



WOMEN VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

Each year on June 12th, the Great State of Florida recognizes Women who have served our military. A big thanks to Governor DeSantis who proclaimed, June 12th Women Veterans Recognition Day. This day commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which granted women an opportunity for a career in our nation's military.

Many of you have attended this ceremony at the Convention Center in years past, and it has become a beloved tradition in Okaloosa County. This year's speaker is Col. Kristen N. Wood, Commander of the 1st Special Operations Mission Support Group, Hurlburt Field, Florida. She is a dynamic military leader, and we are honored to have her address our community.

The ceremony is open to everyone of every age from children to our oldest citizens. The Snowden-Horne Chapter of the Children of the American Revolution will be in attendance to lead recitation of our Pledge of Allegiance.

After the program, we will process to the Dedication Plaza to lay wreaths in honor of women who have served our nation. This will be an excellent time to tour the beautifully laid-out park and to view the statues of women patriots. The statues are placed on a winding path beginning with the Revolutionary War and continuing to our latest theatres.

As you walk through the Women Veterans Monuments you will notice the work to create a living shoreline being done near the banks of Choctawhatchee Bay. A living shoreline provides vegetation to stabilize the area and prevent erosion from future storms. This living shoreline will be 2000 ft. long. Combination grants from National Fish and Wildlife, Restore Act and Tourism Development Dollars are being used to fund this project to restore damage done during Hurricane Sally in September 2020.

This beautiful 20-acre parcel is home to 248 bird species identified by the Audubon Society. It features a heron rookery where the birds nest each spring, and serves as a vital stopover for monarch butterflies during their fall migration to winter habitats in Mexico. The area also supports a wide variety of other animals and wildlife, making it a rich and diverse ecosystem.

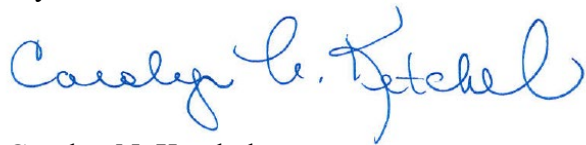
This year two new statues will be unveiled, although placement will need to wait until construction is finished. One is Captain Linda Bray. Capt Bray was deployed to Panama during

Operation Just Cause in 1989. She took action when a routine operation became a three-hour fire fight with the enemy. The other is Florence Finch. Before enlisting in the Coast Guard, Ms. Finch was a part of a network of private citizens smuggling food, medical supplies and clean clothes to POWs in the Philippines during WWII.

Please plan to attend this hour-long ceremony. It will become a treasured tradition to honor our military serve women who have contributed so much the history of our nation.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as your commissioner.

My Sincere Thanks,



Carolyn N. Ketchel
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