

Press Release: August 6, 2024

Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women

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The Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame will be presented to the community by the Commission on the Status of Women. The event will take place on Monday, August 26 at 6pm at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center. Here is a brief bio on this year's inductees

Sharon Allen – Mattie Kelley Cultural Arts Inductee

It is with profound esteem that we honor Sharon "Shari" Allen as the 2024 Cultural Arts Inductee. For over 29 years, Shari has directly contributed to the arts and cultural expansion of Okaloosa County and Northwest Florida. She is honored to have partnered with her husband, Todd Eric Allen, CEO of Northwest Florida Ballet. Shari has played an influential role in creating core artistic curriculum, arts advocacy, administrative direction, overseen outreach through scholarships, assisted with grant funding, and instruction for the Northwest Florida Ballet Company, Academie, and Community School. Mrs. Allen has devoted her life to the arts, leading women in our community to go on to greatness. She has built a legacy in Okaloosa County, which we are truly grateful.

Col. Allison Black – Military Inductee

Commander of 1st Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field serving 32 years in USAF, Col. Black called Hurlburt Field her home for many years. She prepared Air Force Special Operations Forces for worldwide missions, overseeing the wing's four groups, 24 squadrons, 40 tenant units and Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command. Colonel Black flew 3400+ hours, 2000 combat hours in the AC-130H Spectre gunship and U-28A Draco. She was the first female AC-130H Spectre navigator to open fire, the first female Air Force Combat Action Medal recipient earning her the moniker, "Angel of Death" during Operation Enduring Freedom. A trailblazer for women throughout her career, she spearheaded High School ROTC competitions, arranged mentorships, and has fostered a strong connection between Hurlburt Field and many community organizations.

Judge Lacey Powell Clark - Carolyn Spencer Humanitarian Inductee.

Lacey Powell Clark is a Circuit Judge in the First Judicial Circuit of Florida who has made significant contributions toward the welfare of people in our community. She is a native of Okaloosa County where she practiced civil litigation for 24 years before becoming a Judge. She served as a member of the Rotary Club of Crestview and on the board of Fresh Start for Children and Families. Judge Clark was Chair of the Family Law Advisory Group tasked to improve procedures in dependency, delinquency and family law matters. Judge Clark is the Co-Chair of the First Judicial Circuit Professionalism Committee and Chair of the Local Professionalism Panel West. She is a member of the Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Okaloosa Florida Association for Women Lawyers.

Shawn Crist – Education Inductee

Niceville resident Shawna Crist has devoted her entire adult life to enriching the educational opportunities of students in Okaloosa County. What makes her contributions unique, however, is that she has been recognized not only for her career as an Okaloosa School District teacher, but also as a parent volunteer and as an educational support person. In fact, she is the only person to be named the Okaloosa County Teacher of the Year, Volunteer of the Year and Educational Support Person of the Year.

Sierra Elliot – Contemporary Inductee

After serving 10 years with the Air Force, Ms. Elliott transitioned into a Civil Service career and serves as a Sexual Assault & Harassment Specialist at the 1st Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, FL. She is the installation's focal point for crisis intervention, advocacy, support, and empowerment for those who have experienced sexual assault and harassment in our military community. As a victim advocate, she has earned the most prestigious awards in her field across various platforms. In 2023, she was invited to the Pentagon and recognized as the top-performing victim advocate in the Air Force while also achieving the DoD Promoting Excellence in Prevention award. She is the national recipient of the 2024 Exceptional Military Victim Advocate Award. These accomplishments acknowledge her outstanding leadership and tireless efforts in advancing victims' rights.

Lori Kelley – Business-Professional Inductee

Lori is an incredible influence in Okaloosa County. She is the chair of the Northwest Florida State College Board of Trustees, where she and the board have led the expansion of the College through multi-million-dollar construction projects and unprecedented enrollment growth. She previously served as president of the NWFSC Foundation Board which has seen record-breaking asset growth and grants development over \$70M. Lori chaired both Niceville-Valparaiso and Walton County Chamber boards. She was able to help the N-V Chamber establish a 501-C3 and raise funds for a new building that was paid off the following year. Over 30 years at Warren Averett she has risen to senior tax member with one of the largest client bases on the Gulf Coast, plus an impressive endorsement from Fudpuckers about helping them through several catastrophic events.

Joy Makela – Community Service Inductee

Joy is a lifetime resident of Okaloosa County who has built a thriving behavioral health private practice that serves the state of Florida. Joy is a tireless advocate and servant leader for military families, minority populations, women's ministries and educational excellence supporting the community as a wife, mother, and psychotherapist. From military daughter, military wife, and military mom to School Advisory Committee Chair, mental health mentor, church volunteer, youth soccer team manager, Science Fair Judge, published writer, and award-winning photographer, Joy demonstrates her extraordinary commitment and service to our Okaloosa County community amplifying women and their pursuits.

Barbara Henderson Slocumb – Pioneer Inductee

Fourth-generation Okaloosa County native Barbara Henderson Slocumb's roots reach back to Otahite, a Native American outpost, and the Revolutionary War patriot Aaron Snowden. Barbara's grandmother, Lula Snowden Hamilton, was the 1910 postmistress of the Otahite Post Office. A member of the North Okaloosa Historical Association, Barbara has helped collect, donate, and oversee artifacts that allow Baker Block Museum visitors to experience pioneer life in NW Florida. Barbara is the family service director for Davis Watkins Funeral Home. She and her husband, Bill, have two daughters and three grandchildren. Barbara continues to actively support her mission to preserve our heritage and culture.

Since 1995, 140 women have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. This award was created to honor and recognize women who have made important contributions to Okaloosa County. For more information visit the website at occsw.com. Or call Jeanne Rief at 850-685-8027