



THE ISLANDER



The SGI Paint Out artist, Beth Bathe, from Pennsylvania won second place for her oil painting of the St. George Island's iconic lighthouse in this juried event

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- State Legislators Hope for Hurricane Michael Aid** page 2
Important bills to provide assistance from hurricane damage
- Tourism Development Council Report**..... page 2
A Media plan for advertising and promoting Franklin County
- Recent Events**pages 3, 4
Putt Master Competition raised money for Franklin County Libraries.
SGI Paint Out hosted plein air artists, awarded Franklin County High students free workshop and art supplies.
- ECCC Role for Seniors**..... page 4
Updates from this important volunteer council and information about their support for seniors
- SGI 2025 and County Government Report**.....pages 6, 7
Updates about important issues in the county
- Civic Club hosts AJ Smith, Franklin County Sheriff**..... page 7
AJ Smith discussed how the Sheriff's department has been able to improve service to Franklin County and shared some important data

Upcoming ISLAND EVENTS

Franklin County – May Dates Board of County Commissioners Regular Meetings
May 7, 21 at 9:00 am
Commission Meeting Room, Apalachicola

Audubon Fl. Bird Steward Training Walk
April 20, 27, 9:30 - 11:30 am
St. George Island State Park
Register at bsamuelsen@audubon.org
www.FLBeachBirds.org

Elder Care Community Council (ECCC)
April 22, Earth Day Celebration
www.holyfamilyseniorcenter@gmail.com
850-653-3134 or 850-509-5009

SGI Brewfest
Franklin County Humane Society Benefit
April 27, 1 - 4 pm
Paddy's Raw Bar
www.sgibrewfest.com

Forgotten Coast Quick Draw
May 4
Registration: 8 - 8:45 am,
Event Competition: 9 - 11 am
www.forgottencoastenpleinair.com

Rock by the Sea Charitable Music Festival
May 8 - 12 | SOLD OUT
Doc Myers' Island Pub & Sports Bar
www.rockbythesea.org

SGI Civic Club Meeting (3rd Thursday)
6:30 pm, May 16 @ SGI Firehouse
Speaker: TBD

SGI Lighthouse Full Moon Climb
Flower Moon - May 18 @ 8 - 9:30 pm
Strawberry Moon - June 17 @ 8:30 - 10 pm
850-927-7745 for information

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF FRANKLIN COUNTY AREA EVENTS
CLICK www.ApalachicolaBay.org

“
If I sound
desperate, I am.
We are all Floridians.
We’ve got to do
everything we can
to help these people.”

Sen. Bill Montford

Rock by the Sea is a charity
music festival that officially kicks off
with a Pre-Party on Wednesday, May 8 at
6:30pm music everyday through Sunday
Brunch and is sold out. For more info or
to make a charitable donation visit
www.rockbythesea.org

SOLD OUT

They will be hosting 20 or more musical
acts (up and coming nationally, regionally
touring bands and singer songwriters).
Weekend Passes are \$175 until March 15,
2019 then they will be \$225. Daily passes
will only be available if space permits (we
expect a sell out). We will be planning music
for the early arrivals. Free for pass holders
and \$10 for everyone else. Passes available
for purchase on our website.

State Legislators Hope for Hurricane Michael Aid

Taken from CBS Miami affiliate:

With disaster aid stalled in Congress, Florida lawmakers on Tuesday April 16 began moving legislation aimed at providing money and other assistance to people in the Panhandle still recovering from the powerful storm.

A Senate Appropriations panel approved a pair of bills to provide assistance for housing, debris removal, infrastructure repairs and other needs. One measure would create a \$300 million loan program out of the “rainy day” reserve fund if lawmakers ultimately decide to approve the money in final budget negotiations. Democratic Sen. Bill Montford of Tallahassee, who represents many of the most affected counties, said northwest Florida is still suffering months after Category 4 Hurricane Michael swept ashore in October. Congress has been unable to agree on a roughly \$13 billion aid package for multiple U.S. disasters including Michael — meaning state legislators must step in, Montford said. The decision will be made by the end of session on May 3, 2019.

Tourism Development Council Meeting Report

Report by Barbara Morris - 4/10/2019



FINANCIAL REPORT

John Soloman reported that 33.4% of the budget for 2019 has been spent. Collections are \$52,063.46, a 1.6% increase over the same time last year.

WEBMASTER REPORT

There were over 35000 digital viewers, 122 newsletter sign-ups, 167 requests for help with accommodations, 250 visitor guide requests, and 9000 views of blog posts.

VISITOR CENTER REPORT

There were 1282 visitors to welcome center

PROMOTION AND MEDIA REPORT

Two “Visit Franklin County” promotions are in progress; Forgotten Coast T.V. has three commercials targeted toward S. Walton, The Villages, and the Atlanta area. 30-second commercials are appearing on HGTV, The Food Network, and The Travel Channel with plans to expand to Orlando and Birmingham.

Magazine ads are appearing in “Bridal Guide,” “Garden and Gun,” “Good Housekeeping,” “Woman’s Day,” “Trip Advisor” and “New Orleans” magazine, each targeted to their readers.

*A promotional mail-out is planned for every household in The Villages in Orlando.

St. George Island Paint Out - by Buena Brown

The second annual SGI Paint Out competition held, April 7-13, gave SGI and Franklin County the opportunity to broadcast to neighboring counties and states that SGI is open for company and business — an especially important message in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael. The pre-summer time frame provided ideal weather for painting outdoors. For seven days, 18 nationally and internationally acclaimed plein air artists, hosted by SGI residents, were given the opportunity to record the beauty of the Island on canvas. Together with the Forgotten Coast's Tourism Development Council, the Apalachicola Chamber of Commerce, Duke Energy, Island businesses, the SGI Plantation art and social committees, volunteers, and donors, the organization was able to offer opportunities to experience the uplifting effect and sense of pride that art brings to people and their community. The businesses were especially supportive as it brought positive attention to the island during this shoulder season attracting an affluent audience. Five of the area restaurants provided complimentary appetizers for daily 4 o'clock happy hours where the public could meet and greet three artists daily and view their SGI paintings from the week. The SGI Visitor Center kicked off the festival and served as a meeting place for artist's workshops. The momentum grew each day as more people attended the activities on St. George Island.

The grand finale was the Art Show & Reception at the St. George Plantation and was sponsored by the St. George Plantation Social Committee and Art Committee. With over 160 attendees, attendance exceeded expectations and art sales were many.

This year, the Paint Out was able to sponsor 10 Franklin County students to study with master painter, Joe Palmerio, the SGI Paint Out 2019 judge. The Paint Out was able to supply students with all necessary art supplies needed to paint en plein air at the Pavilion at Lighthouse Park. Supplies not used were donated to the Franklin County High School. Film students from the high school also attended the nocturnal paint night to capture footage for a short video competition. The SGI Paint Out, a non-profit 503 C organization, wants to further its level of involvement with county students and will be seeking ways to offer young people the opportunity to learn about visual arts careers.



SGI Paint Out paintings above



Franklin county students attend a workshop with master painter, Joe Palmerio



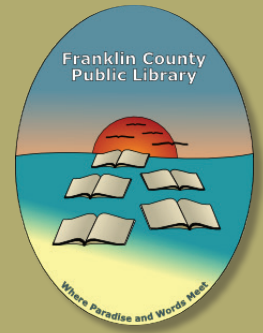
The First Annual SGI Civic Club Charity Golf Tournament

This event netted approximately \$7000 for the Civic Club's charitable donations fund, an amazing sum for this one-day event. Civic Club logo items including goff shirts, coffee mugs, and visors are on sale at every Civic Club meeting.

Biggest Event AT ECCC this Month - Earth Day

April 22, Monday - Monarch Butterfly Workshop & Taco Lunch, 11:30 a.m., sponsored by Weems Memorial Hospital. This workshop will feature Nancy Jones, an avid expert on Monarch Butterflies and their amazing migratory patterns. Lisa Bailey, from ANERR, and a few other special guests, will also be in attendance.

RSVP to: holyfamilyseniorcenter@gmail.com



2019 Putt Masters Mini Golf Tournament benefited Franklin County Public Library

The Friends of Franklin County Public Library celebrated the 7th Annual Putt Masters tournament on April 6 as businesses, groups, and individuals teed-off to determine the best putter in the area. Shirley and Jimmy Sapp of the Red Pirate Family Grill and Oyster Bar hosted the event once again. Many thanks to everyone that made this another successful event.

Become a Supporter of the Senior Center

“Holy Family Senior Center” is sometimes confused with a religious institution. Actually, Franklin County’s leading not-for-profit senior services operation retained the facility’s original name out of respect for the valuable historical role the building played in our community. Here is its story.

In 1917, Mercy Paige wrote a letter to Bishop Edward P. Allen of the Mobile Diocese begging for the establishment of a Catholic mission in her adopted town of Apalachicola. Born and raised in Pensacola, Mercy was a well-educated graduate of that town’s St. Joseph Catholic School, established for African American children in 1877. Hearing her plea, Bishop Allen arranged financing to purchase a square block in Apalachicola in 1919, where “Holy Family” stands today. African American sisters from the Holy Family Order in New Orleans agreed to take charge of the new school. They would remain in Apalachicola for 48 years. Holy Family School officially closed on June 9, 1968, but the church itself continued to serve The Hill, as that portion of Apalachicola was called, until 1987.

After extensive renovation and updating in 2012, Apalach Mayor Van Johnson dedicated the facility as “Holy Family Senior Center.” The building, now owned and maintained by the City of Apalachicola, houses the local community group called Elder Care Community

Council (ECCC), which provides outreach programs, daily lunches, educational/recreational programs, and advocacy initiatives for the senior population of the county. ECCC is funded by the Franklin County Commission through the Area Agency on Aging; an annual fundraiser event, Sizzler 5K Race and 1-Mile Fun Run on St. George Island; and private donations.

The daily lunch program not only helps meet the nutritional needs of this population, but the Center serves as a location for all-important social interaction for area seniors. Lunch is open to the general public, Monday through Friday, from 11 am until noon, free of charge. Frequent educational and recreational events, also open to the public, strengthen the personal connections between the seniors and the community.

Holy Family School's rich history made it the heart of The Hill. It is only right that this heart continues to beat as a beautiful community center to serve everyone, particularly our seniors.

Join us any time by contacting holyfamilyseniorcenter@gmail.com or calling 850-653-3134. To learn more of how you can help this critical community program, call ECCC at 850-509-5009. Please visit our Facebook page to see latest events and activities at the Center.

Here's a special 2019 Summer Opportunity: The Summer Breeze FANraiser. Please support our effort by donating electric fans to seniors in our community to keep them COOL during the upcoming summer season. Bring donations to Holy Family, Monday through Friday 10 am - 2 pm, or make a monetary donation to ECCC and we will purchase fans in your name.

Call or email to reserve your attendance for these April events at Holy Family Senior Center.



Help Birds Nest in Peace



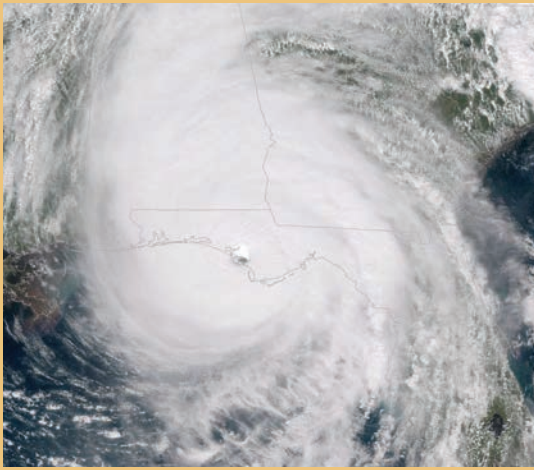
VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED to hang at the beach with cute chicks – the bird kind!

Shorebirds and seabirds don't nest in trees. They court, mate, lay and incubate their eggs and raise their young on the busy sandy beaches, on oysterbars and the small islands along the coast. The eastern panhandle is an important breeding area for these species, several of which are state threatened.

Audubon Florida's Bird Steward Program is looking for volunteers to help chaperone these nesting areas and educate the public. Birding skills are not necessary, but people skill are. We will train you. It's fun, rewarding and you will help make a positive difference in the lives of these birds. Join us for a bird steward training walk to learn more!

Learn more: www.FLBeachBirds.org or register for a Bird Steward Training walk at St George Island State Park. April 20th and/or 27th ; 9:30 – 11:30 am.

Register: bsamuelsen@audubon.org



Hurricane Michael was officially labeled a Category 5 hurricane by John L. Beven II, Robbie Berg, and Andrew Hagen of the National Hurricane Center on April 19, 2019

ALERT FRANKLIN

Franklin County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Staff is reminding residents to sign up for Alert Franklin on their website at www.franklinemergencymanagement.com and clicking on the Alert Franklin Logo. **YOU MUST BE SIGNED UP TO RECEIVE ALERTS!** If you need assistance signing up, please contact our office and EOC staff will be happy to assist you.

RE-ENTRY TAGS

Franklin County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Staff is reminding residents to apply for Re-Entry Tags prior to Hurricane Season. Once the EOC is activated NO Tags will be issued. If you have a Re-Entry tag and it is expired, simply draw a line through the expiration date. We no longer issue expiration dates on Re-Entry Tags therefore it is valid. You can print the application for ReEntry Tags at www.franklinemergency-management.com. If you need assistance signing up, please contact our office and EOC staff will be happy to assist you.

Board of County Commissioners Report- by Brenda Karlin

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved extending the hours and closing the alley in between Doc Myer's Island Pub and Resort Vacation Homes 5/9-13 for the Rock By The Sea event. Rick Watson, Treasurer, presented the request to have the festival at Doc Myer's Island Pub Wed., 5/8 to close at Midnight; Thur. and Fri., 5/9 and 5/10; closing at 2 am; Sat., 5/13 closing at 3 am. The event would be allowed to close the alley in between Doc Myers' Island Pub and Resort Vacation Homes to turn the music toward the bay instead of the beach and residential areas from 6 pm 5/8, until noon on 5/12. That will also leave production equipment away from the streets.

The BOCC approved a portion of the \$120,000 budgeted for a new bathroom at the SGI Lighthouse to go to the contractor to provide the County with an estimate of the costs to complete the project. This action item was included in The TDC report presented by John Solomon-TDC Administrator. The BOCC will seek an estimate from Dewberry, the county's contracted engineers, to develop a preliminary design and cost estimate for expanded restrooms that will also meet hurricane and ADA codes. This is not expected to be a big fee because this task is consistent with similar tasks that Dewberry performs under its annual contract. However, when that estimate comes in, the BOCC will have to approve that specific amount.

When Dewberry returns with its projected costs/design, the BOCC must then decide about going ahead with the proposed restroom. Assuming the BOCC agrees with the Dewberry proposal, the county will issue a request for bids for an architect to create the full design and assuming the BOCC accepts the new architectural design, the county will issue a request for bids to build.

Meanwhile, the county will review potential funding sources which are likely to include a combination of TDC funds, RESTORE funds, and possibly a USDA grant. Since a similarly sized restroom in Apalach cost in excess of \$600K, we have no reason to believe that this restroom will be priced much less than that. The hurricane and ADA standards alone—which may result in an elevator, for example—will drive up the price.

Given all this, we are likely looking at September/October ground breaking date. Commissioner Jones' hope is to cross the date of the county's new fiscal year so the TDC can spend \$120K (2018) and \$120K (2019) that was promised to SGI last year.

More “Farmed” Oysters Coming to the Bay

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Division of Aquaculture, is currently processing additional aquaculture lease applications for Apalachicola Bay. Because of the decline in productivity of wild oysters in the Bay and the devastating economic impact on the oystering industry in recent years, the state and county are encouraging the expansion of farm-raised oysters. The oyster producers must receive a lease from the state to occupy specific state-owned waters for farming. Led by Commissioner Smokey Parrish, the county commission encouraged the state to consider the value of the Bay waters to pleasure and commercial boating when granting leases so that the location of “columns” of growing oysters do not interfere with boating lanes. An even bigger concern is the fear that this more expensive form of oystering will be out of financial reach for traditional oystering families and that the available leases will be bought only by seafood conglomerates that have no ties to the county. As an example, not only are the leases and equipment an expensive investment, but the oyster columns, which sit unattended for much of their development, become highly valuable near maturity and must be protected 24 hours a day to prevent loss of entire crops to theft.

A parallel initiative for restoring the oystering industry is a 5-year experiment led by Florida State University and funded generally by TRIUMPH Gulf Coast, the funds resulting from the state’s lawsuit against the companies involved in the Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill in 2010. This project is particularly related to the Oil Spill because many experts believe that “over-harvesting” that occurred in the threat of potential destruction from oil washing into the Bay contributed to the decline in shell food population. Regardless, the current conditions in the Bay no longer support the life cycle of wild-grown oysters, and the state has announced it will no longer fund unproductive “seeding” of wild oysters as it has done the last five years. The FSU project hopes to result in the development of a sweet and salty-tasting oyster that will again thrive in the world-famous Bay.

Because of the decline in wild grown oysters, many local restaurants have had to resort to importing oysters from Texas, Louisiana and other coastal states. Some are serving farmed from Alligator Point and other local locations. Those continuing to provide wild Apalachicola Bay oysters must charge a premium price.



Elected Sheriff of Franklin County in 2016, A. J. Smith has a long career in law enforcement. Being elected sheriff brought him back to his roots, having first served for Franklin County in 1980. Since that start, he has had opportunities to serve in wide ranging positions of responsibility that have brought relevant experience to this position. Among those are stints at Marine Patrol, Alcoholic Beverage & Tobacco, Fire Marshall’s office, Wakulla County and Leon County sheriffs’ offices.

At Thursday’s dinner meeting, Sheriff Smith spoke of improvements to deputy patrol routes to better serve the county, upgrades to patrol cars, officer morale and job satisfaction improvements. He also promised to return the surveillance camera to the SGI Recycling Facility to deter violations.

In addition, Sheriff Smith highlighted his deepest passion—the need for a stand-alone local residential rehab facility. This would be a rare asset in our rural county but is urgently needed when an addict ends up in jail. He discussed the burden of drug abuse on everyone that surrounds a drug addict.

Currently, Sheriff Smith’s Franklin County Jail located on Hwy 65 has an in-house substance abuse program called “Fresh Start.” This faith-based rehabilitative program serves offenders who are sentenced by judges to a minimum two-year sentence—one year in county and a final year in a transitional house either in Panama City or Charleston, SC. Several members of the Civic Club teach or assist in this program including Bill Mills, Robert McMillan, Bill Nelson, Carol Holton, Bud Hayes and James Donald. Denise Butler, recently certified, begins in May. Preliminary data indicates that inmates who complete the program have a much better recidivism rate than the general population—4% over a six year period compared to 36% for others leaving the system. The SGI Civic Club has supported the “Fresh Start” program with charitable donations since it was started in Franklin County two years ago. For more information, contact Bill Mills, Chief Administrative Officer of Fresh Start – Florida, at kjbmills@gmail.com.

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