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Published - July, 16, 2007

## What's new at The Wharf

### Complex adds more shopping, restaurants

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For years, white beaches and year-round golfing were the calling cards for Gulf Coast vacations.

Now, tourism officials have a new mantra: shopping.

One the more recent examples of the marriage between Gulf Coast tourism and shopping is The Wharf in Orange Beach, Ala.

With about 50 shops and restaurants — plus an 10,000-seat amphitheater — The Wharf is becoming a Gulf Coast hot spot.

"Anytime you add an upscale venue, like the Wharf, you raise the standard for the entire destination," said Mike Foster, vice president of marketing for the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau.

And while shoppers will find national franchises, like Starbucks, The Wharf's Main Street has a distinctly regional retail flavor. Among the locally owned stores that have opened recently:

n Sand Dollar Lifestyles, an Alabama Gulf Coast shoe and clothing retailer for the last 20 years, has opened its sixth lower Baldwin County location at The Wharf. Owned by the Hardy family of Mobile, Ala., the 20,000-square-foot shop includes three stores; Sand Dollar Lifestyles, Game Face and Life Is Good.

"Sand Dollar Lifestyles has always been a family business where everybody helps out in some way," said Rhoda Hardy. Her in-laws, Jim and Peggy Hardy started the business several years ago. Rhoda and her husband, Jeff Hardy, "just picked up where they left off."

She said the two-story main store, Sand Dollar Lifestyles, features major shoe brands, such as Timberland, Clarke's and Crocs. Game Face carries collegiate-oriented merchandise and Life Is Good has shoes, clothing and other items aimed primarily at beach-goers.

n Across the street, Tammy and Roger Butterfield hope to attract pet owners — and pets — at Twisted Whiskers and Co., a specialty pet boutique offering everything from gourmet pet treats to harnesses and life jackets for beach-going dogs.

"We felt like there wasn't a unique pet accessories boutique in this area that carried what we offer to our customers' pets," Tammy Butterfield said.

n Husband and wife Jay and Terry Forsberg offer miniature golf course with a twist. Paradise Indoor Miniature Golf features a challenging indoor 18-hole course for kids or for the serious golfer looking to improve their short game skills while staying cool.

"It's been great on rainy or extremely hot days so far," Terry Forsberg said.

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Plans are in the works to add a video arcade area and to start league tournaments.

n Mobile-based photographer Joe Dunn has just opened Joe Dunn Fine Art Photographs on Main Street. His photographs feature scenes from New Orleans' French Quarter, Paris, and South Beach. Dunn also owns a gallery on Royal Street in New Orleans.

"We wanted to expand our horizons to other cities. So we started looking a little closer to home," Dunn said.

n The Wharf's operation manager, Richard Flandreau, wanted to draw hungry visitors to a family-style seafood restaurant. Fish Tales at The Wharf is an outdoor bistro offering a view of the Intracoastal Waterway and the adjacent Wharf Marina. The menu is a blend of standard American fare, such as cheeseburgers, spare ribs and traditional Gulf of Mexico cuisine.

"What's unique about us is that everything is cooked over an oak wood fire stove," said general manager Steve Broun.

n Live Bait, which has been a popular Gulf Shores seafood restaurant for years, has opened another location at The Wharf. John Brunick, manager, the restaurant features a sushi bar, outdoor and indoor dining, plus an outside cabana and adjacent bar.

n When Jim and Mientje Green, former proprietors of the famed New Orleans nightspot Tipitina's, relocated to Orange Beach more than a decade ago, they left the food and beverage business behind. Now they're back with Mientje's, a Creole eatery boasting a New Orleans style menu.

Adjacent to the Creole restaurant the Greens have also opened the 501 Club, a live music venue with a full bar and a sound system designed by The Wharf's Amphitheater sound man, Pete Bryan.

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hey,  
escambia county commissioners..... listen up!

quit your infighting and work together (for a change)  
your ego... individual and collective.... has stagnated  
this counties growth and development far too long.

it may not be 'original', but, why try and reinvent the wheel?

baldwin county, alabama, will continue to grow and be the  
destination for many millions of tourist dollars while you continue  
your childish ways.

but, you are still too arrogant to admit it... what a shame....

i think i'll move too..... somewhere like baldwin county, alabama...

Posted by: **ifroggy1972**