

**October
2025**



ECCAC

Emerald Coast Children's
Advocacy Center

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Greetings!

October is a season of transition - summer fades, routines shift, and change is in the air. It's also a time that reminds us how powerful growth can be, even when it begins in difficult places. With that in mind, we want to share the story of one young woman whose journey through hardship and healing is a powerful reflection of resilience.

In 2022, we met a teenage girl who carried a heavy mix of emotions that often came out as anger. She felt the pressure to act like everything was fine, to love the very people who had let her down, and to figure out what to do with feelings she couldn't quite name.

At her first session, she made it clear she didn't believe therapy could help. "There's nothing I can get out of this. Anything you have to say or 'teach me,' I can just find online," she told us. Her body language spoke just as loudly - closed off and ready to walk away.

But she came back. Week after week, despite the challenges of homelessness, Baker Acts, moving to a new county, and the ups and downs of adolescence - she kept coming back.

Over time, she began to trust the process. She opened up at her own pace, and as she did, she started to heal. She not only worked through her trauma, but she also began connecting the dots between her past and how it affected different areas of her life. She learned to set boundaries and remove people who brought back those same painful emotions. She found her voice and used it, even when it scared her.

This young woman discovered a resilience she didn't know she had. She built healthy relationships, advocated for herself, and developed tools to face life's difficulties with courage and confidence.

Four years later, the transformation is undeniable. The girl who once declared therapy could not help

her has grown into a strong, remarkable young woman who uses the skills she learned every day. Ending therapy was hard for her - because she could see how much she had grown and didn't want to let go.

Her journey is a powerful reminder of what happens when healing meets resilience. She is proof that even when trauma tries to bury strength, it can be uncovered, nurtured, and reclaimed.

-ECCAC Team

Empowering.

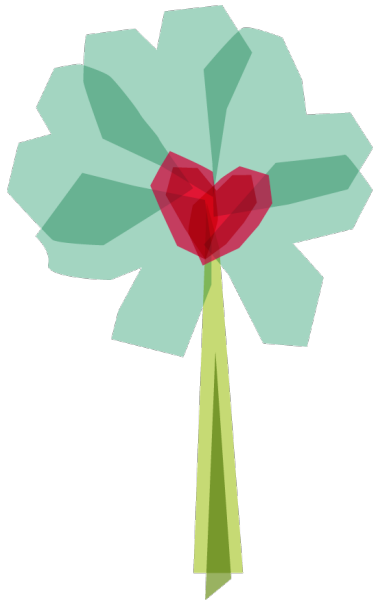


Back-to-School Success!

Our Back-to-School campaign was a huge success – thank you to everyone who participated and supported! Together, we were able to stuff **125 backpacks** with supplies for students heading into the new school year.

We're also thrilled to share that our **Prevention Team** is officially back in schools teaching Safety Matters education. Here's to another great year of empowering students with knowledge and tools to stay safe!





ANNUAL & MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION

When you partner with us as a subscriber, it is important for you to know that our team is celebrating because you are playing a huge role in a child's healing journey. It is a **BIG DEAL!**

Thank you for your partnership as we work together in our fight to **END CHILD ABUSE** and **END CHILD NEGLECT!**

Please note that all subscriptions are renewed on an annual or monthly basis. You can cancel your subscription at any time by contacting us at info@eccac.org.

Join Today!



Restoring.

Stories of Strength



Every so often, a child's story touches us in a way that reminds us exactly why we do what we do. One of our therapists recently shared about a client whose journey reflects both the deep challenges many children face and the incredible resilience they carry within them.

At just 11 years old, this kiddo has already lived through more than most of us can imagine. His first 7 years were filled with hardship, followed by 12 different foster homes. In his recent session, he opened up about the weight of his past and his fear of facing more instability ahead.

And yet—he shines. He is resilient, courageous, and full of heart. In that same conversation, he shared a song with me that he said felt like it was written about his life: **"Sunrise" by Forrest Frank**. Even in the face of so much loss, he continues to find connection, hope, and meaning.

It's children like him who remind us why our work matters. Every child deserves the chance to feel safe, supported, and rooted in love.

Watch/Listen to "Sunrise" by Forrest Frank

ECCAC Board of Directors - 2 New Additions

We are proud to welcome two new members to our Board of Directors! Each of our board members brings invaluable knowledge, experience, and passion to our mission, and we are so grateful for their leadership and commitment.

Please join us in celebrating our two newest additions, Danielle Becker and Leighann Elliott—read more about them below!



Danielle Becker

Danielle earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and later obtained her law degree from Georgia State University. Her experience as a CFO provided her with a strong financial foundation, further complemented by her service on the Finance Committee at Community Bible Church in Stockbridge, Georgia. As a member of ECCAC's Board of Directors, Danielle will bring her extensive background to the organization's Finance Committee.

Now based in Northwest Florida, the Beckers produce a weekly podcast, *What the Hell Do I Know*, which began as a hobby and has since grown into a passion for storytelling. The podcast is available on YouTube and all major podcast platforms. In addition to their creative endeavors,

the couple oversees real estate holdings in Georgia and Florida, along with equity and venture capital investments. They remain deeply committed to inspiring the next generation to achieve great things.

When asked what her focus would be serving on the Board, Danielle shared, "I'm inspired to be a

part of ECCAC because I believe every child deserves the chance to thrive and be free from fear, trauma or shame. It is my goal that with good mission driven governance and committee work, we can help make a difference for the children receiving ECCAC services.” Julie Porterfield, ECCAC CEO, added, “We are so glad to have Danielle on our Board. She has unique talents that will help us to continue to meet our objectives for the children we serve.

Leighann Elliott

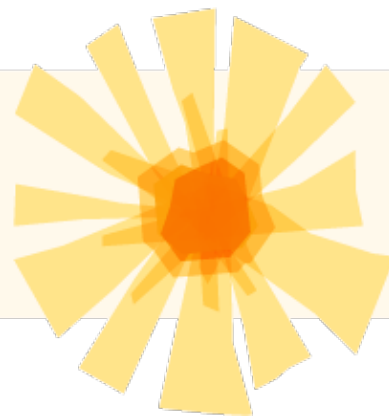
Raised in the Atlanta area and a 2017 graduate of Auburn University with a degree in Hospitality Management, after graduation, Elliott relocated to Northwest Florida. In 2020, she co-founded RaeBird Weddings + Events, as of 2025, the company is now solely led by Elliott. As well, in addition to planning and implementing weddings, The Village of Baytowne Wharf is now also her client where she currently handles all their events, too. RaeBird has received many impressive awards and recognition in numerous publications in their first five years. Also, Elliott has received personal recognition honors as I Am Destin in *VIP Destin Magazine* and *Scarlett Magazine*’s 2025 Women of the Year Winner as The Wedding Planner.



Elliott commented on her new Board position, “I am inspired by the work of ECCAC because I believe every child deserves to feel safe, supported, and valued. As a young professional, I want to give back to my community in a way that truly makes a difference, and their mission aligns with my passion. What drives me most is knowing that ECCAC can change the course of a child’s life. It is important to me to make a difference by sharing my time, energy, and heart with ECCAC.”

Julie Porterfield, ECCAC CEO, added, “What ECCAC does matters because every child should have a normal childhood. Last year alone, we assisted 1,480 kids and 17,367 students in Walton and Okaloosa Counties received Safety Matters education. There is no doubt that Leighann Elliott’s efforts and expertise will help us make a positive difference for our kids.”

Preventing.



October is Safe Sleep Awareness Month

This month, we are reminded of the importance of creating safe sleep environments for infants. To support families in our community, we host Safe Sleep Classes that teach caregivers how to reduce the risks associated with unsafe sleep practices.

As part of this program, every family who attends a class receives a brand-new crib—giving their

baby a safe place to rest from day one.

To continue making this possible, we are seeking donations of new cribs. Your support ensures that every child has a safe start in life, and every caregiver leaves class with both the knowledge and tools to protect their little one.

To sign up for the class please contact LaShana@eccac.org.

Donations for Cribs



Meet our newest safe sleep graduates!

Preparing for The Future

We had the distinct honor of visiting with President's [Don Gaetz](#) staff member [Davidson Oberste](#). We shared the work, the vision of the [Florida Network of Children's Advocacy Centers](#) and Centers throughout Florida.

Davidson shared his wisdom, his knowledge as we prepare for the upcoming legislative session. We walked away more empowered and equipped to advocate for child abuse victims.

President Gaetz has been an avid supporter and advocate of our Center for many years.



We are so grateful for the work he has done in our community and beyond.

Pilot Club of DeFuniak Springs

In anticipation of the new school year, the **DeFuniak Springs Pilot Club** and the **Life Enrichment Center in DeFuniak Springs** partnered to collect over **\$1,300.00** in school supplies for the **ECCAC**. Collections were also taken at local DFS business **Shear Pleasure Salon**. **ServPro** of Walton County assisted with delivering the donations.



We are all thankful for the generosity of our community. This event continues to grow each year with support from many individuals and volunteers.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation



We are honored to share that we have been selected as a grant recipient for the 2025–26 year by the **Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation**. This year, **DCWAF** presented **ECCAC** with an incredible **\$225,000** check to support our mission.

The **DCWAF** has long been a champion for children and families in our community, and their continued investment helps ensure that kids impacted by abuse and neglect receive the care, advocacy, and hope they deserve.

We are deeply grateful for this partnership and look forward to working alongside **DCWAF** this year, joining in their mission to change lives for the better—one child, one family, and one future at a time.

Thank you, **DCWAF**, for believing in the work we do and for standing with us in the fight to protect children.

A Glimpse At Our Partnership

EMERALD COAST CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER

Since 2011, DCWAF has donated over

\$3 MILLION

to ECCAC—supporting their growth from one location with six staff members to a network of three locations, five programs, and over 30 employees serving children and families in crisis.



20 YEARS
DESTIN
CHARITY
WINE AUCTION
FOUNDATION

A huge thank you to **CHELCO** for choosing **ECCAC** as the beneficiary of their recent golf tournament! Their generous donation helps us continue providing safety, healing, and hope for children in our community. We are so grateful for their partnership and commitment to protecting kids.



Emerald Coast Parrot Head Club

A big thank you to the **Emerald Coast Parrot Head Club** for flying in with such generosity! Your flock has truly landed in the hearts of the children we serve at **ECCAC**. Because of your support, we can continue helping kids soar toward brighter futures.

We're so grateful to have your crew in our flock. Together, we're making a difference, one wingbeat at a time!



Pounder's Hawaiian Grill

A heartfelt mahalo to our friends at **Pounders Hawaiian Grill** for hosting a special day where a portion of their sales supported the children of the Emerald Coast during our Back-to-School Drive!

Your generosity fills little hearts with hope, encouragement, and the tools they need to start the school year strong.

We are so grateful for community partners like you who share your aloha spirit with the families we serve.



EVENTS CALENDAR

Fall Dinner Series

October marks the start of our Dinner Series, auctioned off at the Gala in March. Each of these gatherings offers a unique atmosphere and a special opportunity to connect with members of the community in a more intimate setting. We're excited to kick things off and look forward to sharing these experiences with you!

If you missed your chance to secure a seat this year and are feeling a little bit of dinner series FOMO, don't worry—these popular auction lots will return at the Gala in March 2026.

Bubbles & Bunco

Wednesday, October 8th

Vin'tij

Hosted by Cindy Cole

Chars & Cigars

Wednesday, October 8th

The Pierce Residence

Hosted by Jim & Tammy Pierce

Savor the Sunset

Wednesday, October 22nd

The Swanson Residence

Hosted by Jerry & Peggy Swanson

Tour di Italia

Saturday, November 1st

The Lichorwic Residence

Hosted by Dr. Dennis & Glenda Lichorwic



The Freeport Mayor's Ball

The Freeport Mayor's Ball will be celebrating its 11th year on Saturday, *October 11th* at Props Brewery. This year, the **ECCAC** will receive a portion of the proceeds raised. Please support this event and purchase your tickets today!

[Purchase Tickets](#)

Looking to Volunteer? Mark Your Calendars!



Harvest Wine & Food Festival

Oct 16 - 19
All Day Events
Watercolor

The 2025 Harvest Wine and Food Festival event will be hosted October 16-19 in Watercolor!

[Volunteer](#)



South Walton Celebrity Golf Classic

Oct 16 - 19
All Day Events
Baytowne & Raven Courses

The event presented by Celebrities for Charity, is a golf tournament that benefits the ECCAC.

[Volunteer](#)



46th Annual Toys for Tots

Nov 16
11:00 am
Mullet Festival Grounds

Join us as we raise toys and money for the children in our center and their families for Christmas!

[Volunteer](#)

Giving Tuesday

This Giving Tuesday, your support for **ECCAC** helps provide safety, healing, and hope for children who have endured abuse and neglect. Every gift makes a difference—because every child deserves to feel safe, supported, and loved.

Save the Date!

GIVING TUESDAY

DEC
2

We're proud to be a part of this global celebration of giving.

#GivingTuesday

Gala & Golf 2026

Join us for our Annual Gala & Golf Weekend—a celebration filled with fun, community, and purpose. From an elegant evening gala to a day on the greens, every moment helps support **ECCAC**'s mission to protect children and bring them hope and healing.

Don't miss this unforgettable event for a cause that truly matters!

SAVE THE DATE
MARCH 7-8, 2026

EMERALD COAST CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY CENTER

GALA & GOLF

WEEKEND

We hope you will join us!

HILTON SANDESTIN BEACH
GOLF RESORT & SPA

KELLY PLANTATION GOLF CLUB



Rise to the challenge.

Help us restore childhood joy and hope for the future.

Become a Champion



Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center | 401 McEwen Drive | Niceville, FL 32578 US

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