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SOUTH WALTON Life

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Santa is in Town!

Holiday Happenings Around South Walton

Santa's arrival to our area is a highlight of the season! Where can you find him Around Town?

You can visit Santa at **The Village of Baytowne Wharf** at his sleigh at his arrival during the Tuba Christmas event on Sat., Dec. 11. If you miss that, you can still visit Wednesday nights Dec. 1-15 in the Village. Visit www.baytowne-wharf.com.

Santa Days at Pecan Jack's 30A

Saturday, Dec. 11th, Noon-3pm. The best Ice Cream & Candy shop on 30A will feature a special guest again this year! Santa's Day at Pecan Jack's 30A is back featuring the most delectable holiday treats. Sample their sweets, shop for the holidays and meet Santa! The first 100 guests will receive a free gift. Pecan Jack's makes every piece of Candy, Praline, Chocolates & Ice cream hand-crafted on site.

Hosted by the City of DeFuniak Springs, from Nov. 26 - Dec. 31, Chipley Park lights up with the **annual Christ-**



mas Reflection Displays and more than 10 million lights reflecting off the lake. Open Nov. 26 - Dec. 31. Friday-Saturday, 5:30-9:30 p.m.; Sunday-Thursday, 5:30-9 p.m. nightly. \$5 per person, free for children under 5, Tuesday discount for military; \$10 for carload up to five people. Carriage rides are available on select nights (Nov. 27 - Dec. 31), \$10/person.

(850) 978-2999.

The Festival of Trees at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin runs from Thanksgiving through Christmas Day. Participating non-profit organizations compete to win cash prizes totaling \$7,000. Cast your vote for the People's Choice award. Grand Boulevard also is hosting photos with Elf On The Shelf in Grand

Park at the Festival of Trees display on Saturdays, Dec. 11 & 18 from 2-4 p.m.

Main Street DeFuniak Springs brings back **Merry Main Street!** Free to attend, Merry Main Street boasts live music and theatrical performances, an outdoor market, food trucks, rides on the

SANTA

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Creating Christmas Memories

BY REV. GUERY H. CLENDENING

It's that time of year. Christmas is just around the corner and before we can blink an eye, it will be over. Can I make a suggestion: take advantage of the moment to create special memories that will last a lifetime!

When my Wife Linda and I lived in Macon, Georgia, during Christmas we would make an annual shopping trip to Atlanta. We would take the children out of school and hit the road early. Because I was born and raised in Atlanta, I knew my way around town. We would shop from mall to mall, hunting for the best bargains. Lunch was always a special family time and a welcome break for my weary feet. But then it was on to the next group of stores.

Personally, I am not much of a shopper but, like many, my wife loved it! So, this was the big day for me to keep quiet, not complain or to be impatient; while we went from rack to rack, counter to counter, trying on clothes, looking for the right gifts and toys.

MEMORIES

continued on page 3



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 **Community**

SANTA

continued from page 1

Choctaw Express Train, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, kids character appearances by The Character Clubhouse, and more family fun – all taking place outdoors along Baldwin Ave. in downtown DeFuniak Springs. Beginning Saturday, December 4th, events occur every Friday and Saturday up to Christmas. https://bit.ly/MSD_Merry-Main, Info@mainstreetdfs.org, (850) 296-9051.

Dust off those skates and get in the winter spirit at The Village of

Baytowne Wharf's **Baytowne on Ice**. Ice rink is open now – Feb. 2nd. Hours vary daily. Visit BaytowneWharf.com.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin hosts a special light show on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights from Dec. 1-22 during the 12 Nights of Lights where the tree lights in the events plaza will dance and blink to music at 6, 7 and 8 p.m. Visit BaytowneWharf.com.

Join **Sinfonia's Holiday Pops** Fri., Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. at Village Church of Destin featuring singer/actor of the stage and screen Nicholas Rodriguez. From

holiday classics to Broadway to the great American Songbook, this festive twist of music will put everyone in the holiday spirit. Tickets \$29.50 - \$55.00. sinfoniagulfcoast.org.

Eden Gardens State Park will be illuminated Sat., Dec. 11, 5-8 p.m. More than 2,000 luminaries will light the garden paths of Eden Gardens at nightfall. Music and carolers voices will fill the air throughout the evening and cookies and hot beverages will be provided by the Friends



of Eden Gardens. The event is free and park entry fees will be waived from 5-8 p.m.

Santa Paws at AJ's Grayton Beach is calling all dog-lovers! Santa will be on site at AJ's Grayton Beach on Sunday, Dec 5th from 12-2 p.m. visiting with all his furry friends. Spend your Sunday with your favorite four-legged companion enjoying brunch and live music with Will & Linda. Bring your fur pup and your camera to get a great photo. Road Dogg Rescue will also be at AJ's looking to find foster homes or get dogs adopted going into the holiday season.

MEMORIES

continued from page 1

If you are near my age, you probably remember when Cabbage Patch Dolls hit the market. I'll never forget my beloved wife, standing in a crowd of determined shoppers, ready for the clerks to open another shipment of dolls! What a sight to behold, watching a mass of humanity make their move to secure one of their prizes. Our shopping wasn't over until the last store closed around 11 o'clock. But, the best was yet to come! You see, part of the agreement to take the family shopping was for the girls to agree to eat at The Varsity with me. Linda called it "greasy memories". I loved it; two Chili Dogs, fried onion rings and a large frosty Orange Freeze. That was "icing" on top of the cake, that made it all worth it!

After the Varsity experience, we would drive downtown to Rich's Department Store and



make our way to the top of a large breezeway between Rich's two buildings. From there, we would view a huge Christmas tree. That was our tradition for years. We would then drive home to Macon, tired but joyful; because we had spent a beautiful day together. Fighting traffic, yes; Traipsing from store to store, yes; but nonetheless, together. I am thankful for the memory. So

thankful God gave me my family and all those special times together!

Times have changed. My children are grown now, and my beloved wife is in Heaven; but the memories created will never be forgotten. So, as we approach Christmas, may I suggest that in this busy time of the year, that we do certain things intentionally. Don't let the Christmas rush steal from you precious moments that will last forever.

When Jesus was born, most people of the day missed His ar-

rival. He was born in a stable, because there was no room for His family in the Inn. (Luke 2-7). But the angels didn't miss His coming. Thousands appeared in the clouds to announce to the shepherds: "for unto us is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2-11). It's His birthday we are celebrating. Don't miss the moment, and what He, as the Savior, can mean in your life. Merry Christmas and Happy Memory making!

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Psalm 18:28
 "It is you who lights a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness."

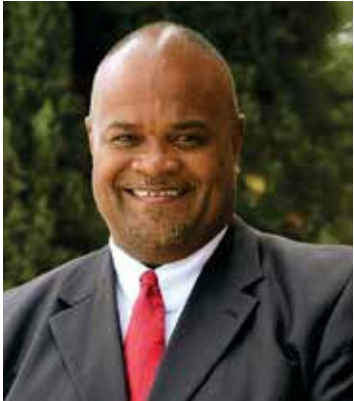
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 Community

WCSD Superintendent's Update December 2021



Superintendent A. Russell Hughes

Winter has emerged, but Walton County School District shows no sign of cooling down in educational excellence! On the contrary, we have had a phenomenal first half of the school year, indicated by the many happenings throughout the District. Teachers, students, and staff have worked diligently to meet academic rigor. They will soon

see the fruit of their labor as they rise to meet the challenge of End of Course (EOC) and semester exams while anxiously awaiting the Christmas Holidays.

As we move forward, there are a few important dates to keep in the forefront of your December schedule and family activity planning. December 17, 2021, marks the end of the 2nd nine weeks and first semester. December 20, 2021, through January 3, 2022, is the official "Winter Break" holiday. All students and school district employees will be off on those days to observe the winter break and enjoy the holiday season with friends and family. Teachers will return to work on January 3, 2022, with students following on January 5, 2022. Although students are off for the holidays, we encourage you to keep them mentally engaged and active to avoid the "winter knowl-

edge slide!" Perhaps you might have them read a favorite holiday story or come together to play a fun family game that encourages higher-order thinking skills.

Out-of-this-world thinking occurred during November as each middle school participated in exploring our solar system. The Emerald Coast Science Planetarium Experience, sponsored through a generous grant from the St. Joe Foundation, was showcased to middle school students across the District. Students entered an inflatable dome to view a show highlighting constellations, the solar system, and space exploration. Thank you, St. Joe, for your partnership in the education of Walton County's students.

The Walton County School Board recognized the Walton County Presidential Scholar nominees in the areas of Academics and Career Technical Education at the November 2, 2021 school board meeting. The Commission on Presidential Scholars accepted nominees from across the state to meet their mission of recognizing and honoring superior high school seniors. Scholars are chosen based on outstanding achievement in one of two categories. Categories include an academic component based on SAT/ACT scores and a Career and Technical (CTE) component demonstrating excellence in career and technical education. This year's nominees are Mr. Westin Corbin of Walton High School, recognized as

the academic scholar, and Miss Alyssa Sutton of South Walton High School's Magnet Innovations Center/STEAM school as the Career Technical Education Scholar. Congratulations to these candidates!

The District is equally proud to recognize Freeport High School's Morrigan Burnham. Morgan was recently honored by Governor Ron DeSantis for her PERFECT score on the state Biology end-of-course examination! Congratulations to Morrigan on her recognition and Biology teacher Amy Baker for her work in the classroom!

In addition, Walton County School District recognizes Walton Middle School student Bethany Waites for having her artwork selected to represent Walton County in the Art in the Capitol Competition, a statewide visual arts competition for Florida students grades 6-8. Each district school holds an art competition to select the winning art piece, which lands a space displayed at the Capitol in Tallahassee. Hats off to you, Bethany!

In athletic excellence, huge applause is due to our High School Football programs. Freeport High School, South Walton High School, and Walton High School created a trifecta for grid-iron play.

Each school's team earned a spot in state playoff competitions. Congratulations to the coaches and players of these teams who represented our county in EPIC fashion!

Our Fine Arts programs continue leading students in the mastery of their creative abilities. Many special activities and holiday performances have been scheduled across the District to showcase talent during this holiday month. Stay informed of these activities through your child's school newsletters and social media platforms. We know you will be delighted when you can see your child progressing academically, creatively, and socially. For your convenience, the current holiday concert schedule is below.

- December 4 - SophistiCats Sing at Tree Lighting, Freeport City Hall at approx. 6:00 (after the parade)
- December 7 - Christmas Concert, FHS at 7:00
- December 7 - ECMS Holiday Concert, SWHS at 7:00
- December 8 - Christmas Concert, DLE at 5:30
- December 8 - Christmas Concert, PHS at 6:30
- December 9 - WHS Marching Braves perform in DFS Christmas Parade, 1:00
- December 12 - Band Winter Concert, WHS at 6:30
- December 12 - Holiday Band Concert, SWHS at 7:00
- December 14 - Holiday Guitar/Piano Recital, SWHS at 6:00

Superintendent Hughes wants to wish each student, family, employee, and community member a happy holiday season! "We look forward to continuing our journey to #1 when we return next year!"



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Coastal Seniors December 2021 Update

During all December events we are collecting non-perishable food for the United Way and new coats for kids for them to distribute to the needy. You can also drop food and clothing off at the Coastal Branch library.

Fridays with Friends - December 10th from 10 AM - Noon

Each "Fridays with Friends" program will be open from 10 AM until noon. Coastal Seniors will welcome members, who are 50 years and older, to our office to participate in activities, such as: card games, board games, ping pong, bingo, art classes, exercise classes, etc. If you are interested in any of these activities, please let us know so that our volunteers can prepare. You can contact us by calling 850-280-5342, or by sending an email to:



coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Pickleball at the Boys and Girls Club - Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Come join in the fun now through December 16th. Sandy and Joe will help anyone just learning or wanting to learn how to play. And don't forget that the new public pickleball courts are scheduled to open by the end of the first quarter of 2022 at the Walton County sports complex behind Dune Lakes Elementary School.

Floral Design and Holiday Cookie Swap - December 14th

from Noon - 100 PM

Jim Ryan from 1920 and Company will show us how to make a floral arrangement for the Christmas table. Please register for this by 12/4/21 as we have space for only 20 people. Be sure to bring cookies to swap! Call or email us to register -- coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com or 850-280-5342.

Little Free Library

Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. has received a Little Free Library which is located at our office at 70 Logan Lane, Santa Rosa Beach, Florida 32459. It is outside our front door and allows seniors to access books and

puzzles whenever they are able to come by our office location.

Seniors 50 years of age and up residing in or visiting Walton County are invited to join CSSW. Membership is \$20 for individuals, \$30 for family, and \$50 for businesses. You can become a member on Facebook at Coastal Seniors of South Walton, or via

email at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com, or on the website at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org. Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. is a non-profit 501© (3) organization for active adults and we're looking for dedicated, enthusiastic persons to join our Board of Directors.

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Community

Democratic Women's Club of South Walton Recognizes SoWal Fire Department

South Walton Fire Department is recognized for its outstanding job in protecting local citizens and visitors from fire emergencies, emergency medical response and transport, and beach safety with well-trained lifeguards and beach emergency staff. We all recognize that 2021 has been an unusual year as local citizens, tourists and SWFD staff

have coped with the effects of COVID-19 in our county, with a large increase in medical emergency calls to SWFD.

Fire Department staff are on the front lines during this pandemic and the Democratic Women's Club of South Walton wanted to recognize their service and their contribution to the well-being of the local citizenry.

On November 10, 2021, the DWC delivered pizzas to Station 2 for the shift on duty that day and gift certificates to purchase pizzas for the other shifts. The Democratic Women's Club offered their Thank You to the staff who work to protect both visitors and local residents 24/7 throughout the year.

Susan Bowden, President of



the Democratic Women's Club and Board Member Karen McGee delivered the pizzas.

For more information about the Democratic Women's Club of Walton County, go to our website at waltoncountydwc.org or contact us at Democratic Women's Club of Walton County, P. O. Box 2507, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459.

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Wreaths Across America Ceremony at Gulf Cemetery December 18th

Gulf Cemetery will host a Wreaths Across America Ceremony on Saturday, December 18th at 10:45AM. The Historic Gulf Cemetery will be joining with Arlington National Cemetery and over one thousand cemeteries across the country for the annual Wreaths Across America Ceremony. Join in honoring this tradition by your participation in placing wreaths on every veteran's grave site. A brief ceremony including a nationally-coordinated moment of silence will precede the placing of the wreaths. Unlike the memorial day ceremony, this event is informal and those attending are encouraged to be in comfortable attire. Children are encouraged to participate

in the wreath laying and many are part of the ceremony. For more information on Wreaths Across America, please visit www.wreathsassamerica.org. The Historical Marker Council in Tallahassee designated Gulf Cemetery as a State of Florida Heritage Site in 2013. The Cemetery was established in 1914 and is located on the highest point in Santa Rosa Beach, fronting Scenic Highway 393. The historical marker was unveiled at the cemetery's 100th birthday on Memorial Day, May 26, 2014. The historic Gulf Cemetery is located on South County Highway 393 in Santa Rosa Beach. For more information, visit www.gulfcemetery.org



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Destin/30A Moms; A Local Resource and Community Created Just For You!

BY MITZI KLATZKIN

Three years ago Megan and Tom Burns along with their five children moved from Minnesota to Blue Mountain Beach. Last year they relocated to the Point Washington area. As they became more immersed in the South Walton community Megan found herself wanting to find a way to help the numerous small businesses grow and flourish. While she was ruminating on this, her friend from another area learned of an opportunity with the local sister site of City Mom Collective. Thinking Megan may have met someone who would be interested, she tagged her in a post on social media to make her aware. Immediately after seeing Destin/30A Moms her first thought was tell me more! It quickly became evident she did know the perfect new owner herself.

If you are a mother raising your family from Destin to Inlet Beach this is an invaluable resource. Accessible via the web at destin.momcollective.com as well



as present on Facebook and Instagram @destin30amoms, one can gain up-to-date local information whenever they need. In addition there is a newsletter that is emailed consistently that acts as a regular recap for reminders of what is happening now (so if you have not already be sure to go to the web to be added to the distribution list). The goal is to connect and empower local moms while providing resources to get them plugged into the community and united both on and offline. As Megan discusses her site she lights up explaining she “wants this community to always be a place of inclusion and never alienation.” She goes on to share

that she hopes this community is a place of comfort when in need of solace, a place for laughs when the day is not going as planned (often true in motherhood) and a place of friendships, support, empathy, encouragement, understanding and acceptance always.

Resources provided by Destin/30A Moms range from best brunch places to rainy day activities. They are always publishing lists of fun activities around the community. Another component is regular posts from ten local moms discussing all things parenthood to keep spurring the continuous dialogue within the community and giving everyone the ability to share insight, tips and tricks. They are always looking to grow their contributor team so if you are interested in applying the application can be found on the website.

In an effort to bring this community together offline too Destin/30A Moms provides opportunities for regular meet-ups as well. The last event was a Mom’s Night Out hosted at Blush Beauty Lounge in Inlet

Beach. At the affordable price of \$25 per ticket, event goers were able to enjoy a delicious charcuterie board spread and a variety of wines, relax with a gentle skincare peel and leave with a

swag bag. Upcoming events will include fitness, crafting, dining, family outings and more! Visit www.destin.momcollective.com for more information.



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Miramar Beach | (850) 460-7970



Manatees are in Motion!

This is the time of year for migrating Manatees! So, slow down and look out for them. As water temperatures cool, manatees naturally migrate to warmer waters, generally warmer than 68 degrees to survive the winter. So, in the fall they travel to Florida springs, power plant discharges and other warm-water sites.

Manatees can be difficult to see, especially when you travel in a boat on the water. You may see a swirl on the surface caused by the manatee when it dives; see an animal's back, snout, tail or flipper break the surface of the water; or you may only hear the manatee when it surfaces to breathe. In all of these instances, keeping your distance

and passive observation are the best ways to view manatees. Boat slow and look out below to allow them to swim safely.

While manatees are large, they can be difficult to see in the water. The West Indian manatee is an imperiled species and is protected by state and federal law. Please avoid harassing or disturbing manatees whenever you discover that manatees are in the water near you. Harassment is defined as any activity that alters the animal's natural behavior. By altering the manatee's natural behavior, you may create the likelihood of danger that is bad for the animal and against the law.

That's why it is important to



follow guidelines and follow all manatee protection zones; look out while boating; wear polarized glasses and always give them space. Manatee protection zones are marked by waterway signs and maps of manatee protection zones are available online at MyFWC.com/Manatee by clicking on "Data and Maps." Disturbing manatees at warm-water sites can cause them to swim out of those protected areas and into potentially life-threatening cold water.

During the colder months, Slow down in certain areas to prevent manatees from being injured or killed by motorboats or personal watercrafts. Boat strikes continue to be a major threat to Florida manatees.

Being Near Manatees

Look, but don't touch manatees. Also, don't feed manatees

or give them water. If manatees become accustomed to being around people, they can alter their behavior in the wild, perhaps causing them to lose their natural fear of boats and humans, which can make them more susceptible to harm.

Do not pursue or chase a manatee if you see one while you are swimming, snorkeling, diving, paddling or operating a boat.

Never poke, prod or stab a manatee with your hands, feet or any object.

If a manatee avoids you, do not chase the animal for a closer view.

Give manatees space to move. Avoid isolating or singling out an individual manatee from its group and do not separate a cow and her calf.

Keep hands and objects to yourself. Don't attempt to snag,

hook, hold, grab, pinch, hit or ride a manatee.

Avoid excessive noise and splashing if a manatee appears nearby. The manatee may be resting and may surface without being aware of your presence. Noise and activity may startle the animal awake, which may put it in harm's way if it is frightened and leaves the area.

If the site you visit allows in-water activities near manatees, use snorkel gear and float at the surface of the water to passively observe manatees. The sound of bubbles from SCUBA gear or other devices may cause manatees to leave the area.

Physically handling a distressed or stranded manatee might cause more harm. Instead, report injured, distressed, sick or dead manatees to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922) or dialing #FWC or *FWC on a cellphone so trained responders can assist.

Additional resources for boaters, educators and other interested members of the public are available at MyFWC.com/Manatee.

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The Florida Black Bear Receives a New Home

Northwest Florida boasts the second largest bear population in the state. But, due to a high level of development in the region, the black bear population is being pushed out of their homes at alarming rates, which increases bear sightings and injuries to bears.

Alaqua Animal Refuge wanted to help solve the challenge. When local philanthropists Raven and Ryan Jumonville learned of Alaqua's plans, they wanted to know how they could get involved. And they did with a special gift to Alaqua Animal Refuge to build a bear sanctuary. Their gift, a 2008 Cruisers Yachts 460 Express yacht, will be sold with proceeds going towards building a portion of a new sanctuary to house unreleasable Florida Black Bears and educate the public about their plight.



The bear sanctuary will be located at Alaqua's new 100-acre home in Freeport and will include educational aspects that will teach our community and others how to live with them safely. "When wild animals are rehabilitated and deemed unreleasable by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), their fate is often



euthanasia. There are not enough sanctuaries to help all of the animals in need, especially for larger native species like bears," says Alaqua Founder Laurie Hood. "We want to be able to give these animals a place to live out their lives and become ambassadors for their species."

"The more our community and visitors know about them,

the safer it will be for humans and bears alike," iterates Hood. "It was a dream come true to receive such a generous gift earmarked for a project that will be one of the first of its kind in the state. We look forward to teaching our community what a treasure these animals are and help some of the ones in need at the same time."

Alaqua Wildlife Director Shelby Proie adds, "As our native fauna continue to get displaced and in turn have more unavoidable interactions with humans, we are grateful to have the space to facilitate such a large project for this charismatic megafauna. Black bears are such an integral part of North Florida's ecosystem and not only do we want to offer them a second chance of life through developing a wildlife rehabilitation center that meets their needs, but we will be able to go beyond that

and have a space where they can live out their lives in an expansive natural environment if they are deemed non-releasable.

The Jumonville family has been loyal donors to Alaqua for a number of years, gifting one million dollars towards the Refuge's capital campaign to help build the new Welcome Center and Adoption Building at its new facility. The donation of the yacht to help with the bear sanctuary was the idea of their daughter, Jayden. "I like animals more than I like boats," said Jayden.

Galati Yachts in Destin is assisting with the sale of the vessel, and they are also including monthly dockage and electric at their facility. For a private showing and additional information, call Galati Yachts at 850-998-3011.

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 Community


BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

Thanksgiving week brought encouraging news (according to the Wall Street Journal) that supply chain logjams might be loosening. The administration, in trying to give some relief to gas prices, was set to make releases from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Bill Gates' TerraPower (according to CNBC) is planning to build a nuclear plant in a Wyoming coal town. According to the Nuclear Energy Institute, nuclear energy's avoidance of CO2 emissions in 2019 was the equivalent of removing 100 million cars from the road. We are beginning to think that nuclear is re-emerging as a source of clean alternative energy for electricity and that investors should take note.

The first of perhaps two infrastructure bills has been passed and signed by the president. Inflation is running at its highest reported levels in over 30 years. The Federal Reserve is prepared to start scaling back its asset purchases which might slow the growth of the money supply. We think that means that mortgage rates might begin a (very slow) ascent. That could impact home builders and suppliers as well.

The labor shortage continues. We understand this has been fueled by early retirements, women leaving the workforce to care for children, the elderly and those that have chosen to step out of the workforce temporarily. The labor participation rate is at a record low of 61.6% of the eligible working population. It was at about 67% at the beginning of the century. The implication for investors is that companies will be accelerating their demand for innovations from artificial intelligence and automation. While productivity in the American workplace remains high it will be challenged as the cost of labor is going up at an increasing rate. Low revenue industries, such as hospitality and restaurants, will

need to look at ways to maintain their productivity. We took note recently while dining at a fast-food establishment, that the ordering and paying process was all automated. It was fast and efficient, and our food was delivered swiftly by a smiling kitchen worker. The sign of more things like this to come. We think investors should consider those tech firms that are leaders in AI and automation.

Might AI and automation have an impact on carbon sequestration efforts? According to The Economist, while deforestation has generally decreased across the globe (with exceptions in a few key areas of the world that have been relied upon as carbon sinks such as the Brazilian rain forest), the rate of reforestation has decreased as well. The use of nuclear energy to power AI might help companies and countries satisfy their energy demands – and at the same time address climate issues as nuclear burns cleaner than carbon. Investors might consider utility stocks that have nuclear as part of their energy production mix.

The President has re-nominated current Fed chairman Jerome Powell as well as nominated Lael Brainard as Vice Chair. The belief in the media is that these two leaders have a track record favoring an expanding money supply despite the current Fed concerns about inflation. We think investors should therefore look at what that might mean: 1) Higher yields in the bond market (typically that is favorable for banks) 2) greater focus on materials, commodities, and 3) all kinds of real estate.

An additional word about banks. They are increasingly looking for ways to participate in the cryptocurrency markets. They are doing this by either creating whole departments to accommodate their clients for investing and/or utilizing crypto as a means for transactions.

Electric vehicles (EV's) continue to grow investor interest. More companies, in addition to established manufacturers, are getting into the business and initiating public offerings. Our concern is that many of these have low to no revenues or low to no production and their valuations

are quite high. We think back to the dot.com era in the early 2000s and are left wondering if this time things are once again not different. We encourage our clients to recognize the opportunity that EVs bring but to exercise caution with those companies that have recently gone public. We also appreciate that although EVs are growing, there will still be considerable demand for gasoline in the world. We also wonder, can green energy grow fast enough to keep up with increasing demand? Nonetheless, we think investors should also be on the lookout for stocks of firms that are engaged in the extraction and production of those materials needed for batteries to run those EVs. Investors should also watch the legislation that might increase the tax credit for EVs.

While all of this is going on, today's retirees and many investors report they want and/or need income/yield. Add to that, the real rate of return is declining as inflation is increasing. Traditionally, CDs, bonds, and perhaps pensions or annuities would have provided for that. Increasingly, people are turning to dividend paying stocks. Take note, that does however increase the risk to the investor. We suggest that clients looking at stocks for dividends examine three areas: 1) Dividend aristocrat stocks. What makes a stock a dividend aristocrat? Our understanding is that it must be in the S&P 500 and have increased its dividend for the past 25 years. 2) Real Estate Income Trusts. There are a variety of REITs, and many invest in apartment communities, warehouses, data (cloud) centers, cell towers, shopping malls and housing developments. Investors can scrutinize for income as well as growth potential. 3) Enhanced dividend and income strategies through mutual funds, ETFs or Separately Managed Accounts (SMAs) that invest in dividend stocks, but also earn premium income from options. Each has its own risks and potential benefits, and investors should scrutinize those carefully.

Finally, and always, at The First Wealth Management, we encourage our clients to 1) concentrate to accumulate and then

diversify to preserve 2) to monitor and make changes to their strategies over time vs overnight 3) consider the impacts that taxes can have on their savings and investments.

The First Wealth Management is located at First Florida Bank, a division of the First, A National Banking Association, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32541, with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City. Phone 850.654.8124.

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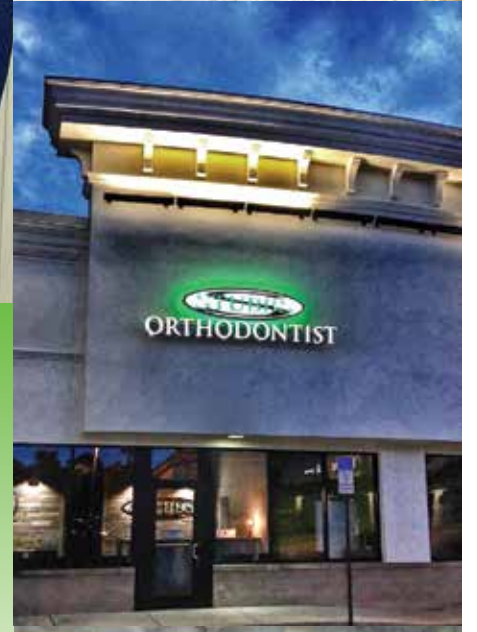
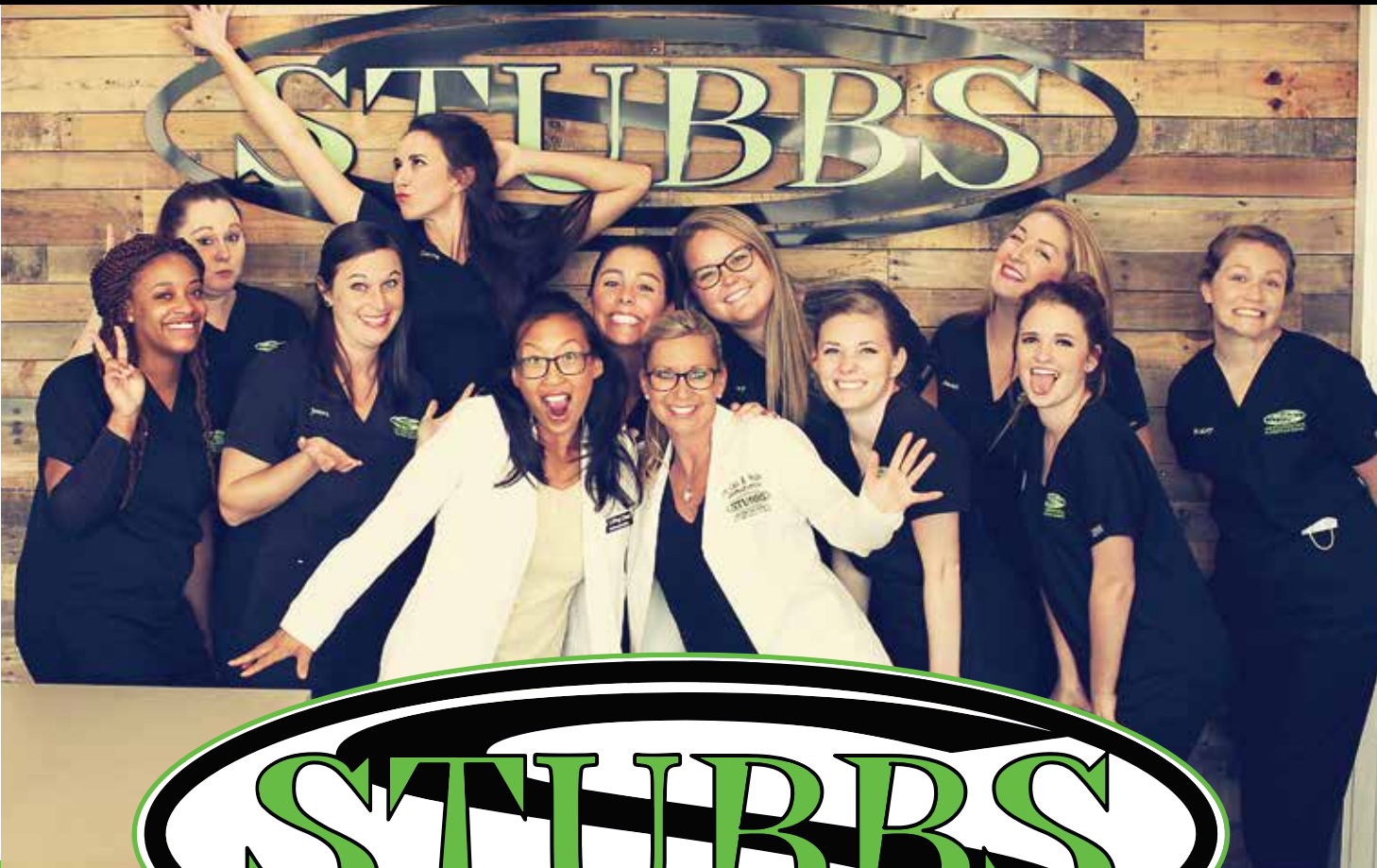
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Community

Our Local Pro; Jimmy Chapin and Sand Dollar One Property Management



When Jimmy Chapin purchased Sand Dollar One in June of 2019, he had a clear mission and purpose in mind: "to create the best property management company on 30A." Calling on a lifetime of business experience and practical wisdom, he set out to build the finest team on 30A. "Because people make up the backbone of the organization and make it successful," he says. "We have been incredibly blessed to find talented people that love the vacation management business." Jimmy believes "the golden rule" is still the key to building a truly great organization. "If you focus on helping others succeed,

you in turn will succeed...it's so rewarding. I believe we've built the best team on 30A."

When you walk into the Sand Dollar One office in Santa Rosa Beach, you are greeted with their mission statement: "As a relationship driven company committed to providing the best service of property management on 30A, we are consistently adding value to our owner's properties. Through commitment to excellence, our number 1 priority is to provide superior service, and to create long-lasting personal relationships. We provide a culture of partnerships with our owners and guide them to success."

Jimmy says, "as one being in the service industry, you must understand what the customer wants and then work to find a way to exceed their expectations. Attention to details, understanding, and a desire to excel are the keys to our success."

Sand Dollar One uses the acronym CARES to express its core Values:

Compassion - We treat both owners and guests with understanding, kindness and concern.

Action - We are constantly in contact updating owners on big and small projects.

Respect - Owners have worked hard to earn their vacation home. We honor them by protecting their legacy.

Excellence - We go the extra mile to provide the best experience possible for owners and guests.

Service - We cultivate personal relationships with owners and guests because superior service is our specialty.

Some may think it's just cliché to talk about "Teamwork,

Compassion, Action, Respect, Excellence and Service," but for Jimmy Chapin and his team at Sand Dollar One, the sentiment is genuine. "We really want to practice what we preach," he said. "I believe the larger companies just can't provide the same level of service we can. We focus on the little things and treat our customers and guests the way we would want to be treated. Just like the good Book says!"



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initiative. Developing a broad community-wide coalition to do this work is central to its success.

Primary responsibilities for this program include:

- Organizing and leading COT weekly meetings
 - Arranging programs and guest speakers from local organizations
 - Building and developing relationships within COT community
 - Seeking opportunities for COT outreach and fundraising
 - Developing partnerships with other local agencies and entities
 - Developing relationships with possible participant referral organizations
 - Reporting
- COT is a program of Caring & Sharing of South Walton. For additional information email

info@caringandsharingsowal.org

Save the Date for two Communities of Transformation Events happening in 2022:

Cost of Poverty Experience - COPE - Saturday, January 29th

COPE provides an interactive experience for individuals and organizations to better understand poverty, learn from people making the journey out of poverty, and become a change-maker in their organization.

Taste and See - Tuesday, February 2022

Come experience the transformative ministry of Communities of Transformation and learn more about how you can become a part of a community of support!



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For resources on how to talk to your children about alcohol, visit www.waltoncountyprevention.org

 Community

South Walton Family Friendly Events this December

Every Christmas Story Ever Told

Friday, December 10 - 12 & December 17th - 23rd, 11:00 am
Grab your chairs and pick your perfect spot in front of the Seaside Post Office for the magical holiday tradition of Every Christmas Story Ever Told in Downtown Seaside. Outdoor performances take place December 10th - 12th & December 17th - 23rd at 11:00 AM in front of the Seaside Post Office on Central Square. This is a complimentary, non-ticketed event thanks to The Seaside Merchants. Back for its 11th year, The REP Theatre's holiday smash hit, Every Christmas Story Ever Told, returns with all of your favorite Beloved Holiday Classics packed into a show full of high-energy jolly and hilarity! Four REP actors, armed with props and costumes, send up everything from Charles Dickens and Dr. Seuss to Jimmy Stewart and Chewbacca in this ever-evolving REP favorite. It's the perfect way to get ready for the season, beat the festive fatigue, and share some holiday cheer. 99 Central Square, Santa Rosa Beach.

Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides at Grand Boulevard

Beginning Friday, December 10th, 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm 'Tis' the season to be jolly! The Town Center at Grand Boulevard will be awash with thousands of beautiful white lights, bringing a festive and inviting spirit to the Boulevard. Enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride around the Town Center every Friday & Saturday evening Dec. 3 - Jan. 1 between 5PM and 8PM. Grand Boulevard's Coastal Culture program presents an exciting variety of entertainment and events this season. Enjoy a Holiday Open House and Walk-about, Photos with Santa Clause, Horse Drawn Carriage Rides and Coastal White Christmas Holiday Lights. Visit www.grandboulevard.com for more information.

12 Nights of Light at Baytowne Wharf

Beginning Friday, December 10, 6:00 pm
This December enjoy a festive light show in The Village of Baytowne Wharf every Wednesday,

Friday, and Saturday leading up to Christmas! The 12 Nights of Light will also be featured during their special holiday edition of the Wednesday Night Concert Series. Watch three dazzling shows on the Village tree at 6pm, 7pm, and 8pm. Come stroll The Village of Baytowne Wharf after dark. Beautiful holiday decor and sparkling lights throughout the Village will fill your family with the spirit of Christmas. Holiday festivities are going on during Thanksgiving week and through December. The Destin Harbor will be dancing with lights and cheer during the 35th Annual Destin Boat Parade Sun. Dec 12 from 6 - 6:30 p.m. followed by a Fireworks Finale and Fire Spinning! Trivia is turning into a Winter Funderland at Trivia Night: Holiday Edition, Fri. Dec. 17, 6-8 p.m. at the Emerald Coast Science Center! The winning team of 6 will receive one \$25 gift certificate to the center. Have a drink, come up with a ridiculous team name. Ages 21 & up only. \$12 for nonmembers • \$10 for members. (850) 664-1261.



Topsail Hill Preserve State Park: Santa's Camp Christmas

Friday, December 17, 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Topsail Hill Preserve State Park invites you to join them for Santa's Camp Christmas in the park on Friday, December 17th and Saturday, December 18th. Celebrate the season with music, food, games, smores, a silent auction and Santa's Express to the North Pole! Topsail Hill Preserve State Park, 7525 W. Scenic Highway 30A, Santa Rosa Beach. Call 850-267-8330 for more information.

Miracle on 34th Street: A Live Musical Radio Play

Sunday, December 19, 2:30 & 7:30 pm Staged as a live radio play, this version of "Miracle on 34th Street" — adapted from the 1947 Lux Radio Broadcast by Lance Arthur Smith with original songs and arrangements by Jon Lorenz — is the classic Christmas cup of cheer we all look forward to during the holiday season. When a department store Santa claims he's the real Kris Kringle, his case gets taken all the way to the Supreme



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Watersound Holiday Farmers Market

Thursday, December 23rd, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Come out and support your local farmers at the Watersound Holiday Farmers Market on November 24th, December 23rd and 30th from 10AM - 2PM. Held in a beautiful covered pavilion, the Town Center packed full of food vendors, crafts and gifts, local farm stands, and featured food trucks. Give the gift of "local" this holiday season! For more information follow "Watersound Town Center Farmers Market" on Facebook or visit www.30afarmersmarkets.com for more information. Watersound Town Center is located at 75 Origins Main Street in Watersound.

Baytowne Countdown

Friday, December 31st, beginning at 6:00 pm Ring in the New Year at the Village of Baytowne Wharf, Dec. 31 from 6pm till after midnight! Dance the night away and enjoy a live band in the Events Plaza and breathtaking fireworks as they light up the sky over the lagoon at midnight. The Village

of Baytowne Wharf is the place to welcome 2022! Admission is free and open to the public - 21 & over after 10pm. 20 & Under must be accompanied by a legal guardian after 10pm. Enjoy their family friendly evening from 6-8PM with face painting, kids

activities, and LIVE music on the Baytowne LIVE stage. Finish off the family friendly evening with our first fireworks display at 8PM. The Village of Baytowne Wharf, 9300 Baytowne Wharf Blvd, Miramar Beach.

Court, and a little girl's belief makes the difference in the 'miracle.' With live Foley effects and a score of holiday carols, "Miracle on 34th Street" is a beloved musical that will bring the whole family together. To learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, find them on Facebook, or call 850-684-0323 and visit www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org. Emerald Coast Theatre Company, 560 Grand Blvd Suite 200, Miramar Beach.

Topsail Hill Preserve State Park: Guided Plant Stroll

Monday, December 20th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am

Join Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and Master Gardener Bill Kuenstler on the third Monday each month from 9:00a.m. - 11:00a.m for a Guided Plant Stroll. Take a stroll through the park and the campground to explore the plants visible and to see what is in bloom. Visitors will learn about some of the plant species here at the park. Topics for the hike will vary based on the time of year and growing season. The program is on the third Monday of the month. This program is free with regular park admission. Topsail Hill Preserve State Park, 7525 W. Scenic Highway 30A,



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 Community

Employees Protest Vaccine Mandate at Sacred Heart on the Emerald Coast

On Wednesday, November 10th Nurses and community members gathered in front of Sacred Heart on the Emerald Coast in Miramar Beach to protest the upcoming Vaccine Mandate being imposed on all hospital employees beginning November 12th. Many hospital employees, family and community members waved signs as people honked and waved in support of the rally. Their message was loud and

clear: We will not comply with the vaccine mandate. Roughly two dozen medical professionals were put on “unpaid suspended leave” at Sacred Heart for declining the COVID 19 immunization. These medical professionals work in the ER, Med Surg, OR and PACU. One nurse had worked there for seven years. Official termination will happen in January if they do not comply. Attorney Greg Crosslin rep-

resents about 80 doctors, nurses and staff employed at Sacred Heart locations in Walton, Bay and surrounding Counties.

Crosslin believes the vaccine requirement is an infringement on the “personal rights and beliefs of employees and is a form of “blackmail” to require a vaccine they believe is unnecessary, and potentially unsafe.

“Tell us what you’re doing and why,” Crosslin said, asserting that Ascension’s leadership had been unwilling to engage in meaningful discussion of the vaccination requirement.

“Why are you mandating a vaccine when there is no crisis?” Crosslin said, citing the drastic decrease in new cases and hospitalizations related to COVID. “You know, the bottom line is they’re telling the staff you can either play Russian roulette and potentially have suicide by vaccine or keep your job. That’s not a choice.”

Not long after the protest in Miramar Beach, Governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation designed to protect Florida employees from losing their jobs due to COVID-19 vaccine mandates and protect parents’ rights to make healthcare decisions for students. The bills were passed

through a Special Session of the Florida Legislature and signed by the Governor. is.

Effective immediately:

Private Employer COVID-19 vaccine mandates are prohibited.

- Employees can choose from numerous exemptions, including but not limited to, health or religious concerns; pregnancy or anticipated future pregnancy; and past recovery from COVID-19.
- Employees can choose to opt for periodic testing or PPE as an exemption.
- Employers who violate these employee health protections will be fined.
- Small businesses (99 employees or less) will face \$10,000 per employee violation.
- Medium and big businesses will face \$50,000 per employee violation.
- Government entities may not require COVID-19 vaccinations of anyone, including employees.
- Educational institutions may not require students to be COVID-19 vaccinated.
- School districts may not have school face mask policies.
- School districts may not quarantine healthy students.
- Students and parents may sue

violating school districts and recover costs and attorney’s fees.

At his press conference announcing the new legislation, Governor DeSantis said “Nobody should lose their job due to heavy-handed COVID mandates and we have a responsibility to protect the livelihoods of the people of Florida. I’m thankful to the Florida Legislature for joining me in standing up for freedom.”

According to Attorney Crosslin, in response to the new legislation, Sacred Heart Ascension has called most of the protesting employees back to work- but not all, Additionally, the hospital has not officially issued exemptions or accepted the new state mandated forms.

The protesting Sacred Heart Ascension employees all filed for medical or religious exemptions prior to the November 12th deadline, but none were granted. One nurse reported that the digital exemption form could not be submitted without checking a box that agreed to voluntary resignation by November 12. This nurse printed the exemption request form, had it notarized and submitted it to HR, not checking the resignation box.




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 8:00am: Holy Eucharist Rite I with Instrumental Hymns
 10:30am: Holy Eucharist Rite II with Sanctuary Choir
 Children’s activities during the 10:30am service in the educational building for children up to 5th grade. Nursery opens at 10:15am.

WEEKDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE:
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 Monday - Friday
 Morning Prayer: 9am | Evening Prayer: 4:15pm (No evening prayer on Fridays)

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 Lectio Divinia / Discussion: 10:30am - 12:00pm

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Travel Tips with Pam: America's Top Holiday Destinations!



BY PAMELA DONAR

There are so many towns in the United States that consider the holiday season the most magical time of the year. They put forth the effort to make their city a memorable destination for both residents and visitors of all ages. Here is my list of towns to consider visiting this holiday season.

Durango, CO - If you've considered taking a ride on a steam train, then head to Durango. Their historic train has been in operation between Durango and Silverton since 1882 but during the winter it turns into the Polar Express. This ride allows you to view thousands of lights along with Santa and his elves at the North Pole all from the comfort of the train. They even serve hot chocolate as you enjoy a read-

ing of The Polar Express by your conductor.

Leavenworth, WA - Nicknamed the Village of Lights, this small town of 2000 residents ushers in the holidays with 21 miles of lights. They have Christmas markets, carolers, sledding, and of course Mr and Mrs Claus. The town's backdrop is cascading mountains which remind you of the Swiss Alps.

Natchitoches, LA - If you prefer a warmer winter wonderland, this quaint town four hours north of New Orleans is worth a visit. They proudly host over 300,000 lights, a kids Christmas festival, and a fireworks show over the river. All events take place at the National Landmark Historic District along the banks of the Cane River Lake.

Annapolis, MD - Only 30 minutes outside Washington DC, this capital city hosts spectacular holiday events. At Sandy Point State park they showcase more than 60 lighted displays including a colonial village and the North Pole. A not to miss event is the Eastport Yacht Club's Parade of



Lights where boat owners show off their lighted masterpieces in Annapolis Harbor.

Santa Claus, Indiana - Also known as America's Christmas Hometown, this holiday celebration started in the 1920s. In this magical town children can visit the Santa Claus Museum & Village and write a letter to Santa. When done, they ring a bell to let Santa know their letter is ready. They host two solid miles of

lights to marvel at and people enjoy coming here for family friendly food and festivities.

New York, NY - The town so nice, they named it twice is extra special during the holidays. There are so many festive areas to visit such as the Bryant Park holiday market and ice skating rink, however the most epic thing to do is stroll down Central Park on Fifth Avenue to Macy's Herald Square to view the world

renown holiday window displays. The city is adorned with wreaths and bright lights everywhere. You'll also be able to see the massive Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center.

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 Community

Meet our Local Pro: **Dr. Kevin Wells**

BY RITA L. SHERWOOD

Dr. Kevin Wells has been practicing Optometry for almost 24 years. He is a Board-Certified Optometric Physician, internationally published author, Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and Diplomate of the American Board of Optometry. He was also in the first class of Optometrists trained to perform laser eye surgery for the treatment of certain eye conditions. Originally from Oklahoma, he and his family spent many summers vacationing in Destin. Eleven years ago, they decided to make it their permanent home.

Wells Vision and Laser Eye Center is a full-service eye care practice that utilizes the most advanced technology to perform eye exams, manage eye disease

and treat eye injuries and infections. They also have a large selection of designer frames and sunglasses to choose from. If glasses aren't your thing, you can be fit into contact lenses or have LASIK performed in their state-of-the-art LASIK suite.

LASIK is performed by world renowned eye surgeon Dr. Bret Fisher from Panama City. Dr. Fisher has performed over 40,000 procedures and has been involved with numerous FDA investigational studies. The consultation to determine if you are a candidate for LASIK is free of charge. Even if you only need reading glasses, there is an option to eliminate those as well.

Macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, dry eye disease and cataracts are just some of the eye diseases that are managed at Wells Vision and



Laser Eye Center. The latest technological addition is the Optical Coherence Tomographer with Angiography. This instrument takes a CT scan of the retina and can measure blood flow without the need of injecting contrast dye into the body. Another machine is able to measure the functionality of the nerves within the eye and between the eye and the brain. This technol-

ogy allows Dr. Wells to determine if an eye disease is progressing before structural damage in the eye occurs.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in the U.S. Dr. Wells has a device called AdaptDX that is 92% accurate in determining if a healthy eye is at risk for developing macular degeneration in the next three years. Intensive Pulse Light (IPL) is used to alleviate dry eyes. It also tightens the skin and reduces fine lines, age spots and rosacea.

Dr. Wells says, "The most rewarding part of what I do is helping people see their best. Vision is our most used sense so it's great to see patients get excited when they can see more clearly. My favorite clinic day is the day after LASIK surgery when patients are seeing for the first time in years without glasses or contacts."

Dr. Natalie Pelly recently joined the practice. She is a graduate of University of Alabama, Birmingham College of Optometry. She has an interest in specialty contact lens fittings and children. A former local, she and her husband Chris are glad to be back to the Emerald Coast.

When not working, Dr. Wells enjoys spending time and traveling with his two daughters. He is a CrossFit enthusiast that placed 103rd in the world for his age division in the CrossFit Open this year. Wells Vision and Laser Eye Center also has a **new location in Santa Rosa Beach!** Now you can book your next eye appointment at one of their two locations: 36086 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin, 850-424-6677, or 24700 U.S. Hwy. 331 S., Santa Rosa Beach, (850) 931-2020.

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Dr. Kevin Wells, OD, FAAO
Dr. Bret L. Fisher, M.D.
Dr. Natalie Pelly, O.D.

Help Feed Young Minds with Food for Thought

By HEATHER BENNETT

In addition to providing meals and snacks for the 3,400 food insecure children in their backpack program, Food for Thought has been gearing up for the holidays. They recently delivered 700 turkeys and 33,000 food items over 5 service locations to reach over 3,000 children across Okaloosa and Walton Counties for Thanksgiving.

If you are unfamiliar with their work, Food for Thought is a nonprofit organization, which provides meals and snacks to children who are dependent on free or reduced school meals, bridging meal gaps that might occur on the weekends or during holidays, so kids can focus less on where they are going to get their next meal and more on their schoolwork. They literally provide food for thought.

Due to the economic impact of Covid, Food for Thought has seen an increase in demand. “Last year we saw a 38% increase in our pick-ups for the holidays, and this year we are planning on a 10% increase over that,” said Tiffanie Nelson, founder of Food for



Thought. In 2020, most people were struggling with unemployment or reduced hours, and this year inflation has had an effect on the cost of groceries, gas and general cost of living, leaving some

families still struggling to make ends meet.

Covid has also had a two-fold effect on Food for Thought. In addition to seeing a 40% increase in the cost of food from distributors and brokers, they experienced a decline in volunteers. “Prior to Covid we saw about 250 individual volunteers a week to help us provide our services, and right now we are struggling to get to 100,” stated Tiffanie.

Despite the setbacks, Food for Thought is committed, and is meeting their weekly deliveries. They are grateful for the volunteers they currently have, and regardless of how social media looks, they are still in need of more volunteers to make the drops easier. “There aren’t enough hands and feet on our team of 5 to provide all these services to over 3,000 kids a week,” said Tiffanie, referring to the 34 school drops they make across Okaloosa and Walton counties.

In addition to these services, they are getting prepared for another holiday drop for Christmas break, providing snacks and meals for children during their two-

weeks off of school, a time when food insecurity may be high. A child can miss around 20 meals over Christmas break. “Children who are already enrolled in our services get access to our holiday services,” stated Tiffanie. “We spread out through the community to make those pick ups easy for the families and we have a variety of times, and we communicate directly with the families.”

When asked what Food for Thought needs most, Tiffanie said that volunteers and donors are both important because one doesn’t work without the other. “We need donors to help support our work, and we need volunteers to help us distribute. They are both extremely valuable to us.”

If you are interested in helping Food for Thought, keep in mind that it only costs \$5 to fill a backpack to support a child for a week, and 1-2 hours a month of your time spent volunteering can really make a difference. For more information on how you can get involved, please visit their website, <https://fftl.org>.



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Arts

Emerald Coast Theatre Company Presents Holiday Productions Sure to Get You in the Mood!

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) continues its 9th mainstage season with three inspired December offerings sure to chase those winter blues and put your entire family in the spirit this holiday season.

All performances are staged at ECTC's performance space located at 560 Grand Boulevard (upstairs) in Grand Boulevard

Town Center in Miramar Beach. **"The Snow Queen" (Theatre for Young Audiences)**

ECTC'S Junior Company to perform four performances of "The Snow Queen" on Friday and Saturday at 9 a.m. (Dec. 10 and 11).

Be spirited away by this new musical adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's fantastical

coming-of-age adventure that inspired the Disney hit movie Frozen. Join Gerda on a dangerous and whimsical quest to save her best friend, Kai, before he is trapped forever in the Snow Queen's palace. With an original pop-rock score, alluring ballads, urban steampunk flair, the enigmatic "Snow Queen," is not your average bedtime story. This Theatre of Young Audiences production is designed for young audiences from age 6 and up and is performed on ECTC's Second Stage. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors/military and \$14 for students (with ID).

"Miracle on 34th Street"

Do you believe? Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) continues its 9th mainstage season with one of most beloved holiday classics of all time with, "Miracle on 34th Street."

The show opens Friday, Dec. 9, and runs three weekends through Sunday, Dec. 19. Performances are Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at 7:30 p.m. with 2:30 p.m. Sunday matinees Dec. 12 and 19.

In this classic heartwarming story, a department store Santa

claims he's the real Kris Kringle and his case goes all the way to the Supreme Court. Audiences watch the miracle unfold as the belief of a little girl (Susan) makes all the difference in many ways. Adapted from the 1947 Lux Radio Hour Broadcast this entertaining version of Lance Arthur Smith's play is staged with live Foley effects and a score of holiday carols.

A part of the Professional Theatre Mainstage series, "Miracle on 34th Street" will be staged in ECTC's performance space located on the second floor of 560 Grand Boulevard in Grand Boulevard Town Center in Miramar Beach. Arrive at the theater early to enjoy the display of original artwork in the ECTC Lobby Gallery sponsored by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County. The exhibit features artwork by local artists. All of the artwork is available for purchase. Proceeds benefit ECTC and its theater education programs.

Tickets to "Miracle on 34th Street" are \$36 per person for adults, \$34 for seniors (55 years old and up)/military and \$30 for students (must show ID). Purchase tickets online at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

Christmas Cabaret on the Boulevard

ECTC adds even more spirit to the season with Christmas Cabaret on the Boulevard set for December 14 and 15 at 7:30 p.m. and December 18 at 2:30 p.m. Cast members of "Miracle" will perform holiday-inspired songs and Christmas carols in a cabaret-style revue. Mix and mingle with the performers, enjoy a warm beverage or drink from the cash bar, and enjoy a festive, family-friendly evening out filled with live entertainment. Tickets to Cabaret are \$25 for adults, \$23 for seniors/military and \$20 for students (with ID).

Save the date for ECTC's upcoming mainstage offerings: "The Marvelous Wonderettes" (Jan. 21-23, Feb. 10-13, Mar. 3-6); "Miss Abigail's Guide to Dating, Mating & Marriage" (Jan. 28-Feb. 6); "2 Across" (Feb. 18-27) and "Xanadu" (May 13-22).


StoryTeller Series: "The Fall of April" (Jan. 11); "Katharine Hepburn" starring Shirley Simpson (March 1), and "Give 'Em Hell Harry" (Feb. 8).



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Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Annual Fundraiser Crescendo! February 25-27th

Sinfonia Gulf Coast, our region's only fully professional symphony orchestra, is pleased to announce the full line up for its annual fundraiser Crescendo! A Cultural and Culinary extravaganza, slated for February 25-27, 2022.

Festivities begin on Thursday, January 27 at 11:00 a.m., with a Crescendo! Kick Off Lunch at Bijoux Restaurant + Spirits located at The Market Shops. Enjoy an incredible lunch prepared by award-winning chef/co-owner Jack McGuckin, sip elegant wines, indulge in delectable desserts, shop all of the must-have accessories of the season from The Jewel, door prizes and raffle items, plus much more. Tickets are \$125 per person and include lunch, wine and gratuities.

On Friday, Feb. 25 at 6:00 p.m. Crescendo! weekend will begin with a series of carefully curated vintner dinners hosted

in elegant homes and venues throughout the Emerald Coast, which pair the talents of local and regional "celebrity" chefs with some of the country's most acclaimed vineyards for a delicious evening of food and wine. Participating wineries include Darioush, Fleury Estate, Oakville Ranch, Bouchaine plus more. Chefs include Jude Tauzin, Executive Chef of Tony Chachere and Jack McGuckin of Bijoux Restaurant + Spirits, with the full culinary lineup announced soon. Vintner Dinner tickets are \$350 per person and include all food, wine and gratuities.

This year's main event is themed, "Carnivale" and is set for Sunday, Feb. 27 at 11:30 a.m. at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Miramar Beach. This energy-infused event experience will celebrate the cultural and culinary arts by showcasing world-

class vintners, expert spirit purveyors, amazing auction items, and a musical performance. Enjoy reserved table seating, hors d'oeuvres, a full, seated lunch, live and silent auctions, and an all-inclusive afternoon of incredible fun.

Tickets to Crescendo! 2022 are \$175 per person and include all food, wine, reserved table seating, performance and valet parking. Tables of up to 10 guests may be reserved by calling (850) 460-8800. Sponsorship opportunities are still available.

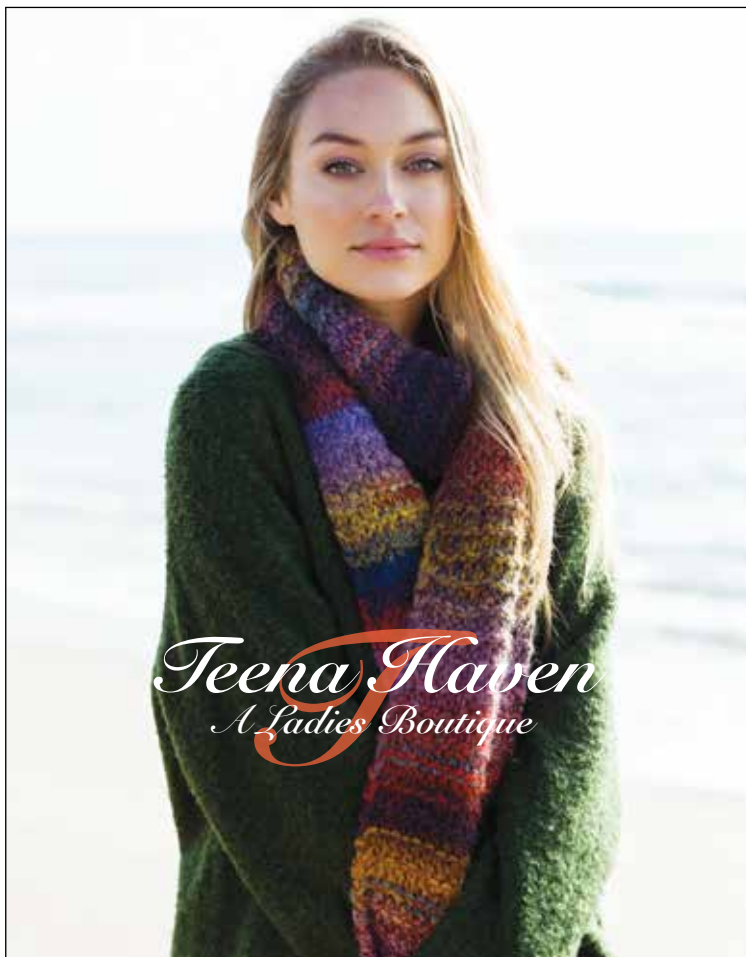
Proceeds from Crescendo! will benefit Sinfonia and its music education programs, which include: musicians/guest artists in schools, free orchestra concerts, bus transportation for students, Sinfonia Youth Orchestra program, Arts in Medicine initiative with Sacred Heart Hospital and LINK UP concerts for third through fifth



graders in partnership with Carnegie Hall.

Tickets for Crescendo! 2022 are now on sale. For more information or to purchase tickets

for Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Crescendo! events, visit www.sinfoniagulfcoast.org or call (850) 460-8800.



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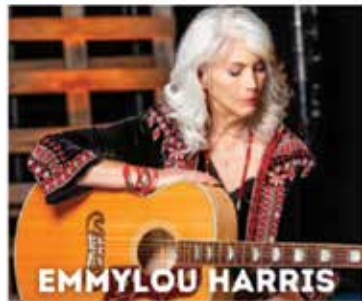
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Music

Begin the New Year with the 2022 30A Songwriters Festival!

For the past 12 years, the 30A Songwriters Festival has attracted thousands of die-hard live music fans from around the country to our area to hear original songwriters spanning many genres of music perform their songs. Highway 30A features 30 venues presenting over 230 songwriters and 300+ solo, band and in-the-round performances throughout the weekend of January 14 – 17. The 30A Songwriters Festival production team transforms amphitheaters, town halls, restaurants, theaters, bars and covered patios into unique music venues ranging in capacity from 75 to 750 seats indoors and 6,000 outdoors.

The Festival is celebrating its 13th year with performances on the main stage at presenting partner Grand Boulevard's Town Center in Miramar Beach with headline performances by renowned artists Brothers of a Feather (Feat. Chris & Rich Robinson Of The Black Crowes), Mavis Staples, Emmylou Harris, Dawes and Jenny Lewis.



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MAVIS STAPLES



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DAWES



Amy Grant and Ricki Lee Jones will be performing for the first time. Returning to perform two shows each throughout the week-

end are songwriting legends Rodney Crowell, Patty Griffin, Steve Earle, John Paul White (The Civil Wars), Gary Louris (Jay-

hawks), Shawn Mullins and Dar Williams!

Additional artists include Marc Broussard, Carlene Carter, Robyn Hitchcock, Sierra Hull, James McMurtry, Liz Longley, Dan Navarro, Sarah Lee Guthrie, Jeffrey Steele, Kalen & Aslyn, Peter Bradley Adams, Kyshona Armstrong, Jeff Black, Mary

Gauthier, Alex Guthrie, Toby Lightman, Charlie Mars, Michael McDermott, Leigh Nash, Abe Partridge, Alice Peacock, Darden Smith, J Barnaby Bright, Meaghan Farrell, Jesse Terry, The Young Fables, Todd Snider, Madison Cunningham, Kim Richey, James McMurtry, Tommy Stinson (The Replacements), Adia Victoria, Will Hoge, Hayes Carll, Chris Stamey & Peter Holsapple (The dB's), Chuck Prophet, Lera Lynn, Paul Thorn, Allison Moorer, Tim Easton, Bob Schneider, John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band), Amanda Anne Platt and the Honeycutters, RB Morris, AJ Ghent, Sarah Lee Guthrie, Leslie Mendelson, Jeffrey Steele, Annie Mack, Kalen & Aslyn, Peter Bradley Adams, Kyshona Armstrong, Jeff Black, Mary Gauthier, Gretchen Peters, Brittney Spencer, Alex Guthrie, Toby Lightman, Charlie Mars, Michael McDermott, Leigh Nash, Abe Partridge, Alice Pea-

SONGWRITERS

continued on page 23

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Cultural Arts Alliance Announces Valentine Tour of Homes & Gardens February 12 & 13

The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County is excited to announce that early bird tickets are now on sale for the highly anticipated annual Valentine Tour of Homes & Gardens. The tour is known for providing a rare opportunity to enter some of South Walton's most interesting residences, showcasing stunning interiors, acclaimed architectural design and picturesque settings, which are sure to bring inspiration to tour goers' winter beach weekend.

With a focus on location, this year's self-guided tour, which is presented by Visit South Walton with additional support from the Florida Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, will emphasize outdoor living

spaces, gardens and interesting courtyards. The event is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 12 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 13 from 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.

All net proceeds benefit the CAA's 'Art For All' Program, which provides support to Walton County schools, teachers, students, artists and arts organizations to further arts education in the community.

Tickets are \$40 in advance through December 31, \$45 beginning January 1, 2022 and \$50 the days of the event, valid for the entire weekend with one entry per house. Tickets can be purchased in advance on the CAA's website, CulturalArtsAlliance.com. Tickets will also be available for purchase at several

of the homes throughout the weekend.

Please note that as most of these homes are private residences, they cannot be guaranteed as ADA compliant. Please notify the CAA office in advance

for questions regarding access, and best efforts will be made for accommodations.

To volunteer, visit culturalartsalliance.com/volunteer. Volunteers receive a complimentary event ticket.

For more information about the Valentine Tour of Homes and the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County, call 850-622-5970 or visit CulturalArtsAlliance.com.

SONGWRITERS

continued from page 22

cock, Darden Smith, J Barnaby Bright, Meaghan Farrell, Jesse Terry, The Young Fables, Crys Matthews, Eliot Bronson, Heather Mae, Amy Speace, Pat McGee, Alexa Rose, Levi Lowrey, Wyatt Durette (Yesterday's Wine), Krickets, Davin McCoy, The Bittersweets, Robbie Hecht, Seth Walker, Randall Bramblett, Web Wilder, Peter Karp, Max Gomez, Max McCann and many more!

"2022 marks the 13th year of producing the 30A Songwriters Festival. It began as a small event and grew quickly into a premier one-of-a kind musical showcase for world-class songwriters," says Russell Carter, President of Russell Carter Artist Management and Festival Co-Producer. "From the start, the Festival has been a benefit for the local nonprofit Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County." Russell points out that "this year — 2022 — we cel-

ebate a New Morning. In honor of this theme, select musicians will showcase Bob Dylan's classic album, New Morning, performing all of the songs in the original album sequence."

"Anticipation for the 2022 30A Songwriters Festival is dramatically stronger than ever after 15 months of postponed shows due to the pandemic," says Cultural Arts Alliance Executive Director and Festival Co-Producer Jennifer Steele. "The Cultural Arts Alliance has been instrumental in establishing a rich and rewarding culture of creativity that enhances our community's quality of life, and we are eager to re-engage in person with our wonderful music enthusiasts, both fans and performers from all over the country, in support of the Arts."

For a complete artist lineup, visit 30aSongwritersFestival.com. Tickets <https://www.freshTix.com/events/2022-30asongwritersfestival>.

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Wellness

Journey Bravely: How Are You Doing, Really?



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

How's your stress level? How are your relationships? How are your physical and mental health? Are your current cop-

ing strategies moving you closer or further away from a sense of peace and direction? Often, we skip these questions and move straight to goals/resolutions at the beginning of each year. What if this year, you slow down and take a soul inventory now? What would it look like to reflect over the last several months of caring for yourself and ask "what's working" and "what's not working?"

One of the beautiful things about being human is your ability to change and adapt based on new information. Once you reflect and understand what's working and what changes are needed to be in a healthier, more

balanced space, you can begin taking steps to better care for yourself. Change initially causes discomfort, but you are capable of change even when it's hard.

So, how are you supposed to figure out what needs to change and what you're supposed to do about it?

5 Self-Assessment Questions for Mapping Better Self-Care:

How are you tending to your energy level? Maybe you're exhausted, lacking sleep, noticing in your face/body that you're pushing too hard. Take 10 minutes to reflect and write your observations about your energy level. Note activities you're doing that create positive energy you'd like to continue or increase. Note energy draining activities that you'd like to let go. Try sorting these activities into categories of "must keep" (be careful that you aren't putting everything into this category) and "could let go." Write one shift you could make to improve tending to your energy level.

How are you tending to your spirit? Maybe you've prioritized other important things over taking care of yourself spiritually. Maybe past emotional baggage makes it hard to prioritize spiritual practices. Engaging spiritually often results in



increased connection, hope, and joy in life. Take 10 minutes to reflect and write about past spiritual activities that have helped you. Reflect on how you felt when you engaged those activities. Reflect on why you stopped doing those activities. Write one shift you could make to improve tending to your spirit.

How are you tending to your physical body? If you will listen, your body will provide you with valuable information about your well-being. Maybe you've been putting off going to the doctor. Maybe you're avoiding moving your body. Maybe your relationship with food has become unbalanced in some way. Maybe you're using substances to self-medicate and your body is paying the price. Take 10 minutes to reflect and write about physical practices that create balance for you. Reflect on the barriers you have to engaging in these practices regularly. Write one shift you'd like to make to tend better to your physical body.

How are you tending to your emotions? Your mood and management of emotions can make or break your daily life experience. Allowing space for emotion and having effective strategies to cope and calm

when emotions get large can completely revolutionize your emotional landscape. Take 10 minutes to reflect on which feelings create the most discomfort for you. Note unhealthy coping skills you currently use to suppress or avoid feelings (drinking, shopping, eating, raging, avoiding). Note healthy ways you've coped and calmed in the past that have worked for you without causing extra problems in your life (walk, talk to friend, art, deep breathing, podcast, ocean). Write one coping shift you'd like to make to tend better to your emotions.

How are you tending to your relationships? Maybe you find yourself being defensive, not listening well, or pushing away those you love. Take 10 minutes to reflect on how you are experiencing and showing up in your most important relationships. Note relationships that feel unhealthy and why. Note relationships that feel positive/supportive and why. Note your behavior patterns that are causing problems in your relationships. Write one shift you'd like to make to tend better to your relationships.

Making changes to prioritize caring for yourself can feel challenging. Try remembering that you must take care of yourself consistently to show up well in your family, work and community life. All aspects of your life suffer when you are at the bottom of your life "to do" list. As you reflect and plan your shifts, remember you can find us at journeybravely.com for support along your journey.



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Are You Getting Your Best Sleep?



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

As we age, it seems like it's more difficult to get a good night's sleep. For some of us, it's harder to fall asleep and others have difficulty staying asleep. Then there are those who have difficulty with both falling asleep and staying asleep. A lack of sleep leads to daytime sleepiness, an inability to concentrate, emotional instability, poor decision making and a decrease in mood. A lack of sleep is also associated with increases in disease such as Alzheimer's, diabetes, heart disease, depression

and more. It's easy to see how important a good night's sleep is.

It should not be a surprise that the main reason sleep problems occur as we age is from dysfunction in our hormones. After age 40, the amount of sleep problems that occur from a lack of hormones increases rapidly. Progesterone plays a major role in the ability to fall asleep at night. By dosing progesterone correctly, we are able to eliminate those hours of staring at the ceiling waiting to fall asleep. And with the proper use of testosterone and estrogen, we are able to get your sleep cycles to continue not only through the night, but also well into the morning. You can say goodbye to those mornings of waking up at 3 a.m. staring at the ceiling trying to decide if you should start your day or fight that losing battle to get a few more hours of sleep.

Most people think of hormones as only affecting libido or sexual function. In my mind, these are the least important reasons to consider hormone optimization. Improving sleep, waking



refreshed and ready for the day, reducing your risk of disease and death, reducing your risk of multiple different cancers, improving your mood and increasing your overall feeling of well-being are far more important.

As always, keep in mind that what is considered "normal" or "reference range" is not the same as optimal. A quick example of this is your Vitamin D level. A level of 30-100 is considered normal, but levels below 40 are associated with a 40% increase in cancer and levels below 50 are associated with a 6x increase in

If you have to ask your doctor to order the lab, do you think they are going to know how to interpret the result? Come see us and get your labs done. Let the experts evaluate your levels.

Dr. Richard Chern, MD specializes in hormone optimization in both women and men. He travels throughout the U.S. teaching doctors how to properly optimize hormones in men and women, including providers here in Northwest Florida. Dr. Chern along with nurse practitioner Sue Griffin ARNP are both currently accepting new patients. Call (850) 830-3012 today to make an appointment. It will be a life changing event.

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Wellness

The Risks of Sanitizing



By KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

While looking at the over-use of antibiotics, I came across some information that bares our attention.

Antibiotics are used to treat

bacterial infections and have been successful in treating these illnesses. However, because antibiotics are not bacteria specific, they kill the good bacteria along with the bad.

Most of us know that we need to maintain a healthy gut microbiome in order to keep our immune system strong. (The majority of our immune system is located in the gut.) Put the two together and you have a gut void of bacteria after using antibiotics which makes our bodies more susceptible to bacteria and viruses to attack.

Enter anti-bacterial soaps, hand sanitizers, sprays, etc. These products are also not bacteria specific and kill the good

and the bad, thereby weakening our body's defenses. But unlike antibiotics, there are additional dangers.

The FDA warns that symptoms such as headaches, nausea and dizziness can occur after applying alcohol-based sanitizers to the skin. Vapors can be inhaled and the alcohol is absorbed into the skin. Repeated use can result in skin becoming dry, flaky and sensitive to touch. Dry skin actually increases our chances of picking up germs.

Some sanitizers contain Triclasan which is intended to kill bacteria and has been used in products from toothpaste to body wash (Seriously!). High exposures can disrupt natural hormone cycles and even impact fertility. Triclasan has been banned from several types of products.

The CDC notes the risks in children. Younger children (under 12) are more susceptible

to adverse effects, because their livers lack the adult amounts of glycogen. Between these products being scented and kids being kids, their tendency is to sniff and/or put their hand in their mouths.

Doctors warn about the risks well: Eczema, skin irritation, formulations that affect fertility, resistance to antibiotics, hormone problems, immune system issues, impact on body development, contracting a skin disorder and alcohol poisoning.

Lastly, disinfecting or sanitizing counters and cutting boards land in this category. These products don't dissipate and can end up on your hands and in your food.

Washing our hands with soap and water, cleaning counters with a clean cloth (you can use water with a touch of vinegar), and focusing on keeping our immune system healthy is a great routine

for health.

Christmas is approaching which means emotions from stress to joy to sadness and everything in between can manifest. Being grateful and finding something good about every person we come in contact with can do wonders for our health. Share a smile wherever you go and enjoy some days in sweats and slippers.

Keep your eyes out for the January issue. I'll be hosting a Reset Challenge in January to kick those sugar cravings acquired over the holidays plus more education and tips. If there is a topic you'd like to know about, email me at succeed@healthydayhealthylife.com

Have a blessed, joy filled Christmas season filled with laughter and love. To your health and pumpkin pie!

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Simplifying Medicare Advantage Choices



BY GREG DURETTE

This is the time of year when you should review your Medicare options and make important decisions about your coverage for 2022.

Right now, we are in the Annual Election Period (AEP) for all Medicare beneficiaries. It is often referred to as the Annual Open Enrollment Period. This annual event runs from October 15th through December 7th.

Because this period allows ALL Medicare eligible folks to make switches and changes, it is the most heavily advertised time of the year...not like I have to tell you that! Folks on Original Medicare (Parts A&B), Supplements (MediGap), Stand Alone Prescription Plans (Part D) and Advantage Plans have a chance to pretty much do anything they want with their coverage mix. The hard part comes with sorting it all out.

One of the things I often say to Medicare beneficiaries during this time of year is to make sure you don't get so overwhelmed by all the information out there that you run out of time to take action. It can sometimes become "paralysis by analysis" syndrome. Remember, the AEP ends on December 7th!

Figuring out which coverage options are best for you can be confusing at any age, but understanding healthcare options for those 65 and older can be even more difficult.

I suggest considering these three things when shopping for Medicare Advantage/Supplement plans:

Choice: When it comes to Medicare, one size does not fit all — what works for your neighbor may not work for you. Take the time to learn and understand the benefits and costs of each plan, so you can feel confident in your decision and your health care coverage.

Care: Care starts with a strong relationship with your primary care provider. If your plan has a network, make sure you're comfortable with the doctors and hospitals in that network. Check to see if your plan will coordinate your care with the rest of your providers—in and out of State.

Experience: Medicare can be complex and confusing. It's

important to find a seasoned agent that works for you and supports you throughout your health care journey with plan benefits and resources that can help you live more and worry less.

Since Medicare Advantage Plans are offered by private companies, one excellent feature is they have more freedom and motivation to include extra benefits like; vision, hearing, gym memberships, dental, over-the-counter pharmacy items and more.

However, it is important to note that, not only do Medicare plans vary by state, they vary right down to each individual county in each state.

Your sibling in North Dakota is not going to have the same insurance company options you would in your Florida county.

This is why it is vitally important to work with a local agent that knows the area and understands benefit landscape as it applies to you. A famous actor or retired athlete on TV touting a toll-free number from who knows where will likely not.

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for more than 38 years and can be reached at his office at (850) 842-2400 or his mobile at (978) 509-2941.

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Musings

Feeling into the Holiday Spirit

“When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.” -Rumi

The holiday season is shining bright and hopefully bringing lots of excitement, love and laughter into your life. The days seem to be filled with more cheer and it seems that more and more people allow it to fill up their hearts. So much so that our daily interactions feel more joyful. Allowing the spirit of the season to consume your being can be healing. You are letting in more love, releasing constricting energy, and letting yourself become more present in the moment. That really is the magic of the season, isn't it? Allowing more love to

flow through. Allowing more light, allowing more positive energy to come in and stay a little longer. And the gift of the season is sharing that love with others. Letting your light shine. Shining on those that might have forgotten how to feel it, need a little more, or to let it expand and shine even brighter. Feel the love. Feel the magic. Let it fill your heart with joy. No matter what life is bringing to you now, choose to believe. Choose to go on the path of love. Life lived in joy is a life richer and fuller than staying living in fear. Find your place in love. And share that with all. Happy Holidays!



Many blessings and love to all of yours! May your heart be full with love and may you have someone amazing to share it with.

FIVE ways to feel Holly and jolly:

Gratitude- it's the easiest way to shift your energy. Think about at least one thing you are grateful for. In every moment in life we have at least one.

Visualize- remember a moment or experience that brought

you bliss. Or create a moment where you can imagine yourself feeling love. Close your eyes and take yourself there. Let the feelings encompass your entire being.

Create- we are creative beings in need of sharing. There are so many ways to be creative from painting to the way we clean our house. Maybe you put a little jig in your step.

Give- when we do something, anything for someone else, it's like an intrinsic reaction comes upon us and we feel elated. There are lots of ways to give, it doesn't have to be a gift. It could be giving your time or a smile. Knowing that we have helped someone else can really lift our own lives up in purpose.

Play- this world is a playground, so get out and play. No matter your age, ability, or circumstance. **DO** something that makes you laugh, feel giddy, and get you out of your head. Say yes to life's experiences that come to you.



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Loved One



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Hi. This is your late loved one speaking. I don't have long, so listen up because I have a lot I want to tell you.

First off, I get it.

Ever since I left this world you have missed me, and I know you're bracing for the holidays without me. No matter what anyone says, this year's festivities are going to be really tough.

In fact, let's be honest, this festive season will probably suck pondwater. But then, Thanksgiving and Christmas are tough holidays for a lot of people. You're not alone.

See, the misconception about the holidays is that they are one big party. That's what every song on the radio claims. Each television commercial you see shows happy families clad in gaudy Old Navy sweaters, carving up

poultry, smiling their perfect Hollywood teeth at the camera. But that's not exactly reality.

In reality, fifty-eight percent of Americans admit to feeling severely depressed and anxious during November and December. In reality many folks will cry throughout the "most wonderful time of the year."

Well, guess what? Nobody is crying up here in heaven. This place is unreal. There is, literally, too much beauty to take in. Way too much.

For starters—get this—time doesn't even exist anymore. Which I'm still getting used to.

Right now, for all I know, the calendar year down on Earth could be 1728, 4045, 1991, or 12 BC. It really wouldn't matter up here. This is a realm where there is no ticking clock, no schedule. Up here there is only this present moment. This. Here. Now. That's all there has ever been. And there is real comfort in this.

I know this all seems hard to grasp, but if you were here you'd get it.

Also, for the first time I'm pain free. I feel like a teenager again in my body. You probably don't realize how long I've lived with pain because I never talked about it, I kept my problems to myself because I was your loved one, and you needed me to be brave.

But pain is a devious thing. It creeps up on even the strongest person, little by little, bit by bit. Until pretty soon, pain becomes a central feature of life.

Sometimes my pain would get so bad it was all I thought about. No, I'm not saying that my life was miserable—far from it. I loved being on earth. It's just that simply waking up each morning was getting exhausting.

But, you know what? Not anymore. In this new place, I am wholly and thoroughly happy.

But enough about me. I don't have room to describe all the terrific things I'm experiencing, and you don't need to hear them. Right now, you're grieving, and what you need is a hug.

Which is why I'm writing to you. This is my hug to you. Because you've lost sight of me. And in fact, you've lost sight of several important things lately.

Death has a way of blinding us. It reorganizes the way you think, it changes you. You will never be the same after you lose someone. It messes with your inner physiology. It reorganizes you're neurons.

But then, there's one teensy little thing you're forgetting:

I'm still around.

Yes, you read that correctly, I'm right here with you. No, you can't see me. No, you can't reach out and hold me. But did you know that one of the things I'm



allowed to do as a heavenly being is hang out with you?

It's true. I'm never far away. I'm in the room with you now, along with a big cloud of ancestors, saints, and witnesses. I'm shooting the breeze alongside you, watching you live your life, watching you raise your kids, watching your private moments of sorrow.

Here, in this new realm, I am in the perfect position to help you learn things. Which is what I vow to spend the rest of your earthly life doing, teaching you little lessons, lending you a hand when you least expect it, and desperately trying to make you smile. Actually, I've already been doing this stuff, you just don't realize it.

What, you don't believe me?

Well, wake up, pal. You know that tingle you get in your spine whenever you think of me? That's me.

You know how, just yester-

day, you had a beautiful memory when you were driving and it made you cry so hard that it actually felt good and you began to laugh through tears? Also me.

You know how sometimes when you're all alone, preoccupied with something else, suddenly you get this faint feeling that someone is standing in the room with you? Hello? Me.

You're not alone on this earth. You never were. You never will be. So during this holiday season, when cheerful families are getting together and making merry, and taking shots of eggnog, I'm going to be clinging to your shoulder, helping you muddle through somehow.

I'll be making your spinal column tingle a lot, and I'll be sending plenty of signs. Each of these signs—every single one—is code for "I love you." So start paying attention to these hints.

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Musings

In Search of Commonality



BY KIRK MCCARLEY,

There's an exercise where two people face each other a couple of feet apart with one raised hand. Palms meet and each individual is instructed to apply

force to the other person's hand. The question is then asked, "what progress is being made?"

In this era of divisiveness in which we now exist, does it not seem as if we are wrapped up in a world of opposing forces not only in disagreement, but often in rage against one another? Vaxing vs. anti-vaxing. Pro-choice vs. pro-life. Red vs. blue. Industrialists and environmentalists. The list goes on.

If I'm honest, I must examine my own rationale. How do I size a person up? Do I focus first on outward appearance, the clothes that are worn, hairstyle, adornments such as tattoos or piercings? Do I stereotype based

on where someone is from or belief systems? Are my premises flawed?

During a recent meeting a client shared similar thoughts. A person of faith, his livelihood directly involves one or more of these combustible topics of modern society.

An idea he submitted regards our initial approach towards one another. Do we seek first to differentiate or rather search for commonality? Prefacing his consideration was a concept to begin from referenced no less than between 442 and 759 times in the Bible, depending upon translation: LOVE! Can we AGREE that's a lot of mentions?

How do we practically live that out?

What if we first disarm? Are you equipping yourself for confrontation or understanding? Do you know the other's stories?

I met Patricia on a plane. Admittedly I'm a travel snob, perfectly content to bury myself in the pages of the most recent literary find. Patricia had drawn the short straw and was confined to the middle seat. She began casual conversation and I confess my first reaction was to get back

to my book. Instead, something directed me to refocus and listen. For an hour I learned about her work, her family, and hopes and dreams. As it turned out we had a lot in common. We lived in the same county. We have



worked in public service. We were married, had kids and grandkids. We were fortunate to have all five of our senses. We bleed the same color. We could agree that we wanted people to come together for a greater good.

I finished that book later.

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi asks the Lord to make us instruments of His peace. What are ways that can be lived out?

There are times and places where opinion matters and needs to be expressed. Carefully examine if that time and place is in the present moment, later, or ever, for that matter.

Does your manner or countenance reflect kindness or provocation? Does it further relationships?

Is your "go to" a smile or a frown?

Where is your curiosity meter? Are you asking more questions or offering up more responses?

Seek connection with those of different ilk. Challenge yourself to overcome timid awkwardness.

Timmy Thomas is a soul, R&B, and pop artist. One heck of a keyboardist too. Nearly 50 years ago he crafted lyrics that not only captured a time of the turmoil of war and discord but one that remains timeless to this day.

"Tell me why? Tell me why? Tell me why? Why can't we live together? Everybody wants to live together Why can't we live together?"

No more wars, no more wars, no more war Just a little peace in this world

Nomatter, nomatter what color You are still my brother No matter, no matter what color You are still my brother"

Peace to you and yours this holiday season.

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCarley is a Certified Professional Coach as well as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM-CP Certified. He also is a Production Assistant for both college football and basketball for ESPN and leads group cycling classes as a Certified Spinning instructor. Contact kirk@theseedsowercoach.com, theseedsowercoach.com, or call 314-677-8779.

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Christmas Miracles



Mr. Ed's story is to believe in "Christmas Miracles."

After years of battling childhood diabetes, Mr. Ed's oldest daughter Pat passed away. Her death made Mr. Ed bitter. Though he had spent years as a Sunday school teacher and respected leader in his church, he walked away from anything that had to do with God or the church. How could a loving God allow such a thing? He began to drink heavily, sometimes consuming a case of beer a day. His favorite subject matter became the hypocrisy of the church, and how he couldn't stand preachers. I reminded him that I worked in the ministry, to which he replied, "Then I hate you too." Don't get me wrong, being around Mr. Ed wasn't all bad. About once a week, he would drop by with the largest New York Strips in town for us to grill. As long as we didn't mention God, church, or show concern about his drinking, he was fun to be around.

About the only thing Mr. Ed could tolerate that had to do with Christianity was Christmas. He loved buying gifts, especially



for underprivileged children. My wife and I had moved six hours away with our boys, and he was looking forward to us driving back to Mobile, Alabama for the holidays. A few weeks before Christmas, he called me late at night. I was afraid he was going to call off Christmas at his house. His voice was trembling. He said he felt like the last twenty-four hours were a dream. I asked him what happened. His response is one you may not believe, but I'll

tell it to you just the same.

Mr. Ed was traveling to the gambling boats which were less than an hour away from his house. He said he went there for the cheap all you can eat buffets, but he also liked to spend time with the one arm bandits. As he was driving down Interstate 10, Mr. Ed heard an audible voice. Yes, it was God. God told Mr. Ed to turn the car around and go to Pastor Perry's house to repent. Mr. Ed was so startled,

he immediately drove to Pastor Perry's and asked for prayer. After hours on his knees before God, Mr. Ed was a new person. Not only was he at church that next Sunday, but every time the doors were open.

When people asked him if he had seen the light, Mr. Ed would reply, "No, I heard the voice." Those who knew him did not doubt him. He was a changed man. Just a few months after hearing

the voice, Mr. Ed was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away within weeks after that. Personally, I have never heard the audible voice of God. But every time I put that fire truck ornament on the tree, I think of someone who not only heard, but someone who listened.

Rick Moore is Communications Pastor with Destiny Worship Center in Miramar Beach.

BY RICK MOORE

Every ornament embodies a memory. The ornament we purchased for our first Christmas together. The ornament we purchased while on a fun vacation. The ornament that is a family heirloom. The ornament that makes us laugh. The ornament that makes us cry. Every ornament on the tree can bring back a memory. My father-in-law, Mr. Ed, was a firefighter for thirty-three years. Placing the firetruck ornament on the tree each year brings back a flood of memories from Christmas past. To believe



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 Musings

When God Called Saint Nick



BY DAVID HOLLAND

We couldn't sleep on Christmas Eve, so we snickered and played the guessing game. We taunted one another with our imagined gifts to open on Christmas morning. "Guess what I'm getting for Christmas," we giggled. We made so much noise that Mom eventually came up to our room. We pretended to be asleep, but she called our bluff.

"I know you're awake, so quit trying to fool me. I have a Christmas Eve story to tell, so lie still and listen."

Gabriel, the Arch Angel, announced before heaven's throne, "Your Majesty, the children are restless."

"What? My children?" mused the Ancient Glorious Wonder.

The nine-foot angel whined, "The children of the realm stir impatiently waiting for something more."

"Why, I gave them everything they could need. Mothers to nurture and fathers to challenge

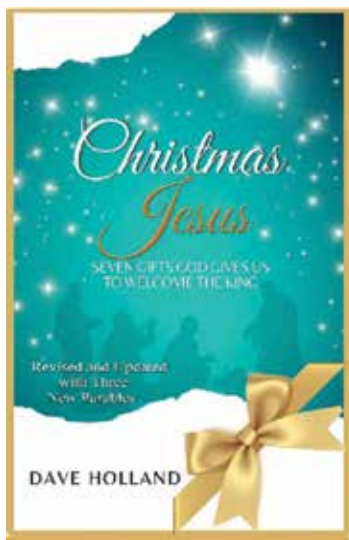
them and grandparents to lavish My love upon them. What more could they want?"

"Perhaps the dark stain still shadows their hearts, Father," said the Son as He entered the eternal throne room. "Greed and selfishness lurk in their imaginations."

"Aye, it shades their minds from comprehending the gift of My great love for them." The foundations of heaven shook as the Father stood to make a pronouncement. Raising the scepter of His power, He thundered the pronouncement, "I propose gifts for all the children of the realm, gifts to delight and gifts to make merry the hearts of children everywhere. Call Saint Nick to create a plan to carry out my decree." With the thunderclap of His scepter upon the sea of glass before His throne, the decree went forth.

Millions of heavenly creatures flapped their wings and bowed their heads before the wondrous wisdom of the Ancient Father. But how could Saint Nick possibly carry out the royal decree?

Paradise resumed its singing, and Cherubim blew the horns of holiness day and night. Soon, the halls of heaven rattled with the joy-filled cry of Saint Nick, "Ho, Ho, Ho! Gather round seraphim and angels galore, for I have a plan to carry the Father's love to the ends of the earth. An abundance of life evermore for all who believe and receive fullness of life. Father



will write peace and joy in the sky and etch it in human hearts. We need food in abundance, beautiful wrappings, and lights to brighten the celebrations."

The Holy One's laughter reverberated through all creation, "I knew Saint Nick would invent a plan to fill my children's hearts with joy."

Saint Nick bowed before the Ancient of Days, "Yes, Great Father, but there is a price."

He decreed with nostrils flaring and hair flying, interrupting

Saint Nick, "No price is too much for My children, no extravagance too generous for My love."

"But what is the price?" the angels cried.

Saint Nick's shoulders shook, and he heaved

with sobs of travail. "Father, Your children long for fame and money. They desire to be given whatever they can imagine. The dark stain holds them as slaves and blinds them to the gift of Your love. They fight and argue while lusting for more, evermore."

Not a wing fluttered. Breathless angels hung still as heaven waxed silent. Finally, the angels whispered, "So what is the price?"

All heaven wept, "Who is worthy to pay the price? Who can heal the blindness that blocks the vision of God's love?"

"The children need to see, the children need to see, the children need to see," chanted the seraphim.

Just then, the object of the Father's love for eon upon eon stepped up to heaven's heights. His hair was white like wool and His face shining like the sun, His garments shone like burnished brass and His voice like the sound of many waters—the Son, the Apple of the Father's eye, said, "I will pay the price, I will go to Bethlehem to be the

baby born to die. Then the children will see the ultimate gift and they will want no more."

Slowly, the Son dropped the robe of His power and shed the scepter of His authority. He laid down His glory and left heaven silent.

Whispers and whirring of angel armies set all heaven abuzz with the cry, "What could this mean?"

The Father rose from His throne. "Gabriel, it's time. Blow the trumpet. Angels form into choirs. Guardians of light burn a pathway to the City of David—a baby is born this night to fulfill my promises."

Launching into action, all heaven jumped at the Father's commands. Then sleigh bells and reindeer hoofs split the skies.

"Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas!" shouted Saint Nick with glee. "The light of the world has come. The Son of the Most-High God is born in a manger. The Gift of all gifts blesses all children everywhere. May the Son heal blind eyes and cleanse the dark stain with His own blood. Children everywhere rejoice, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world has come!"

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Mom finished her story and said, "Sleep now little children. Dream as I dream. I dream of the Son given to you, the Son who can drive dark stains from hearts. Sleep now. Dream of what you can give on Christmas morning, for it is in the giving that genuine joy will flood your heart. Giving what matters most is the price of Christmas. God gave us the life of His Son with all His love. Now we must give to one another with all our love."

Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring here in Destin. He has released his Christmas devotional, "Christmas Jesus," with three new fables added for fun. You can get a copy of this book from his website, DaveHolland.org or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach in churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidHolland54@gmail.com.




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What's on 30A TV? — The Yellowstone Phenomenon

BY PAUL VIZARD

Season 4 of Yellowstone, starring Kevin Costner, Cole Hauser, Kelly Reilly, and Luke Grimes just kicked off. Set in Montana, the series popularity has increased with large audiences following Montana ranchers in daily conflict with developers, other ranchers, and lowdown characters. The show has spawned merchandise with quotes from “Beth” (Kelly Reilly) the spitfire daughter of John Dutton (Kevin Costner) and the look and fashion of rough hard “Rip” (Cole Hauser).

Our 30A TV content partner Sidewalks TV interviewed Costner and Luke Grimes, revealing pointers on the characters, and the underlying message of the show. Yellowstone is the first scripted drama show for Paramount Streaming, and has catapulted the channel to a major player in the streaming TV world.

Costner said “We are watching something honest, and when it’s brought into focus there can be drama. Yellowstone, it’s as good as I wanted it to be. It’s great and it was great on paper. Listen there is lots of stuff on TV, people make their choice of what they’re going to watch and the reality is, if they watch Yellowstone I think it’s going to be a feast for them.”

With the show firmly established at Season 4, it is unclear where Costner stands as a figure-head long term. His character looks to retire, but is frequently derailed by events that require his full attention as the patriarch of the largest ranch in Montana. Some of his larger than life character actions are outshone by his daughter, Beth, who is a never ending source of quotable outbursts and quips. “What would Beth do” was trending on twitter recently, and her character is a mix of trainwreck and an extraordinary business manipulator.



You can check out the Costner/Grimes interview at www.30A.TV Grab some snacks and check out Yellowstone. It’s not for kids and the faint at heart, but really draws you in, and the scenery is spectacular.

For help or advice on how to

watch Streaming TV drop me a line at paul@30a.tv and have a great holiday season.

About 30A Media

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 Dining

Your Oasis Awaits!

BY LORI SMITH, PUBLISHER

Who would have thought our area's only fully plant-based, hidden gem nestled off the road next to a quiet neighborhood in Santa Rosa Beach would be bursting at the seams with flavor (and a chill atmosphere with a calm vibe to get lost in)!

Not your ordinary fare, the new Oasis restaurant aims to highlight the delicious diversity and abundance of plants with menu items that include overstuffed sandwiches, cheesy buffalo spinach dip, loaded burgers and a Chocolate Espresso Martini for dessert. Here, you're not missing a thing with this new kind of dining experience crafted with gourmet, plant-based comfort food.

We couldn't wait to bite into our lunch which did not disappoint. I had to ask if the Moroccan Spiced Burger was really plant-based as you can't tell. Owner Amy Sievers says it's a blend of their own compilation of spices, lentils and other fare that give it the consistency and amazing flavor! Well, it passed my taste bud test!

The breakfast burger is also a BIG hit with locals. It's a perfectly seasoned, plant-based burger topped with an egg patty, leaf lettuce, tomato, avocado and served with home fried potatoes. A dinner specialty is shepherd's pie with garlic butter toast and roasted Brussels sprouts. And don't forget the Burnt Chocolate Cream for dessert! With a daily rotating menu, other recommended items include Berry Spinach and Mixed Greens Goat Cheese, Buffalo Tender Wrap, Fried Oyster Mushroom Gyro or Kefta Kabob Gyro (personal favorite), Mediterranean Bowl, eggplant lasagna, lentil meatless loaf and Trumpet Scallops Over Angel Hair Pasta—some familiar 100% vegan dishes; some not. For an appetizer, the Eggplant Fries looked really great at the table next to us! We will be trying those next time for sure!

Amy, also a photographer and artist, says the Oasis is a place for the entire family—vegan, lactose intolerant, nut intolerant, etc. There's an item on the menu for each member to be able to



eat and enjoy a meal together. "I wanted to create a space of connection where vegans AND non-vegans could have a food experience to remember," says Amy on Facebook.

The team behind this inventive, vegan innovation—Chef Amy and Chef Divaldo—has quickly won over the stomachs of locals and visitors, as it has expanded from its initial business, Destin Fresh which many locals are familiar with, Amy decided to

take a leap of faith with the new restaurant. The timing was right. "When I started this venture, I had no idea how amazing it would be. I saw a need, I had an idea and I ran with it. Long days and nights, over my head at times, stressed, excited and dedicated, we grew the idea," says Amy on Facebook.

"The idea was made real." The long-awaited Oasis Santa Rosa Beach is now open for lunch (11 a.m.-3:30 p.m.) and dinner (4:40-10 p.m.). "I started this adventure with no real plan. I needed a kitchen and found myself building a restaurant. Over my head and out of my league would be an understatement for sure," says Amy. I jumped in and let my ideas take over and run wild as day by day I added to and built out my Oasis."

Get away from your ordinary at the outside smoothie bar. Do lunch at the outside café and pool deck. Sip on amazing Oasis craft drink list at the Elixir Bar or feast at the fabulous Sunday brunch from 11 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. There's

also a pizza bar and inside reservation only dining.

"Oasis is a place to stay, chill and relax. "We saw a need, had a vision, and then made it real. We wanted a place for us and others. A place where people could eat and enjoy food without fear of harming our bodies or animals," says Amy. "Here's to clean eating, delicious eating and safe eating—so grateful for these healing foods and this opportunity."

"The Oasis is a place to connect thought planned events, yoga, pool, lounge, evening dining, breakfast, lunch, smoothies, etc. And no TVs! It's a stay-all-day or grab-a-bite-and-go place—a unique way to dine and unwind," Amy passionately elaborates. "I just want to make people feel good!"

Located off the busy path of Hwys. 98 and 30a on 306 Bald Eagle Dr., it's time to find your way to the Oasis! Visit theOasisSRB.com or @theOasisSRB on Facebook. Call (850) 401-9149. Open Tuesday To Friday-Lunch: 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Dinner 5 to 10 p.m.; Saturday 5-10 p.m.; Sunday Brunch 11 a.m.-3 p.m.



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Holiday Season Dining and Entertainment Options in South Walton



Fish Out of Water's Christmas Eve Dinner

The Fish Out of Water restaurant at WaterColor Inn is offering a Christmas Eve Dinner from 5-9 p.m. on Friday, December 24. In addition to live music, there will be a la carte dining, a children's menu available, and Chef Features to include Brie Crostini with Duck Confit and Balsamic Cranberry Jam, Winter Salad, and a "Christmas Dinner" of Prime Rib, Boursin Mashed Potatoes, Fried Brussel sprouts with Warm Bacon Vinaigrette and Toasted Almond, Demi-Grace, and Horseradish Cream, served with Yorkshire Pudding. Visit www.foow30a.com for more information. 34 Goldenrod Circle, Santa Rosa Beach, (850) 534-5050

Fish Out of Water New Year's Eve

The Fish Out of Water restaurant is hosting a New Year's Eve multicourse dinner celebration from 6 p.m. to 12 p.m. on Friday,

December 31. Ring in 2022 with a delicious meal, champagne and a night full of wonderful memories. In addition to live music, a photo booth and the a la carte dinner menu, guests can choose from a selection of Chef Features to include Lobster Mac and Cheese Bites served with creamy Chipotle aioli, Beet Salad made with candy-stripe baby heirloom beet, Ossobuco made with white wine braised veal shank and served with creamy roasted garlic polenta. Visit www.foow30a.com for more information. 34 Goldenrod Circle, Santa Rosa Beach, (850) 534-5050

Havana Beach Bar & Grill at The Pearl Hotel - Christmas Eve & Christmas Dinner

Enjoy a three-course meal for Christmas Eve and Christmas Dinner at The Pearl Hotel's Havana Beach Bar & Grill (12/24/21 seating times from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.; 12/25/21 seating times from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m.). Diners can choose from first course options of Roasted Parsnip and Apple Soup, Christmas Salad, Sauteed Gulf Shrimp Carbonara, or Crispy Fried Gulf Oysters; An a la carte children's menu is available for children 12 and under. Price includes non-alcoholic beverages, alcoholic bev-

erages are available for purchase at an additional fee. Reservations are required. Visit www.thepearlrb.com for more information. 63 Main Street, Rosemary Beach, (850) 588-2882.



Havana Beach Bar & Grill at The Pearl Hotel - New Year's Eve Menu

Enjoy a festive meal to celebrate New Year's Eve at The Pearl Hotel's Havana Beach Bar & Grill. Seating times are available from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., and guests can enjoy a three-course prix fixe menu, priced at \$145 per dining guest including a welcome glass of sparkling wine upon arrival. For the first course, guests may choose Venison Chili, Tuna Tartare Napoleon, Prince Edward Island Mussels Colcannon, or Spinach & Beet Salad. The main course offers either Paella de Marisco, Seared Muscovy

Dusk Breast, Havana Beach Lobster Mac & Cheese, Braised Beef Short Rib, or Filet Mignon Au Poivre. The dessert course offers the choice of Double Chocolate Mousse Cake, Salted Caramel Cheesecake, Black Forests Trifle, or a Trio of Sorbets. Price includes non-alcoholic beverages, alcoholic beverages are available for purchase at an additional fee. Reservations are required. Visit www.thepearlrb.com for more information. 63 Main Street, Rosemary Beach, (850) 588-2882

Boot Scootin' Boogie New Year's Eve & Day at Scratch Biscuit Kitchen

Stop by Scratch Biscuit Kitchen during normal business hours (7 a.m. - 2 p.m.) on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day to enjoy special menu items, live country music and the first



opportunity to sign up for the 2022 Mug Club. Featured dishes include Black Eyed Peas and All Things Lucky Specials, and members of the Mug Club will receive a personal Mug Club YETI and unlimited coffee for only \$1 a day with the purchase of a \$35.99 annual membership. Visit www.scratchbk.com for more information. 1777 East County Hwy 30A, Suite 101, Santa Rosa Beach, (850) 231-6550.



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 Music

Emily Bass; Making Music from Nashville to Los Angeles and Beyond

BY WILL ESTELL

If you're a fan of live music and the creative types that bring it to life, then you've probably heard of Destin local Emily Bass. If you haven't, here's your introduction.

My fiancé and I, along with friends, first saw Emily live at AJ's in Destin this past summer. Being music lovers who routinely see three or more live performances most weeks, I'd say our group is pretty hard to impress—

even when it comes to all the talented performers in the area. That said, everyone in our group was astounded by Emily's performance and the way she had such control over her vocals, while also playing guitar and interacting with the large crowd of tourists she was entertaining.

If it's not enough to be able to hold the attention of a group of seasoned music lovers—some in our group well-versed local band members themselves—while entertaining an outdoor crowd of tourists and locals, this talented 18-year-old was doing it all while performing original material she had written and composed. Did I mention again, she's only 18?

Let me give a little personal glimpse into how good I think this young lady's songwriting and presentation skills are by saying that after a few decades in media, having interviewed everyone from Sara Evans, Amy Grant, Kenny Chesney and Darius Rucker to FGL, Alan Jackson and the iconic Jimmy Buffett, I don't take just any music related story assignment. But when I've



heard someone perform like Emily Bass does, and I believe that person has a good shot at making it, I am just as honored to do those feature stories as I am the big magazine cover stories with the uber well-known artists—and Emily is most definitely one of those people.

Appearing on both seasons 17 and 18 of The Voice, Emily certainly knows a thing or two about the competitive environment of the music business, and just how

much tenacity, determination, and work it takes to get to that level. When you hear her perform, you will immediately know that too.

In addition to her performances—most recently opening for Cole Swindell this November—Emily writes and co-writes many of her own songs, and had just returned from recording in Los Angeles the day before we sat down at The Wave in Destin for this interview. Additionally, she's made recent trips to Nashville where she is recording to work for future releases with other artists, as well as working on plans for more upcoming performances in the new year, both locally and throughout the country. "I've been writing a lot and really love the creative aspect of songwriting, both for myself and with other writers," Emily told me.

"Dear Emily," her breakup song about giving advice to her ex boyfriend's new love interest, is definitely an intriguing and well-written lyrical piece that gets even better when her passion for the self-written tune shows in her presentation. When you hear her lyrical composition, it really takes you by surprise that she's only 18 years old, yet has all this life experience to pull and write from. It's very akin to what people thought about Taylor Swift's first few albums of work. The same can be said for her single, "Sometimes," featuring her friend Michael Williams.

Emily says she is currently working on a new EP coming in the next six months, with one of her new singles "I'll Just Not" dropping on all platforms on January 21st. You can check out more of Emily's music on most all streaming platforms, as well as keep track of her upcoming shows and releases on her personal site: EmilyBassMusic.com.

Will Estell is a writer and magazine editor, with hundreds of published articles in various publications, as well as numerous additional online articles in an array of genres. He's founded 11 magazine titles from concept to fruition, both for other publishing companies and his own partnerships, while continuing to actively partake in freelance media projects for an array of local, regional, and national publications, such as this one.

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Studio 237 Music Lessons: Trust

BY LISA CYR

The binding glue between a teacher and student is trust which is initiated and maintained by the teacher. It's the reason why a student or a parent will not leave a music teacher for a different one. Trust between the student and teacher is developed over time and first impressions tend to make a significant difference. There are systems that teachers employ to create an atmosphere of trust during a music lesson.

First, we become acquainted with each other by introducing ourselves by name, grade level, favorite colors, foods, songs, styles of music, type of instrument you own, where it is located, musical goals, extracurricular activities, etc. We discover commonalities and learn to appreciate each other's differences. A "give and take" concept which provides a foundation for acceptance.

Remaining positive is positively important. It's so easy to say or think, "Just do what I am telling you to do!" which really dampens trust into a soggy mess. It is the "look at the glass

half full" concept. Focus on what you can do. This boils down to changing the teacher's perspective and then helping the student achieve purposeful positivity. I think of positivity like a sealed driveway repelling negative

water as it beads up and rolls off the concrete.

One of the more challenging aspects of trust is to convince the student that you really do know what you are doing. Traditionally, I hang my diplomas and

certifications on the wall over my piano. I also perform a few song excerpts for the student. Lessons require regular feedback to and from the student. I might ask a student why they perceive a situation the way they do and promise that all answers are positively valid. Students want to know the reason why they need to sit up straight, stop crossing their legs three times over, or why do they have to play boring song-like exercises over and over again? They want to know "Why can't I just play like a professional in four weeks?" Demonstrating "why" can be amusingly fun. At least we can laugh as I slouch over the piano keys with low wrists and sit like a pretzel on the piano bench and say, "how does this look?" It's a real icebreaker.

I never say the words, "trust me". Teaching is more like an adventure into an unknown world. Together, one step at a time, we investigate and learn how to learn. If a student knows that you are scaffolding them as they mature, then they are more apt to take possession of their own learning and eventually per-

form without assistance.

Maturity is the result of trust. A music student develops personal fortitude through consistent methodic daily pursuits of a goal. They learn how to work through difficult situations and emotions by developing a positive determined mindset according to their uniqueness. They learn how to receive and implement positive critiquing and suggestions. Some aspects are non-negotiable since tried-and-true technical parts of the instrument reproduce a particular song style. A balanced perspective of learning is important to mature.

Ultimately, trust is not earned, trust is developed, fed, and nurtured. A one-way street with two lanes, two people, working together.

Studio 237 Music Lessons is in Santa Rosa Beach. Our teachers are ready to teach guitar, piano, drums, voice, ukulele and more. Call Ray or Lisa Cyr at 850.231.3199 to schedule a visit or lessons. www.Studio237Music.com.



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 Business

Buying a Car During the Current Diminished Inventory Market

BY WILL ESTELL

By this point, most everyone who drives, or keeps up with current economic and supply chain trends, is well aware that the current automobile market in our country (and most others) is facing a problem we haven't seen to this degree in our lifetimes.

In a nutshell, the current lack of new and used vehicle inventory is partly due to supply chain issues first affected by the pandemic, and later catapulted into more problems with a fire in a major supplier facility in China, leading to a worldwide shortage of microchips used in the new car manufacturing process.

This new car shortage is, by association, also responsible for the diminished number of used cars on the market, since dealers depend on new car trade-ins for much of their used inventory, that then flows down the chain to supply the major auto auction houses, local wholesale dealers, and the smaller non-dealer pre-owned car lots. Meaning right now, the demand for new and used cars is far outweighing the availability. Thus, making it harder to find the particular new or used vehicle you may be looking for, and increasingly difficult to get a good deal on the pre-owned automobiles you do find to purchase.

So, what do you do if you find yourself in need—or want—of a vehicle during these tumultuous times?

We all know that anytime supply for anything is less than the demand for the same tangible product—be it real estate, automobiles, building supplies or high-end watches—the result is usually a temporary adjustment—repeat after me, “inflation”—in the said commodity. Read that again, “temporary.” Meaning that if we pay too much for something just because there is less of that something in a current market, we often still paid too much! That's basic economics, but it's surprising how many people get caught up thinking they have to have something and let their emotions talk them into paying too much for it.

In the case of used cars especially, we are seeing a number of vehicles selling at retail establishments for a good percentage over what the true retail value for that same vehicle is. Remember, this shortage is real, and the supply of vehicles available may not catch up with normal auto purchasing demand for up to another two years (once the chip shortage is overcome and new manufacturing resumes to a normal pace), however (the BIG “HOWEVER”) this doesn't mean it's smart to pay over the retail book value for any car or truck you are considering buying.

If you are paying over the NADA (National Auto Dealer's Association) or KBB (Kelly Blue



Book) retail value for the vehicle, you are simply paying too much. And, that will come back to haunt buyers who do this. As the vehicle you purchase is only worth what the books say it is worth when it comes time to sell or trade it in later on. And that time will come. You can do a simple internet search to find those values for any car you are thinking about buying, keeping in mind that dealers still want to sell cars, perhaps needing to more now than ever. So, push for that best deal or walk away.

So far, the “real” values of the used (or new) vehicles on the market hasn't changed much at all in the real world, even though some dealers are asking more, and some consumers seem willing to pay more than the book values. This means some people (a lot of people) are likely to find themselves way upside down when they try to sell or trade that car or truck they paid thousands over value for, just to get it. Remember, like most consumer goods, the ma-

jority of cars and trucks (other than particular collectible, rare, and antique ones) are depreciating assets. So, unlike the home or condo you buy that generally will continue to go up in value, the car you buy—even at fair market price—will almost always go down in value from the day you buy it. That's why it's so important to buy it right in the first place.

One way to buy smart is to really educate yourself on the real value of any vehicle you are considering. Just because lot A is selling their vehicle \$2,000 less than lot B doesn't mean either one is a good deal. Use the NADA and KBB book values and make it a rule not to pay over the retail book value, no matter what the dealership or seller may tell you about supply and demand, or current values. If you pay too much today, you will most definitely owe way too much tomorrow.

The good news is that reputable dealers know this supply issue will even out in time, and they also know that the book value is the real value. Make it a point to do business with those dealers and sellers only. In fact, being sort of auto aficionado myself, having owned over 35 various cars, trucks and SUV's over the years, my hard rule when purchasing anything (Yes, even in this current market.) is to never pay one dollar over the NADA clean trade-in book

value for anything. Whether on a car lot or from an individual, I stick to that rule. This way I always know that I can drive most of those cars for even a year or less, keep the mileage at or below the national average, and still be able to trade or sell the vehicle for what I owe on it or more. The good news is, I have even been able to do this twice (for my pre-owned BMW and my fiancée's Mercedes) in the past few months, even during the current automobile market. So, just know you can do it; it just might take a little more shopping around and tougher negotiating skills to make this happen.

Will Estell is a writer and magazine editor, with hundreds of published articles in various publications, as well as numerous additional online articles in an array of genres. He's been instrumental in founding 11 magazine titles from concept to fruition, both for other publishing companies and his own partnerships. He actively partakes in freelance media projects for an array of local, regional, and national publications, such as this one. Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his fiancée, ABC news anchor, Laura Hussey. When he isn't writing, creating or consulting, he enjoys attending live musical events, hanging out with friends and playing with cars...real ones.

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Helpful Holiday Energy Saving Tips



BY CHRIS BALZER, ECES

ENERGY TIPS by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

This holiday season is unlike any other, to cap off a year unlike any other. Throughout this season, and as we move into a new (and hopefully better) year, we wish you moments of peace amid the difficulties, connections with family and friends, even if they can't be in person, the warmth of memories from holidays past and wonderful glimpses of the joy that still lives under the surface.

We would also like to share a few holiday energy savings tips to help brighten your nights and lower your energy bills.

Switch to LED lights when decorating. LED lights use 80 to 90% less energy than incandescent lights. If you aren't sure if you have incandescent lighting or not, you can tell if you have incandescent lights when it is warm or hot to the touch. We recommend using a digital thermometer to test to avoid injury. It is estimated that four strands of LED lights will

save \$30 this month compared to four strands of the traditional lighting. It is also a good idea to use timers to reduce the amount of time holiday lighting stays on, plus one less thing worry about.

When cooking the holiday feast, don't forget about the smaller appliances. Crock-pots and microwaves use less energy and give off less heat than ovens and stoves. Also consider co-cooking. If one dish needs to bake at 400° and the other at 350°, consider sharing the baking time and set your oven at 375° and bake both dishes.

Electronics are always a popular gift. You can get those electronics and save energy. When choosing electronics: TV's, computers, gaming consoles, etc., always look for Energy Star qualified electronics. These qualified electronics use less energy and save energy. Rechargeable batteries and LED lighting might not be on top of anyone's list, but they make great stocking stuffers and save energy. Also, consider using smart power strips and turn off the electronics com-

pletely. Many electronics, even when powered off, still use energy. I call them energy vampires.

If you plan to leave this holiday season, think about automating your home. Put exterior and interior lighting on timers to avoid being on all day and night. Add a thermostat which you can control via Wi-Fi and your smart phone, in the event we get a cold streak or heat wave during the time you are away, you can control your home's temperature. Also, remember to unplug those energy vampire electronics which use energy even when turned off.

When shopping for groceries, buying local foods and goods not only supports our community, but saves energy by reducing transportation-related energy costs.

It is always a good idea to give your home an energy checkup by a professional. They can pinpoint your biggest energy loss areas and provide suggestions and solutions to become more energy efficient.

We wish you and your loved ones a happy, safe and energy-

efficient holiday season!

Chris Balzer is founder and president of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions, a smile-provider company. ECES provides smiles to its customers after installing high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save and become energy efficient, schedule an inspection by calling (850) 588-2870, visit www.trusteces.com or email wecare@trusteces.com. Save en-

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 Business

The Gift of a Sound Personal Insurance Portfolio?



BY JOE CAPERS,
INSURANCE ZONE

In a recent edition we focused on the details of a sound Business Insurance Program. Similar parallels can be established for your equally important Personal Insurance Program. Personal lines insurance is designed to offer protection for individuals and families rather than organizations and businesses. The most common types of personal insurance are property and casualty insurance which includes

homeowners, condo, renters and auto insurance. The rates of insurance vary depending on geographic locations and the level of risk that an individual may have.

In our state of Florida, some types of personal lines insurance are required while others are strongly recommended. All Florida residences must have auto insurance which covers drivers while commuting to work, running errands and for other personal reasons and while used in business pursuits. On the other hand, homeowners, condo unit owners and renters insurance protect against damage to residences and personal assets.

Ultimately, insurance is about safeguarding one's family from life's uncertainties – and life does indeed have uncertain and unexpected events. Personal insurance adds that extra layer of protection that can give you peace of mind in today's world.

Below is a sampling of per-

sonal insurance coverage that are recommended for you and your family:

Homeowners & Homes Under Renovation or Construction – Protects your home the way it protects you by choosing the proper coverage that meets your needs.

Condo Unit Owners – Your condo association may have insurance, but your individual unit has its own coverage needs. Condo insurance protects your dwelling elements, personal property and liability.

Renters Insurance – Can be structured to cover more than just your personal property, and personal liability is just one example.

Rental Property or Landlord Insurance – Protects your property investment for you as a rental property owner.

Auto Insurance – Protection that gives peace of mind when on the road.



Flood Insurance – Homeowners does not cover flooding so flood insurance will protect against floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact our area.

Boat and Yacht Insurance – Know that you, your guests and vessel are protected so you can enjoy your time on the water.

Umbrella – This high limit coverage goes above your personal and auto liability policies to protect you from unexpected and catastrophic events.

Jewelry and Collections – For those special items and valuables that your homeowners coverage will have severe limitations.

Motorcycle and RV Insurance – Provides liability protection for you and your machine.

Home Office Liability – As more individuals are now working from home, make sure you have protection for this often-overlooked exposure.

Life Insurance – Whether term or permanent, life insurance can provide income, final expenses, transfer an inheritance and business continuation.

Pet Insurance – You know I would not leave off this vital protection to cover the health for our precious animals.

There are many choices in

the marketplace when it comes to your personal insurance program – especially automobile and homeowner coverage. We recommend you work with an agent and agency that will take the time to get to know you, your family, and your insurance needs. One that can search the marketplace for the correct combination of coverage and price to meet the insurance requirements of you and your family.

You've worked hard to attain your assets and this is a great time of the year. Let a personal lines specialist provide you with the gift of a Personal Insurance Program that will protect you with sound insurance products.



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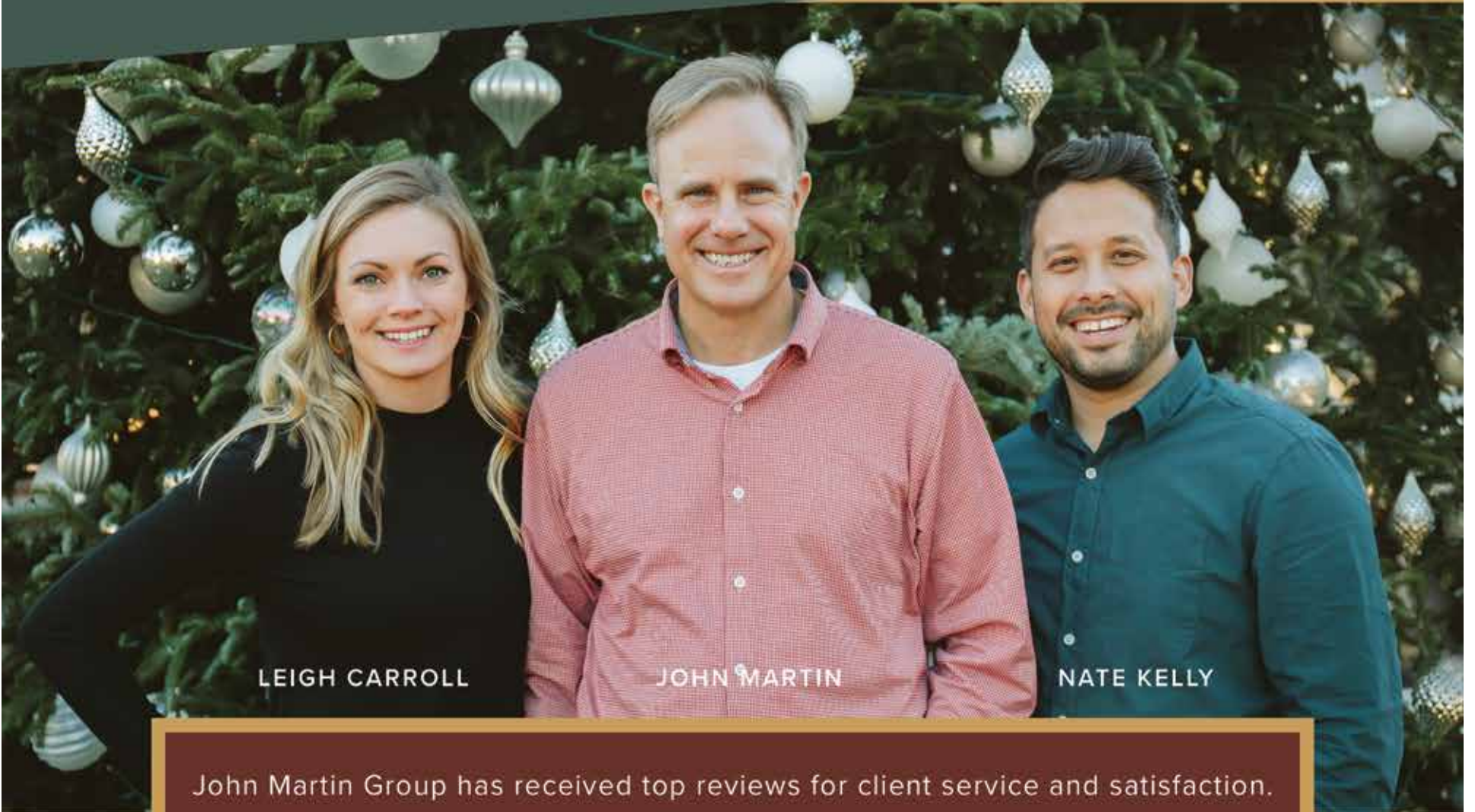
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