



## **WOMEN'S VETERANS DAY AT WOMEN VETERANS MONUMENTS PARK**

You are invited to a celebration of Women's Veterans Day on June 12<sup>th</sup>. We will gather 7:45 A.M. inside the Destin-FWB Convention Center, where a light breakfast will be available, prior to the 8:00 A.M. start. The ceremony, honoring our women who have served in the United States Military, will include a keynote address by Retired Col. Allison Black, USAF (Hurlburt) and a presentation of the Medal of Honor by the Choctawhatchee Bay DAR, to be announced at the event. Following the indoor event there will have a wreath laying at the Plaza Wall.

The beautiful 20 and ½ acre park features eight life size statues of women who have served in United States Armed Forces from the Revolutionary War to current theatres. These statues have been purchased using the Tourism Development Tax known as the "Bed Tax". This is a one of kind park in the United States with the beauty of the land and the history of women who served our great nation. We expect and hope for an additional eight statues to complete the park.

The park is the home of a heron rookery, many turtles, and the Audubon Society has identified over 240 species of birds that migrate through our area. In addition, each fall the park is on the migratory path of the Monarch butterfly. Recently the old wooden walkway has been replaced with wide sidewalks for ease and safety and to accommodate wheelchair accessibility. Work on the living shoreline along the Choctawhatchee Bay will be completed later this year.

This park is for patriots and conservationist and reflects the values of our Emerald Coast. Learn of the heroic deeds of our women veterans as you enjoy a beautiful walk in nature.

### **REVOLUTIONARY WAR**

Margaret Corbin continued loading and firing the cannon during the November 16, 1776, attack on Fort Mifflin after her husband was killed. She was later felled in battle and became the first woman to receive a government pension as a disabled soldier. She is buried at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, New York.

### **CIVIL WAR**

Cathay Williams was born in Missouri to an enslaved mother and a free father in 1844. She disguised herself as a man, assumed the name William Cathay, and enlisted in the Union forces. She was

assigned to the 38<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment where she served two years before being discovered following a hospitalization for small pox. She later joined an all-black regiment that would eventually become part of the legendary Buffalo Soldiers.

## **WORLD WAR I**

Lenah Higbee was the first woman to receive the Navy Cross. She eventually became the second superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps during which time she grew the corps from 160 members to 1,300, formalized Navy nursing uniforms, and designed the Navy nurse insignia. She would eventually have two battleships named for her. She is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

## **WORLD WAR II**

Jacqueline Cochran fought her way out of obscurity to become the first woman to break the sound barrier. She was instrumental in creating the WASP program, became the first woman civilian to be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and, in 1948, was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserve.

## **KOREAN WAR**

Jonita Bonham Bovee was a flight nurse with the 801<sup>st</sup> Air Medical Evacuation Squadron in Tachikaw, Japan during the Korean War. She logged 245 hours of medical evacuation flights before being severely injured in a plane crash in the Sea of Japan. She assisted in the rescue of 17 survivors before allowing herself to be pulled from the water. She became the first female recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross for her heroic actions.

## **VIETNAM WAR**

Sharon Lane arrived at the 312<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai on April 29, 1969. She worked 5 days a week in Ward 4 and spent her off duty hours caring for soldiers in the surgical ICU. 1Lt Lane was killed on June 8, 1969, when a salvo of 122mm rockets, fired by the Viet Cong, struck between Wards 4A and 4B. She was the only American nurse killed as a direct result of hostile fire, and was posthumously awarded several medals including the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

## **PERSIAN GULF WAR**

Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester was a vehicle commander with the 617<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company. Sgt. Hester received the Silver Star for her actions during an enemy ambush by anti-Iraqi fighters in Baghdad on March 20, 2005.

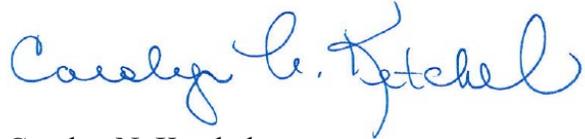
## **WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

Neesema was born in Afghanistan and immigrated to the United States when her father became a student at University in the United States. She enlisted in the Air Force in 1985, completed her education and was commissioned as officer in April 2001. On 9-11 she was the only Airman in the Air Force to understand Pashto, the language of the Taliban, and became an Aircrew Linguist in the RC-

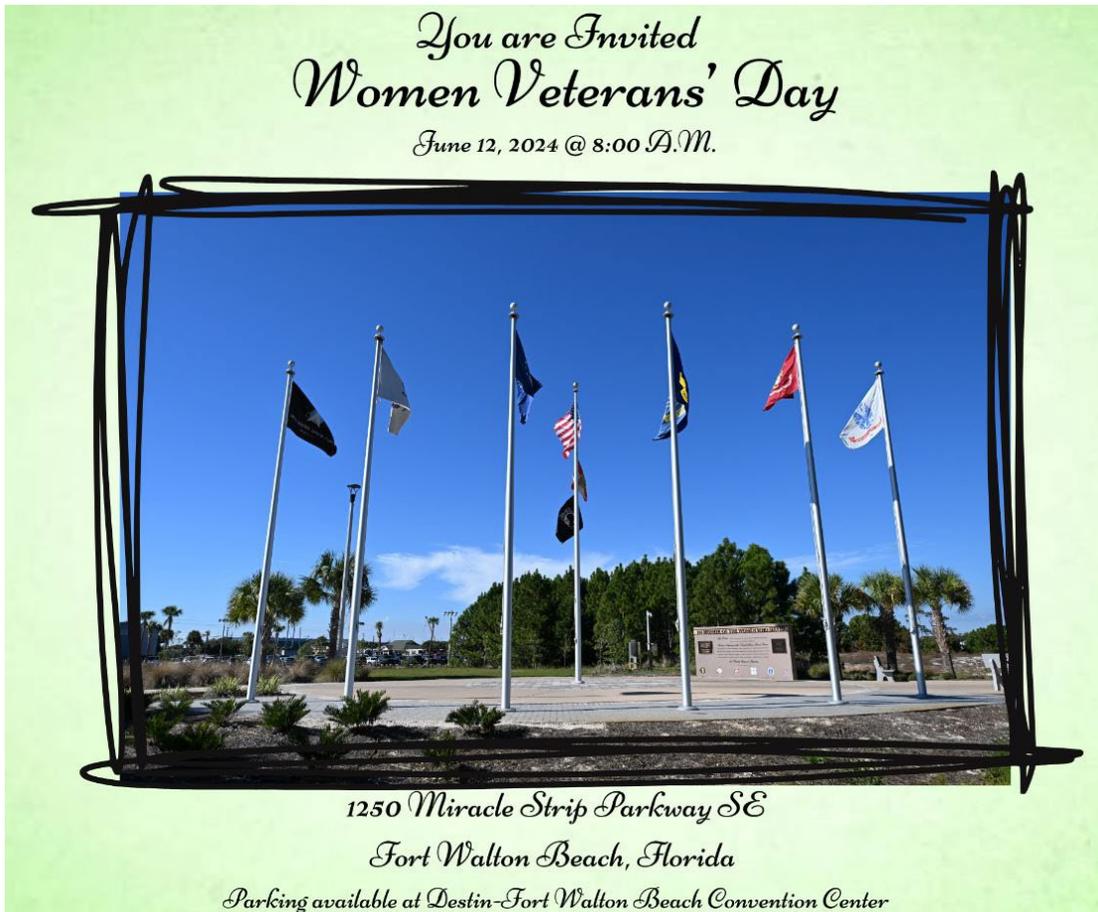
135 Surveillance and Recon. Aircraft, eventually collecting and disseminating time-critical actionable combat intelligence directly to the U.S. President and SECDEF.

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

My Sincere Thanks,



Carolyn N. Ketchel  
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*You are Invited*  
***Women Veterans' Day***  
*June 12, 2024 @ 8:00 A.M.*

*1250 Miracle Strip Parkway SE*  
*Fort Walton Beach, Florida*  
*Parking available at Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center*