

County Connection

April 2024

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Stay Engaged. Click the logos to join us on social media



Thank you for your service

With more than 1,000 employees serving the public in Okaloosa County, it is important to recognize the efforts of this work. One of the ways we do this is with recognition of an employee's work anniversary.

We recently recognized a large group of employees at this month's regular Board meeting who are at various stages in their County careers.

While these individuals chose to appear in person before the Board for recognition, there are many more of you who have humbly remained behind the scenes, reaching similar milestones.

All of you deserve a hearty Congratulations!

We began recognizing employees and their anniversaries with collector challenge coins last year for those who have served, beginning with year two of service, through year 30. This acknowledgment is a small token of your hard work and I hope it is a reminder that you have the support of the Board and administration as you continue your journey in the Okaloosa County family.

Thank you for your tireless efforts.



John Hofstad
County Administrator

Okaloosa County maintains StormReady designation for over 20 years from NWS



The National Weather Service (NWS) has renewed Okaloosa County's StormReady status. The County has held this designation since 2002. [READ MORE >>](#)

Okaloosa County announces 2024 mosquito control schedule



The county also recommends preventive measures such as draining standing water from various containers, maintaining swimming pools, and covering skin with clothing or repellent. [READ MORE >>](#)

Okaloosa County approves removal of derelict shrimp boat in Joe's Bayou in Destin

The derelict shrimp boat had been anchored in Joe's Bayou for over a year, receiving numerous complaints from residents. "That specific vessel received a lot of attention, a lot of complaints, and a lot of people wanting it to be deemed derelict and removed," said Fogg. "But the fact of the matter is, it did not meet all the criteria that were necessary to classify it as derelict."

[READ MORE >>](#)

Okaloosa students lead the charge in Fentanyl Awareness Campaign



The council, which has been meeting regularly since May 2021 with the support of County Commissioner Mel Ponder and Superintendent Chambers, aims to bridge the gap between administrators and students. [READ MORE >>](#)

Okaloosa County residents invited to FREE document shredding event



In celebration of Earth Day, Keep Okaloosa Beautiful and the City of Mary Esther are organizing a free Shred It Event for all Okaloosa County residents on April 20 from 10:30am-12:30pm. [READ MORE >>](#)





StormReady

Okaloosa County has maintained a StormReady designation from the National Weather Service for over 20 years. The National Weather Service (NWS) has recently renewed Okaloosa County's StormReady status, a designation that acknowledges the County's emergency preparedness through robust communications infrastructure and an increased level of severe weather awareness. The County has maintained this designation since 2002.



Corrections giving back

Members from the Okaloosa County Department of Corrections partnered with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, North Okaloosa Fire Department and the Crestview Fire Department this past Saturday to drop in and surprise a special birthday girl at her party being held at Flip and Fun in Crestview. A couple of days before the birthday party, 6-year-old Moira's mother posted a cry for help on social media. She explained that they recently moved to Okaloosa County and didn't really know anyone and that only one person from Moira's class had RSVP'd to attend her party. Her mother explained that Moira is Autistic and all she wants is "to have a fun party with lots of friends and people singing Happy Birthday!" It didn't take long for members from the Okaloosa County Department of Corrections to see this post and a plan to gather the forces to drop in for a surprise was formed.



Not so risky business

Okaloosa County Human Resources and Risk Management Department received a \$5,000 grant from Preferred Governmental Insurance Trust to be applied to our training and safety initiatives. Risk Management applies for these funds annually which greatly help to support the County in achieving the goal of providing a safe place for our employees to work.

Convention Center Happenings



April Events of note at the DFWBCC:

- National Fire Control Symposium 2024 (military / classified event) – first-time, 4-day event with about 400 people, with an economic impact of about 1,000 room nights within the county's hotels and about \$80,000 in Food and Beverage.
- Favored Women Conference 2024 – first-time, 3-day event for about 1,200 women. They have about 750 room nights with county's hotels and are already under contract to come back to the facility next year, but now with two events back to back.
- Weapons Program Increment 3 – back on site for the third time. They had about 450 attendees (all military and contractors)
- Athletic Championships 2024 – this was their 20th year with us! A 2-day cheer competition with about 8,000 people over the weekend.

Okaloosa's Women Leaders



Over 40 women represented Okaloosa County at the recent Women in Leadership Conference at the University of West Florida campus in Pensacola. The event was sold out. Bonnie Tierney, Systems and Networks Manager in our Information Technology Department, said that this was the best showing of women from Okaloosa County that we have ever had at the event. She said it is, "very inspiring to hear from the amazing speakers they have every year."

Litter prevention hard at work



Keep Okaloosa Beautiful (KOB) volunteers recently performed a follow-up cleanup on Seibert Avenue in Destin. KOB Director and Environmental Resource Coordinator, Kali Hiemier said that the litter was much less on this trip, proving that if the public sees a clean space, they are less likely to pollute it with litter in the future.

On the farm



Hundreds of people came out to the Okaloosa County Farm Bureau's Day on the Farm event near Baker in coordination with the Okaloosa County Extension Office. There were animals, demonstrations, food trucks, and an Easter Bunny for the dozens of families and children to enjoy.

April Milestones



Congratulations to these County employees who are celebrating their work anniversaries. Pictured with County Commissioners and County Administrator John Hofstad are Kevin Dukes, 2 years (Tourist Development), Sabina Pennington, 2 years (Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program), Kevin Price, 2 years (Tourist Development), Judy Lorenz, 5 years (Board of County Commissioners), Patrick Powell, 5 years (Airports), Dorothee Bennett, 10 years (Library Co-op), Timothy Durbin, 20 years (Growth Management) and Kenneth Worley, 30 years (EMS).

OTHER MILESTONES



Paula Barrow is celebrating 2 years with Okaloosa Corrections



- Faye Douglas, 5 years (Office of Management and Budget)
- Leslie McGhee, 5 years (Tourist Development)
- Leigh Medina, 5 years (Information Technology)

In Case You Missed It

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Regular Board Meetings



April 16 - Meeting notes

- County Attorney's Office presented summary of 2024 Regular Florida Legislative Session.
- Warren Averett presented Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).
- Board approved amending ordinance adding beach provisions related to digging holes and maximum tent sizes.
- Board approved amending ordinance adding a provision for two new non-vending areas and adjusting the setup time provision.
- Board approved 3-year collective bargaining agreement between the County and the International Association of EMTs and Paramedics/National Association (IAEP).
- Board approved acceptance of \$1.25M grant from FDEP for the development of a Special Needs Ball Field and Park at Meigs Park in Niceville.
- Board approved \$1,475,811.63 for continued dirt road stabilization in north Okaloosa County.

TIDBITS



Patrick Maddox
Okaloosa County
Public Safety Director



May 11

10 am - 2 pm

Okaloosa County
Administration Building
Shalimar



Laura Hussey
Morning Anchor
WEAR Channel 3



The Hurricane Preparedness Expo is coming to the Okaloosa County Administration Building, 1250 N. Eglin Pkwy. in Shalimar on May 11, 2024, from 10 am to 2 pm. [Click to learn more>>](#)

Okaloosa County routinely holds online auctions for surplus items. The auction is open to the public. Live auctions will be posted at this link:
<https://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/okaloosaco,fl/list/current?orgid=1024171>