

# Santa Rosa County District 3 Newsletter

## *A Message From Your Commissioner*

*Working together, we will overcome these challenging times!*



**District 3  
Commissioner  
W.D. "Don" Salter**

**Contact**  
6495 Caroline Street  
Suite M  
Milton, FL 32570

**Phone:**  
(850) 983-1877 WK  
(850) 994-6426 HM

**E-mail:**  
comm-salter@  
santarosa.fl.gov

**Fax:**  
(850) 983-1856



To receive this or  
other Santa Rosa  
County publications  
automatically via e-mail,  
please sign up at:

[www.santarosa.fl.gov](http://www.santarosa.fl.gov)

For those without  
internet access, call  
(850) 983-1877  
to receive a copy through  
the mail.

Perseverance is a powerful word. As we all know, we are living in trying times with fuel prices at record levels, the housing market down, the continued weakening of the American dollar, high insurance premiums, and reduced revenue for our county. We are experiencing the worst U.S. economy in decades, but we, in Santa Rosa have many blessings to count. Even with the suppressed U.S. economy, we continue to hold our own in Santa Rosa County. Our unemployment rate has risen to 4.6 percent, up from 3.2 percent in May 2007, compared to 5.5 percent for Florida and the U.S. as a whole. We have the 49th lowest unemployment rate in Florida compared to the other 66 counties. Once again, we have seen an increase in unemployment, but we are doing well compared to other counties across the US.

We continue to have new people moving to our county which helps grow our tax base. Commercial development continues to expand which also adds to our tax base and allows us to keep our shopping dollars in our county – shop Santa Rosa! New industry continues to choose Santa Rosa as their new home. This is especially true in our county industrial park and all along Highway 98 as we continue to create "The Innovation Coast". We are also working diligently to recruit aerospace and defense industry to our county, especially for the continued development of Whiting Aviation Park. Our goal is to create an Aerospace/Military Defense Coast Region similar to the Space Coast in eastern/central Florida. So, brighter days are ahead!

We are also blessed to have a strong military presence in our county - NAS Whiting Field in the north and Eglin, Hurlburt Air Force bases in the south. These three entities ensure us a stable economy even during challenging times. We also continue to work hard with our agriculture community to enhance their opportunities as well. Our farmers can now sell their vegetables to Wal-Mart as TEAM Santa Rosa has secured a vendor identification number or VIN and have created the "Panhandle Fresh" program. So, if you are looking for locally grown fresh vegetables – buy Panhandle Fresh.



Much of my time over the last several months has been to support our WWII veterans and the "Honor Flight" program. Through this initiative every WWII veteran who chooses, will fly to Washington DC to visit "their" memorial – the WWII Veterans Memorial at no cost to these heroic Veterans. This is the least we can do to honor "America's Greatest Generation" heroes!! If you would like to help support this effort, please call Emily Spencer in the county administration office at 983-1943.

As you can see, there are many exciting things happening in our Great County! We will persevere during this economic storm and continue to have a great place to live, play, and work. I wish to say "thank you" to every county employee for doing a great job and being part of Santa Rosa County's bright and successful future.

*- Don Salter, District 3 Commissioner*



# Santa Rosa District 3 News

## Santa Rosa County- NAS Whiting Field Partnership Used as Model

Santa Rosa County and Naval Air Station Whiting Field have been working together diligently since 1999 in creating and maintaining a mutually beneficial partnership to keep the air base fully operational while still encouraging a positive relationship with area residents.

This effort has encompassed a variety of programs and agreements that have protected land around NAS Whiting Field and the Navy Outlying Landing Fields from incompatible construction or encroachment.

Encroachment can be defined as issues external to military operations that affect or can affect military installation testing, training, and other operations and overall military readiness. There are several encroachment issues that may affect a military installation and its mission, including noise hazards, endangered species, wetlands, competition for airspace, and urban growth around military installations. Therefore, an aggressive partnership with the county and state is essential in achieving a joint effort in mitigating both current and future encroachment concerns.

Whiting Field is the Navy's busiest air station which routinely accomplishes more than 1.5 million annual flight operations in support of the DOD's primary pilot training program. It encompasses two major airfields and 13 outlying fields located in Florida and Alabama. The possibilities for encroachment encompassing an area of this magnitude are numerous. Santa Rosa County and the base have partnered on several initiatives to help insulate Whiting Field from future incompatible construction. These programs include:

- **Joint Land Use Study** - This is a report that was commissioned by Santa Rosa County in 2003 to identify conflicts between land uses and aircraft operations in the county. The report's recommendations provided a policy framework to support adoption and implementation of compatible development measures designed to prevent urban encroachment, safeguard the military mission, and protect public health, safety, and welfare. Santa Rosa County has implemented all the recommendations, which included notification to NAS Whiting Field on all initiatives, a voting membership on the Planning Board, lighting controls, clustering development away from airfields, and requiring a disclosure of training activities along with property and development purchases.
- **Florida Forever Projects** - This is a State of Florida program that partners with several organizations to protect environmentally sensitive lands. These are projects, through financial support from Florida, that sets aside funding for acquisition of tracts of land which are not to be developed.
- **Yellow River Ravine Project** - This Florida Forever project covered approximately 16,000 acres in Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties. This land borders Eglin AFB to the south and the Blackwater River State Forest on the north. Navy Outlying Landing Field Harold, a vital helicopter tactical airfield was protected by this project.
- **Clear Creek Project** - The Nature Conservancy developed this Florida Forever project to acquire more than 5,000 acres of land surrounding NAS Whiting Field. This compliments the 388 acres already purchased by Santa Rosa County. This project is currently listed as a Florida Forever Group "A" project for funding. The Navy has partnered with Florida utilizing the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI) funding. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) evaluated more than 900 acres of the original tracts to develop into trails.
- **Florida Defense Alliance Projects** - This program is designed to provide funds to local governments for projects that support local infrastructure that have a positive impact on base efficiencies while benefiting the local community as well. Santa Rosa County has received grants worth approximately \$2 million dollars so far.

"These projects have been vital in ensuring current and future pilot training at Naval Air Station Whiting Field. These initiatives also play a key role in safeguarding environmentally sensitive areas throughout Northwest Florida," said Lt. Randy Roy, NAS Whiting Field Community Liaison.

The issues that bases, such as Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach, Va. and Naval Air Station Key West, continue to deal with provide a stark counterpoint to the successes that Santa Rosa County and Whiting Field enjoy. The training mission of Training Air Wing - FIVE at NAS Whiting Field is a vital one for the military missions of the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. The efforts of Santa Rosa County to help ensure the availability of training facilities now and for the future have been a tremendous boon in supporting that mission.

"The relationship between NAS Whiting Field and Santa Rosa County has been amazing. Their efforts have become a Navy-wide model for how encroachment planning and partnering should be done," said Roy.





# Santa Rosa District 3 News

## TEAM Update

Santa Rosa County is a community on the rise. Our excellent quality of life, workforce and natural beauty are extremely attractive for individuals and businesses alike. According to the Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development, from 1980 to 2007, we have experienced a population growth rate of 173 percent making us the 14th fastest growing county in Florida (77th nationally).

While growth is good, it must be managed in order to preserve the attributes that draw people here in the first place. Likewise, we must guard against policies that choke economic growth. The evidence shows that we're on the right track:

- ✓ Our average salary increased 11% over the last year compared to statewide average of 5% placing us ahead of all other counties in the State!
- ✓ SRC has consistently ranked in the top 5 for job growth over the past 3 years.
- ✓ The number of businesses in SRC has increased over 50% in the past 7 years.
- ✓ Total sales in the County have increased over 60% in past 7 years.
- ✓ SRC unemployment rate for 2007 was 3.6% compared to 4.0% for Florida and 4.6% for the U.S.

A key ingredient to our economic success is our industrial parks. We have six of them in Santa Rosa County: Whiting Aviation Park, Pullum Park, Northwoods Park, Pace Industrial Area, Jay Industrial Park and Santa Rosa Industrial Park. While each park has its own advantages, as a whole they provide the perfect opportunities for businesses to grow and thrive.

For example, Santa Rosa Industrial Park, with aggressive recruitment and support by TEAM Santa Rosa Economic Development Council and the Santa Rosa Commission, has doubled its occupancy since it first opened in 2000. This growth has been characterized by a diverse set of companies that bring economic stability and value to the area. Recently, the industrial park welcomed Pro-Build Lumber as its newest member, and it will soon be home to Ropella, a leading executive search and consulting firm. In addition, construction will soon begin for the H.T. Hackney Co., one of the largest wholesale distributors in the United States, and MeltPro, a manufacturer of hot melt adhesive dispensing equipment.

The industrial park has been a major contributor to Santa Rosa County's economic success and we expect even more businesses to join this thriving neighborhood of entrepreneurial industries.

## Panhandle Fresh – From Our Farm to Your Table: Now in Wal-Mart

Agriculture accounts for more than \$72 million in annual revenue in Santa Rosa County. Generations of families have made farming in Santa Rosa County and surrounding regions their way of life. The sustainability of this industry is paramount to our economic development as it is the third most significant industry in the county behind military and tourism.

To ensure that the agribusiness industry continues to thrive, Panhandle Fresh Marketing Association, was created. The association assists farmers in pooling their resources and allowing them access to larger markets in the produce industry.

An initial objective for this effort was the formation of The Riverwalk Farmer's Market, a local farmers' market located in downtown Milton. Now, through the PFMA, consumers have the opportunity to get farmer's market freshness at the Pace Wal-Mart. The first wave of crops; which include: cantaloupe, squash, green beans and cucumbers hit the shelves Memorial Day Weekend and produce will be offered through the growing season, including watermelon and other summer crops for the Fourth of July. We look forward to broccoli, cauliflower, greens and winter squash in the fall and winter. If you go to Wal-Mart look for the Panhandle Fresh Brand and know that you are buying product grown within 100 miles, that taste better, is more nutritious, helps your economy, protects our rural land in Santa Rosa County and with most recent scares, you can feel safer eating produce your neighbor has grown for you!



## Citizen Spotlight

*Debbie Smith*

If you drive in the Roeville area, chances are you have seen native Debbie Smith walking and picking up trash along the road, no matter the weather. Debbie first began her clean-up campaign after Ivan as a way to give back and help build community morale and pride. She now covers about a 5-mile area of Munson Highway from Parker Road to Pat Brown Road. The president of the Crane Cemetery Association also wanted funeral processions in the area to have a trash-free drive to the cemetery. Debbie plans to keep cleaning as long as she can. She has enjoyed seeing the results of her hard work and the friends she has made. Ms. Smith pays for the garbage bags and the tipping fees at the Central Landfill and states "It's just my contribution to my community. My family has been a part of Roeville since my great-great grandmother. It's how I wind down from a hard day."

Santa Rosa County thanks you Debbie Smith!



# Santa Rosa District 3 News

## Inaugural Emerald Coast Honor Flight

April 30, 2008, is a day that will be remembered in the minds of more than 140 people. This was the day of the inaugural Emerald Coast Honor Flight, a national program, brought to the 1st Congressional District by Congressman Jeff Miller. This initiative enabled 102 World War II veterans accompanied by guardians and medical personnel to fly to Washington, DC, for a day to visit THEIR memorial.

Guardians were to report to the Pensacola Airport at 4:45 AM, but I woke up before my alarm clock, set for 3:30 AM, went off. When we walked into the airport terminal, it was full of people all there for the ECHF. We soon realized that most were the veterans and their families. Some of them had arrived as early as 3:00 AM after only a few hours of restless sleep even though their designated time of arrival was 5:15 AM. This was their day that had taken over 60 years for them to finally be thanked for sacrifices they had made decades before. Some of them needed wheelchairs or walkers while some were still nimble of foot.

The weather in DC was perfect as we landed at Reagan International Airport greeted by an "Honor Spray" by two fire trucks. Congressman Miller personally greeted the group as they started their walk through the crowded concourse and were welcomed with flags and applause. Our first stop was at the World War II memorial—THEIR memorial—to view the marble structures that represent all of the major battles fought in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. Senator Bob Dole came to greet the group and was very gracious as he talked with the veterans and posed for pictures. A wreath in honor of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice was placed at the site. After a lunch provided by Arby's and another quick walk around the WWII memorial, the group left to visit the Korean War and the Vietnam War memorials. Our last stop was at the Iwo Jima memorial in Arlington Cemetery where a group photo was made.

Now it was time for the group to say goodbye to Washington, DC, and head for home. As they went to board the plane, they were again greeted and cheered by the people in the airport. We thought the flight home would be quiet as the veterans would be exhausted from the day's events. However, this was not true as they continued to talk about the day and also about their memories of the war.

When we arrived at Pensacola Airport, a hero's welcome was waiting for the group. Senior NCOs from all branches of the service snapped to attention and saluted as they welcomed the veterans home. There were smiles and tears, handshakes and hugs as a large crowd of family, friends, and strangers were in the lobby with signs, flags, and cheers. As I left the terminal, I walked up to a veteran in a wheelchair who had come out and turned his chair to face back into the terminal.

I stopped when I looked down and realized he was crying. I reached down, took his hand, and asked if he was all right. His answer sums up the feelings of the whole group, "Yes, this is just the best day of my life."

As the day turned into evening, I realized I had been witness to a special metamorphosis. Friendships had been established, and stories that once were taboo were shared. The fine thread that had woven this generation together was finally being revealed. Healing had begun. Men and women from all branches of the service were now a "brotherhood."



Above: Three Honor Flight participants accept a proclamation from the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners.

- Pete Southerland  
Marine Corps League

## Santa Rosa County Whiting Field Golf Association Veterans Memorial Golf Classic



Help Santa Rosa County WWII Veterans join the next Emerald Coast Honor Flight by registering to play the Santa Rosa County Whiting Field Golf Association Veterans Memorial Golf Classic. The Tournament will feature prizes for first, second and third place teams as well as "closest to the pin" and "longest drive" awards. Mulligans and tee busters will be available. Your support will help give a local WWII Veteran the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. to see the memorial paying tribute to their heroic efforts!

**When:** Friday, July 25 at noon, registration at 11 a.m. with a 4-man scramble and shotgun start

**Where:** NAS Whiting Field Golf Course

**Player Registration:** \$75 single player, \$400 corporate team (includes tee sign; tee signs can also be purchased for \$100)

For more information, call (850) 626-7292 or log on to [www.srcvets.org](http://www.srcvets.org)