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– Frank Lloyd Wright



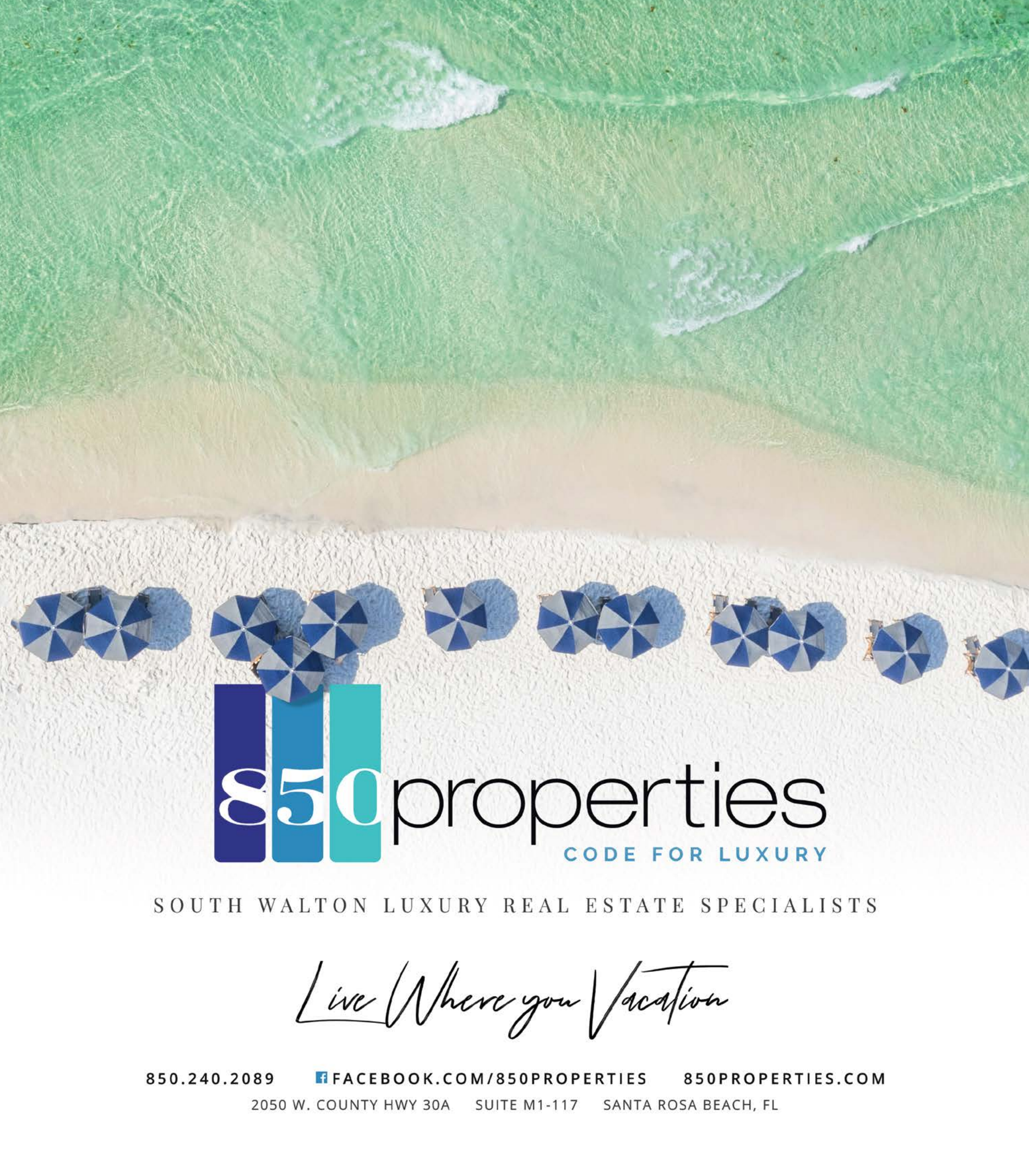


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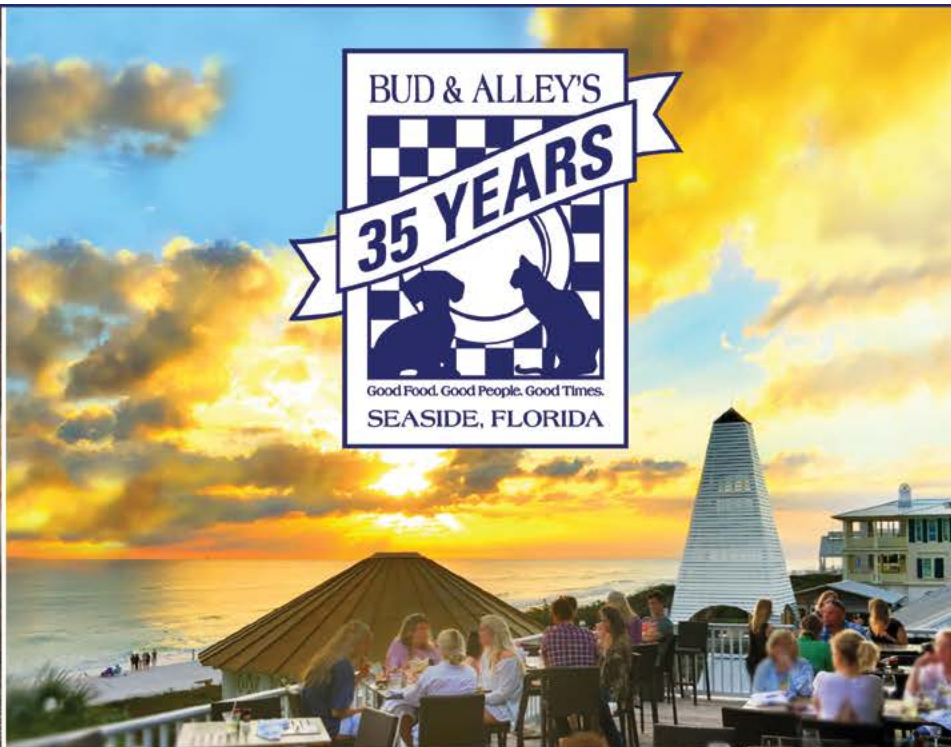
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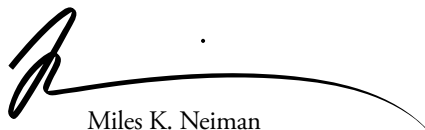
The fall is back and there's a lot of news. Some good. Some bad. There's chaos in Afghanistan. Covid is still here. And the future, as usual, is unpredictable.

All of this noise makes me thankful once again, for the serenity and peace that our 30-A beaches bring. While our community is not always perfect and we have our own share of conflicts and issues, mother nature continues to dazzle us with her beauty and innate wisdom.

We learn from her. We are inspired by her. And she often guides us on the correct path when we don't have the answers.

As always, this issue is packed full of the people, places, and things that make 30-A and the surrounding neighborhoods of South Walton so delightful. We invite you to enjoy the pages that follow and support your local businesses. Whether you're a local or a visitor to 30-A, there is always something new to discover and a new friend to make.

Until next issue, stay safe and thankful.


Miles K. Neiman

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Snorkelers explore the natural beauty in the warm Gulf waters.



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Luxury on a Plate

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

Offering a sense of luxury unlike any in the local area, Sandestin's new Hotel Effie is the soul of sophistication and class, and that feeling of refinement naturally extends to their signature restaurant, Ovide. Featuring a menu created by Celebrity Chef Hugh Acheson, the food at Ovide clearly shows his love of Southern Gulf fare, his flawless classic French technique, and a bold creativity that has been the hallmark of his long and storied career. Each dish reflects the standard of excellence that the Hotel Effie embodies, heightened with a passion for sustainability and seasonality that explodes with incredible flavor unlike anything else that's crossed your lips.

Open since February 2021, the restaurant has proven to be the culinary gem in Effie's crown, a hotel named for owner and developer Tom Becnel's grandmother, Effie Burns. The picture of hospitality, Effie was a welcoming presence who made every guest feel like part of the family and lavished them with personal attention, always ready with a charming smile that put them immediately at ease. Ovide is an homage to her husband, the namesake of the restaurant, and the perfect way to honor such an impressive man.

An elegant culinary adventure for their guests, Ovide brings together classic Gulf Coast flavors and impeccable classic French technique—both of which are especially important to Georgia native and James Beard Award-winner Chef Acheson, who is the culinary lead for Ovide. "The partnership between Hotel Effie and Chef Acheson to develop the culinary offerings of the hotel has brought both his team and his amazing skills to the table and bar top," says Nogah Winfield, Assistant Director of Marketing at Hotel Effie. "We feel that all of this heightens the travel experience for hotel guests and take them on a culinary journey that they will never forget."

Serving every meal from breakfast to dinner, Ovide proves its range without ever missing a beat. From perfectly cooked eggs—the true test of a chef's prowess—to pancakes and avocado toast, the morning menu is a beautiful array of dishes that proves the saying that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Naturally,

Clockwise from top:
Burrata Salad, Jumbo
Lump Crab Toast,
Eggs Benedict

Photos courtesy
@ovideff



lunch is more on the casual side, featuring sandwiches and salads as well as entrees and a selection of all-day breakfast items.

Best sellers on the menu include the burrata salad, a fresh ball of soft burrata nestled in beautiful heirloom tomatoes and sweet peaches, drizzled with fresh basil oil vinaigrette. Cooked to perfection, the filet mignon is ten ounces of prime steak accompanied by whipped potato, shiitake mushroom jus, and maître d'hôtel butter. For seafood lovers, the pan roasted red snapper will quickly become a favorite, cooked in a Thai chili emulsion and served over pigeon peas and rice with charred bok choy.

All of Chef Acheson's creations are elevated takes on classics, displaying his respect for the roots of the region

and his creative desire to take these simple dishes to new heights. Effie's signature biscuits, collards, truffle creamed corn, and rice grits all testify to Southern heritage while at the same time making them something more refined. At Ovide, the menu is driven by a respect for sustainability, using seasonal ingredients that provide the highest level of flavor to create something truly remarkable.

Naturally, the dessert menu is every bit as beautiful as one would expect from a restaurant as dedicated to excellence as Ovide. Favorites include decadent pecan pie, moist chocolate cornbread, and luscious crème brûlée.

Executive Chef Lulu Dangerfield has been at Ovide for the past six months, ably leading the staff under her to execute the menu to Chef Acheson's exacting standards. A chef for ten years, Chef Lulu studied culinary arts in Mexico before beginning the career that finally brought her to the Emerald Coast.

Much like the hotel that surrounds it, the interior spaces of Ovide are a designer's dream, featuring a dramatic floral art piece set into the trey ceiling overhead that brings together traditional botanicals with a modern application. Set amidst a stark black background that plays to the dark woodwork and furnishings, the ceiling artwork is almost unexpectedly feminine in an otherwise masculine space.

In addition to the wow-worthy food and bar menus, Ovide also hosts something that one might not expect: live music. Featured every Sunday during brunch, local talent comes to entertain diners while they enjoy their meal.

From unforgettable breakfasts to sophisticated dinners, Ovide is a taste of excellence—and a destination you won't want to miss.

Located at 1 Grand Sandestin Blvd., Miramar Beach, FL, US 32550. Open daily 7:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.; 5:00 p.m.- 10:00 p.m. for dinner. For more information, call (850) 351-3030 or visit hoteleffie.com.



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Food is Love

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

Grab-and-go, convenient food, and beverages isn't a new concept. It's been around so long that no one can remember when it wasn't...But it definitely hasn't always been healthy. Far from it, in fact. But for Dr. Bart Precourt and his wife, Kelli, the concept of bringing healthy options to the community was one that needed to be explored.

As the owners of Balanced Health Studio, a mecca of wellness that includes world-class yoga, top-tier chiropractic care, and functional nutrition, holistic well-being is obviously a way of life for the two self-proclaimed "health nuts" who have been providing nutrition support for nearly 20 years. It made sense, then, to add another facet to their business; and Prema Organic Café soon became more than just a concept. "The word 'prema' means 'to love', and the idea is simple," Bart explains. "We make the food with love and serve it with love, and our customers—including us—choose healthy food because we love ourselves and reward ourselves with food that nourishes the body."

Opened in summer 2020, in a space right next to Balance, Prema offers fresh cold-pressed juices, smoothies, and grab-and-go dishes created with both health and convenience in mind. The menu is everything anyone hoping to eat clean could dream of: 100% organic, gluten-free, soy-free, and canola oil-free. "Everything is fresh and healthy," says Bart. "Our customers don't even have to ask about what's in it or skip around the menu. We live this way in our personal lives and have been waiting for something like this to come to 30-A; and while we knew it would be hard to hold this standard, so far we are doing it."

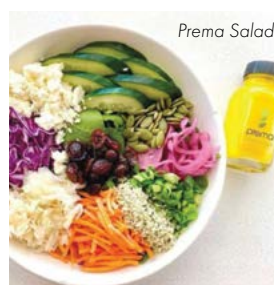
Naturally, the question of taste comes into play for anyone new to the "health food" space. For these uncertain individuals, Prema answers that question with one bite. "Healthy food is the gold standard, and many people are surprised how delicious everything tastes," Bart says. "In fact, many think that everything tastes so good that it couldn't possibly be healthy."



Superfood Salad



Trio of Organic Smoothies



Prema Salad

Photos courtesy Prema Organic Café

Top sellers on the menu include the acai bowl, the Prema salad, the pesto chicken, and their cold-pressed juices. "Apparently, our acai bowl is the best there is—that's the constant feedback we are getting from people who try it," says Bart, whose personal faves are the repair latte with collagen, lucuma, and honey; the celery juice; the ginger shot; and the Prema salad with their famous tuna salad (no mayo).

While the idea of an organic café can be intimidating to newbies, the atmosphere is one that is open, friendly, and incredibly inviting. "It's a different vibe here, and it's contagious!" says Bart. "Good energy, a friendly smile, and amazing food. If you look back into the kitchen, there is a good chance you will see your cold-pressed juice being made just moments before you drink it. There's something about choosing to do some-

thing great for your body that just puts people into great moods. Generally, I feel that all of 30-A has a good vibe, but we bring another level to it...it's fun."

Of course, the healthfulness of their products relies on their ingredients: the freshness, the quality, the way it's been grown. For that reason, Prema has been incredibly selective of their partnering vendors. "Sourcing our ingredients has been a big decision," Bart contends. "They must have organic produce and goods; that has been a bit of a challenge, yet we are hoping that other restaurants and cafés start requesting organic so that our options in this area increase. We do our best to vet all our vendors, even down to the glass bottles we use for juices. We are doing what we can to 'love' mother earth as well by reducing plastics however possible. We also source locally with some local farmers who provide organic produce and coffee. This is an area we see for big-

time expansion, and vendors are now reaching out to us as the word gets out about the quality of products we use."

While opening during a pandemic was risky, the Precourts knew that people needed what they were offering. "Healthy bodies require healthy foods," Bart says. "Last year gave all of us enough reason to start eating better. Simply put, if our nation ate better, we would be better off. And the cool thing is that it's now easy and delicious."

Prema Organic Café is located at 3557 East County Highway 30A, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459. Open daily from 7:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m. For more information, call (850) 213-3023 or visit prema30a.com.

The Girl's a Souperhero

30-A is gaining a tour de force

BY CAROL BADARACCO PADGETT

Souper Jenny by the Sea will be under 800 square feet, with some outdoor communal seating, but will be primarily designed for 30-A lifestyle grab-and-go dining.

In 1996 during the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, resident Jenny Levison took off to travel the world. On the road for 18 months, she learned to cook. Mightily cook. And then she came back ready for action.

"When I returned, most of my collected recipes were soups," she states. And so a friend suggested a superhero name for the eatery that Levison decided to launch in 1999: Souper Jenny. Fortunately for 30-A, Souper Jenny is heading this way.

As Chef and Owner, Levison opened five neighborhood cafes in metro Atlanta—Souper Jenny in Buckhead, Roswell, Brookhaven, Decatur, and the Westside. She explains her criteria for locations, saying, "I usually pick neighborhoods where I spend time and that offer a wide variety of community."

At her metro Atlanta neighborhood Souper Jennys, Levison found she basically had two seasons, the cooler months and the warmer months. And no matter the season, Levison's menu changes daily. In warmer months, Souper Jenny offers fewer hot soups, more salads, and chilled soups. In cooler months, six hot soups appear daily, along with three or four salads and two sandwiches. All of which score high marks with Levison's patrons, so much so that Souper Jenny's staff sees people return again and again.

"I think Souper Jenny offers exceptional service from people who genuinely care," Levison says of her patrons' loyalty. "I am always amazed to watch my team and how they know our customers better than I do! They get to know their names, their preferences, their families. It's wonderful to watch."



Jenny Levison

Photos courtesy of Jenny Levison



Chicken Stew



In addition to serving fabulous food, like any good superhero Levison is committed to giving back to local community. In Atlanta, for example, Souper Jenny is known for its Zadie Project, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that feeds the city's hungry children. Of the initiative, Levison notes, "I chose the name to honor my father,

Jarvin Levison who is known as Zadie (Yiddish for grandfather). He is my inspiration for cooking and my motivation for getting involved in my community. He also gave me my very first soup recipe, My Dad's Turkey Chili. In our 18-year history, it is still our most popular soup."

As founding sponsor of The Zadie Project, for every bowl of My Dad's Turkey Chili purchased in Atlanta, Souper Jenny has donated a nutritious meal to a family in need.

She adds, "Our servers are full of positive energy and personality, so it's not uncommon for people to be greeted with singing, smiles, or interpretive dance moves."

Ever expanding her circle of friends, Levison found 30-A to be a natural fit for Souper Jenny. "30-A is an area that I love, and I've spent a lot of time there," she says, noting that 30-A has a big Atlanta contingent too. "I feel our brand will have a good head start there."

Souper Jenny in 30-A—in the new Greenway Station project between Seagrove and Rosemary Beach—will be called Souper Jenny by the Sea and will stand out from the Atlanta locations in various ways. "We will focus on a variety of fresh salads, artisan sandwiches, entrees to go, appetizers, and desserts. And of course, there will be soup, but a smaller selection in the summer," Levison hints. In addition, Souper Jenny by the Sea will be under 800 square feet, with some outdoor communal seating, but will be primarily designed for 30-A lifestyle grab-and-go dining.

When asked how she plans to market her new 30-A location, which is slated to open in early summer 2022, Levison simply smiles, "I'm a big grassroots marketer, so stay tuned for some fun."

Since Souper Jenny won't open in 30-A until next summer, Levison is taking this time to soak in what locals will be looking for in anticipation. "If you live in the area, please feel free to email me directly (souperjenny@aol.com) and tell me what you'd love to see and what food you are missing in the area," she says. "I am so excited and I will be there personally next summer to get it all going. We hope to be up and running by Memorial Day weekend."

Along with the excellent and healthy food that she's pumped to bring to 30-A, Levison promises to bring another of her superpowers. "I think my biggest success is my incredible team. If you hire correctly, if your people believe in your vision, you're more than halfway there."

And she adds, "I truly love what I do and I think it shows in our service and in our food."

Connect IG: [@followingsouperjenny](https://www.instagram.com/followingsouperjenny)



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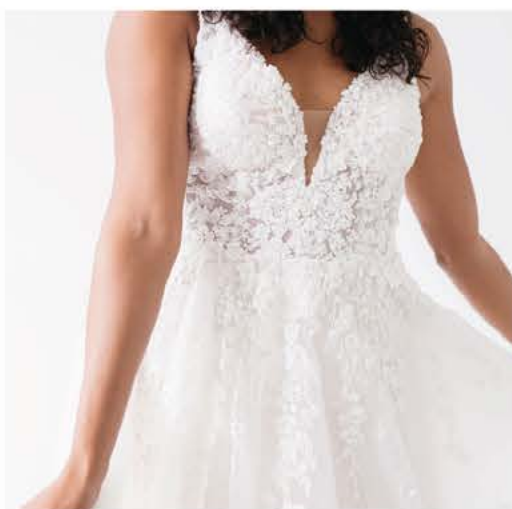


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Artwork that Awakens the Senses

Anna Sweet's timeless pieces represent the beauty of the world's best beaches

BY TESS FARMER



Anna Sweet in her studio



Photorealistic aerial ocean and gulf scenes by artist Anna Sweet are currently on display in local art gallery Curate30a in Rosemary Beach. Inspired by the many beaches Sweet has scouted throughout her years of underwater photography, her original works are created by mixing resin with a combination of acrylic pigments and minerals.

"Anna's art captures the quintessential beauty of our gulf waters here along the Emerald Coast," says Gary Handler, gallery owner of Curate30a. "Many often mistake her work as photography since the depiction is so vivid and realistic, they invite the viewer to truly jump in!"

Sweet manipulates paint colors and spreads them across wooden art panels, producing effects of lacing and webbing to mimic the serenity and life of the ocean. Each piece is layered with levels of color and translucent resin providing the viewer with a stunning three-dimensional representation of the sea from above. Creating her work from the shores of Hawaii, Florida, and now Oregon, Sweet creates custom shapes, sizes, and even usable surfboards.

Raised in Charlotte, North Carolina, above her mother's art gallery, Sweet and her nine siblings were immersed in the art world from a young age. Inspired by the light of the sun and the movement of the body, Sweet's hand evokes the dynamic sensuality of beauty in motion, capturing transient moments of swim, dance, and the crashing of a wave.

Her first family vacation was to Destin where she remembers thinking, "A place like this actually exists?" She recalls the beauty and vibrancy of the water's color and contrasting sand. Her mom bought her a video camera that trip and she captured the beauty of the Emerald Coast for the very first time. It would be years

later that she'd develop a career inspired by the majestic waters of the world.

With a love of photography developed in high school, she attended the School of Visual Arts in New York City to follow her dreams of becoming a full-time artist. She then decided to pursue internships in photography to hone her craft and ended up working for one of her main influencers, fashion photographer Rankin, in London. That role was grueling and led her to realize if she worked half as hard at developing her own career she'd move ahead even faster.

She started to develop a series out of some underwater images she had shot a year prior. She developed her own style by experimenting and continuing to try new techniques. "Ultimately, I wanted to bring my images to life," says Sweet. "I began experimenting with resin from a body shop, and different materials such as mica and glass, as well as acrylic paints that I had become so familiar with growing up beside my mother who restored classic artworks for a living. A few months later I had my first five images and I applied for a London street arts festival. Things took off from there."

A visit to see her mom in Miami was all it took to remind her of the inspiration and rejuvenation she needed living in a warmer climate near the beach. She continued learning and growing her collection, expanding to new galleries from New York to Hawaii.

She then moved to Key West where she met her husband and in 2017 started her own gallery there until last year when the family moved with their two young daughters outside of Portland, Oregon.

Sweet continues to marry mediums and explore new things through her form, focusing on quality and bringing even more dimension to her pieces, while focusing on the sustainability of her craft. She and her husband are also creating their own sustainable winery and farm in Oregon, another creative endeavor she's learning a lot about.

Sweet's collections are available through galleries across the country, including here in Rosemary Beach. Curate30a regularly hosts exclusive shows and live painting performances that allow the artist and collector to connect, adding immeasurable value to each acquisition and making the process of collecting truly personal.

"Anna's work is captivating and authentically represents the beauty of the Emerald Coast," adds Handler. "Being able to take home a piece of art that emulates your vacation is a rare opportunity. We invite visitors and locals to allow us to assist you in creating a collection that inspires your surroundings."

Curate30a, 72 Main St. Rosemary Beach, (850) 231-1808. Mon-Sat: 10am – 9pm, Sunday: 12pm – 8pm IG: @curate30a, Curate30a.com

An Interview with Artist Ann Forbush

BY ANNE HUNTER

Ann Forbush is a multidisciplinary artist with a deep appreciation for fragile landscapes and habitats. Her most recent series, called *Painting the Water's Edge*, is an evocative collection of works that focuses on the beauty to be found along the margins. The exhibition will run from October 1 through December 31 at 25 Central Square in Seaside.

What is your history and tie to Walton County?

My grandparents and my uncle bought two adjacent lots in Grayton in the 1950s. According to family lore, the lots were tangled jungles that had to be cleared with a machete (though I have a hard time imagining my grandmother wielding anything more dangerous than a rolling pin!). I have vivid memories of Grayton in the 1960s and 70s with unpaved roads, the General Store (now the Red Bar), endless skies, and the distinctive scent of live oaks after a storm. We're fortunate that our family has been able to keep these lots for more than 65 years!

Tell us about your educational background and the story of the moment you decided to pursue art.

There wasn't a particular "Aha!" moment when I became an artist. I've just always been a "maker": working with textiles, metals, and dark-room photography in my early years; attending art college in Atlanta and Philadelphia followed by a 20+ year career as a printmaker and instructor working in monoprints, collage, artist books, and found-object sculptures. In my mid-50s I returned to school and got my masters in fine arts. So, I guess that makes me a life-long learner.

Tell us about your process for creating a painting. When you find or see something that you love and want to include—can you describe that moment of inspiration that becomes art?

I think that, for everyone, what you know affects what you see. I take photographs and field notes, but my goal is not to recreate a scene. I'm more interested in creating a mood and a place where the viewer can go to re-



Photos by Jack Gardner



the sun and the moon are both in the sky. The light is magical.

Your favorite local restaurant?

There are so many good options! My husband and I like to walk to Grayton Seafood with our little flashlight after dark—and close the place.

What are your thoughts about art and New Urbanism?

I am a fan of the New Urbanism movement, its compact organizational plan encourages walking and bicycling for daily activities. It's oddly reminiscent of Grayton's original layout from the 1890s.

What is your advice to aspiring artists?

My advice is to create art-work every day, explore different techniques, and surround yourself with materials that enrich your spirit. These things will help your work gain momentum and depth.

flect. The inspiration for the *Painting the Water's Edge* exhibit was drawn directly from the landscapes in and around Grayton Beach. Though I've been coming to Grayton for my entire life, I'm now able to spend long stretches of time here and hope that this series will contribute to raising awareness about the beauty and fragility of the dune lake ecosystem.

Describe your genres of art and what inspires you about each.

My recent work is mostly on paper and canvas, and I continue to experiment with 3-D works like hand-bound books and small-scale sculptures. Everything I make is very tactile. Torn edges, transparent layers of color, and utilizing the natural attributes of my materials are all through-lines—for example, I use beeswax to resist ink, or I emboss impressionable materials. Combining elements from the natural world, and marking moments in time, are also recurring themes.

What is your favorite time of the day at the beach?

I like both ends of the day. The early morning when the mist rises over the lake and the early evening when

Share your thoughts about community-based collaborations.

Art can bring people together and strengthen communities. Over the past decade, I've organized and participated in several projects with large groups of artists (up to 50) for international and US-based exhibitions to support non-profit cultural exchanges. Last year I created a print-on-demand cookbook (called *Improvisational Cooking*) and donated the net proceeds to a food relief program for kids who usually get meals at school. After the *Painting the Water's Edge* exhibit in Seaside, a portion of the proceeds will be donated to the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center in Freeport, an educational non-profit that promotes biodiversity, sustainability, and the restoration of ecosystems.

The Forbush exhibition will run from October 1 through December 31 2021 at Anne Hunter Galleries, 25 Central Square in Seaside, Florida. For more information visit: annehuntergalleries.com or www.apforbush.com.

Swagger & Sway

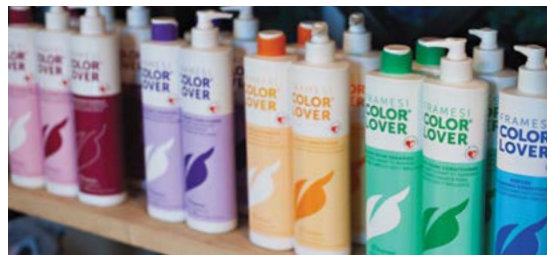
BY JESSA JANSEN

Through the family music legacy of the Heckschers, Maria Heckscher is continuing the tradition of being “cool” in her own way.

Located within the luxury retirement community The Blake at Miramar Beach, high-end salon and spa Swagger & Sway adds a beautiful addition. Swagger & Sway is a conceptual Barber, Beauty & Spa boutique that features the iconic perception of “the generation that invented cool”. The demographic is reflected through the salon’s 50s style and themed music. Granddaughter to prominent big band leader Ernie Heckscher, Maria Heckscher opened Swagger & Sway, paying homage to the era of the clientele. She has two partners in this location: Michael Jordan, owner of Vivo Spa, and her right-hand Janelle Knight, director of operations for Swagger & Sway as well as MH Salon 30A.

Having opened within the shadow of a pandemic, both MH Salon 30A and Swagger & Sway have collectively flourished economically in the high profile and bountiful areas between Destin and 30-A. The Jordan partnership provides the ability to extend services from MH Salon 30A and Vivo Spa, extending their range to further clientele, within and outside of The Blake community, with the future possibility of having multiple locations. People desire to have a higher-end salon and spa located in these types of communities, and that is exactly what Swagger & Sway brings to the table. In return, the staff found the rewarding benefits in the response from their clientele at The Blake. They felt they were giving something back to that generation.

By listening to their stories with 50s music playing on the record player in the background, a change is seen in those who come in as they are reliving that golden era through music, laughter, and style. The music beckons other dynamics found within each patron. The clients can relate to the music and reminisce, bringing them



back to a time in their memories. This has proved helpful for some clients struggling with degenerating diseases like Alzheimer’s. The clients leave the salon feeling reminded of their youth and feeling beautiful, having been treated to beauty and spa services. A unified belief shared by the staff has been that “it’s the story behind Swagger & Sway that makes it so special.”

Swagger & Sway offers a high-end staff who also employ MH Salon 30A and Vivo Spa. Having worked and trained with Framesi in Milan, Italy, Maria Heckscher

works to train her staff to exemplify their quality work. Swagger & Sway isn’t only a salon and spa boutique for the generation that knew the golden 50s, but a newer generation by offering their services to the public community as well.

Heckscher began her climb through the beauty and spa industry following the support of her grandfather when she opened the first salon and spa boutique in Atlanta. After relocating across the street in a new building, a team of Master hair stylists remained. Today

The Maria Heckscher salon is a proud Green Salon. Maria hopes to bring the same environmentally sound type of green salon to her Florida locations. The amount of salon and spa waste that salons are known for, fuels her drive to incorporate being “green” into her Florida locations.

She has seen in Atlanta that the salon waste can go into bio composite plastic or into clean energy. Heckscher notes that consumers are more mindful today and spending in ways that reflect the mindfulness of the planet. She has worked with companies over the years to help propel her businesses forward into being completely environmentally friendly. The beauty and oil industries are the top two highest that make waste that can be put to make better things, for example, taking 95% of waste and creating energy. After 39 years, Heckscher reflects that “it’s nice to have places that keep certain legends moving on by creating better beauty and a better world.”



Swagger and Sway Salon: (850) 687-4247, www.swagger sway.com, IG: @theswaggersway. MH Salon 30A: (850) 387-7907, www.mhsalon30a.com, IG: @mhsalon30a



Tom Fitzpatrick

Matthew Fitzpatrick

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Touring Through the Changing Tides of Time

BY CAROL BADARACCO PADGETT



We are busier than ever since May 2020,” states the manager of 30-A’s Blue Dolphin Tours in Panama City Beach. The 30-something-year-old family business continually draws repeat customers and maintains a loyal, knowledgeable staff.

Blue Dolphin Tours is known for its focus on the purity of the local environment, its no-stress, family-focused approach, and its fabulous tours to see the wildlife living in the blue placid waters. It’s about looking outward, and it’s about the journey.

Although Blue Dolphin Tours and its offerings haven’t changed since the world did in 2019, the home states of its patrons have. “We’re getting lots of new visitors from states like Virginia, Illinois, D.C., Michigan, Washington, Oregon, and California,” the business’s manager confirms. Regulars, too, remain continually among the mix, with about 50% of Blue Dolphin Tour’s business being repeat, and many of its returning guests’ faces have been long since etched into the minds of the Blue Dolphin Tours staff.

In a world where so many things are in flux over time, Blue Dolphin Tours offers visitors something steady: friendly faces, experienced Coast Guard Captains, custom-built boats, the beautiful waters of the Gulf Coast, and many sea creatures that make the stunning 14 miles between the Bay and Gulf waters their homes.

But even though the customer service that Blue Dolphin Tours delivers is reliably constant, its tours remain delightfully different each time a boat leaves the dock. “We go out, swim and snorkel, and before too long

inquisitive dolphins will come to watch us,” he describes. “We observe in the wild and have encounters. The experience is 100% different every single time.”

One of the reasons that Blue Dolphin Tours has consistent success giving visitors extraordinary experiences is that several hundred wild dolphins live in the area of Panama City Beach—an ample amount of the inquisitive mammals to interact with the boats that are out on the water all day long. The dolphins have made this stretch of waterway their home due to the 45-foot depth of the shipping channel, which provides an abundance of fresh food.

“Deep water means lots of different marine life,” the business manager confirms. And for the dolphin, it’s like having the perfect buffet waiting for them in their own backyard.

In addition, the surrounding area’s rich bays and estuaries are icing on the cake for the dolphins that travel all through the waters back and forth between Panama City, Destin, and Apalachicola.

Although the connection to nature that families get to experience on a Blue Dolphin tour is rare, so is the chance to connect with one’s own family, in the moment—a moment where family members don’t want to blink for fear of missing something extraordinary. Families on Blue Dolphin tours get to meet other families in the form of bottlenose dolphin pods, and many tourists, in particular, have never experienced such a thing.

At present, numerous dolphins are joined by turtles, different birds of prey, shells, starfish, and sand

dollars to make up the cast on guests’ tours. Manatee, too, are joining the lineup of late.

Yet, Blue Dolphin Tours is careful to ensure that the presence of its boats and families doesn’t interfere with this wildlife. “Our Captains respect the dolphins and their natural habitat, and avoid disturbing them,” he emphasizes. Respect is something the Blue Dolphin Tours team seeks to instill in every visitor to its business, as well, leaving them with these lessons, “Protect our environment and enjoy your family and friends—as well as the great outdoors that God has blessed us with.” Counting blessings and paying them forward, the Blue Dolphin Tours business donates to several local and foreign non-profits.

Circling back to the present moment, the business manager considers the incredible creatures that make Blue Dolphin Tours so special. “They’re just naturally inquisitive creatures. You see mothers teaching babies how to feed. We’ve witnessed birthings. People from all over the country come here to see what a dolphin acts like in the real world.”

And for anyone who hasn’t yet witnessed these wonders—many across the country live a lifetime without experiencing them—the manager of Blue Dolphin Tours extends an open invitation: “We are experts in family fun. Come see why!”

Blue Dolphin Tours, 3601 Thomas Drive, Panama City Beach, Florida 32408, www.bluedolphintour.com

Working the Back 9

How Bobby Johnson continues to make 'the 30-A life' a reality for today's homeowners

BY MICHAEL J PALLERINO

Years ago, an old broker friend of Bobby Johnson shared a secret that helped set the course for the then young realtor's career: "Listers last." Soaking the advice in, Johnson took a deep dive into honing his listing skill set. The strategy, he found, was a way to tell a property's story—and the story is what helps make the sale.

30-A stories are a part of Johnson's legacy. His family moved to the South Walton area in 1981, taking up residence in Seagrove Beach. Prior to that, the Johnsons made frequent trips to visit family who ran a little country store on Highway 98, where the kids were rewarded with trips to the beach after a day of pumping gas. Part of Johnson's ability to find the area's hidden gems—and the stories that go along with them—comes from those experiences.

"My lifelong relationships have benefitted me. I feel it's critical that a home or a lot tells a story. The old stories of what it was like years ago are pretty cool. For instance, many people don't realize that Forest Lake was an old campground or that Highway 83 in Blue Mountain used to be called Dump Road because that's where we had to bring our trash. I always say there is a cast of characters everywhere. I'm told I might even be one of them."

Growing up around real estate and new construction (his stepfather is a contractor), Johnson's eventual foray into the real estate game came naturally. Twenty years ago, he honed his love of 30-A by founding and managing one of the area's most successful boutique real estate firms, eventually becoming arguably one of Florida's best real estate agents (earning the prestigious Coldwell Banker President's Elite Award given to the top 3% of sales associates worldwide). Posting an average of more than 50 transactions a year, Johnson has been voted Florida's Top 10 agent based on client satisfaction by the American Institute of Real Estate four times running.

After eventually selling his company's shares, the certified Luxury Home Marketing specialist joined Engel & Voelkers, where he leads The Bobby J team, which includes Stacey Petrucci, Kevin Boyle, Stefanie Warrick, and Johnson. Together, they continue to sell all the benefits 30-A offers, following what Johnson believes is the truest tenet of salesmanship—being real. For example, if a home is not the right fit for his client, he will say so. He doesn't believe owning a beach home is

for everyone, oftentimes recommending that people rent and see if it's something they really want. He credits some of the empathy in his sales approach to his nursing background. "Listings need lots of love and care, and by nature I am a caregiver. I have always loved listings. That is where I really shine and an area I have perfected."

Today's market along 30-A continues to evolve—an evolution that brings with it a new set of opportunities and challenges. For example, as the area grows, the grumblings from the locals are gaining in volume. And Johnson, a local's local himself, understands, which is why he believes it is just as important to be a sounding board than a salesperson.

"It's critical to me to share the past with people—to let them know why we do things a certain way around here. I find myself complaining at times, too. I like to get out and try and make a difference. People want 30-A to stay what it was, but that's not reality based. Every cool area I know has grown. We have some unique attributes that will never change—like the state forest and areas that have been protected. We all need to make sure none of that ever changes. I'm grateful today that we can live in a place so cool and make decent wages."

These days also offer Johnson another opportunity that he is embracing more than ever. Like his mentor before him, Johnson believes in passing along the nuggets of the trade he has acquired over the years to his team, each of whom offer a unique set of skills that he believes he lacks. The "surround-yourself-with-those-who-can-do-what-you-cannot leadership" approach continues to keep him motivated.

"I realize I am perhaps on the back nine of my career. Retirement is drawing close, but I will say this, my plan is to keep doing what I can to make this area magical. South Walton has afforded me a career and a lifestyle I never thought was possible. I feel indebted to her, so I am now trying to listen, learn, and find places I can be of most service to the area."

Bobby Johnson: Engel & Voelkers 30A Beaches, 3092 W County Highway 30A Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459, thebobbyjteam.30afineliving.com, homeson30a.com, (850) 865-7798 (mobile), (850) 213-3048 (office), bobby.johnson@engelvoelkers.com



Bobby Johnson

Photo courtesy Shane Carter Photography

“People want 30-A to stay what it was, but that’s not reality based. Every cool area I know has grown.”

Bob Thomas – Counts Real Estate Group, Inc.

BY JESSICA HOLTHAUS BADOUR

Bob Thomas



As fall brings a nip to the air along 30-A, the summer has wrapped up another season. With kids back in school, local time is more relaxed. Sitting down with real estate mogul Bob Thomas, the biggest question for him: Will the market relax, too?

“I think for the fall season we’re going to be seeing a leveling off in the market,” he explains. “I’m not expecting any major adjustments or pull-backs; I think the pricing will level off and we’re going to be seeing a little more inventory available.”

Thomas’s real estate career is relatively new, having gotten his license in 2018, but already has a rich history here in the panhandle. After spending 25+ years in corporate America, a 2015 family vacation to WaterColor changed his future. The Thomas family fell in love with it here and initially bought a home as a vacation rental, which took off. Thomas saw the success of the real estate market and decided to move here full-time in 2018 to follow his passion.

He joined Counts Real Estate Group, which has been here on the Emerald Coast since 2005. Today, the company has 130 plus local full-time agents, with 21 dedicated to the local 30-A office. In 2020, Bob took the next step and went from

Realtor® to a partner.

“I have ownership in Counts Real Estate Brokerage, am a Realtor®, and have my own family vacation rental properties,” he explains. “It’s been very rewarding.

“When I first started, the market was good,” he continues. “Then COVID hit. My first impression was, ‘We’ll see a setback now.’ Just the opposite happened. Business picked up and continued to increase all last year. In February, sales began to exceed the pricing on the market. The Emerald Coast is a great value.”

With the pandemic, virtual showings became commonplace – making it even easier for a buyer out of the area to see properties and find the right one without having to travel. It’s not uncommon these days for a customer to purchase a home without physically seeing it; Thomas notes it’s still a lot of interaction but it’s mostly virtual.

“Most of my customers are looking for a luxury condo or home that can work as a vacation property. Many are empty nesters who have been visiting the panhandle for a long time, looking to diversify and invest in a vacation rental, while also enjoying the property themselves,” he says. “Most recently we are seeing millennials get in on the action as they mature into their careers and their life goals transform.”

Thomas provides a unique perspective as someone who did the same thing in 2018. Vacation rental properties are not “passive income,” he notes. It’s work, and it requires marketing to create success. His value-add for all his customers comes after the sale closes.

“Often, after we close, phone calls continue. As my customers start the process of putting their property on vacation rental websites and apps, they come to me for guidance to help get them up and running,” Thomas describes. “While I don’t manage properties, I love to talk to them about my experience, and it’s really an extra benefit to the customer.”

Bob Thomas and Counts Real Estate Group are taking on new customers consistently. With 12 years of experience and a 30-A office, the team understands the local community and economy. This truly differentiates Counts from the competition.

Thomas thanks their robust technology support structure, with all the digital marketing and technical tools needed for today’s real estate transactions. It provides full operating speed to take care of customers throughout the entire process, while the marketing director and her team provide critical expertise that benefits all their customers.

Looking ahead, Thomas is excited for the region and the attention 30-A continues to receive.

“We have a great value here on the Emerald Coast when compared to other real estate hot spots in Florida. The awareness and interest in this area, there’s a lot of demand,” he says. “COVID was a trigger for a lot of people. It’s challenging because inventory is low, but we are seeing a little uptick in listings. I keep telling my customers: Be patient. More choices are coming.”

Counts Real Estate Group’s local 30A office houses 21 agents and is located between Rosemary and Seacrest Beaches at 5231 E Co Hwy 30-A, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459. Reach the office at (850) 231-1483 or visit www.countsrealestate.com.

Most recently we are seeing millennials get in on the action as they mature into their careers and their life goals transform.

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Back to School: Health Strategies

BY DR. BART PRECOURT

Let's begin by just saying the past year has been interesting! As the dust begins to settle, there are still many questions. Have we learned from the past year? Hopefully! In this article are some of the most common questions I get in my practice about kids' health and going back to school.

We knew from the beginning that running and hiding was not a long-term strategy; yet it's what we had, and at some point, we would have to face moving forward in a safe and healthy way.

In no particular order, here you go:

Are kids safe to go back to school?

This is a resounding yes! YES. YES. Does it mean they will never catch a cold or flu? No. Kids get those things, it's okay. They are meant to have exposure to germs etc, that's how their immune system gets smarter. It means they are safe from potentially fatal outcomes. This is what is being overlooked. The data clearly indicates that children are not at risk for serious illness or death from COVID-19. It's important that we teach them healthy practices, including reducing the fear that many of them now have about interacting with other humans.

What can I do to boost up my child's immune system?

This is what we should focus on. Three easy focus points.

First, increase Vitamins C, D and Zinc. These work to enhance and activate the immune system. The immune system is what protects your child.

Second, combine this with a new approach to nutrition. Viruses and bacteria thrive when we eat sugar and processed foods. Essentially sugar brings our defense field down. It's time to do something different. Help your child have more healthy options. Learn about healthy foods. Get rid of sugar! The need to get stronger from the inside out will never go away so this is a long-term investment. This is not news to you, though now it is real. Sugar down regulates the immune system. Let's learn from the past year and take more action.

Third, get better SLEEP. We heal when we sleep. Better sleepers generally have stronger immune systems.

Lastly, get the schools involved. No longer accept school meals that are unhealthy, processed, and full of sugar. (Glad to help here if need be!)

Sugar brings our defense field down. It's time to do something different. Help your child have more healthy options. Learn about healthy foods. Get rid of sugar!

What should we teach our children about health?

Okay... this was really me making a question up... yet it's a good one! Let's teach them about the immune system, the very thing that will ensure their future health. Too many kids are being taught the way to stay healthy (or really how not to be sick), is to avoid their friends (distance) and mask up. Enough! Let's be bold and push, beg and plead all the local schools to teach their students about the innate and adaptive immune systems. Health comes from within. Kids need to learn this. Heck... we all need this reminder. I think we are massively underestimating their capacity to understand about health and sickness. Imagine for a moment all the effort that was put into making policies, putting tape on the floors, plexiglass, masks, social distancing, virtual learning etc. Imagine this year putting that same energy, effort and resources into learning about HEALTH.

Let's help their little bodies get stronger. Let's teach them about how simple things like hugging is shown to enhance immune cells. Smiling, laughing, and playing builds immunity. Sunshine makes us stronger. Operating out of love, not fear, builds them up. Let's give them some confidence and certainty through education and action.

p.s. I will volunteer to teach these as long as teachers and parents are present.

Parting notes:

Collectively I think with the information we had last year that schools and teachers did an amazing job adapting to the circumstances. And now it's time to raise the bar... to emphasize health, building our immune



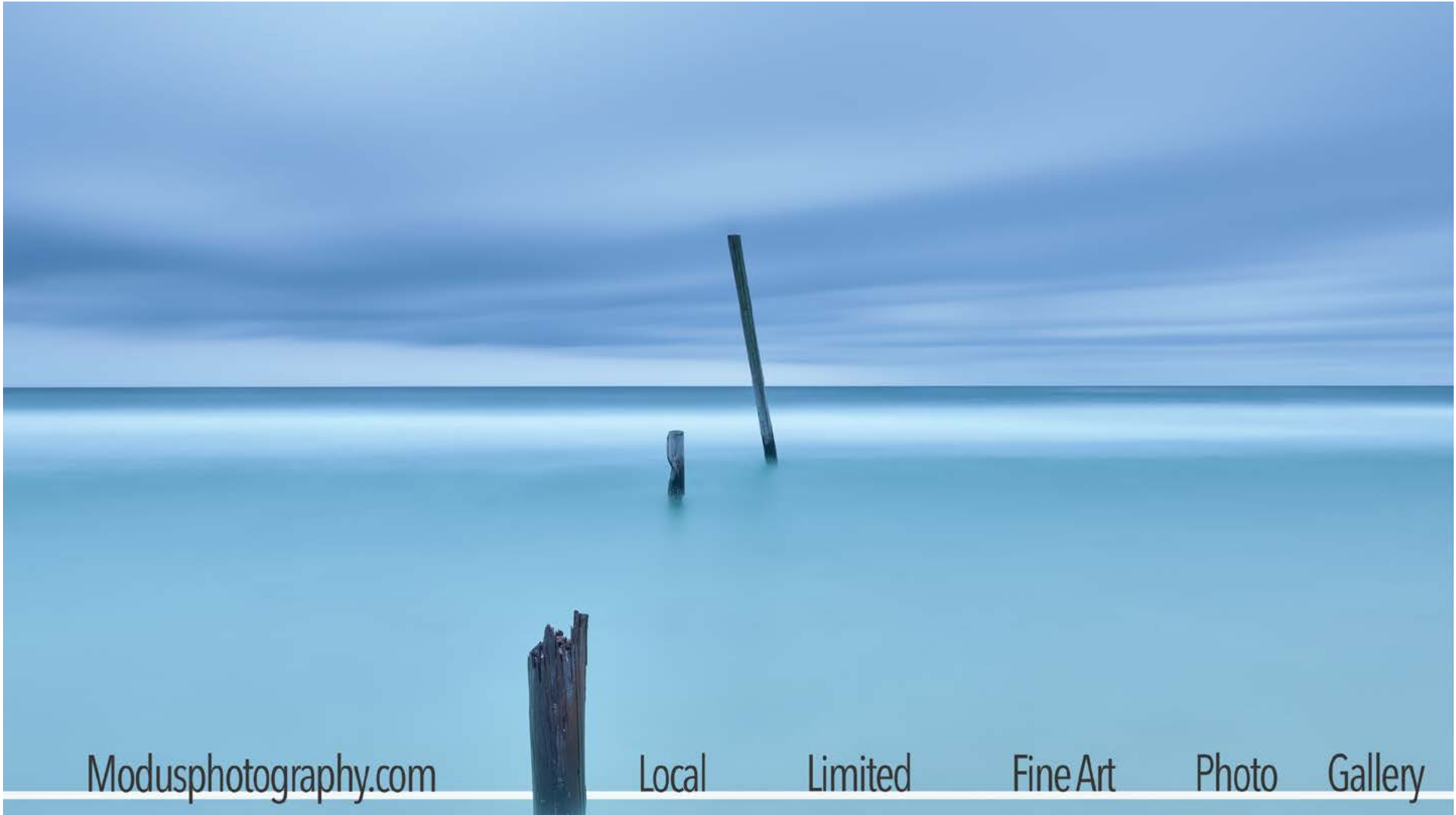
Dr. Bart Precourt

systems, and improving diet and nutrition. If there was ever a time to get motivated on these topics, it's now.

For the parents out there... stand your ground. Lead by example. Be bold enough to let go of some of your bad habits. Be the weirdo eating healthy all time. Consume less sugar. Less alcohol. Sleep more. Laugh. Stress less. Get outside. Exercise. Take your vitamins. Practice gratitude. Love.

Let's do this!

Dr. Bart M. Precourt, D.C., is a Holistic Doctor, chiropractor, acupuncturist and nutritional consultant. For nearly 20 years he has helped people get healthy, lose weight and create healthy sustainable lifestyles. He currently practices in Seagrove Beach, FL at Balance Health Studio, www.balance30a.com. For a consultation, contact Balance Health Studio at (850) 231-9288.



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Pounding the Pavement with a Purpose

30A 10K celebrates 10 years of giving back to the South Walton community

BY TESS FARMER

Recognized as one of the top ten turkey trots in America, the 30A 10K takes place in Rosemary Beach and is known for its scenic yet flat and fast courses as well as the over-the-top after party.

“We invite locals and visitors to experience the beauty of South Walton county and give back to local charities while making health and fitness a part of a weekend of gratitude and indulgence,” says Race Director Karen Meadows. “It’s also a great opportunity to enjoy meals, shopping, and outdoor activities throughout our amazing local communities.”

The 30A 10K, 5K, and 1-mile fun runs welcome runners, their friends, and families as the main event with two days of fun, family-focused activities on a popular holiday weekend at the beach. The capstone event – the 10K, 5K and 1-mile fun run races – will take place on November 25 as runners race down scenic Highway 30A taking in the sights and fresh beach breezes along the way.

The 30A 10K is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to serve the community by producing a fun and safe race with related events to raise money for contribution to local charities while promoting health and fitness. Started by local residents Karen Meadows, Amy Stoyles, and Craig Baranowski, the race is in its tenth year.

All money raised is donated to the event’s annually-selected charity partners. The charity partners for the 2021 race include: The Point Washington Medical Clinic, the Walton County Education Foundation, Northwest Florida Guardian ad Litem, and the Seaside School Foundation.

“All the charity partners have a direct impact here in South Walton and the mission of each one is vital to the health and wellness of our local community,” says Amy Stoyles, Co-Race Director. “We have been able to support these worthwhile causes each year thanks to the support of our runners, volunteers, and sponsors, we couldn’t do it without them.”

Meadows, who is a certified USA triathlon and running coach, says the atmosphere of the beach and culture of sports and fitness here makes 30-A the perfect destination for a race of this caliber. “We’ve kept it family friendly so everyone at all levels can participate, but you can also qualify for other races this way,” she says. “This race has become such a tradition here and there are ways for everyone to participate.”



Participants celebrate with Lucky the Turkey

Locals and visitors make exercising and enjoying the outdoors a part of daily life here at the beach, with many opportunities to get your heart rate up in the fresh air and sunshine.

“After a year of being cooped up, we all are reminded how important these things are to our health and wellness not just through physical fitness but being coming together as a community,” adds Stoyles.

“There is no shortage of opportunities to be active and enjoy the natural wonders here along 30-A and we’re happy to be a part of that tradition,” says Meadows. “And lucky enough the temperatures and humidity start to cooperate a bit more come late November!”

To learn more and register for the race, visit 30a10k.com. The 30A 10K is a Peachtree Road Race qualifier with certification #FL12097EBM. All runners receive an eco-friendly race shirt and a commemorative, reusable insulated water bottle to keep their favorite drink at its ideal temp and to eliminate single-use plastic bottles in landfills, waterways, and oceans.

ABOUT THE 30A 10K

With a 10K, 5K, and 1-mile fun run, this Thanksgiving Day tradition has something for the whole family. Packet pick up takes place the day before the event at The Hub on 30A and the race starts and finishes in beautiful downtown Rosemary Beach on Thanksgiving morning.

As one of the largest road races in South Walton, with an estimated 6,000 participants, vendors, and volunteers, this is one holiday extravaganza you don’t want to miss. All money raised is donated to local charity partners. To date, the 30A 10K Inc. has donated more than \$450,000 to area non-profits. This year, the organization plans to break the half million-dollar mark.



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Post-Marital Estate Planning

BY KIMBERLY WATSON SEWELL AND FRANKLIN H. WATSON



Kimberly Watson Sewell
and Frank Watson

If you are single, you are in good company. Nearly half of all adult Americans are single. Being single can mean considerable personal and economic freedom. Nevertheless, just like your married counterparts, proper Life and Estate Planning is necessary to keep you in control.

Disability Planning

Every adult American is responsible for making his or her own personal, health care and financial decisions. In fact, you may take many basic decisions for granted. For example, you decide where to live, what medical care is appropriate and how to manage your finances. But what if an illness or injury leaves you unable to make even these basic decisions? Who will make such decisions for you? Who will have your best interests at heart?

Proper Life and Estate Planning is required in advance of your incapacity if you want to appoint your own decision-maker. Otherwise, by default you may find yourself in the Probate Court in a legal process that typically employs three lawyers and makes your private, personal, health care and financial circumstances a matter of public record.

Choosing Guardians

Do you have minor children (i.e., under age 18 in most states)? If yes, you probably invest considerable time and treasure to provide them with a moral, safe and secure home environment. What if you die while they are still minors? Who will rear them to adulthood? Who will provide the moral, safe and secure home environment? Unless you want a Probate Judge to make the selection for you, proper Life and Estate Planning is required.

Who will manage the inheritance you leave for your minor children until they reach adulthood? Again, that decision will be made by a Probate Judge in the absence of proper Life and Estate Planning by you.

What if you have minor children, but are divorced or never married? Absent a showing of unfitness, the Probate Court will appoint the surviving biological parent not only to rear the children to adulthood, but also to manage their inheritance. Additionally, if the surviving biological parent then survives your children, they ultimately may receive your child/children's inheritance, which might not be what you would prefer to take place.

Distributing Mementoes

Is family harmony important to you? Whether it is grandma's yellow pie pan, antique furniture or that Civil War sword, such items should be identified in your Life and Estate Plan along with the designated recipient of your own selection. Otherwise, your valuables could end up in the hands of the wrong loved one or sold to a perfect stranger in your Estate Sale. Either way, relationships between and among your loved ones could be bruised or battered unnecessarily.

Estate and Gift Taxes

Benjamin Franklin noted that there are only two certainties in life: Death and Taxes. While there is little we can do to avoid the former, proper estate tax planning can minimize the latter. One of the best kept secrets for reducing Federal Estate Taxes is giving while you are living. Such giving leverages the Annual Gift Exclusion (AGE) that is available to every taxpayer.

Under the AGE, each taxpayer may give \$14,000.00 each year to as many people as they wish. This wealth transfer does not trigger gift taxes to the donor or to the donee. Additionally, any future increase in the value of the gifted asset is not included in the donor's estate for determining Federal Estate Taxes later. For this reason, gifts of appreciated assets (e.g., stock that is rapidly going up in value) are popular. [Note: legal counsel should be sought before making AGE gifts.]

One of the best kept secrets for reducing Federal Estate Taxes is giving while you are living. Such giving leverages the Annual Gift Exclusion (AGE) that is available to every taxpayer.

Are your likely beneficiaries young, inexperienced, or perhaps irresponsible? If so, various Trusts can be created to protect your AGE gifts from their potential divorces, lawsuits, bankruptcies, or good, old-fashioned squandering. Through carefully drafted Trusts you can control how and when the gifted assets are made available to your beneficiaries. As legendary jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes put it: Put not your trust in money but put your money in trust.

ASK YOURSELF...

These Questions Regarding "Estate Planning for Singles."

- Were I incapacitated due to an injury or illness, would I or my assets be subject to the Probate Court?
- Were I to die leaving minor children, have I legally appointed at least one Guardian (i.e., Bank-Up Parent) for them and someone I trust to administer their inheritance?
- Were I to die, have I legally designated who will receive various valuable (or sentimental) items of tangible personal property from my estate, to avoid conflicts among loved ones?
- Were I to die, have I made arrangements to protect the inheritance for my children from their potential divorces, lawsuits, bankruptcies or squandering?



Frank Watson has been conducting real estate closings along 30A since 1997. For more information, please contact: Watson Sewell, PL (850) 231-3465 www.watsonsewell.com

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Stan Utley: Master Short Game Instructor

BY TOM FITZPATRICK



Stan Utley

Stan Utley was recently on 30-A to host a short game clinic at Sharks Tooth. Based out of Scottsdale and Aspen, Stan played the pro tour in the 90s. He began offering advice to fellow tour pros and a second career ensued as a great teacher and as an advisor to the popular Orange Whip training brand.

Stan's short game theme is that it's easier to focus on swinging the clubhead and less on the grip end. When we drag the handle through impact the club head fails to properly release. He often makes reference to why the USGA banned putter anchoring—because it works! Anchoring the grip against your shirt buttons allows the clubhead to easily swing. It's similar to a rotating car tire: the outer part of the tire travels on a larger circle while the center axle travels on a smaller circle. That's best done by swinging with your wrists and elbows, he says.

Stan Utley on Putting:

It's vital to get into a solid putting posture (*photos 1 & 2*). Start by standing tall and holding the putter straight out with the grip pointed at your sternum. Push your hip joints down and back—this will force your chest lower and get your eyes positioned over the ball. Stan says “most people struggle in putting because their arms are straight. Bending from the hips creates soft elbows”.

For the backstroke, load the club by working the right wrist and elbow behind you.

Start the downstroke by moving the putter face down first while the grip stays in place. A common mistake is to drag the handle thru impact preventing the putter from properly releasing. Use your wrists without

being flippy. Pros speed the head up at impact by slowing the grip where it becomes vertical and almost pulling back. That's a fantastic way to visualize the putter releasing at impact.

A great drill is to rotate the putter 90 degrees so the toe end is aimed at the hole. Hit putts with the toe and you'll feel the putter release!

Stan Utley on Pitching:

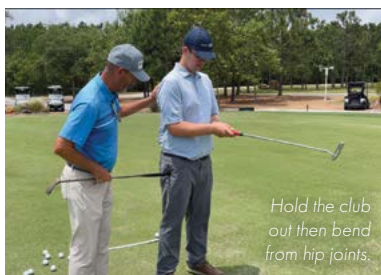
Stan had us hit chips using a 3 wood to sense the pendulum motion.

“Accelerate the club head early down the plane line by using the wrists,” Stan states.

Through the impact you actually want to stand up on the shot (*photo 3*). Stan quips, “When I stand up the club snaps down.” That helps the grip get vertical at impact, bringing the bounce into play - no more fat or bladed pitches. He continues, “For a low drawing pitch take the face back shut then rotate the forearms thru from a forward ball position.” Throwing the clubhead first on the downswing makes it much easier for the club to make it around the corner after impact. That was the thought that propelled Nick Price's career.

Drill: Hold the hosel with your right hand and tap a ball with the grip. The ball only moves when you use your wrist correctly. As you pivot through, keep your right elbow tucked into your side.

Bunker: Push your hips down and back with your feet square. Now lean towards your front foot. In the backswing rotate your right forearm open, then “dead weight” drop the club two inches behind the ball using the back flange. Don't dig! (*photo 4*)



Tom Fitzpatrick is a David Leadbetter certified instructor and an active realtor with Scenic Sotheby's Intl Realty. Contact him at (850) 225-4674 or tom@scenicsir.com



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