

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

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Okaloosa County Takes Home a 2020 Best Practices Award

Shalimar, FL– The Institute for County Government (ICG) revealed the results of the Annual County Government Best Practices Awards at the 2020 Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Legislative Conference. Chairman Carolyn Ketchel was presented with the award for the *Lazarus Field Memorial Service Project* on Tuesday, January 5, 2021.

“These are challenging times across the state, but our counties are constantly adapting to ensure the best outcomes for our communities.” said FAC President and Palm Beach County Commissioner, Melissa McKinlay. “It is an honor to recognize Okaloosa County for this incredible program.”

With an annual average of 30 unclaimed individuals who die without family or financial support, Okaloosa County has contracted with various funerals to provide internment services for over 450 deceased individuals in the last 17 years at approximately \$1,800 per internment. Chairman Carolyn Ketchel and the County thus partnered with local clergy and churches to create the *Lazarus Field Memorial Service Project*, providing dignified burials and services to those who would otherwise not receive them.

“I’m grateful to the many faith communities who come together on November 2nd each year, in an ecumenical spirit, to celebrate the lives of those who died without means to provide for a burial.” said Ketchel. “Perhaps this recognition will serve to pave the way for other counties to have such a ceremony.”

Now in its second year, the awards program honors the accomplishments of county leadership in creating innovative solutions for challenges facing local communities and aims to heighten peer-to-peer communication and collaboration. Solutions can range from efficient local programs to increased service speeds spanning across financial management, health and human services, criminal justice, technology, and more.

Founded in 1929, the Florida Association of Counties is a non-profit association representing the diverse interests of Florida’s 67 counties. The Florida Association of Counties helps counties effectively serve and represent Floridians by strengthening and preserving county home rule through advocacy, education and collaboration.

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