

**FREE!**

Gulf Coast

# Snow **BIRDS**

A Winter Visitor  
Publication  
Holiday 2024

**Clubs and  
Calendar**  
pages 10-11 and 12-13

**Upcoming  
Expos**  
page 21

**Casino  
Entertainment**  
page 17



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SNOWBIRDS 19TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

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- Inherited Retinal Disease
- Surgical Devices in Macular & Retinal Surgery

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# Good Time Tours

upcoming trips

## Cajun Encounter

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Visit the Instagator Ranch, Take the Abita Brewery Tour, Shop at the Cajun Village, tour the Oak Alley and Laura Plantation

\$275 per person double occ

## FL Underground

Feb 15, 2025

Falling Waters (FL Tallest Waterfall), Marianna Caverns, Lunch at Blue Hole Park, Lake Defuniak (perfect round Lake)

\$120 per person

## Mardi Gras Trips

Day Trip - Feb 23, 2025

Spend the day watching parades-\$60 Per Person

Overnight- Feb 23-24, 2025

Spend the day in New Orleans, Stay the night at Hollywood Casino, Play at the IP Casino

\$145 pp double occ

## Get Your Kicks on Rt 66

June 09-22, 2025

13 nites, Many stops and sights, 2 nites in Las Vegas! Some meals included. \$1950 per person double occ



## DAILY CASINO TRIPS



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# Snow BIRDS

Gulf Coast

### ON THE COVER

Gail and Andy Vreeland spent 17 years in the northeast Georgia mountains and returned to their native Mississippi coast recently and are dedicated Gulf Islands National Park volunteers.



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**Advertising and editorial deadline  
for the January issue is December 10**

Submit ads or contact us for info: [publisher@snowbirdsgulfcoast.com](mailto:publisher@snowbirdsgulfcoast.com)

**There's no better way to reach winter visitors on the Gulf Coast!**

For advertising information, call 850-291-1266  
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We want your events and club  
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7:30-11 AM (WEEKENDS)

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# Welcome!



Inhale, exhale repeat.

You made it to your winter home! Some of you have been coming to the Gulf Coast for many years while others are relative newcomers.

What's the best way to enjoy the coast?

Get involved, meet people and JOIN in!

I launched this magazine in 2006-07 and it was immediately embraced. I kept it going throughout the lean years of Covid because I felt it was important. Snowbirds keep our economy humming. They volunteer in all kinds of ways and fill the churches.

Snowbirds sing, dance and work in theater. Some will travel I-10 to the Mississippi coast (several times) to try your luck!

Simply put you all bring life to our coast!

So I offer a warm welcome.

Have a look at our expansive calendar and myriad of special events created just for YOU.

Get out and explore!

Best,  
Karen Harrell, Publisher  
850-291-1266



The Beau Rivage (above) and Bellingrath Gardens and Home (right) are aglow for the holidays!

The Beau Rivage has its dazzling, traditional decor along with several holiday shows that are perfect outings for the whole family. Details on page 16.

Bellingrath's Christmas Magic in Lights fills the renowned gardens with millions of lights creating a winter wonderland for an evening stroll.



# Breakfast with a Gulf view at Windjammers on the Pier

By Karen Harrell, Publisher

There are many opportunities for weekend "brunch," but those places are often crowded. Finding breakfast with a Gulf view is a rarity.

So, when Windjammers on the Pier on Navarre Beach announced earlier this year that it was adding breakfast, I rejoiced! The sound of the surf set against a backdrop of emerald green water sets the stage!

A quick browse through the menu revealed

moderate prices for breakfast entrees starting at \$10.

On my first visit, I chose avocado toast, which was seasoned with sea salt, lime, cilantro, pico de gallo and cotijo cheese. The order was plentiful, tasty and filling (just \$10). I also sampled an egg Benedict (huge portion) served with ham, two poached eggs and hollandaise sauce served over a biscuit (\$12). Other options included a Classic Breakfast with two eggs, sausage or bacon, grits or potatoes and a choice of biscuit or toast (\$10), Crab Cake Benedict (\$20), Ranchero Breakfast Burrito (\$16) and several others. Other tempting options were the Vanilla Bean French, Toast topped with a warm berry compote, whipped cream and powdered sugar (\$14), a Monte Cristo with ham and cheese battered and fried, topped by powdered sugar (\$15) and Chicken and Waffles (\$19).

An expansive cocktail list includes Mimosa (\$5), classic Bloody Mary (\$10), Peach Bellini (\$8) and several more. A variety of Mocktails (no alcohol) are served so all can join the festivities! The lively bar attracts a sports-hungry crowd with multiple games



showing. Live entertainment is on tap at various times, too.

Follow the Facebook page and consult the website for updates. A full Thanksgiving dinner with dessert will be offered, and a New Year's Eve dinner and celebration will be staged with fireworks.

Details: [www.windjammersonthepier.com](http://www.windjammersonthepier.com)

## If you go

Windjammers on Navarre Pier is located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico's longest pier (1,545 feet, 30 feet high) and is joined by a store and gift shop. Many people choose to walk the pier before or after dining. Last winter, the restaurant underwent a massive renovation to update and expand the space. All tables are now under a roof, and table space expanded. Bar options were also expanded, and cocktails and mocktails are now served.

8579 Gulf Blvd., Navarre Beach, Fla.

Winter hours: 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.



# UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

## Navarre Christmas Parade

Sat., Dec. 7 | Starting at 1 pm  
Navarre Park, 8513 Navarre Pkwy.

## Milton Christmas Parade

Sat., Dec. 7 | 6 pm – 8 pm  
Jernigan's Landing, 5165 Willing St.

## Navarre New Year's Eve Celebration

Dec. 31 | 8:30 pm – 12:30 am  
Navarre Beach Pier, 8579 Gulf Blvd.

## Penguin Plunge N' Paddle

Wed., Jan. 1, 2025 | 12:30 pm – 2 pm  
Jauna's Pagodas, 1451 Navarre Beach Cswy.

## Navarre Beach Pier Plunge

Wed., Jan. 1, 2025 | 12 pm  
Navarre Beach Pier, 8579 Gulf Blvd.



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# Mississippi Snowbirds enjoy volunteering at Gulf Islands National Seashore

**Q. What are your names and where are each of you from?**

Our names are Andy Vreeland and Gail Vreeland. We are from the Mississippi Gulf Coast and we are both retired.



**Q. Where do you currently live? Where did you move from and why did you move?**

We lived in Long Beach, Mississippi, until Hurricane Katrina hit and we lost our home. We were transferred to Northeast Georgia with my work and lived there for 17 years until I retired. We then decided to relocate back to Carnes, Mississippi, so we could be closer to our family. We were both previously married. We both have two children each and are the proud grandparents of six grandchildren and two great grandchildren.



**Q. How did you meet - and how long ago?**

We met while working as operations managers for Kmart Corporation. Gail worked at the Kmart in Long Beach and I worked in Waveland, Mississippi. We met while attending a horticultural meeting at St. Rose Nursery outside of New Orleans. We have been together for 31 years.

**Q. What were your occupations? When did you retire?**

Gail and I both worked the majority of our careers in retail management. Gail retired from Kmart and worked several more years for the City of Pass Christian, Mississippi. I retired in February 2022 and Gail retired in December 2007.



**Q. When did you start volunteering at Gulf Islands?**

We started volunteering at Gulf Islands National Seashore in April 2022. We have only volunteered at Fort Pickens, but have traveled the United States, visiting over 12 national parks to include Yellowstone, Zion, Mesa Verde, Arches and the Grand Canyon. Our goal is to try and visit as many national parks as well as state parks as we can when not volunteering.

**Q. How hard is it to get a position with Gulf Islands?** The process for becoming a volunteer is simple. You go to Volunteer.gov and search through the current openings and simply apply. There is an interview process and if selected you will then complete paperwork for a background check. Once all is complete you will arrive at the location you selected and begin the work.



**Q. What do you like best about being a volunteer for the park?**

First and foremost is preserving the natural resources of the parks for future generations. By volunteering, it allows us the ability to do our part in achieving this. It also allows us to meet people from all over the world and share the natural beauty of our great Gulf Island National Seashore.

As campground hosts, we get to share all the historical information regarding Fort Pickens, as well as the local area. We also answer any questions regarding the campground rules and regulations.

As camp hosts we are the first point of contact with our visitors. We assist law enforcement with any emergencies that may come up within the park. We assist visitors with any issues regarding their campsites or issues involving Recreation.

There are also many other types of volunteer positions within the GUI. Gail has volunteered for the Sea Turtle monitoring program for the past two years. We both have assisted in the GPS marking of all signage within the Gulf Islands National Seashore, which included taking measurements of all signs and pictures so the park will know what was there if needed. I have worked the campground office by checking in all campers and providing information regarding the park. We have also assisted with traffic control for the Blues Angels practices. We also assist with any projects needed within the park.

**Q. You relocated to the north Georgia mountains after Hurricane Katrina for**

**more than 15 years but recently moved back to the coast- what prompted the move? Has it changed?**

We relocated back to Mississippi to be closer to family. Although a slow process, we are seeing the Mississippi Coast rebuild with more family attractions outside of casinos to include the Mississippi Aquarium.

**Q. What was your favorite destination on your westward trip?**

All the destinations we visited while out west were amazing yet different in their own way. It would be next to impossible to pick one as our favorite since they were all so beautiful.

**Q. Do you have another big trip planned?**

We are looking at exploring the east coast from Virginia north to Maine.







### Volunteer dos and don'ts

Volunteers must apply on [www.volunteer.gov](http://www.volunteer.gov) for positions. Please do not email the park unless you are interested in organizing a group activity.

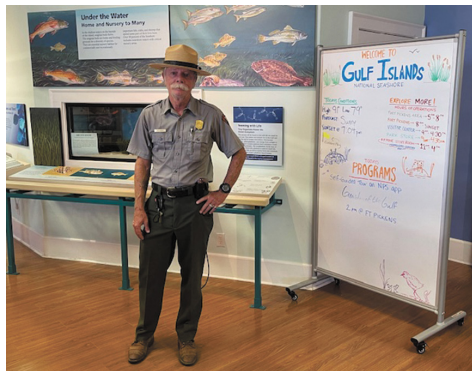
Not all positions have housing provided - it depends on the position and park.

There are expectations and performance reviews associated with volunteer contracts.

Volunteers are treated the same as full-time staff and are expected to follow the same rules and park rules.

As volunteers earn hours in our park they can earn recognition items to include the National Park Service Annual volunteer pass it can be an accumulation of hours from many parks.

Hours are archived on the [www.volunteer.gov](http://www.volunteer.gov) account.



### Senior pass information for National Parks

An America the Beautiful - National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands Senior Annual Pass is \$20 plus fees totaling \$10. The Senior Lifetime Pass is \$80 plus fees totaling \$10. Ask about special discounted passes for military members, veterans and dependents.

The \$80 Senior Lifetime and \$20 Senior Annual Senior Passes provide admittance to more than 2,000 recreation sites managed by six Federal agencies, with up to 100% of the proceeds being used to improve and enhance visitor recreation services.

#### Who qualifies for the Senior Pass?

U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are 62 years or older. (You must have turned 62 before you can buy the pass).

NOTE: Owning property or paying taxes in the U.S. does not automatically qualify you for a Senior Pass. You must be a permanent U.S. resident, or a U.S. citizen with identification such as U.S. Driver's License, Green Card or U.S. Passport.

Learn more at <https://store.usgs.gov/senior-annual> or <https://store.usgs.gov/lifetime-senior-pass>

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## Snowbird Clubs

Snowbirds are slowly returning to the coast.

### GOOD NEWS/Bad News

Over 80 people attended the 42nd annual "Yoopers Club" (Upper Michigan) luncheon last spring. Organizer Dan Inglis said, "Great food, great time was had by all with lots of prizes." But the event has been sidelined this year. The reason? A lack of volunteers. The group donated leftover food to local organizations. For more information, contact Dan Inglis at 906-440-0866 or Sandy Inglis at 906-748-5966.

### FLORIDA

**Panama City Beach:** Traditional winter resident Appreciation Days (also known as free Donut Days) will be staged again throughout the winter. Dates include Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 (tickets for Homecoming available); Friday, Feb. 7, 2025 (tickets for Senior Prom available); and Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025 (tickets for Grand Finale available). Details: Visit Panama City Beach, 850-233-5070 or [www.visitpanamacitybeach.com](http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com)

**PCB Senior Center:** Stop by just

about any day, and you will find something to do and friendly folks to meet. Annual membership is \$50. Residents participated in a variety of classes and exercise sessions, including woodworking, playing the ukulele, pickleball, line dancing, doing exercises (including yoga and chair exercises), and creating a variety of crafts. Folks who want more information are encouraged to join Coffee Shoppe and discover the full list. The senior center is located at 423 Lyndell Lane, Panama City Beach, Fla. (next to the library), Details: 850-233-5065 or [pcbseniorcenter.com](http://pcbseniorcenter.com)

**Walton Snowbird Club:** The club netted more than 200 new members this past season and overall had 724 members. Organizers and volunteers have put a lot of work into developing activities and trips (Biloxi and New Orleans) for members. Water aerobics, tennis, pickleball, singing, poker, mah jongg and other games, blood drives, book discussion, bowling, ballroom dance, basketball, biking, art and so much more! The club regularly posts information on its Facebook page and

website. Each year, the club awards two scholarships to deserving Walton County High School seniors. Details: [www.waltoncountysnowbirdclub.com](http://www.waltoncountysnowbirdclub.com)

**Destin Snowbird Club:** The club registered 1082 members this past year, including 961 from the USA, 120 from Canada and one from the UK. Club members meet weekly during winter at The Roost – aka Destin Community Center, 101 Stahlman Dr., Destin, Fla. TGIT (Thank Goodness It's Tuesday) at Lulu's., 4607 Legendary Marina Dr., Destin. Activities include bus trips and cruises to games, writer's group, quilting, crafts, singles groups, and activities such as golf, pickleball, bowling, basketball, softball and more. Local businesses generously donate door prizes. 'Like' the club's Facebook page and bookmark the website. Details: [thededstinsnowbirds.com](http://thededstinsnowbirds.com)

**The Fort Walton Snowbird Club:** From a pre-pandemic high of 745 (2015) to a low of 276 (2022), the club is steadily growing (313, 2023). Registration and meetings are staged at the Fort Walton Beach Recreation Center, 132 Jet Drive, Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

There are door prizes and 50/50 drawings. Monthly club social, golf, tennis, pickleball, card games, crafts and billiards, Golf scrambles, Valentine's Day dance and more. Details: [fwbsbc.com](http://fwbsbc.com) or 920-619-4065.

### Navarre/Santa Rosa County:

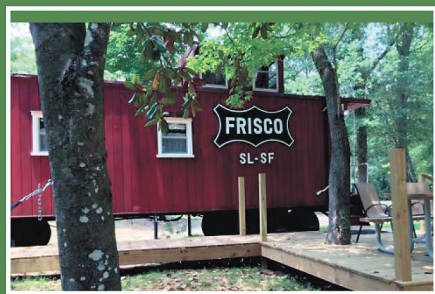
Snowbirds have discovered this Low-key and laid-back area. Winter activities include a wide range of lectures conducted by local experts at the Navarre Welcome Center, 8543 Navarre Pkwy., Navarre, Fla. 3rd annual festival is a chance to celebrate Navarre Beach's history and mingle with the community. The 2025 festival is on Jan. 16, from 2 to 4 p.m., at St. Sylvester Catholic Church. The theme is the Roaring 20s, and attendees are encouraged (but not required) to dress in 1920s attire. A variety of vendors attend from local restaurants, shops, boutiques and more. Details: [Navarrechamber.com](http://Navarrechamber.com) or [www.getrelaxing.com](http://www.getrelaxing.com) or 850-981-8900.

**Perdido Key:** The Perdido Key Chamber will again sponsor a series of "Hootennany's" this winter at the world-famous honky tonk Flora-Bama Lounge.

## BOOK A YEAR-ROUND ADVENTURE!



River trips, zipline, fire pits, kayaking, tubing, camping (tent and RV), three train car options, cabin rentals, hiking nearby.



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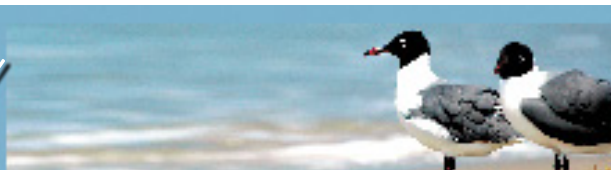
*Magic Christmas in Lights*

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[f](#) [i](#) [X](#)

# Join the Club!



The visitor center is a popular stop for winter visitors (and this magazine can be found there). Details: 850-492-4660 or [www.perdidochamber.com](http://www.perdidochamber.com).

## ALABAMA

**IOWA:** Iowa Snowbirds are invited to attend events held during January through early March 2025. All Iowans and their guests are welcome; no membership fee to join. January and February breakfast meeting location is GT's On The Bay, 26189 Canal Rd., Orange Beach. Reservations MUST be made by noon one week in advance. Sign up at <http://iowa-alabamagulfcoastsnowbird.org> (preferred), or by calling Chris Hedlund at 319-430-4597. No late reservations accepted. At each breakfast a 50/50 "voluntary" lottery is held and half of the proceeds help defray club expenses and the other half is distributed to multiple "winners." Attendees can enter a Calendar Drawing where cash prizes are awarded. Tickets are \$10 with proceeds benefiting the Ft. Morgan, Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Fire Departments. Drawings held from mid-February through mid-March.

The first cocktail party is Jan. 24 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Caribe Resort, Bldg. D, 28103 Perdido Beach Blvd., Orange Beach. Bring your own beverage and a dish to share. NO reservation required.

**MICHIGAN:** Club meetings will resume in January 2025 at The Island Church, 25550 Canal Rd., Orange Beach, Ala. Coffee and doughnuts are served at 9 a.m., and the meeting starts at 10 a.m. Annual membership is \$5 per person. Merchandise is for sale at the meetings. A full schedule of golf outings is available on the website: [www.michiganclubalabama.com](http://www.michiganclubalabama.com) or [michiganclubalabama@gmail.com](mailto:michiganclubalabama@gmail.com)

**MISSOURI:** ALL SNOWBIRDS are invited! Meetings are 8:30 a.m. Wednesdays for breakfast at Tacky Jacks, 240 E 24th Ave., Gulf Shores, Ala. The cost is \$14 and includes a buffet breakfast, tax and tip. RSVP on the website. Mixed golf scramble every Wednesday at 1 p.m., Gulf Shores Country Club, 520 Clubhouse Dr., Gulf Shores, Ala. Weekly Happy Hour, 4 p.m. Mondays at Cobalt, 28099 Perdido Beach Blvd., Orange Beach, Ala. RSVP on the web-

site. Details: [missourisnowbirds.org](http://missourisnowbirds.org) or [mer2@charter.net](mailto:mer2@charter.net)

**MINNESOTA:** Weekly Tuesday breakfast meetings at GT's on the Bay, 26189 Canal Rd., Orange Beach. Doors open at 7:30 a.m., breakfast, 8:15 a.m. There is a minimum number of 75 to host the breakfast meetings through Mar. 14. Cost is \$12 per person, and sign-up is the prior Tuesday at [www.mnal.org](http://www.mnal.org). Tuesday lunch meetings are mid-March through May at The Ugly Diner, 2200 E. 2nd St., Gulf Shores, Ala. Details: [MNSnowbird1@mnal.org](mailto:MNSnowbird1@mnal.org)

**PENNSYLVANIA:** The Pennsylvania Snowbird Club meets weekly for breakfast at 9 a.m. on Wednesdays at Buzz Kats restaurant on Canal Road in Orange Beach beginning January 8 and continuing through March 5. Contact: Rich Smith, 610-217-6674.

**WISCONSIN:** Join online or before a meeting. Dues are \$4 each year. Members pay \$2 each at the door. Upcoming events include: (confirm online): Nov. 28 - Thanksgiving Dinner OBCC, 12:30 p.m.; Dec. 4 - Lunch - PaPa Rocco's, 11:30 a.m.; Dec. 11 - Breakfast,

8:30 a.m.; Dec. 18 - Lunch, Original Oyster House 11:30 a.m. and Dec. 25 - Christmas Dinner, OBCC 12 to 1:30 p.m. Jan. 8 - Meeting 9 a.m. OBEC Wednesday; Jan. 22 - Meeting, 9 OBCC 10 11:30 sign up; Feb. 5 Meeting, 9 a.m. OBEC; Feb. 11 \* Pin No Tap --Bowling, 9 a.m. & 1 p.m. for Christian Services Gulf Bowl Foley; Feb. 12 - Pot Luck, OBCC 10 a.m.; Feb. 15 - Trivia Night, 6 p.m. OBEC; Feb. 19 - Meeting, 9 a.m. OBEC; Feb. 26 Club Picnic, OBCC 10 a.m.; Mar. 4 Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras; Mar. 5 - Meeting, 9 a.m. OBCC; Mar. 12 - Meeting, 9 a.m. OBCC; Apr. 20 - Easter Dinner, 12:30 p.m. CARD PLAYING on Fridays Starting Jan.2 through March 28, 9 a.m. @ The Lighthouse on East Beach Blvd. SPECIAL GOLF RATES: for Wisconsin Snobirds @ Glen Lakes. Tell the desk you are a Wisconsin Snobird. OBEC is Orange Beach Event Center, and OBCC is Orange Beach Community Center. Details: Membership Chair Tom Chestnut at [tac.smc.14@gmail.com](mailto:tac.smc.14@gmail.com). Details: [www.wisconsinbirds.com](http://www.wisconsinbirds.com) or Wisconsinbirds on Facebook.

## Winter Rates



Winter rates, beginning Dec 1, will be

**\$69**

all day, every day.

**\$63**

on Monday and Tuesday for "Military Monday" and "Senior Tuesday"

contact:  
Troy ([traybon@tigerpointgolf.com](mailto:traybon@tigerpointgolf.com))  
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book a tee time:  
[tigerpointgolf.com](http://tigerpointgolf.com)



Tue., Feb. 4, 9am-1pm | Orange Beach Events Center (at The Wharf)

## 2025 10th Annual Snowbird Fest

Anticipated Lineup of Events:

- Business Expo
- **New Entertainment!**
- Car Shine & Show
- Free Restaurant Samples & Coffee
- **Door Prizes & Give-Aways**
- Pet & Magic Acts, & so much more!



**Snowbirds attend FREE!**  
PRE-register online & enter to Win prizes!



[www.SnowbirdFest.com](http://www.SnowbirdFest.com)

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Exhibit to showcase your business



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## He's a mean one....

The, the, the ... Grinch is coming! Get ready to rediscover the heartwarming magic of the holidays with Sinfonia Gulf Coast's The Grinch in Concert on Saturday, Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach. This special Film in Concert experience brings together live music and the beloved tale of Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas in an unforgettable event for the whole family. Sinfonia Gulf Coast also invites you to celebrate the holiday season in style with the return of Broadway star and critically acclaimed vocalist Morgan James. Big Band Holiday Toast 'n Jam featuring Morgan James will take place on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Crystal Ballroom at Henderson Beach Resort in Destin. Details: <https://sinfoniagulfcoast.org/>

### Through 12/14

**Forgotten Coast Festival of Trees** – Enjoy beautiful Christmas displays at The Joe Center for the Arts. 201 Reid Ave., Port St. Joe, Fla. Hours: Wednesdays – Saturdays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays: Nov. 24, Dec. 1 and 8: 12 to 4 p.m. Closed Nov. 27-29. Details: <https://thejoecenterforthearts41.wildapricot.org/>

### 11/24, 29, 30 and 12/1,6,7,8,13,1,20-24

**Winterfest** - Downtown Pensacola becomes a winter fantasy land with live performances, a Polar Express Tour and appearances from Santa Claus, the Grinch and other favorite holiday characters. Details: <https://pensacolawinterfest.org/>

### Through 1/1

**Christmas Nights In Lights** - a magical and an immersive experience from the convenience of your own vehicle. This dazzling drive-through showcase is over 1.5 miles and features over one million lights fully synchronized to holiday classics right on your car radio. Mobile International Speedway, 7800 Park Blvd., Irvington, Ala. Details: <https://nightsinlights.com/>

### Through 1/5/25

**29th Annual Magic Christmas in Lights at Bellingrath Gardens & Home** - 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Lights turned on by 5 p.m. A festive paradise on the Gulf Coast. Wander through a dazzling 65-acre Garden estate (below) adorned with thousands of lights. The Bellingrath Home is decorated with holiday finery and poinsettias. Closed Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. 12401 Bellingrath Gardens Rd., Theodore, Ala. Details: <https://bellingrath.org/>



**Weekends 11/23 - 12/15 and December 19-23**  
**OWA Holiday Projection Show** - Dusk to 9 p.m. Get into the holiday spirit with OWA's epic Holiday Projection Show combining choreograph lights and music in an unforgettable experience. 101 S. OWA Blvd., Foley, Ala. Details: <https://visitowa.com>

### 12/3

**Orange Beach Christmas Tree Lighting** - 5:30 p.m. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas at The Wharf! Help us usher in the holiday season with bulbs, garland and glee. The annual tree lighting hosted by the City of Orange Beach. 23101 Canal Rd. Orange Beach, Ala. Details: [alwharf.com](http://alwharf.com)

### 12/6

**Fairhope Christmas Parade** - 7 p.m. Join the celebration in the streets of Downtown Fairhope, Ala. Details: 251-929-1474

**Pensacola Beach Lighted Boat Parade** – 6:30 p.m. The 2024 parade sets sail from Sabine Marina and makes its way around the Santa Rosa Sound to the Pensacola Beach Boardwalk. After the parade, Santa appears at Quietwater Shell on the Pensacola Beach Boardwalk, followed by a firework display over the Santa Rosa Sound. Details: <https://www.pensacolabeachchamber.com/lighted-boat-parade/>



### 12/6-8

**Victorian Candlelit Christmas** – 5 to 9 p.m. The annual Victorian Candlelit Christmas, hosted by the Hattiesburg Historic Neighborhood Association, is a two-day event featuring 18,000 luminaries lining the sidewalks of the city's oldest neighborhood. Explore Hattiesburg, Mississippi's historic streets, with over 300 homes and businesses decorated for the holidays, plus carolers, horse drawn carriage rides, food trucks and more. Details: <https://www.visithburg.org/events/victorian-candlelit-christmas/>

### 12/6-22

**All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914** - The Western Front: Christmas 1914. Out of the violence of World War I, a silence, then a song. A German soldier steps into No Man's Land singing "Stille Nacht." See the true story of the first Christmas Eve of World War I, when soldiers across the Western Front laid down their weapons to celebrate Christmas together. 560 Grand Boulevard, Suite 200, Miramar Beach, Fla. Details: [www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org](http://www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org)



12/7

**Holiday Fresh Market** – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shop in a relaxed, hassle-free environment in an outdoor setting. Buy hand-crafted Apalachicola specialties such as baked goods, artwork, wood carving, pottery, and hand-knitted goods. Apalachicola Visitor Center, 17 Ave. E., Apalachicola, Fla. Details: <https://www.floridasforgottencoast.com/event/holiday-fresh-market/>

12/8

**Surfin' Santa Beach Parade** - 2 p.m. See Santa Claus close out the annual parade on Pensacola Beach, Fla.! Parade starts from Avenida 10 and makes its way down Via De Luna and ends at the Gulfside Pavilion. Details: <https://www.pensacolabeachchamber.com/surfing-santa-beach-parade/>

12/12

**Jingle at the Joe** – 6 to 8 p.m. ET. A great evening of live music, food and silent auction items, all for a great cause! 201 Reid Ave., Port St. Joe, Fla. Details: <https://thejoecenterforthearts41.wildapricot.org/>  
**Experience the Magic: Decatur, Alabama's Historic Christmas Tour of Homes** – 2 to 7 p.m. Experience the enchanting beauty of Decatur, Alabama's beautifully decorated historic homes, each adorned with festive lights and seasonal decorations. Live Nativity and live music, plus carolers and carriage rides. Details and tickets: <https://decaturchristmastour.com/>

12/13 and 22

**A Christmas Story** - Ralphie just wants a Red Ryder BB gun, but instead gets bullies, a mouthful of soap and a pink bunny suit. See the modern classic come to life onstage at the Pensacola Little Theatre, 400 South Jefferson St. Pensacola, Fla. Details: <https://www.pensacolalittletheatre.com>



## Sounds of the holidays: Coastal Christmas concerts

12/6

**Mattie Kelly Arts Center presents Holiday Pops** – 7 to 9 p.m. Broadway actor/singer Grace Morgan joins the Northwest Florida Symphony Chorale Unified Gospel Choir Voices of Northwest Florida. Northwest Florida State College, 100 College Blvd., Niceville, Fla. Details: [www.mattiekellyartscenter.org](http://www.mattiekellyartscenter.org) or 850-729-6000

12/6-7

**White Tie Rock Ensemble Presents: A White Tie Christmas** – 7:30 p.m. All your favorite Christmas classics brought to you by the best. 205-A N. OWA Blvd., Foley, Ala. Details: <https://visitowa.com/entertainment/owa-theater/>

12/14

**The Rat Pack Revue at OWA Theater** - 7:30 p.m. The Rat Pack Revue brings the music by Sinatra, Martin and Davis to life. Hear holiday hits such as Let It Snow, Jingle Bells and White Christmas. 205-A N. OWA Blvd., Foley, Ala. Details: <https://visitowa.com/entertainment/owa-theater/>

12/14-15

**Mobile Symphony Orchestra presents Christmas Around the World** – explore Christmas music and traditions from far away and close to

home. This festive concert features baritone Ricardo José Rivera. Mobile Saenger Theater, 6 S. Joachim St., Mobile, Ala. Details: 251-432-2010 or <https://mobilesymphony.org>

12/15-16

**A Carey Christmas** - William Carey University presents The Carey Worship Choir & Orchestra, the Carey Ballet Theater Department and the Laurel Ballet Academy performing timeless Christmas classics and new favorites. Hardy Street Baptist Church, 1508 Hardy St., Hattiesburg, Miss. Details: <https://www.visithburg.org/events/a-carey-christmas/>

12/23

**25th Annual Tidings of Comfort & Joy concert** - 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Enjoy a concert of seasonal music both religious and secular, traditional and contemporary. First United Methodist Church, 6 E. Wright St., Pensacola, Fla. Details: <https://www.wuwf.org/tidings-of-comfort-joy>

12/14

**Billy Claus and the LuLuBelles** – 1 to 3 p.m. Join the holiday fun at LuLu's Destin! Families can enjoy an afternoon of free activities, including a visit with Billy Claus, Santa's brother who doesn't like cold weather - he lives in the tropics.

LuLu's is located in Destin at the foot of the Mid Bay Bridge. Details: [www.LulusFunFoodMusic.com/destin/](http://www.LulusFunFoodMusic.com/destin/) or 850-710-LULU (5858)  
**2024 Cox Pensacola Christmas Parade** - Celebrate in the streets of Downtown Pensacola, Florida, with 100 entries, and eight bands from local communities and New Orleans. The parade also features the nationally renowned Blue Angels flight team. Details: <http://www.coxpensacolachristmasparade.org/>



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## 1,000th Watchman Procedure Patient Phyllis Forte Finds Better Quality of Life

Phyllis Forte has been married to her sweetheart, Ronald Forte, just known as Ron, for more than 54 years. They met when Phyllis was 17. Over the years they have built a family that includes two children, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. They lived in Germany for several years to work and spread God's word as missionaries. Her family and her love for God give Phyllis purpose and strength.

Phyllis has had several health setbacks in the last decade that have affected her quality of life with her family – aspiration pneumonia resulting in COPD, a bad fall that caused neck and shoulder pain, atrial fibrillation or AFib, and several other conditions. Phyllis experienced several health emergencies because of her AFib. She has had three cardiac ablations and a cardioversion.

Not long after that, her doctor, Marcelo Branco, M.D., FACC, an electrophysiologist with Baptist Heart & Vascular Institute, began talking with Phyllis about options for her heart health, such as the Watchman™ procedure.



Patients who may be considered for the Watchman™ procedure have non-valvular atrial fibrillation and are at increased risk for stroke. Atrial fibrillation, or AFib, occurs when the upper chambers of the heart beat out of sync with the lower chambers, causing sporadic heart palpitations that can allow blood to idle in the left atrial appendage and eventually clot. These clots can break away and enter the bloodstream, causing a stroke.

AFib patients are five times more likely to have a stroke. Phyllis did not want to continue feeling the way she had been, and she wanted to lessen her health risks. The blood thinners she was regularly

taking caused her to have a few serious bleeds, even from a simple scratch.

Phyllis said yes to receiving the Watchman™ procedure. In April 2024, she was the 1,000th patient to have the procedure at Baptist. Since then, Baptist has performed more than 1,200 Watchman™ procedures. The Watchman™ device is threaded through a vein in the leg and into the heart, where it is implanted at the opening of the left atrial appendage. It serves as a barrier to prevent clots from entering the bloodstream. The procedure is performed under general anesthesia in the heart catheterization laboratory and usually lasts about an hour. Normally patients can go home the same day.

Since the surgery, Phyllis has spent her time helping around the house, canning fruits and vegetables from her garden, and enjoying her family.

"I have more energy now," Phyllis said. "I've had no problems since the procedure, and I look forward to being able to stop taking the blood thinners." Phyllis credits Dr. Branco, along with the care team at

BHVI, for taking such great care of her. "Dr. Branco is awesome and has the best bedside manner," Phyllis said.

"Everyone I encountered at Baptist took such amazing care of me, including Drs. Videau and Celigoj, who I have also seen. Staff have called to check on me since my procedure. Baptist Heart & Vascular Institute is the best at heart care – the people are so caring too. I would recommend the Watchman™ procedure to anyone considering it."

"I always aim to enhance the quality of life for patients like Phyllis," Dr. Branco said. "The Watchman procedure is quick, painless and effective and significantly reduces her risk for a stroke. I enjoyed seeing Phyllis in a follow-up appointment recently, and she's doing great. Those we serve at BHVI are special, and it fills my heart to help others improve their hearts."

Baptist introduced the Watchman™ procedure to Northwest Florida in 2016. For more information about the Watchman™ and other treatment options available at the Baptist Heart & Vascular Institute, visit [ebaptisthealthcare.org/heart](http://ebaptisthealthcare.org/heart).

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## Escape to the South's premier holiday destination and celebrate the season at Beau Rivage

Christmas tradition for many in the South includes a visit to Beau Rivage, MGM Resorts International's expansive AAA Four-Diamond beachfront destination in Biloxi. For more than two decades, Beau Rivage has transformed the resort with festive décor, seasonal promotions, entertainment and activities for all ages and spectacular shopping for everyone on the list.

"From Thanksgiving to New Year's, our team looks forward to creating memorable holiday experiences," said Beau Rivage President & COO Brandon Dardeau. "It's a time of year our guests and visitors to the Mississippi Gulf Coast have come to know and love. A visit to Beau Rivage continues to be a favorite family tradition with special menus and a full calendar of events that brings the spirit of the season alive."



Enter into Beau Rivage's winter wonderland with larger-than-life nutcrackers, colossal Christmas ornaments, hundreds of frost-covered trees, thousands of brilliant poinsettias and Santa's sleigh and reindeer soaring high above the atrium. A 25-foot Christmas tree and classic winter scenes inspire the joy of the holiday throughout the resort.

On Dec. 1, Beau Rivage's signature holiday event, "Christmas with Santa – A BR Prime Experience," transforms the resort's award-winning steakhouse into an enchanting setting perfect for creating lifelong memories with Santa and other



holiday characters. Guests can enjoy classic Sunday brunch offerings like fresh seafood, live action cooking stations, traditional breakfast offerings, holiday pastries, bottomless Bloody Mary's, Mimosas and more. A commemorative photo and limited-edition keepsake gift mark this memorable holiday occasion.



Continue the holiday magic by experiencing the tradition of The Nutcracker. The Mississippi Gulf Coast Ballet Theatre presents the timeless classic for both a matinee and an evening performance on Sunday, Dec. 8 at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Choreographer Lisa Hendrickson brings this holiday fairytale to life with stunning sets, vibrant costumes, dramatic lighting, and world-renowned dancers, Reka Gyulai and Chase Swatosh.

In addition to the holiday production show, Beau Rivage plays hosts to headline entertainment throughout the season including Cirque Dreams Holidaze on Nov. 22 & 23. A world-renowned cast of performers along with an ensemble of circus acts, Cirque Dreams Holidaze takes the stage on November 22 and 23, 2024 in the Beau Rivage Theatre. This brilliant and whimsical holiday spectacular features breath-catching acrobatics, fun-

loving skippers, slight-of hand jugglers and much more. Cirque Dreams Holidaze conveys the magic of the season with a Broadway-style production infused with contemporary circus arts.

The Broadway hit Elf The Musical takes the Beau Rivage Theatre stage for 23 performances, Dec. 12-28 (dark Dec. 13, 16 & 23). This box-office-record-breaker combines vintage comic style and high-energy contemporary music to deliver jolly holiday entertainment for the whole family. The show is created, produced and directed by internationally known Las Vegas producer Jeb K. Rand, whose entertainment career spans more than 30 years. Rand has



Ring in the New Year with an unforgettable celebration in the Beau Rivage Theatre. The Molly Ringwalds

produced Beau Rivage's holiday shows for more than a decade, as well as this summer's hit, "Footloose the Musical."

Also see Ledisi on Nov. 30 and Kenny G The Holiday and Hits Tour 2024.

Beau Rivage's annual Holiday Open House provides an opportunity to find gifts for everyone on the Christmas list. From Nov. 13-17 and Dec. 10-14, dozens of vendors and artisans will showcase their wares in the resort's retail promenade and hotel second floor. Enjoy holiday offerings from Savvy Cie, Audrey Adele, Rachel Katz, Maurice Milleur, Studio Polo, as well as regional artists Satterfield Pottery, Coaststyle Art Watercolor Painting and photographer Ken Murphy, among others.

Casino players will enjoy Five Days of Stocking Stuffers Dec. 17-21, where a daily gift is available based on MGM Rewards points earned from slot activity. Now through Jan. 1, the Winning Wonderland Giveaway, gives participants a chance to win a share of \$250,000 in prizes including \$50,000 cash and a 2025 Porsche 718 Cayman.

return with their legendary energy, iconic hits, and dazzling light show. Get ready to be transported back to the 80s for the biggest party of the year!





# Casino Fun



**Dec. 12-28, Dark Dec. 13, 16 & 23**

**Elf the Musical** - Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Discount hotel and tickets prices available. Details: 888-566-7469 or [www.beaurivage.com](http://www.beaurivage.com)

**Nov. 22-23**

**Cirque Dreams Holidayze** (touring show) - Varying times. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, MS. Details: 888-566-7469 or [www.beaurivage.com](http://www.beaurivage.com)



**11/30**  
**Roots and Boots Tour** - Aaron Tippin, Sammy Kershaw and Collin Rye - 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, Miss., Details: 228-436-3000.

**12/8**  
**The Nutcracker** - 2 p.m. & 6 p.m. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Details: 888-566-7469 or [www.beaurivage.com](http://www.beaurivage.com)

**12/13**  
**Brandon Bennett's Elvis My Way Christmas** - 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. Details: 228-436-3000.



**12/13**  
**Kenny G & The Holiday and Hits Tour** - 8 p.m. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Details: 888-566-7469 or [www.beaurivage.com](http://www.beaurivage.com)

**12/31**  
**New Year's Eve with the Molly Ringwalds!**

Celebrate with ultimate 80s cover band, The Molly Ringwalds, Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Details: 888-566-7469 or [www.beaurivage.com](http://www.beaurivage.com)



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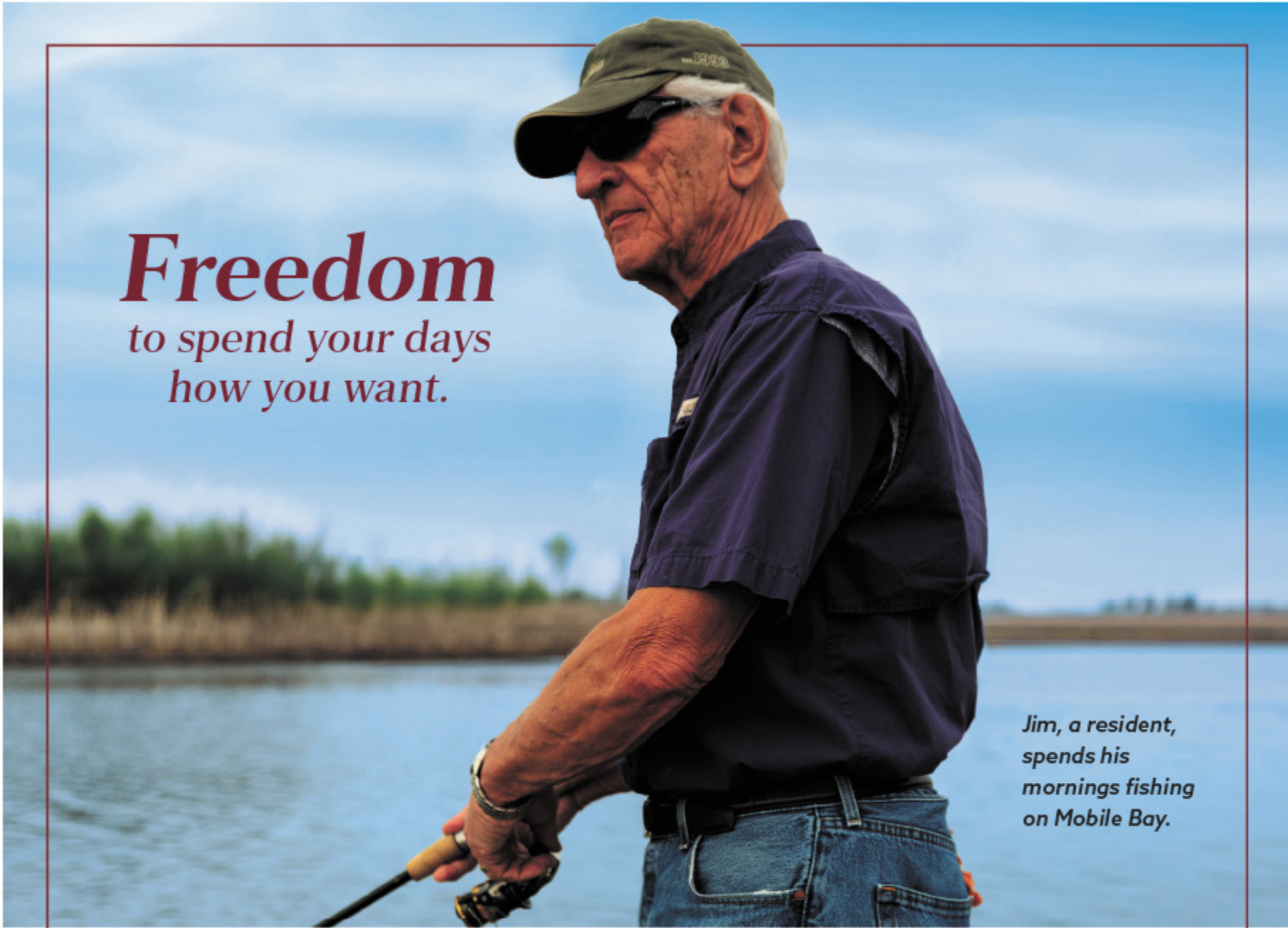
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A photograph of an elderly man, Jim, wearing a green baseball cap, sunglasses, a purple short-sleeved shirt, and blue jeans. He is holding a fishing rod and looking out over a body of water under a blue sky with light clouds. The background shows a shoreline with trees and reeds.

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# Pensacola's Books by the Bay Festival returns in March

After a successful first year in 2024, Pensacola's Books by the Bay Fest returns in 2025 on March 29 in downtown Pensacola in the Museum Plaza.

Regional, national and international authors will have book signings, book vendors and panel discussions.

The Kids Area will include writing poetry, making personalized bookmarks and readings from children's authors.

Look for the list of authors and exhibitors in early 2025 at <https://www.booksbythebay.info/>.

Books By the Bay is organized and hosted by Emerald Coast Writers, a 501 C(3) not-for-profit founded in 1986 as West Florida Literary Federation, Inc. Emerald Coast Writers is an all-volunteer organization with an endowed office in the Clark Cultural Center, 200 S. Jefferson, Pensacola, Florida.

With a membership of approximately 100 literary-minded individuals, ECW is led by a Board of Directors and offers educational programs and critique groups, hosts open mics, sponsors writing competitions, conducts youth

writing contests, publishes a biennial anthology and selects the Poet Laureate of Northwest Florida.

The group, with a mission to preserve the literary heritage of Northwest Florida, also maintains the Cultural Center's Patrick Cassidy Resource Library, a collection of books written by area writers.

Books By the Bay, premiering in 2024, is billed as the first outdoor book festival in Northwest Florida and is funded by sponsorships, grants, exhibitor's fees and Emerald Coast Writers, Inc. All event organizers are volunteers. Members of Emerald Coast Writers, some of whom live out of state, receive discounted rates as exhibitors, but exhibitors do not have to be members of ECW.

To join or learn more, visit [www.emeraldcoastwritersinc.org](http://www.emeraldcoastwritersinc.org), follow Emerald Coast Writers on Facebook, and ECW tent at Books By the Bay.

## New Orleans Book Festival

The New Orleans Book Festival will be March 27-29. Authors will be announced around the end of the year. All events will

take place on Tulane's uptown campus.

The festivities will kick off with opening sessions on Thursday, March 27, followed by a full programming lineup on Friday and Saturday. Saturday, March 29, will be Family Day at the Fest, featuring an array of activities tailored for children and families, including appearances by local and national children's authors.

The festival will include live musical performances, culinary showcases and engaging discussions with some of the city's most dynamic writers and public figures.

For more details about the New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University, visit [bookfest.tulane.edu](http://bookfest.tulane.edu) or connect with the event on Facebook.

## Sirens by the Sea

The Sirens By The Sea Book Signing & Bonfire will be April 4-6 at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center. Meet authors, enjoy books and more. Details: <https://www.facebook.com/unalivepromotions/events>



# TMH Physician Partners opens new medical office in Panama City Beach

TMH Physician Partners, in collaboration with The St. Joe Company, opened a new medical office plaza at 1002 N. Arnold Road in Panama City Beach.



"We are thrilled to open our new medical office plaza, which marks the beginning of our commitment to an advanced and comprehensive healthcare platform in this vibrant community," said Mark O'Bryant, president & CEO of Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH).

The new medical office plaza opened in July with Urgent Care and Primary Care and now offers a range of services, including: Physician Partners - Primary Care, Physician Partners, Services by Southern Medical Group - Cardiology Pulmonary, Critical Care & Sleep and the Coastal Tides Surgical Center

The next phase of the healthcare campus includes a new hospital set to open by the end of 2027. The hospital will initially have 180 beds, with 60 to 80 available at opening, along with an Emergency Center and additional services such as Surgery, Cardiology, and Imaging.

"This project has been thoughtfully planned over the past few years, and we're thrilled to see the first phase come to fruition," said Jorge Gonzalez, president and CEO of The St. Joe Company. "This medical campus will meet a critical need for more healthcare options but also create dynamic synergies between research, education and clinical expertise and position our region as a destination for expert healthcare."

For more information about TMH Physician Partners and the services available at the new medical office plaza, please visit [TMH.ORG/PCB](http://TMH.ORG/PCB). All offices are accepting new patients.

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## Check out plenty of sports along the coast during December

### 57th Snowball Derby stock car race set for Dec. 8

The famed Snowball Derby, the short-track Late Model race at Five Flags Speedway, is set for its 57th running from Dec. 4-8 in Pensacola.



Drivers from across the country and Canada will race for the prestigious title, as well as a \$50,000 winner's check. Among the drivers is defending champion Ty Majeski, who won his second Tom Dawson Trophy in the last four years.



Practices and local races start Thursday, Dec. 5. Qualifying for the Snowball Derby is Friday, Dec. 6 and the Snowflake 100 is Dec. 7. The weekend wraps up with the 300-lap Snowball Derby Dec. 8 at 1 p.m.

Fans can check out the updated driver entry list, purchase tickets and other race information at [www.snowballderby.com](http://www.snowballderby.com)

### Ice hockey

**PENSACOLA:** Pensacola's Ice Flyers will compete in the Southern Professional Hockey League, having won the President's Cup title four times.

Upcoming home games:  
Dec. 6 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Macon  
Dec. 21 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Huntsville  
Dec. 26 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Macon

Dec. 28 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Peoria  
Jan. 3 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Birmingham

Details: <https://iceflyers.com/>

**BILOXI:** The Sea Wolves play in the Mississippi Coast Coliseum in Biloxi. The team is part of the Federal Prospects Hockey League.

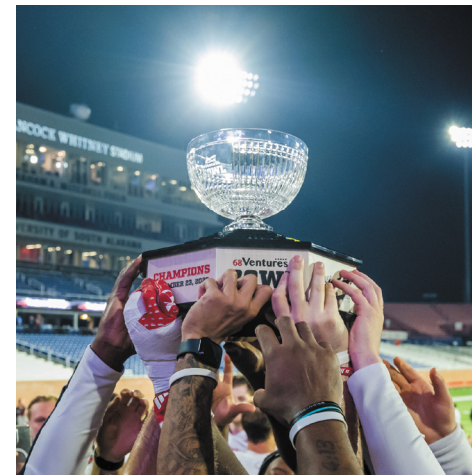
Upcoming home games:  
Dec. 1 – 4:05 p.m. vs. Columbus  
Dec. 6 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Columbus  
Dec. 27 – 7:05 p.m. vs. Winston-Salem  
Dec. 28 – 6:05 p.m. vs. Winston-Salem  
Dec. 29 – 4:05 p.m. vs. Columbus

Details: <https://www.mississippi seawolves.com/>

### Bowl game in Mobile pits college football teams

The 68 Ventures college football bowl game will be played at Hancock Whitney Stadium in Mobile, Alabama, on Dec. 26 at 8 p.m. The game will be shown on ESPN.

The game matches teams from the Conference USA, Sun Belt Conference or the Mid-American Conference. It's usually a high-scoring affair as it has averaged 63 total points over the last 25 years.



Details: <https://68venturesbowl.com/>

### NBA time in New Orleans

Snowbirds who follow their favorite NBA team at home, they have a chance to root for them when they come south to play the Pelicans in New Orleans at the Smoothie King Center.

The Pelicans host the New York Knicks on Dec. 21, the Memphis Grizzlies on Dec. 27 and the Minnesota Timberwolves on Jan. 7.

Details: <https://www.nba.com/pelicans/>

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## Welcome, Snowbirds! Gulf Coast organizations, businesses celebrate winter visitors

Snowbirds have been gathering on our white sands for decades, but for many, 2025 will be their first time in the region

Have a lot of questions? Gather for one – or all – of the listed Snowbird events. Ask questions, dress zany, tap your feet and sample some food!

Some longtime events, such as the Fort Walton Beach Chamber's Winter Guest Fest, won't return, while others have formed in their place!



### Navarre Beach Snowbirds Festival

This third annual festival is a chance to celebrate Navarre Beach's history and mingle with the community. The 2025 festival is on Jan. 16 from 2 to 4 p.m. at St. Sylvester Catholic Church. The theme is the Roaring 20s, and attendees are encouraged (but not required) to dress in 1920s attire.

A variety of vendors attend, including local restaurants, shops, boutiques and more. Details. [Navarrechamber.com](http://Navarrechamber.com)

### Snowbird Fest

The annual event paused during COVID-19 but is back!

Snowbird Fest, organized and produced by The Snowbird Company, will be held Feb. 4 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Orange Beach Event Center at The Wharf.

Vendors from all forms of business exhibit, including restaurants, insurance companies and attractions such as golf, vacation rentals and fishing and a varied selection of entertainment.

Both the young and old Elvies have made appearances that had the snowbirds' toes tapping, while other entertainers have performed an eclectic mix of beach tunes, country and rock from many ages.

The Snowbird Fest also boasts a car 'shine and show' in conjunction with the expo. Details: [www.snowbirdfest.com](http://www.snowbirdfest.com)



### 10th Annual Pensacola Beach Chamber/SRIA Beach Bash

Join the bash on the beach on Jan. 23 from 9 to 11 a.m. at Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church. Variety of vendors and entertainment. Details: 850-932-1500 or [www.visitpensacolabeach.com](http://www.visitpensacolabeach.com)



### Visit Panama City Beach: Winter Resident Appreciation Days

Winter residents can enjoy complimentary coffee, donuts and giveaways at Winter Resident Appreciation Days from 8 to 10:30 a.m. at Boardwalk Beach Hotel & Convention Center.

Dates include Jan. 10 (tickets for Homecoming available); Feb. 7 (tickets for Senior Prom available) and Feb. 18 (tickets for Grand Finale available).

**Homecoming Dance and Social:** Jan. 13, 4 to 9 p.m. - This year's Homecoming Dance and Social is at Boardwalk Beach Hotel & Convention Center on

**Winter Resident Senior Prom:** Feb. 10, 10 a.m. - One of the biggest winter resident events of the year! The theme is Paradise Island, and the event is staged at Edgewater Beach and Golf Resort.

**Winter Resident Grand Finale:** Feb. 20, 4 to 9 p.m. Edgewater Beach and Golf Resort.

Details: [www.visitpanamacitybeach.com](http://www.visitpanamacitybeach.com)



### Hootenanny Snowbird Events, Flora-Bama, Perdido Key

Four Hootenanny Snowbird events will be held this winter on Jan. 9 and 23 and Feb. 6 and 20 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Presented under a giant tent in the historic "Roadhouse-style" entertainment complex with live music on the festive Flora-Bama stage, multiple vendors are offering

samples and lunch is provided. Take a photo and share it with folks at home! Details: [www.perdidokey.com](http://www.perdidokey.com)

### St. George Island Farewell

This Snowbird Appreciation Day Dinner, hosted by the St. George Island Business Association, is Feb. 11. The event includes dinner, raffles and music. Details: [sgiba.com](http://sgiba.com)



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## Sean of the South: Unseen

You're a single mother. Your name is Deidra. Your wallet has three bucks in it. You have an old Visa gift card with twelve dollars left on it.

Something bad happened today.

It wasn't because of anything you did. It's because you're in your late thirties and teenagers can do your job cheaper. They cut your hours. Management's way of firing you.

You reacted. You let your manager have it. You called him an awful name. You wish you could take it back.

You cry in your car. You wipe your face. Then cry again. You wait for your kids to exit the free daycare.

And here you are, sorting mail while you wait. Power bill. Water bill. Cell phone bill. Cable. Insurance. It never ends.

Your kids run toward you. There are kisses, hugs. You notice how tall your oldest is. Your nine-year-old colored a picture.

They talk loud and happy.

You're thinking about what's inside your refrigerator for supper. A few slices of bologna, half a liter of Coke, old carrots, two eggs.

You look in your purse. The gift card.

You drive to a pizza buffet. It's six bucks for your oldest, four bucks for the youngest—not counting soda.

You slide your card and hold your breath.

Life isn't supposed to be this way. You're not supposed to skip suppers and feed your kids with gift cards.

You're young, pretty, healthy. You're supposed to be happy. Instead, you're a few dimes shy of homelessness.

After the meal, you leave eighty-four cents for a tip. That's all the loose change you have. You're saving your last three dollars.

You drive. Your gas gauge is on E.

You're humiliated. That's how poverty works. It embarrasses a person until they think so little of themselves, they don't like their reflection.

You pull into a gas station. You're going to put three dollars into your old Ford Contour. Not a penny more.

You walk inside to pay cash.

There's a man in line behind you. He's tall.

Longish hair. Dirty boots.

He sees you throw three dollars down. He steps forward and says, "I'll pay for her gas." He places thirty dollars on the counter.

"You don't have to do that," you tell the man.

He doesn't answer. He just smiles.

You're embarrassed. You head for your car.

He follows. "Wait!" he hollers.

Now you're scared. Some weirdo is following you, and God knows what he's got in mind. You've seen the ten-o'clock news.

You jump into your car and lock the doors. You start the engine.

He raps on the window. "Please," he says. "I'm not gonna hurt you."

After a few minutes, he doesn't leave. You roll down your window—against your better judgement.

The man hands you an envelope with four hundred-dollar bills in it. Crisp bills. Four.

"It's all I got," he says. "Wish it were more." He says nothing else and walks away. He does not step into a car. He does not mount a bicycle.

He walks into the darkness, and he's gone.

Maybe you don't think there is something up there watching over you.

Deidra wants you to know there is.

*Sean of the South* 



Author Sean Dietrich embraces fans after a performance.

## Author Sean Dietrich speaks on Southern stages

Author Sean Dietrich, known for his column "Sean of the South," is out on the road, bringing his unique perspectives, humor and heartfelt writing to crowds across the South.

Upcoming dates include:

- Dec. 1 - Florence, Ala. with Three On A String
- Dec. 6 - \*rescheduled\* Calhoun, Georgia
- Dec. 7 - Albertville, Ala. with Three On A String
- Dec. 14 - Columbiana, Ala.
- Dec. 15 - Homewood, Ala. with Three On A String

For tickets and information, visit <https://seandietrich.com/events/>

Dietrich is a columnist, humorist, multi-instrumentalist, and stand-up storyteller known for his commentary on life in the American South.

His work has appeared in Newsweek, Southern Living, Reader's Digest, Garden and Gun, and his column appears weekly in newspapers throughout the U.S. He has authored 18 books and over 4,000 columns. He makes appearances on the Grand Ole Opry, and his work has been featured on the Today Show. He also hosts a podcast based on his writings.

For more information about Dietrich, his work, and other upcoming events, visit <https://seandietrich.com/>.



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Majestic Oaks RV Resort in Biloxi is located just a few blocks north of Hwy 90 and Biloxi Beaches, and just blocks away from the MS Coast Coliseum & Convention Center. From I-10, take I-110 South exit to Hwy 90 Biloxi West to Rodenburg. Continue to Pass Road. Left one block.



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**Good Time Tours** - Offers group bus transportation to Mississippi coast casinos, New Orleans and beyond. [www.goodtimetours.com](http://www.goodtimetours.com)

**Majestic Oaks RV Resort** - Modern RV park located a few blocks from Biloxi's top casinos. [www.majesticoaksvr.com](http://www.majesticoaksvr.com)

**OWA Parks & Resort** - A world-class development with restaurants, entertainment, shops RV park and attractions. Details: [visitowa.com](http://visitowa.com)

**Rouses Markets** - Louisiana-based grocery chain which features numerous specialty items and a hot food bar. [www.rouses.com](http://www.rouses.com)

**Retinal Specialty Institute** - Rapidly expanding practice of the region's best retinal specialists. Currently conducting clinical trials. [www.retinalspecialty.com](http://www.retinalspecialty.com)

**Santa Rosa County Tourism** - Known for sugar white beaches, gorgeous water and the Gulf of Mexico's longest pier. The northern end boasts camping, hiking, tubing and canoeing. [www.getrelaxing.com](http://www.getrelaxing.com)

**Navarre Chamber** - Annual Snowbird and Wintertime Welcome presented by the Navarre Chamber and Santa Rosa County Tourism. [www.navarrechamber.com](http://www.navarrechamber.com)

**Shrimp Basket** - Tasty seafood with All You Can Eat specials. [www.shrimpbasket.com](http://www.shrimpbasket.com)

**Splash RV** - State of the art RV park with numerous cabins and park models. Heated swimming pools and lazy river. [www.splashrvresort.com](http://www.splashrvresort.com)

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**Wind Creek Atmore** - Deluxe south Alabama casino with fine dining, luxury amenities, on site movie theatre and cooking classes. [www.windcreekatmore.com](http://www.windcreekatmore.com)

## 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 of golf courses, restaurants, medical facilities and attractions from Panama City to the Alabama Gulf Coast.

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Gulf Coast



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## Ad deadline: December 10

Now is the time to plan for the 2024-2025 Snowbird Season! Contact us to learn more about our ad packages and how you can reach thousands of Gulf Coast winter visitors!





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14

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