

# County Connection

March 2026

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## Okaloosa County America 250

On July 4, 2026, our nation marks 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Okaloosa County is answering the call with America 250 local events every month leading up to this historic milestone.

The Okaloosa County America 250 Commission was founded by resolution of the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners on Jan. 20, 2026, to support these efforts.

The Commission includes County staff and community leaders who are dedicated to providing a worthy series of events to celebrate this important milestone.

I encourage you to view the event calendar for upcoming events and to submit any events at the official Okaloosa County America 250 Commission site [here](#).

Thanks for all you do for the citizens of Okaloosa County.



**John Hofstad**  
County Administrator

## JetBlue begins nonstop service from Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport to New York, Boston



The new flights provide direct access for customers in the Northeast and open new opportunities for Emerald Coast residents traveling to New York, Boston or beyond with connections from JetBlue's focus cities to destinations across the United States, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Destin, Okaloosa County work to settle differences over Holiday Isle state park



A proposed interlocal agreement for the new Holiday Isle state park drew extended debate at the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners' March 3 meeting, with Destin city officials advocating for their own version. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Okaloosa County moves toward \$3 million purchase of waterfront property in Shalimar for new park



"This property has the utilities there, it has the trees, it has a shoreline that has a seawall," Coffey told commissioners. "Plus it has a lot of other things — not a big giant billboard next to it." [READ MORE>>](#)

## \$10 million beach renourishment project in Destin to begin soon



A long-awaited beach renourishment project will begin the week of March 23 in Destin to restore approximately 150,600 cubic yards of sand lost to erosion from Hurricane Sally in 2020. [READ MORE>>](#)

## HOW I WORK: An inside look at how Nathan Sparks connects business, leadership, and community through economic development



Depending on the day, I either tune into NewsNation's "Morning in America" over a cup of coffee or jump on the stationary bike for a quick ride. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Okaloosa's Pineview School construction enters final stretch with August opening on horizon



With less than six months until its scheduled opening, Pineview School is taking shape rapidly. [READ MORE>>](#)

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## Law Enforcement Torch Run

Okaloosa County Corrections and Law Enforcement conducted a Torch Run for Special Olympics this month. Participating agencies include: Okaloosa County Department of Corrections, Crestview PD, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, and the Florida Department of Corrections.



## Beaching Safely

Beach safety flags are back in season on Okaloosa Island and the lifeguards are back in action. Flags will be flying and lifeguards will be on duty every day of the 2026 season through October 31, from 9am – 6 P.M. You can sign up for Beach Safety Alerts by texting BEACH to 44144.



## Work Day at Patriot Park

Keep Okaloosa Beautiful and Destin-Fort Walton Beach had a great turnout for the Patriot Park Workday. Volunteers worked with county staff to pick up debris and used hand tools to clear a portion of the park's new natural surface trail! We appreciate everyone's hard work and we can't wait for the park to officially open.



## Play Ball!

Playing on newly installed fields, the Shalimar Little League recently held its opening ceremonies at the Shalimar/Port Dixie Little League Fields. Okaloosa County Parks crews have been working diligently to bring these much-needed upgrades to this community park.



## Making an Impact

We are honored to be recognized by the Health Department in Okaloosa County. EMS Paramedic Andrew Kindle was recognized as the Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership's (OCHIP) Healthy Communities Member of the Year. Okaloosa County Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners was also recognized as the organization of the year by OCHIPs Healthy Communities. Efforts include overdose support, Narcan distribution, public awareness for pedestrian safety and affordable/workforce housing initiatives. Okaloosa County's Housing Program Manager Brittnee Orr was also recognized with an Impact award for her work in finding housing assistance for families in Okaloosa County.



## Reclaimed Water Progress

The Shoal River Water Reclamation Facility within the Shoal River Industrial Park continues to make progress.

The new facility is a major step forward in expanding wastewater treatment capacity for future needs in north Okaloosa County. The SRRWRF will include all the components of a state-of-the-art, modern plant, other related infrastructure needs, on-site effluent disposal, and future public access reclaimed water for irrigation and industrial use.



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## Adams Recognized as Visionary Hospitality Leader



Jennifer Adams and Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida was included in Forbes article titled, "10 Visionary Hospitality Leaders Proudly Promote International Women's Day." The article spotlights 10 visionary hospitality leaders who are championing progress and inclusion across the industry in honor of International Women's Day. The piece features insights from Jennifer Adams, Director of Tourism in Destin-Fort Walton Beach, who highlights the vital role women play in driving innovation, enhancing the visitor experience, and protecting the destination's natural resources.



## Okaloosa County Represents at Women's Leadership Conference

Okaloosa County registered 46 women for the Annual Women in Leadership Conference in Pensacola. The women heard from excellent speakers on the topic of leadership, teamwork, and mentoring from Chandra Newman, Commanding Officer Naval Air Station Pensacola and the Honorable M Casey Rodgers, US District Judge. Takeaways include talent development, empowering staff, and strong team cultures. Congratulations to Tarajoy Hill from Tourist Development Department. She was number one on the leaderboard for conference posts and activities.



**UF** IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



## Discover Healthier Eating This March with Cooking Up Health

National Nutrition Month occurs each March to promote healthier eating habits and well-being. Eating well is important for many reasons. The foods we choose affect our energy, mood, and long-term health. A healthy diet can help prevent conditions like diabetes and heart disease. It also helps us stay focused in school, play sports better, and feel more confident in our bodies. Even when life gets busy, taking a moment to think about our food choices is worthwhile.

There are many easy ways to start eating healthier. You might swap soda for water, add vegetables to your meals, enjoy fruit as a midday snack, or choose whole grains. Planning meals in advance can make healthy eating simpler and save money. Even if meal planning isn't your favorite activity, take some time to find some quick and simple recipes you and your family like to keep handy to help you avoid splurging on take-out.

Physical activity is also part of a healthy lifestyle. You don't need to run miles or join a gym. Walking, dancing, riding a bike, or even stretching can help keep your body strong and support good nutrition. When was your last visit to an Okaloosa County or a local city park?

If you're unsure where to start or need fresh ideas, join us for Cooking Up Health: The Mediterranean Way, an engaging, educational series that will change your approach to food! Discover seven simple steps to healthier meals, learn easy recipes, and pick up practical tips that fit into your everyday life.

This series will be delivered online from 11 am-12 pm CT, with a live in-person finale and rewards for completing the series! Class dates are: 3/26, 4/2, 4/9, 4/16, 4/23, and 4/30 (in-person date is TBD). Register for just \$25, at <https://bit.ly/CUHNW26>.

## Recent Milestones



Congratulations to these County employees who are celebrating their work anniversaries. Pictured with County Administrator John Hofstad and County Commissioners are Karen Griffin (EMT) 15 years, Jessica Valek (Natural Resources Manager) 5 years, Josh Castille (Electrician) 5 years, Amanda Maxwell (Facility and Parks Maintenance Director) 5 years, Simona Stransky (Engineering) 2 years and Evangeline Murphy (Elections Specialist) 2 years. Learn more about your Okaloosa County government at [MyOkaloosa.com](http://MyOkaloosa.com).



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# In Case You Missed It

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## Regular Board Meetings

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### March 3

- Board approved ordinance to include ballot language for a 10 year Local Option Infrastructure Surtax.
- Board approved Lake Clyde dredging project next to Meigs Park.
- Board approved moving forward with next steps for Shalimar waterfront property.
- Board approved amendment to Interlocal Agreement between the City of Niceville and Okaloosa County for Meigs Park.

### March 24

- Board approved MSBU agreement to fund railroad crossing project in Magnolia Blossom in Crestview.
- Board approved preliminary agreement with the City of Fort Walton Beach for land swap.
- Board approved 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue sidewalk project grant.
- Board listened to an update on the Transit system.
- Board approved ratification of application for State Road 85 traffic improvement funding.

## TIDBITS

FLORIDA'S GREATEST  
HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PARTY



**HURRICANE**  
**EXPO**

**MAY 30**  
**10 AM**

**SAVE**  
**THE**  
**DATE**

**MAY 30, 2026**  
**10 A.M.-1 P.M.**  
**OKALOOSA COUNTY**  
**ADMIN BUILDING**  
**SHALIMAR, FL**