

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

May 15, 2023



Okaloosa County to Celebrate Women Veterans Day

(Okaloosa County, Florida) – The Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners is continuing its tradition of celebrating veterans with a Women Veterans Day event and wreath laying at 8 a.m. on June 12, 2023. An indoor ceremony will take place inside the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the base of the Margaret Corbin statue at Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans’ Park. Women Veterans Day was recognized by the State of Florida by proclamation from Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2021.

“Florida has the second largest population of women veterans in the country. With our military presence in Okaloosa County, it is only fitting that we take a moment to recognize the courageous contributions women have made to this nation,” said Okaloosa County Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel. “We are so fortunate to have a one-of-kind park that honors women veterans like Margaret Corbin, who bravely took up arms to protect our freedom in the Revolutionary War.”

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.

Another hero recognized at Veterans Park is Cathay Williams. She was the first documented African American woman who served as a soldier in the U.S. Army and the only known female to serve with the famed Buffalo Soldiers in the Civil War. Despite the ban allowing women to serve in the war, she nobly posed as a man to enlist.

A Northwest Florida veteran, Jackie Cochran, is also among the eight recognized at the park. Cochran was a pilot from DeFuniak Springs who held more speed, distance, and altitude records than any other flyer during her career. In 1964 she flew an aircraft faster than any woman had before. In 1953, eager to make the transition to jet aircraft, Cochran became the first woman to break the sound barrier, piloting an F-86.

In honor of Cochran, Northwest Florida State College is holding a production of “Flight of Jackie Cochran,” at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center’s Sprint Theater on June 4, 2023, at 2 p.m. The cost is \$30 and proceeds will benefit the Okaloosa County Women’s Veterans Monuments. Tickets can be purchased at mattiekellyartscenter.org.

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

###

OKALOOSA COUNTY PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER NICK TOMECEK
(850) 585-7059 | OCPIO@MYOKALOOSA.COM