

Dog park dedicated to Nancy Weidenhamer

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DESTIN — The city has given one last honor to the late Nancy Weidenhamer last week by naming the Destin Dog Park after her.

The new sign reads Nancy Weidenhamer Dog Park.

Nancy worked with Destin officials for years to make the dog park a reality. She passed away June 24 after a short battle with cancer.

"That park was her baby, and it wouldn't exist if it wasn't for her," Parks and Recreational Director Lance Johnson said.

Nancy's commitment to better Destin dates back to the 1990s, when she was involved with numerous city committees.

Along with her husband, Tom, she showed support for Destin by attending every event she could. She also was a regular at City Council meetings.

"She was heavily involved with the city. ... There were very few City Council meetings I

didn't see her in," Johnson said.

One of the most notable contributions was her effort to establish the dog park, which gave her the nickname "Destin Dog." Weidenhamer organized fundraising campaigns to raise \$38,000 for the city to match.

The dog park opened in January 2012.

"She spent a lot of time knocking on doors, hosting fundraising events and even sold T-shirts," said Doug Rainer, the city's spokesman. "Anything she could think of to help raise money for the park, she wasn't afraid to try it."

Weidenhamer is remembered as a wonderful wife, mother, friend, volunteer and, of course, as the "Destin Dog."

"I remember the big smile and twinkle on her face when we did the ribbon-cutting of park," Johnson said. "It was definitely one of her biggest moments, wearing her Destin dog outfit. It's unbelievable what she would have done for that dog park."

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she became principal of Edwins Elementary School in Fort Walton Beach.

As a classroom teacher, she was recognized twice as the teacher of the year at Southside Elementary School in 1988 and 1992. She has been recognized as a Woman of Valor, the Mae Reatha Coleman Crestview Citizen of the Year and has received the Okaloosa Outstanding Woman Award and the Drum Major for Justice Award.

She volunteers for Crestview Covenant Hospice, Children in Crisis, North Okaloosa Medical Center, the FAMU Pharmacy School and Silver Crest Rehabilitation & Nursing Center. She was the vice-president of the Democratic Women's Club of North Okaloosa, the educational director for Belief Foundation, Inc., the president of the North Okaloosa Gideon Auxiliary, president of the Church of God in Christ Central Florida Jurisdiction #1 Business and Professional Women Federation, Inc., and is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Dr. Karyn M. Combs, Ed.D. — Education Inductee

Dr. Karyn M. Combs is known as a principal, Air Force reservist, community activist, and leader in Okaloosa and surrounding counties. During her principalship at Eglin Elementary, the school was rated A+ for 10 consecutive years. Then in 2008, Combs was deployed to



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Iraq as the equal opportunity director for 10,000 Air Force personnel.

Her commitment to excellence, integrity and service before self attributed to the success in resolving discrimination and sexual harassment cases at the lowest levels during her eight-month deployment. This experience was life-changing, and in 2012 Combs humbled herself to seek help for PTSD.

Now retired, Combs works part-time, volunteers in organizations, and teaches African-American History from the book that she and her dad published in 2006.



Evie Fox — Community Service

Evie Fox — Community Service Inductee

Evie Fox was a writer and editor at the Playground Daily News in the 1980s. She also wrote a weekly humor column. In 1985 Fox was a case manager for the Geriatric Residential and Treatment System and a marketing specialist at Harbor Oaks Hospital. In 1989 she became the marketing director at the Okaloosa Guidance Clinic, coming up with the name "Bridgeway Center" and designing an award-winning logo.

Fox's greatest impact was as executive director of the Healthy Start Coalition. She developed a system of care for pregnant women and their children. Her accomplishments include starting the "World's Greatest Baby Shower," an annual event that provides pregnant women and new parents with gifts and information on parenting and community resources.

She established a Teen Awareness Team to help students make healthy choices and prevent unwanted pregnancies. She supervised a team of health care professionals who provided home care and education to pregnant women and babies to ensure they are receiving the health care and nutrition they need.

Fox also served as president of the Florida Association of Healthy Start Coalitions, where she was able to impact funding for prenatal and infant health care and raise awareness of infant

mortality in Florida.



Tammy McDaniel — Contemporary Inductee

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Travel adviser Tammy McDaniel is owner of Tammy's Journeys in downtown Fort Walton Beach. She is the true epitome of living the American Dream. Adopted from Korea at 10 months old, she grew up in Des Moines, Iowa. She spent seven years in the Air Force and went to night school to study travel and tourism. After moving to Northwest Florida in 1994, she worked for various travel agencies, a private air charter company and eventually started her own travel agency in 2011.

McDaniel has been both a leader and generous contributor to her community. In 1999 she joined the local American Business Women's Association which paved the way for her to serve on many boards in the area, eventually serving as the District 1 Vice President of the National ABWA.

According to Jim Reece, recycling coordinator of the Okaloosa County Public Works, "Tammy was instrumental in raising environmental awareness among both the public and private sector as the impetus behind the formation of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Environmental Committee. As a result of her initiative, the Board of County Commissioners approved the formation of a Sustainable Okaloosa County Committee made up of county staff from various departments to look at ways to implement cost-saving measures. Her zeal and tireless efforts to promote environmental stewardship at every level exemplify the remarkable woman that she is."

McDaniel is a true leader with a heart for mentoring others and giving back to her local community both financially and with her time.



Brenda Shoffner — Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Inductee

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Brenda Shoffner has been the arts and entertainment editor at the Northwest Florida Daily News since 1990. She has earned her title, "The Voice of the Arts," for Okaloosa County. Shoffner has used her position to promote the arts from high school productions and community theater groups to professional touring companies performing at The Arts Center at Northwest Florida State College.

Shoffner writes a weekly column that promotes local arts festivals, performers, stage productions, authors,

art gallery shows, etc. She has awards from the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors and the Florida Press Association, plus multiple community awards from local organizations, including Stage Crafters. Shoffner has served as a judge for the High School Thespian Festival and other events. She volunteered four years as a Fort Walton Beach High School Viking Band parent and one year on their telethon committee.

State Sen. Don Gaetz appointed Shoffner to the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, the only person from Okaloosa County. She was the Council's secretary. She made a motion that updated the criteria for grant applications. During her tenure, Florida regained stature as a cultural leader among the states, moving from 46th place to fifth place in 2015.

Brenda Shoffner serves as a mentor to young writers. She encouraged Savannah Evanoff to invite local musicians for live performances in the newsroom and they are streamed live on Facebook. They have also launched the Daily News' first entertainment podcast, called the DN Dish.

Shoffner's contributions have provided tremendous benefits to local artists and also to the community. Okaloosa County is a richer place thanks to her contributions.



Nancy Weidenhamer — Posthumous Inductee

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Nancy Weidenhamer embodied the word volunteer.

She embraced her community with gusto, passion and great pride whether it was teaching literacy to adults, fundraising for the Destin Dog Park, planting sea oats on Norriego Point or dressing in character costumes for holiday events at community venues.

Weidenhamer gave unselfishly of her time to numerous causes and served on many boards. To name a few, the Workforce Housing Committee, the Destin Harbor District Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee, Destin Public Works & Safety Committee, Catholic Charities, Corpus Christi Catholic Church, The Board of The Others and the Destin Board of Adjustments.

Throughout the years, Weidenhamer's dedication has been recognized with the Diocesan Medal of Honor for Lifetime Achievement, the state of Florida's Champion of Service Award and by the Destin City Council with the renaming of the Destin Dog Park to The Nancy Weidenhamer Dog Park.

Her generosity of spirit and civic contributions are an inspiration to women of all ages and will continue to impact the lives of everyone in the community.

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