

## communityprofile



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The "downtown" area of Pensacola Beach on Santa Rosa Island, looking north toward Gulf Breeze with the city of Pensacola beyond.

**Have Your Coast and a Career Too** Low stress, low traffic, and high career satisfaction distinguish Florida's attractive panhandle city. Pensacola's sugary white sand beaches are the icing on the cake.

By Eileen Lockwood

Sometimes, as she gazes out on the Gulf of Mexico, Juliet De Campos, MD, thinks longingly about southern California, where she grew up. "In Santa Monica, I could walk 16 blocks to the ocean, stop at one of the numerous coffee places to rest, have some outrageously expensive drink, and then walk home," she reminisces. "The streets were lined with elegant shops, coffee shops, and Wolfgang-Puck-style restaurants."

But the nostalgia is short lived.

De Campos looks out at miles and miles of sand so soft, so white, that it's hardly ever called mere sand. To beach lovers and tourism promoters it's "sugar," "powder," or "snow." Walking those beaches of finely ground Appalachian Mountain granite with her husband and two young children is a favorite pastime.

The shores of Pensacola proper and of its barrier islands—Perdido Key and Santa Rosa Island—are regularly rated tops in America. Which, De Campos admits, can't be said of those beloved Santa Monica strands. "They have dirty brown sand," she says.

Not only that, in Florida's westernmost big city it's still possible to buy beachfront property, even if you're not a millionaire. "I bought my 4,500-square-foot luxury home for half of what my 1,600-foot condo in California sold for," says De Campos.

De Campos has also found an appealing spirit of friendliness which spills over into neighborhood parties and Christmas decoration sprees. And, she says, "I can't go anywhere without seeing one of my patients."

The camaraderie has grown since she found another cozy niche—as team doctor for the Woodham High School

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Titans. She also works with Pensacola Power of the National Women's Football League and last year was on the medical staff of the Pensacola Barracudas, an arena football team.

To a former sports fanatic, being a team doctor is the next best thing to being an athlete. De Campos' pre-medical years included being sports editor of the University of Southern California's *Daily Trojan* and an Associated Press stringer, but she had dreamed of treating professional athletes since, at age 10, she'd reveled over a 64-foot touchdown run by an extraordinary USC tailback named O.J. Simpson.

After training as an orthopaedic surgeon and completing an exclusive fellowship at the [Kerlan Jobe Orthopaedic Clinic](#), she learned that treating college and pro teams isn't a whole lot different from being a season ticket holder, however. You pay for both privileges.

In a way, though, she's "bought" her way into the hearts of the high school athletes. "I take my kids to the games, travel with the team, and I've bought equipment, too." The payback is more than inspirational. She now treats families and friends of the players. And she's learned that other coaches are envious of the Titans because she's the attending physician!

### Liquid factor

De Campos and other physicians like Patrick Dial, Wendy Wozniak, Clay L. Molstad, and Ian Rogers say water is a dominant part of life in the Florida panhandle city. There are bays, sounds and bayous, creeks and rivers, lakes and lagoons—and 40 miles of the emerald and aquamarine Gulf (no one seems to call it everyday blue).

For avid fishermen like Dial and his wife, that means opportunities to snag big ones from three different environments—saltwater, freshwater, and the brackish wa-



A home in East Hill, one of several historic residential neighborhoods in Pensacola.

<p><b>POPULATION</b></p> <p>Metro Pensacola Area: 412,153            City of Pensacola: 56,255            Escambia County: 294,410</p> <p><b>CLIMATE</b></p> <p>Average annual rainfall: 62 inches            Annual snowfall: None            Average High / Low Temps:            January: 60° / 42°            July: 90° / 74°            Days of sunshine: 241</p>	<p><b>TRANSPORTATION</b></p> <p><b>AIRPORT:</b> Pensacola Regional Airport</p> <p><b>BUS:</b> Greyhound</p> <p><b>TRAIN:</b> Amtrak has direct routes west to Los Angeles, and east to Jacksonville and Orlando.</p> <p><b>INTERSTATES:</b> Interstate 10 west to New Orleans (202 miles), east to Tallahassee (195 miles), and Jacksonville</p>	<p>(358 miles); I-10 connects to I-75 south to Tampa (469 miles) and Orlando (457 miles); I-10 also connects to I-65 north to Atlanta (287 mi.)</p> <p><b>COST OF LIVING:</b></p> <p>97.5 (U.S. Average is 100)</p> <p><b>MEDIAN HOME PRICE:</b></p> <p>\$106,300</p> <p><b>MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD EFFECTIVE BUYING INCOME:</b></p> <p>\$31,970</p>
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ters in between. "We also enjoy simply spending time outdoors together," he says.

A surgeon who arrived last spring from Baton Rouge, Dial is already planning to buy a boat, although he admits his practice has "taken off" and may limit his recreation time. His surgical oncology skills, honed at Boston's Leahy Clinic, might be enough to fill his time, but more recently developed laparoscopic techniques have made him twice as popular among patients.

Nevertheless, he's optimistic about snatching time for casting and angling. "I live inland, but a beach is still only 20 minutes away," he says, "and traffic is much better. It reminds me of Baton

Rouge the way it was 25 years ago."

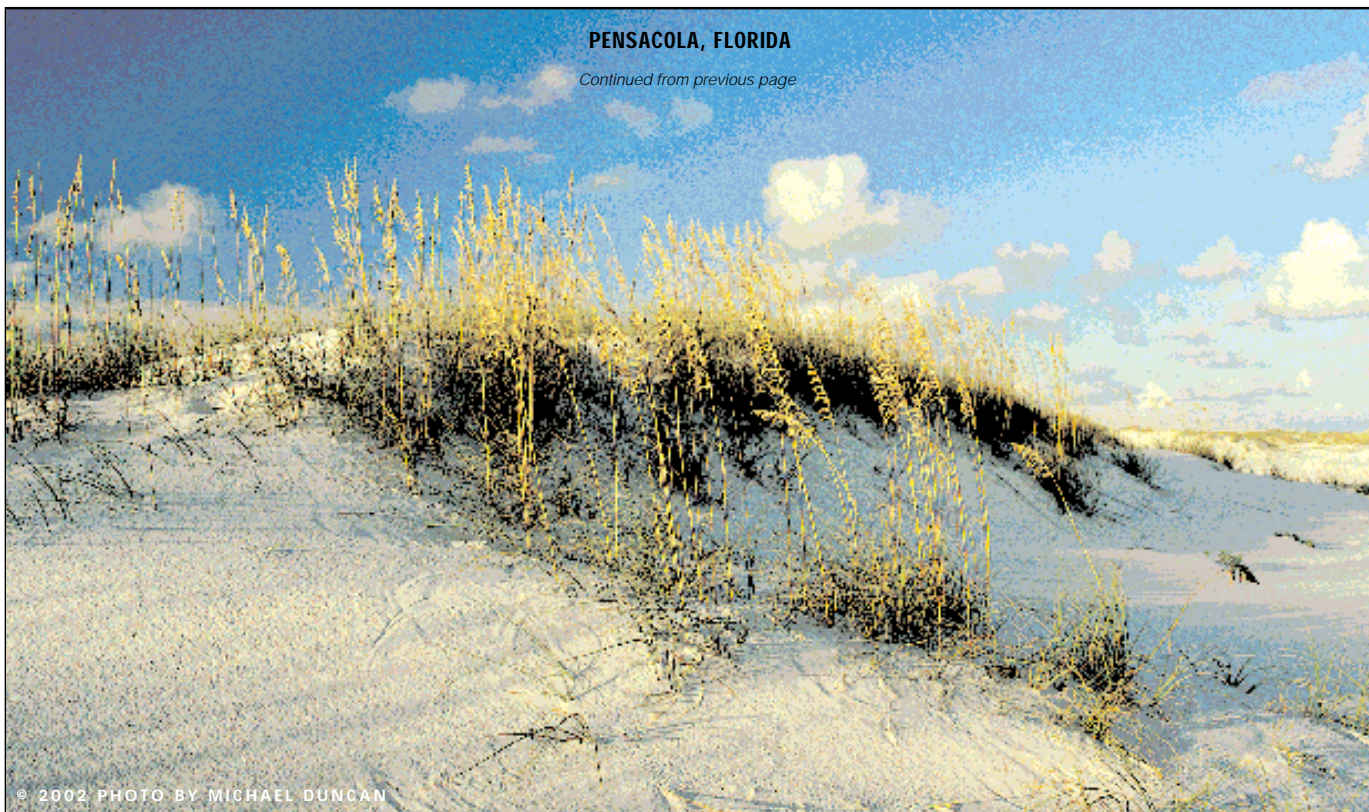
For Wozniak, a family practitioner and fitness enthusiast from Ohio, kayaking and running on the beach are highlights of Pensacola leisure. "I fell in love with Pensacola many years ago," she says. She had visited the city often because of a brother who lives here. "You can exercise and go for a walk year-round. That is one thing I treasure and never could do at home," she says.

### Attractive practices

After her residency at Doctors Hospital in Columbus, Wozniak interviewed at several hospitals, opting for the panhandle city. Here she joined a well-established

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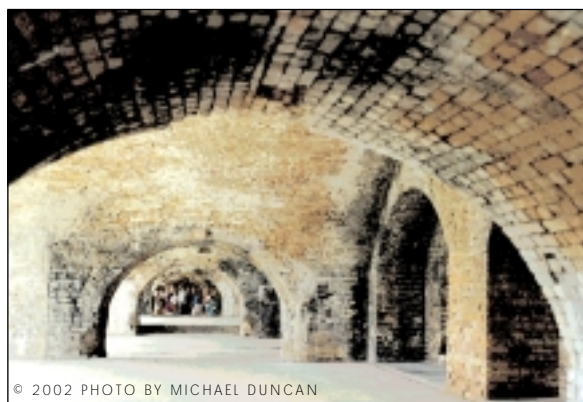


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*ABOVE, Sea oats and sand dunes on Pensacola's famous white sand beaches. Sand this white doesn't get hot in the sun. LEFT, Blue Angels Atrium of the National Museum of Naval Aviation. RIGHT, Ft. Pickens was built in the 1830s on the western tip of Santa Rosa Island to protect the entrance to Pensacola Bay.*



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practice with two other physicians affiliated with [Sacred Heart Health System](#), the oldest of the three civilian medical centers in the area.

Wozniak says Pensacola has more than a year-round outdoor lifestyle. "It is a good place to practice. The patients are great, and the referral basis is wonderful. Specialists are very willing to help. They return calls, and most of the time they're willing to see a patient the same day."

Molstad, an internist, appreciates the practice environment because of comfortable access to specialists. "During 20 years in a multi-specialty clinic (in Lafayette, Indiana) I was always able to get subspecialty help for my patients, but

one physician's pay was always at the cost of another physician's pay. Here there is no conflict over pay. Subspecialty people get paid what they get paid, and I get paid what I get paid."

Which is not to say there's an overabundance of some specialists, such as pulmonologists, urologists, dermatologists, and others. "There are many specialties open," says De Campos. "For instance, there are no fellowship-trained orthopaedic hand surgeons here."

### **A boatload of charms**

After concluding it was time to leave Indiana, Molstad and his wife decided "we wanted to be someplace we'd enjoy

being and that our grown children would enjoy visiting." Pensacola appealed to them because it is neither as hot nor as congested as South Florida.

More of Pensacola's assets became evident later. A boat ride on the bayou introduced Molstad to the beautiful aquatic surroundings. "It was really gorgeous," he says. Since then, he's also come to appreciate the people of Pensacola. "By and large [they] are just very nice, not as frenetic as in some northern areas and with an air of civility not quite so prevalent in the north."

The Molstads are happy with the simple pleasures of walking on the beach, swimming in their pool, and reading next to it, but they've also found streets lined with

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live oaks a worthy substitute for seeing fall trees turn color in Indiana. “We don’t miss the fact that the leaves are gone after the blaze of color,” he adds.

Irish-born Ian Rogers enjoys the water from a different perspective. A microvascular surgeon who has lived and studied in Canada, Australia, New Orleans, and Gainesville, Florida, he gets his fill of beautiful scenery from above. “If you jump out of an airplane, it’s gorgeous,” says the daredevil from the Auld Sod.

If there’s a downside to the landscape, it would be that, like other bayou cities along the gulf coast, the land lies mostly at sea level and is very flat. “I miss the hills overlooking the Pacific,” De Campos says of her former home.

If there’s a shortcoming in Pensacola’s charm, some physicians say it comes in culture, sports, and dining limitations. “Culture here is not up to my standards,” says De Campos, but her judgment may be colored by previous exposure to Los Angeles’ music and drama organizations.

To answer this point, Jeff Nall, the development director at [The Arts Council of Northwest Florida](#), quickly ticks off a dozen or more of the 100 area organizations dedicated to the arts, including a symphony offering two concert series every season, the 60-year-old [Pensacola Little Theatre](#), the Museum of Art, the [Opera League](#), [Northwest Florida Ballet](#), [Choral Society of Pensacola](#), and—a special favorite—the 260-voice Pensacola Children’s Chorus.

Rogers considers the symphony orchestra “a plus,” and has discovered a number of “decent” restaurants. “They’re not as good as New Orleans,” he says. But he notes those Crescent City dining delights are not out of reach. “You only have to drive a few hours to get there.”

### **Built on water**

For Pensacola itself, water, water everywhere means more than fun

and good views.

As early as 1559, Spaniards recognized the area as a perfect bulwark to protect their New World foothold, and a group settled here under the leadership of Don Tristan De Luna.

Life did not go smoothly for the newcomers. “They were hit by a hurricane,” says Gale Messerschmidt, a volunteer docent at [Historic Pensacola Village](#), a neighborhood of restored houses and museums. “According to Spanish archives, the storm sank seven ships and killed many of the animals. It was horrible for the people.”

It was enough to scare off Don Tristan’s little band—and all others—until 1698.

Fortunately, hurricanes have been few and far between in Pensacola over the years. Two big ones—Erin and Opal—punched the barrier islands in 1995, but they were the first in 70 years. Opal, which caused some \$3 billion in damage (with very few fatalities), was only the third since 1886 to hit with such severity.

By 1698, Spain was feeling the pinch from France and England for New World dominance. That year, a more determined cadre marked its claim and began building forts to defend the strategic location. The fort-building mania lasted long after they’d left. One bastion after another went up until as late as 1865. Two survive as historic sites today—[Fort Pickens](#) and [Fort Barrancas](#)—both restored and now administered by the National Park Service as part of the 40-mile-long Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Eventually Pensacola Bay was discovered to be Florida’s deepest seawater port and became a naval operations center, starting with a shipyard in the 1820s. The now-renowned Naval Air Station opened in 1913. It became the training site for some 28,000 World War II Navy pilots.

Now, with four bases providing training in everything from piloting planes and he-

licopters to military medicine, survival, equipment maintenance, and national security, the Navy accounts for 20 percent of the economic activity in the two metro area counties—Escambia (which includes Pensacola) and Santa Rosa—with a yearly infusion of \$2.1 billion from wages and pensions for more than 53,000 active and retired military and civilian employees.

Little wonder that Pensacola is known as the Cradle of Naval Aviation. Reinforcing the nickname, the huge [National Museum of Naval Aviation](#) is one of Florida’s biggest tourist attractions. And crowds turn out every year when the Blue Angels close-order flying team performs at its home base.

“Virtually every business in the area is impacted by the military’s presence,” says Vann Goodloe, a retired Navy helicopter pilot who heads the armed services department of [Pensacola’s Chamber of Commerce](#). The department, a division of the chamber that focuses on the community’s relationship with the armed services, is one of only eight such departments in the U.S. Goodloe, who has lived in seven Navy-dominated cities besides Pensacola, says, “This is the finest Navy town I have ever lived in.”

Why? “The people! They have time for one another. They’re not in such a rush. And they’re not ensnarled in traffic like so many other places.”

A lower cost of living doesn’t hurt, either, including no state income tax. However, Dial warns that property taxes can be quite a bit higher than in most comparable cities.

Goodloe’s praises continue: “Wonderful year-round climate. Most beautiful beaches in the world. Great fishing, hunting, golfing. I would match the golf courses against any courses anywhere.” Not to mention several thousand retired naval personnel still young enough to be available for other work—and heavy volunteerism. The retirees, he proudly boasts,

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“have a tremendous work ethic, core values, commitment, courage, and integrity.”

### Working smart

The ready-to-work people, along with a labor pool younger than in many other cities, have made an indelible impression on companies like Armstrong World Industries, Solutia (formerly a Monsanto division), Advantage Credit, Elysium Power Solutions, and most recently, General Electric, which has begun manufacturing industrial and commercial generators in the area. Together, these companies account for more than 2,700 employees. Thousands also work at the three hospitals—[Sacred Heart Health System](#), [Baptist Health Care](#), and [West Florida Hospital](#).

The area's population hasn't grown as fast as the rest of Florida, according to city manager Tom Bonfield, but it is expected to speed up in the next few years. As for hospitals, says Bonfield, “they serve a much larger area than metro Pensacola. I would say they probably have more beds than needed now, but that will change as the region grows.”

Worker quality is no myth, Bonfield adds, quoting a recent speech by John Rice, the GE Power Systems president and CEO who oversees the new generator plant. Rice said, “We thought we'd get a good work force in Pensacola, but what we found is that this is one of the best in all of GE.”

De Campos says amen to that. “With a relatively well-educated work force it can be pretty easy to get good help.”

### Breaking ground, making headlines

De Campos and her Florida surgical colleagues made news headlines around the world last summer in a grueling marathon that made medical history. “When I left California, I gave up the idea of becoming the most famous doctor in the world,” she muses. That changed on

the night of July 6, 2001.

De Campos, Rogers, the microvascular surgeon, and Jack Tyson, MD, a trauma specialist, worked through the night to reattach the arm of 8-year-old Jessie Arbogast. The boy had been airlifted to Baptist Health Care after being savaged by a 200-pound bull shark while wading in shallow Gulf waters at dusk.

Equally spectacular were heroic actions by Jessie's uncle who dragged the shark to shore, his aunt and a National Park Service ranger who performed CPR, a second ranger who shot the shark, and a lifeguard who yanked the amazingly intact arm from the monster's gullet.

The surgical team carefully stabilized a patient almost completely drained of blood, reattached veins, fitted bone together, reconnected nerves and muscles and, finally, grafted skin from his leg to equalize the length of his arm.

“People have been putting on arms forever and ever,” says Rogers, “but this is the first case where an arm has been bitten off, the shark caught, and the arm retrieved. I looked up other cases like that and couldn't find any.”

It's hard to argue that Jessie's case was anything less than a chart topper, but Pensacola's three hospitals have increasingly proven they're ready to meet many another medical challenge.

After his surgery, Jessie was cared for at [Children's Hospital](#), a component of Sacred Heart Health System, which has the city's only pediatric intensive care unit. Started in 1915 by Daughters of Charity, the medical center today has been cited as one of the nation's top 100 orthopaedic hospitals by the [HCIA-Sachs Institute](#). Catalyst Benefits has said the system has the “nation's best senior program.”

Sacred Heart fills out its services with an impressive list of 21st-Century specialty units, such as [Women's Hospital](#). The hospital provides state-of-the-art treatment for

such female disorders as osteoporosis, breast and gynecological cancer, and high-risk pregnancies for women throughout Northwest Florida. The region also benefits from the new [Regional Heart and Vascular Institute](#) for adults and children which includes an emergency trauma and chest pain center.

In 1951, Baptist Hospital (now [Baptist Health Care](#)) opened with 140 beds and Florida's first post-operative recovery room. Several expansions have brought the total to 492 beds, but, more importantly, the hospital and the Baptist Health Care network that evolved from it have collected a long string of awards.

Last year, for the second time, representatives from the [Baldrige National Quality Program](#) made a site visit (a major event in itself) to evaluate the hospital for its prestigious citation recognizing businesses across all spectrums for excellence. “Alas,” says Karen Smith, the Baptist public relations spokesperson, “we did not get the award itself, but we did make many organizational improvements as a result of participating in the program.” In January, 2002, it was named Number 10 on *Fortune* magazine's list of 100 best companies to work for. “That puts us on a par with companies like Microsoft, FedEx, and Land's End,” Smith proudly points out.

Baptist's list of notable 1990s achievements runs like credits after a blockbuster movie: the first children's inpatient psychiatric unit in the service area, first in the region to offer radioactive seed implants for prostate cancer, and the first autologous bone marrow transplant program, to name a few.

Baptist's monumental Internet site provides near-medical-text information about a lengthy list of disorders from abscessed teeth to yeast infections. It's one part of an electronic network that led to a citation from [Hospitals and Health Networks](#), the journal of the American Hospital

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Association, naming it one of America's most wired hospitals.

Baptist Health Care's most prodigious national initiative, the [Baptist Health Care Leadership Institute](#), began in 1997. The institute's seminars have attracted more than 4,500 participants from hospitals in 46 states, who learn how to achieve service and operational excellence while increasing market share and employee satisfaction.

[West Florida Regional Medical Center](#) last year adopted the motto, "It takes an individual to treat you like one," but it's an ethic that dates to its founding in 1975. The third major hospital in the Pensacola area offered the area's first home-like childbirth suites, featuring "one-stop" birthing facilities for labor through postpartum care. For the other end of the lifespan, the medical center has offered [Senior Health Services](#) since 1995. And the center's [HealthWorks](#) focuses on comprehensive programs for area workers from pre-employment testing to treating work-related injuries and rehabilitation.

Other unique West Florida services are nationally accredited echocardiography and nuclear cardiology programs, and a memory disorder clinic. "But the one really big service we provide here," says marketing vice president Kathy Houser, "is the only comprehensive inpatient/outpatient rehabilitation institute located here in Pensacola. The next closest are in Mobile and Gainesville."

Even with an overwhelming array of special treatment services, care still boils down to treating individual patients. Two of Pensacola's hospitals proved they're up to this task when Jessie Arbogast careened into a ready-to-work operating room. The three surgeons—De Campos, Rogers, and Tyson—rather modestly attribute Jessie's miraculous survival partly to a child's natural resilience. But medical skill cannot be discounted.

At last report, Jessie has some arm movement, is responding to family members, trying to talk, and showing joy. According to one spokesperson, "He is coming around to the point where there's a lot of hope." One trio of dedicated Pensacola surgeons has a different hope—that they never see that kind of surgery again! ■

*Eileen Lockwood is a free-lance writer based in St. Joseph, Missouri. She last wrote "A Full Stein," a profile of Milwaukee, Wisconsin in September/October 2001.*