

**FREE!**

# Gulf Coast *Snow* BIRDS

A Winter Visitor  
Publication  
January 2021

**Running  
through the  
pandemic**

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In print and online  
[SnowBirdsGulfCoast.com](http://SnowBirdsGulfCoast.com)

SNOWBIRDS 15TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR



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**mardi gras**  
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**king Cake**  
ON THE GULF COAST

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*\*No cash value. Not valid with other  
discounts or promotions. Excludes  
Friday and Saturday nights  
performances. Expires 2/28/21.*

Here's to a whole new year. We're kicking it off in a big way at OWA. Come check out our new, one-of-a-kind store, Native Treasures, in Downtown OWA. Stick around for an amazing meal at Paula Deen's Family Kitchen. Be awed at Legends in Concert's "Direct From London," beginning Jan. 15. Don't miss OWA's Arts and Crafts Festival, Saturday, January 30th from 12pm-4pm. From local artists to British stars, this is one very happy new year.

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## Gulf Coast *Snow* **BIRDS**



### ON THE COVER

Retired educators Kathi and Bill Cutler began their "new adventure" – retirement – in 2017. Bill (70) grew up in rural Massachusetts and Kathi (67), in rural Maine. They married in 1991. They have found the perfect winter home and spend seven and a half months each year in a long-term rental at Pensacola Beach, Fla.

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# Welcome!

Aren't we all happy to usher in 2021?

Earlier this spring as whispers of a new virus became louder and louder, few of us knew what that would entail.

Now we are some nine months into a full-blown pandemic with two vaccines approved and a brighter future on the horizon.

Most communities and businesses have embraced CDC guidelines, which urge people to wear a mask, frequently wash hands (something we should do anyway) and stay six feet from people who don't live in our household.

Can you take a walk on the beach or trails? Yes. Play tennis, pickleball or a round of golf? Absolutely. Just limit the high fives and hugs and after play don your mask to interact.

Dining out is one of the joys of the winter experience. Many local restaurants offer outside dining space, many with a water view. If dining in, ask for a table outside the main traffic areas. Take advantage of conveniences such as curbside pickup and delivery. Tip as generously as you are able.

The region's casinos have reconfigured space to provide social distancing, added hand sanitizer stations and floor monitors to ensure compliance. Most no longer allow smoking on the main floor. Live shows with carefully configured seating have slowly returned at a variety of venues.

Snowbird clubs have suspended most activities this season. Some of you have learned to use apps such as Zoom (see our tips on page 14) to communicate with loved ones and others. It's not the same, but better than a phone call.

As always, we are happy you are here. If you are reading this online from "home" we hope you can return soon. Please sign up for our e-newsletter and "Like" our Facebook page for the latest news.

Next season let's hope hugs are back! Be well.

All the best,

Karen Harrell, [publisher@snowbirdsgulfcoast.com](mailto:publisher@snowbirdsgulfcoast.com) or 850-291-1266.

PS – We are happy to be publishing this winter. Thank you for the support.



Perdido Bay golf shop attendants are masked up and ready to greet golfers this season.

While there, you also can pick up a copy of the Snowbirds Gulf Coast Magazine.



# TRANSFORMING BAPTIST for the FUTURE

## New Health Campus Opening in 2023



### Campus

- Investment: \$615 million
- 57 acres
- Convenient, accessible location at the intersection of Brent Lane and I-110 in Pensacola, Florida

### Hospital

- 602,000 square feet
- 10 Floors
- 264 beds

### Multispecialty Health Center

- 178,000 square feet
- 6 floors
- 162 exam rooms

### Amenities

- Town square with walking paths, outdoor classrooms, rehab areas and outdoor event space
- Chapel and healing garden for quiet reflection and serenity
- Café and coffee shop with indoor and outdoor seating
- Retail pharmacy

**Baptist Health Care's new campus** represents the single largest investment in health care facilities, services and programs in Northwest Florida history. Continuing our founders' bold vision and legacy, Baptist is making this significant investment to transform care in the community and improve the quality of life for generations to come.

### Project Team



**BRASFIELD  
& GORRIE**  
GENERAL CONTRACTORS  
General contractor

**Meadows & Ohly**  
Program manager



Equipment & technology planner

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# "New adventure" brings northeastern couple to Pensacola Beach

Retired educators Kathi and Bill Cutler began their "new adventure" – retirement – in 2017. Bill (70) grew up in rural Massachusetts and Kathi (67), in rural Maine. They married in 1991.

The couple combined his two daughters from a previous marriage and three "heart" children (two girls and one boy) into their family. They spend seven and a half months each year in a long-term rental at Pensacola Beach, Fla.

They made their first visit to Pensacola Beach in 2010 to visit one of their daughters who had relocated there with five of the couple's 14 grandchildren. The couple attends and is active at Pensacola Beach Community Church.

They spend the other months visiting their other children and grandchildren in Kansas, Vermont, Minneapolis and Maine.



## Q. What did you do before retirement?

Kathi worked for 42 years in public education, from elementary school through high school, serving as a music and choral instructor for 21 years, and then as an assistant principal and principal in high school and middle schools in Maine and Connecticut. Kathi retired in 2017 from her position as principal of a middle school in Orange, Conn.

Bill was in college ministry for 44 years, working with the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at colleges and universities throughout New England, and retired from his work with graduate ministries on the Yale campus in 2017.



## Q. Has the Novel Coronavirus changed your habits while on the coast? And if so, how?

Yes, the virus has impacted our lives here. One of our granddaughters was recently exposed to the virus at her dance studio, so we had to quarantine from her family, which meant not being able to have them with us for Thanksgiving though we brought over a box of food for them.

## Q. What kind of activities do you each enjoy?

Kathi likes to cook and is very good. I like to eat what she makes, so this works out well! I (Bill) have been running regularly since 2017 when I participated with my daughter Cori in the Bridge-to-Bridge run. I like to swim in the Gulf and the condo pool. Kathi got me a paddleboard last Christmas, but I haven't quite the hang of standing on it yet! With the virus limiting our social life, we've gotten into jigsaw puzzles a lot and have an ongoing Scrabble tournament between ourselves. The three main activities with which Bill was involved were impacted by the virus.



I helped start up a local park run ([www.parkrun.us](http://www.parkrun.us)), which began in February 2019. This is a free weekly 5K that happened every Saturday morning on the wooded trails at UWF until March 2020, when we had to cancel until large group events become safe again.

Last spring, Kathi had wanted to volunteer at a Pensacola hospital working with infants but had to put that on hold. She was also working as a substitute teacher at a local music school but had to stop that once the school stopped in-person lessons. Social times with friends or taking grandkids to movies, concerts, and other group activities all stopped.

The couple said they look forward to when the virus eases, and they can participate in in-person activities. But in the meantime, they are staying busy doing what they can where they can.





## Baptist Health Care's First Intuitive Health-Partnered Dual ER and Urgent Care Facility Opens in Navarre

The Baptist Emergency Room and Urgent Care in Navarre is now open at Baptist Medical Park – Navarre, located at 8888 Navarre Parkway, Navarre, Fla.

A partnership between Baptist and Intuitive Health brings the first hybrid emergency room and urgent care clinic to Northwest Florida. Texas-based Intuitive Health has partnered with established health systems nationwide since 2008 to build, operate, launch and retain health care facilities that provide urgent care and emergency room services under one roof.

The dual emergency and urgent care facilities eliminate the need for patients to self-diagnose the severity of their health concern before selecting the most appropriate medical center for care. The new patient-centered model is designed to simplify the way patients access immediate, appropriate care while also lowering out-of-pocket costs.

"We've witnessed a growing issue across Northwest Florida and the entire country surrounding trying to guide consumers to the appropriate level of care," said Brett Aldridge, vice president of business development at Baptist Health Care. "Requiring patients to determine the

level of care they require by choosing either a freestanding ER or urgent care is neither feasible nor safe. Through our partnership with Intuitive Health, Baptist Health Care is eliminating the guesswork and improving patient experience with a full-service emergency room and urgent care under one roof."

Baptist Emergency Room and Urgent Care, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is equipped with on-site lab equipment, a radiology suite with X-ray and multi-slice CT scanners, and staffed with board-certified, ER-licensed physicians who see each patient and determine if the appropriate care is emergent or urgent care. Patients are transparently billed accordingly, only paying for the level of care they need, which eliminates unnecessary emergency room visits.

"In addition to receiving the highest quality of care, patients want convenience, immediate access to care, better customer service and greater transparency in the billing process," said Thom Herrmann, CEO of Intuitive Health. "Partnering with Baptist Health Care to bring our dual urgent care and emergency care clinics to Pensacola is



an exciting step toward making high-quality and transparent patient care more accessible nationwide."

Baptist Emergency Room and Urgent Care represents the future of health care by empowering patients to make informed decisions about their health and revolutionizing the way patients

find, receive and are charged for care. The model helps convert unnecessary ER visits into urgent care-billed visits, minimizing out-of-pocket patient costs.

More information about Baptist Health Care is available at [ebaptisthealthcare.org](http://ebaptisthealthcare.org). More information about Intuitive Health is available at [iheruc.com](http://iheruc.com).







Legends in Concert, the nation's premier and longest-running tribute artist production, announced its first two shows for 2021 at the OWA Theater. Kicking off the season for a special limited engagement, January 15 to February 7, will be the reprise of the hit shows Direct From London. See unbelievable tributes to Elton John, Freddie Mercury, Rod Stewart and George Michael together on one stage. Buy tickets at [VisitOWA.com/Tickets](http://VisitOWA.com/Tickets) or by calling 251-369-6100. Group discounts for 10 or more are also available; contact the box office for details.

Please note that events can change or may be cancelled because of the changing rules surrounding COVID-19 safety. Call or check websites or social media before heading out to an event.

### WEDNESDAYS

**Boardwalk Talks at Dauphin Island Sea Lab Estuarium** - The Northern Gulf Institute presents informal talks about the Gulf of Mexico region. 101 Bienville Blvd, Dauphin Island, Ala. First and third Wednesdays, 11:15 a.m. FREE. Details: [www.disl.org/estuarium](http://www.disl.org/estuarium) or 251-861-2141



**Winter Wednesdays** - Bellingsrath Gardens and Home - Sessions are held each week in the Magnolia Room from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Jan. 6 to Feb. 24. Mobile, Ala. Register: 251-459-8864. Details: [www.bellingsrath.org](http://www.bellingsrath.org)

### Thurs/Fri/Sat

**Alabama Gulf Coast Music Hall** - Dancing, BBQ, live music and more! Dance the night away to country, oldies, '50s, pop and blues. 12615-A Foley Beach

Express, Foley, Ala. Details: <https://alabamagulfcoastmusichall.com/>

### through 12/31

**35 Days of Christmas & Trains** - Mississippi Coast Model Railroad Museum, 522 Pass Rd, Gulfport, Miss.. Daily from 5 to 9 p.m. Closed 12/24-25. Price: Free, donations recommended \$5 adults, \$2 children. Details: [www.mcmrcm.org](http://www.mcmrcm.org)

### through 1/1

**Christmas Nights of Lights of Mobile** - Come out and see over one million lights synchronized to traditional and newer, rocking Christmas music played through your own car stereo at Hank Aaron Stadium. Pack your vehicle full of friends and family to enjoy the show! Details: <https://mobileseg.com/events/>

**Snowflakes on the Bay** - Enjoy the illuminated snowflakes in the historic live oaks in Bay St. Louis and Waveland. Bay St. Louis, Miss. Details: 228-463-9222

### through 1/3

**Magic Christmas in Lights** - Bellingsrath Gardens and Home celebrates 23 years of dazzling nighttime displays. See more than 1,100 set pieces, 3 million lights and 15 scenes on a walking tour of the 65-acre estate. Online tickets are sold for designated entry times because of precautions related to COVID-19. These appointments DO NOT limit our guests to any length of time for their visit. Details: [Bellingsrath.org](http://Bellingsrath.org) or 800.247.8420

### through 1/16/21

**First City Lights Festival** - Downtown Pensacola, Fla. hosts family-friendly events. There are trolley rides among one million white lights. An old live oak tree located at the northwest corner of Plaza Ferdinand will be strung with hundreds of interactive lights that react to sound. Details: [www.visitpensacola.com/event/first-city-lights-festival/7804/](http://www.visitpensacola.com/event/first-city-lights-festival/7804/)

### through 1/31

**Baytowne On Ice** - Apex Skating Pavillion, 9300 Emerald Coast Parkway, West Miramar Beach, Fla.. The perfect place to find the winter spirit! Details: 850-714-7614 or [www.baytownewharf.com](http://www.baytownewharf.com)

### 1/1-21

**Special Exhibit: War Crime Trials of German Military and Government Members** - Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum in Carrabelle is presenting a special exhibit on the War Crime Trials of German military and government members, of which the Nuremberg Trials are the most well-known. Details: <https://www.floridasforgottencoast.com/event/special-exhibit-war-crime-trials-of-german-military-and-government-members/>

### 1/9

**Audubon Bird Watching field trip to Ft. Walton** - Looking for wintering sparrows and waterfowl. 8 a.m. meetup at the NE Corner of Walmart Parking Lot, 3767 Gulf Breeze Pkwy., Gulf Breeze, Fla. Hosted by Francis M. Weston Audubon Society. All registered participants will agree to wear masks and honor social distancing protocols. Participants must provide their own transportation. Expect easy walking; bring water and snacks. Ends at noon. Register: Lucy at [town\\_point@bellsouth.net](mailto:town_point@bellsouth.net), leave your name and cell phone number to receive confirmation.

### 1/20

**Carmen presented by the Pensacola Opera** - Pensacola Saenger Theatre, 118 Palafox Pl., Pensacola, Fla. 7 p.m. Due to social-distancing measures, limited seating is available for our mainstage shows this season. In-person performance tickets are only available for this event by calling the Pensacola Opera office at 850.433.6737.

### 1/30

**OWA Art and Craft Festival** - 1501 S. OWA Blvd., Foley, Ala. Noon to 4 p.m. This family-friendly event is completely free to attend and enjoy. Stroll the pedestrian-only streets of Downtown OWA and experience a wide variety of local arts and crafts for sale. Live performances from Roman Street on the Island Stage beginning at 1 p.m. Their special blend of Latin-Jazz music will be broadcast throughout the beautiful backdrop of Downtown. Details: [visitowa.com](http://visitowa.com)

### 1/30 - 3/13

**Americana Music at the Lodge** - Concert series in the Lodge at Camp Helen State Park will be ONLINE this year beginning Saturday, Jan. 16 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Concerts will be available ONLINE on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/friendsofcamphelen](http://www.facebook.com/friendsofcamphelen). Dates include Jan. 30, Feb. 13, Feb. 27, and March 13 Concert series is hosted by Lucky Mud and sponsored by Florida's Department of Environmental Protection and the Friends of Camp Helen State Park. Details: <https://www.friendsofcamphelen.org/americana-concerts>

### 2/26 - 28

**Vintage Market Days of Mobile** - It's the TENTH VMD™ of Mobile event - "Vintage Love"! Shop with more than 100 vendors while enjoying live music and food trucks! The Grounds

*Reservations required for dinner & show.*

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at 1035 Cody Rd. N., Mobile, Ala.  
Details: <https://www.facebook.com/events/791168218129920>

2/28

**Navarre Beach Bridal Expo** - Save the Date! The Navarre Beach Bridal Expo takes place at the beautiful Springhill Suites Navarre Beach, 8375 Gulf Blvd., Navarre, Fla.. Vendors must be registered by January 31. To register contact: Springhill Suites Navarre Beach 850-939-001

3/5

**Gulf Shores Police Association Golf Tournament 2021** -

Peninsula Golf Club, 20 Peninsula Blvd, Gulf Shores, Ala. 10:30 a.m. registration and 1 p.m. start. Team entries due by Feb. 8. Golf, range balls, carts, lunch, hole contests, team and door prizes included. Details: Julie Netemeyer at [Julienetemeyer@yahoo.com](mailto:Julienetemeyer@yahoo.com) or Sgt. Josh Hoguet at [jhoguet@gulfshoresal.gov](mailto:jhoguet@gulfshoresal.gov)



## Mardi Gras goes on!

This year's Mardi Gras is scaled back in many places but there are still a few chances to laissez le bon temps rouler! Events are subject to cancellation and change. Check details before you head out and follow safety protocols. Here are a few Gulf Coast parades for 2021.

1/30

**Annual Ocean Springs** - Elks Mardi Gras Parade - 1 p.m., Ocean Springs, Miss. The parade begins at the corner of Front Beach, and follows Porter Ave., Washington Ave., Government St., and Holcomb Blvd.. Battle of the Bands will begin at noon on Front Beach. Details: <https://www.gulfcoast.org/events/mardi-gras-events/>

**Annual Krewe Unique Mardi Gras Parade** - 2 p.m., Ocean Springs, Miss. The parade begins at the corner of Front Beach. Details: <https://www.gulfcoast.org/events/mardi-gras-events/>  
**Milton Mardi Gras** - Noon to 11:30 p.m. After Party behind the Courthouse at Jernigan's Landing. Details: <https://www.facebook.com/MiltonMardiGras2021>

# GOODBYE, 2020! HELLO, 2021!

Who's ready to kiss 2020 goodbye? And who's ready for a fresh start in 2021? The Gulf Coast has you covered from farewell fireworks to a chilly plunge into the new year.

## New Year's Eve

**New Year's Eve Fireworks!** - Pensacola Beach Boardwalk, Pensacola Beach, Fla. Fireworks at midnight ring in 2021 and say good riddance to 2020! Keep your eyes focused on the Pensacola Beach skies this New Year's Eve for a free firework display along the Pensacola Beach Boardwalk. Details: [www.pensacolabeachchamber.com](http://www.pensacolabeachchamber.com)

**New Year's Eve at HarborWalk Village** - Ring in the New Year on the Destin Harbor! The party starts with live music at 7 p.m. on the main stage followed by an 8 p.m. fireworks show! The A-Town A-List, hits the stage at 9:30 pm performing covers of all your favorite songs. Our night will end with midnight fireworks to start 2021! Details: <https://www.fwbchamber.org/events/details/new-year-s-eve-at-harborwalk-village-9248>

**Visit Panama City Beach New Year's Eve Fireworks** - View anywhere along the destination's 27 miles of award-winning beaches. The fireworks will begin simultaneously at 12 p.m. and will be set off from Schooner's, the Russell-Fields City Pier and the M.B. Miller County Pier. Masks and social distancing are encouraged. Details: [www.visitpanamacitybeach.com](http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com)



## New Year's Day

**The Flora-Bama Polar Bear Dip** - Take a dip in the Gulf of Mexico at high noon. Those who fully submerge will get a free draft beer and a free New Year's lunch of ham, black-eyed peas,

greens and cornbread. 29603 Perdido Beach Blvd., Orange Beach, Ala. Details: <http://www.florabama.com/polar-bear-dip>

**Polar Bear Plunge 2021** - Kick off your new year with a plunge into the Santa Rosa Sound at the Paradise Bar & Grill, Pensacola Beach, Fla. Registration begins at noon. Details: <https://www.pensacolabeachchamber.com/polar-bear-plunge/>

**The 4th Annual Pirate Plunge** - Navarre Beach, Fla. at the Navarre Beach Fishing Pier with afterparty at the Windjammer Restaurant. Plunge happens at noon. Details: <https://www.navarrepirateplunge.com/>

**10th Annual Kiwanis Polar Bear Dip** - Take the plunge into the Gulf of Mexico during this family-friendly event presented by Kiwanis Club in partnership with The Hangout and City of Gulf Shores. Costumes encouraged! Party starts at 10 a.m. with live music, beach bonfire and more. 101 E. Beach Blvd., Gulf Shores, Ala. Details: <https://www.thehangout.com/polarbeardip/>



2/6

**St. Andrews Main Parade** - 2 p.m. Join in the festival fun beginning at 10 a.m. Over 14 Krewes on over 30 floats complete with the color guard, beads, doubloons and more! Food, drink and live music! Pet parade Feb. 7. Details: <https://www.standrewsmardigras.com/>

2/13

**Annual Krewe of Neptune Night Mardi Gras Parade** - 5:30 p.m. Main St, Biloxi, Miss. Main St to Hwy 90 to Lameuse St to Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd to Howard Ave to Caillavet St. ending at Bayview Ave. Details: <https://www.gulfcoast.org/events/mardi-gras-events/>

2/15

**Annual Mystic Krewe of the Seahorse "Lundi Gras" Parade** - 5 p.m. Bookter St., Bay St. Louis, Miss. Details: <https://www.gulfcoast.org/events/mardi-gras-events/>



## Bellingrath

Gardens and Home

### Winter Wednesdays 2021

January 6	After Christmas Sale in the Gift Shop, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
January 13	Southern Winter Gardening, 10:30 a.m.
January 20	Lies the Tour Guide Told Me, with Tom McGehee, 10:30 a.m.
January 27	A History of Mobile in 22 Objects, 10:30 a.m.
February 3	Winter Garden Walk, 10:30 a.m.
February 10	The Basics of Vegetable Gardening, 10:30 a.m.
February 17	Origins of Azaleas, 10:30 a.m.
February 24	Cool and Crazy Plants at Bellingrath, 10:30 a.m.



## Bellingrath

Gardens and Home

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1.800.247.8420 • [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org)



# Safer, seasonal shopping at the Gulf Coast's open-air farmers markets

Take a leisurely stroll this winter through an area Farmers Market. Numerous markets are staged on different days. All are operating with Covid-19 precautions.

**Palafox Market in Pensacola** - The iconic farmers market features locally grown food, farm produce and products. The Palafox Market is staged under a canopy of crepe myrtle trees that align Martin Luther King, Jr. Plaza in downtown Pensacola, Fla. Seasonal vegetables and fruit, home baked good, arts, crafts and live music make this market a festive place. From the market you can walk the length of Palafox Street (sidewalks) to the waterfront and explore the Historic Pensacola Village nearby. A vendor and locator map are available at [palafoxmarket.com](http://palafoxmarket.com).



**The Farmers Market** - Historic Downtown Panama City and Historic Millville Watson Bayou Park. Weekly Market with local produce, meats, arts and crafts. Saturdays they are in Historic Downtown Panama City and Thursday in Millville, Fla. Check out their featured vendors at: <https://panamacityfarmersmarket.com/> and questions 850-481-9969 850Market@gmail.com

**Downtown FWB Farmers' The Market** - 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays at Fort Walton Beach Landing Park, 139 SE Brooks Street, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. Farmers, artisan food vendors, and crafters offers an array of locally grown and handmade items. Stroll down the streets of Downtown Fort Walton Beach after the Farmers Market and check out local shops and restaurants. Details: [downtownfwb.com](http://downtownfwb.com) or [downtownfwbartwalk@gmail.com](mailto:downtownfwbartwalk@gmail.com)

**Highway 87 Outdoor Market at Pik-itz** - 1922 Hwy. 87, Navarre, Fla. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This outdoor market takes place on the first and third Saturday of each month. Farm to Table vendors are available along with arts & crafts and inside shopping at Pik-Itz! Art & Antiques. 850-710-7128 or visit [www.pikitz.com](http://www.pikitz.com)

**Grand Boulevard Farmer's Market** - Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. inside Grand Boulevard, Sandestin, Fla. Features fresh produce, fruit, vegetables, grass-fed beef, whole chickens, eggs, honey and more. Saturdays year round. Details: Diane Kolopanas 850-499-4697.

**30A Farmer Market** - Rosemary Beach Inlet, 28 S. Barrett Square, Rosemary Square, Rosemary Beach, Fla. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sundays year-round. Walk through the beautiful park like setting with shade trees, a pretty fountain, cobblestone walkways and visit with our friendly farmers, makers and bakers. Details: Diane Kolopanas, 850-499-4697.

**Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fisherman's Market** - 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. Located at 20733 Mifflin Rd., Foley, Ala. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Located 30 acres near Wolf Bay Lodge restaurant on County Rd. 20 in Foley between Hwy. 59 and The Foley Beach Expressway. The market has strict Covid-19 rules following CDC guidelines. The covered facility is open year-round rain or shine. Details: [www.coastalalabamamarket.com/](http://www.coastalalabamamarket.com/)

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\* Limitations: These promotions are for Snowbirds and new patients.



SCAN TO VIEW OUR WEBSITE



# Winter fun and events across the coast

Although most area Snowbird clubs won't have organized meetings this season because of the pandemic, there are several events on tap to keep you entertained.

**OKALOOSA ISLAND:** The annual Fort Walton Beach Chamber's Winter Guest Fest is set for 8 a.m. to noon January 28 at the Destin Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, 1250 Miracle Strip Pkwy, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. The event's new sponsor is Crystal Shores Realty, Inc. Admission is \$2. Vendors run the gamut from dining, resorts, shopping, hotels, entertainment, and more. Details: fwbcchamber.com or 850.244.8191



**NAVARRE:** Navarre Beach Visitor Information Center Snowbird Activities - 8543 Navarre Parkway, Navarre, Fla.

Jan. 4 - 9 a.m. - Coffee and Donuts Meet & Greet - Welcome to Navarre Beach!

Jan. 7 - 9 a.m. - Sea Turtle Lecture with Cathy Holmes from the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center.

Jan. 21 - 11:30 a.m. - Seasonal Seafood Lecture with Chris Verlind.

Feb. 4 - 9 a.m. - "Ask the Bird Biologist" by Caroline with Audubon

Feb. 18 - 9 a.m. - Marine Sanctuary Reefs by Chamber Foundation/Marine Sanctuary Mike Sandler

Feb. 26 - 9 a.m. - Coffee & Donuts - Farewell Snowbirds, till next time.

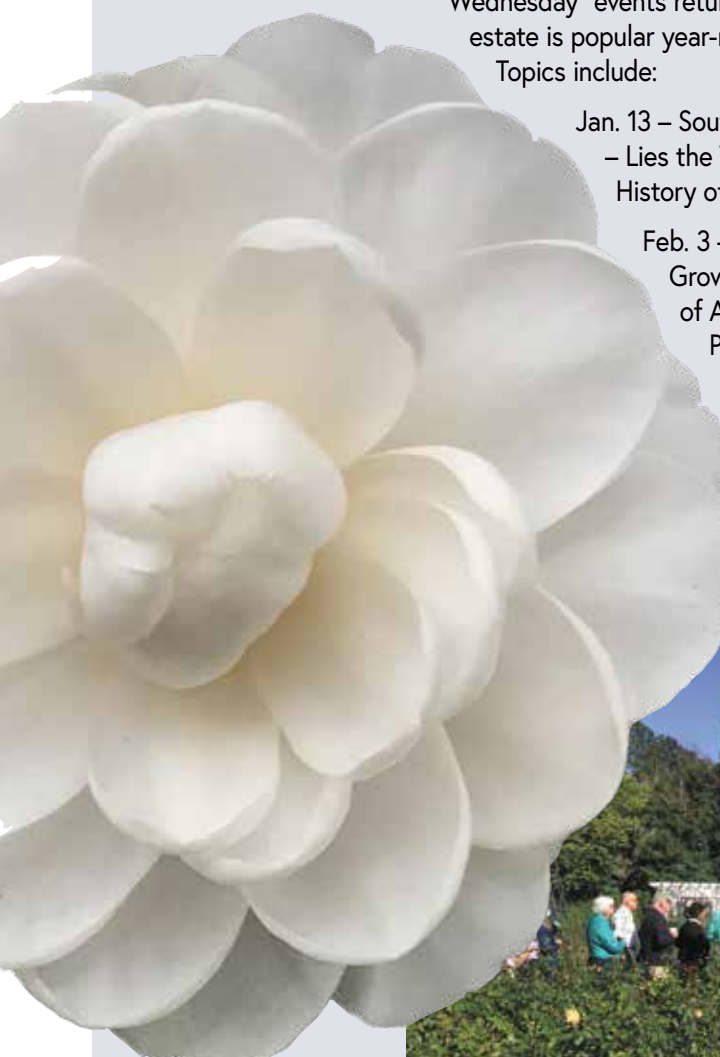
All events take place at the Navarre Beach Visitor Information Center. Limited Seating. Details: 850-981-8900

**WINTER WEDNESDAYS:** Bellingrath Gardens and Home's popular "Winter Wednesday" events return. The sprawling 65-acre estate is popular year-round. Topics include:

Jan. 13 - Southern Winter Gardening; 20 - Lies the Tour Guide Told Me; 27 - A History of Mobile in 22 Objects

Feb. 3 - Winter Garden Walk; 10 - Grow More, Give More; 17 - Origins of Azaleas; 24 - Cool and Crazy Plants at Bellingrath.

The estate is located at 2401 Bellingrath Gardens Road, Theodore, Ala. Details: bellingrath.org or 251.973.2217.



**PERDIDO KEY CHAMBER'S ANNUAL "HOOTENANNY"** - Join the fun Feb. 11 at the Flora-Bama. The theme is "Sweetheart Saloon" and to comply with "Safe Social Distancing" Covid-19 rules, there will be two sessions: This event is staged at the sprawling roadside beach bar with plenty of space to spread out. The fun includes live music, vendors, lunch provided by Flora-Bama chefs and giveaways. The cost is \$10 per person. Tickets are available online at [perdidochamber.com](http://perdidochamber.com) or at the office: 15500 Perdido Key Dr., Pensacola, Fla. Details: [perdidochamber.com](http://perdidochamber.com)



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# 12 tips for better long-distance video chats

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the way many of us communicated as we've had to isolate from family and friends.

Zoom has become the mainstay of communicating remotely, either through the computer or on your phone.

Here are some tips to make your Zoom experience better.

- Change your Zoom background to space, or a custom photo: Go to Settings > Virtual Background and select or upload the image you want from there.
- Mute and unmute with the space bar: Press and hold the spacebar to mute and unmute your mic.
- Set up a waiting room for added privacy: Zoom bombing occurs when uninvited guests crash your Zoom meeting and disrupt it. Enable the Waiting Room feature, so you can see who's attempting to join the meeting before allowing them access. Go to Account Management > Account Settings. Click on Meeting, then click Waiting Room to enable the setting.
- Share your screen: Click on the Share screen icon on the toolbar at the bottom of the meeting screen. You'll have the option to share your entire desktop, or just one of the windows you have open.
- React with emoji on screen: If you're muted in a meeting, you can still let the hosts know your thoughts with emoji reactions. Send a thumbs up or a clapping emoji to communicate without

interrupting the meeting. To react during a meeting, click the Reactions tab at the bottom of the meeting screen.

- Turn on gallery view: Gallery view lets you see everyone in the meeting at once, instead of just the person speaking. Click the tab that says "Gallery view" in the top right corner.
- Record the meeting to your computer: Both free and paid Zoom subscribers can record their meeting to their laptop or computer using the desktop app Go to Settings > Recording and toggle it on. When you're hosting a Zoom meeting, click the Record icon on the bottom toolbar.
- **Host a group meeting longer than 40 minutes:** On Zoom's free basic tier, group meetings can only last up to 40 minutes (though one-on-one meetings are unlimited in time). To get unlimited group time, upgrade to a paid account.

## Looking good in an online chat

- Place the camera at face level or slightly higher for the most flattering angle. Looking down isn't flattering to anyone.



- Check your lighting to make sure you don't have harsh shadows. Having several sources of light will give a more diffused look.
- Choose a simple background. A lot of clutter is distracting during a video chat.
- Want a little extra "oomph"? Many programs have features that allow you to smooth lines and brighten your face for a healthy glow.

There are many video chat options, including Facetime and Skype. You may just want to check in with family and friends to see what services they are already using, then get on board. Plus, they'll be extra help if you get stuck!



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offer condos ranging from studios to 3 bedrooms. We have condos all over Holiday Isle and a few on Highway 98. Holiday Isle is a quiet area in Destin consisting of a variety of condo complexes and homes that offer a relaxing environment for a winter stay. Our rates start as low as \$1000/month and we offer a variety of complexes with varying amenities.

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If you're not sure exactly what condo would be perfect? Give us a call at 1-800-837-5102 or 850-837-0010 and let our reservation staff find a condo for you at your price point or the requirements you need.



# Get inspired by Dauphin Island: Nature, dining & fun

From sunsets to surf fishing and from history to kayaking, words and photographs can give a taste of Dauphin Island's majestic beauty. But as the saying goes, seeing is believing, and seeing Dauphin Island – whether for the first, the tenth or the 100th time – is nothing short of inspiring.



Surrounded by the Gulf of Mexico, Mississippi Sound and Mobile Bay, Alabama's only barrier island is known as "The Sunset Capital of Alabama," and rightly so. Locals and visitors alike love to pause at the end of each day and sit on the deck or the beach to watch Mother Nature's end-of-the-day light show.

The rest of the time they can choose from an array of activities that include charter fishing, boating, sunbathing, swimming, birding, visiting historic Fort Gaines, learning about the area's marine life at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Estuarium, hiking through the Audubon Bird Sanctuary, learning the history of Dauphin Island at the Welcome Center's museum and stopping by Dauphin



Island's variety of restaurants, gift shops and boutiques. Visitors can also ride the Mobile Bay Ferry; take a nature tour, a dolphin watch boat ride, a lighthouse cruise, or a sunset cruise; visit the island's two art galleries and check out the walking and biking trails that span the 14-mile-long island.

For special events, there's just no beating Dauphin Island. The annual Dauphin Island Sailboat Regatta every April is billed as the largest one-day point-to-point regatta in the United States, and the annual Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo in July is billed as the largest fishing tournament in the world.

The island also kicks off the region's Mardi Gras season every winter, hosting between 30,000 and 40,000 visitors for the first two parades of the year. **(2021 events have been cancelled because of COVID-19.)**



A large part of Dauphin Island's charm is its laid-back atmosphere. With no towering buildings, big-box stores, shopping centers, traffic jams, or even traffic lights, it is everything an old-fashioned beach resort should be: fun, friendly and family-oriented.

Whether you're thinking about spending the winter on Dauphin Island, or merely a weekend, we've got what you're looking for. Come see us, and see why it's such a special place!

## GET AWAY AND DROP ANCHOR FOR THE DAY!

*Day trip getaways to Dauphin Island and The Villages of South Mobile County beckon.*



Visit Dauphin Island and the uncrowded Villages of South Mobile County on Wednesdays in January and February – and linger among the region's most treasured attractions. Dauphin Island Sea Lab Estuarium, Fort Gaines, the Audubon Bird Sanctuary, Bayou la Batre, Bellingrath Gardens, and more.

**Dauphin Island**  
And  
THE VILLAGES OF  
SOUTH MOBILE COUNTY



# News Briefs

## Gaming update

### Mississippi Gulf Coast Casinos

All casinos along the Mississippi Gulf Coast have reopened under new Covid-19 protocols based on physical distancing and cleaning. Per Mississippi Gaming Commission guidelines, a 50 percent capacity restriction will be enforced and table games and slot machines are configured to allow for appropriate physical distancing. Many amenities also have reopened. Details: [coastalmississippi.com](http://coastalmississippi.com).

### Wind Creek Atmore

Face coverings are required and temperature checks upon entrance. Walk-ups are welcome but gaming floor reservations are recommended. Six feet distance between guests is enforced. No smoking allowed on the floor and hotel reservations require a separate reservation. Details: [windcreekatmore.com](http://windcreekatmore.com)



## New Year's Fireworks in Panama City Beach

The pandemic won't stop determined folks ring a new year and wish "good riddance" to 2020.

Panama City Beach Visitors have the option of ushering out 2020 with three New Year's beach fireworks displays. "Although this is not our normal New Year's Eve extravaganza, we have modified this year's event so that our locals and visitors alike would be able to celebrate this special holiday with loved ones," says Visit Panama City Beach President and CEO Dan Rowe.

"Our beautiful shores provide plenty of wide-open space for individuals to spread out, and we are thrilled to be able to provide a safe way to say goodbye to 2020 and welcome the New Year."

The first "Visit Panama City Beach New Year's Eve Fireworks" can be viewed in-

person on the destination's 27 miles of award-winning beaches. The fireworks will begin simultaneously at 12 p.m. and will be set off from Schooner's, the Russell-Fields City Pier and the M.B. Miller County Pier.

Masks and social distancing are encouraged. Details: [www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/event/visit-panama-city-beach-new-years-eve-fireworks/25078/](http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/event/visit-panama-city-beach-new-years-eve-fireworks/25078/)



## Senior hub in PCB offers classes and activities

Panama City Beach Senior Center is offering socially distanced activities this winter. Popular activities such as woodworking (staged under an outside pavilion) continue as do a number of exercise and craft classes.



The center is located at 423 Lyndell Lane, Panama City Beach. There are also city outdoor pickleball courts and a public library located next door. Membership is required. Details: 850-233-5065 or [www.pcbssc.com](http://www.pcbssc.com).

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# Running for health helps beat the pandemic blues

By Louis Cooper

The year 2020 saw me running to get through it. Literally. Let me back up to January 2019. I had been contemplating adding light running to my exercise regime. At that point, I was a few years into a weight loss effort through which I have now lost about 150 pounds. As a relatively inactive person for most of my life, and now in my late 40s, I knew I needed some professional guidance, so I enrolled a "My First 5K" training program at Pensacola's Running Wild shoe store.

For the first 12 weeks of 2019, I met two nights a week with a team of coaches and other novice runners, building our strength, stamina and confidence. At the end of 12 weeks, we ran a 5K race on Pensacola Beach. My time wasn't good, but I ran the whole way without slowing to a walk, which was my only goal.

Running a 5K was probably the biggest physical accomplishment this life-long fat kid ever achieved. I love it. Not just the races, but I have kept running several times a week. I went on to run in about 10 more 5Ks in the year following that first race. I loved it! I saw neighborhoods, parks and facilities I had never seen (or at least noticed) before. The crowds of runners, all having fun and yet working toward a goal, electrifies me. After I run for 10 or 15 minutes, that "runner's high" people talk about really sets in. If you are lucky enough to find a buddy running at your pace, you can chat as you run, which is all the better.

I welcomed 2020 looking forward to a year of running adventures. Then, about a week after the exuberant McGuire's St. Patrick's Day Prediction 5K in March, COVID-19 hit. Sports events – including 5Ks – were necessarily halted.

I was one of the lucky ones. My employer sent me home to



work. That fact, and that no one in my closest circles has fallen to the virus, are things I am sincerely grateful for. All through quarantine, I have continued to run. Science says running creates feel-good endorphins in our brains. The pandemic – not to mention Hurricane Sally – caused extra stress, worry, financial insecurity, loneliness and cabin fever for me and, I'd bet, most people. Thank God for those extra endorphins!

Running a half hour in my neighborhood, two or three times a week, helps clear my head. My body needs to expend that energy, stretch those muscles and sweat out those toxins. Running can be an emotional, almost spiritual, cleansing for me. In a time of isolation, running has also led me to develop deeper friendships with fellow runners.

As understanding of the virus and the development of proper precautions have evolved, some of the organized 5K races have returned. My first race back was Pensacola Half Marathon & 5K in October. Registrations were limited, people wore masks when they weren't running and they spaced runners several feet apart at the starting line to help create natural breaks. I asked my personal physician if he felt like 5K races, like most outdoor events, were safe, and he agreed they were.

Running – planning my runs and races, the relationships I share through running and the benefits of maintaining my weight – salvaged 2020 as best for me as could have been hoped for. So, in addition to my job and my healthy family, I am adding running to my 2020 gratitude list.

## Upcoming 5K Runs

- **Casino Bridge Run** (Biloxi): Jan. 30, 2021. <http://www.casinobridgerun.com/> or 251-980-1045.
- **Saint Mary Catholic School Frosty 5K** (Fort Walton Beach), Jan. 30. <https://saintmaryschool.net/frosty-5k> or 850-243-8913.
- **Pensacola Double Bridge Run**: Feb. 6, 2021. <https://pensacolasports.org/doublebridgerun/> or 850 434-2800
- **Son of a Beach 5K** (Destin): Feb 13. Visit <http://www.sonofabeach.org/> or email [info@beachultra.com](mailto:info@beachultra.com)
- **Sweetheart 5K, Sea Turtle Half Marathon and Sweetheart 1 Mile Fun Run** (Gulf Shores): Feb. 20. <https://www.gulfshores.com/events-calendar> or 251-968-7511
- **Flora-Bama's Beach Run/Walk for America's Warriors** (Perdido Key), March 20. <https://www.florabama.com> or 850-492-0611.

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## Myron

It seems like a hundred years ago. But it was only last year. I can't forget it. There I am, at a restaurant. I am playing Christmas music on an accordion with a band. There is no virus, no social distancing, and everyone is happy. I am out and about in public. What a notion.

I play accordion because my granddaddy played it before me. This instrument is in my lineage. And it's in our history as a civilized race. Thus, I believe that as long as we have young accordionists, there is still hope for humanity.

A few children approach our stage.

"WHAT KIND OF INSTRUMENT IS THAT?" asks the redhead.

"It's an accordion," I say.

"WOW! IT'S SO HUGE AND DORKY LOOKING!"

"That's not very nice..."

"IT SOUNDS LIKE A DYING TOAD!"

"NO," says another. "IT SOUNDS LIKE AN ANIMAL GETTING RUN OVER BY A CAR!"

"Hey kid," I say. "Santa told me you're getting nothing but underwear and deodorant this year."

This kind of accordion shaming is nothing new. I've been ridiculed since my childhood. I have heard all the classic jokes.

Such as: What do you call a successful accordionist? A guy whose wife has two jobs.

Or: What are the first words an accordionist says after he knocks on your door? "Pizza delivery."

But I don't care. When I play accordion, I play for my mother's father—the man who fought in Europe, and won a Purple Heart for his valiance. He was a farmer, a storyteller, a wood carver, a musician who could sing in Italian, German, French, Spanish, and Cajun. And when he played "Lady of Spain," it was magic.

Of course all this accordion business can be embarrassing to admit at, say, dinner parties. Like a party I was at a few years ago. The attorney sipping gin remarked: "I'm learning guitar, I got one for my birthday this year."

"Yeah," added the thoracic surgeon. "I played a little saxophone in high-school band."

"Well," I said. "I play the accordion."

They laughed softly. Then, one man handed me his glass and said, "I'll take a refill on this gin."

No. People prefer guitarists. A guitarist can walk into a crowded party and females will hurl themselves at him.

An accordionist walks into a room, and suddenly a snowbird named Ethel is attached to his arm, talking about her grandkids in Sheboygan.

Even so, I am what I am. I started playing accordion because my family was funadamentaliat, and every Saturday night from my infancy we watched what all evangelicals watched. "The Lawrence Welk Show."

Admittedly, I'm not a huge fan of any show that features 38 guys who all look like your father's dentist, singing for an hour about Hawaii. But there was, however, one thing I liked.

Myron Floren. The gentle Dakotan would appear on the screen, wearing a 120-bass PANaccordion,

and I would almost mess my britches. He would play "Tico Tico" at a lightning fast tempo. His hair was greased with industrial cement, his teeth were porcelain, he was a god.



Sean of the South

One Christmas, my parents got me a small 12-bass accordion. I would lock myself in my bedroom and practice "La Valse de la Belle" for hours.

Then, I would apply an entire can of my father's pomade before going to baseball practice.

When I became a better accordionist, I entered the fourth-grade talent show. I played "Cajun Surprise," followed by "Louisiana Joe." I played superbly.

I expected applause. Or at the very least, a key to the city. But when I finished, the audience made no noise.

A man in the front row mumbled, "What's all that sticky junk in your hair?"

I almost gave up the instrument for good. But my granddaddy told me that I couldn't.

"If you don't play the accordion," he said. "Then pretty soon mankind won't have any accordions left. The world is depending on you, son."

So with that kind of responsibility on my shoulders I started taking gigs. My first professional gig was a funeral. I was 14. They paid me 10 bucks. I'll never forget it.

It was a Pentecostal service. The preacher asked me to play something mournful. So, I played "Peace in the Valley."

One woman started crying, then another. And when the preacher's baritone voice began singing with me, I almost forgot which song I was playing.

Since then, I have played my accordion for all kinds of occasions. Cajun soirées, country dances, beer festivals, Polka parties, quinciñeras, weddings, funerals, and one used car auction. And I have met interesting people along the way.

Like the 9-year-old boy that day I was telling you about, when playing with my band, who visited the restaurant stage while I was squeezing out "Jumbalaya."

"Hey, I like your accordion," he said. "It looks really old."

"It is old."

"I play accordion, too," the kid explained.

And I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Will you play something for me?" I asked.

He agreed. I removed the instrument and handed it to him. The accordion was almost as big as he was. He strapped it to his chest and played a melody so sweet it made my heart hurt. He got a standing ovation—which almost never happens to accordionists.

"Where'd you learn to do that?" I asked.

"My grandpa taught me," he said.



Well.

Even in these troubled times there's still hope for the human race.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South. Learn more at [www.seandietrich.com](http://www.seandietrich.com)

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## Find your copy of Snowbirds Gulf Coast!

Snowbirds Gulf Coast prints four editions each winter: Holiday, January, February and Spring that are distributed regionally from Panama City Beach, Fla., west along the Florida panhandle to the Alabama Gulf Coast and Biloxi Visitor Center.

We also push out .pdf versions of the print edition through our e-newsletter (sign up online) and Facebook page: Snowbirds Gulf Coast ("Like" the page to receive information.) Find us at more than 300 condo lobbies and RV parks, plus dozens of golf courses, restaurants, medical facilities and attractions from Panama City to the Alabama Gulf Coast.

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Mobile Visitor Center  
Alabama Welcome Center at I-10/Florida Line  
Condo lobbies throughout the coast  
RV Park offices throughout the coast  
Majestic Oaks RV Resort

Navarre Beach Visitor Information Center  
Panama City Beach Visitor Center  
Panama City Chamber  
Pensacola Beach Visitor Center  
Pensacola Visitor Center  
Perdido Key Visitor Center  
Sandpiper Cove  
Santa Rosa County Visitor Center  
Seaspray  
Village Baptist Church, Destin  
Walton County Visitor Information Center  
Rouses Gulf Shores and Orange Beach  
South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce

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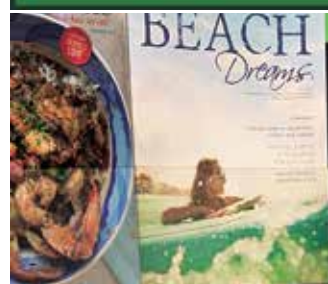
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