

MERRY CHRISTMAS

The last meeting of 2021 was held at the “Roost” on Tuesday, December 14. The Emerald Coast Community Band, under the direction Nathan Freemore, melodiously implanted visions of sugar plums in each snowbird’s head and helped kick-off their holiday activities. For some, that meant heading back to their Northern nests for the Holidays.



Vice-president Walter Williamson and his wife Becky traveled back to Tupelo, but before leaving, they filled their mind’s sleigh with pleasant memories of Destin’s Christmas offerings such as the annual Holiday Street Parade, and the Lighted Boat Parade. They even drove to Defuniak Springs to relish the 10-Million Christmas Light display.

Likewise, President and First Lady, Don and Joan Collins also traveled north to celebrate Christmas with their family. Their northern home is in Ontario however, and their gift wish this year is that the border remains open so that they can return to Destin by the New Year.



For the past 12 years, Dean and Deb Harper travelled back to Tennessee for Christmas. This year however, they will remain in Destin and welcome their family here. “We’ll celebrate Christmas night with a traditional southern Christmas dinner of turkey and cornbread, and then we’ll open gifts,” Dean said. They are looking forward to spending more “warm” holiday time with the kids, and are planning to show-off all Destin’s holiday decorations - especially the beautiful tree and lights on display in Destin Commons.

Kindness and good cheer are the gifts that Jackie and Terry Roberson will share this Christmas. Their home will be open to friends who might otherwise spend the day alone. “These people are family, not just friends,” Jackie explained. One of her favorite things about this time of year is the joyful mood exhibited by most folks. “Rudeness and sneering disappear,” she said. “Heck, sometimes people even let you out into traffic!” If asked for advice by Destin newcomers, Jackie would tell them to decide where they wanted to eat before Christmas Day.



Like the Robersons, Cindy and Ray Varnell consider their snowbird friends as family. Their family in Knoxville has gotten smaller and more scattered while their “family” in Destin seems to grow with each new season. The Varnells enjoy the sights and sounds offered by the Destin community this time of year. If they were to offer any tips to others considering Destin for the Holidays, it would be to join the Destin snowbird club. “Enjoy all the community has to offer like special Christmas events,” Cindy advised. “And make new winter friends.”



Joann Benesh has co-chaired the Destin snowbird Singles Friendship Club for many years. She said she enjoyed the times when the group would go to Christmas dinner at the Destin United Methodist Church. This year, Joann says that her Christmas will be “very low-key.” She plans to go to church, hopefully in person, and listen to her favorite Christmas carols throughout the day.” My family is scattered,” she said, and added, “We did a Zoom call which was very special.”

The 2022 snowbird year will commence with the annual BIG REGISTRATION on Monday, January 3, from 1 to 3 p.m. Even those snowbirds who are already registered may want to come and check out all the events and activities that will be represented in the gym of the Destin Community Center. Storage lockers will be open for the retrieval of stored items from 2 to 3 p.m. that same day.

The first meeting of 2022 will be held on Tuesday, January 4. This will begin the two-meeting schedule with the first meeting at 8:30 a.m. and the next one at 11. Rich McDuff of McGuire’s Irish Pub fame will welcome the flock back to the “Roost” with his fun-loving antics and popular folk music. It will be nice to have everyone back together again.



Until then, may you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy – and Healthy – New Year.