

EVENT GUIDE DESTIN FISHING RODEO

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AJ'S SEAFOOD & OYSTER BAR**

2026

**MISS DESTIN
KAYLYNN
HAYLES**



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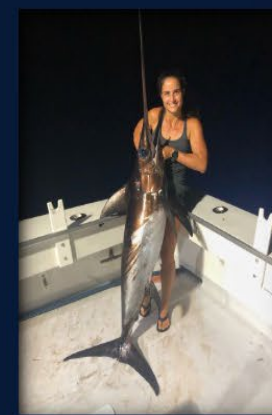
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OCTOBERS IN DESTIN CARRY WITH THEM A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, PRIDE, HERITAGE AND NO SMALL AMOUNT OF COMPETITION.

What began in 1948 as a way for local fishermen and their families to stretch the season just a little bit longer has become something much bigger — a thread connecting generations past, present and future alike. Even as Destin has grown and changed over the years, the Rodeo has remained a constant.

By the end of September, much of the Destin Harbor is running on fumes. But come October 1st, something shifts in the air

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Amber Helton

that breathes it all back to life. You feel it walking the docks. You feel it heading offshore — or inshore — for the day, and you feel it hanging around behind AJ's waiting for the boats to come to the scales.

From before sunrise to long after dark, there's an energy in Destin during October that's hard to describe unless you've experienced it for yourself.

For more than seven decades, hard work, tradition and community have come together in a month-long tournament and celebration rooted deeply in the identity of this town. Built by generations of anglers, deckhands, captains, spectators and volunteers alike, the Rodeo has become part of life in Destin, and whether it's a 90-pound amberjack, a 50-pound grouper,

or a kid proudly carrying a pinfish to the scales with a grin on his face, it's all part of what makes it special.

The Rodeo also represents something deeply personal for many of us. This year, I find myself reflecting on the generations of families who have made the Rodeo part of their lives for decades. My own family is fortunate to be part of that tradition, with three generations actively fishing it today. My father-in-law has fished the Rodeo for more than half a century and still runs his charter boat each October. My husband has fished it his entire life, and now our children look forward to it every year as well.

This year will feel different in many ways as we remember longtime weighmaster Bruce Cheves. For more than 40 years, Bruce was a familiar and steady presence at the Rodeo, and his impact on this event and the people involved cannot be overstated. Traditions like the Destin Fishing Rodeo endure because of people like Bruce — people who dedicate their time, energy and heart year after year to keeping them alive.

As we celebrate the 78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo, I want to thank the volunteers, sponsors, captains, crews, anglers and families who continue to make this event possible. Most of all, thank you to everyone who continues to show up each October and carry this tradition forward for the next generation.

We look forward to seeing you at the docks this October.

RACHEL STAPLES

CHAIRMAN OF THE RODEO

Rachel Staples



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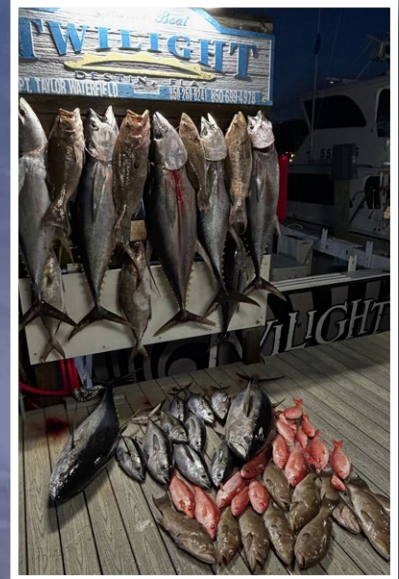
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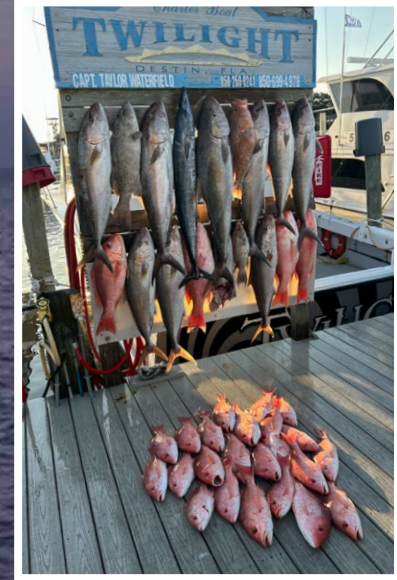
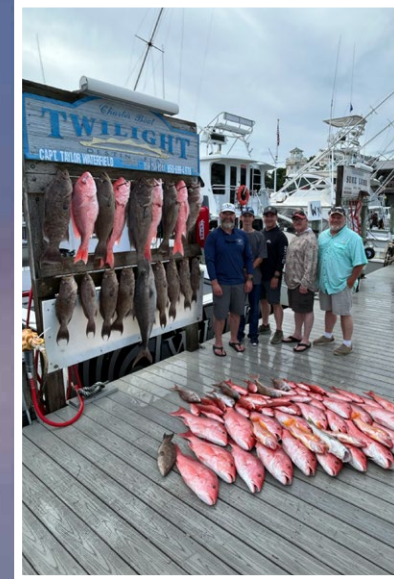


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2026 MISS DESTIN

My name is Kaylynn Hayles, and I am incredibly honored and grateful to serve as your Miss Destin 2026. Being born and raised in Destin, this community has always held such a special place in my heart, and becoming Miss Destin is truly a dream come true. I feel so blessed to represent the town that has shaped me into the person I am today.

“One of the biggest parts of my life has always been fishing.”

KAYLYNN
HAYLES



I am the daughter of Eric and Angela Hayles and have an older brother, Maddox, who has always been someone I look up to. Growing up in Destin gave me the opportunity to experience an amazing childhood surrounded by a close-knit community, beautiful beaches, and lifelong friendships.

From a young age, I have always loved being involved in the community and participating in activities that helped me grow both as a leader and teammate. I cheered for the Destin Dolphins football team and participated in local dance and gymnastics programs.

Giving back to the community means so much to me. I enjoy volunteering as a coach for the Destin Dolphins and Destin Marlins cheer teams and mentoring younger athletes in the same programs that helped shape me growing up.

Outside of volunteering, I love spending time with family and friends, being out on the water, relaxing at the beach, and taking my dog, Bettie, on walks. I also work two jobs, hostessing at Harbor Docks and making snowcones on the beach with Sunrise Beach Chair Company.

I attended Destin Elementary School and later Destin Middle School, where I became heavily involved in athletics and extracurricular activities. During middle school, I served as president of the fishing club, was a four-year member of the cheer team, and competed on the track and field team for four years. I ran the 800-meter race and threw discus, and one of my favorite memories was qualifying for the state competition in eighth grade with my school's 4x8 relay team.

This upcoming year, I will be a senior at Niceville High School. I am an honors student with a 4.2 weighted GPA and a proud four-year member of the nationally and state-ranked Niceville High School cheerleading team. I am also involved in several organizations including Beach Clean Up Club, National Honor Society, Women in Sports Association, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Leadership, where I have had the opportunity to give back to the community.

One of the biggest parts of my life has always been fishing. I grew up spending countless hours on the boat with my dad, whether it was joining him on fishing trips or spending time with my family on our boat. A favorite memory of fishing of mine would be during Harbor Docks Cobia Classic when I was younger and I caught the biggest one out of everyone!

October has always been one of the most exciting times of the year in Destin because of the Destin Fishing Rodeo. I always joke that I was born September 30th, the day before October started, just so I could enjoy all 31 days of rodeo season! I am beyond excited to be part of the 78th Destin Fishing Rodeo and welcome everyone with open arms. Serving as Miss Destin 2026 is an honor I will never take for granted, as I am the luckiest girl in “The World’s Luckiest Fishing Village.”

Kaylynn Hayles



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2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 2026

🏆 Rodeo Judges Meeting ([Wednesday, September 2nd](#))

Volunteer Rodeo Judges will meet at 5:00 pm at the Destin Community Center for an informative meeting regarding the record-keeping of the Rodeo weigh-ins. If you are interested in participating as a Rodeo Judge, contact the Rodeo office at 850.837.6734 or email amberjack@destinfishingrodeo.org

🏆 Meet Miss Destin ([Tuesday, September 15th](#))

Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 6:00 pm, The Alice – A Gathering Place, will host an introduction party for Miss Kaylynn Hayles, Miss Destin 2026. Captains, crew, anglers, Rodeo members, volunteers and their families are invited to this 24th Annual Destin tradition.

🏆 48th Annual Destin Seafood Festival ([September 25, 26, & 27](#))

Come join us along the harbor at the 48th Annual Destin Seafood Festival. Live music on multiple stages all three days of the event! Admission is FREE. Elevate your experience with a VIP ticket, including a seafood competition between chefs, food samples, private bathrooms, private bar, entertainment and more! www.destinseafoodfestival.com

🏆 Captains and Mates Meeting ([Tuesday, September 29th](#))

Sponsored by Centennial Bank and AJ's hosted in the downstairs restaurant area. Tuesday, September 29, 2026 – Registration begins at 4:00 pm with the meeting following at 5:00 pm. Complimentary food and beverages provided for captains, mates and their guests. Boats may register and pick up captain's packages at the event. Any rule changes will be announced and discussed at this very important, mandatory meeting. Centennial Bank will give away two \$250 gift cards to two lucky registered boat captains! (Must be present to win). Angler information cards will be disbursed.

🏆 78th Annual Rodeo "Reel Local" Kick-Off Party ([Tuesday, September 29th](#))

Immediately following the Captains and Mates Meeting on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, at 6:00 pm, AJ's will host the 78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo Kick-Off Party. Family-fun gathering with Live Music! Join Us! Sponsored by Bud Light. www.ajsdestin.com

October 2026

🏆 78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo ([October 1st - 31st](#))

Happy Rodeo! Come join us at the 78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo! Weigh-Ins are everyday behind AJ's from 10 am - 7 pm.

🏆 Destin 5K Rodeo Run ([Sunday, October 4th](#))

Starts at the picturesque Clement Taylor Park on the beautiful Choctawhatchee Bay. This run meanders through historic Destin neighborhoods and ends back at the park. Proceeds benefit the Miss Destin Scholarship Fund. Contact kimmymeyers@yahoo.com for more information or register online at destinfishingrodeo.org.

🏆 Kids Fall Movie Festival – ([Monday, October 12th](#))

School is out for Columbus Day and AJ's has just the thing to keep the kids entertained! AJ's will be showing a FREE movie on the famous JumboTron! Kids will be treated to hot dogs, popcorn and snowcones! For more details, please visit www.ajsdestin.com.

2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 2026 (continued)

🏆 Bruce Cheves Day ([Friday, October 16th](#))

Come to the docks to celebrate the date the City of Destin has declared "BRUCE CHEVES DAY!" Our late weighmaster will be specially honored as we remember his best told tales and legacy he gifted the Destin Fishing Rodeo for 41 years.

🏆 Ringing of the Bell ([Friday, October 16th](#))

Each year at 5:00 pm on Bruce Cheves Day, the Rodeo celebrates the lives and legends of those we lost this year.

🏆 Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation Day ([Saturday, October 17th](#))

Each October, The Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation brings in children from foster situations to fish and learn about marine habitats and environmental awareness. Sponsored by The New Florida Girl's American Spirit, Fish Florida, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, Pilot Company, Zup-Med Memphis and Destin Realty.

🏆 4th Annual Miss Destin Mingle ([Saturday, October 24th](#))

Miss Destins from throughout the years come from near and far to celebrate the newest member of their "club". The girls get together to reminisce by enjoying an afternoon harbor cruise and photo opportunities at the weigh-in! Come celebrate these incredible women with us!

🏆 Halloween on the Harbor ([Saturday, October 31st](#))

Wear your costume and join Rodeo captains, anglers, Rodeo judges, Miss Destin and Rodeo volunteers to be a part of the largest Halloween Party on the Destin Harbor!

November 2026

🏆 78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo Awards ([Thursday, November 5th](#))

Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 5:30 pm, the lucky anglers, captains and mates will be given their awards and prizes in a festive, fun and casual gathering in the downstairs restaurant of AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar!

January/February 2027

🏆 Annual Rodeo Membership Meeting ([TBA](#))

The meeting is open to all members of the Rodeo. Hosted at AJs Seafood & Oyster Bar. complimentary hors d' oeuvres will be served. This is a Members Only event. Membership fees for new and existing may be paid at the meeting and must be paid prior to the voting. Membership information at www.destinfishingrodeo.org

For more information on these events please visit the rodeo website at www.destinfishingrodeo.org or AJ's at www.ajsdestin.com

RODEO ENTRY FEES!

CHARTER BOAT - \$500.00

PRIVATE BOAT - Under 26' • \$300.00

PRIVATE BOAT - 26' & OVER • \$500.00

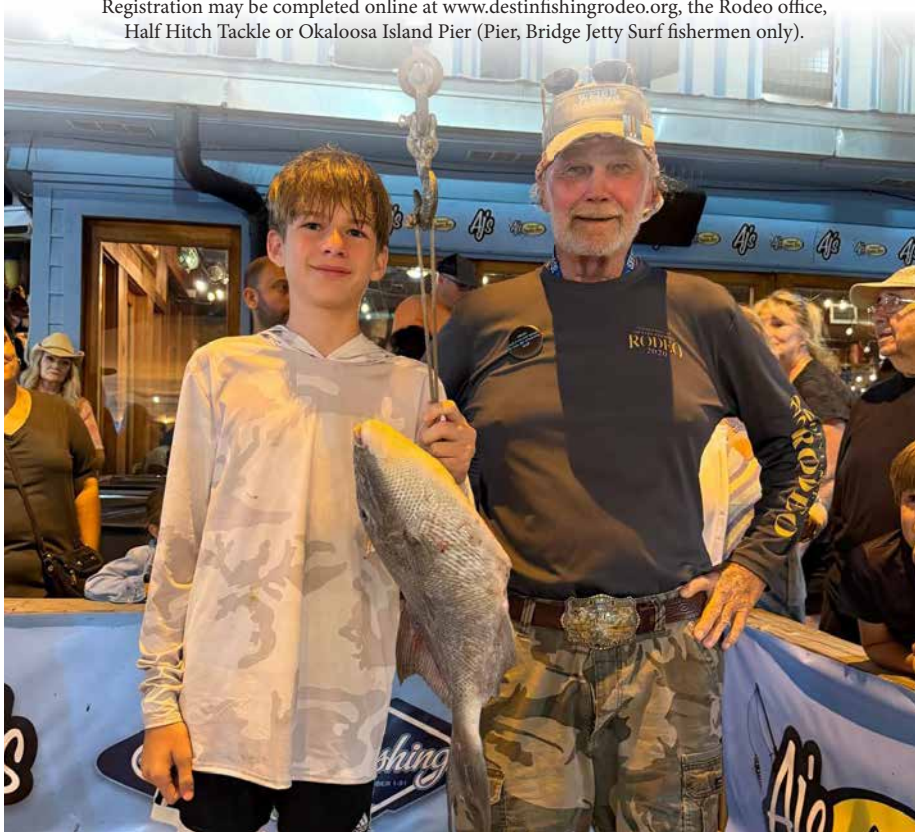
KAYAK/PADDLE BOARDS - \$100.00

PIER, BRIDGE, JETTY & SURF FISHING

\$25.00 Adults - Under 15 Years Free

Anglers fishing aboard registered vessels - FREE

A copy of a State/Coast Guard issued Boat Registration Form must be on file with the Rodeo prior to first weigh-in. Boats and/or competitors entered after the beginning of the Rodeo in any division are not eligible for competition until the day following registration. Registration may be completed online at www.destinfishingrodeo.org, the Rodeo office, Half Hitch Tackle or Okaloosa Island Pier (Pier, Bridge Jetty Surf fishermen only).



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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
AJ'S JUMBOTRON

4pm

Captains & Mates Registration

5pm

Captains & Mates Meeting-
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4pm-6pm

Rodeo Kickoff Dinner

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Party Boat DESTIN PRINCESS offers open-boat deep sea fishing trips in the Gulf of America (purchase one ticket per person) aboard our clean, fast, and comfortable US Coast Guard approved 65 ft. Catamaran that can carry 41 passengers. The Catamaran style absorbs the motion of the water reducing the chances of sea sickness. The Princess is in excellent condition, has men's and women's restrooms, air-conditioned cabin, places to sit in the sun and shade, and we know where the fish live! Recently our spots have produced larger size fish, and the fish populations are up! We provide bait, tackle, fishing licenses, and instructions from the best crew on the Destin Harbor.



Deep sea fishing ranging from a 4-hour kids cruise to a 12-hour DEEP water trip. We catch Red Snapper, Grouper, and Triggerfish. Bring sunscreen, food, beverages, and a camera to capture memories to last a lifetime. **850-837-5088** or Book online at **destinpartyboatfishing.com**

BOOK YOUR CHARTER TRIP TODAY

CHARTER BOAT KRAKEN REELS

Kraken Reels is a federally permitted 47-foot Chris-Craft Commander Sportfish powered by dual Cummins 450s, offering a comfortable and capable ride for your Destin Fishing Rodeo adventure. The boat features air conditioning, a bathroom, outriggers, and top-of-the-line fishing gear to help anglers make the most of their time on the water.

Captain Jon Ray has been fishing the Destin area for 10 years and brings local knowledge and experience to every trip.



Whether bottom fishing, trolling, or heading offshore, Kraken Reels is equipped and ready for a great day of fishing in the Gulf. **Gofishing@krakenreels.com**
850-659-7998

CHARTER BOAT DESTINATION + DAY BREAK

The charter boat Destination is ready to take you and your guests on a first class deep sea fishing experience. Big, safe and capable perfectly describe this 55' fishing machine. The Destination specializes in providing a full-service, private, charter fishing experience for anglers of all ages and skill levels. We are USCG approved for up to 27 passengers and conveniently located at HarborWalk Marina.

The Daybreak is a custom built fishing machine designed and built by G&S Yachts here in Destin. It's family friendly and perfect for groups of up to 6 passengers.



We are Rodeo Ready!
Contact us at **850-259-3778** or **destinfishinginfo@gmail.com**,
charterboatdestination.com.

CHARTER BOAT PHOENIX

The Phoenix is a 52' custom G&S sportfisher that is fast, clean and comfortable. It has a spacious galley with TV and AC. It is USCG approved for up to 20 passengers. The Phoenix has proved itself as one of the top fishing boats within the Destin Fishing Rodeo and fleet. We have placed in several divisions over the last few years including King Mackerel, Blackfin Tuna, reef fish, Ladies and Juniors.



Contact Captain Justin Brantley at **850-837-9734** or visit us online at **charterboatphoenix.com** for more information! Let's go fishing!

CHARTER BOAT DESTINY

DESTINY is a large, fast, clean, and comfortable 72" G&S USCG approved party boat that carries up to 56 passengers. She offers open-boat deep sea fishing trips in the Gulf of America. No need to charter an entire boat; you can purchase one ticket per person to go deep sea fishing. Destiny's size and weight reduces the chances of sea sickness. She is in excellent condition, with restrooms, air-conditioning, sun and shaded seating. We know where the fish live! Recently our spots have produced larger fish, and fish populations are up! We provide bait, tackle, fishing licenses, and instructions from the best crew on the Destin Harbor. Enjoy deep sea fishing ranging from a 4 to 12 hour trips, testing your DEEP water



skills. Our 6-hour deep sea fishing trip is our the most popular. We catch Red Snapper, Grouper, and Triggerfish in season and many other species. Bring sunscreen, food, beverages, and a camera to capture memories to last a lifetime.
850-837-5088 or Book online at
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Emerald Coast Charters: 30 years ago it was just a dad taking his daughter fishing... Today it's two captains with two boats taking your dad and daughter fishing. This father-daughter team enjoy sharing their passion with every fisherman young and old; from the most serious anglers to the first-time fisherman. With over 50 years combined experience your family is sure to make lifelong memories. Our 40-foot boats have comfortable indoor cabins with restrooms and air-conditioning. We offer private charters that can accommodate up to 15 passengers. All awards are given to the anglers!



Reserve your adventure today and let's place your name on the 2026 leaderboard. Call **850-356-4034** or check out our website at **Emeraldcoastcharters.net**
Faith * Family * Fishing

CHARTER BOAT BOW'D UP

The boat is a 52' custom Sportfisher. USCG approved for up to 13 passengers. The vessel is equipped with sleeping berths, bathroom/shower, air conditioning, satellite TV, and galley. Captain Brady has won captain of the year in 2008, 2016, 2017. We specialize in Big King Mackerel, overnight trips for Swordfish, Marlin and Tuna.



Call captain Brady Bowman at **850-978-5876** to book a trip!
Captbradybowman@gmail.com
Bowdupfishingdestin.com

CHARTER BOAT SEA FIX

Climb aboard our 45-foot custom sportfishing charter, a powerful and dependable vessel built for adventure on the open water. Powered by twin Cummins turbo diesel engines, she delivers both strength and reliability to get you to the fishing grounds fast and comfortably. Recently upgraded with the latest marine electronics, including GPS, radar, and fish-finding technology, this boat is fully equipped to put you on the bite. With a spacious deck and room for up to 25 passengers, it's the perfect choice for group outings, corporate



events, or serious angling trips. Whether you're chasing the thrill of the catch or just need your "Sea Fix," Captain Chris and first Mate Aaron are ready to deliver.
850-685-2963 CharterBoatSeafix.com

CHARTER BOAT MAXIMUS

Maximus is one of Destin's premier large offshore center console boats. As a Catamaran it's a smooth riding and spacious vessel to get you to the fish faster and more comfortably. Restroom on board for the ladies and the high sidewalls makes it comfortable for kids as well. Maximus is great for beginners, kids and hard core fisherman that want to make longer runs.



Captain Justin Hall
469-853-0858

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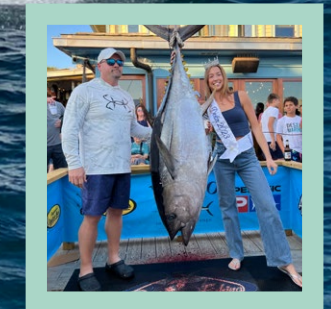
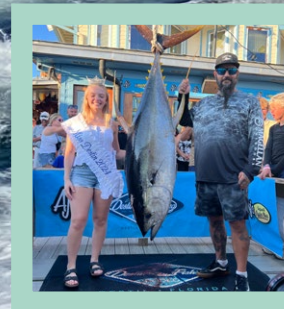
CAPT. TRAVIS REAM

CHARTER BOAT

LADY EM

850.837.6717

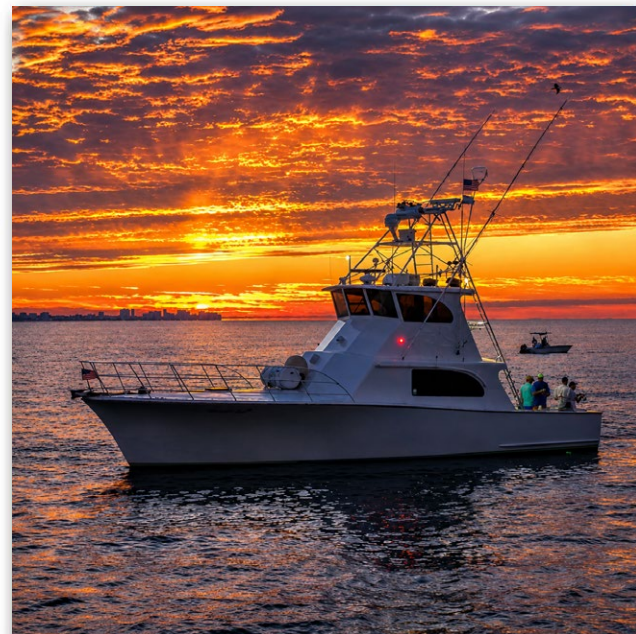
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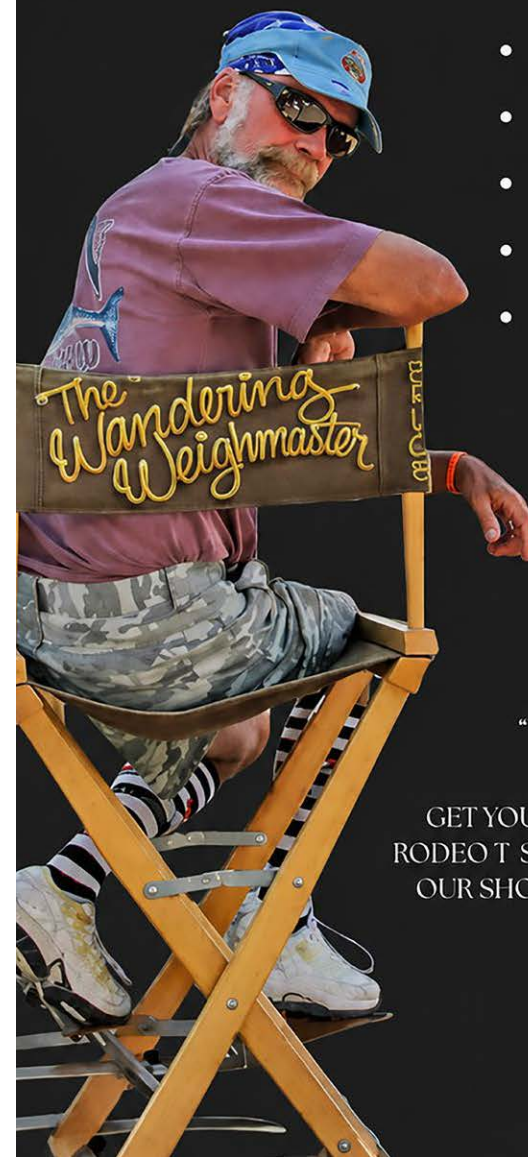


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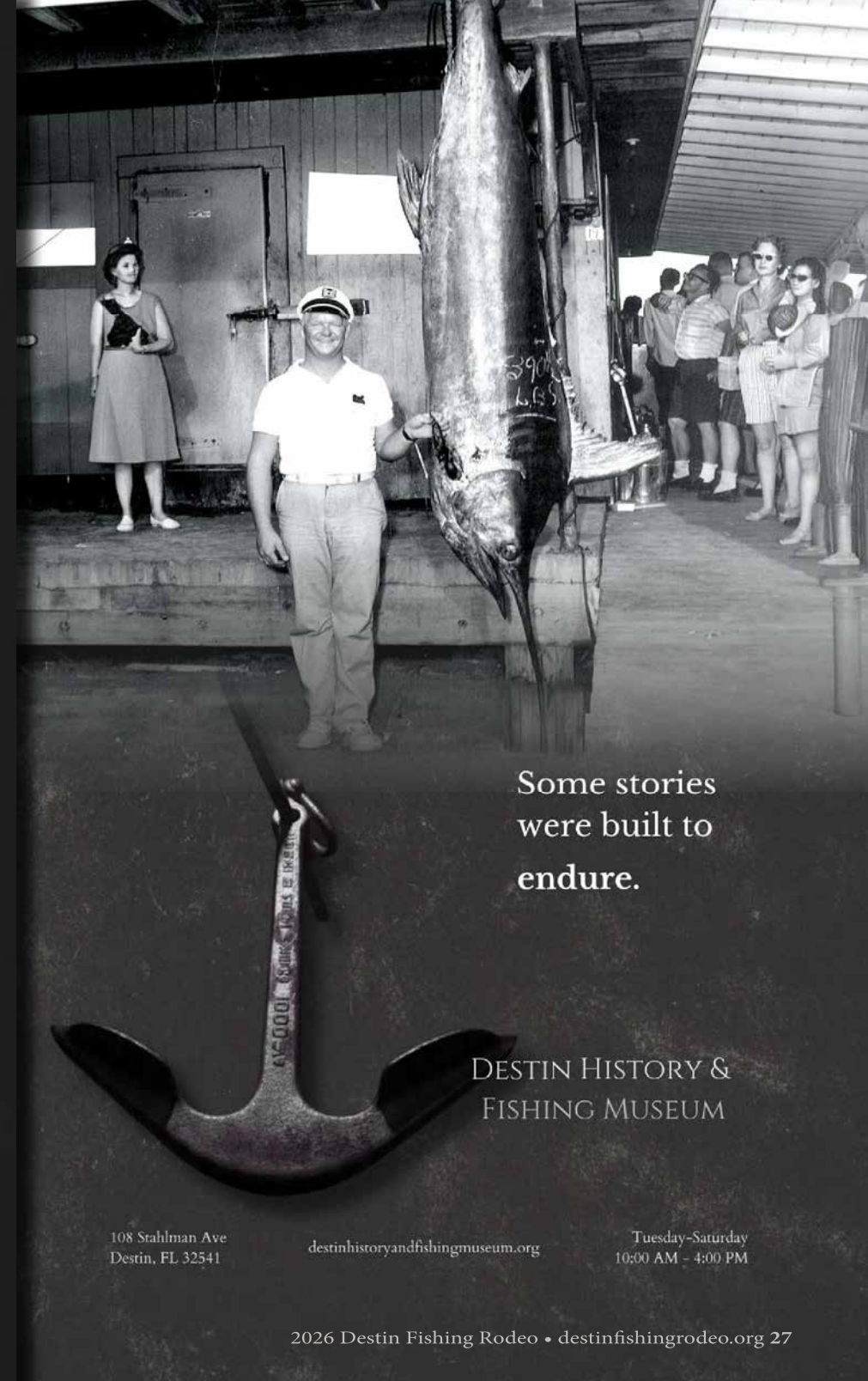
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2026 REGISTERED VESSELS



2026 REGISTERED VESSELS



Charter Fishing Boats

A Charter Boat is utilized for all varieties of deep-sea sportfishing and is generally chartered by groups of 4 or more, however some individuals may be grouped to form a charter. Contact the Captain for more information.

Boat Name	Captain Name	Phone	Web	E-mail	Pass	Size
100 Proof	Allen Staples / Robert Michelson	850-259-7343	destincharterfishing.org	100proofcharters@gmail.com	20	52'
5th Day	Jimmy Miles	850-356-4034	emeraldcoastcharters.net	bloumiles5@gmail.com	6	40'
A Slice of Life Fishing	John Wrostek	618-779-1417	FB: A Slice of Life Fishing	babamm1@charter.net	6	32'
Al-Lin	Harold Staples	850-837-8615	al-lin-charterboat.com	al.lin@cox.net	6	44'
Big John	Denis LaBarre / Reid Phillips	850-585-4384	bigjohnfishing.com	fishon@bigjohnfishing.com	15	52'
Blue Runner II	Tommy Carter	850-685-0077	destincharterfish.com	bluerunner_2@yahoo.com	6	42'
Bow'd Up	Brady Bowman	850-978-5876	bowdupfishingdestin.com	captbradybowman@gmail.com	13	52'
Catching Memories	Brian Cole	850-963-6460	catchingmemoriescharters.com	colesconstruction01@gmail.com	6	46'
Championship	Matthew & Christian Champion	504-535-3491	championshipoffshore.com	mchamp1307@gmail.com	6	42'
Dawn Patrol	John Tenore	850-376-1936	dawnpatroldestin.com	johntenore55@gmail.com	6	21'8"
Daybreak	AJ Niemiec	850-259-3778	charterboatdaybreak.com	destinfishinginfo@gmail.com	6	40'
Deep Charters	Jon Polk	850-400-4155	deepcharters.com	jon@deepcharters.com	6	38'
Deep Obsession	David Dewberry	850-650-3825	pelicanadventures.com	pelicanadventures@gmail.com	6	42'
Destination	Stan Phillips	850-259-3778	charterboatdestination.com	destinfishinginfo@gmail.com	27	55'
DiscipleShip	Brandy Miles	850-356-4034	emeraldcoastcharters.net	bloumiles5@gmail.com	15	46'
Double Time	Tim Adams	850-685-1932	doubletimecharters.com	capttim@doubletimecharters.com	6	25'
Finest Kind	Jason Mikel	850-837-6800	charterfishingdestin.com	jasonmikel@yahoo.com	22	53'
First Light	Tyler Brielmayer	850-419-5999	nothinmattersfishingcharters.com	tylex16@yahoo.com	10	48'
Fish N Fun	Karl Boehm	850-797-1978	fishNfundestin.com	fishNfundestin@gmail.com	6	32'
Full Contact	Greg Meyers	850-496-0590	charterboatfullcontact.com	charterboatfullcontact@yahoo.com	6	38'
Full Draw	Brantley Galloway	850-543-3211	hilinercharters.com	hilinercharters@yahoo.com	6	40'
Game On	Eric Thrasher	850-259-1962	gameonchartersdestin.com	daybreak1962@yahoo.com	6	41'
Good Times	Mark Mueller / Anthony Dewberry	850-650-3825	pelicanadventures.com	pelicanadventures@gmail.com	20	45'
Great Escape II	Jason Rogers	850-218-2199	greatestescapefishing.com	allaroundmarine@aol.com	6	58'
Huntress	Mike Graef	850-685-5593	charterboathuntress.com	fishhuntressdestinfl@cox.net	6	40'
Into the Blue	Nino Bright	850-420-9342	intothebluedestin.com	info@intothebluedestin.com	6	46'
Just B Cause	Ken Bolden	850-830-3619	Fishingjustbcause.com	captkenb@gmail.com	20	45'
Knot Working	Marc Attaway / Sean O'Hare	678- 858-1662	knotworkingfishing.com	marc.attaway@outlook.com	6	30'
Kraken Reels	Jonathan Ray	850-659-7998	krakenreels.com	gofishing@krakenreels.com	6	46'
Lady Em	Travis Ream	850-837-6717	ladyemdestin.com	ladyemcharters@gmail.com	25	65'
Making Time	Bill Harrison	850-837-1293		captmerica012@icloud.com	8	28'

Boat Name	Captain Name	Phone	Web	E-mail	Pass	Size
Maximilian	Chris Fulford	469-853-0858	maximusfishing.com	maximurpm@gmail.com	6	33'
Maximus	Justin Hall	469-853-0858	maximusfishing.com	maximurpm@gmail.com	6	33'
Nothin' Matters	Hunter Ewing	850-419-5999	nothinmattersfishingcharters.com	tylex16@yahoo.com	6	44'6"
On the Bite Too	Scott Whitehurst	850-259-6210		onthebite1@gmail.com	6	24'10"
Outta Line	Trey Windes	850-837-2320	charterboatouttaline.com	outtalinefishin@gmail.com	24	53'
Phoenix	Justin Brantley	850-837-9734	charterboatphoenix.com	phoenixcharterboat@gmail.com	20	55'
Reel Legend	Richie Riddle	850-687-7377	reellegendfishing.com	zach@rookiecharters.com	13	47'
Relentless	Steve Regan	850 585 8426		charterboatrelentless@gmail.com	20	65'
Respite	Charles Stone	850-218-4517	bluwaterescape.com	bwecharters@gmail.com	6	27'
Sea Fix	Chris Michelson	850-685-2963		nostuk@gmail.com	25	45'
Sea Winder	Chris Couvillon	850-259-9125	seawinder.com	chris@seawinder.com	6	40'
Seahorse	Dean Cox	850-259-8782	charterboatseahorse.com	deancox@mchsi.com	16	47'
Silver King	Alex Hare / Camden Oliver	850-226-3995		alexhare10@icloud.net	6	25'
Stelluna	Judah Barbee	850-585-9985	deepseadestin.com	stelluna25@gmail.com	20	52'
Sure Lure	Don Dineen	850-376-8399	surelurecharters.com	fish@surelurecharters.com	6	40'
Tradewinds	Brian Howard / Larry Meyer	850-830-4752	charterboatsdestin.com	bhoward271@cox.net	49	65'
Tropical Winds	Randy Hanshaw	850-837-7095	olinmarlercharterboats.com	olinmarlerbooth@gmail.com	35	65'
Twilight	Taylor Waterfield	850-699-4978	FB: Charter Boat Twilight	taylorwaterfield@gmail.com	12	52'
UnReel	Justin Destin	850-259-2516	fishingwithadestin.com	fulldraw2005@yahoo.com	17	55'
Windwalker II	Bernie "Berno" Lefebvre	850-374-2470	fishdestinflorida.com	captberno@gmail.com	15	48'

Boat Name	Captain Name	Phone	Web	E-mail	Pass	Size
American Spirit	Jim Green	850-837-1293	partyboatamericanspirit.com	newflagirl2000@aol.com	65	85'
Destin Princess	Jason Klosterman	850-837-5088	destinpartyboatfishing.com	maryanne@destin-real-este.com	42	65'
Destiny	Dennis Kendrick	850-837-5088	destinpartyboatfishing.com	maryanne@destin-real-estate.com	56	72'
Gulf Breeze	Stone Caldevilla	850-837-7095	olinmarlercharterboats.com	olinmarlerbooth@gmail.com	35	65'
Sweet Jody	Aaron Finkley	850-585-9985	sweetjodyfishing.com	sweetjodyfishing@gmail.com	40	56'
Swoop II	Matt Wheeler	850-502-5033	Swoop2adventures.com	mattheather@swoop2adventures.com	40	65'
Vera Marie	Micheal Cline / Anthony Dewberry	850-650-3825	pelicanadventures.com	pelicanadventures@gmail.com	65	75'

Party Fishing Boats

Large, "for hire" fishing vessels that take out groups of unrelated passengers. Instead of chartering the entire boat, anglers pay a fixed per-person fee, but making new friends is still 100% free.

For as long as I can remember the Fishing Rodeo has been a part of my life. I was born and raised in Destin, to Darla Smith & Michael “Mo” Helton. Long before I could appreciate what the Destin Fishing Rodeo meant for our community, I was already immersed in the world that makes it possible.



DESTIN'D TO BE

BORN ON THE WATER

My mother worked at the Harborwalk Charters booking booth, helping visitors connect with the incredible fishing experiences that have made Destin famous, while my father spent his career as a mate aboard many of the boats in our charter fleet, helping anglers create memories

on the water. Because of them, my childhood was spent on the docks, around the boats, and among the fishermen who built this community. The harbor wasn't just where my parents worked—it was where I grew up. The captains,

mates, business owners, and fishing families who made their living on the water became an extension of my family and helped shape the person I am today.



Sea Robin, more like catch Robin

DIRECTOR AMBER HELTON

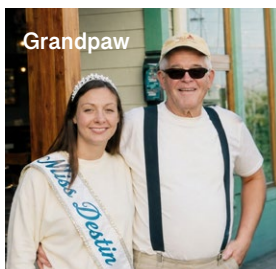


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THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER, YOUR GROUPE, OR YOUR COBIA

Fishing isn't simply a pastime; it is a way of life. The waters that surround our town provide not only livelihoods but also memories, fellowships, and lessons that will stay with me throughout my life. Both of my parents introduced me to the fishing lifestyle that has been such an important part of my life. My mother has shaped the values that have guided me along the way. She has encouraged me to embrace new experiences, travel the world, and never miss an opportunity to serve others. Her unwavering support has given me the confidence to pursue opportunities that help me grow, while her example taught me the importance of kindness, gratitude, and having a servant's heart. Those lessons in community involvement and service would eventually lead me to one of the most rewarding

experiences of my young adult life—representing the city I love as Miss Destin. There has always been something special about Destin that tugs at my heartstrings; it extends beyond the harbor and into the community itself. In 2005, I competed in the Miss Destin pageant and was honored to be selected as Miss Congeniality by my fellow contestants. To this day, it remains one of the most meaningful recognitions I have ever received because it came from the young ladies who shared that experience alongside me. That same evening, I was blessed with the honor of being crowned Miss Destin. Wearing the crown and sash meant far more to me than a title—it was an opportunity to celebrate the people, traditions, and hometown that had shaped my life.



My year as Miss Destin holds a special place in my heart. It gave me the opportunity to represent the city I treasure through countless appearances, parades, ribbon cuttings for Target and the Destin History & Fishing Museum, youth fishing events, and our annual community celebrations. Spending 31 days in October, with the weigh-in barge as my throne, I celebrated with thousands of anglers when the boats backed in to weigh their catch. That month deepened my appreciation for the people, organizations, and traditions that make Destin such a remarkable place to call home. More importantly, taught me the importance of community service and engagement, and preserving the heritage that makes our "Luckiest Little Fishing Village" so special.

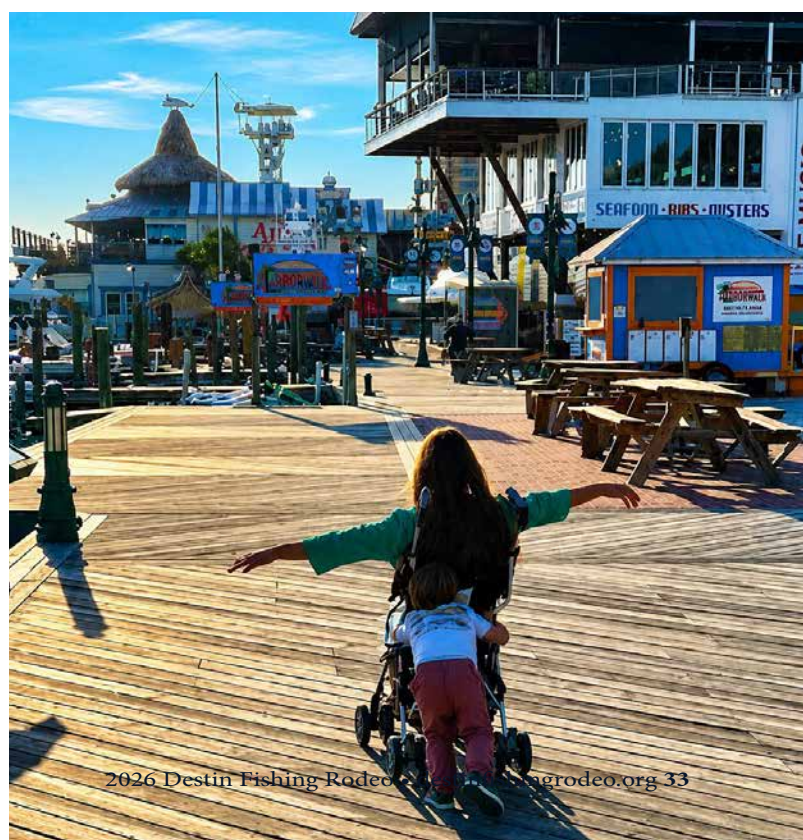


AMBER HELTON

Another pivotal chapter in my journey came during my time as Event Coordinator for the Boathouse Oyster Bar. In that role, I had the opportunity to organize and oversee multiple fishing tournaments, including the Summer Slam, which spanned June, July, and into August, celebrating our town's summer fishing season. That experience allowed me to wear many hats. I helped secure sponsors, register boats, coordinate event logistics, weigh and record catches, maintain tournament standings, and ensure every detail was handled from start to finish. I often joked that I was the tournament's biggest cheerleader because I genuinely loved celebrating every boat and angler's success and sharing in their joy. The organization, camaraderie, relationships built with captains, anglers, and sponsors, and the opportunity to create memorable experiences for people who shared a passion for fishing, I thrive in every aspect of tournament management. I am immensely grateful to the Schofields for entrusting that role to me.

Looking back, that position proved to be one of the most influential experiences in preparing me for where I am today. It was a steppingstone that gave me valuable

hands-on experience and reinforced a long-held dream of mine of promoting the fishing traditions and culture that have been such an important part of my life. My connection to the Destin Fishing Rodeo extends far beyond attending it as a local or growing up around it. Over the years, I have had the privilege of volunteering in nearly every facet of the Rodeo, gaining a firsthand appreciation for the tremendous effort required to make this cherished event a success. I've served as a Rodeo judge during weigh-ins, writing up fish entries, and have helped sell merchandise alongside Ann White and Becky Mac in the merchandise trailer. One of my most memorable experiences came in 2021 when I was tasked to take over the weigh-in scales for the first five days of the Rodeo. I have had the privilege of working side-by-side with Mrs. Helen Donaldson, learning many of the behind-the-scenes operations that most attendees never see. From entering catch data and managing records to understanding the countless details that keep the Rodeo running smoothly, I gained invaluable insight into the dedication and organization required to preserve this longstanding tradition. My involvement with the Rodeo continued to grow, and in 2024, I was honored to serve as Chairwoman of the Rodeo. That leadership role allowed me to work even more closely with volunteers, anglers, sponsors, captains, and community partners. I gained a deeper understanding of the planning and coordination required to produce an event of this magnitude. Each role provided a unique perspective and allowed me to work alongside the dedicated people who are the heart and soul of our town's longest-standing tradition. As I have prepared to step into the position of Director, I find myself reflecting on a few remarkable coincidences. This year marks twenty-one years since I was crowned Miss Destin 2005, a role that first gave me the opportunity to serve as an ambassador for the city I love. I am the same age today that Mrs. Helen was when she became Director of the Destin Fishing Rodeo in 1998.



Over the years, Mrs. Helen has generously shared her knowledge, experience, and passion for the Rodeo with me. She has taken me under her wing, patiently teaching me the countless details that go into producing an event of this extent. From the technical aspects of Rodeo operations to the traditions that have made it a beloved institution for generations, she has been a mentor, teacher, and friend.

As the Destin Fishing Rodeo enters its 78th year, I am incredibly grateful for the confidence Mrs. Helen has instilled in me and for the time she has invested in preparing me for this opportunity. Her guidance has helped me approach this new chapter with both excitement and respect for the responsibility it carries.

Fishing is more than a tradition in my family—it's part of our legacy.

My late grandpa, Frank, is remembered by many as one of the pioneers of cobia fishing in our area. He created and patented the famous Ding-A-Ling jig, a lure that became well known among generations of anglers. That passion was carried forward by my father, Michael "Mo" Helton, who continued producing the Ding-A-Ling and spent his life on the water as a respected mate in our charter fleet. His passion for fishing and innovation on the water helped leave a lasting mark on the Destin fishing community.

Through both, I inherited not only a love of fishing but also a deep appreciation for the people and traditions that make this community so special. In February of this year, my Daddy-O passed away. While losing him has been one of the most difficult experiences of my life, it also reminded me just how extraordinary this



DESTIN'D TO BE DIRECTOR



Gone Fish'n for shore ...



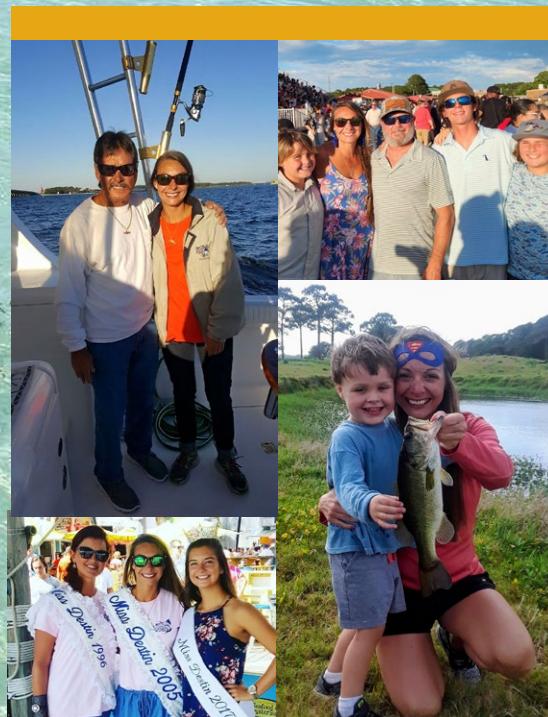
community truly is. During his burial at sea and celebration of life, nearly twenty boats joined in procession to honor him. As I looked across the water and saw friends, captains, and our fishing village coming together to pay their respects, I was overwhelmed with gratitude and

pride for the place I call home. In that moment, I felt more connected than ever to the community that raised me. Destin's fishing tribe is built on tradition, respect, and a shared love of the water. There is competition. There is camaraderie. But at the end of the day, we are a community.

FISHING LIFE

That day served as a powerful reminder that while fishing may bring us together, it is the celebration of our heritage that keeps us connected.

The fishing lifestyle that defined my childhood continues to shape my life today. My man friend, Captain BJ Teems, and I are raising a blended family of three boys who share the same love for fishing, boating, and life on the water that we grew up with. As lifelong Destin locals, we understand how



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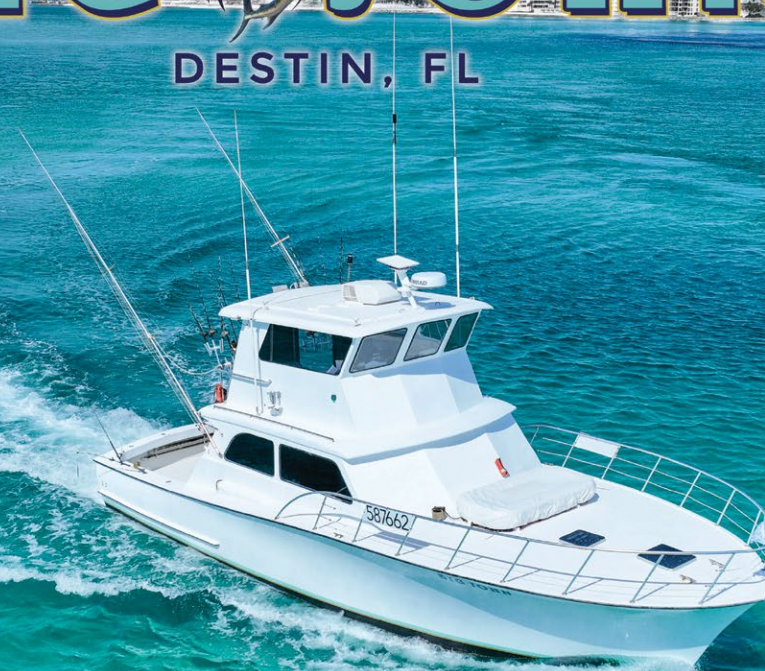
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A FISHING FAMILY

fortunate we are to call this place home, and we have always wanted our children to experience the same connection to our waterways and our outdoor way of life that meant so much to us growing up.

We are, at our core, a fishing family. Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to reel in some memorable catches of my own, but these days, the greatest joy comes from watching our boys experience those moments for themselves. Seeing the excitement on their faces when they land a fish, hearing them tell the story afterward, and watching them create memories on the water remind me why traditions like the Destin Fishing Rodeo matter so much. Those experiences are about far more than the fish. They are about family, friendships, and a lifelong appreciation for the place we call home.

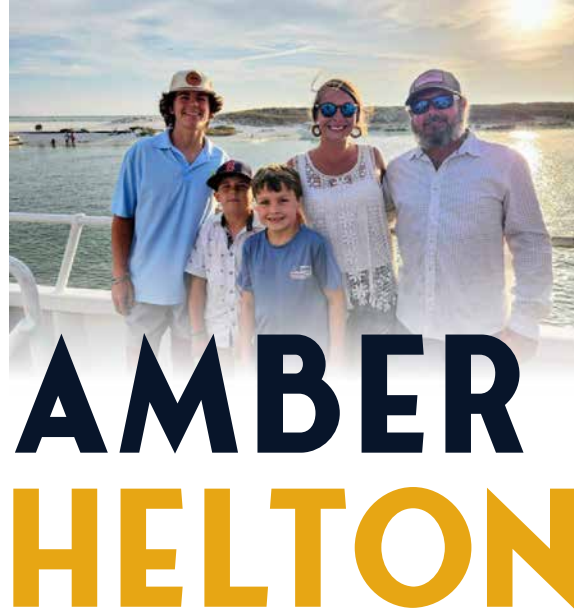
As I step into this new role as Director, I am especially grateful that my mother continues to be part of the Rodeo family. Each October, she can still be found volunteering wherever she is needed—whether judging fish weigh-ins, helping in the merchandise trailer, or supporting me and this event behind



the scenes. Her servant's heart and love for this community continue to inspire me, and I am blessed to have her beside me as I begin this new chapter.

As I step into the role, I think not only about the generations that came before us, but also about the generations that will follow. I never imagined my first year as Director would be my first Rodeo without Bruce. He welcomed me as his new "boss." While October will be slightly different with his absence, the Rodeo will continue to honor his legacy.

The Destin Fishing Rodeo has been part of my story for as long as I can remember. When I look at the path that brought me here—from growing up in a fishing family, to serving as Miss Destin, to coordinating fishing tournaments, to volunteering in nearly every capacity the Rodeo has to offer, to serving as Chairwoman, and now Director—I am filled with gratitude and excitement! It helped shape my childhood, connected me to my community, and introduced me to many of the people who have influenced my life. Now, I have the privilege of helping write its next chapter.



AMBER HELTON

For a girl who grew up on the docks of the World's Luckiest Fishing Village, surrounded by fishermen, boats, and the traditions that make Destin so special, serving as Director of the Destin Fishing Rodeo feels less like the beginning of a new journey and more like the continuation of one that started many years ago.

I am extremely grateful for the heartbeats involved in the Rodeo; our members, committees, volunteers, sponsors, and every pair of hands that are excited and happy to continue this beloved tradition. As I often say, "It takes a village, and we have THE BEST one!"

I am Amber Helton, your new Director of the Rodeo.

You could even say I was destined for it.

Happy Rodeo! 🐟



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2026 DESTIN FISHING RODEO AWARDS



2026 Rodeo Awards

Awards Presentation:

5:30 PM Thursday, November 5 – AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar



Bruce Cheves' Memorial Red Snapper

Sponsored by A.J.'s Seafood & Oyster Bar

Largest Red Snapper of Tournament	\$3000
2 nd Largest Red Snapper of Tournament	\$2000
3 rd Largest Red Snapper of Tournament	\$1000

Charter Boat Division

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1st & 2nd King Mackerel

Henry Hinkel Memorial Award

Sponsored by East Pass Podcast

Ham Palmgren Memorial Award

Sponsored by Twinkle Outzen

Sponsored by Charter Boat Huntress

Sponsored by Becky McFarland,

Rising Star Real Estate, Inc.

Sponsored by Holiday Isle Properties

Sponsored by Holiday Isle Properties

Sponsored by Breathe Easy Rentals

Sponsored by Charter Boat Lady Em

Sponsored by Emerald Coast Charters

Sponsored by American Legion Post 296

Sponsored by American Legion Post 296

Party Boat Division

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1st & 2nd King Mackerel

Sponsored by Party Boats Destiny & Destin Princess

1st & 2nd Red Grouper

Sponsored by The Pancakery

1st & 2nd Blackfin Tuna

Sponsored by Destin Charter Boat Assoc.

1st & 2nd Mingo Snapper

Sponsored by American Legion Post 296

1st & 2nd Scamp

Sponsored by Destin Charter Boat Assoc.

1st & 2nd Triggerfish

Sponsored by Destin Charter Boat Assoc.

1st & 2nd Wahoo

Sponsored by Ann White Interiors

1st & 2nd Amberjack

Sponsored by The Trophy Center

1st & 2nd Black Snapper

Sponsored by New Florida Girl's American Spirit

1st & 2nd Red Snapper

Sponsored by Tom Milliren



Charter Boats Under 26' Division

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1st & 2nd King Mackerel

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Red Grouper

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Blackfin Tuna

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Mingo Snapper

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Scamp

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Triggerfish

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Wahoo

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Amberjack

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Black Snapper

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Red Snapper FEDERAL

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals

1st & 2nd Red Snapper STATE

Sponsored by Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals



Private Boat Division

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1st & 2nd King Mackerel

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Red Grouper

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Blackfin Tuna

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Mingo Snapper

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Scamp

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Triggerfish

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Wahoo

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Amberjack

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Black Snapper

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House

1st & 2nd Red Snapper

Sponsored by Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House



(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1st & 2nd King Mackerel

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Red Grouper

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Blackfin Tuna

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Mingo Snapper

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Scamp

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Triggerfish

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Wahoo

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Amberjack

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Black Snapper

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

1st & 2nd Red Snapper

Sponsored by Legendary Marine

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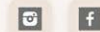
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2026 DESTIN FISHING RODEO AWARDS



2026 DESTIN FISHING RODEO AWARDS



Ladies Division (OPEN)

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd King Mackerel	Sponsored by Harbor Docks
1 st & 2 nd Amberjack	Sponsored by Harbor Docks
1 st & 2 nd Blackfin Tuna	Sponsored by Harbor Docks
1 st & 2 nd Wahoo	Sponsored by Harbor Docks
1 st & 2 nd Red Snapper	Sponsored by the Spears Group



Murphy's Home Services Junior Division (OPEN)

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd King Mackerel	Sponsored by Murphy's Home Services
1 st & 2 nd Amberjack	Sponsored by Murphy's Home Services
1 st & 2 nd Blackfin Tuna	Sponsored by Murphy's Home Services
1 st & 2 nd Wahoo	Sponsored by Murphy's Home Services
1 st & 2 nd Red Snapper	Sponsored by the Spears Group

Senior Division (OPEN)

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd King Mackerel	Sponsored by Chris & Brad Norvell
1 st & 2 nd Amberjack	Sponsored by Sugar Palm Vacation Rentals
1 st & 2 nd Blackfin Tuna	Sponsored by Charter Boat Huntress
1 st & 2 nd Wahoo	Sponsored by Professional Inspection Enterprises
1 st & 2 nd Red Snapper	Sponsored by the Spears Group



Offshore Division (OPEN)

(1st Place - \$200 Half Hitch Gift Card and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Half Hitch Gift Card and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd Barracuda	Sponsored by Half Hitch Tackle
1 st & 2 nd Bonito	Sponsored by Half Hitch Tackle
1 st & 2 nd Dolphin	Sponsored by Half Hitch Tackle
1 st & 2 nd Triple Tail	Sponsored by Half Hitch Tackle
1 st & 2 nd Yellowfin Tuna	Sponsored by Half Hitch Tackle

Billfish Division (OPEN)

(1st Place Only - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st Place Blue Marlin	Sponsored by Charter Boat 100 Proof
1 st Place White Marlin	Sponsored by Charter Boat UnReel
1 st Place Sailfish	Sponsored by Charter Boat Game On
1 st Place Swordfish	Andrew Gillingham Memorial Award Sponsored by Boathouse Marina



Deep Drop Division (OPEN)

(1st Place Only - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st Barrellfish	Sponsored by Charter Boat Finest Kind
1 st Tilefish	Sponsored by Charter Boat Finest Kind
1 st Kitty Mitchell	Sponsored by Charter Boat Finest Kind
1 st Snowy Grouper	Sponsored by Charter Boat Finest Kind
1 st Warsaw Grouper	Sponsored by Charter Boat Finest Kind
1 st Yellowedge Grouper	Sponsored by Charter Boat Finest Kind



Boathouse Reef Division (OPEN)

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd Cobia	Sponsored by BoatHouse Oyster Bar and Marina
1 st & 2 nd Lane Snapper	Sponsored by BoatHouse Oyster Bar and Marina



Inshore Division (OPEN)

(1st & 2nd Place - Shimano Rod, Reel and Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd Flounder	Sponsored by The Ship's Chandler and Shimano
1 st & 2 nd Redfish	Sponsored by The Ship's Chandler and Shimano
1 st & 2 nd Sheepshead	Sponsored by The Ship's Chandler and Shimano
1 st & 2 nd Spanish Mackerel	Sponsored by The Ship's Chandler and Shimano
1 st & 2 nd Speckled Trout	Sponsored by The Ship's Chandler and Shimano



Extended Voyage Division (OPEN)

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

1 st & 2 nd Red Grouper	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Scamp	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Yellowfin Tuna	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Big Eye Tuna	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Wahoo	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Amberjack	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Dolphin	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Yellowedge Grouper	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Snowy Grouper	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Barrel Fish	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Tile Fish	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining
1 st & 2 nd Red Snapper	Sponsored by Fort Walton Machining



Okaloosa Island Pier - Pier Bridge Jetty & Surf Division

(One-Year Pier Pass and Rodeo Trophy)

Largest King Mackerel	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Spanish Mackerel	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Pompano	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Redfish	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Speckled Trout	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Flounder	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Sheepshead	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
Largest Fish by a Junior (except sharks and rays)	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier

Largest Fish by a Senior (except sharks and rays)	Sponsored by Okaloosa Island Pier
--	-----------------------------------



Abram Sitcer Memorial Kayak Division

\$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

Largest Flounder	Sponsored by Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer
Largest King Mackerel	Sponsored by Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer
Largest Redfish	Sponsored by Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer
Largest Sheepshead	Sponsored by Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer
Largest Specked Trout	Sponsored by Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer
Largest Spanish Mackerel	Sponsored by Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer

Mason Hupp Mako My Day Shark Division

1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

Largest Shark of Tournament	Sponsored by Pat & Lori Hupp
2 nd Largest Shark of Tournament	Sponsored by Pat & Lori Hupp



Chasing Tail Paddle Tours Paddleboard Division

1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy

Largest Any (except Black Drum, Jack Crevalle, Sharks & Rays)	Sponsored by Chasing Tail Paddle Tours
2 nd Largest Any (except Black Drum, Jack Crevalle, Sharks & Rays)	Sponsored by Chasing Tail Paddle Tours



Double "G" Custom Rods & Restoration Youth Angler Mingo

Custom Made by Rod Maker Glen Browder specifically for the Youth Anglers Mingo Award

Largest Jr. Girl Charter	Sponsored by D & G Custom Rods & Restoration
Largest Jr. Boy Charter	Sponsored by D & G Custom Rods & Restoration
Largest Jr. Girl Party	Sponsored by D & G Custom Rods & Restoration
Largest Jr. Boy Party	Sponsored by D & G Custom Rods & Restoration

Rodeo Records

(Rodeo Record Breakers will win \$500 Centennial Bank Check)

Grouper - 1993	70.2 lbs.	Bill Smith, Covington, GA Sunrise, Captain Kelly Windes
King Mackerel - 2018	64.2 lbs.	Bert Savoir, Ft Walton Beach, FL Dawn Patrol, Captain John Tenore
Wahoo - 2022	101.0 lbs.	Derrick Dover, Mary Esther, FL Muscle Memories, Capt Andrew Dover
Amberjack - 2012	111.6 lbs.	Mark Underhahl, Pensacola, FL Strange Brew, Captain Ken Nettles
Dolphin - 2000	49.0 lbs.	Jim Rainer, Memphis, TN Full Pull, Captain Chris Wagner
Warsaw - 2003	358.8 lbs.	John Hardin, Dunedin, FL Big John, Captain Todd Allen

First Fish in Rodeo

First Fish weighed in on October 1st Sponsored by The Trophy Center

BOAT AND CREW AWARDS

Jim Wilson Billfish Catch and Release Awards

(1st Place - \$200 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy, 2nd Place - \$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

Billfish Catch and Release Awards will go to the BOAT with the most releases in October	
Most Releases	Sponsored by The Wynsong
Second Most Releases	Sponsored by The Wynsong



Michael "Mo" Helton Memorial Mates Award

(\$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy.)

Awarded to the Charter Boat Mates aboard the vessel that catches Largest Rodeo Fish (no sharks, no Extended Voyage)
Sponsored by the Helton Family

2026 DESTIN FISHING RODEO AWARDS



June Aiken Memorial Charter Boat Mates Awards

(\$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

Sponsored by Friends & Family of June Aiken



Mike McKinney Memorial Party Boat Mates Awards

(\$100 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

Sponsored by Friends & Family of Mike McKinney



Brant Kelly Memorial Charter Boat Captain and Mate Awards

(\$1000 Centennial Bank Check and Rodeo Trophy)

\$1000 to the Captain and \$1000 to the Mate that catch the largest Wahoo of the Tournament. Sponsored by the Brant Kelly Family



Chubby Destin Memorial Captain's Jackpot Awards

Trophies sponsored by Dewey Destin Seafood

Largest King Mackerel	50% Jackpot
2 nd Largest King Mackerel	30% Jackpot
3 rd Largest King Mackerel	20% Jackpot

Captain's Awards

Winning captains will be determined at the end of the tournament using a simple formula: 1st Places = 20 points, 2nd Places = 10 points, Daily Awards = 1 point

Charter Boat	Sponsored by Charter Boat 100 Proof
Private Boat	Sponsored by Complete Fixture Solutions
Party Boat	Sponsored by Complete Fixture Solutions
Charter Boat Under 26'	Sponsored by Charter Boat 100 Proof
Private Boat Under 26'	Sponsored by Complete Fixture Solutions
Extended Voyage	Sponsored by Complete Fixture Solution

Daily Awards – King Mac Daily Award-

Based on 31 boat participation - \$100 buy in.
Pays the boat \$100 a day for largest King Mackerel of the day.
At the end of the tournament the remainder of the pot will be split 25% to the boat captain with largest King Mackerel and 75% to local charities.

Largest Fish of the Day Under 26' Vessels

78th Annual Commemorative Medal and Merchandise Discount Certificate for largest of each specie each day

Amberjack
Black Snapper
Blackfin Tuna
Dolphin
King Mackerel
Mingo Snapper
Red Snapper
Spanish Mackerel
Speckled Trout
Triggerfish

Largest Fish of the Day OVER 25'11" Vessels

78th Annual Commemorative Medal and Merchandise Discount Certificate for largest of each specie each day

Amberjack
Black Snapper
Blackfin Tuna
Dolphin
King Mackerel
Mingo Snapper
Red Snapper
Scamp
Triggerfish
Wahoo

Largest Fish of the Day Ladies, Junior, Senior, PBJs & Non-Motorized

78th Annual Commemorative Medal and Merchandise Discount Certificate for largest of each specie each day

Largest Fish by a Junior – OPEN
Largest Fish by a Lady – OPEN
Largest Fish by a Senior - OPEN
Largest Fish – Pier Bridge Jetty Surf
Largest Fish – Kayak/Paddleboard

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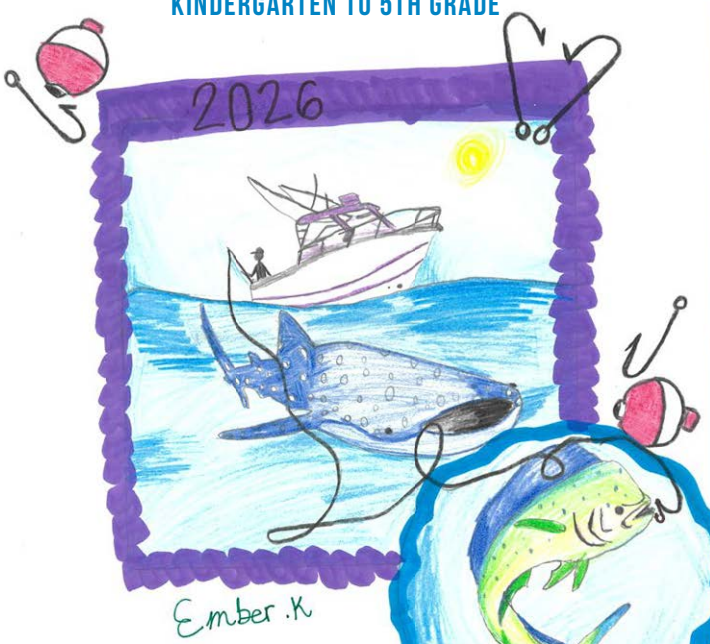
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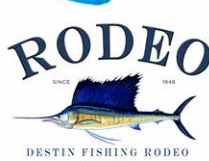
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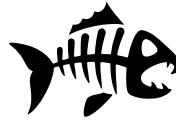






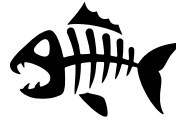
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2025 RODEO'n REVIEW

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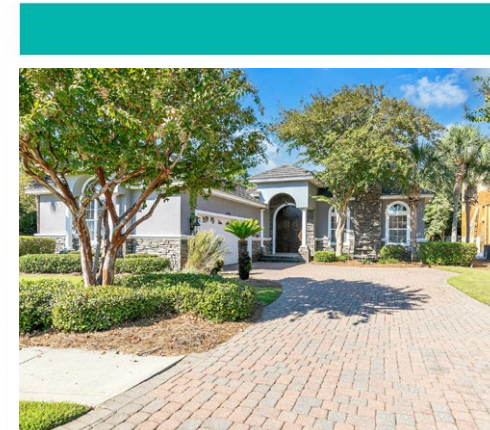


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LOOKING BACK AT THE 77TH RODEO



The Island Pier

- * ROD RENTAL
- * COLD DRINKS
- * BAIT & TACKLE

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DESTIN FISHERMAN'S CO-OP



PHOTO BY THE STEVEMEISTER

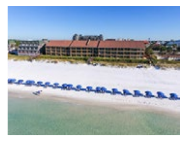
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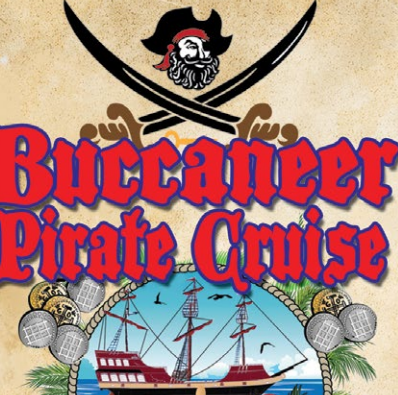
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(excluding bonus and jackpot awards)

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2026 Rodeo Rules

SCOPE: These rules govern the Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo to be held October 1 through October 31.

GENERAL:

- 1 Contestants shall abide by the Rodeo rules. All rules are interpreted by the Rodeo Rules Committee and/or Board of Directors. The decisions of the official Rodeo Rules Committee and/or Board of Directors shall be final.
- 2 Rules may be modified, interpreted or changed without notice to meet unusual or emergency conditions by action of the Rodeo Rules Committee and/or Board of Directors.
- 3 Any winning angler or captain is subject to a polygraph test to verify authenticity of catch. The Rules Committee and/or Board of Directors will determine cause for the test.
- 4 Anyone who fails a polygraph test or is determined cheating (by the Rules Committee and/or Board of Directors) will be disqualified from participating in the rest of the year’s Rodeo and the following two years’ Rodeos. All catches in the current Rodeo will be disqualified.
- 5 Scales are considered accurate to the point of failure. Failed scales will be substituted with State certified, calibrated scales. No fish will be re-hung or re-weighed.
- 6 Inshore Division, Pier, Bridge, Jetty and Surf, Kayak and Paddleboard entries must be caught within the area between the eastern end of Choctawhatchee Bay (mouth of the ditch) to Navarre Beach Bridge.
- 7 All Boats must enter the Gulf through Destin’s East Pass with the exception of weather-related condition trips which have called and notified the Rodeo office prior to departure. (850) 837-6734
- 8 Boat Entry: A copy of a State/Coast Guard issued Boat Registration Form must be on file with the Rodeo prior to first weigh-in by boats Under 26’. Boats and/or competitors entered after the beginning of the Rodeo in any division are not eligible for competition until the day following registration, with the exception of Bonus Awards (Jackpot, King Mackerel Daily, etc.) which must be entered 72 hours before being eligible.
- 9 All fish must be caught on rod and reel, using hook and line. Handheld electric reels may be used.
- 10 Fish can only be weighed in the division that the boat was registered in and/or “open” divisions.

- 11 Boats may not leave Destin East Pass prior to 12:01 a.m. and must return to weigh-in by 7:00 p.m. daily. A daily bag limit will apply. Overnight fishing prohibited except in the Extended Voyage Division.
- 12 Prize winning fish shall be the largest by weight. In the event of a tie, the first fish recorded shall be the winner. Minimum weight of one pound is required for eligibility.
- 13 All fish are to be drawn (from anal vent through the breastplate to the throat with all entrails removed) and washed for inspection prior to being recognized by the weighmaster. Whole fish brought to the Rodeo weighmaster will be sent to the back of the line. An exception will be made for Triggerfish, Sheephead, Pompano, Flounder and Sharks. Sharks will be weighed and recorded whole. If the shark is in contention for a prize, it will be gutted to determine that it is a legal fish. The whole weight will be the recorded weight. Fish in contention for world or state records will be weighed prior to being drawn for Rodeo entry at the request of the angler.
- 14 It is the responsibility of the angler to dispose of all fish.
- 15 Angler must be clearly identified prior to weighing fish. Only two fish per specie, per day, per person will be weighed. Boat captain and angler must be present, sign official entry form and verify the weight and angler of each fish officially entered in the Destin Fishing Rodeo at the time of weigh-in. The Angler’s SSN may be required prior to being awarded a cash prize. By signing the official entry form, the captain also attests the angler whose name appears on the entry form did catch the fish being weighed. The captain’s signature and initials at Division Line further attests to the division being entered. No changes in division will be allowed after the entry form is signed. The Captain’s Signature proves ALL information on the form is correct.
- 16 Fish which have spoiled, been mutilated, frozen or appear to have been frozen, or chemically treated are not eligible for competition. (SHARKS MAY BE SHOT)
- 17 Any boat or individual in arrears to the Destin Fishing Rodeo after December 31st of the year the debt is incurred will be ineligible for all subsequent Rodeos until the debt is satisfied.
- 18 In an effort to expedite the weigh-in process, the largest fish in each division should be presented first.
- 19 Weigh Barge Etiquette: Boat Crew is responsible for getting the catch from the boat to the Rodeo scales. Barge Officials have the right to recommend Unsportsmanlike Conduct to the Board of Directors.

- 20 The following persons are not eligible for awards (except, the King Mackerel Jackpot Awards, Captains Awards or Mates Awards if they have participated as such within the current calendar year: (a) Captains/crew members charter/commercial boats. Defined as “Crewmember” under definitions.; (b) commercial fishermen returning from a commercial trip are ineligible to enter fish from that trip; (c) No fish caught on a Recreational Rodeo Trip may be sold, bartered or traded; (d) commercial fishing pier owners/operators may not enter a fish in pier, bridge, jetty and surf division; (e) Rodeo Officials.
- 21 To expedite the weigh-in process during heavy traffic times, all boats will be required to check-in with the DOCKMASTER and be visually recognized past the point in the Harbor. Open Division contenders will be given a time-stamp to avoid controversy in case of a tie. After 5:00 p.m., Private Boats under 26’, Kayaks and Paddleboards must park in a designated slip and walk their catches to the barge. At busy times, Charter Boats with customers, will be given preference. Order of weigh-in will be left to the discretion of the DockMaster.
- 22 Unsportsmanlike action by Rodeo participant may disqualify that individual from this and future events.
- 23 Complaints or protests must be in the form of a written statement and personally turned in to the Rodeo officials on duty not later than 7:00 p.m., seventy-two (72) hours following the occurrence which occasioned the complaint. A cash deposit of five hundred dollars (\$500) must accompany the protest. The burden of proof is on the Protester. If the complaint or protest is found to be valid, the deposit is returned, If not, the deposit becomes the property of the Destin Fishing Rodeo, Inc. Once a protest has been filed, the protested must be notified and has 72 hours to reply, in writing, their position on the protest. If the Board determines that a polygraph is required, the protested has 48 hours to inform the Board of their intentions whether or not to take the polygraph. The Board will strive to settle the matter within 14 days of the written position by the protested.
- 24 Participants in the Rodeo may not possess in excess of the FWC Recreational bag limits. Commercial quantities may not be possessed even for boats commercially permitted.
- 25 BRUCE CHEVES DAY – October 16 is Bruce Cheves Day at the Destin Fishing Rodeo. The traditional ‘Ring of the Bell’ and other celebratory events will be conducted to celebrate the longtime weighmaster and storyteller.

DIVISIONS OF COMPETITION:

Specific awards and prizes for the Divisions of Competition are listed in the Awards Schedule/Prize List.

- 1 SHARKS – ** If you catch a shark and want to bring it to the Rodeo Barge, you must first contact a member of The Rodeo Shark Identification Team to confirm that the species is a legal catch. The team member will then contact the Rodeo Office to notify that the shark has been identified as legal and it can be weighed. If you have a Federal Reef Permit, you must adhere to Federal Rules. HMS Permits are required to weigh any shark in the Destin Fishing Rodeo. No Nurse, Lemon or federally protected shark will be allowed. HMS permits available at www.hmspermits.noaa.gov. All sharks brought to the weigh-in station must qualify using Federal Regulations, regardless of State regulations, if they are different. Minimum length on all Hammerheads is 78 inches, All other sharks (except for the Atlantic Sharpnose), the minimum length is 54 inches.
- 2 CATCH & RELEASE DIVISION: This is a BOAT award. An official entry must be made at the weigh-in barge. It is the responsibility of the captain to present Photo documentation of the catch to the Rodeo office within 48 hours of the catch. Photo must include the Current-Year Rodeo Flag or sticker or a digital date/time stamp.
- 3 BILLFISH DIVISION: HMS Permits are required to weigh any billfish in the Destin Fishing Rodeo. The Billfish Division includes of the Largest Blue Marlin, White Marlin, Swordfish and Sailfish of the tournament. The Rodeo has added 3” to the Federal size limit of these species. Length is measured from lower jaw to fork. The minimum length of a Blue Marlin is 102”; White Marlin is 69” and the Sailfish is 66”. The Rodeo encourages anglers to check the leaderboard before killing a billfish. Billfish can be caught and released as entry in the Billfish Catch and Release Division with photo documentation.
- 4 LADIES, SENIOR AND JUNIOR AWARDS: Only Ladies, Seniors and Juniors may enter fish in the Ladies, Senior and Junior Divisions. Ladies, Seniors and Juniors may cross in their appropriate categories (ie. Boat Type). Division must be declared at entry.
- 5 Double G Custom Rods and Restoration YOUTH ANGLER MINGO (October 1 – 31, 2026) The junior (age 6-14) girl and boy angler on a Charter AND on a Party Boat that catch the largest Mingo Snappers of the tournament will win a custom-built rod. (4 rods – 2 for Charter and 2 for Party).

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(excluding bonus and jackpot awards)

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(excluding bonus and jackpot awards)

- 6 EXTENDED VOYAGE DIVISION. Boats must notify Rodeo Headquarters prior to leaving the boat slip by calling 850-837-6734. To qualify in the EXTENDED VOYAGE DIVISION. The trip must be declared prior to the boat leaving the slip. Declaration must include the name of the Captain, the Second Captain, the date of departure, expected return date and whether the boat is departing from East Pass or the Ditch. The boat must return a different calendar day than when it departs, vessel must be at sea for a minimum of 18 hours and a maximum of 96 hours. A vessel on extended voyage cannot add additional fuel on board between the time they leave the Destin Harbor and return to the Destin Harbor. Once a vessel has been declared on an Extended Voyage, all fish brought back from the trip must be weighed in the Extended Voyage Division, Billfish Division, or Billfish Catch and Release Division. All Boats must enter the Gulf through Destin's East Pass with the exception* of extended voyage trips which have called and reported that they are going through the ditch.
- 7 Fish must be weighed on the day of the vessel's return to port. Two licensed captains are required aboard fare carrying vessels at all times and both captains must sign entry forms at the dock. Dates of Extended Voyages and both captains' names must be declared prior to leaving the boat slip. Fish caught on Extended Voyages ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR RODEO RECORDS, JACKPOT AWARDS or BONUS AWARDS (Special awards offered from time to time).
- 8 *Exceptions: medical or weather related must be approved by BOD and/or the Rules Committee. If a vessel must return to port for approved medical or weather related reasons after the close of scales on the scheduled day of return (after the vessel has been away for at least 18 hours and it is a different calendar day), the captain must call the Rodeo office (850) 837-6734, and declare what they are bringing to the scales and the estimated weight of each fish that will be weighed. The catch must be brought to the scales the following day within the first hour of scales being open.
- 9 KAYAK DIVISION - ONLY human powered kayaks will be allowed. NO pier/shoreline/wade/jug/trot line/hand line/cast or drag net/bow fishing allowed. All Kayaks should be launched from shore. No assistance from another vessel is allowed. Entries must be caught within the area between the eastern end of Choctawhatchee Bay (mouth of the ditch) to Navarre Beach Bridge. Fish caught in the Kayak Division are eligible to weigh in the Kayak Division. (No Jack Crevalle, Black Drum, Sharks or Rays allowed).

- 10 PADDLEBOARD DIVISION - ONLY human powered Paddleboards will be allowed. NO pier/shoreline/wade/jug/trot line/hand line/cast or drag net/bow fishing allowed. All Paddleboards should be launched from shore. No assistance from another vessel is allowed. A contestant shall not be eligible to hold more than one place in the Paddleboard division. Entries must be caught within the area between the eastern end of Choctawhatchee Bay (mouth of the ditch) to Navarre Beach Bridge. Fish caught in the Paddleboard Division are eligible to weigh in the Paddleboard Division (No Jack Crevalle, Black Drum, Sharks or Rays allowed).
- 11 PIER, BRIDGE, JETTY & SURF DIVISION – \$25 fee (for anglers 15 years and older) must be paid 24 hours prior to weighing fish in PBJs division. Only fish caught on Pier, Bridge, Jetty or Surf are eligible in this division. Fish must be weighed the day of the catch. Entries must be caught within the area between the eastern end of Choctawhatchee Bay (mouth of the ditch) to Navarre Beach Bridge. "LARGEST" fish (daily and overall) Junior and Senior awards may be a specie outside the division (except for sharks and rays, Jack Crevalle and Black Drum).
- 12 KING MACKEREL DAILY - Based on 31 boat participation \$100 buy in.
- a. Pays \$100 a day to the Captain for largest King Mackerel of the day.
 - b. At the end of the tournament the remainder of the pot will be split 25% to Captain in pot with Largest King Mackerel and 75% to local Charities.
- 13 KING MACKEREL JACKPOT - Open to all registered boats (Fare Carrying or Private) that have paid the Jackpot entry fee (\$100 per boat) **ALL WINNERS IN KING MACKEREL JACKPOT MAY BE ADMINISTERED A POLYGRAPH TEST at the discretion of the Board of Directors.** The Jackpot will be split as follows: (AFTER 10% TO RODEO FOR ADMINISTRATIVE FEE)
- a. Largest King Mackerel 50% / Second Largest King Mackerel 30% / Third Largest King Mackerel 20%.
 - b. Jackpot Fee must be paid 72 hours before fish may be weighed in.
 - c. Prize money will be paid to the person named on the entry form.



AWARDING OF PRIZES:

1. A prize not claimed within thirty (30) days after the date of the award shall revert to the Rodeo.
2. DAILY prizes must be claimed by the angler or legal Guardian at the Merchandise Trailer within 48 hours of the close of scales the day of catch.
3. The Rodeo will present six (6) Captain's Awards: Charter Boat Captain, Party Boat Captain, Charter Boat Captain – 26 feet and under, Private Boat Captain, Private Boat Captain – 26 feet and under, and Extended Voyage Captain. Winning captains will be determined at the end of the tournament using a simple formula: 1st Places = 20 points, 2nd Places = 10 points, Daily Awards = 1 point (If a fish wins more than one daily prize, it will only be awarded 1 point). All 1st & 2nd Place fish will be counted in the total Captain's Points (from Boat Divisions and Open Divisions) No points will be awarded for the First Fish or King Mac Jackpot. Should Captain's Award points end up in a tie, the captain that reached the final points first will become Captain of the Year. All point calculations and rulings by Rodeo officials are final.
4. Overall Prizes may only be picked up by the person who won the prize. A signed letter from the prize winner indicating permission for a named other person to retrieve their prize may be scanned or e-mailed, no later than Monday, November 2, 2026 to fishing@destinfishingrodeo.org.
5. All awards are ANGLERS Awards (except for Captain's King Mackerel Jackpot, King Mac Daily, Captain's and Mate's Awards, and Billfish Tag and Release Awards). 1099's will be issued to the winners in accordance with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.
6. Kids Certificates and/or Fishing Rods will be given to any child 10 or under who presents a fish to the Rodeo Dock before 5 p.m. (time exception will be made for anglers on registered vessels) every day. Only 1 rod and certificate per child per month.

DEFINITIONS:

1. **Rodeo officials:** Paid employees & the Official Rodeo Judges judging that day.
2. **Charter Boat:** A boat owned and operated as a charter fishing business in Destin as determined by the Rules Committee.
3. **Party Boat:** A boat owned and operated as a charter fishing business in Destin as determined by the Rules Committee and participates in the Beaufort Head Boat Survey.
4. **State - Saltwater Charter Boat License:** Required for captains taking paying customers out to the state water boundary (9 nautical miles in the Gulf).

5. **Federal** - Federal charter permits are required for vessels taking paying passengers into federal waters (beyond 9 nautical miles in the Gulf of Mexico). These NMFS-issued permits cover species like Reef Fish, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Highly Migratory Species (HMS) like tunas and sharks. If you intend to cross into federal waters (beyond 9 miles off Destin) to fish for reef fish or coastal migratory pelagics, you must hold a federal Gulf Charter/Headboat Permit.
6. **Private Boat:** Vessel that has not carried passengers for hire as determined by the Rules Committee.
7. **Under 26':** Any vessel 25'11" and below as per official state vessel registration. Valid registration papers must be produced at the time of Rodeo registration. Registration Papers may be emailed to fishing@destinfishingrodeo.org, presented in person to the Rodeo Office or by mail (P.O. Box 296, Destin, FL 32540) prior to the Rodeo. Any fish caught aboard a vessel without documented registration papers on file will be disqualified.
8. **Non-motorized Vessel:** ONLY human powered vessels will be allowed. NO gasoline or electric motor propelled boats, sail boats, airboats, float tubes, or poled boats may be used.
9. **Open Awards Classification:** Awards eligible to all motorized vessels registered in the Destin Fishing Rodeo.
10. **Registered Entry:** A registered entry is an entry that is recorded with an official Rodeo Judge and eligible to be recorded on the leader board at the weigh station.
11. **Crewmember:** Any adult (18 or older) person whose primary occupation is as a credentialed crew member while underway of any commercial/for-hire fishing vessel in the Gulf.
12. **Legitimate Entry for Captain Awards:** The heaviest fish in each category from a boat, per trip, that takes a position on the leaderboard. In the event of a tie, the earliest weigh-in prevails.
13. **Junior Angler:** any angler age 6 – 14 years old on the day of the competition. Anglers under the age of 6 are eligible for a certificate and rod and reel.
14. **Lady Angler:** Female anglers age 15 and older on the day of competition.
15. **Senior Angler:** Any angler 65 years or older on the day of competition.





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2025 RODEO RESULTS

2025 Captain of the Year

Charter Boat	Allen Staples	100 Proof	254 Points
Extended Voyage	Chris McConnell	Gulf Grown	100 Points
Party Boat	Aaron Finkley	Sweet Jody	168 Points
Charter Boat Under 26'	Alex Hare	Silver King	205 Points
Private Boat	Andrew Dover	Muscle Memories	112 Points
Private Boat Under 26'	Kevin "Mac" McDaniel	Hat Trick	57 Points

2025 Charter Boat Mates Awards

Charter Boat	Robert Michelson	100 Proof
Party Boat	Steve Funk, Andrew Ready, Austin Finkley	Sweet Jody

Chubby Destin Memorial King Mackerel King Jackpot

1st King Mackerel Jackpot		
Sponsored by Dewey Destin Restaurants	49.8	John Tenore, Dawn Patrol
2nd King Mackerel Jackpot		
Sponsored by Dewey Destin Restaurants	49.2	Marshall Mathes, Marshall Law
3rd King Mackerel Jackpot		
Sponsored by Dewey Destin Restaurants	49.0	Chris Clements, Clementine

Brant Kelly Memorial Wahoo Award

Largest Wahoo of the Tournament	76.0	(Destination, Captain Stan Phillip, Mate-Isiah Hazelette)
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Charter Boat Division

1st King Mackerel	30.8	Max Brace - Crestview, FL	Shoal River
2nd King Mackerel	28.2	Anthony Ardivino - Hermitage, TN	Reel Chill
1st Red Grouper	19.4	Lamar Bowman - Soddy Daisy, TN	Outta Line
2nd Red Grouper	16.6	Clay Johnson - Monroe, GA	Bow'd Up
1st Blackfin Tuna	29.2	Ron Kuhn - Little Rock, AR	Huntress
2nd Blackfin Tuna	28.0	Hayden Holt - Alexandra, AR	Bow'd Up
1st Mingo Snapper	5.6	Louis Martinez - Niceville, FL	Finatical
2nd Mingo Snapper	4.8	Marc Threet - Spring City, TN	100 Proof
1st Scamp	12.2	Rick Strickland - Alpharetta, GA	Finest Kind
2nd Scamp	11.8	Mason Moon - Bowling Green, KY	Finest Kind
1st Wahoo	76.0	Joyce Schrader - Indianapolis, IN	Destination
2nd Wahoo	72.6	Gavin Wilson - Germantown, TN	Angel's Share I
1st Almaco Jack	28.0	Russell Francis - Crestview, FL	First Light
2nd Almaco Jack	13.6	John Churchill - Aurora, IL	Reel Chill
1st Black Snapper	10.8	Cal Goodlet - Rock Springs, GA	Bow'd Up
2nd Black Snapper	9.6	Jackson Renfro - Floyds Knobbs, IN	Stelluna
1st Triggerfish	9.4	Buz Hall - Corryton, TN	Huntress
2nd Triggerfish Charter	9.0	Olivia Wright - Lebanon, TN	Tropical Winds

Party Boat Division

1st King Mackerel Party	16.6	Brian Lowe - Summerville, TN	Swoop II
2nd King Mackerel Party	16.4	Brian Bailey - Bowling Green, KY	Destiny
1st Red Grouper Party	14.0	Glenn Wong - Boyle, MS	Sweet Jody
2nd Red Grouper Party	10.8	Adam Patrick - Vicksburg, MS	Destiny
1st Blackfin Tuna Party	23.6	Gypsy Shorb - Hindsievelle, AR	Sweet Jody
2nd Blackfin Tuna Party	20.8	Lyman Kerkhof, Jr. - Milton, FL	Swoop II
1st Mingo Snapper Party	4.4	Daniel Verel - DeFuniak Springs, FL	Sweet Jody
2nd Mingo Snapper Party	4.4	Dennis Weddington - Hammond, IN	American Spirit
1st Scamp Party	8.6	Stephanie Roberts - Fort Walton, FL	Swoop II
2nd Scamp Party	7.6	Gerald Fieger - Morning View, KY	Swoop II
1st Wahoo	39.8	Becky McMaster - Shalimar, FL	Sweet Jody
2nd Wahoo	39.2	Bo Yarbrough - Bowling Green, KY	Destiny
1st Almaco Jack	13.6	Becky McMaster - Shalimar, FL	Sweet Jody
2nd Almaco Jack	12.4	Clay Gerber - Destin, FL	Sweet Jody
1st Black Snapper	12.0	Tim Littlefield - Panama City Beach, FL	American Spirit
2nd Black Snapper	11.8	Greg Gill - Destin, FL	American Spirit
1st Triggerfish	6.8	Kelly "Socks" Phelps - Rogers City, MI	Destin Princess
2nd Triggerfish	6.4	Chuck Rose - Scottsburg, IN	American Spirit

Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals and Real Estate 26' & Under - Charter Division

1st King Mackerel	49.8	Tony Tenore - Destin, FL	Dawn Patrol
2nd King Mackerel	34.4	Dan Pfeil - Louisville, TX	Silver King
1st Red Grouper	7.2	Christopher Bowling - Roark, KY	Fishonn
2nd Red Grouper	6.2	Brad McCluskey - Ballwin, MO	On The Bite Too
1st Blackfin Tuna	26.2	Lucas Denny - Alcoa, TN	Silver King
2nd Blackfin Tuna	26.0	Steve Muhonen - Buffalo, MN	Silver King
1st Mingo Snapper	3.4	Charlie Morekis - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Silver King
2nd Mingo Snapper	3.4	Charlie Morekis - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Silver King
1st Scamp	9.6	Garret Lee - Buffalo, MN	Silver King
2nd Scamp	5.2	Steve Muhonen - Buffalo, MN	Silver King
1st Almaco Jack	5.6	Benny Baugh - Madisonville, KY	Silver King
2nd Almaco Jack	3.0	Douglas Goodhart - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Game Changer
1st Black Snapper	8.6	Woody Leath - Forney, TX	Fishonn
2nd Black Snapper	7.0	Douglas Goodhart - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Game Changer
1st Triggerfish	7.8	Cheery Gleneck - Fort Walton Beach, FL	On The Bite Too
2nd Triggerfish	7.0	Jon Lee - Destin, FL	Silver King

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2025 RODEO RESULTS

2025 RODEO RESULTS

D&G Custom Rods Kid's Mingo

Largest Junior Girl Mingo Snapper Charter	4.4	Layla Case - Taylorville, KY	100 Proof
Largest Junior Boy Mingo Snapper Charter	4.4	Ethan Wood - Destin, FL	100 Proof
Largest Junior Girl Mingo Snapper Party	2.2	Keira Dunn - Mary Esther, FL	Sweet Jody
Largest Junior Boy Mingo Snapper Party	3.2	Jayce Hansen - Alpharetta, GA	Sweet Jody

Boshamps Seafood & Oyster House Private Boat Division

1st King Mackerel	49.0	Jeff Van Horn - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Clementine
2nd King Mackerel	47.4	Jeff Van Horn - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Clementine
1st Red Grouper	18.2	Gus Andrews - Defuniak Springs, FL	Bird Dog
2nd Red Grouper	15.6	Andrew Dover - Destin, FL	Muscle Memories
1st Blackfin Tuna	25.8	Julian Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Muscle Memories
2nd Blackfin Tuna	24.4	James McKenna - Dickson, TN	Beyond Blessed
1st Mingo Snapper	4.8	Elijah Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Muscle Memories
2nd Mingo Snapper	4.6	Gus Andrews - Defuniak Springs, FL	Bird Dog
1st Scamp	17.4	Brad McCann - Destin, FL	Little Blue
2nd Scamp	17.0	David Simpson - Auburn, AL	Little Blue
1st Wahoo	45.8	Tanya McElroy - Destin, FL	Load the Wagon
2nd Wahoo	37.2	Brian Threlkeld - Navarre, FL	Team Coastal
1st Almaco Jack	28.2	Paul Frazier - Bartlett, TN	Bird Dog
2nd Almaco Jack	21.8	Trey Brown - Destin, FL	Let's Kick It
1st Black Snapper	10.0	Derrick Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Muscle Memories
2nd Black Snapper	9.2	Tony Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Muscle Memories
1st Triggerfish	6.6	Joseph Silva - Miramar Beach, FL	Playin-Hooke
2nd Triggerfish	6.4	Derrick Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Muscle Memories

Legendary Marine 26' & Under Private Boat Division

1st King Mackerel	49.2	Daniel Young - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Marshall Law
2nd King Mackerel	48.4	Will Sexton - Destin, FL	S.S. Mullet
1st Red Grouper	7.8	Kenny McDaniel - Santa Rosa Beach, FL	Hat Trick
2nd Red Grouper	6.6	Gary Perrin - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Big Jerk
1st Blackfin Tuna	24.8	Will Sexton - Destin, FL	S.S. Mullet
2nd Blackfin Tuna	24.4	Thomas Curry - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Blind Hog
1st Mingo Snapper	3.8	Tana Varner - Navarre, FL	Let's Get Kraken
2nd Mingo Snapper	2.2	Tony Todd - Apison, TN	True Grit
1st Scamp	3.2	Scott Strumlauf - Inlet Beach, FL	Lucille
2nd Scamp	3.2	Tony Todd - Apison, TN	True Grit
1st Wahoo	29.2	Paul Young - Midland, TX	Helen Rose
2nd Wahoo	27.6	Clint Willard - Niceville, FL	Blind Hog
1st Almaco Jack	5.4	Kevin McDaniel - Shalimar, FL	Hat Trick
2nd Almaco Jack	5.2	Chip Browning - Shalimar, FL	Big Jerk
1st Black Snapper	6.4	Hunter Meyer - Miramar Beach, FL	Southern Grace
2nd Black Snapper	3.4	Hunter Meyer - Miramar Beach, FL	Southern Grace
1st Triggerfish	8.0	Tony Todd - Apison, TN	True Grit
2nd Triggerfish	5.4	Paul Young - Midland, TX	Helen Rose

Boathouse Oyster Bar & Marina Reef Division

1st Cobia	21.8	Dave Bromley - Eagan, MN	On The Bite Too
2nd Cobia	19.6	Aaron Contreras - Milton, GA	Great Escape II
1st Lane Snapper	4.0	Rudy Schreider - Centennial, CO	Double Time
Largest White Marlin	77.8	Dakota Cleveland - Christiana, TN	Lady Em
Largest Swordfish	47.2	David Copeland - Destin, FL	Deep Obsession

Harbor Docks Ladies Division

1st Ladies King Mackerel	38.4	Hannah Myers - Destin, FL	Silver King
2nd Ladies King Mackerel	28.4	Lisa Goble - Destin, FL	Piper Fallon
1st Ladies Red Grouper	18.6	Jenna White - Murfreesboro, TN	100 Proof
2nd Ladies Red Grouper	14.4	Suzann Threet - DeQuincy, LA	100 Proof
1st Ladies Blackfin Tuna	26.8	Jillian Brown - Pace, FL	Huntress
2nd Ladies Blackfin Tuna	26.6	Sandra Rush - Clarksburg, WV	Vengeance
1st Ladies Wahoo	40.2	Kathy Case - Taylorsville, KY	100 Proof
2nd Ladies Wahoo	33.6	Kristen Fowler - Milton, FL	Huntress

Murphy's Home Services Junior Angler Division

1st Junior King Mackerel	30.0	Camden Oliver - Shalimar, FL	Silver King
2nd Junior King Mackerel	24.4	Ariel Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Muscle Memories
1st Junior Red Grouper	15.6	Harrison Case - Taylorville, KY	100 Proof
2nd Junior Red Grouper	7.2	Beckett Wright - Destin, FL	100 Proof
1st Junior Blackfin Tuna	27.2	Hagan Knight - Providence, KY	UnReel
2nd Junior Blackfin Tuna	24.6	Wyatt Weller - Franklin, TN	Sea Fix
1st Junior Wahoo	48.2	Luke Teems - Destin, FL	100 Proof
2nd Junior Wahoo	41.6	Keaton Dyer - Greeneville, TN	100 Proof

Senior Division

1st Senior King Mackerel	31.6	Jay Pavlas - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Clementine
2nd Senior King Mackerel	25.4	Rick Leyh - Austin, TX	On The Bite Too
1st Red Grouper	16.4	Eddie Hernandez - Gulf Breeze, FL	Finatical
2nd Red Grouper	14.0	Tom Threet - Quincy, LA	100 Proof
1st Senior Blackfin Tuna	26.6	Dan Richardson - Smithville, GA	Huntress
2nd Senior Blackfin Tuna	26.4	Timothy Carr - Sheridan, IN	Huntress
1st Senior Wahoo	41.2	Garrett Veazey - Jacksonville, AL	100 Proof
2nd Senior Wahoo	39.8	Thomas Henry, Jr. - Santa Rosa Beach, FL	Gulf Grown

Half Hitch Tackle Offshore Division

1st Barracuda	37.2	Cole Henderlight - Mount Juliet, TN	100 Proof
2nd Barracuda	35.4	Garrett Figar - Destin, FL	Wired Up
1st Bonito	15.8	Eric Mitchen - Rhome, TX	Catch 22
2nd Bonito	12.4	Kevin McDaniel - Shalimar, FL	Hat Trick
1st Dolphin	18.4	Hunter Sauna - Roswell, GA	Deep Charters
2nd Dolphin	15.0	Collin Miller - Rockspring, GA	Twilight

The Ship's Chandler and Shimano Inshore Division

1st Flounder	3.0	Kevin McDaniel - Shalimar, FL	Hat Trick
2nd Flounder	2.6	Kevin McDaniel - Shalimar, FL	Hat Trick
1st Redfish	7.6	Kenny McDaniel - Santa Rosa Beach, FL	Hat Trick
2nd Redfish	6.8	Chuck Magill - Niceville, FL	Hat Trick
1st Spanish Mackerel	7.8	Conlin Arrowsmith - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Blind Hog
2nd Spanish Mackerel	5.6	Jason Johnstad - Escalon, CA	Anastasia
1st Speckled Trout	3.6	James Bell - Destin, FL	On The Bite Too
2nd Speckled Trout	3.4	Chris Schlafke - Glasgow, KY	On The Bite Too

Fort Walton Machining Extended Voyage Division

1st Yellowfin Tuna Open	167.2	Scott Heimich - Bella Vista, AR	Gulf Grown
2nd Yellowfin Tuna Open	162.8	Tyler Garrett - Apison, TN	Dixieland Delight
1st Almaco Jack Open	20.0	Donnie Reed - Springville, AL	Gulf Grown
2nd Almaco Jack Open	15.0	Richard Jaffe - Inlet Beach, FL	Twilight
1st Yellowedge Grouper Open	37.0	Dave Bromley - Eagar, MS	Gulf Grown
2nd Yellowedge Grouper Open	17.6	Dave Bromley - Eagar, MS	Gulf Grown
1st Barrel Fish Open	17.2	Jeremy Dineen - Springfield, IL	Sea Fix
2nd Barrel Fish Open	15.0	Rick Shereda - Sherman, IL	Sea Fix
1st Snowy Grouper Open	13.4	Corbin Courington - Niceville, FL	Championship
2nd Snowy Grouper Open	8.6	Robert Johnson - Niceville, FL	Championship
1st Red Grouper Open	11.0	Isaac Eyth - Enterprise, AL	DiscipleShip
2nd Red Grouper Open	9.2	Corbin Courington - Niceville, FL	Championship
1st Scamp Open	22.4	Tim Schmedes - West Palm Beach, FL	Finest Kind
2nd Scamp Open	13.2	Brett Koehler - Shelbyville, IL	Twilight
1st Wahoo Open	42.8	Samuel Dickson - Temple, GA	Gulf Grown
2nd Wahoo Open	31.6	Alex Porter - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Lady Em
1st Dolphin Open	15.4	Randy Cleveland - Wellsboro, PA	Lady Em
2nd Dolphin Open	13.2	Cole Cleveland - Navarre, FL	Lady Em
1st Tile Fish Open	8.8	Anthony Burgess - Crestview, FL	Reel Therapy
2nd Tile Fish Open	8.4	Casey Whitlock - Crestview, FL	Gulf Grown

Okaloosa Island Pier - Pier, Bridge, Jetty and Surf Division

Largest King Mackerel PBJs	22.8	Tristen Vacks - Destin, FL	PBJs
Largest Spanish Mackerel PBJs	5.6	Bill Ireland - Santa Rosa Beach, FL	PBJs
Largest Pompano PBJs	2.4	Alivia Hollis - Niceville, FL	PBJs
Largest Redfish PBJs	7.0	Nevaeh Denton - Republic, MO	PBJs
Largest Speckled Trout PBJs	3.8	Jeff Van Horn - Fort Walton Beach, FL	PBJs
Largest Flounder PBJs	2.6	Paul Cox - Fort Walton, FL	PBJs
Largest Junior Any Species PBJs	5.4	Ariel Dover - Mary Esther, FL	PBJs
Largest Senior Any Species PBJs	8.8	Bill Ireland - Santa Rosa Beach, FL	PBJs



2025 RODEO RESULTS

Friends and Family of Abram Sitcer Kayak - Abram Sitcer Memorial Division

Largest Flounder	1.4	Derrick Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Sea Note
Largest King Mackerel	9.0	Derrick Dover - Mary Esther, FL	Sea Note
Largest Redfish	7.6	James Holahan - Fort Walton Beach, FL	Solo Skiffer
Largest Speckled Trout	4.4	Jerrett Cleveland - Niceville, FL	The Blue and Yellow One
Largest Spanish Mackerel	4.2	Derrick Dover - Mary Esther, FL	

Mason Hupp Memorial Mako My Day Shark Division

1st of the Tournament	189.8	Hunter Shearer - Albany, KY	Outta Line
2nd of the Tournament	152.0	Joshua Marshall - Valparaiso, FL	Home Grown

The Waters at Freeport Paddleboard Division

1st Any Species	5.8	Ken Machuta - Shalimar, FL	Rougarou
2nd Any Species	4.6	Albee Wheeler - Destin, FL	Luv It

Charter Boat Finest Kind Deep Drop Division

Largest Barrel Fish	18.4	Garrett Thornton - Blackshear, GA	Special K
Largest Tile Fish	10.2	Dennis Rogers - Milton, FL	Finatical
Largest Snowy Grouper	31.2	Katelyn Lagrosse - Destin, FL	Finest Kind
Largest Warsaw	19.4	Riley Michelson - Mary Esther, FL	Sea Fix
Largest Yellowedge Grouper	21.8	Timothy Hogg - Belleview, KY	Mighty Fine

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar AJ's Bonus Awards Division

1st Wahoo	76.0	Joyce Schrader - Indianapolis, IN	Destination
2nd Wahoo	72.6	Gavin Wilson - Germantown, TN	Angel's Share I
3rd Wahoo	50.0	Brandy Sullivan - Cashier, NC	Reel Chill

The Wynsong Jim Wilson, Jr. Memorial Billfish Catch and Release Division

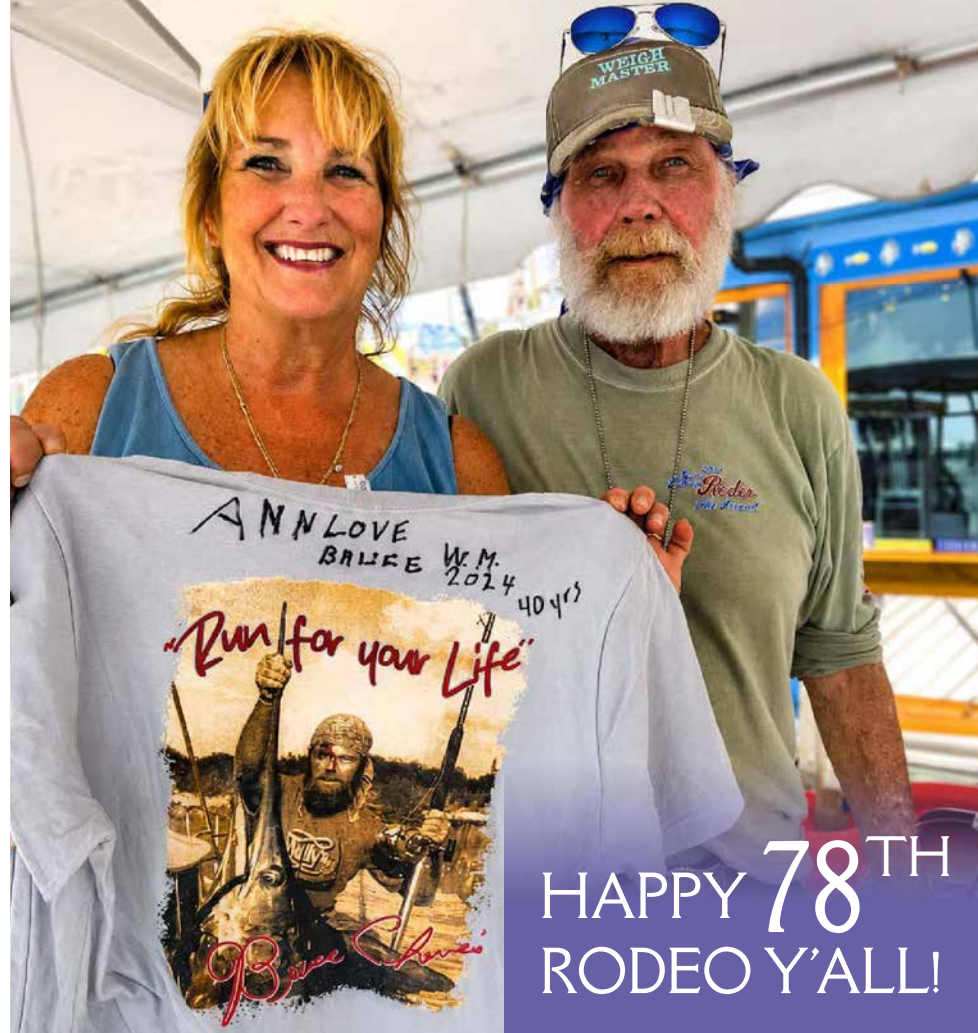
1st Billfish	3.0	Ty Moore - Galletin, TN	Let's Kick It
2nd Billfish	2.0	Jeff Cowen - Birmingham, AL	100 Proof

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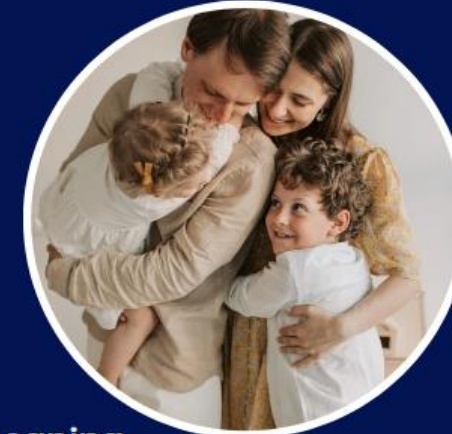
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2025 RODEO'n REVIEW
LOOKING BACK AT THE 77TH RODEO



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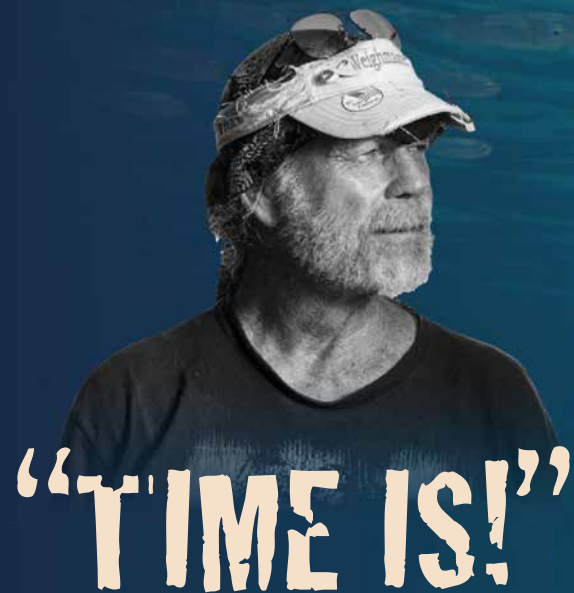
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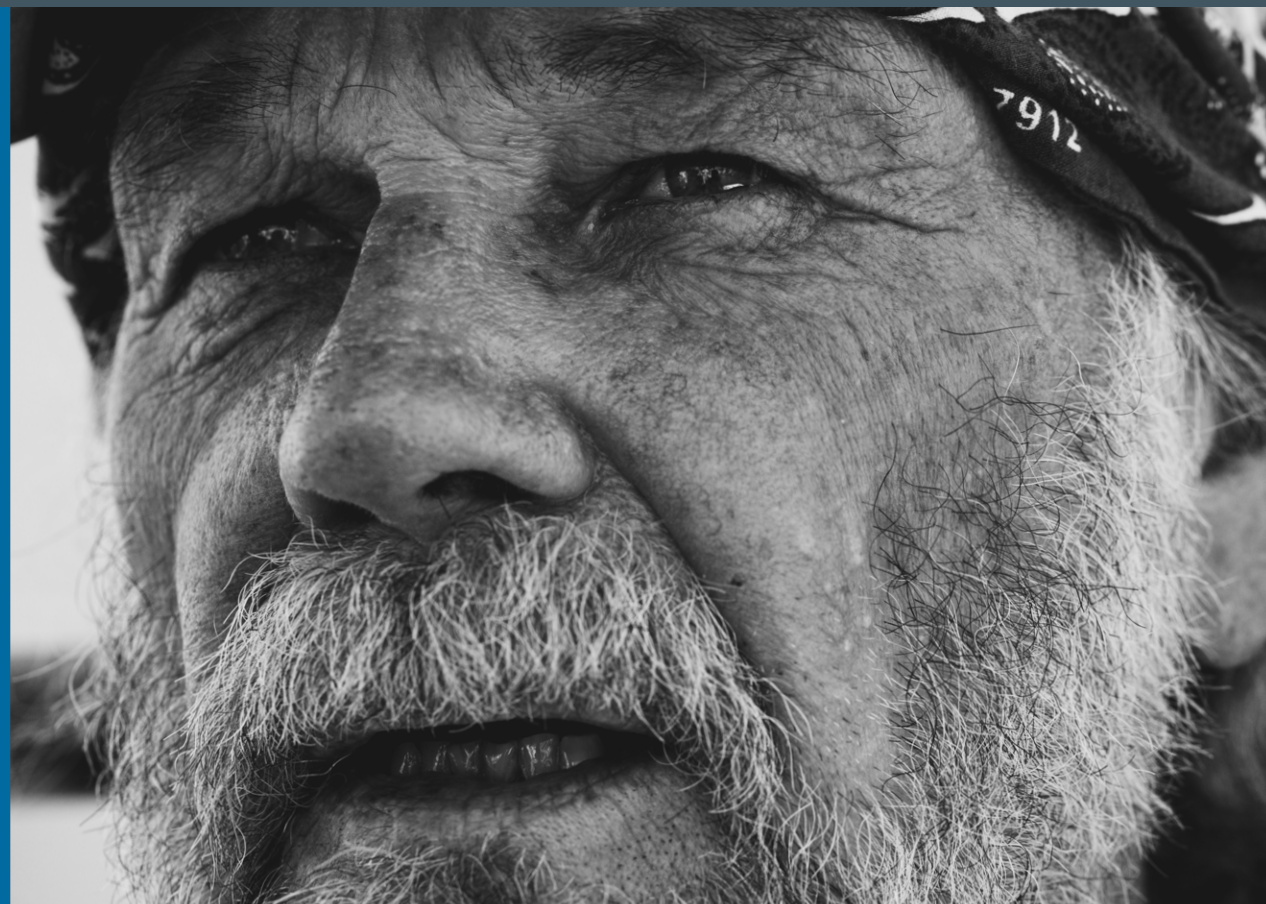
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“TIME IS!”

The Memorial Pages of the Destin Fishing Rodeo celebrate the remarkable individuals whose passion, dedication, and love for Destin helped shape one of the Gulf Coast’s most treasured traditions. These men and women were more than participants—they were the heart and soul of the Rodeo, leaving an enduring mark on the tournament, the harbor, and the community they loved. Through the memorial awards established in their honor, their spirit continues to inspire each new generation of anglers, captains, volunteers, and fans.



“GUPPIES TO GODZILLA, CAUGHT ON BATHTUBS OR BATTLESHIPS... BRING ME A FISH AND I’LL MAKE YOU FAMOUS!”

Every cast, every catch, and every celebration along the docks serves as a reminder that the Destin Fishing Rodeo is built on the people who devoted themselves to its success. Their stories live on, their contributions endure, and their legacy remains woven into the very fabric of the Rodeo.

Few individuals embodied that spirit more completely than Bruce Cheves. Arriving in

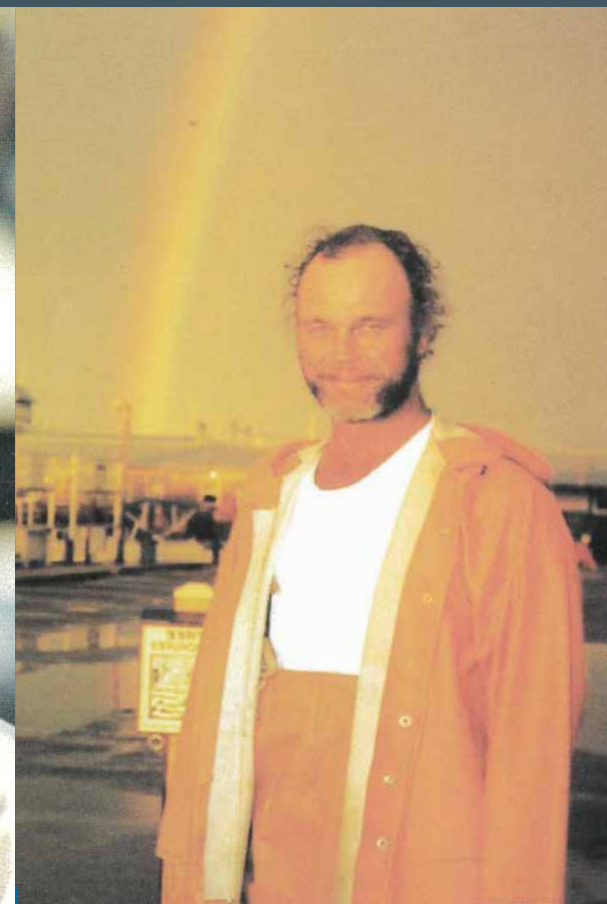
Destin in 1977, Bruce quickly became a familiar and respected figure within the local fishing community. Whether greeting anglers at the scales, sharing a laugh on the docks, or ensuring the integrity of the competition, he earned the admiration of everyone who crossed his path. In 1991, Bruce assumed the role of Destin Fishing Rodeo Weighmaster, a responsibility he carried with pride, professionalism, and unwavering dedication for decades.



“HAS ANYONE TOLD YOU HOW PRETTY YOU LOOK TODAY?”

For thousands of anglers, Bruce was the face of the scales and the trusted guardian of the tournament’s integrity. He approached every weigh-in with precision, fairness, and respect, helping create the atmosphere of camaraderie and sportsmanship that defines the Rodeo today. His steady leadership became part of the daily rhythm of October in Destin, and his presence offered a sense of consistency that competitors and spectators alike came to appreciate.

But Bruce’s legacy reaches far beyond the numbers recorded on the scale. He was a storyteller, a mentor,



a friend, and a fixture of the harbor. Countless tales have been shared about Mr. Cheves over the years, and while some may have grown larger with retelling—as great fishing stories often do—the impact he had on the people around him was undeniable. His humor, kindness, work ethic, and commitment to doing things the right way left an impression that continues to be felt throughout the community.

To honor that legacy, AJ’s proudly sponsors the Bruce Cheves Memorial Award, recognizing individuals who exemplify the same dedication, integrity, sportsmanship,

WE HONOR YOU BRUCE

and love for the Destin Fishing Rodeo that Bruce demonstrated throughout his life. In addition, the Destin History and Fishing Museum has permanently renamed its Rodeo Gallery the Bruce Cheves Memorial Rodeo Gallery, ensuring that future generations will learn about the man who helped preserve and strengthen one of Destin’s greatest traditions.

These tributes stand as more than memorials—they are celebrations of a life well lived and a legacy that continues to inspire. Bruce Cheves helped make the Destin Fishing Rodeo what it is today, and his influence lives on in every angler who approaches the scales, every story shared on the docks, and every October day spent celebrating the sport and community he loved so deeply. ■



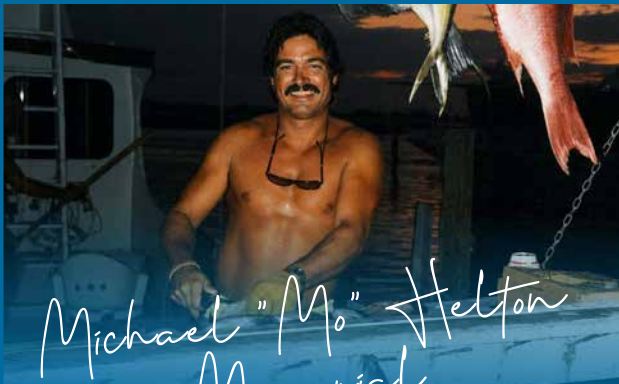
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THANKS FOR 41 YEARS OF RODEO



June Post Aiken "Mama June" Memorial

CHARTER BOAT MATES AWARD June lived a life defined by love, faith, and an unwavering zest for adventure. Born in Greenwood, MS, she lived on the Tallahatchie River where her love of boating and fishing began. In 1974 she married Hal Aiken, a partnership that spanned more than 51 years. Together they raised two children and built a life rooted in family, hard work, and shared dreams. They loved fishing at their family farm, Aiken Acres, and spent family vacations fishing the Gulf waters of Destin. This connection to the coast shaped the next chapters of her life.

Moving to the Emerald Coast in 1988, June and Hal bought a 35' Bertram and named it the Desperado. With Capt. Hal at the helm and June as Mate, they created lasting memories and friendships with their clients. This journey led to the founding of Aiken Yacht Service, where life continued on the water, managing and crewing up private sportfishing yachts. June was in her element working as a Mate for over 30 years. She never missed an opportunity to wet a line and loved sharing her stories, knowledge, and passion for fishing with others. Her warmth, adventurous spirit, and love for the water left a lasting impression on everyone who knew her. The sun on her face, the wind in her hair – that was her kind of freedom.



Michael "Mo" Helton Memorial

CHARTER BOAT MATES LARGEST FISH AWARD Mo dedicated his life to the pursuit & craft of fishing after planting himself in Destin at 18. Beginning on charter boats in Destin Harbor, he learned the trade from the town's best captains. A respected mate and fisherman, Mo spent countless hours on the Gulf building a career defined by skill, hard work, and a passion for the water. His experience spanned every facet of the industry, including longlining and bandit fishing, offshore trolling, and bottom fishing. Known for his ability to target a wide variety of species, he earned the trust of captains, crews, and anglers throughout the fleet. His knowledge of bait rigging, fish behavior, and boat-side techniques helped anglers land memorable catches. A multi-time Mate of the Year, Rodeo winner Mo found success on the Gulf's competitive tournament circuit, earning numerous placements in billfish tournament. His skill, determination, and ability to perform under pressure made him a respected presence in the world of charter & big-game fishing.

While he earned recognition with catches made on the Gulf, Mo's love for fishing extended far beyond offshore waters. He could just as easily be found casting a line in a local pond or lake, excited about a bass the length of his foot. For Mo, it was never just about the size of the catch—it was about the joy of fishing itself.

Life on the water greatly defined Mo's life. His legacy lives on through the stories shared at the dock, the friendships forged along the way, and the generations of fishermen inspired by his example... "See Ya!"



Brant Kelly Memorial

CAPTAINS WAHOO AWARD Brant Kelly grew up on "the hill" overlooking Kelly Docks in Destin, where his lifelong love for the water began. As a boy, he and his friends famously rode tethered bikes off the Destin Bridge, swam ashore, retrieved the bikes, and did it all again. He often joked that he had "salt water in his veins."

Brant started working for his grandfather, Coleman Kelly, on Destin's first party boats, eventually moving into charter fishing and later building his own legendary charter boats. His first creation, the Charter Boat Lady K—now known as the Destination—was followed by the Relentless, still operated by his family today. Though professionally laid hulls arrived from Alabama, Brant personally crafted every remaining detail, building from instinct and experience rather than blueprints. Asked how he designed boats without drawings, he replied, "I couldn't draw it—I didn't know what it was going to look like!"

For Brant, fishing was always about more than catching fish; it was about creating unforgettable memories and making every trip fun. He deeply loved Destin's fishing community and generously shared his wisdom with others, especially hardworking mates. His family proudly sponsors this Mate's Award in his honor.



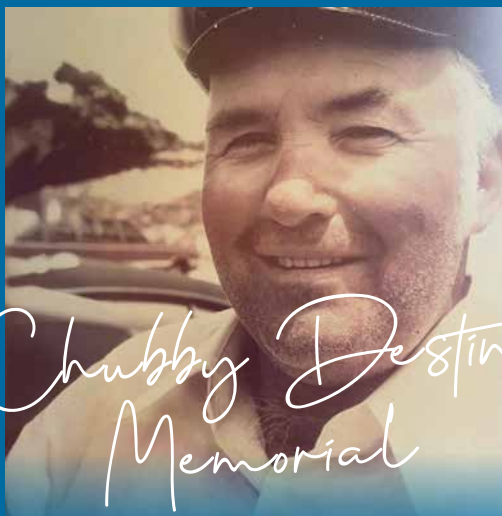
Henry Hinkel Memorial

CHARTER BOAT KING MACKEREL AWARD Henry Hinkel was a great fisherman who loved Destin! These two facts showed in the many ways he gave to the City as well as the Destin Fishing Rodeo. He paid for the first "Welcome to Destin" sign by the bridge, a roof for the library and the Destin Fishing Rodeo Office Building! He donated many of the mounted fish that are displayed in the Destin History and Fishing Museum and the City Hall. Henry Hinkel was an avid fisherman and still holds the record for the largest king mackerel in the Rodeo. He fished exclusively with Tommy Browning on the Finest Kind. The Henry Hinkel Memorial Award is a small way to honor a man who gave so much to the city that he loved. Capt. Tommy and Janie Browning.



Ham Palmgren Memorial

CHARTER BOAT AMBERJACK AWARD The Palmgren Family has been coming to this area since the late 60s to fish and enjoy the Emerald Coast. They always booked three days of fishing while on their vacation and until 1973 always fished out of Panama City. In 1973 they came to Destin and never fished Panama City again! Ham Palmgren loved fishing for King Mackerel and Cobia, but by far his weakness was fishing for billfish. He felt he fished with some of the finest Captains in Destin William Frank Davis, Chubby Destin, Steve Wilson, Tommy Browning, Brant Kelly and David Windes. Ham enjoyed all of their mates, but had a special affinity for David Windes' mate aboard the Miss Lisa and Seascape; Charlie Martin. In 1982 the Palmgren's "retired" and moved to Destin, and volunteered to judge the Rodeo that first year. When Marcia Green was director, she asked his wife Marion to help out at the Rodeo every day from 10-12. Mr. Ham was there most days that year, and every year after until 2012. Ham served as a Rodeo Judge every year that he was able, and when he wasn't judging, he was running errands, going to the bank, post office, hardware store, wherever he was needed he pitched in, with a smile and kind words for everyone he met. Halloween was Ham's favorite day of the year! He loved to dress up and play the part of his character every year. A few of his more memorable costumes were Popeye, A Hooter's Girl named "Candy", Bob Marley, Pirate, Fish Head, vampire, caveman and a Sumo Wrestler and by far his favorite was the Hospital patient – where he showed "his" rear! Ham passed away in 2013 at the age 92. The Rodeo will surely miss this truly southern gentleman.



Chubby Destin Memorial

KING MACKEREL JACKPOT AWARDS Capt. H.F. "Chubby" Destin was a great competitor in the Destin Fishing Rodeo and always looked forward to fishing his Charter Boat "Shooting Star" in it. He was the recipient of the Sportsmanship Trophy in 1968; the Leonard Hutchinson Memorial Trophy in 1971 & 1973; the largest Blue Marlin Division in 1969; the largest King Mackerel Division in 1957, 64-69, 73; and, the Overall King Mackerel Division in 1973. The Traveling Captain's award was retired to him after winning it 3 times. He caught his largest king in the last Rodeo he fished in 1973. He loved to fish, was passionate about the fishing industry and was not afraid to speak his mind to anyone who challenged the industry, and usually did. He was a compassionate man and would help anyone who needed help. In the years since his passing, we have been privileged to have complete strangers share their memories of his kindness. He was a wonderful husband and father. We miss him daily.



Robert Stewart
Memorial

PARTY BOAT GROUPER AWARD Robert Brian Stewart (November 27, 1954 - February 1, 2012), affectionately known as “Captain Bob”, fished every year in the Destin Fishing Rodeo since 1972. He often referred to himself as a “Fishing Machine”, as fishing was his greatest passion. Bob’s two (2) favorite t-shirts to wear bore the slogans, “Fish Fear Me” and “Shut up and Fish!” Bob’s greatest accomplishment fishing was winning the 2005 Destin Fishing Rodeo Party Boat Grouper Division reeling in a 61LB Grouper he affectionately named, “Mr. Grouper.” Accordingly, Bob’s family and friends have sponsored the 2014 Grouper Party Boat Award in Bob’s Honor.



Mason Hupp Memorial

THE “MAKO MY DAY” SHARK AWARD honors Mason, a Fort Walton Beach native who loved life on the Emerald Coast. Whether at the beach, on a boat, fishing from a dock, playing soccer, or joking with friends, Mason brought energy, charm, and humor everywhere he went. He was the kind of person you could always count on—the first to arrive, the last to leave, and a friend to everyone he met.

Mason began fishing and playing soccer at just three years old. Family fishing trips in the Gulf became a lifelong passion, even though he battled seasickness for years. One of his favorite childhood memories was fishing with his grandfather “Rabbit,” proudly catching a string of pinfish they later joked about “eating.”

As he grew older, Mason would fish anywhere he could—beaches, piers, docks—drawn by the excitement of the catch, the peace of the water, and the friendships built along the way. Determined to catch a shark one day, Mason and a friend successfully caught and released a five-foot nurse shark at night—“the big one.”

The Destin Fishing Rodeo became a cherished tradition, inspiring the creation of the Mason Hupp Memorial “Mako My Day” Shark Award in his honor.



Abram Hunter
Sitcer Memorial

KAYAK DIVISION Abram Hunter “went fishing with Jesus” on April 28, 2019. Born November 18, 2006, Abram—lovingly called “Brum”—filled every day with adventure, laughter, and heart. He is survived by his parents, Kevin and Amanda, and his older brother, Bradley Gunner Sitcer, his “Irish twin,” born just one year and nine days earlier. The brothers were inseparable.

Abram lived boldly and pursued every passion with enthusiasm. He swam with sharks and stingrays at Ripley’s Aquarium in Myrtle Beach, scuba-dived with the crew of the Aquanaut, flew an airplane, and even joined his favorite bands, Great White and Blink-182, on stage. A lifelong Scout, he proudly advanced through Wolf, Bear, Webelo, Arrow of Light, Scout, and Tenderfoot.

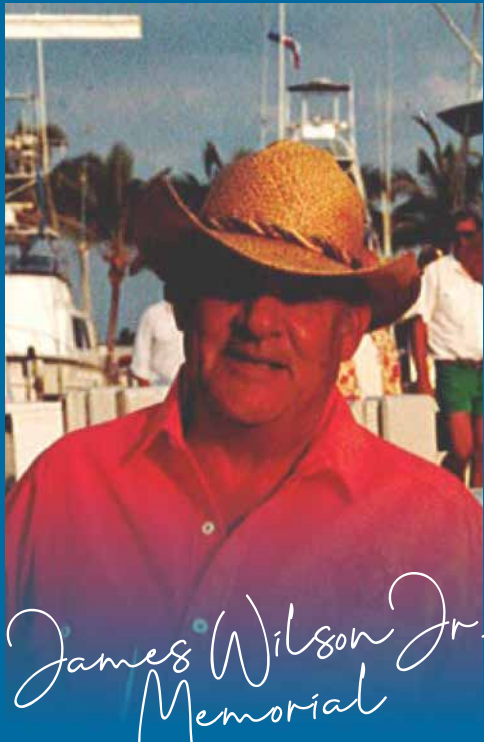
He loved biking with Bradley, fishing with his dad, beach days with his mom, visiting grandparents, building with Legos, anime, and his dogs—Stryker, Lexi, and Destiny. After moving to Niceville in 2015, Abram developed a deep love for the Destin Fishing Rodeo, especially the weigh-ins and annual t-shirts.

Abram’s kind heart, humor, music, dancing, and love for others will never be forgotten. His message to everyone: “FISH ON!”



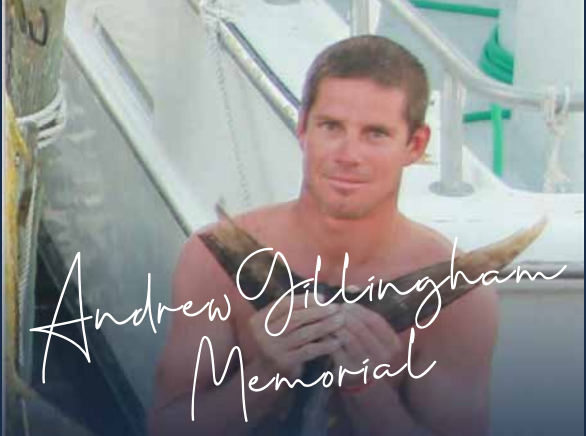
Michael Thomas McKinney
Memorial

PARTY BOAT MATES AWARD Michael McKinney, affectionately known to us as Mini Mac, MT, or just Mike, was a born fisherman...and then he practiced! He caught his first fish at age 2 and never looked back. On his eighth birthday in 1977 Mike went deep sea fishing for the first time under the tutelage of Captain Tom Marler aboard Her Majesty. After that, his love for fishing in Destin only grew. In 1978, 1979 and 1980 Mike won first place in the Junior Division of The Destin Fishing Rodeo. Mike fished with many of Destin’s great captains and went on to work on numerous boats of the Destin Fleet. He truly loved to teach people the joy of fishing and gave that gift to friends, family and the many customers aboard the boats where he worked and fished. Mike’s academic interests were centered on fishing. He accepted a college scholarship to study Fisheries Management in Alaska. During that time he was recognized as Distinguished Fisheries Management Student at the University of Alaska. Mike was a published writer, award winning photographer and artist. All those who knew Mike knew he was a man devoted to friends, family and his passion for fishing.



James Wilson Jr.
Memorial

BILLFISH CATCH & RELEASE DIVISION Mr. James Wilson, Jr. started fishing out of Destin in 1975 with his first Sportfishing Boat “Wynsong”. He enthusiastically enjoyed offshore fishing, especially billfishing. Over the years he participated in all of the Gulf Coast and many of the Bahamas Billfish tournaments. He was very successful in all of them, leaving behind a legacy of good sportsmanship, competition and comradery among his peers and young folks of today. Jim very much enjoyed releasing the billfish so others could enjoy their mighty performances. We know he would be honored to sponsor the Catch and Release division of the Destin Fishing Rodeo.



Andrew Gillingham
Memorial

FIRST PLACE SWORDFISH Andrew Gillingham was a part of the Destin Fishing Fleet during some of the best times. The charter fleet has a comradery that can only be compared to a mix of Groundhog Day, Hangover and Apocalypse Now. The days are long but the years are short. The professionalism for the art, the competitions that spawn and the love for each other is real and raw. Charter fishing in Destin, FL. takes grit, dedication, knowledge, patience, determination and wisdom. And I am here to tell you that Andrew had all of those amazing qualities as one of the best humans to ever walk the docks of Destin. Andrew was an extremely talented fisherman. His passion for fishing made him a fish magnet and there are plenty of photos and videos to prove it. Andrew had the patience of Job with the kids while fishing and pure joy was all over his face when he helped them reel in their first fish. Tuna, Wahoo, Snappers or Swords didn’t stand a chance when Andrew was out fishing. As our tears rolled down our cheeks as we said goodbye, the fish breathed a small sigh of relief. We as a community miss him dearly and the friendships he had here are still waiting on him to hop on down the dock with that swanky smile. The soap down the water hoses will just have to wait for the next generation of pranksters.



2025 RODEO'n REVIEW

LOOKING BACK AT THE 77TH RODEO



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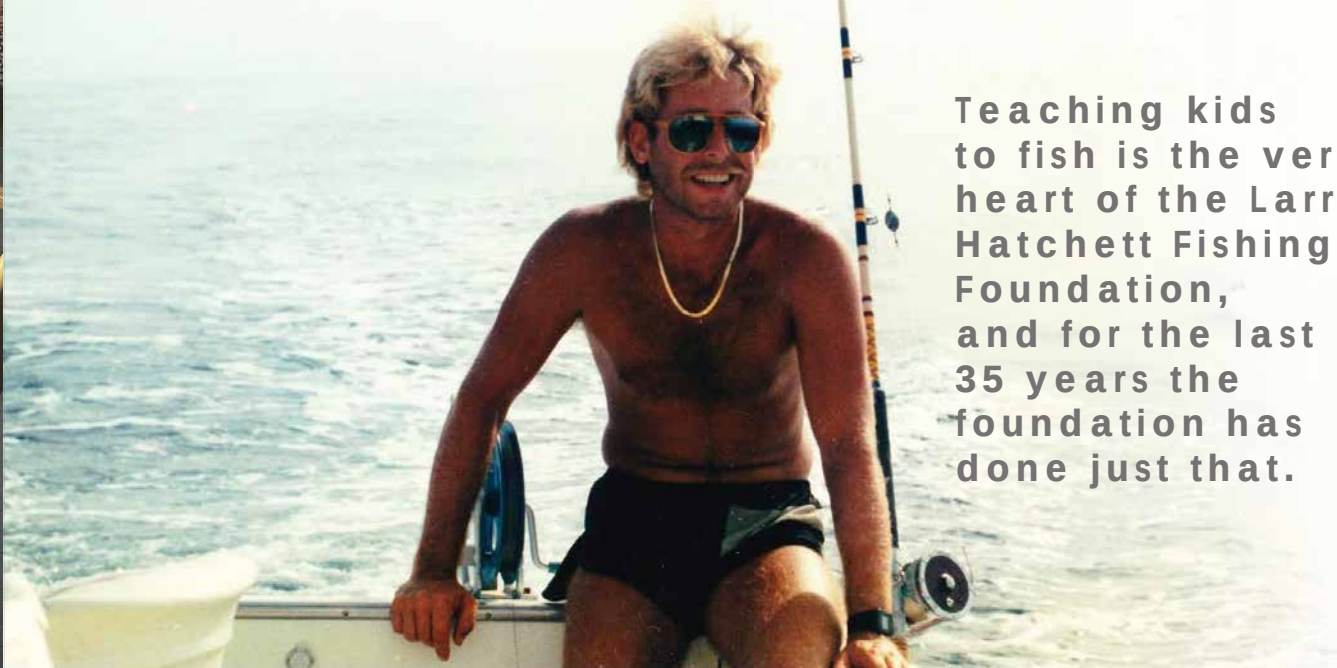


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LARRY HATCHETT FISHING FOUNDATION



Teaching kids to fish is the very heart of the Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation, and for the last 35 years the foundation has done just that.



**“Give a man a fish,
he’ll eat for a day.**

**Teach a man to fish,
he’ll eat for a lifetime.**

**Teach a child to fish,
he may feed the world.”**

– Larry Hatchett

THE FOUNDATION

The Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation was created as a memorial to Larry Hatchett, a lifelong Memphian who fished all over the world. His greatest joy, however, was fishing in the gulf. Larry called Destin “the capital of his soul.” He often took children fishing with him, as he enjoyed both teaching them how to fish as well as seeing their elation when they reeled in their first catch. Larry faced an untimely death at the age of 34, and this prompted the formation of the Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation’s annual trip so that Larry’s legacy could live on.

The 36th annual trip is scheduled for October 16-18, 2026 and will include foster children from homes in Florida, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Many of the participants have never had the opportunity to see the beach or swim in the gulf, and some have never traveled outside of their hometown. Each year approximately 115 kids will have the opportunity to fish in the gulf while learning about marine habitats and environmental awareness. They will also have the chance to form meaningful relationships with others in similar situations as their own.



LARRY HATCHETT



fishing foundation

IT'S ABOUT THE KIDS

Justice, a former participant states, “These trips were like the light at the end of the tunnel... we could forget about all of our problems and the difficult times we went through and will continue to go through. The LHFF made my time in the foster care system so much better.” Justice is now an adult volunteer for the foundation.

Furthermore, the event affects the volunteers that help make the trip a reality. “This has been both an honor and a privilege for us to help those who have faced so many challenges throughout their lives. Our goal is to eventually take 1,000+ kids each year.” (Bob Wilder, Foundation President). Eric Westbrook, director on The American Spirit as well as LHFF board member states, “This is one of my favorite trips each year because the foundation is very dear to my heart.” Throughout the years our volunteers have worked with the foster parents to become mentors to many of the participants. These mentor-type relationships have helped teach kids life skills such as how to shave their face, how to write a college essay, and have guided them through challenging life situations.



ABOARD THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

The Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation as well as everyone involved always looks forward to the rodeo competition. In 2008, one of our participants won first place in the triggerfish division and another placed third overall. In 2010 one of our youth won a \$2,500 Education IRA from the rodeo. The Foundation is also a rodeo sponsor and funds the Bonnie Orr Memorial Award for the Miss Destin Pageant winner.

This year the kids will fish with Captain Jim Green aboard The American Spirit. Fish Florida contributes funds towards the cost of the boat, and corporate as well as individual

sponsors donate funds to pay expenses for travel, fuel, lodging, meals/snacks, fishing rods, and other souvenirs that each child gets to take home with them. As a non-profit organization, each contribution is vital for the foundation to continue our mission to one day “feed the world.” We extend many thanks to the Destin community and all that support this mission. ■

For more information or to make a contribution please contact LarryHatchettFishing@gmail.com , call/text our Treasurer Liz Wilder Lemley (901-833-6760), find us on Facebook, Instagram, or visit www.LarryHatchett.com





2025 RODEO'n REVIEW

LOOKING BACK AT THE 77TH RODEO



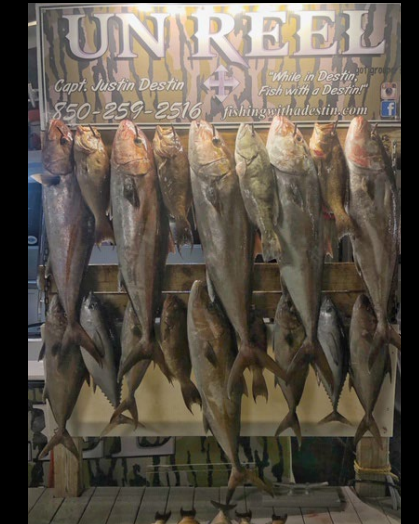
FISHING WITH A DESTIN

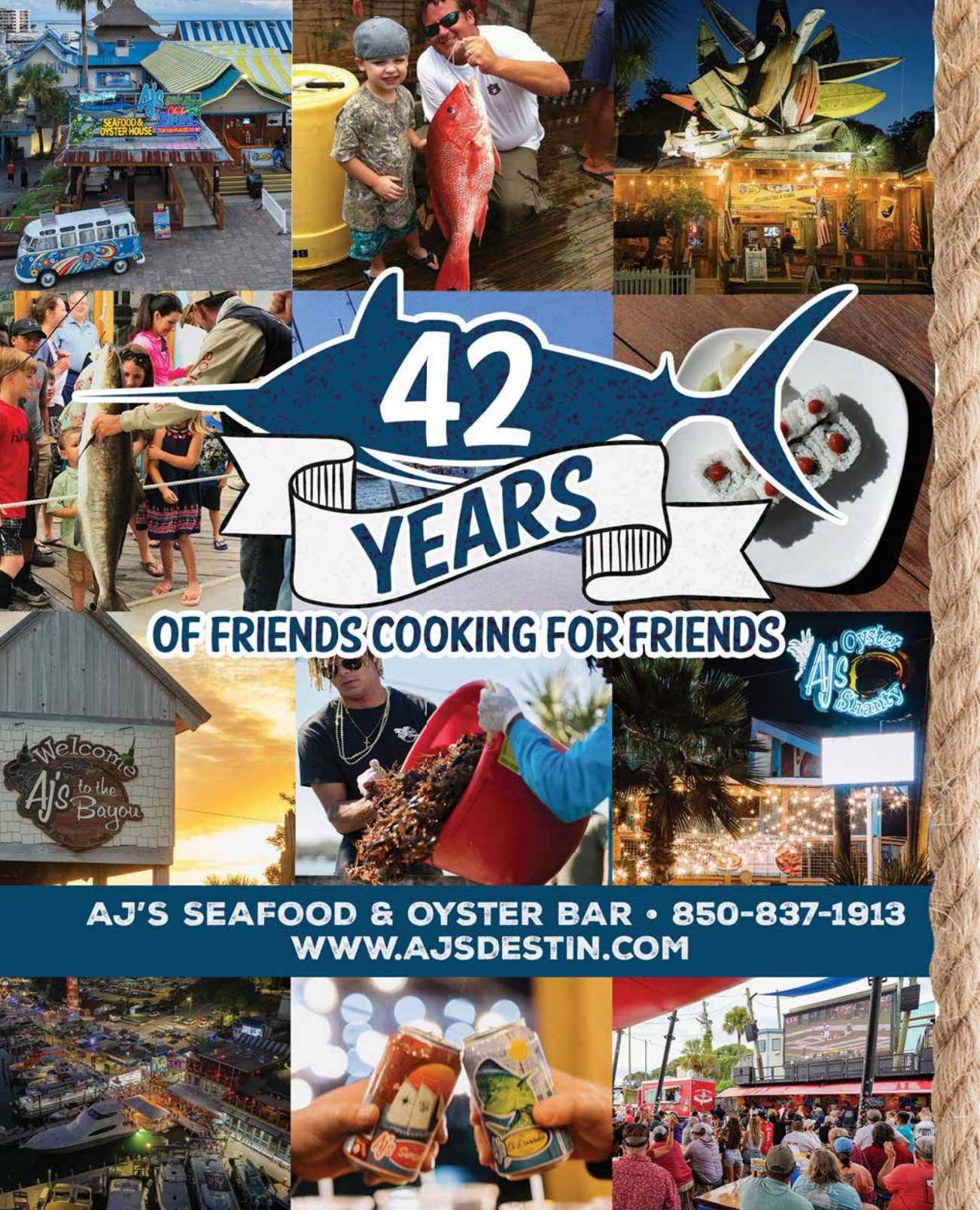
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