

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

May 28, 2024



### Okaloosa County to hold 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Women Veterans' Day Celebration

**(Okaloosa County, Florida)** – Okaloosa County is inviting the public to attend the 2nd Annual Women Veterans' Day ceremony on June 12, 2024, at 8 a.m. to celebrate the service of women who have served our nation. The event will include an indoor ceremony at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the nearby Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans Park. Women Veterans Day was recognized by the State of Florida by proclamation from Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2021.

"This event focuses on a group of veterans who may have been overlooked by others in the past," said Okaloosa County Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel. "We want to recognize these women and let them know that their service has not been forgotten and in Okaloosa County, they will always have our support."

In 2021 Okaloosa County unveiled the Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans Park where this year's wreath laying will take place. A total of eight women who served in combat, during various U.S. military conflicts, are honored at Veterans Park with life-sized bronze statues strategically placed along a quarter-mile path. It is surrounded by native wildlife that includes a nearby great blue heron rookery.

This year's event will focus on the Vietnam War Commemoration that honors our nation's Vietnam Veterans and their families for service and sacrifice. By Presidential proclamation, the Vietnam War Commemoration will continue through Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2025. The signing of the proclamation marked the 50th anniversary of the departure of the last American troops from Vietnam.

Sharon Ann Lane, a Vietnam Veteran, is one of the eight women depicted at Veterans Park. Lane was the only American nurse killed as a direct result of direct enemy fire in the Vietnam War. She worked at the 312th Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai on April 29, 1969. She was originally assigned to the Intensive Care Unit but was reassigned to the Vietnamese Ward. This work was often physically and emotionally challenging, yet Lane repeatedly declined transfers to another ward.

For her service in Vietnam, she was awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star with "V" device, the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the National Order of Vietnam Medal, and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross (with Palm).

Learn more about the heroes depicted at Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans' Park at <http://myokaloosa.com/bcc/women-veterans-memorial>

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