scary Side of Acupuncture

BY DR. KAREN DEVORE

October is the season for haunted houses, bubbling cauldrons and things designed to make us shiver. Yet for many people, nothing sounds quite as intimidating as voluntarily lying down while someone places needles in their body. Add herbs, glass cups and perhaps even a flame, and I can understand the hesitation.

Fortunately, acupuncture is usually far gentler than the anticipation. The needles are remarkably thin, and most patients are surprised by how comfortable—and often deeply relaxing—the experience can be.

But the needle is only the beginning of the story.

Acupuncture exists within a much broader Eastern medicine tradition that considers patterns, relationships and the interplay between structure, function, energy and environment. Traditional acupuncture, neuroacupuncture and facial rejuvenation acupuncture can use the same tiny needle in very different ways. Herbal medicine, cupping and other complementary techniques expand the possibilities even further.

So, in the spirit of October, let's make the needles, herbs and fire a little less mysterious.

Traditional Acupuncture: Much Bigger Than You Think

If your idea of acupuncture begins and ends with back pain, you are seeing only a small part of the picture.

People explore traditional acupuncture for headaches, sleep, stress, digestive concerns, fertility, hormonal transitions,

musculoskeletal complaints, neuropathy and chronic or complex pain. For one person, it may complement physical therapy or medical treatment. For another, it may be part of preparing for pregnancy, navigating perimenopause or staying active as the body changes with age.

Eastern medicine has also long valued prevention—paying attention to changes in sleep, digestion, energy, tension and recovery before they become impossible to ignore.

Acupuncture is about more than placing a needle where something hurts. Research continues to explore its relationship with pain modulation, sensory signaling and nervous system activity, while the traditional framework considers the individual's larger pattern of function and balance. That versatility allows it to be restorative

ty becomes particularly interesting. The brain and nervous system retain an ability to adapt and reorganize in response to stimulation, learning, injury and rehabilitation—even in adulthood.

Neuroacupuncture may be incorporated as supportive care during stroke recovery or for people living with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, neuropathy, neuralgia, tremors, weakness or certain forms of pa-

ralysis. It may also be explored around specific symptoms or functional goals for people with PTSD, anxiety or autism, as well as neurological symptoms

Continued on page 23



or proactive, highly focused or whole-person, and able to stand alone or complement other care.

Neuroacupuncture: When the Nervous System is Part of the Story

Neuroacupuncture takes acupuncture into remarkably complex territory. This specialized approach incorporates carefully selected scalp and body acupuncture around neurological and functional goals involving the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves, movement, sensation, balance and coordination.

This is where neuroplastici-



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Grant Wittstruck: Faith. Family. Community Service.

Panama City Beach is more than a destination to me. It's home. It's where Brandi and I have planted our roots, where we're raising our family, and where I've spent nearly 15 years building relationships, serving our community, and working to make this an even better place

to live.

As a candidate for Panama City Beach City Council, three principles guide my approach to public service: Faith. Family. Community Service.

Faith: My faith is the foundation of how I try to live and lead. To me, that means acting

with integrity, treating people with respect, listening even when we disagree, and remembering that public service is about serving others.

I believe those same principles belong at City Hall: honesty, accountability, transparency, and a genuine commitment to

the people it serves.

Family: For nearly 15 years, Brandi and I have called Panama City Beach home, and today we're raising our two children here.

That makes the decisions our city makes deeply personal to me. Decisions about public safety, infrastructure, responsible growth, recreation, and quality of life aren't abstract issues—they will help determine the Panama City Beach our children inherit.

I want PCB to remain a place where families can put down roots, raise their children, build businesses, retire, and be proud to call home.

Community Service: I believe if you want to make your community better, you have to be willing to show up, get involved, and do the work.

Long before I decided to run for City Council, I was serving this community. Through organizations like Beach Care Services, Florida Elite Girls

Softball, the PCB Chamber, Grand Lagoon Coalition, Navy League, and other local organizations, I've had the opportunity to work alongside people who care deeply about making our community better.

Those experiences have allowed me to listen, learn, build relationships, and better understand the challenges and opportunities facing our city.

For me, running for City Council didn't create my commitment to Panama City Beach—it's the result of it.

Faith. Family. Community Service.

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To learn more about me, my background, and my priorities for Panama City Beach, visit votegrantwittstruck.com.

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What is Horticulture Therapy?



BY LAUREN GOLDSBY

If you've spent time nurturing a garden, growing houseplants, or getting your frustrations out by pulling weeds, you've likely experienced some of the benefits of horticulture therapy without even realizing it. Horticulture therapy involves utilizing plant activities and is often accompanied by mindfulness practices to achieve therapeutic outcomes. Let's dig into what that looks like in practice.

History of Horticulture Therapy: Before this practice had a name, people had been utilizing it for years. It's part of a larger scope of therapy called na-

ture-based interventions, which use nature to improve health and well-being. Horticulture therapy (HT) can affect both physical and psychological health and help people in varying ways depending on their circumstances. As early as the 19th century, Dr. Benjamin Rush (who is recognized as the father of American psychiatry), noted its benefit for people experiencing mental health issues. Since then, research has continued to show benefits for mental health and stress reduction in children, adults, and seniors.

Current Horticulture Therapy: Research has shown the efficacy of participating in HT. Studies show that it can reduce anxiety and depression, improve student wellbeing and academic resilience, and benefit aging populations. Studies show a reduction in stress hormones, along with neuroprotective effects, following gardening-based activities.

In clinical settings, HT involves trained practitioners who

Continued on page 14



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It's PCB Fishing Rodeo & PCB Seafood Festival Time!

Bay County Artificial Reef Association is hosting the **Fourth Annual PCB Fishing Rodeo** October 3-11 at Capt. Anderson's Marina. This event is great for the entire fishing community, whether you fish from a paddle board, the jetties, a private recreational boat, a charter boat or a head-boat, you can join in the competition. Check out the details at www.pcbfishingrodeo.com/entry to get all the info you need and sign up today!

Species that are included in the competition are: King Mackerel, Grouper, Wahoo, Red Snapper, Tuna, Shark, Red Fish, Flounder, Pompano and several more. The exact list will be confirmed on the night of the captain's meeting.

Some of the highlights include the mandatory captain's [and reps of all participants] meeting Friday, October 2 from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., with dinner served at 6 p.m. at The Event Center, sponsored by Capt. Anderson's Marina.

Tournament fishing begins at 12:01 a.m., Saturday, October



3 and the scales close at 5 p.m. Sunday, October 11. The scales are open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. [closing Sundays at 5 p.m.] with daily prizes awarded at 7:10 each evening.

On Saturday, October 3, the **Annual Kids' Fishing Clinic & Tournament** will be held by the Bay County Artificial Reef Association from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. All kids participating will receive a rod & reel courtesy of Tarpon Dock Seafood and Half Hitch Tackle. There will be a touch tank hosted by the St. Andrew Bay Estuary program. An educational kids' scuba sta-

tion will offer tips on snorkeling and diving. Of course, there will be plenty of kids' activities, including the all-popular bounce house and ice cream shop. The Bay County Artificial Reef Assoc. and PCB Rodeo crew will be cooking up locally sourced Tarpon Dock Seafood - yum! They will be serving grouper & chicken baskets!

Throughout the weekends and the week of the rodeo, there will be nightly live family-friendly entertainment.

Friday night, October 9, the **PCB Seafood Festival** will open at 5 p.m. with over 80 ven-

dors of great seafood and lots of other great foods as well as arts and crafts. There will be a designated area for bounce houses and fun. The festival activities will continue from 11 a.m. until 9 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday for some great family feasting and fun. Live music with Black Rayne takes place on the main stage Friday evening at 6 p.m., on Saturday we host Chris Wade at 4 p.m. and Mick & May at 6:30 p.m. with the Will Thompson Band and the popular 90s Country Tribute on stage Sunday, 3-6 p.m. Find more details at www.pcbseafoodfestival.org.

Even if you don't fish, this will be a really fun free event for your family and friends. You will see anglers from four years old to 94 bringing in their catches as you enjoy all the fun activities and great food!

On Sunday evening October 11, the PCB Rodeo officials will have their closing ceremony at 6 p.m. and award all the prizes, closing out the evening with (what else but) fireworks at 8:30 p.m.

The Anderson family is proud to host all these family-friendly venues for our community, and we look forward to seeing you here real soon!

Shell Island/Dolphins, Deep Sea Fishing, Capt. Max's Bar & Grill, and the beautiful waterfront venue, The Event Center at Capt. Anderson's Marina, await you! Come join the fun!

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Carlos Sanchez - A Call to Serve:

Proven Leadership for Panama City Beach

For twenty-three years, I had the profound honor of wearing the uniform of the United States Air Force. Serving as a Chief Master Sergeant and an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technician across two combat deployments to Iraq and two to Afghanistan, I learned that true leadership requires running toward the problems that others avoid. Operating in those high-stakes environments, where I earned two Bronze Stars, instilled in me a steadfast commitment to mission success. Today, that mission is right here at home in Panama City Beach.

When I retired from active duty, my family chose to plant our roots in our beautiful city. My wife, Laura, teaches at West Bay Elementary, and our three daughters are growing up in this vibrant community. I am running for the Panama City Beach City Council because I believe our city deserves proven, competent leadership to navigate the growth and opportunities ahead. My qualifications are rooted



in strategic planning and operational management. During my time in the military, I earned my Master of Public Administration (MPA) and a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. Transitioning my military leadership into municipal service, I currently work as the Utilities Operations Manager for the City of Panama City. These experiences form my three core campaign pillars:

1. Safety First

Your safety is my priority, and it starts with proven, data-driven leadership. I will apply twenty-three years of high-stakes risk management experience

as an Air Force Bomb Technician to enhance public safety and keep our city safe year-round. We must prioritize proactive preparedness, bringing military-grade planning to our emergency response and critical infrastructure to build true hurricane resilience. This requires ensuring our first responders, the true backbone of our community, are fully equipped with the resources, training, and support they need to respond effectively and protect our neighborhoods. I will advocate to speed up the construction of the police substation on the east end and the public works hurricane safe room.

2. Competency In Government

Our city deserves management, not administration. I will leverage my direct, hands-on experience managing complex municipal utility systems to improve our aging infrastructure, drastically reducing water loss, and finding lasting solutions to our ongoing stormwater challenges. Utilizing my PMP and MPA, I will enforce fiscal accountability to eliminate waste, maximize your tax dollars, and ensure our funds remain solvent into the future. My commitment is transparent execution with no empty promises, delivering only data-driven, sensible management that ensures basic city services are provided reliably and efficiently.

3. Community Always

As a husband to a local teacher and a father of three here, my priority is protecting the unpar-

alleled quality of life we enjoy in Panama City Beach. Dedicated to our residents and our local veterans, I will ensure City Hall listens to the people who actually live here. We must protect our home, balancing smart growth with the preservation of the unique community character that makes our city great, always putting residents first. This includes moving the Lullwater Lake restoration project along to restore it to its former beauty and protect it from overdevelopment.

Service is not just a chapter in my past; it is a lifelong calling. Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient Panama City Beach.

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Differences Between a Living Will and a DNR



BY JON CARROLL

There are two documents related to medical decisions that often get confused.

Imagine you are home with a loved one when you collapse. Your loved one calls 911. The paramedics arrive to find that your heart has stopped.

Your loved one knows you have always said, “I don’t want to be kept alive by machines.” And there is a living will along with your estate-planning documents.

But the paramedics have arrived to deal with the fact that your heart has stopped. Should they perform CPR despite your Living Will?

This scenario illustrates an often misunderstood distinction: a Living Will and a Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR) are not the same thing. What are the differences between the two documents?

A Living Will (also known as an Advance Directive) is a legal document that communicates your wishes about life-prolonging medical treatment if you become unable to make or communicate your own health care decisions and are in circumstances covered by the document and Florida law.

It can address treatments such as mechanical ventilation and other life-prolonging procedures. It provides guidance to your physicians, family, and health care surrogate about the treatment you would want.

In other words, a living will answers the questions of: “If I am in certain end-of-life circumstances and cannot speak for myself, what medical treatment do I want?”

Over thirty years ago, the concept of a living will became especially familiar to many Floridians because of the highly publicized case of Terri Schiavo.

Schiavo was a Florida wom-

an who suffered cardiac arrest in 1990 and was left with severe brain damage. Eight years later, a legal battle developed between her husband, who sought to have life-prolonging measures withdrawn, and her parents, who opposed that decision. The dispute continued through multiple court proceedings and ultimately became a national political and legal controversy before Schiavo died in 2005.

While Florida enacted a statutory living will framework before the Schiavo case, her tragic situation brought the practical importance of advance directives into the public spotlight. It demonstrated what can happen when a person becomes unable to communicate and family members, physicians, and courts must determine what that person would have wanted.

Today, Florida law allows a competent adult to make a living will directing the withholding or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures if the person becomes incapacitated and has a terminal condition, an end-stage condition, or is in a persistent vegetative state, subject to the requirements of the statute.

But a living will is not neces-



sarily an instruction to emergency personnel about what to do when your heart suddenly stops. In such circumstances, a Florida Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR) addresses what should happen.

A properly completed DNR directs health care providers and emergency medical personnel not to perform CPR in that situation.

That distinction is particularly important during an emergency at home. Paramedics need to know immediately whether a valid DNR exists. This is why people will keep a DNR in a visible place, such as taped to their refrigerator. A living will in an estate-planning binder may communicate your wishes about end-of-life treatment, but it is not the same thing as having

so emergency personnel know not to attempt CPR. Another person may have a living will but still want CPR attempted in an emergency. The important thing is that both documents allow you to express your wishes and to ensure those wishes have been clearly communicated before a crisis occurs.

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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A Superior Mechanical to Host Second Veterans & First Responders Event in Niceville

The Walton and Okaloosa communities are coming together again to give recognition and thanks to our first responders, veterans, and active military. A Superior Mechanical will hold its second Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Lunch at the Niceville Community Center, 204 Partin Drive North,

Niceville, FL 32578 on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Please save the date!

During the event, A Superior Mechanical will donate a new Water Heater System complete with installation to a local First Responder or Veteran in need. This giveaway is open to all

who have served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and all first responders including EMT/Medics, Police, Sheriffs and Fire Fighters. Register to win at ASuperiorMechanical.com/Giveaways.

The event includes a delicious hot lunch catered by Swiftly Catered, a brief wel-

come from the sponsors and supporters, and the Hot Water Heater. This event is supported and sponsored by United Community Bank, Lyle Allamon-Realtor & Homes For Heroes, the City of Niceville and Niceville Community Center, Niceville High School (who will present the colors), and Rocky Bayou

Christian School (who will sing the National Anthem). Walton and Okaloosa County businesses are encouraged to sponsor; for more information, contact Marta Thorpe at (850) 814-3822.



Coastal Creatives: Emily Ellis



BY LEE ANN LEONARD

If you've ever visited the Lake Powell or Lake Powell Community Alliance Facebook page, then you've probably admired Emily Ellis' photography. For the alliance's bird survey images, she artistically captures

everything from bald eagles to yellow-crowned night herons. The engaging images beg to be framed or painted, and for good reason. The Inlet Beach resident is an accomplished photographer and painter who has won more than 20 awards and participated in over 45 exhibitions. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Auburn University in 1989 and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of South Florida in 1993.

"The natural world has traditionally been my foremost inspiration," the University of Florida Master Naturalist Program graduate says. Her photographic, educational and leadership contributions to many

nature-based organizations garnered her the Bay County Audubon Society's "Conservationist of the Year" title in 2020.

When she's not dusting off her awards, immersed in nature capturing wildlife or planning the annual "Lake Powell Cleanup," Ellis can be found in her eclectic home studio, dabbling in multiple mediums. "Regardless of medium, my work leans predominantly toward the abstract with an emphasis on texture, mark-making and especially composition," Ellis explains. "I'm a stickler for strong composition."

Attend one of her art shows, and you'll be drawn to photographs that appear almost tac-



and scales provide immersive textures. Other evocative works depict animal eye portraits, color inversions and open-lens photography."

To view this activist's striking work, search Daisy Hipbilly on Facebook or contact her to schedule a studio visit at (850) 818-2262 or EmilyFrancesEllis.Art@gmail.com.

HORTICULTURE

continued from page 8

plan, review, and lead activities, but don't let that stop you, since these activities can still be done in a more casual setting. Activities are available online on the UF website and include a description of the activity and goals, a materials list, step-by-step instructions, safety considerations, and the intended population. You can search through different topics and populations to help narrow down activities that you may be interested in.

Activities and Where to Find Them: An activity I came across recently is making an insect hotel. This activity helps to teach the concept of local pollinators and insects and how they nest and survive during the colder months. In managed landscapes, our leaf litter and stems of plants are often bagged up and discarded. Building an insect hotel creates

a safe environment for insects to rest, grow, and multiply. Participants are encouraged to think and talk about their own needs, which may look different from person to person. This activity can be done with materials you have lying around the house or garden and can be adjusted as needed for different age groups. The guidelines for this activity can be found here: <https://hos.ifas.ufl.edu/media/hosifasufledu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/pdfs/Insect-Hotel.pdf>

Lauren Goldsby can be reached at legoldsby@ufl.edu. An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Andra Johnson, Dean. Single copies of UF/IFAS Extension publications (excluding 4-H and youth publications) are available free to Florida residents from county UF/IFAS Extension offices.

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From Healing to Hooksets: The Pompano Queen Finds Her Place on the Emerald Coast

BY ADASON RILEY

When Courtney Harper first started casting lines into the Gulf in the early morning hours, she was looking for something simple: a little peace. Navigating a difficult season of personal loss, the quiet rhythm of the waves, the sunrise, and the anticipation of a bite gave her a place to breathe.

What began as a way to heal after loss, eventually became a calling, a business, and a way to share her passion with others.

Last year, PCB Life shared Courtney's story as she began building her beach fishing guide service. Today, many locals know her as the "Pompano Queen." Her goal has always been about more than catching fish; she teaches residents and visitors the basics of surf fishing while encouraging them to understand and protect the coastal environment.

One year later, as October marks National Women-Owned Small Business Month, Courtney has reached another milestone: she is the ONLY female surf fishing charter guide licensed and permitted on the beaches in the Panhandle. Being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry is not something she set out to make a statement about; it simply became part of her story.

"When I started, I just wanted to share the peace and magic of sunrise fishing and protecting our natural resources," Courtney says. "I knew there weren't many women doing shore-based guiding, but I couldn't have predicted how enthusiastically people would respond to it."

That response has transformed Pompano Queen into a thriving local business. Families book sunrise sessions together, vacationers eagerly learn beach fishing, and locals return throughout the year hoping to land pompano, redfish, and other species native to the Emerald Coast.

Courtney emphasizes that she could not have built the business without her Gulf Coast community, or without her guide, Chris, and assistant, Jack, who both embrace the energy of Pompano Queen. Local tackle shops have spread the word,



neighbors stop to offer encouragement, and the broader fishing community provides advice and referrals. Visit Panama City Beach has also been extremely helpful and supportive of this venture.

"The support has been over-

whelmingly beautiful," Courtney says. "To go from finding solace on these beaches to being booked solid with people who want to learn from me is humbling. Panama City Beach really does show up for its small businesses."

Her impact extends beyond the sand. When she isn't guiding clients, Courtney works with Fishing Tackle Retailer and The Fishing Wire, national trade publications owned and published by Angie Thompson, a female trailblazer in the fishing industry. The platforms connect retailers and industry professionals with product trends, market news, and business insights.

"Working with Fishing Tackle Retailer keeps me connected to the bigger picture of the industry," she says. "Between guiding on the beach and working for the magazine, I literally get to talk about fishing all day long. I'm surrounded by incredible women in business, passionate anglers, and a community that lifts each other up."

Connecting with others in the industry recently opened the door to a partnership with surf fishing leader The Sinker Guy to develop her own branded, sustainable pompano rigs. Packaged in biodegradable materials

and available for wholesale purchase by the end of the year, the line reflects her ongoing commitment to conservation.

For Courtney, entrepreneurship was never about following a mapped-out plan. It was about recognizing a passion, taking a chance, and seeing where it led.

"I think sometimes you just have to start," she says. "You don't always know exactly where something is going to take you. You just know that you love it and you believe in it."

Her journey is a reminder that small businesses are often born from personal beginnings and a quiet need that evolves into a life-changing pursuit.

"If you told me a couple of years ago that I'd be running the area's only female surf charter and living out my dream on these beaches every single day, I wouldn't have believed it," she reflects. "It just goes to show that when you put your heart into something and trust your community, the tide will carry you right where you belong."

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BY JAMIE ZIMCHEK

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Know Your Neighbor: **Katrina Wiggins**

By MICHELE HARDMAN

Supposedly, when people meet us for the first time, they form an opinion within the first eight seconds. The first time I met Katrina Wiggins, I was immediately impressed. She's one of those women who just exudes class — good posture, a calm

demeanor, soft-spoken, warm, and friendly. And she's done so many cool things throughout her life that I won't be able to do them all justice in this short column, but read on.

Katrina was born and raised in Detroit and says it was a wonderful place to grow up in

the '70s. After graduating from college in Michigan, she landed a job with Ford Motor Company and worked at their facility in Pittsburgh for a year and a half. Then life took her to Philadelphia, with stops after that in Bear, Delaware; York, Pennsylvania; and Raleigh, North Car-

olina. She worked for the Avon Corporation for a while and loved her time there — as District Sales Manager, she got to travel and work out in the field, interacting with sales reps and helping them grow their independent businesses.

Eventually, Katrina and her husband both felt Dallas calling them, so she transferred there through Avon. Her husband, a graduate of North Carolina A&T State University, was serving on the advisory board for the school's Center of Entrepreneurship & Innovation. He agreed to step off the board temporarily to help run the organization while they searched for their next director. Katrina began tagging along and getting involved, and soon realized that this was one of the things she was put on this earth to do — to help others by sharing her own knowledge and experience.

That realization led Katrina and her husband to establish Launched for Life, a program to help young adults handle adult life more confidently. Katrina had been a latchkey kid herself, which taught her at a young age how to cook, properly answer the phone, and talk with adults — lessons she now passes on. She and her husband also ran a summer camp called Camp Biz Life for three years, focused on the basics of starting and running a business, and for a time ran another organization called WIELD (the Wiggins Institute of Entrepreneurship & Life Development), designed for men 18 and up who would live at one of the Wiggins' apartments while going through the program. On top of all that, they've also owned a few auto dealerships along the way.

Another of Katrina's pas-



sions is travel, and she's found a way to build a career around it while helping others experience new places and cultures too. She's a travel consultant with her company, Live Beautifully — visit her website at tolivebeautifully.com to see her upcoming trips or have her plan your own personal itinerary. Her latest venture is serving as Market Director for HUM Concierge (humconcierge.com), a private home and life management firm that also offers move and relocation management, and is a certified woman-owned small business. And if all of that isn't enough to keep her busy, she's also working on her first book, set to debut within the next few months — all about hospitality and living beautifully, filled with her own personal experiences and tips for living life to the fullest.

After living in six different states, Katrina now calls the PCB area home. She and her husband first came here from Charlotte, North Carolina, planning to be snowbirds for a month. They decided to extend that to three months, then realized they loved the beach life so much that they wanted to relocate here for good.

Cross paths with this extraordinary woman if you get the chance. She'll inspire you.

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Water Hazards

By ALAN M. WATSON,
PRESIDENT, GOLF+ PCB

A few days ago I was able to enjoy some time away from the shop with my son and one of my employees on the golf course. This was the first time Jon, my newest team member, had ever played this particular course, so I was trying to be helpful off each tee box with a brief explanation of the hole. The course has water on many holes, fourteen of eighteen to be exact, and I tried to point out water and other hazards when I could. On hole 15 there is water at the end of the hole near the green, but since it is a long par five I honestly didn't think about mentioning the water at the tee box. Jon hit his drive a little left while I was in the middle of the fairway. We were a ways apart when he hit his next shot, and without the knowledge of the water, he did, in fact, get wet. That was on me. I should have warned him to lay up or to play left side as he approached the green so as not to flirt with the hazard. When he got up to the pond he looked at me and said,

"I didn't know there was water here." I felt pretty bad since I could have warned him but I failed to do so.

Life is a lot like golf isn't it? Hazards everywhere but rarely enough people around to warn you. And sometimes we probably wouldn't listen anyway. I remember when I was in my late twenties thinking to myself that my father was full of all kinds of good advice. Too bad I didn't stumble upon that realization until I was 26 or older. Not that his words weren't true before that; it's just that I wasn't listening.

I think the best advice my father ever gave me was this gem - If you're going to make adult decisions you have to be prepared to live with the adult consequences. Wow! That one hits home over and over as I look back on my life. But I digress.

Golf is pretty similar to my father's advice. If you're going to make golf decisions you have to be prepared to live with the golf consequences. Driver and then 3-wood into a long par five. Maybe. Or maybe a better play



is to hit 5-iron then 5-iron then 7-iron into the green and have a birdie putt. Maybe driver off the tee goes out of bounds or 3-wood from the fairway just results in a topped shot that only wanders fifty yards. You need to reach a par three but the wind is in your face. Maybe the smart play is two extra clubs, choke down, and swing 75% rather than trying to muscle your stock iron up to the distance. Choices abound in golf as in life.

One choice I see lots of golfers get wrong is wedge selection around the greens. Choosing

whether to bump and run, chip, or flop at a target on the green is dependent on many things. Flag placement for one. How much room do you have between you and the flag that is green versus rough? Are you in a fluffy lie or on a tight lie? What bounce options do you have and what shots have you practiced? We've all hit the dreaded chunk and run when we didn't mean to from a wet lie right on the collar of a green. And many golfers have slid a wedge right under a ball while in a thick fluffy lie resulting in a shot that

goes barely anywhere. Having the right wedge loft, bounce, and grind AND the skills to use them are tough to come by these days. More golfers should spend time chipping and putting before a round to get a feel for the unique grass and soil conditions at the course rather than banging balls on the driving range. Just my two cents. Find out what shots you are most comfortable with and work on those. Not every golfer is great with a flop shot. Most people would do well to learn how to bump a pitching wedge or gap wedge and get it rolling to the cup. Tap in putts for par are awesome! Long come backers are not!

Whatever hazards you face on the golf course or in life just know you're not the only one and much like life, if you keep doing it over and over again you'll figure it out eventually. Effort and repetition is the key to getting better at golf. Effort for sure usually outweighs smarts in life also. Again, just my two cents.

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A Message from Superintendent Mark McQueen



It's hard to believe we're already heading into October. The first weeks of school are behind us, routines are taking shape, and across Bay District Schools, our students and teachers are doing what they do best: learning, growing and finding new opportunities to succeed.

One of my favorite parts of this job is getting into our schools and seeing that work firsthand. Whether it's visiting

a classroom, watching students learn a new skill in one of our career and technical programs, cheering from the sidelines on a Friday night or seeing our students perform on a stage, I'm continually reminded that some of the most important learning happens when students discover something they're passionate about.

You'll see a great example of that in this month's issue with

Surfside Middle School's new culinary program. What started as an idea for one elective class drew interest from more than 250 students. That response says a lot about what happens when we listen to our students and create opportunities that connect learning to the real world.

As we move further into the school year, I'm grateful for the teachers and employees who make those opportunities pos-

sible and for the families, businesses and community partners who continue to support our schools.

There is a lot to be proud of in Bay District Schools, and there is even more ahead. Thank you for continuing to Say YES to BDS and, most importantly, for believing in our students.



A Recipe for Success at Surfside Middle School

When Surfside Middle School Principal Matt Pitts decided to add a culinary elective this school year, he thought he had a pretty good plan. Chef Robin Downs, a former Surfside teacher and longtime culinary instructor, would return to the beach middle school to teach one culinary class. The rest of his day would be spent teaching math.

Then students signed up. More than 250 students, rough-

ly one-third of Surfside's student body, requested the new culinary elective. Pitts quickly realized one class wasn't going to cut it.

Instead, Downs is now spending his school day in the kitchen, introducing middle school students to culinary skills that could eventually translate into real-world opportunities in a community where restaurants, resorts and hospitality are an important part of the local economy.

And these young chefs aren't spending much time on the basics.

Already this year, Surfside students have prepared beignets for faculty, tackled a shrimp boil and made key lime pies. Along the way, they're learning that success in a kitchen requires much more than knowing how to follow a recipe.

Students have to listen. They have to communicate. They have to work together. Measurements matter, timing matters and details matter. And when you're part of a kitchen team, everyone has a job to do. Those are lessons Downs knows how to teach.



A well-known local chef and caterer, Downs previously built successful culinary programs at Arnold and Mosley high schools. His student chefs have competed against professionals in the local culinary industry...and won. In fact, Downs has developed something of a reputation at the annual Death by Chocolate competition: when his students

enter, they win.

Now, he believes middle school students can rise to that same level of expectation.

One of the most significant pieces of Surfside's new program is the opportunity for students to work toward ServSafe certification, an industry-recognized credential widely used in restaurants and hospitality.

That makes the program particularly fitting for a beach community. For students growing up in Panama City Beach, hospitality isn't an abstract career field. It's an industry they see all around them. Earning an industry credential while still in middle school can give students an early introduction to potential careers and skills they can continue developing in high school and beyond.

The certification also creates an opportunity for the program to sustain its own growth. Successful industry certifications generate funding that can be reinvested into the culinary program, helping purchase ingredients, equipment and other supplies students need to keep learning and cooking.

For Pitts, the response from students has already demonstrated the value of trying something new. What began as an idea for a single elective has quickly grown into one of Surfside's most sought-after offerings.

And for Downs, it's another opportunity to show what students can accomplish when they're given a challenge, high expectations and the chance to get their hands dirty.

At Surfside Middle School, the recipe may start in the kitchen, but the skills students are learning could take them far beyond it.

The Sacred Art of Instrument Acquisition



By MICHAEL AUSTIN

Every music shop has a familiar species of customer: the man standing ten feet from a gleaming new instrument, gazing at it with the reverence normally reserved for stained glass, newborn babies, and perfectly smoked brisket. He picks it up, plays three glorious notes, then abruptly sets it down as if it has begun transmitting his location to his spouse. “I’m just looking,” he says, although everyone knows he has mentally named it, toured with it, and selected the corner of the bedroom where it will definitely not fit.

The fear is not unreasonable. At home, the arrival of a new guitar, banjo, fiddle, mandolin, trumpet, or mysterious pedal-shaped object may trigger questions. These questions often begin with “Is that new?” and mature rapidly into “How much was it?” The experienced musician understands that these are not requests for information. They are oral examinations covering household budgeting, storage capacity, personal integrity,

and why the water heater continues to make that noise.

Yet upgrading an instrument is never mere shopping. It is always undertaken for the love of God, family, and country. The logic is airtight. A better instrument produces a sweeter sound; a sweeter sound uplifts the soul; an uplifted soul becomes more patient with children, more useful at neighborhood gatherings, and more likely to play “America the Beautiful” in tune. Frankly, refusing the upgrade could be interpreted as a failure of civic responsibility.

The family benefits are equally obvious. A handcrafted acoustic guitar is cheaper than a boat, quieter than a motorcycle, and much less likely than a golf club membership to remove its owner from the house for six hours every Saturday. It is, therefore, not an expense but a strategic domestic investment. This point can be strengthened by casually mentioning that vintage instruments “hold their value,” provided nobody asks for charts, receipts, or examples from your actual collection.

Sometimes, of course, this love must be demonstrated through what diplomats call a phased introduction. The new instrument may enter the home under cover of a blanket, spend a short spiritual retreat behind the winter coats, and emerge weeks later with the confident air of something that has “always been there.” This maneuver belongs firmly to comedy,



not relationship counseling: hiding major purchases is a splendid way to turn a musical duet into a courtroom solo. Still, the image of a grown man tiptoeing past the laundry room with a tuba deserves its place in folklore.

Shop employees witness every stage of the ritual. There is the reconnaissance visit, the return visit “for strings,” the lengthy phone call conducted beside the drum kits, and the final moment when the buyer asks whether the case can be disguised as something practical. A vacuum cleaner, perhaps. A rake. One gentleman may even request a receipt reading “essential home maintenance.” We decline, but we admire the imagination.

may even say yes, especially when reminded that the instrument will inspire worship, strengthen family bonds, and preserve the republic. Timing helps. Do not make this speech while the washing machine is leaking.

So when you see a nervous man in the shop embracing a new instrument like a sailor greeting land, be kind. He is not buying another toy. He is answering a higher calling—one with spruce,

brass, maple, valves, frets, or an alarming number of cymbals. He may pause at the door, rehearsing his explanation. He may ask whether we have a plain brown bag large enough for a double bass. But deep down he knows the truth: love sometimes sounds like music, and sometimes it sounds like the garage door opening very, very quietly.

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 Arts & Music

A Comedically Fun Murder Mystery Hits the ECTC Stage This October



By CAMERON HUGHES

October is the perfect time for a murder mystery, and Emerald Coast Theatre Company

(ECTC) is bringing plenty of intrigue to the stage with *The 39 Steps*, running October 15–25 at Grand Boulevard.

Based on Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller, *The 39 Steps* combines murder, espionage and romance in an adventure filled with rapid-fire comedy. Four actors take on more than 150 characters as one ordinary man finds himself caught in an extraordinary chase filled with twists, turns and laughs, making for a fun night out this fall.

Lovers of last season's *Murder on the Orient Express* will



find plenty to enjoy in this fast-paced thriller, including the return of audience favorite Hayes

Mercure. After keeping audiences guessing as American businessman Samuel Ratchett, Hayes returns to the ECTC stage in *The 39 Steps* for another suspenseful adventure, this time on a deadly pursuit through the Northern European countryside.

Following *The 39 Steps*, ECTC heads into the holidays with its third production of Season 14, *Million Dol-*

lar Quartet Christmas, running December 3–20. Featuring the music of Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley, this high-energy holiday celebration combines rock 'n' roll classics with Christmas favorites for a festive night of live music, nostalgia and holiday spirit.

Performances of *The 39 Steps* run October 15–25 at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, located at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach. Tickets and more information are available at emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

The St. Joe Community Foundation Awards Grant to Panama City Symphony

In August, The St. Joe Community Foundation renewed its commitment as the Panama City Symphony's Grand Marquee Season Sponsor for the 2026-27 season. Their \$50,000 grant will support the Symphony's Music Outreach and Education Programs during the 31st season, *Horizons: A Season of Discovery*.

This substantial grant from

the St. Joe Community Foundation comes at a pivotal growth period for our organization. Because our board functions actively as a working board — donating the equivalent labor of five full-time team members every week — we know firsthand how much every resource matters. This grant directly strengthens our capacity to execute live orchestral concerts

along with music education and outreach, serving Northwest Florida.

About The Symphony's Music Education Programs

The Symphony's "Make Music Magic" program, designed for the youngest K to 2 audiences, helps children develop an awareness and appreciation for music through interactive singing, exercises that use motor

skills, and imaginative activities. In the "Discovering Music" program, designed for grades 3 to 5, musicians engage young minds by demonstrating their instruments' unique qualities and showing how they are used to create a full musical performance through active listening, individual instrument demonstrations, and interactive

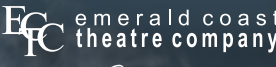
learning. The Symphony's Mentoring Program offers advanced high school musicians (grades 9 to 12) a rigorous, pre-college training experience. Mentees rehearse and perform alongside Symphony professionals, study privately with Symphony musicians, and perform in a student recital.

Panama City Symphony's "Sing with the Symphony" program for adult and children's choruses debuted last season at *Holiday by the Bay*, the Symphony's annual Christmas concert, and was such a magical success it returns this season for two performances. In December, the adult and children's choruses will be featured at the majestic *A Grand Symphony Christmas* (formerly *Holiday by*



the Bay). In April, the adult chorus vocal ensembles return for the season finale, Beethoven's crowning masterpiece, *Symphony No. 9*.

The Panama City Symphony String Academy is an after-school ensemble for students in grades 4 to 8 (ages 9 to 15) interested in learning violin, viola, cello, or double bass. The program provides structured, high-quality musical education in a welcoming and supportive environment. Through regular rehearsals, students develop strong technical skills, learn effective rehearsal habits, and experience the teamwork needed to perform confidently as an ensemble.



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Downtown Panama City Prepares for Fright Nights: Dreamwalkers This October

The Raven Queen is haunted — not by ghosts, but by consequence. Years of dark magic, taken freely and never repaid, have drawn the attention of something ancient and impartial. The Collector does not negotiate. He does not forgive. He has been living inside her ever since, a darkness you may have already encountered without knowing what it truly was.

Now she comes to you. Desperate. Humble, even. She needs dreamwalkers to enter her subconscious, travel through the wreckage of her memories, and uncover the full measure of her debt — so she can pay it, and be free. You agree. Of course, you agree.

Prepare for another season of screams as Fright Nights: Dreamwalkers, an immersive haunted experience, returns to downtown Panama City. This highly anticipated event, presented by the Bay Arts Alliance and taking place at the iconic Panama City Center for the Arts in Historic Downtown Panama City, promises another spine-tin-



gling experience, bringing back moments of Fright Nights past, from the Carnival of Souls to the atrocities summoned by the Faceless.

The Raven Queen, created by Jayson Kretzer and brought to life by Misty Joy, has played an important role in the haunted experiences at the Center for

the Arts. The character, along with her giant spider minion, Iktomi, have captivated imaginations and weaved a web of suspense for the community. In this closing chapter of Fright Nights, the Raven Queen forges an alliance with the citizens of Panama City, revealing her humanity as she seeks to protect the world she once terrorized.

“Watching the Raven Queen evolve over the past six years has been incredibly rewarding. What began as a haunted attraction has grown into a living mythology that many of our guests return to year after year. This year’s story is everything we’ve learned coming together



Haunt Nights

Thursday - Saturday, October 15-17

Thursday - Sunday, October 22-25
6-9 p.m. each night

Tickets go on sale Friday, September 18.

This experience is recommended for audiences aged 12 & up. Under 12 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Bay Arts Alliance suggests that parents take into account their

children’s tolerance levels for jump scares, flashing lights, and loud noises.

Those interested in joining the team or how to get tickets can learn more by visiting FrightNightsPanamaCity.com.

The Light Room Announces New Exhibit Featuring Chris Calohan

The public is invited to an opening at the Light Room on October 17, from 6-8 p.m., showcasing the work of well-known Panama City photographer Chris Calohan, who is celebrating his 80th birthday with a retrospective exhibit of his photography journey. Featured in the show are some of his early analog photos and his most recent works, which come full circle, blending digital techniques with historic photo processes. Please join us for the opening night, and help celebrate this lifetime of consistent creativity.

Chris writes:

“My 68-year photographic journey began with the gift of a 35mm Canonflex camera my uncle gave me for my 12th birthday in 1958. I still have that very same camera and it still shoots beautiful images. I



am a former educator (photography teacher), technical illustrator, analyst, and a jack of all trades, master of a few.

My journey is a retrospective of photography’s true beginnings, even in our mostly digital world. My processes illustrated in this exhibition consist of Platinum/Palladium, Kallitypes, Cyanotypes, Salted Paper and Feroblends.”

The exhibit will be open from October 17-31, 2026.

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PC Symphony Unveils Four Music Director Finalists for its 31st Season Amid Regional Economic Surge

Following an extensive search that attracted over 100 applicants, the Panama City Symphony Search Committee has selected four finalists to contend for the orchestra's next Music Director and Conductor position. An 11-member committee of orchestra musicians and board members narrowed the field to four conductors, each of whom will lead one subscription concert during season 2026–2027, Horizons: A Season of Discovery.

This search arrives during a period of unprecedented organizational growth for Panama

City Symphony, marked by record concert attendance, expanded venues, and deepened community outreach through youth music education. According to regional economic and tourism reports, Bay County continues to experience unprecedented growth, with a population approaching 200,000 and over \$3 billion in annual tourism impact. Panama City Symphony's artistic expansion directly mirrors this regional momentum, demonstrating how premier performing arts institutions serve as vital engines for talent attraction and economic vitality.

"We are thrilled to present four dynamic candidates who each bring an incredible level of artistry, vision, and leadership to the table," said Dr. Marlene East, President of the Board of Directors of Panama City Symphony. "Our process is focused on finding a leader who will elevate our orchestra's artistic excellence while actively engaging with our community."

Meet the Music Director Finalists
Dr. Rachel Waddell launches the series on Saturday, September 19, 2026, con-



ducting Dvořák's New World Symphony at Bay High School's Barbara W. Nelson Fine Arts Center. Waddell currently serves as Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University and Music Director of the Longmont Youth Symphony. An acclaimed conductor with a Doctor of Musical Arts from UNLV, her guest appearances include the Orchestre Métropolitain and the Rochester Philharmonic, alongside earning two American Prize awards in Orchestral Programming.



Alex Amsel takes the podium on Saturday, November 14, 2026, at St. Andrew Baptist Church to lead fellow countryman Piazzolla's The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires. Amsel, Associate Conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and former Resident Conductor of Houston Grand Opera, is a dynamic Argentinian-Mexican conductor recognized for his vibrant musicality and community outreach. He has led productions at Utah and Houston Operas and conducted at major international festivals including Aspen and Romania's George Enescu Festival. He founded the Student Composition Project, commissioning six orchestral world premieres from young Arizona composers.

Dr. Ryo Hasegawa will conduct Beethoven's Eroica and Rautavaara's Cantus Arcticus on Saturday, January 30, 2027, at St. Andrew Baptist Church. Dr. Hasegawa serves as Assistant Conductor of the Charleston Symphony—where he led the youth orchestra to its Car-

negie Hall debut—and Music Director of the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra. Holding a Doctor of Musical Arts from Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Conservatory, this rising Japanese conductor has appeared with the Hamburg Symphony and Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra.



David Bernard closes the finalist series on Saturday, February 13, 2027, leading With Love, Tchaikovsky: Symphonic Valentines at Arnold High School's Helen Blackburn Auditorium. Bernard is an award-winning conductor serving as Music Director of the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony, Massapequa Philharmonic, and Eglevsky Ballet. A Juilliard and Curtis alumnus who has performed at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Bernard was named Conductor of the Year at the 2025 European Classical Music Awards and holds a U.S. patent for the immersive Inside-Out Concert format.

Audience members and orchestral musicians will be invited to provide direct feedback after each performance to help inform the Board of Directors' final choice. The search will culminate ahead of the Season Finale on April 10, 2027 (Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Ode to Joy), when the chosen new Music Director takes the podium to lead the orchestra into its next chapter.

For concert details and tickets, visit panamacitysymphony.org. Tickets are also available on Eventbrite.

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Dermatology Tips to Remember this Fall



BY BRIDGET SULLIVAN, PA-C,
COASTAL SKIN SURGERY AND
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As we enter the fall months and the weather gets cooler, it is important to take into account skin changes that can occur. Fall is an excellent time to reset your skin-care routine and address

common concerns before winter arrives. This article will review tips to help with your skin health and appearance during the cooler months.

- Dry Skin - colder weather can mean dry skin, make sure to moisturize your skin twice daily. The best time to apply moisturizer is right after a bath or shower.

- Avoid hot water - on a cold day we typically like to take a hot bath or shower. Hot water temperatures can dry out our skin. Opt for lukewarm water instead.

- Dry cracked lips - don't forget to moisturize your lips. Vaseline or Cerave healing lip balm are both great products for dry lips.



- Don't forget your sunscreen - Even though it's cold outside, sunscreen application is still important to combat skin cancer and aging.

- Flare up of skin conditions - changes in the weather can flare up inflammatory skin conditions like eczema or psoriasis. Be aware of this and prepare ahead of time.

- Ideal time for cosmetic procedures - the fall and win-

ter months are an ideal time for cosmetic procedures like chemical peels, micro needling facials, and laser treatments. After these treatments, there is typically a recovery period where sunlight should be avoided.

- Flaky Scalp - colder weather can sometimes cause our dandruff and dry scalp to flare. Anti-dandruff shampoos containing ingredients such as ketoconazole, zinc pyrithione or

selenium sulfide may help.

- Dry rough heels and feet - apply creams containing urea to help soften thick, rough skin.

- Get a skin exam and skin cancer screening - fall and winter months are the perfect time to get a skin cancer screening after all the fun in the sun had during the summer.

Fall is the perfect season to give your skin some extra attention and establish habits that will keep it healthy throughout the year. I hope these simple takeaways and tips are helpful to you and your family during the fall and winter months. As always, please consult your dermatology provider for any skin health issues or concerns.

ACUPUNCTURE

continued from page 7

associated with complex chronic illnesses.

Treatment is individualized around the person, their neurological presentation and their goals. Neuroacupuncture does not replace appropriate neurological, medical, psychological or rehabilitative care. Instead, it offers another potential tool within a thoughtful, coordinated plan.

Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture: A Different Approach to Aging Well

Needles in the face may sound particularly appropriate for October, but these needles are tiny, remarkably fine and meticulously placed.

Facial rejuvenation acupuncture is considerably more sophisticated than placing a few needles around a wrinkle. Precise needling creates controlled stimulation within the tissues, supporting local circulation and the body's normal tissue-repair response. Research continues to explore its potential influence on skin elasticity and other features associated with facial aging.

This is typically a progressive approach, with sessions building upon one another as the practitioner monitors the response over time. It may appeal to someone noticing that stress, hormonal changes and time are showing differently in the mirror—or someone interested in

complementing an established aesthetic or skin-health routine.

Eastern medicine brings an interesting perspective to aesthetics: the face does not exist independently from the person attached to it. Sleep, chronic stress, hormonal transitions, nutrition and overall health eventually show up in how we look and feel. The goal is not to make someone look like a different person, but to support the face while still paying attention to the whole person.

Herbal Medicine: More Than "Natural"

No October discussion of Eastern medicine would be complete without a few herbs.

Botanical medicine has deep roots across Eastern traditions, where plants may be used individually or combined into carefully constructed formulas. Plants contain biologically active compounds, which is precisely why species, preparation, sourcing, formulation and dose matter.

Herbal medicine may provide additional support alongside conventional care or offer another avenue when certain options are limited or poorly tolerated. That does not mean ignoring pathology. Good integrative care respects diagnosis, appropriate testing and conventional treatment while continuing to ask what else may reasonably support the individual.

At Tortoise Clinic, our in-house dispensary includes raw

Chinese herbs, carefully selected formulas, professional-grade supplements and targeted nutrients. It supports individualized patient protocols and is also open to the public.

Cupping: An Old Practice with Modern Appeal

Cupping has been used for centuries and has found a modern audience in sports, physical recovery and wellness settings.

Traditional fire cupping may be dramatic to watch, but the flame is removed before the glass cup is placed on the body and never touches the skin. Contemporary methods create a similar lifting effect without fire.

Unlike the downward pressure of massage, cupping lifts

the tissues and may be incorporated for muscular tension, mobility, restriction, discomfort or recovery after physical activity. Whether it is a golfer maintaining shoulder mobility, a runner recovering from training or someone carrying years of tension through the neck and back, cupping offers another tool within a broader approach to movement and recovery.

Eastern medicine can appear mysterious from the outside. There are needles, unfamiliar herbs, glass cups and occasionally even fire. Behind them is a long history of observation, individualized care and an evolving body of research.

For me, the interesting part is not choosing between East-

ern and Western medicine. It is understanding where each has something meaningful to offer and when they can complement one another.

So, this October, save the fear for the haunted houses and scary movies. The needles are tiny. Fire is optional. And the herbs are far more sophisticated than a bubbling cauldron might suggest.

Dr. Karen DeVore is the owner of Tortoise Clinic in Santa Rosa Beach, a multidisciplinary clinic bridging Eastern and Western perspectives and providing the North Florida community with thoughtful, individualized, whole-person care.

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What the TV Show “Shrinking” Gets Right About Being a Therapist



BY MICHAEL McMANUS, LCSW

I’ve spent several decades in this profession, so when a show about psychotherapists starts trending, I watch it with a mix of curiosity and mild dread. Most portrayals of therapists on screen are either cartoonish-

ly wise or cartoonishly broken. “Shrinking” surprised me. It leans into something closer to the truth: therapists are not oracles. We are people who happen to be trained to sit with pain, and we carry our own.

The premise — Jimmy a grieving therapist who starts breaking the rules, telling clients exactly what he thinks, blurring the professional distance he was taught to maintain — is dramatized for television, obviously. Nobody should actually run their practice that way. But underneath the exaggeration is something real: the character is visibly human. He grieves badly. He makes mistakes with his daughter. He gets things wrong

with his clients and has to repair it. That imperfection is the point, and it’s the part of the job most people never get to see.

Therapy has always had an unspoken mythology around it — the composed clinician behind the desk, unreadable, unaffected, dispensing insight from a place of total stability. When I started out, that was more or less the model I was trained in. Keep the frame rigid. Keep your own life out of the room. Stay behind what we used to call the “therapeutic wall” — the idea that revealing too much of yourself would somehow contaminate the work.

I don’t work that way anymore, and I haven’t for a long

time. Somewhere over the years, I stopped believing that distance was the same thing as professionalism. I got more transparent. More willing to let a client see that I’m a person who has struggled, who doesn’t have every answer sitting in a drawer, who is genuinely moved by what they bring into the room. That shift wasn’t comfortable at first — it went against everything I’d been taught about maintaining the “expert” posture. But it changed the work. Clients don’t need a blank screen to project onto nearly as much as they need to feel like they’re sitting across from someone real.

That’s why a show like this resonates, messy plot lines aside.

It gives people permission to see therapists as flawed, evolving humans rather than emotionally sealed professionals — and honestly, I think that’s closer to what actually makes the work effective. Connection doesn’t come from perfection. It comes from two people being willing to be real with each other, one of whom happens to have some training in how to hold that space well.

Michael McManus LCSW and his wife Angela are Therapists in Santa Rosa Beach Florida. To set up an appointment Michael can be reached by text or phone at (850)-837-0123 are at the website: psychotherapy30A.com.

Bay County Flamingo Challenge Enters Second Year

New Flamingo Challenge: Bridge Walk for Breast Cancer added to events

The Flamingo Challenge is a partnership between Ascension Sacred Heart Bay and First Commerce Credit Union entering its second year in Bay County. In 2025, the inaugural month-long fundraising initiative raised \$15,463. Throughout October, Breast Cancer Aware-

ness Month, the #Flamingo-Challenge invites the community to purchase and display flocks of pink plastic flamingos at their homes and businesses. These vibrant displays serve as a playful yet powerful visual reminder of early detection and local support.

Why The Flamingo Challenge

In the past three years, more than 400 women in Bay County were diagnosed with breast cancer, and more than 30% of those cases were discovered at an advanced stage.

Only 53% of women in Bay

County currently follow the recommendation to receive an annual mammogram.

The initiative helps eliminate the cost barrier of annual screening mammograms for women who do not have health insurance.

Funds raised cover costs related to additional breast cancer diagnostics and treatment for local women who cannot afford to pay.

“With the success of the Flamingo Challenge overall, all

uninsured women over 40 automatically qualify for a screening mammogram at Ascension Sacred Heart Bay Women’s Diagnostic Center,” said Robin Godwin, President and CEO of Sacred Heart Bay. “This eliminates the burden of having to pay out of pocket for this annual screening, helping prevent financial barriers from delaying critical care.”

Continued on next page



Dr. Chern, MD,
Sue Griffin, ARNP
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He Cares For You



BY KERRY KNIGHT, MINISTER,
EMERALD BEACH CHURCH OF
CHRIST

*“Casting all your care upon Him,
for He cares for you”
(1 Peter 5:7)*

There is a beautiful hymn
named, Does Jesus Care?” The
first verse raises this immortal

question. “Does Jesus care when
my heart is pained, too deeply
for mirth and song? And then
comes the wonderful refrain: O
yes, He cares, I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my
grief; When the days are weary,
the long nights dreary,
I KNOW MY SAVIOR
CARES.

How interesting is the use of
the word, “casting.” The Greek
word means “throwing off.” It
describes a person who cannot
handle the weight or size of the
load, so they toss it aside into the
arms of One who can. Have
you ever suffered from such
pain and agony from a personal
problem that you just couldn’t
bear it? Of course you have. So
what do you do? Most will ag-
onize with tears and fear of be-
ing unable to cope with it. Life

becomes a terrible misery of
hopelessness. It doesn’t have to
be that way. If you are a Child
of God, you have a Father who
is all powerful. His Son, your
Savior, gladly accepts your pain
and does so for one reason: “He
cares for you.”

The Bible affirms: “For you

are all the children of God by
faith in Christ Jesus. For as
many of you as have been bap-
tized into Christ have put on
Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27)

Accept Christ into your life
by acknowledging your faith in
Him. Turn from sin in your
life through repentance, and be

baptized to wash away your sin.
Your load will be lifted, and you
will live in the peace of knowing
that He cares for you.

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

FLAMINGO

continued from previous page

Flamingo Challenge: Bridge Walk for Breast Cancer

This year, Bay County resi-
dents are invited to step up and
make a powerful difference this
fall as the Ascension Sacred
Heart Foundation, First Com-
merce Credit Union, and Gulf
Coast State College join forces
to host the inaugural Flamin-
go Challenge: Bridge Walk for
Breast Cancer.

On Saturday, Oct. 17, at
Carl Grey Park in Panama
City, this inspiring community
event unites residents, business-
es, and breast cancer survivors
behind a vital goal: providing
lifesaving breast health services
to local women. Most impor-
tantly, 100% of all funds raised
from the event will support
Bay County, directly benefiting
women in need of breast cancer
screening, diagnostics, and care,
regardless of their ability to pay.

“From the beginning, the
Flamingo Challenge has been
about bringing people together
in a way that is meaningful, visi-
ble, and makes a difference close
to home,” said Cecilia Homi-
son, CEO of First Commerce
Credit Union. “The Bridge
Walk gives Bay County another
way to rally around local wom-
en and families, while helping
ensure more women have access
to the breast cancer screenings,
diagnostics and care they need.



We’re proud to see this commu-
nity embrace the Challenge and
make it its own.”

Date: Saturday, Oct. 17

Location: Carl Grey Park,
Panama City, with parking
available at Gulf Coast State
College

Schedule: Registration
opens at 9 a.m. | The walk
starts at 10 a.m.

Pre-registration: Partici-
pants can sign up in advance by
visiting [bit.ly/BridgeWalkfor-
BreastCancer](http://bit.ly/BridgeWalkforBreastCancer).

How to Flamingle

We encourage all readers,
local businesses, and neighbor-
hood groups to join the move-
ment. You can register to walk,
start a team, or host a flock of
flamingos in your yard or store-
front. To pre-register for the
walk, visit [bit.ly/BridgeWalkfor-
BreastCancer](http://bit.ly/BridgeWalkforBreastCancer). To learn more
about the Flamingo Challenge
or make a donation, visit bit.ly/BayFlamingoChallenge.

WHY I BELIEVE



Join Us for October Sermons

Theme: HE CARES FOR YOU - I Peter 5:7

Oct. 4: Jesus cares...when we suffer from physical and emotional pain

Oct. 11: Jesus cares...when we face tragedy and loss

Oct. 18: Jesus cares... when we are afraid

Oct. 25: Jesus cares... when we feel betrayed

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

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Worship 10 am

SUNDAY PM:
Lesson 1 pm

WEDNESDAY:
Bible Study 7 pm

Musing



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Right now, the news media is in an uproar over AI. The headlines are bleak. Experts are saying our cherished way of life is in danger. Pretty soon, if things keep going this direction, they say we will lose basic human abilities, such as empathy, sustained focus, and the ability to spel withot autocorrek.

And while I know I'm supposed to be terrified of AI, I'm not worried. Namely, because right now, I'm busy watching "The Dog House."

"The Dog House" is a TV series about people who adopt pets in Godmanchester, England. The show documents stories of animal rescues from the Wood Green Pets Charity, and it is crack for dog lovers.

After a few moments of

watching, you're rooting for families, for rescues, for the rescue staff, and you've finished two bags of Chili Cheese Fritos.

This show is nearly perfect. On the "International Sean Dietrich Adorable-TV Scale," a scale ranging from 1 to 10 (with 10 being, say, "Lilo & Stitch," and one being "A Clockwork Orange"), "The Dog House" receives a score of 632,348.

This is because the show is positive.

Have you ever tried practicing positivity? Have you ever actively been positive for a full 24 hours?

Yes. I know. Some see positivity as willful ignorance. Others see positivity as pure stupidity. But personally, I have always seen positivity as a five-syllable word.

Even so, positivity is not just ANY five-syllable word such as "geometrical," "vegetarian," or "Lithuania." Those are regular five-syllable words. No, positivity is real.

Everything in this world is made of energy. If you were to magnify any object to the atomic level, you'd see only waves or

Sean of the South: AI



particles. Many particles carry an electrical charge.

That chair in the corner is really just energy. The phone you're holding: Energy. The crumpled Frito-Lay bag lying next to you on the sofa: Also en-ergy.

So, in electrical terms, "positivity" actually means something different than you might think.

Let's go back to high-school physics class for a moment. Quit doodling in your history textbook and altering that image of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, you pervert. Let's talk about electrical circuits.

Recall that an electrical circuit won't work if each point

carries the same voltage. Take your house. Light and power only happen in your home when there is a potential difference between high points (positives) and low points (negatives).

Now apply this to life in general.

Daily life is filled with high and low points. A high point in your day might be finding \$50 in your coat pocket, whereas a low point would be, for example, undergoing an IRS audit that lasts about as long as dental school—not that this has ever happened to me.

Positive thinking isn't about pretending low points don't exist. Hardship, frustration, grief, disaster—those things happen. But in electrical terms, these low points offer low electrical potential.

You CAN'T get an electrical current flowing if you're not positively charging your circuit.

So, once again, sticking with electrical jargon:

If you deal with the low points, but actively aim for the high points, you will generate a current. The current will start small. But it will build. Because

that's what energy does. It grows.

The more positivity you build, the more positive the people around you will become. One electrical current can spread across the world. Across the universe. Across time and space. Touching nearly every human on the planet.

If, however, you only focus on low points, you're—electrically speaking—dead. Like a dead electrical outlet. Or a dead toaster oven.

Over time, your body and mind will become so lethargic you'll require energy from external sources to survive. Other people in your life can feed you positive energy for a little while, but not forever.

Ultimately, you'll drain your loved ones until their batteries are almost dead, too. Pretty soon, THEY'LL become negatively charged. Your negativity will alter them. Their negativity will alter THEIR loved ones. And the negativity loop will get bigger and bigger, affecting more and more people, until there's nothing left on this Earth but AI.



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It's 'Ber' Time at Sharp Flooring & Home Furnishing

BY KIM BRAZELL, BUSINESS & MARKETING MANAGER

Summer is over. School is back in session, and it's officially the 'Ber' months. When the heat has been as suffocating as it has been this past summer, we are more than ready for some cooler weather and some clear, beautiful days. That means it's time to start thinking about fall and the holidays. Is your home ready to entertain your family and friends, or does it need a refresh?

Transitioning from summer to fall doesn't need to be difficult. Here are some quick and easy ideas to make an impact on the look and feel of your home just in time for fall and the holidays.

In your main living space, one of the easiest and best ways to make an immediate impact is to change any light and airy summer accents to more seasonal fall accents. Doing this through color is a great way to instantly transform your space. Add a little orange, deep burgundy or green to create a warm, earthy environment.



"One of the best ways to make an instant change in your living room is by adding or changing your area rug," says Justin Hazellief, store manager for Sharp Flooring & Home Furnishings, which is located on Highway 77 in Panama City. "Sharp offers a variety of colors, types and sizes to fit your space. It's a quick, easy way to make a dramatic impact. Our in-store selection means that you can pick it out and take it home the same day too."

In addition, some other budget-friendly changes could be changing your curtains or throw pillows to create a warm, inviting feel to your home. Layering with earth-toned blankets or textured baskets helps make the room warm and cozy as

well. "Upgrading or changing out your lighting—from your shade to an entire lamp is also an excellent way to change the ambiance of a room. People sometimes underestimate the difference that lighting can make in a space, as it can create a coziness in your home."

In your dining room, you can add upholstered chairs to your dining table to soften wood or glass tables. Neutral-colored upholstery will keep things light so that you can coordinate table decorations or other wall decorations to create a wonderful entertaining experience.

The second way to bring a little fall into your home is to re-envision how you live in your space. Think about holiday gatherings and how the furniture flows in your house. Rearrange your space now to maximize the number of people you can host. If you don't have enough space, it's a great time to shop for that perfect item, such

as a sofa, loveseat, or a recliner.

Popular options right now are modular sectionals. Basically, these sectionals can be configured to fit almost any room. Their popularity allows them to be arranged and rearranged to best fit the space and the immediate need for seating. "Furniture today is made for the flexible way we live. So modular is a great way to go. If you need separate pieces, we have those too. Everything from side chairs to recliners. If we don't have something in stock, we can order it and should have plenty of time to get here before the holidays," says Hazellief.

Sharp offers a wide array of major manufacturers to choose from too, such as Ashley Furniture, Ardent, Million Dollar Rustic, and Serta, just to name a few. The turnaround time can be anywhere from a few days to up to six weeks, depending on the piece or pieces ordered. But ordering means that you can pick a color and/or pattern to really customize your home.

If finances are a bit tight, no worries. Sharp Flooring &

Home Furnishings offers financing for your purchase. You can enjoy your furniture and pay over time. It's the best of both worlds as you have the furniture to enjoy, but it's not a huge hit to your wallet—especially so close to the holidays. Financing gives you the ability to purchase with peace of mind.

"We invite everyone to come in and see what's new at Sharp," says Hazellief. "This store has been serving the Panama City area for more than 45 years, and we're proud to continue offering the great selection of flooring, tile, and rugs our customers have come to know us for. Now, we've expanded beyond flooring with exciting new product lines, including furniture, cabinets, and countertops."

"We're especially excited about our new furniture selection and the opportunity to offer customers even more for their homes. Whether you're furnishing a room, updating your floors, or planning a larger home project, we want Sharp to be a place where you can find it all under one roof."

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Design and Culture: Outdoor Kitchens

How we love the outdoors and the best time of year to be out and about in the Panhandle is here! If you are looking to build an outdoor kitchen or maybe remodel an area outside, we have some local resources to get you headed in the right direction.

SeaBee Constructors, LLC is a locally owned company. They offer a wide range of services including a new build or an outdoor kitchen remodel. Stucco, Brick, Hardy board, and Stone are a couple of options to consider for your new outdoor kitchen, and Heather Greise from Sea-bee Constructors will help you design an outdoor kitchen that works for your exterior space.

When it comes to outdoor storage in your outdoor kitchen, The top two options are stainless storage or outdoor cabinets. NatureKast is the leader in the industry for outdoor custom cabinetry. It can be customized to the grills and appliances you would like in your outdoor kitchen, custom hoods are available if you need ventilation and it is all weatherproof. NatureKast has a limited lifetime warranty and offers a wide range of finishes with



Design by NatureKast, Louvered door style, Weathered Graphite, Fantasy Brown Marble countertops. Granite Plus is your local resource for NatureKast Cabinetry.

seven door styles: Slab, Shaker, Rustique, Louvre, Contempo,

Euro and Metro. If you would like to find out more you can visit NatureKast.com or stop by Granite Plus.

When selecting countertops for your outdoor kitchen there are a wide range of options. Granite and natural stones are the most common materials used in outdoor kitchens for now. Dekton, a manufactured material, is slowly making its way into our outdoor kitchens. Dekton is scratch-resistant, stain-resistant and heat-resistant. One of the wonderful characteristics of this product is its patterning, influenced by nature. For example, The Onrika Collection from Dekton gives the Calacatta Marble look without the main-

tenance of Marble. Dekton can also be used for wall cladding in your outdoor kitchen. Last but not least, Caesarstone Quartz is one of the only companies that has a quartz collection that can be used outdoors. It is durable



Marine grade patio furniture available at Panhandle Patio

and perfect for an outdoor space. Samples of these products are available at Granite Plus.

Now it's time for barstools to go with that new beautiful outdoor kitchen. Panhandle Patio, located in Panama City is owned by a local family, Austin and Lynsey Beasley. All of their furniture is from Florida, and they have a line of Marine Grade Polymer furniture that comes in a wide range of colors and fabrics. If you would like to find out more, you can stop by their showroom located at 3715 West 23rd Street.



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Summer's Over, Now What?



By TIPP SPRADLIN

In Florida, we don't measure the year by the weather, we measure it by who is visiting. The holiday season is the brief window between Black Friday and New Year's Eve. Snowbird season is when northern license plates migrate south for the winter. Spring Break season is March Madness without the brackets. Memorial Day to Labor Day is when we welcome the masses and quietly remind ourselves they're helping pay the bills.

Each of these seasons brings a different type of buyer to the counter and a different challenge for local businesses. But summer is the big one.

By September, most locals are enjoying lighter traffic and shorter wait times at their favorite restaurants. I can't help but think of The Wizard of Oz

when Glinda gently coaxes the Munchkins out of hiding and tells them the Wicked Witch is gone. And they all rejoice.

But before we put another summer behind us, it's worth figuring out what we learned from it. Grab the people who survived the summer with you, order some lunch, and start there.

Where did the business struggle?

What worked perfectly well in February but fell apart when July hit?

Maybe it was staffing, scheduling, inventory, equipment or communication. Your employees are the best source of intel. They dealt with problems you never saw and probably came up with workarounds you don't know about. Ask nicely, bribe them if you have to, but get their feedback while everyone still remembers what happened.

What did your customers tell you?

Think about what customers repeatedly asked for, complained about or couldn't get.

Maybe they wanted different hours, a product you don't carry, online ordering or a service you don't offer. Pay attention to patterns. You don't have to chase every suggestion, but repeated requests or complaints are free market research.

How did this summer actually compare to last summer?

Memory is a terrible accounting system and napkins aren't general ledgers.

A packed parking lot, ringing phones and exhausted employees can make a season feel successful, but being busy doesn't always equal profitability. Pull up your Profit & Loss statement and find out if it actually was.

Compare the same months year over year. Look at revenue, payroll, cost of goods and other major expenses. Did you make more money? Did it cost consid-

erably more to make it? Where did margins improve or shrink?

Too many small businesses wait until the end of the year to really look at their books. By then, you can see what happened, but you may not remember why.

Worse, a problem that showed up during Spring Break could quietly eat into profits all summer before anyone notices it in December.

What are you keeping, fixing or changing?

Maybe a new process worked beautifully. Document and standardize it.

Maybe staffing was a constant struggle. Is there something you could do differently next season, or do you need to plan around the reality that finding enough people will continue to be difficult?

Maybe customers kept asking for something you don't offer. Is it worth exploring or is it just another TikTok fad?

Maybe the numbers showed that your busiest month wasn't actually your most profitable one. That's worth understanding.

Not every problem has an easy fix, and some may not have a fix at all. The point is to know which challenges you can control, which ones you need to plan around, and which opportunities are worth pursuing.

Pick a few things worth acting on, write them down and make sure they don't get forgotten before the next busy season. Do this after every season that matters to your business.

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Natalie Kessler
Broker

Tipp Spradlin
Business Sales Advisor

Dave Worley
Business Sales Advisor

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Latitude Margaritaville Watersound Phase Two Planned for 2027

Minto Communities USA (“Minto”), The St. Joe Company (NYSE: JOE) (“St. Joe”) and Margaritaville Holdings (“Margaritaville”) announced on September 17, 2026, that Latitude Margaritaville Watersound is expanding with Phase Two of the popular community. Groundbreaking is projected for mid-2027.

With a laid-back lifestyle of fun, food, music and escapism, award-winning Latitude Margaritaville communities have captured the imagination of today’s vibrant 55 and better homebuyers who are growing older...but not up.

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound is being developed by Minto and St. Joe, under licensing from global lifestyle brand Margaritaville Holdings. Located on Northwest Florida’s Emerald Coast near Panama City Beach, it is in the heart of St. Joe’s vast Bay-Walton Sector Plan that encompasses approximately 110,500 acres with approximately 15 miles of frontage on the Intracoastal Waterway. Since the start of Latitude Margaritaville Watersound home sales in 2021, there have been 2,637 home contracts as of September 15, 2026, underscoring the demand for the community.

“We look forward to expanding Latitude Margaritaville Watersound and introducing the next chapter of the Latitude Margaritaville lifestyle with new home designs and exciting enhancements to our world-class amenities,” notes Minto USA Division President of Acquisition and Development Dutch Neuweiler.

“Latitude Margaritaville Watersound is a wonderful example of what can happen when a strong brand, an exceptional location, and great partners come together,” said Margaritaville President of Development Jim Wiseman.

Phase Two will be sited on a 3,565-acre parcel along the Intracoastal Waterway and will include approximately 3,500 homes. It will also feature a second resort-style amenity center on the same scale as the community’s completed Town Square with the addition of ex-



IMAGES CREDIT: COURTESY MINTO COMMUNITIES.

citing new concepts.

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound currently offers four distinct home collections: the Conch Cottage Collection, Caribbean Villas Collection, Beach and Island Collections of single-family homes and Vista Collection of luxury two-story homes overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway. Home designs capture the “no worries” tropical vibe that defines Latitude Margaritaville. Floor plans range from 1,210 to 4,048 square feet under air with pricing from the \$300s. Fourteen colorful island-styled model homes are open daily for viewing. Minto will continue with these popular home styles while introducing a number of new innovative floorplans in Phase Two.

The completed Latitude Margaritaville Watersound Town Square features a terraced amphitheater, thatched roof bandshell, full-size concert stage for live music and a jumbo screen for live streaming and movies. There is also a specially surfaced dance floor that provides a little give and spring for dancers. A two-story Latitude Bar & Chill restaurant with rooftop Overlook Bar provides a range of Margaritaville-inspired food and beverage concoctions, live entertainment and panoramic views of the Intracoastal Waterway.

A massive lagoon-style Paradise Pool with beach-like gradual entry and shaded Tiki Island is surrounded by an expansive sun deck. A state-of-the-art Fins Up! Fitness Center offers indoor lap pool and whirlpool spa as well as a wellness program. There are tennis, pickleball and bocce ball courts and an outdoor game lawn with cornhole, billiards, table tennis, putting green and more. The

Town Square also features a Workin’ N’ Playin’ Center that includes the Last Mango Theater, Hangar Workshop and Barkaritaville Pet Spa. Residents also enjoy the Barkaritaville Dog Park and the Intracoastal Waterway by kayak from the Port of Indecision kayak launch.

In addition to existing and planned amenities within the community, St. Joe is continuing to expand the commercial town center adjacent to Latitude Margaritaville Watersound. Watersound® West Bay Center is already home to a growing collection of businesses, with additional retail, dining and service offerings planned, including a Publix Super Market currently under construction. St. Joe also has plans to develop a public marina along the Intracoastal Waterway. Additionally, a healthcare campus located just minutes from Latitude Margaritaville Watersound

on an 87-acre parcel near the intersection of State Highway 79 and Phillip Griffiths Sr. Parkway is being developed. The first phase of the campus is open with a variety of services, including urgent and primary care, cardiology, pulmonology, orthopedics, obstetrics and gynecology, dermatology and a surgery center. Additionally, an FSU state-of-the-art acute care, teaching and research hospital is currently under construction on the medical campus.

Minto Communities and Margaritaville were presented with the Zonda 2026 Master Plan of the Year Award for their portfolio of Latitude Margaritaville communities and Ideal-LIVING magazine recently recognized Latitude Margaritaville Watersound among the Top 100 Best Places to Live across the U.S. and abroad. The National Association of Homebuilders recognized Minto and Latitude Margaritaville Watersound with a 2026 silver Best in 55+ Housing Award for the

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound Town Square amenity center.

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound is the third of the incredibly popular, award-winning Latitude Margaritaville communities. The first of the communities, Latitude Margaritaville Daytona Beach sold out more than five years ahead of projections. The second to open was Latitude Margaritaville Hilton Head in South Carolina. Additional Latitude Margaritaville communities are being planned for South Florida, Texas, and other popular destinations.

Latitude Margaritaville Watersound is located at 9201 Highway 79, Panama City Beach, Florida. Sales Center hours are Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Models are open daily. For information on Latitude Margaritaville, visit www.LatitudeMargaritaville.com or Minto Communities, visit www.mintousa.com.



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SATURDAY, JUNE 5
JASON ALDEAN
★ TUCHER WETMORE ★

SUNDAY, JUNE 6
ZACH TOP
★ TY MYERS ★

*** MANY MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED! ***
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OCTOBER 12TH - 18TH LOBSTER FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 12 - 18 LOBSTER SPECIALS IN RESTAURANT ALL WEEK

**THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 15**

Sand Sculpture, Beach Bar and **ALEX NAPIER & DAYBREAK** live on the Beach Stage

**FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 16**

Sand Sculpture, Beach Bar and **GLORY DAYS** live on the Beach Stage

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17
**LOBSTER FEAST
ON THE BEACH!**

Sand Sculpture, Beach Bar, **ALEX NAPIER & DAYBREAK** and **GLORY DAYS** live on the Beach Stage

**SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 18**
**LOBSTER FEAST
ON THE BEACH!**

Sand Sculpture, Beach Bar and **THE MODERN ELDORADOS** live on the Beach Stage

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