

County Connection

September 2023

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Welcome to the new fiscal year

The Board recently approved the budget for the 2024 Fiscal Year and with it, comes continued progress for the residents of Okaloosa County as well as County employees.

The budget contains a thorough yet fiscally responsible set of resources for each of your departments to help you provide the necessary services our citizens expect.

Additionally, we worked hard to find ways to help you meet the growing needs as the cost of living increases.

The approved budget includes a 4% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for County employees. This adjustment follows the previous Board approved mid-year COLA from May. These salary adjustments, packaged with the fact that employee healthcare costs have remained static, make Okaloosa County more competitive in attracting and keeping a highly qualified and motivated workforce.

I wish all of you another prosperous fiscal year and look forward to seeing what we can achieve, working together for Okaloosa County.



John Hofstad
County Administrator

Destin-Fort Walton Beach helps with release of 10,000 redfish



On Wednesday, September 13, 2023, Coastal Conservation Association Florida joined the Duke Energy Mariculture Center, Visit Destin-Fort Walton Beach and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for this important conservation effort. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa approves contractor for \$4.1 million Live Oak Church Road improvements in Crestview



The \$4.14 million contract will fund widening of the road at Highway 85, adding a turn lane, shoulder improvements, widening the bridge, upgrading traffic signals, constructing a new stormwater pond, and repaving Live Oak Church from Highway 85 to Shoal River Drive. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa approves new 7-member Northwest Florida Fairgrounds Advisory Committee



This committee was created unanimously by the Board on July 18, 2023 to provide guidance on enhancing and refurbishing the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds property, which was purchased by the County from the City of Fort Walton Beach in June. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa and Walton response teams deploy to help in the aftermath of Hurricane Idalia



Two Okaloosa County EMS staff members deployed to provide medical-grade oxygen with their mobile oxygen generator. [READ MORE>>](#)

Recycling is a team effort



Staff from the Solid Waste Division, Keep Okaloosa Beautiful and Public Information have recently focused their efforts to educate the public on how to become better recyclers and to determine potential causes of contaminated recycling loads. Efforts included informational videos and photos, social media posts and multiple trips to the materials recovery facility (MRF) at ECUA in Escambia County.

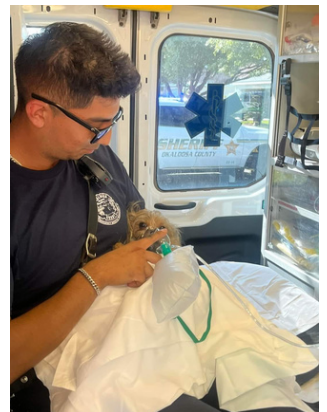


Okaloosa EMS: Lending a hand and O2.

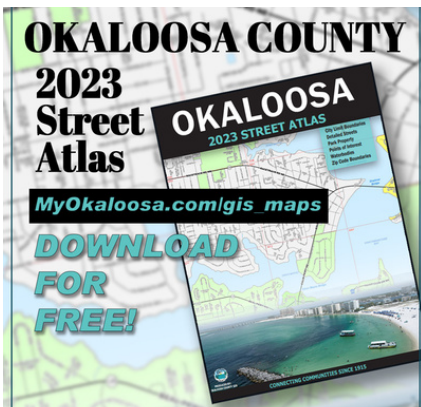


EMS's Lt. Kenneth Worley and EMT Jazmine Roberson deployed to areas in Florida affected by Hurricane Idalia. They provided medical-grade oxygen to both affected residents and responding agencies using the County's Mobile Oxygen Generator.

Great work by Okaloosa County EMT Luna for treating this pup with oxygen after being rescued by Destin Fire Rescue from a house fire earlier this month.



Information Technology



Okaloosa County has published the 2023 GIS Street Atlas that you can download for free right now at: www.MyOkaloosa.com/gis_maps.

FIBER FRENZY: Crews with Okaloosa County's Information Technology Department (IT) are working to improve broadband Internet service in north Okaloosa County by installing 60 miles of Middle Mile Fiber. [VIEW A VIDEO>>](#)



Winner! Winner!



The team with Visit Destin-Fort Walton Beach placed in multiple categories at this year's 2023 Florida Tourism Industry Awards. They were recognized in the below categories.

Sustainable Tourism Marketing

(1st Place) Henry (Named for Henry Flagler): Destin-Fort Walton Beach for the Little Adventures Pilot Program

Creativity in Public Relations

Bronze: Destin-Fort Walton Beach for their Influencer Campaign

Out-of-Home

Bronze: Destin-Fort Walton Beach for the Little Adventures In-Destination Campaign

Websites

Bronze: Destin-Fort Walton Beach for the New "Little Adventures"-Focused Website

Convention Center Happenings



Events of note recently at the DFWBCC:

- MyHero Anime convention took place in late August and was well attended, filling local hotel rooms
 - Hiring our Heroes held their military job fair in mid-August
 - The TDD hosted a dual business after-hours for the Destin and FWB Chambers with over 300 people in attendance.
 - The Convention Center featured local artists who have their work hanging in the DFWBCC. Tables of their art were set up for sale. Aramark provided some sweet and savory light bites.
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Employee Spotlight

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EMPLOYEE MILESTONES



We are proud to recognize these employees for their years of service. Pictured with Commissioners and Okaloosa County Administrator John Hofstad are: Sean Donaldson, Code Enforcement Officer, 2 years, Andre Beal, Sign Technician, 2 years, Tyrone Parker, Transit Division Manager, 5 years, and Barbara Franklin, EMT, 25 years.



Other September Milestones

- Joseph Crocker, SCADA Technician - Water & Sewer, 10 years
 - Charles Wallace, Corrections Officer, 5 years
 - Judine Sullivan, Tourism Development, 2 years
 - William Evers, Mosquito Control Foreman, 30 years
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In Case You Missed It

Regular Board Meetings

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September 5 - Quick Notes

- Board approved the appointment of Dr. Dana Bigham Stephens as the new County Extension Director.
- Board approved amending the Solid Waste Collection and Disposal Services Fee Schedule and agreement with ECUA for recyclable material.
- Board approved the contract with C.W. Roberts Contracting for Live Oak Church Road improvements.

September 19 - Quick Notes

- Board approved a construction contract with Whitesell-Green Inc. (\$5,517,191.30) to construct shade canopies at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport.
- Board appointed three citizens to the Northwest Florida Health Council to serve a two-year term.
- Board approved the purchase vacant property on the SE side of Shalimar Bridge on Eglin Parkway
- Board Approved of Phase II of Veteran's Park to include 4 new Women Veteran's Monument Statue Honorees.
- Consideration of a Conceptual North County Tourism Investment Plan to make tourism investment up to approximately \$25M in the north Okaloosa County Dist
- Board approved the appointment of Michael Hackett as Water and Sewer Director.

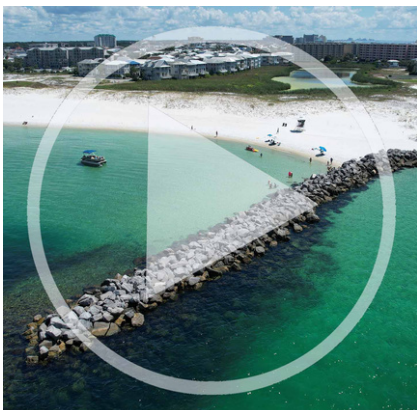
TIDBITS

FLASHBACK (Okaloosa)

Podcast

Check out the latest episode of FLASHBACK (Okaloosa).

FLASHBACK: The Destin East Pass and the Jetties



PEDESTRIAN SAFETY



PEDESTRIAN SAFETY MONTH POSTER CONTEST

Celebrate Pedestrian Safety Month and share "How Do You Walk Safely in Your Community"! Show us your poster design for a chance to win!

- Posters should be turned in to school resource officers by October 4.
- Winners will be announced October 17.
- There are three age groups (elementary school, middle school, high school) with one winner from each age group.
- Submissions should be created on a poster board 22" x 28".

PRIZES

- \$100 gift card
- Certificate of recognition from local government officials
- Display of winning posters in local government buildings





EMPLOYEE DISCOUNTS

Did you know that as a County employee, you can get discounts from businesses like T-Mobile, Verizon, Riviera Family Fitness and AAA? **View a full list of Employee Discounts**

