

**PLUS: 7 things** that define  
artist and entrepreneur  
**Tara McMeans**

# BEACHiN'

SPRING 2024

## Sharing the craft

The **Coastal Arts Center**  
artists-in-residence can help you  
**create your next masterpiece**

## The ARTS Issue!

The Alabama Gulf Coast is more than sand and water.  
Learn about the people and places that make it  
sparkle: **Art classes, glass blowers, galleries, festivals**



**GREAT IDEAS FOR  
DINNER TONIGHT!**

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*Waterfront Family Dining*





# Coastal Arts Center OF ORANGE BEACH



Weddings | Waterfront Venue | Art Classes



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Group Demonstrations  
Field Trips  
Mon-Fri 9-4



Private & Group Classes  
Hand or Pottery Wheel  
Painting/Glazing  
Mon-Fri 9-4

251.981.ARTS 26389 CANAL RD, ORANGE BEACH COASTALARTSCENTER.COM



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Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach artists-in-residence, clockwise from top left, Daniel Rush, Kerry Parks, Maya Blume-Cantrell and Athan Martin pose for a family photo along the shoreline of the bay behind the center. They give talks to visitors and offer classes, all under the funding of the City of Orange Beach. This issue of Beachin' features everything art, from museums and galleries you can visit to events and festivals happening this spring and some of the local creators behind the creative mosaic of the island.

**Photo by Micah Green.**



**COVER STORY**  
**30**





## Events

Things to do this spring, from outdoor arts festivals to music, mullets and hot air balloons.



## Sport Art Museum

Get **Off the Beaten Path** to the world's largest collection of sport art with just a short drive up to Daphne.



## McMeans' 7 Things

Get to know local artist Tara McMeans through the **7 Things** she uses to define her creative expression.



## Classes

Dive into your creativity with art classes and workshops.



## Picture Perfect

The art of photography is especially important when you're choosing the person to capture your big day.

**VOTED BEST  
MEXICAN FOOD  
ON THE GULF  
COAST!**



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# FAJITAS

A sizzling platter of bell peppers and onions with your choice of meat. All fajitas are served with lettuce, pico de gallo, sour cream, guacamole and choice of two (2) sides: Mexican rice, black beans, cactus grits or refried beans.

CHICKEN 16.99  
SHRIMP 17.99  
STEAK 17.99

**PIÑA FAJITAS**  
A grilled half pineapple stuffed with chicken, sautéed bell peppers and onion. 19.99  
Substitute: Steak\* + 3.00  
Shrimp + 2.00.

**TEXAS FAJITAS**  
A sizzling platter of bell peppers and onions with grilled steak\*, chicken and shrimp. 18.99

# SEAFOOD

**GULF FISH TACOS**  
Served two different ways:  
Grilled or Fried.  
**CANTINA STYLE:** Tossed in Boom Boom sauce and topped with pineapple black bean pico, cilantro-lime cabbage.  
**TRADITIONAL STYLE:** Topped with lettuce, pico de gallo and honey habanero sauce. Served with your choice of two sides.  
TWO TACOS 13.99  
THREE TACOS 15.99

**NEW! BOOM-BOOM SHRIMP TACOS**  
Fried shrimp tossed in our Boom-Boom sauce topped with cilantro-lime cabbage, pineapple-black beans and pico de gallo. Served with two sides.  
TWO TACOS 13.99  
THREE TACOS 15.99

**SHRIMP + GRITS**  
A bowl of our delicious Cactus-style grits mixed with our seasoned jumbo shrimp. 10.99

**SHRIMP DIABLO**  
Grilled shrimp cooked with our spicy cheese sauce served with two sides. 15.99

**GRILLED SHRIMP TACOS**  
**TRADITIONAL STYLE:** Topped with lettuce, pico de gallo, an avocado slice and our honey habanero sauce.  
**CANTINA STYLE:** Tossed in Boom Boom sauce and topped with pineapple black bean pico, cilantro-lime cabbage.  
TWO TACOS 13.49  
THREE TACOS 15.49

**SEAFOOD QUESADILLA**  
Grilled shrimp and grilled gulf fish with fresh pico de gallo, sautéed onions and bell peppers. Served with sour cream, lettuce and tomato on the side. 13.49  
Add rice and/or beans +2.49  
Top with cheese dip +1.99

**GULF COAST SEAFOOD BURRITO**  
A blend of grilled gulf fish and shrimp mixed with fresh pico de gallo, house spices and tomato salsa, then topped with cheese dip and red burrito sauce. Served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black beans, Cactus grits or refried beans 15.99

# BURRITOS

Burritos are served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black or refried beans or cactus grits.

**CALIFORNIA BURRITO**  
Grilled steak or chicken with your choice of two sides all rolled into one large flour tortilla topped with cheese dip, avocados, sour cream and your choice of hot or mild salsa.  
CHICKEN 15.99 STEAK 16.99

**TEXAS BURRITO**  
Large flour tortilla stuffed with grilled steak\*, chicken, shrimp, grilled onions and bell peppers. Covered in our cheese dip and salsa. 16.99

**BURRITO MEXICANA**  
Shredded chicken, carnitas or ground beef rolled in a flour tortilla, covered with cheese dip and topped with lettuce and sour cream. 13.99

**CACTUS GRILLED BURRITO**  
Large flour tortilla with grilled steak\* or chicken and covered with our cheese dip.  
CHICKEN 13.49 STEAK 14.99

**BURRITO RANCHERO**  
Large flour tortilla filled with grilled steak\* or chicken, grilled onions, peppers and topped with our zesty ranchero salsa and cheese dip.  
CHICKEN 14.99 STEAK 15.99

# DESSERTS

**SOPAPILLA** 3.99  
With ice cream 5.79

**CHURROS** 5.99

**CHEESECAKE CHIMICHANGA**  
With strawberry sauce. 5.99

**FRIED ICE CREAM** 5.99

# BEVERAGES



**COKE | DIET COKE**  
TEA | DR PEPPER | SPRITE  
BARQ'S ROOT BEER  
LEMONADE | ORANGE FANTA  
MELLO YELLO | COFFEE

# STARTERS

**3 ANIGOS CHEESE DIP**  
Large bowl of our delicious cheese dip with grilled shrimp, steak\* and chicken. Served with pico de gallo on the side and warm flour tortillas. 11.49

**CACTUS GUACAMOLE**  
Fresh chunks of avocado mixed with tomatoes, onions, light jalapeños, lime juice and cilantro.  
LARGE 9.99 | SMALL 5.99

**CANTINA SAMPLER**  
A trio of our famous cheese dip, pico de gallo and guacamole. 11.99  
(no substitutions please)

**CHEESE DIP**  
LARGE 8.99 | SMALL 5.99

**BEAN + CHEESE DIP**  
LARGE 8.99 | SMALL 5.99

**BEEF + CHEESE DIP**  
LARGE 8.99 | SMALL 5.99

**CHORIZO SAUSAGE + CHEESE DIP**  
LARGE 8.99 | SMALL 5.99

**JALAPEÑO + CHEESE DIP**  
LARGE 8.99 | SMALL 5.99

# NACHOS

**FAJITA NACHOS**  
Grilled steak\* or chicken on a bed of tortilla chips with onions and bell peppers. Topped with cheese dip and sour cream. 14.99

**GRANDE SUPREME NACHOS**  
Tortilla chips topped with black or refried beans, seasoned shredded chicken or ground beef, lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream, jalapeños and topped with cheese dip. 13.99  
Sub steak\* or grilled chicken + 2.99

**TEXAS FAJITA NACHOS**  
Grilled steak\*, chicken and shrimp on a bed of tortilla chips with onions and bell peppers. Topped with cheese dip and sour cream. 14.99

**NACHOS**  
CHEESE 8.99

CHEESE & BEAN 9.49

CHEESE & BEEF 9.99

CHEESE & SHREDDED CHICKEN 10.49

CHEESE, BEEF & BEAN 9.99

# SOUPS + SALADS

**TACO SALAD**  
A large crispy tortilla shell on a bed of refried beans, filled with lettuce, tomato, sour cream and your choice of shredded chicken or ground beef with a side of our cheese dip. 10.99

**CACTUS GRILLED CHICKEN SALAD**  
Grilled chicken over lettuce, spinach, avocado and diced tomatoes, topped with pico de gallo. 10.49  
Sub grilled steak\* +2.49

**NEW! BOOM-BOOM SHRIMP SALAD**  
Mixed greens with onion, tomato, shredded cheese and fried shrimp tossed in a Boom-Boom sauce. 12.99

**TEXAS FAJITA SALAD**  
Grilled steak, chicken or shrimp with sautéed onions and bell peppers on a bed of refried beans in a crispy tortilla shell with lettuce, tomatoes and sour cream, drizzled with cheese.  
CHICKEN 11.99 STEAK 13.99 TEXAS 14.49

**CALDO DE CAMARON**  
A traditional soup with shrimp, Mexican rice, onions, spinach, red bell peppers, mushrooms and cilantro, topped with sliced avocado. 9.99

**CALDO DE POLLO**  
Authentic Mexican-style chicken soup with Mexican rice, onions, red bell peppers and cilantro, topped with sliced avocado. 7.99

# TACOS

All taco entrees are served with your choice of two sides: Mexican rice, black beans, Cactus grits or refried beans. Tortilla choice of soft flour, soft corn or hard corn shell.

**TEXAS TACOS**  
One steak\* taco, one grilled chicken taco, one shrimp taco served with pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese. 14.99

**TACOS MEXICANOS**  
Authentic Mexican-style street tacos with carne asada, fresh cilantro and onion on soft corn tortillas. Served with lime and verde sauce.  
TWO TACOS 12.99  
THREE TACOS 14.99

**NEW! CARNITAS TACOS**  
Authentic slow-roasted pork on soft corn tortillas with cilantro and raw onion, and a side of cilantro-lime cabbage and salsa verde.  
TWO TACOS 13.99  
THREE TACOS 14.99

**BRINGO TACOS**  
Juicy grilled chicken tacos with fresh grilled pineapple and chorizo. Topped with raw onion and cilantro.  
TWO TACOS 14.99  
THREE TACOS 16.49

**CACTUS TACOS**  
Seasoned ground beef or shredded chicken tacos with fresh pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese.  
TWO TACOS 12.99  
THREE TACOS 13.99

**TACOS DE FOLLO**  
Juicy grilled chicken tacos with fresh pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese.  
TWO TACOS 13.99  
THREE TACOS 14.99

**STEAK TACOS**  
Grilled marinated steak\* tacos with pico de gallo, lettuce and cheese.  
TWO TACOS 14.99  
THREE TACOS 15.99

# TRADITIONAL plates

Traditional plates are served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black or refried beans or cactus grits.

**NEW! FLAUTAS**  
Three flour tortillas fried with your choice of shredded chicken, carnitas, or ground beef. Served with pico de gallo, lettuce, sour cream, and a side of cheese dip. 14.49

**CACTUS BOWL**  
All bowls are served with Mexican rice, black beans, broccoli, pico de gallo, and choice of guacamole or sour cream.  
GRILLED CHICKEN 13.49  
GRILLED STEAK 15.99  
GRILLED SHRIMP 15.99  
CARNITAS 14.99  
VEGGIES 12.99

**CHICKEN DIABLO**  
Grilled chicken cooked with our spicy cheese sauce. 15.99

**POLLO CACTUS MELT**  
Chicken breast smothered in bell peppers, onions and our cheese sauce. 14.99

**ARROZ CON POLLO**  
Grilled chicken served on a bed of rice topped with cheese dip. 11.99  
(no sides)

**ENCHILADA SUPREME**  
One shredded chicken, one beef and one cheese enchilada topped with lettuce, tomato and sour cream. 14.99

**CARNITAS**  
Slow-simmered pork tips cooked with sautéed onions. Served with fresh tortillas, lettuce, guacamole pico de gallo and sour cream. 15.99

**CARNE ASADA**  
A grilled 9-oz skirt steak served on a sizzling bed of onions and bell peppers. 16.99

**TADUITOS**  
Three corn tortillas fried with your choice of shredded chicken, carnitas, or ground beef. Served with pico de gallo, lettuce, sour cream and cheese dip. 14.49

**CHIMICHANGA PLATE**  
A large flour tortilla stuffed with beef or shredded chicken, then lightly fried and topped with cheese dip. 13.99  
Add steak\* or grilled chicken +1.99

**COMBOS**  
All combos are served with your choice of two sides: Mexican rice, black or refried beans or Cactus grits. Additional charges for steak\*, grilled chicken or shrimp.  
**BURRITO - CHILE RELLENO ENCHILADA - TAMALE TACO - CHALUPA - TOSTADA**  
ANY ONE 10.99  
ANY TWO 12.99  
ANY THREE 14.99

\*THESE ITEMS ARE COOKED TO ORDER: Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have a medical condition.

# KIDS' MENU

For children 12 years and younger, includes soft drink or tea (dine-in only), add 2.00 for adults.

**TACO**  
Chicken or beef taco served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, black beans, Cactus grits or refried beans. 6.99

**ENCHILADA NEAL**  
Cheese, chicken or beef enchilada served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, beans, Cactus grits or fries. 6.99

**MINI NACHOS**  
Choice of ground beef, shredded chicken or plain with cheese dip. 6.99

**MINI QUESADILLAS**  
Kid-sized quesadillas stuffed with cheese and chicken or ground beef and served with your choice of two (2): Mexican rice, beans, Cactus grits or fries. 6.99

**CACTUS MINI BURRITO**  
Beef or shredded chicken burrito served with your choice of two (2) Mexican rice, beans, Cactus grits or fries. 6.99 Substitute steak\* or grilled chicken + 1.50

**CACTUS FINGERS**  
Chicken fingers with fries. 6.99

**Disclaimer - price subject to change.**

\*THESE ITEMS ARE COOKED TO ORDER: Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have a medical condition.

# Find your fun

Things to do on the Gulf Coast  
from Mobile to Pensacola

Spring has sprung, and the calendar is blooming with events and festivals across the Alabama Gulf Coast.



## APRIL

### Mudbugs & Margaritas Festival

**What:** Spend a day enjoying live entertainment, drinking margaritas and local craft beer and munching on crawfish. The family-friendly event features arts and crafts vendors, children's entertainment area and more. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.beachlifeevents.com](http://www.beachlifeevents.com).

**When:** Saturday, April 6, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

**Where:** Heritage Park, 200 N. McKenzie St., Foley

### Ballyhoo Festival

**What:** The 10th-annual Ballyhoo Festival combines a juried fine art festival with a unique cultural exchange. Sit back and enjoy a presentation of original tribal dance by the Poarch Creek Indians in full ceremonial regalia, listen to artists as they compete in the Fiddle and Banjo Competition, and browse the artist booth in between. For more information, visit [www.ballyhoofestival.org](http://www.ballyhoofestival.org).

**When:** April 6-7, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sunday, April 7, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

**Where:** Gulf State Park Lake Shelby, 20115 State Hwy. 135, Gulf Shores

### Bama Coast Cruisin'

**What:** The Wharf is the place to be for car lovers as the annual Bama Coast Cruisin' takes over Orange Beach. The weekend schedule is packed with entertainment, cars and events. For more information, visit [www.bamacoastcruisin.com](http://www.bamacoastcruisin.com).

**When:** April 25-27, times vary

**Where:** The Wharf, 4830 Main St., Orange Beach

### Waterway Village Series

**What:** The Waterway Village Series is the newest music series event presented by the City of Gulf Shores. The six-concert series brings music, food trucks and more to the Waterway Village District. Bring lawn chairs and blankets. For more information, visit [www.gulfshoresal.gov](http://www.gulfshoresal.gov).

**When:** Each Thursday beginning March 7 – April 11

**Where:** Waterway Village, East 24th Ave., Gulf Shores

### Kites Over Mobile

**What:** The fourth-annual Kites Over Mobile brings professional kite flying demonstrations to the skies over Mobile. The family-friendly events give the entire family a fun place to fly a kite, and there is

even a Kite Hospital for those inevitable crashes.

**When:** Saturday, April 13, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sunday, April 14, noon – 5 p.m.

**Where:** USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, 2703 Battleship Parkway, Mobile

### Baldwin County Strawberry Festival

**What:** The annual Baldwin County Strawberry Festival is a tradition for families. Enjoy a day of carnival rides, music, food and classic cars and tractors. The main event is the famous strawberry shortcakes.

**When:** April 13-14, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Where:** Loxley Municipal Park, 4198 Municipal Park, Loxley

### Doggy Fest

**What:** The City of Gulf Shores presents Doggy Fest 2024. Visitors will enjoy a day of live music, art, educational vendors, crafts, doggy obstacle course and more. The event is open to the public, but visitors can pre-register their furry friend and secure a limited, custom pet caricature and special swag bag for \$10.

**When:** Saturday, April 20, 10 a.m. – noon

**Where:** Meyer Park, 400 E. 22nd Ave., Gulf Shores



*WANT MORE EVENTS? HEAD TO OUR EVENT CALENDAR AT WWW.GULFCOASTMEDIA.COM*

### **Earth Day Mobile Bay**

**What:** Celebrate Earth Day at the Fairhope Pier. Explore the environmental exhibits, ecological innovations, live music, children's activities and more.

**When:** Saturday, April 20, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
**Where:** Fairhope Pier Park, 1 N. Beach Road, Fairhope

### **Bald Eagle Bash**

**What:** Party and enjoy delicious food from local restaurants for a worthy cause. The South Alabama Land Trust's annual Bald Eagle Bash is one of its largest fundraisers. Sample shrimp dishes, enjoy local beer and amazing music. This event sells out every year. Tickets are on sale now. For more information or to purchase a ticket, visit [www.southalabamalandtrust.org](http://www.southalabamalandtrust.org).

**When:** Saturday, April 27, 4-7 p.m.  
**Where:** Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Reserve Center, 11525 U.S. 98, Fairhope

### **Baldwin Pops at Heritage Park**

**What:** Spend an afternoon in Foley's Heritage Park with the Baldwin Pops for a free spring concert. Pack a picnic and bring the lawn chairs. The best picnic setup will win a prize.

**When:** Sunday, April 28, 3 p.m.  
**Where:** Foley Heritage Park

### **Interstate Mullet Toss**

**What:** Mullet will fly across the Alabama and Florida state line all weekend long. What started as a reason to party has become a legendary event. Join the fish-throwing fun or just sit back, enjoy a cocktail and watch as people compete to see who can throw the mullet the farthest. For a full schedule of fish-throwing times and event details, visit [www.florabama.com/mullet-toss](http://www.florabama.com/mullet-toss).

**When:** April 26-28, 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.  
**Where:** Flora-Bama Lounge & Package, 17401 Perdido Key Drive, Pensacola

### **St. Benedict German Festival**

**What:** The 51st-annual St. Benedict German Festival brings a day of German sausages, food, arts and crafts vendors and entertainment to the campus of St. Benedict. This is a fun way to support the school. For more information, visit [www.saintbenedict.net](http://www.saintbenedict.net).

**When:** April 27, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
**Where:** St. Benedict, 12786 Illinois St., Elberta

## *MAY*

### **Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival**

**What:** There is nothing as breathtaking as seeing a hot air balloon floating into the sky. Enjoy a weekend of hot-air balloons, activities, entertainment and food at the annual Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival. For more information or a schedule of events, visit [www.gulfcoastballoon-festival.com](http://www.gulfcoastballoon-festival.com).

**When:** May 2-4, times vary  
**Where:** OWA, 100 N. OWA Blvd., Foley

### **Alabama Seafood Cook-off**

**What:** Watch four Alabama chefs compete to win the title of Alabama Seafood King and the right to represent the state at the Great American Seafood Cook-off in New Orleans. Watch the creativity and learn a thing or two.

**When:** Monday, May 6, 6-8 p.m.  
**Where:** The Wharf, 23101 Canal Road, Orange Beach

### **Art in the Park**

**What:** Art in the Park has been a Mother's Day weekend tradition since 1971. The juried fine arts show draws the top artists, craftsmen and visitors from across the Southeast.

**When:** Saturday, May 11, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sunday, May 12, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
**Where:** John B. Foley Park, 196 N. McKenzie St., Foley

### **Orange Beach Billfish Classic**

**What:** The Orange Beach Billfish Classic is a stop on the Gulf Coast Triple Crown Series. Fishermen from all over will compete to top the scales with some of the biggest catches you'll see. For more information, visit [www.orange-beachbillfishclassic.com](http://www.orange-beachbillfishclassic.com).

**When:** May 14-19, times vary  
**Where:** The Wharf Marina

### **The Hangout Music Festival**

**What:** The Hangout Music Festival takes over the white sand beaches of Gulf Shores for three days of music from top performers. Headliners for the 2024 event include Zach Bryan, Lana Del Rey, Cage The Elephant, Renee Rapp and more. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.hangoutmusicfest.com](http://www.hangoutmusicfest.com).

**When:** May 17-19  
**Where:** Gulf Shores Public Beach

## *JUNE*

### **Tacos & Tequila Festival**

**What:** The people who brought Baldwin County the Mudbugs & Margaritas, Gumbo & Alabama Slammer Festival and the Chocolate & Cheese Festival have added a new event to the lineup. The Tacos & Tequila Festival is a family-friendly event with live music, activities, tacos, Hispanic food and tequila drinks. Entry is free. For more information or to see the festival lineup, visit [www.beachlifeevents.com](http://www.beachlifeevents.com).

**When:** June 22-23, times vary  
**Where:** Baldwin County Fairground, 19477 Fairground Road, Robertsdale

### **Music at Meyer Park**

**What:** Live music, fresh air and a fun time are what you will find during the Music at Meyer Park spring concert series. Bring your lawn chair, buy dinner from a food truck and a beverage and rock out. For a list of performers, visit [www.gulfshoresal.gov](http://www.gulfshoresal.gov).

**When:** June 21, July 18, Aug. 15, 6 p.m.  
**Where:** Meyer Park, 400 E. 22nd Ave., Gulf Shores

## *MARKETS*

### **Coastal Alabama Farmers and Fishermans Market**

**What:** Start your weekly grocery shopping at the farmers market every Saturday.

**When:** Saturdays, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
**Where:** 781 Farmers Market Lane, Foley

### **Fairhope Heritage Park Marketplace**

**What:** Browse local arts and crafts, buy fresh produce and plants from farmers and listen to live music. At dusk, enjoy a movie in the park. Bring a lawn chair or blanket and spend the evening with friends and family.

**When:** April 19, 26; May 17, 24, 31, 4-7 p.m.  
**Where:** Heritage Park, 104 N. McKenzie St., Foley

### **Fairhope Outdoor Spring/Summer Farmers Market**

**What:** Purchase local baked goods, flowers, produce and arts and crafts from local producers each Thursday in downtown Fairhope.

**When:** April 4–June 27, 3-6 p.m.  
**Where:** Corner of Magnolia Avenue and Bancroft Street behind the Fairhope Public Library

# THIS WASN'T IN THE BROCHURE!

A series exploring nearby places off the beaten path



# The American Sport Art Museum & Archives

Words by Cole McNanna  
Photos by Micah Green

Sports fans and art buffs alike can harmoniously agree on a day trip to Daphne for an outing at the American Sport Art Museum & Archives. Less than an hour's drive from the beach, visitors can take a tour around the sports world without leaving Baldwin County.

The ASAMA houses what is believed to be the world's largest collection of sport art with over 1,800 pieces ranging from sculptures to paintings to photography and more. Established in 1984, the museum is open to the public, free of charge, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

With larger-than-life sculptures of athletes outside, walk-in visitors are almost surprised by the amount of art inside the architecturally-acclaimed building, according to Artist in Residence Nancy Raia.

"Some people just show up to see many of the Bruce Larsen sculptures in our yard and on our vast



Sunday's Hero, Ernie Barnes



**THE AMERICAN SPORT ART MUSEUM & ARCHIVES IS LOCATED AT ONE ACADEMY DRIVE, DAPHNE.** Get on AL-59 from the beach and travel north for 19.3 miles. Turn left onto AL-104 and travel 11 miles. Turn right onto US-98 and travel 6.8 miles. The museum is inside the U.S. Sports Academy on the right.

grounds and walk around taking pictures,” Raia said. “And then they come inside and realize that we have art inside the building as well, and we have everything from collectible photography to oil paintings to sculptures; we have mixed media, just about every kind of art there is.”

Raia oversees the collection’s arrangement to provide visitors with an experience as unique as the museum itself, which features pieces from every corner of the globe.

“Dr. Thomas P. Rosandich, our founder, loved two things: he loved sport and art. So, when all of this was born 51 years ago, sport was his path, but art was always along with it,” Raia said. “He traveled the world teaching and promoting art and sports management but also on his world travels met artists and started celebrating people who celebrate the actions of sports in art.”

Some of the largest fruits of those traveling labors are

displayed in the Olympic Room and Founder’s Room with wall-to-wall examples of the global impact made by the American Sport Art Museum and the United States Sports Academy.

“There’s artifacts from the travels that the Sports Academy has done bringing sports programming around the world and training and teaching people,” Raia said. “There’s art from other countries. Then there’s our Founder’s Room that shows his travels. People will go in there, and I’ll say, ‘See how many celebrities you know standing with standing with our founder.’”

While Rosandich traveled the world in the name of art, he had to look no further than Baldwin County to find an artist to make bold statements outside the building. An Auburn alumnus and Fairhope resident, Larsen’s sculptures greet all the museum’s visitors and will do the same atop Fairhope’s downtown parking garage.

“(Larsen) has done many of our



sculptures on campus and in the building. He was a local treasure that Dr. Rosandich found his skill thrilling and he loved to add him to the collection,” Raia said. “We have things all around the campus that he has done. Different styles, but mostly it’s his found objects that he welded together, and next thing you know, it’s powerful and tells a great story.”

All of that has led to a world-re-

nowned collection in a grand building nestled on a hillside along Highway 98 in Daphne.

“Just walking in the lobby, people are kind of overwhelmed by the sheer size and the space of this building,” Raia said. “People just are so surprised we have artwork here. Joseph Sheppard is one of them, his work is actually in the Smithsonian, so the caliber of work here is really huge.”

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Wednesday: 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Thursday: 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM  
Friday: 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
Saturday 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
Closed Sunday and Monday



## Appetizers

Spinach Artichoke Dip  
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Bruschetta  
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## Pasta

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Small: 12.95  
Large: 17.95

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Large: 16.95

Lasagna  
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Price Varies

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Caesar  
8.95

House  
8.95

Spinach  
9.95

Greek  
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## Sandwiches

Meatball  
House-made meatballs,  
marinara, mozzarella

Muffuletta  
Ham, salami, provolone  
cheese, house olive spread

Italian  
Ham, salami, pepperoni,  
provolone cheese, house  
dressing

Chicken Carbonara  
Chicken, bacon, green  
and red peppers, onions,  
mushrooms, swiss, alfredo

Chicken Parmesan  
Paniced chicken breast,  
marinara, mozzarella,  
parmesan

## Desserts

House Made Tiramisu  
6.95

Salted Caramel Cheesecake  
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Mini Cannolis  
5.95

Limoncello Dream  
6.95

Flourless Chocolate Torte  
6.95

## Pizza

Elberta  
Italian sausage, smoked  
sausage, mozzarella

Foley  
Peppers, kalamata olives,  
mushrooms, onions,  
pepperoni, italian sausage

Pleasure Island  
Ham, onion, green peppers,  
red peppers, pineapple

Farmers Market  
Fresh spinach, mushrooms,  
onions, peppers, tomato,  
mozzarella

Magnolia Springs  
Fresh spinach, chicken,  
artichoke hearts, feta, sun-  
dried tomato paste

The "Lion"  
Italian sausage, ham, beef,  
bacon, pepperoni

The Florentine  
Alfredo sauce, spinach,  
bacon, tomato, shrimp or  
chicken

The Gulf  
Fresh spinach, shrimp,  
artichoke hearts, feta, sun-  
dried tomato pesto

Five Cheese  
Mozzarella, feta, swiss,  
provolone, parmesan

Mardi Gras  
Ham, genoa salami,  
pepperoni, house-made  
olive salad

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# Menu



Aged Ribeye and  
Filet Mignon



Surf & Turf



Whole  
Flounder



Pan Seared  
Salmon



Blackened Creole  
Shrimp Bow Tie Pasta



Shrimp & Grits  
with Creole Gravy

# 7 THINGS

with  
**Tara McMeans**  
Artist and Entrepreneur

Words by Kara Mautz  
Photos by Micah Green

## 1. DESIGN PRINT PROMOTE

While McMeans said she favors graphic design, she loves to expand beyond her niche to try new forms of artistic expression, which she often experiments with at her print design company, Design Print Promote.

"I love working with many different artistic styles and crafts. My art is displayed around town reflected in business logos, marketing materials, event branding, or you may have seen me teaching art classes at Tacky Jacks."

### \*Fun fact:

**McMeans is the featured artist on the poster for the 2024 Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival, taking place May 2-4.**

## 2. SALTWATER HEALS

"Most recently, after Hurricane Sally, I started Saltwater heALS, a lifestyle brand that gives back to the community," McMeans said.



A graphic designer, artist for over 20 years, member of the South Baldwin Chamber Foundation, Coastal Alabama Business Chamber and recent Best of Baldwin winner for Best Local Artist, **Tara McMeans is no stranger to creative expression.**

McMeans, who graduated from Faulkner State (now Coastal Alabama Community College), not only holds a degree in graphic design and commercial art but is also **a licensed travel marketing professional, festival and event planner and owns Design Print Promote, a Gulf Shores-based print design company.**

While it's nearly impossible to narrow down her inspiration and imaginative spirit, here are "7 Things" that define McMeans's creative expression.

"Prior to starting Saltwater heALS, I was only able to donate my time and talent to local non-profits in Coastal Alabama, [but] I am proud to include my art on retail items and create for a cause. A portion of every sale goes directly to local organizations in the community, so you can feel good about your purchase."

## 3. EPIC SOUTH BALDWIN

Aside from art, McMeans also finds inspiration from working with students and local community members through her involvement with the South Baldwin Chamber Foundation and Coastal Alabama Business Entrepreneurship program.

"EPIC is a year-long interactive and educational business program that will teach students the fundamentals of starting a business, offer networking opportunities and grant resources and funding for student start-ups," McMeans said.

## 4. FAMILY

"Family is the most important thing in my life. My husband and I have been together for 23 years. We are very proud of our children and their academic, career and personal accomplishments," McMeans said. "We have enjoyed raising our kids on the same beaches that my husband grew up on, making new memories here with our parents and looking forward to making them with our future grandchildren."





## 5. COMMUNITY

"There are so many people in our community that I look up to and that are doing great things. I love that we are actively involved and committed to working together to make coastal Alabama the best place to live, work and play," McMeans said. "When I am not working, I give back by volunteering my time and

talents for many local nonprofits in the community. I am passionate about inspiring the next generation through art, education and entrepreneurship."

## 6. BEACH

Of course, any local resident or visitor knows the beach is essential to life on the island, and McMeans said she draws a lot of her inspiration from the waves and sandy shores.

"With the natural healing power of saltwater combined with the natural healing power of our quartz crystal sand, there is just something magical and empowering about our beaches in Coastal Alabama. To all who have come before and all that have yet to discover our beautiful beaches, we appreciate each and every one of our locals and visitors that contribute to the fabric of our 'Small Town, Big Beach.'"

## 7. MUSIC

"Music is the soundtrack to my life, [and] there is music playing all day long in my home and office," McMeans said. "It sets the mood for the day and brings out creativity. The

playlist may differ from day to day, but it is usually a mix of jazz, folk, rock,

EDM, hip-hop, R&B and every now and then some country. My favorite thing to do besides art is to attend concerts and festivals. I love being around colorful and creative people and finding inspiration in all forms of art and music."



# EXPLORE YOUR CREATIVE SIDE

## DIVE INTO ART CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS ON THE GULF COAST

As children, we are encouraged to draw, paint and create, but as we grow up, life can get in the way of our artistic expression. If you would like to expand or get back to your artistic side, we have compiled a list of studios, galleries and businesses that can help. Learn to blow glass or work with clay at the Coastal Art Center of Orange Beach, take an acrylic painting class at the Gulf Coast Arts Alliance, or take a digital photography class at the Eastern Shore Art Center. Take back your creative side and learn from the best of the Gulf Coast.

Words by Melanie LeCroy | Photos by Micah Green

### ***COASTAL ARTS CENTER OF ORANGE BEACH***

26389 Canal Road, Orange Beach  
The Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach is more than just a place to admire or purchase art. The center offers opportunities for visitors to make a piece of glass art in The Hot Shop, turn a lump of clay into a bowl or vase or take one of the many visual art classes. To learn more about the classes on offer, visit [www.orangebeachal.gov](http://www.orangebeachal.gov).

### ***GULF COAST ARTS ALLIANCE***

225 E. 24th Ave., Gulf Shores  
The Gulf Coast Arts Alliance is a little gem. The space is filled with the beautiful works of local artists, but it is also a place of artistic discovery. Local artist Tom Vogel teaches acrylic and pastel classes, and Laura Caffey





teaches glass and resin classes. To learn more about the Gulf Coast Arts Alliance, the gallery or classes on offer, visit [www.gcaa-al.org](http://www.gcaa-al.org).

### ***EASTERN SHORE ART CENTER***

401 Oak Ave., Fairhope  
The Eastern Shore Art Center, located in downtown Fairhope, showcases artists' work and strives to nurture the artistic expressions of students young and young at heart. The center offers weekly classes, intensive workshops and summer camps. Classes range from Beginning Acrylics and Beginning Pottery to Digital Photography and Advanced Painting. To learn more about the classes on offer, visit [www.esartcenter.org](http://www.esartcenter.org).

### ***SAND CASTLE UNIVERSITY***

Alabama Gulf Coast beaches  
Some express their creativity with brushes and paint and some with sand and spoons. Let the sand castle professionals teach you the tricks to build a dream sand castle.

Schedule a class for your family, group or yourself and the class will come to your beach rental or meet you at a public beach. These aren't the sand castles of your youth. Sand Castle University owner Janel Hawkins and her team of instructors are professional sand sculptors, and you will on your way after a class. To learn more about Sand Castle University, visit [www.sandcastleu.com](http://www.sandcastleu.com).

### ***HAWAII FLUID ART***

3800 Gulf Shores Pkwy., Unit 106, Gulf Shores  
Hawaii Fluid Art is a place to create. This studio specializes in fluid art, a technique that originated in the 1930s and involves the mixing of acrylic paint with a thinning medium and then pouring it onto a canvas. The studio also offers classes in glass painting, creating resin beach scenes and decorating charcuterie boards. To learn more, visit [www.hawaiifluidart.com](http://www.hawaiifluidart.com).

### ***THE KILN STUDIO***

9 North Church St., Fairhope  
The Kiln Studio & Gallery in Fairhope is a gallery that showcases regional and nationally recognized ceramic artists but is also a studio space that offers classes and workshops year-round. Classes range from hand building to advanced wheel throwing and everything in between. To learn more about classes and workshops offered, visit [www.thekilnstudio.com](http://www.thekilnstudio.com).

### ***COASTAL MAKERS ART STUDIO & ART BARN***

20764 Barbara Lane, Robertsdale & 1260 Dauphin St., Suite 121, Mobile  
Coastal Makers Art Studio and Art Barn offers classes for everyone from the young to the young at heart. Classes range from painting to resin and wreaths to succulent planters. To learn more, visit [www.coastalmakers.com](http://www.coastalmakers.com).



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7am - Sunset

# Rise & Shine BREAKFAST

*Served Daily 7am - 11am*

## The Basics

### BREAKFAST BOWL | 12

gouda grits topped with hash browns, a fried egg & crumbled bacon

### BREAKFAST BUDDY | 11

fried egg with cheese and choice of bacon, sausage or ham on toasted English muffin. Comes with grits or hashbrowns

### ALL AMERICAN | 16

two eggs any style, bacon, sausage or ham, grits or hash browns with toast

### BISCUITS, GRAVY & EGGS | 14

two biscuits topped with two fried eggs covered with sausage gravy

### BREAKFAST BURRITO | 11

scrambled egg, sausage or bacon & cheddar cheese comes with grits or hashbrowns

### Specialties

SHRIMP & GOUDA GRITS | 17

## Sweets

*choice of bacon, sausage or ham*

### FRENCH TOAST STICKS | 11

### Pancakes

### BLUEBERRY | 13

### CHOCOLATE CHIP | 13

### BANANA PECAN | 13

### PLAIN | 11

## Benedicts

*served with grits or hashbrowns*

### CHICKEN FLORENTINE | 17

fried chicken, sautéed spinach and basil, poached eggs, hollandaise sauce on a toasted English muffin

### VEGGIE | 17

fresh spinach, portabella mushroom, sliced tomatoes, poached eggs, hollandaise sauce, fresh herbs on a toasted English muffin

### CAJUN | 18

conecuh sausage, 2 poached eggs, on an english muffin, topped with crawfish queso

# Late Day ENTREES

*Served Daily 7am - Close*

## Sandwiches

*served with slaw and choice french fries, sweet potato fries, chips, and onion rings*

### HAMBURGER | 15

8oz patty, choice of cheese, on a buttered toasted bun

### TERIYAKI CHICKEN BREAST | 15

bacon & swiss cheese on a toasted ciabatta roll dressed & served with honey mustard sauce

### BUFFALO CHICKEN | 15

fried chicken tenders coated with a spicy buffalo sauce. Served dressed on a toasted bun with a rancho bleu or swiss cheese dressing

### REUBEN | 15

corn beef, swiss cheese, sauerkraut & thousand island dressing on grilled rye

### TURKEY FLATBREAD | 15

turkey, swiss, spinach with a pesto sauce

### SHRIMP POBOY OR WRAP | 16

remoulade sauce, dressed on a warm cuban hogie

### MAHI POBOY OR WRAP | 17

fried, grilled or blackened

## Platters

### SHRIMP PLATTER OR FISH PLATTER | 17

grilled, fried or blackened, corn fritters, coleslaw & choice of side

### CHICKEN TENDERS PLATTER | 15

### SEAFOOD COMBO | 20

mahi, shrimp, grilled, fried or blackened with choice of side

## Salads

*Choice of Ranch, Caesar, Bleu Cheese, Italian, Honey Mustard, Apple Cider Vinaigrette & Balsamic Vinaigrette*

### CRAISIN SALAD | 10

Mixed Greens with Sugar Coated Walnuts, Goat Cheese, & Craisins  
Served with an Apple Cider Vinaigrette. Add Chicken Or Shrimp \$6

### CAESAR SALAD | 10

Romaine Lettuce, Parmesan Cheese, Fresh Baked Croutons  
with Caesar Dressing. Add Chicken Or Shrimp \$6

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# DeSoto's Seafood Kitchen

## Lunch Menu

### HOME-STYLE LUNCH SPECIALS

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

- Fried Shrimp - tail less
- Blackened Catfish
- Fried Catfish
- Broiled Flounder
- Fried Flounder
- Grilled Chicken
- Chicken Creole
- Fried Chicken Tenders
- Country Fried Steak
- Hamburger Steak
- Pork Chops
- Country Ham
- Vegetable Plate

### SANDWICHES

(Served with french fries)

- Complimentary Ice Tea and Bread Served with All Dine in Lunch Entrees.
- Add House or Substitute Salad for side dish
- Po-Boy Sandwich
- Cheeseburger
- Crab Cake Po-Boy
- \*Monte Cristo Sandwich

## Dinner Menu

### STARTERS

- Oysters on the Half Shell  
1/2 dozen ..... 1 dozen
- Southern Style Crab Cakes
- Crab, Spinach & Artichoke Dip
- Coconut Shrimp
- Stuffed Mushrooms
- Alligator Bites
- Fried Crab Claws

- Tuna Dip 1/2 lb
- Sweet Potato French Fry Basket 1 lb
- Fried Green Tomatoes

### GUMBO & SOUP

- Seafood Gumbo cup
- Crab & Shrimp Bisque bowl

### FRIED SEAFOOD FAVORITES

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

- Butterfly Shrimp
- Tail-less Shrimp
- Bon Secour Oysters
- Crab Claws
- Fried Fish of the Day
- Shrimp & Flounder
- Shrimp & Oysters
- Fried Catfish

### SALADS

Dressings: Honey-Mustard, Ranch, Bleu Cheese, Italian, Thousand Island, French, Low-Fat Ranch, Raspberry Vinaigrette, Balsamic Vinegar, Balsamic Vinaigrette, Sesame Asian, Oil & Vinegar

- Riviera Salad
  - with pecan chicken tenders
  - with chicken tenders
  - with boiled shrimp
  - with grilled or blackened chicken

- Caesar Salad
  - w/grilled or blackened chicken
  - w/boiled shrimp

Gumbo & Salad - a cup of Seafood Gumbo and our

Bisque & Salad

### SEAFOOD FAVORITES

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

- Add House or Caesar Salad
- Substitute Salad for side dish
- Fried Butterfly Shrimp
- Fried Oysters
- Fried Crab Claws
- \*Coconut Shrimp
- Grilled Shrimp
- Fried Seafood Platter

### SEAFOOD PLATTERS

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

- Shrimp Lover's Platter
- Fried Seafood Platter
- Broiled Seafood Platter
- Creole Platter
- Caribbean Platter
- Crab Platter

### SEAFOOD SPECIALTIES

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

- Stuffed Shrimp
- Shrimp Scampi
- Blackened Catfish
- Coconut Shrimp
- Grilled Shrimp
- Shrimp Creole
- Crawfish Etoufee
- Crab Cake Dinner

### STEAMED SEAFOOD

(Served with new potatoes & one side)

- Snow Crab Legs - 2 lbs.
- Royal Red Shrimp - 1 lb.
- Combo - 1/2 pound Royal Reds & 1 pound Snow Crab

### TONIGHT'S CATCH

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Choose from the following preparation styles:

- Fried Catch
- Blackened Catch
- Grilled Catch
- Broiled Catch

Broiled Seafood Platter

Stuffed Shrimp

Mahi-Mahi

Yellow-Fin Tuna

Tilapia

Grouper

Snow Crab Legs

Royal Reds - 3/4 lb.

Combo - 1/2 lb. Each

Crab Cakes - 2 cakes

### PASTA

Fettuccini Alfredo

- w/grilled or blackened chicken

- with shrimp or crawfish

Basil Pesto Pasta

- with Roma Tomatoes

- with grilled chicken

- with shrimp

### SIDE DISHES

Fried Green Tomatoes ~ Green Beans

Turnip Greens ~ Sweet Potato Casserole Corn

Fritters ~ French Fries

Mashed Potatoes w/Gravy ~ Fried Okra

Au Gratin Potatoes ~ Steamed Veggies

Kernel Corn ~ Yellow Rice

Black-Eyed Peas ~ Cole Slaw

Lima Beans ~ Macaroni & Cheese

New Orleans Catch

Mediterranean Catch

Caribbean Catch

\*Pecan Encrusted Catch

\*Paneed Catch

### LAND LOVER'S FARE

(Served with your choice of two side dishes)

Hawaiian Rib-eye - (12 oz.)

- add jumbo grilled or fried shrimp

Jamaica-Jerk Chicken

Grilled Chicken Breasts

Fried Chicken Tenders

### PASTA

Fettuccini Alfredo

- with grilled or blackened chicken

- with shrimp or crawfish

Scallops Alfredo

Shrimp & Pasta Marsala

Basil-Pesto Pasta

- with grilled chicken

- with shrimp

### SIDE DISHES

Substitute House or Caesar Salad for a Side Dish

Sweet Potato Casserole ~ Cole Slaw

Baked Potato ~ Steamed Vegetables

Yellow Rice ~ French Fries

Fried Green Tomatoes

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Bayou Seafood Platter - Fried Gator, Frog Legs, Shrimp, Oyster, Catfish

Seafood Platter - Fried Shrimp, Oyster, Catfish

Golden Fried Catfish Platter - (U.S. Raised)

Fried Select Oyster Platter

Fried Shrimp Platter

Fried Gator Platter

**Cajun  
Crawfish Pistols**  
There's Nothing  
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Hurricane Burger • Hillbilly Melt • River Burger

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**REDNECK REUBEN • ALABAMA CHICKEN MELT**

PoBoys • Chicken • Shrimp • Oysters • Gator • Frog Legs

Crawfish Pistols • Catfish • Whitefish • Stuffed Crab

**\*\*\*Cajun Crawfish Pistols Dinner (2) w/ Fries & Slaw\*\*\***

OMG! Shrimp Feast Po-Boy • Seafood BLT

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# AN EYE FOR A PHOTOGRAPHER

## VALUES TO PRIORITIZE WHEN CHOOSING ONE FOR YOUR WEDDING

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY NATALIE WILLIAMSON

**B**ooking a wedding photographer can be easy by searching online. However, wedding photographers aren't just taking photos; they are capturing life's special moments, freezing them in time to look back on in the years to come.

Jessi Casara, recipient of Gulf Coast Media's Best of Baldwin Best Wedding Photographer award, views capturing these moments as a privilege rather than just a job.

"I have always loved photography since I was a kid," Casara said. "I have always loved being able to document people's life, and I am very sentimental.

It is the best feeling in the whole world whenever I get to document your favorite day."

With wedding photography comes many hats to wear, according to Casara. From learning marketing, editing software and even being the bride and groom's "hype girl," clicking the shutter button is just one of the many jobs on someone else's big day.

"It is not just about taking fun photos," she said.

When looking for a photographer to capture your wedding, Casara said there is more to look for than just if they are a professional.

“Other than your significant other, the wedding photographer is the person you will spend the most amount of time with.”

"You need to book someone that you like," Cassara said. "Book someone whose style you like, but also book someone whose personality you love. You will be working with them for months."

Other than your significant other, the wedding photographer is the person you will spend the most amount of time with on that day, so it is important to have someone whose personality you can get along with.

"Your personalities have to work together because for weeks and weeks after y'all are hanging out, this could potentially be your future family photographer," she said. "If you're looking for someone to capture your wedding, ask yourself what do you want your wedding day to look like? Are you more traditional, more whimsical fairy tale? Is the most important thing about your day that it is laid back and stress free, or are you wanting to make sure that you get every single shot on your shot list?"

Casara, who has had her own photography business since 2013, added that before booking someone to photograph your big day, read their "About" section and look at several portfolios, view a full gallery, and make sure they are photographing what you envision for your wedding.

"You're spending a lot of money, and you're planning it for a long time," she said. "Just make sure they can capture the style and everything you really want."

Casara said wedding photography might seem stressful, but she loves documenting those special days.



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# A haven for creativity

## City of Orange Beach supports artists, learning at Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach

Words by Melanie LeCroy | Photos by Micah Green

The Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach is one of the most beautiful places in Orange Beach. The campus is dominated by breathtaking views of Wolf Bay and the picturesque 10,000-square-foot, two-story fine art gallery that showcases works by Gulf Coast artists.

Visitors often miss the Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach because it is not on the main roadways leading to the beaches and condominiums. It's a fun place to browse and enjoy the talented artist's work, purchase gifts and keepsakes to remember one's trip or have a unique experience.

The campus includes more than gorgeous views and a gallery. Situated under a line of trees are three smaller buildings: the Hot Shop, Clay Studio and Open Studio. In each of these spaces, students young and old can take classes or have a one-time experience in blown glass or clay. The Open Studio is a space for other creative pursuits like painting.

Since 2012, the City of Orange Beach has operated the Coastal Arts Center and established a "Resident Artists" program. Currently, there are two resident glass

artists and one resident clay artist. The Hot Shop also has a third artist.

Each year, 20,000 visitors pass through the doors. An additional 15,000 enjoy the annual Festival of Art in March, and another 5,000 visit as wedding guests.

The city-funded and -supported facility is a rare asset.

"This city believes in the arts as an enriching and valuable asset for our area. They view us as a quality-of-life facility, not just a revenue generator," said Desiree Blackwell, director of the Coastal Arts Center of Orange Beach.

The resident artists are on campus daily to speak with visitors and demonstrate how glass is blown or a block of clay is molded into a mug. They bring years of experience and education to the table.

"Two of our resident artists are true locals who grew up in our community, and another is a longtime resident," Blackwell said. "They bring authenticity and local knowledge to their craft and their education component for our visitors."

### MEET THE ARTISTS

#### MAYA BLUME-CANTRELL CERAMICS ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Maya Blume-Cantrell is a Gulf Shores local. She grew up playing on the beaches and graduated from high school in Baldwin County.

She said she was exposed to the arts growing up, attended plays and art camps but did not consider herself an artist until high school.

"I had a high school art teacher, Felicia Olds, who really changed the way I looked at things and kind of changed the trajectory of what I was going to do with my life," Blume-Cantrell said.

It was at Auburn University where she first discovered clay and decided to switch her major from architecture and entered the art department. She graduated with a bachelor of fine art with a concentration in ceramics.

After college, she and her husband lived in Asheville, North Carolina, before returning to the Gulf Coast to raise a family. She worked what she referred to as "real jobs" for several years but always maintained a home studio so she could continue to create. Then, 10 years ago, an opportunity changed everything.

"It was never a full-time job. It wasn't feasible," Blume-Cantrell said. "But right at 10 years ago,



this position became available and it was just perfect.”

As the resident clay artist, Blume-Cantrell manages the Clay Studio, teaches classes and speaks with visitors. She also creates pieces that are sold in the Coastal Arts Center’s gift shop and works on commissioned pieces. When Gulf Coast Media visited, she

was making limited-edition mugs for the annual Festival of Art.

She said the required 40 hours a week in the studio working has improved her work over the last 10 years.

“I’ve been able to explore a lot of different avenues. I did a lot of hand-building previously. Coming into this position, I refocused and really got on the wheel and learned how to do a lot of different techniques,”

Blume-Cantrell said.

When asked if she ever thought she would be able to be a full-time artist and live in her hometown, her simple answer was, “No.”

“My husband calls it a unicorn of a job because I get to do what I love but also have



“My husband calls it a unicorn of a job because I get to do what I love but also have the stability and benefits of working for a city.”







**MAYA BLUME-CANTRELL**

the stability and benefits of working for a city," she said. "What makes it even better is the team that we have here at the Art Center. It really matters who you work with."

### KERRY PARKS GLASS ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Kerry Parks was born in California, but her mom would load her up in a Volkswagen bus and drive to Gulf Shores every summer. She would spend her entire summer playing on the white sand beaches. When she was 10, they moved here permanently. She always had a love of art and intended to pursue graphic design at the University of South Alabama, but the program was extremely competitive to get into. She worked on her required courses while trying to figure out what to major in. Around decision-making time, she learned USA was starting a glass-blowing program. Despite never working with glass, she jumped in, found her passion and graduated with a bachelor of fine art in glass.

While in college, Parks volunteered at the Coastal Arts Center. The stars aligned because once she graduated, a resident artist position opened. That was 10 years ago, and

it was her first job in the glass-blowing field.

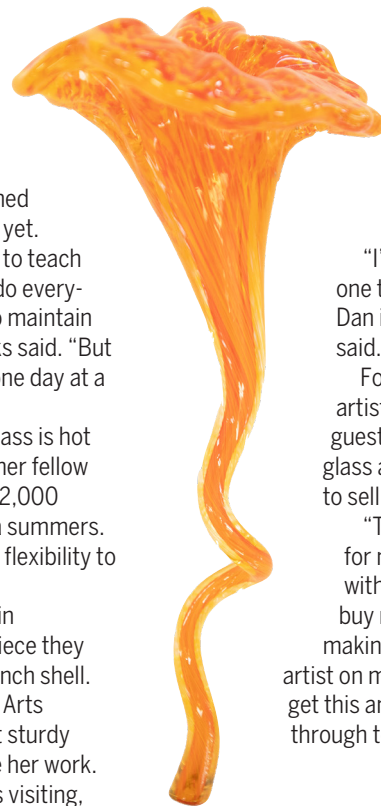
When she reflected back on her start, she laughed at the skills she didn't have yet.

"I didn't really know how to teach people, fix equipment and do everything that you have to do to maintain a running glass shop," Parks said. "But I figured it out by taking it one day at a time."

Unlike most mediums, glass is hot and dangerous. Parks and her fellow artists work with heat over 2,000 degrees in the hot Alabama summers. But this job gives Parks the flexibility to experiment.

Each of the glass artists in residence has a specialty piece they make. For Parks, it's the conch shell. If you ever visit the Coastal Arts Center and see delicate but sturdy glass conch shells, they are her work. While Gulf Coast Media was visiting, she was experimenting with colors for a commissioned conch piece.

Parks's days are filled with blowing glass, speaking with visitors and teaching classes, but she also mentors. Athan Martin began as a volunteer and then moved into an intern position. Parks and fellow artist Daniel Rush have been Martin's teachers, and he is now an employee and



valuable member of the Hot Shop team. Parks said she wishes she had more young people like Martin.

"I've been trying to find someone to hire because eventually, Dan is going to retire," Parks said. "I can't find anybody."

For now, Parks and her fellow artists will continue to delight guests with the art of blowing glass and making beautiful pieces to sell to visitors.

"This place has made it easy for me to have the connection with the people who are going to buy my art and allow me to keep making it," Parks said. "If I was an artist on my own, how would I possibly get this amount of people coming through to see my work?"



**KERRY PARKS**

## DANIEL RUSH GLASS ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Daniel Rush's journey to glass blowing is a lesson that it's never too late to find a new passion.

He grew up just south of Chicago in Plainfield, Illinois. After high school and college, he went off to seminary. Most of his working career was spent as a pastor and teacher at community college.

Like many people who end up moving to Gulf Shores, he and his wife, Kathy, discovered the area on a vacation. A friend brought them here early in their marriage.

"On our first visit here, I said I would love to retire here and have a house on Wolf Bay. We had about \$6 in our checkbook at the time. It was just a crazy dream," Rush said with a smile. "But here we are, and we have a house on Wolf Bay."

He has always been a creative individual and enjoys many artistic pursuits like woodworking, and he taught himself how to make glass beads with a torch for his daughter's jewelry-making business many years ago. For his birthday 14 years ago, Rush's daughter gave him a class in the Hot Shop, and he fell in love with glass blowing. When he returned to Illinois, he started taking courses there.

Rush and his wife moved to Gulf Shores permanently 13 years ago. The admitted workaholic knew he would need something to keep himself busy and began volunteering at the Coastal Arts Center. After four years of volunteering and learning the craft, a position became available, and he was hired. In total, he has spent 12 years in the Hot Shop.

They always say you remember your first. In Rush's case, it's the first piece his wife wanted to display that he remembers most. It was a little yellow bud vase. He said he felt like he had made it when she placed it on a shelf in their home. Now their home on Wolf Bay is brimming with his work.

"My term [for my specialty] is I just make funky pieces. I will blow items and melt them together and then make a sculpted piece out of that eventually," he explained.

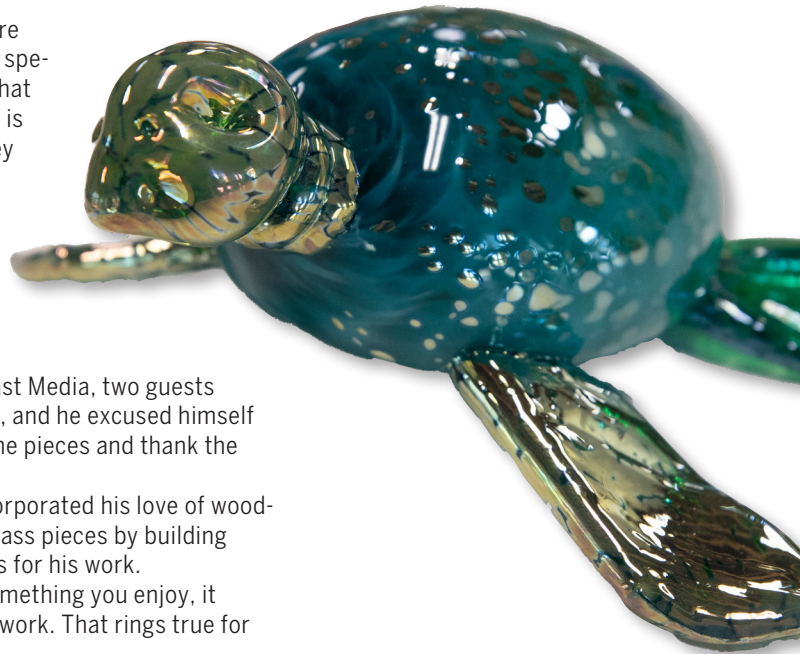
If you see his work in the Coastal Art Center, you will see his "funky" way of blending colored glass together. The glass ocean



waves he makes are stunning. Another specialty item of his that sells like hotcakes is his oil bottles. They make the perfect addition to your kitchen or a gift for the chef in your life. During his interview with Gulf Coast Media, two guests purchased bottles, and he excused himself so he could sign the pieces and thank the visitors.

He has also incorporated his love of woodworking into his glass pieces by building bases and displays for his work.

When you do something you enjoy, it doesn't seem like work. That rings true for Rush.



“It’s a humbling thing because when you think you’ve got it figured out, the glass laughs and teaches you a lesson.”



DANIEL RUSH



"Anytime you can share a passion with someone, that's a good day," Rush said. "I am a people person, and it just makes the day go well to share a passion with people who are interested. They'll ask questions, and you get to share all that stuff with them."

The biggest lesson Rush has learned from glass blowing is what he doesn't know.

"It's a humbling thing because when you think you've got it figured out, the glass laughs and teaches you a lesson," he laughed. "I think I'm a lifelong learner, and this is one of those things that there's never going to be a place where you say, 'Oh I got this all figured out,' because there's always something new to learn."

### ATHAN MARTIN GLASS ARTIST

Athan Martin is the newest member of the Hot Shop crew. His journey to glass-blowing is different from the others and starts much earlier.

Martin grew up mostly in Alabama and was homeschooled, which gave him the opportu-

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nity to explore his interests more than some children. During a vacation to Georgia when he was 9 years old, he became fascinated with blacksmithing at a Renaissance Festival. The blacksmith took the time to answer his many questions and gave him a 6-inch piece of steel to take home and suggested he use a blowtorch and pliers to see what he could make of it.

Before long, Martin and his father were figuring out how to build a furnace in the backyard using an outdoor fireplace and a backpack leaf blower. He spent several years perfecting his metal work until a family vacation to Arizona led him to glass blowing.

During their trip to Sedona, they went by a hot shop called The Melting Point, and the glass blowing piqued his interest, so he signed up for a class. Martin gave the teachers some background on his blacksmithing work, so they let him go last in the class and gave him more time. He spent two hours figuring out the glass and knew he wanted to learn more.

"Once I had gotten done with that class, I looked at my mom and said, 'OK. Here are our options: we can either move to Arizona so I can intern with these guys, or we can find a hot shop in Baldwin County that will take me,'" Martin said.



"I never knew this place existed at that time."

Martin was determined, and he headed to the Coastal Arts Center when he returned from that trip. He has been there ever since.

"They can't get rid of me now," Martin laughed. "It's amazing, though, that they were open to it."

He started off volunteering with the summer camp and assisting with event setup. But he always found a way to get time in the Hot Shop, watching, helping and learning.

"It was very incremental how it happened, but it took six or seven months before they would allow me to gather out of the glass furnace by myself," Martin said. "When anyone asks me where I learned this skill, I say 99.8% of it was learned from these two over here, Dan and Kerry."

For the past six or seven years, Martin has been watching and asking questions. Parks and Rush have been his mentors and teachers. When asked about the memory of the first piece he made on his own, he laughed and said he blacked out.

"It was a flower with the little curly stem," Martin said. "It did not look great, but I did it myself, and I was happy with it. I wanted to improve upon that process, so I kind of tweaked around."

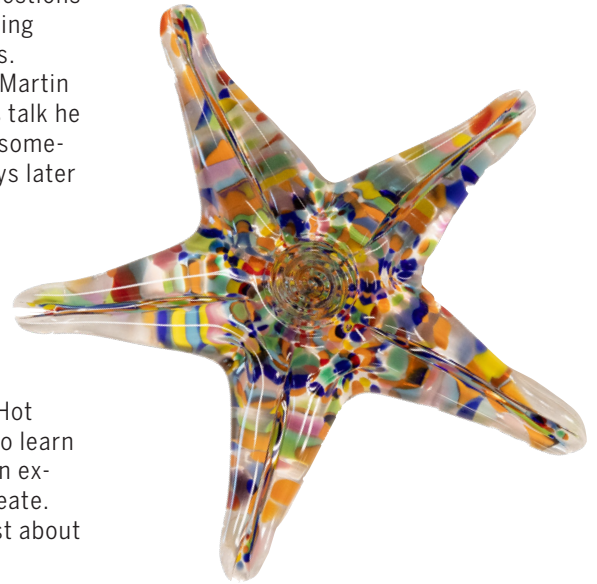
Martin has gone from asking questions and learning the basics to perfecting goblets and giving talks to visitors. Parks and Rush laughed because Martin has managed to memorize Rush's talk he gave word for word. If Rush adds something new, he will hear it a few days later in Martin's talk.

While he is only 22 years old, Martin doesn't see himself leaving the Hot Shop. He does see a potential to get back into his blacksmithing and incorporating the two mediums in his work. He and the Hot Shop team are currently looking to learn stainless steel welding so they can expand on the scale of work they create.

One of the aspects he likes most about glass blowing is the teamwork involved.

"There are a lot of pieces on that wooden shelf that would not be possible

for me to make without someone else assisting me to create it," Martin said. "They know exactly what I need."



“When anyone asks me where I learned this skill, I say 99.8% of it was learned from these two over here, Dan and Kerry.”



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