



# JACKSON COUNTY



## Annual Report 2020

### Jackson County Statistics

Population: **46,414**

Area: **955 sq mi**

Established: **1822**

County Seat: **Marianna**

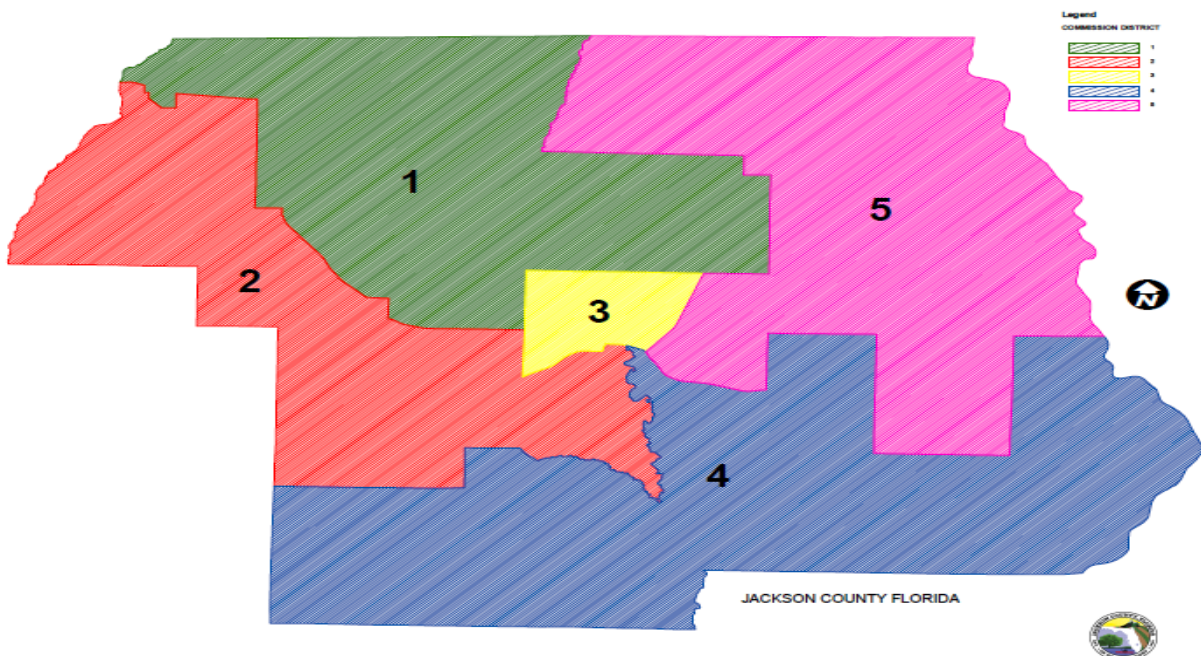
Median Household Income:  
**\$39,022**

Districting: **5 Single Districts**



### ABOUT JACKSON COUNTY

Jackson County was created by the Florida Territorial Council in 1822 out of Escambia County, at the same time that Duval County was organized from land of St. Johns County, making them the third and fourth counties in the Territory. The county was named for Andrew Jackson, 7th US President and a General of the War of 1812, who had served as Florida's first military governor for six months in 1821.





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# BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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## Annual Report 2020



The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners has made significant steps in pushing the County towards the implementation of the tool necessary to foster growth and economic development, as well as moving to approve/adopt milestone items in Fiscal Year 2019-20.

- ◆ Movement of items on the Endeavor Property—Museum, Convention Center, Autism School, Debris Removal (including stumps, procurement for demolition, and issues for the Sheriffs Office.
- ◆ Organizational Changes—two significant reorganizations resulting in a Deputy County Administrator and Public Transportation Director.
- ◆ Large Ticket items for Fire Rescue—Protected OT, Incentive Pay, Grant Match Funding for FR Equipment/ Gear.
- ◆ Acquisition of better spaces for Fire Rescue Stations and Constitutionals (Graceville), Implementation of New Fire Stations (Malone).
- ◆ In-House Mowing Program.
- ◆ Approval of Space that will be utilized Apostle Johnson, and others, to provide free counseling services to the Public.
- ◆ Continuation of “Roll-Back” Taxes, resulting in a 10 year stretch of no tax increases to Jackson County constituents.
- ◆ Support of CARES funding initiatives that impacted businesses and non-profits.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Annual Report 2020

Many emotions are stirred as I reflect on the annual report. I am proud of the work that the Board and staff have accomplished this past year. It is difficult to document all the hard work from staff. It is almost impossible to pen down every accomplishment. Nonetheless, I am so proud of the effort and hard work that has gone into 2019-2020. I am pleased beyond words with the team that we have been working diligently to build. Each person plays a critical role in our success and I hope that each of them knows the value that we place on them. It is a joy and an honor to work for Jackson County. This is my home and I want to see it prosper. I am thankful for this season of my career to be able to serve the Board of County Commissioners, the citizens of Jackson County, and the staff of the BOCC.

I am proud to present this annual report to the Board of County Commissioners and to the citizens of Jackson County. Our role is to serve the citizens, and this is an opportunity to highlight the ways that our employees did this during FY 2019-2020. I hope that you enjoy these highlights from the year and learn something new about the ways that we serve Jackson County.

Over the past two years as County Administrator a lot of things have changed in the County. Being a part of that change is exciting and I know that this is only the beginning. With the support and leadership of the commissioners, we have implemented many positive initiatives across all departments. To name a few:

- ◆ Re-Organizations/Restructures
- ◆ Creation of Organizational Chart
- ◆ Creation of Key Positions
- ◆ Implemented Pay Increases (2% and Longevity Pay) for all staff to be provided in FY 2019-20, FY 2020-21, and FY 2021-22
- ◆ Performance Appraisal Process
- ◆ IT Audit
- ◆ Upgraded Server Room
- ◆ Balanced Budget for FY 20-21
- ◆ New Logo/Website (County Branding)
- ◆ Summer Schedule
- ◆ Broadband Efforts
- ◆ Created OPS Positions for the County
- ◆ Mowing Program
- ◆ Automated HR System
- ◆ Office 365 and Firewall
- ◆ Updated Position Descriptions
- ◆ FEMA Projects for 4177 and 4399
- ◆ Private Property Debris Removal
- ◆ Housing Initiatives
- ◆ Indian Springs Water/Sewer Extension Project—Phase 1
- ◆ FLEET Program

I am excited about the future of Jackson County!



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wilmarie J. Daniels". The signature is fluid and cursive.



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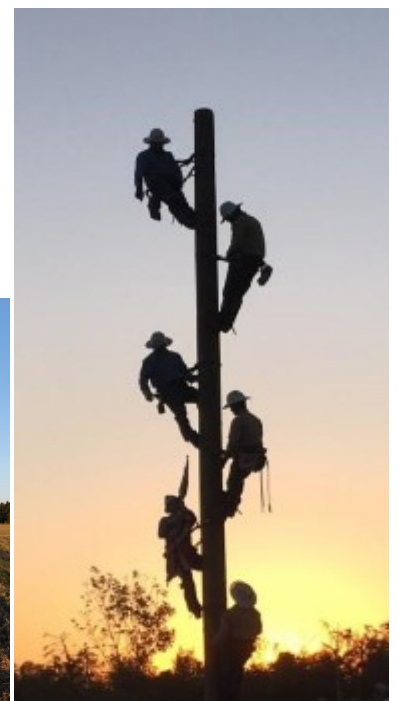
# SPIRIT OF JACKSON

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## Annual Report 2020

On the evening of October 10, 2019 the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners in conjunction with support from local vendors and contractors, presented a celebration for how far we had come post Hurricane Michael. Hosted at Citizens Lodge this effort saw a crowd estimated at 3,500 Jackson Countians. It was a HUGE turn-out where locals and special visitors enjoyed games, boots, raffles (for some really great ticket items!), food trucks, music by the local band Heyword, and a presentation to our hometown hero's that had a huge impact on the community during and after the disaster.

This effort was an amazing opportunity for our community to come together and celebrate our progress. Special events for the night included a fireworks show, a linemen salute and a wood carving by Chad Gainey, created using a tree that fell during the Hurricane. It was an impactful event for all that attended and will be something that the Board will continue on future anniversaries.









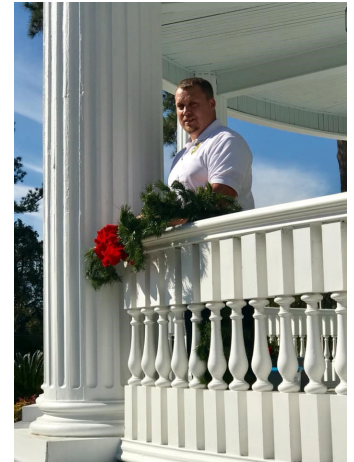
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# ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

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## Annual Report 2020

The 2019 Christmas Party was one for the books!! With Board support and allocated donations it was the first celebration post Hurricane Michael that felt “normal”. With a huge attendance—dinner, prizes, and games made this night really special for JBOCC employees, Party Committee Members, and Members of the Board. We were really proud of the turn-out, but even more proud of the comradery, laughter, and fun had by ALL! Over 50 gifts were raffled off—including gift cards worth a total of \$1,000 going to staff and their families.





# COVID—19

## Annual Report 2020

In March of 2020—the COVID 19 Virus changed the entire way the County provided its normal services to our Citizens. For the first time in history we served the public - virtually. Some of the ways we changed our customer service:

- ♦ Virtual Meetings (ZOOM, Microsoft Teams, YouTube) for Employees and Board;
- ♦ Building Department Automated Forms Online;
- ♦ Phone and Email Responses to Public Needing Immediate Attention;

Additionally, the JBOCC:

- ♦ Temporarily Closed Offices to the Public;
- ♦ Required Social Distancing of Employees Returning to Work;
- ♦ Shutdown the Availability of our Rental Facilities;

Staff worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of our public and employees. Every effort was made, masks were encouraged, hand sanitizer was put on every county desk and Lysol was used as much as possible.



## PLEASE ADHERE TO SOCIAL DISTANCING

When inside, please keep a six  
(6) foot distance from others.

Masks are encouraged for your  
safety and ours.



Sandy Martin, Health Officer, continues to provide the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners updates from the Jackson County Health Department on numbers for the County. She and her staff have worked tirelessly to keep the citizens aware of testing options, provide testing services, and to provide contact tracing—working to ensure containment when/where appropriate.



*I understand that our current situation has created a lot of fear and uncertainty for many of us. First, I want to communicate my understanding of this fear. We are all feeling the impact of this pandemic. I want to acknowledge that you all are experiencing concerns on varying levels. Maybe you are fearful about childcare or the future, in general. These are normal feelings and fears during this time in the world. I want you all to know that I wake up each morning thinking about all of you and the different challenges that you all are facing right now. I would not even consider making empty promises, but what I can promise is that I am going to make wise decisions and I am going to pivot according to day-to-day needs.*

*We are making week-to-week, day-to-day, and sometimes hour-to-hour decisions. We won't always get it right, but we will regroup and start again, when we get it wrong.*

*I am committed to communicating empathetically, truthfully, and frequently until we are on the other side of this crisis. And we WILL come to the other side.*

*—Wilanne Daniels, County Administrator*



### **Making the BEST of a BAD Situation**

The County Administrator created a fun (safe) way to have staff show how COVID-19 was changing processes for county staff. Several Offices submitted pictures and the Ag Extension Director, Doug Mayo, even created a 5 minute AMAZING video highlighting the dire effects of ZOOM on the Departments employees. It was a simple and fun way to still encourage safe interactions for staff who were feeling the impacts of social distancing and being closed to the public.

### **The NEW Normal:**

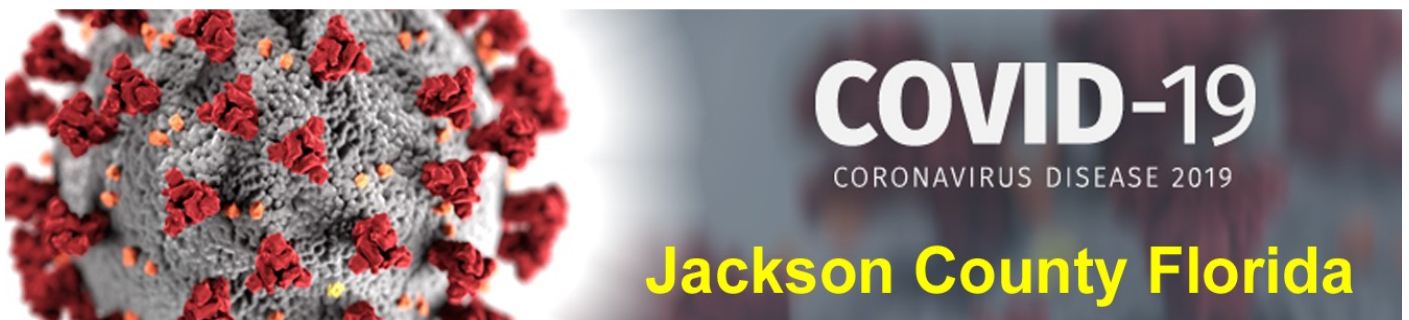
Sneeze Guards

Safety Supplies

Gloves

Masks

Hand Sanitizer





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# CARES

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## Annual Report 2020

On March 30, 2020 I concluded my second year as administrator for the Jackson County BOCC. I thought that we had a year for the books in 2018 with Hurricane Michael devastating our County, but in FY 2019-2020 COVID-19 was a new kind of disaster. With recovery from the hurricane still underway the Jackson County Commission had to pivot in March 2020 to respond to the pandemic. Without delay, the commissioners responded by closing rentals, moving to remote board meetings, a remote working plan was implemented, and an emergency cleaning contract was procured to ensure facilities received proper sanitization.

In June 2020, the Governor's Authorized the Florida Division of Emergency Management to distribute the \$1.275 Billion in Cares Act funding to Florida's 55 counties that were not funded directly by the U.S. Treasury. Jackson County received \$7.3 Million of this allocation. Commissioners, constitutionals, cities, and staff have tirelessly worked to find creative ways to make the largest impact to Jackson County with the CARES funding. Some of the ways this money is being spent are the following:

- ◆ A new ambulance for Fire Rescue
- ◆ Business Grants
- ◆ Safeguards (sneeze guards, sanitization necessities, cleaning supplies)
- ◆ Computer/audio peripherals to outfit departments for virtual meetings/conferencing
- ◆ OPS Positions to fill the gap where inmates could not be utilized
- ◆ Technology to allow essential employees to work remotely
- ◆ Provided PPE for frontline workers
- ◆ Cleaning/Sanitization Services
- ◆ Large ticket purchases needed to accommodate social distancing in County areas





# ADMINISTRATION

## Annual Report 2020

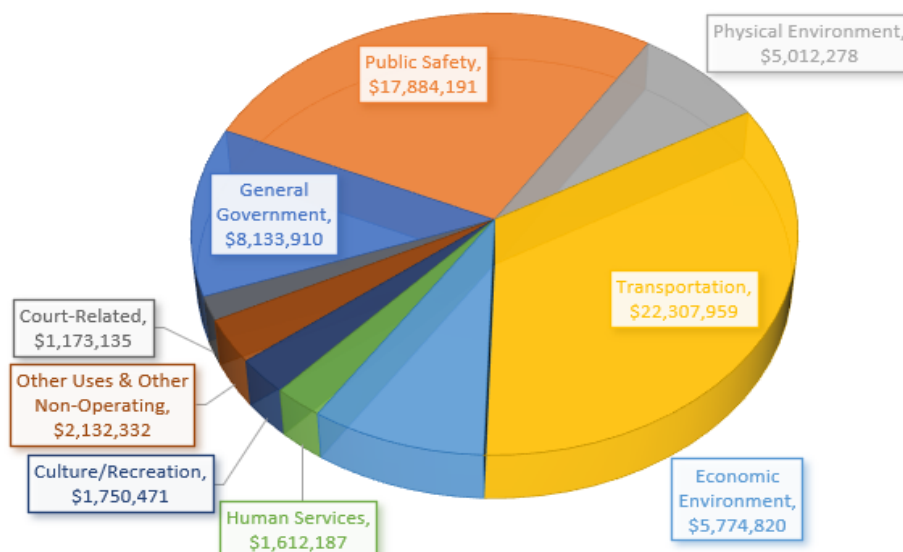


The Administration Department of the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners provides all operational functionality for the County. It is important in the journey towards excellence to create a strong foundation to ensure that everything that is built for the County is resting on a strong base.

The Annual Budget for the County falls under this department. Fiscal Year 2019-20 saw many lessons learned, but it also saw the Commission passing a 2% Cost of Living Increase and Longevity Pay for ALL JBOCC employees! This was a HUGE morale booster for staff, especially those with multiple years of service (even several staff with 30+ years). The plan was approved to be implemented beginning in FY 2019-20 for a three year period, pending available budget. This budget cycle also saw a signification reorganization, several large ticket IT projects, a SCADA system upgrade, a FLEET lease agreement with Enterprise, an in-house Mowing Program, creation of an OPS employee policy and utilization, 4177-FEMA projects movement, several large road project items, online services being promoted/provided, and so much more!



## BUDGET FOR FY 2019-20



# HUMAN RESOURCES

## Annual Report 2020

### Mission

The mission of the Human Resources Department is to collaborate with county leaders to effectively meet the personnel needs of our employees as well as external customers. To accomplish this, the department develops and administers programs and services that support the success of the county's mission and contribute to the achievement of Jackson County goals.

The Human Resources Department provides services, HR leadership and operations to JBOCC employees and managers in the areas of classification, compensation, training and development, recruitment and placement, employee and labor relations, risk management and employee benefits. Human Resources also ensures JBOCC compliance with all applicable employment-related local, state and federal laws and regulations. Additionally, Human Resources administers the group medical, dental, life, retirement, deferred compensation and cafeteria plan benefits to the JBOCC and other county agency employees serviced by the JBOCC HR staff.



### COVID-19 Impacts

HR Staff Processed **69** COVID related requests

- ◆ Requests for Extended FMLA    Paperwork for Quarantine
- ◆ Requests for ADMIN Leave    Tracking Time/Requirements

*"I feel blessed that God gave me the opportunity to join this organization and enabled me to be part of a team that works tirelessly to meet the needs of the citizens of this great County..."*

-Judy Austin, HR Director

*Personnel Action Forms Processed  
for FY 2019-2020*

*New Hires—213*

*Resignations—89*

*Raises/Longevity—221*

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Implemented automated online enrollment for Medical, Central, Vision, Life Insurance, Long and Short-term Disability benefits resulting in a more timely and accurate enrollment process.
- ◆ Resolved all outstanding property and workers compensation claims and implemented processes to ensure all future claims are handled timely and accurately.
- ◆ Implemented processes to fast track the new hire process to reduce downtime and negative impacts on departmental operations.
- ◆ Implemented processes to ensure compliance with COBRA and Florida New Hire requirements.
- ◆ Implemented new Employee of the Month policies and procedures
- ◆ Implemented policies and tracking mechanisms to ensure compliance with new Federal Laws relating to COVID-19 and ensure all employees affected by COVID-19 received the expanded benefits offered under the new laws.
- ◆ Implemented new processes for the management of workers compensation claims; as a result effectively managed 35 workers compensation claims.
- ◆ Updated Position Descriptions for all positions County-wide
- ◆ Working to establish Automated hiring/onboarding HR System (Hire Bridge)
- ◆ Implementation of OPS Employees for Temporary Use

Pictured right:  
Retirement Party  
for Lennetta Loman-Greene, outgoing HR Director



- ◆ Helped facilitate 2-day Leadership Training Webinar for Department Managers County-wide
- ◆ Attended Annual FACT Risk Management Conference
- ◆ Managed 36 job openings
- ◆ Facilitated/tracked 14 FMLA Claims
- ◆ Processed 6 retirements
- ◆ Managed 26 Workers Comp claims



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## Annual Report 2020

The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners Information Technology Department implements, manages, and maintains all county information systems.

### Services Provided:

- ◆ Provide effective technology support for all Board of County Commissioner departments.
- ◆ Promote and facilitate the effective integration of technology.
- ◆ Develop, enhance, and manage the County's enterprise networks to provide high speed, transparent, and highly functional connectivity among all information resources.
- ◆ Develop and maintain highly effective, reliable, secure, and innovative information systems to support all County functions.
- ◆ Facilitate the collection, storage, security, and integrity of electronic data while ensuring appropriate access.
- ◆ Promote new uses of information technology within the County.
- ◆ Provide leadership for effective strategic and tactical planning in the use of technology
- ◆ Provide fast & reliable access to all information systems.



### Accomplishments

- ◆ Implemented Office 365
- ◆ Implemented a Firewall
- ◆ Completed a Verizon Audit - \$15K projected annual savings
- ◆ Utilized a Free Online Ticketing System - \$6K annual savings
- ◆ Internal Audit of Community Development
- ◆ Website Update and Remodel
- ◆ Created Shared Drives allowing for sharing of documents Department wide

**Total Tickets Processed  
for FY 2019-20**

**230**

### MISSION:

The Jackson County Information Technology department strives to provide the highest quality technology-based services, in the most cost-effective manner, to facilitate County services.



# AG EXTENSION SERVICES

Annual Report 2020



*"COVID19 also created real challenges for the Jackson County Extension Service. 2020 was certainly not business as usual, but the motto for the year was, "Do the best you can to help people with the tools we have available"..."*

*-Doug Mayo, Director*

At the end of 2019, the ag commodity markets were improving and farmers were somewhat more optimistic than they were going into 2019. The COVID19 crisis had major impact on the agricultural industry. China is a huge buyer of agricultural commodities like cotton, so the early outbreak there reduced sales and created setbacks to what had been expected to be an improving market. The huge impact was the market price drops due to shut downs and reduced export markets. As restaurants, schools, airports, and other food service buyers shut down, there was a real shift toward retail grocery stores. The shutdown also forced employee layoffs that also affected consumer spending. When your future is uncertain, there are a lot fewer steaks purchased and a lot more hamburger, so there were real shifts in the value of high end foods. Certainly worker safety was an issue, just as with every other industries. Food processing plants suffered from employee outbreaks that slowed food production and distribution. As the plants were closed and slowed by outbreaks, the whole food-chain backed up. Fortunately the CARES programs passed through Congress provided some assistance for most all of the commodity market declines, but it did not make up for the total income losses. The farm economy in Jackson County has struggled now for three straight years.

The Extension Service normally provides a balanced mix of individual consultations with citizens about farming, gardening, and consumer issues, as well as training programs on a wide range of topics. In March in-person interactions were halted. Citizens in general were minimized in-person activities through May. While in-person trainings were not an option, the staff at the Extension Service got very creative in finding alternative tools to stay in contact with residents. Agents used webinars, live social media video broadcasts, YouTube videos, and email newsletters to continue providing helpful information. The net result was almost 435 thousand contacts through the different digital platforms utilized by all programs in just nine months. With so many events and activities canceled, the Extension Staff utilized this unexpected time to focus on creating videos to market the services they provide. The Extension Office never closed, but the staff had to become more creative in finding ways to stay connected to clientele and rose to the challenge of 2020. Working together through this crisis we now have a stronger team than we had in 2019.

**Total Income  
from Rental—  
\$4,319.55**

## Honors & Recognition

- ◆ Doug & Ethan - Best Ag Website in State
- ◆ Ethan - Search for Excellence in Crop Production





Agriculture



Natural Resources



4-H Youth Development



Lawn & Garden



Family Resources



Online/Learning Opportunities

## UF/IFAS EXTENSION JACKSON COUNTY

University of Florida Extension in Jackson provides educational programs on agriculture, home gardening, natural resource management, food preservation and nutrition, family financial management, health and wellness, and youth development.

Extension Group Educational Trainings		
Description	Total # of Events	Total Attendees
Onsite Trainings	141	4,166
Offsite Trainings	3	46
Pesticide Safety	8	296
Webinars	14	132
<b>Totals</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>4,640</b>

Internal Statistics	Total
Office Visits	498
Phone Calls	2,693
Emails	1,083
Field Visits	128
Email SMS Newsletters	47
Emails Opened	72,596
Web Page Views	324,905

Social Media Presence				
Platform	Posts/Videos	Reach	Engaged Users	Viewing Hours
Facebook	1,504	152,430	12,184	-
Twitter	315	125,769	2,491	-
You Tube	36	22,801	-	988

# LIBRARY

## Annual Report 2020



The Jackson County Public Library has three locations: Marianna, Graceville, and Greenwood. All three locations provide items for checkout, physical space for interest group meetings, free internet and computer usage, and instructional classes and entertaining programs on a variety of topics. Our combined collection consists of over 20,000 items including books for adults, young adults, and children, audiovisual products such as books on CD, popular DVDs for children and adults, regional and local newspapers, and other printed materials. Additionally, the library has a collection of very low cost books and other items for sale to the public.

### Mission

The mission of the library is to Entertain, Educate, and Enrich the lives of Jackson County citizens. For entertainment purposes, the library maintains standing orders for popular hardcover reading materials from bestselling authors. There is a limited checkout period on these "New" items in order to provide more readers opportunities to enjoy current titles. A similar program exists for DVDs for all age groups including a standing order for Disney new release DVDs.

*"The lives of our citizens are enriched through a variety of programs provided to people of varying age groups and cultural backgrounds..."*

*-Deborah Hynes, Director*

JOIN MISS PEGGY FOR  
**Story Time** @  **LIVE**  
Wednesdays at 10 a.m. on Facebook Live  
For the Story Time materials list each week, visit the library's Facebook page.



Virtual Story  
Time Facebook  
Views:  
4,175

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# TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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## Annual Report 2020

### MISSION

The mission and objective of the Tourist Development Council is to further enhance the tourism industry and the overall economy of Jackson County through projects or programs that attract new and repeat visitors to Jackson County, increase the frequency of visits, increase the length of stay of visitors, increase the per capita spending of visitors, increase the room nights resulting in an increase in tourist development tax revenues, all while conforming to state and local ordinances and statutes.

The Jackson County Tourist Development Council is responsible for overseeing the marketing of Jackson County to tourists. A tourist is defined as a person who participates in trade or recreation outside the county of his or her permanent residence or who rents or leases transient rental accommodations. Our primary goal is to increase awareness and heighten the Jackson County tourism brand identity through our robust tourism opportunities that are available through natural, cultural, historical, and agricultural experiences. We also work to educate the communities on the importance of tourism and how each of our 160 stakeholders are directly impacted by tourist spending and how each of the 16,000+ households in Jackson County pay \$277 less in taxes each year thanks to tourist spending. The tourism industry in Jackson County is the fourth largest industry by employment and generates an economic impact of over \$140 Million annually. Tourism in Jackson County has been on the incline for the past five years, with projections for the next fiscal year to follow the same trend.



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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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- ◆ **2019 & 2020 AgriTourism Guide** – Team members worked collaboratively to reach out to current listings for updates and revisions and identify new places of interest to be included in this annual publication. The cancellation of the 2020 Sunbelt Ag Expo allowed team members to consider a redesign to the publication that is more user friendly, eliminating the need for duplicate maps and information.
- ◆ **2020 Visitor Guide Redesign** – The Visitor Guide has been attempted to go through a complete update and redesign for several years. Hurricane Michael, short timelines, budget restrictions, and COVID-19 have delayed the process, but the JCTDC Team is proud to say the new guide is in progress with the Current Agency. Design work is currently 60% complete with the goal of going to print by December 2020.
- ◆ **2020 Restaurant Guide** – The Restaurant Guide will be printed in small batches to allow for continuous updates throughout the year and are currently available at the Russ House, County Admin offices, Jackson County Library, and several small businesses throughout the county.
- ◆ **#TheMoreYouKnowJCO** – This social media initiative is an awareness campaign for unique facts and information about Jackson County. Our target continues to be primarily locals via social media (Facebook and Instagram), but a newsletter component was added in summer 2020.



- ◆ **Visit Jackson County eNewsletter** – Ongoing. Our eNewsletter was established in Summer 2020 for updates, events, stakeholder resources, visitor information, and as a platform for storytelling. The new fiscal year will allow us to enter into monthly contract for services through MailChimp, resulting in implementation of a signup service through our website, digital campaigns, and social media for compliance with anti-SPAM laws in the United States and European Union.
- ◆ **Grants and Sponsorships Awarded** – The Jackson County Tourist Development Council awarded grants to Farm City Festival (November 2019), The Wheels and Water Show (February 2020), and the Flint River Grotto Cave Cavort (March 2020). These events each targeted different groups for overnight stays, day trips, and niche tourism opportunities.
- ◆ **Keeping Your AgriTourism Farm Fresh: Part 3** – Our third agritourism workshop was held in February 2020 as part of a partnership with Washington and Holmes Counties to increase and further promote agritourism within the tri-county area. Attendance was significantly lower than the previous year, giving organizers the opportunity to rebrand the event in to more of a “field day” of sorts in the future.
- ◆ **New Board Members** – 2020 welcomed two new Board Members to the TDC as a result of resignation from previous members. Kelly Ziglar, co-owner of The Lazy Acres Family Farm, and Mystie Richards, owner of Bistro Palms, were welcomed aboard the Team in Summer 2020. Each seat on the TDC Board is for a staggered four-year term, with new board members taking on the same term limits for the vacated seat. Two seats are up for new appointment or re-appointment and two additional seats have been vacated in recent months.



### Visitor Information

- 1.3 Million (estimated)

### Direct Spending

#### by Visitors

\$90 MILLION (projected)  
\$120M+ estimated with indirect and induced

### Spending by Category

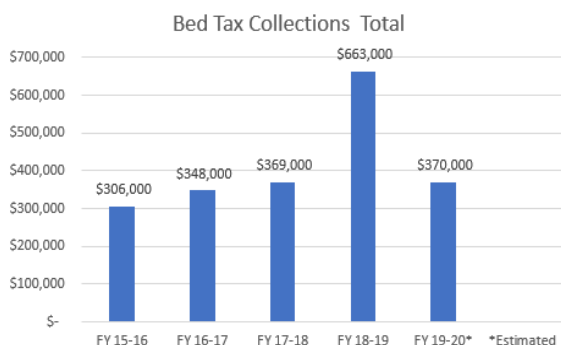
Gas (39%)  
Retail (21%)  
Lodging (19%)  
Restaurants (16%)  
Other (5%)

### Top 5 States

Florida  
Alabama  
Georgia  
Texas  
Louisiana

### Top 5 Countries

Canada  
Germany  
Puerto Rico\*  
Mexico  
Brazil  
(\*US territory)



# VETERANS SERVICES

## Annual Report 2020



The Veterans Administration provides basic healthcare services for qualified veterans in the local area through the Marianna Community Based Outpatient Clinic. Specialty services are referred to Tallahassee. Not all veterans receive VA healthcare. The Jackson County Veteran Services office is the only fulltime office in a five county area.

We do not limit our services strictly to Jackson County residents, but rather see any veteran or family member needing assistance. Therefore, we assist many veterans from surrounding counties. Most of our clients come from referrals and via word of mouth. Jackson County being a small rural community, we have assisted a friend or family member of nearly every veteran in the area. We also do outreach to local Service Organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, etc.



### EXPENDITURES ON LOCAL VETERANS SERVICES

#### Healthcare:

Local VA/Private Healthcare—\$14.3 Million

Insurance & Indemnities—\$151,000.

#### Education:

Vocational Rehab/Employ-\$837,000

#### Chipola College:

Avg 52 Vets/Sem (Full & Part-time)

#### Panhandle Tech & Tallahassee CC:

Avg 3 Vets/Sem from JC

\*\* Expenditures for secondary education

**Veterans Services Provides three main functions: Benefits, Healthcare for Qualified Veterans, and Death—each has a different mission.**

### MISSION:

Enhance the quality of life for veterans, dependents, and survivors.

Assist qualified claimants to navigate the application/appeal process for earned benefits from federal, state, and local levels of government.

## WHAT WE DO

Primarily, we help veterans to apply for VA Compensation (service-connected/military-related disability) and VA Pension (low income financial assistance for non-service connected honorably discharged wartime veterans). We also help widows and dependents apply for any survivor benefits.

One thing we do that is unique in helping veterans, is to help them obtain, review, and organize their military medical and personnel records. Experience has taught us that attaching these documents directly to the claim and labeling them for ease of review, greatly increases the odds of filing a successful initial claim.

Common claims we assist with:

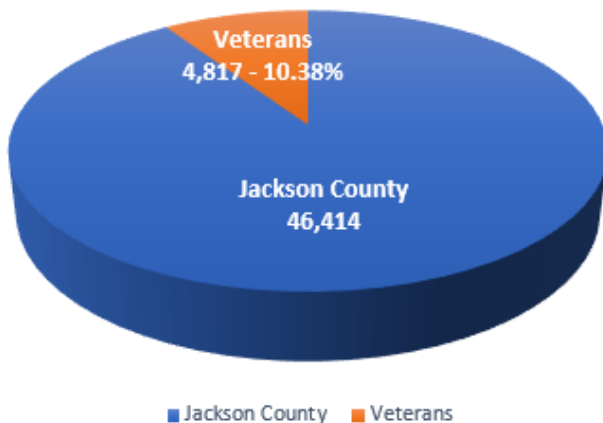
- ◆ Compensation/Disability
- ◆ Veteran's Pension
- ◆ Survivor's Pension
- ◆ Death Indemnity Compensation
- ◆ Burial Benefits
- ◆ Headstone/Markers/Medallions
- ◆ Approval of School Attendance (dependent children age 18 -23) Vocational Rehabilitation
- ◆ VA Life Insurance
- ◆ CHAMPVA Health Insurance (for dependents of 100% permanently and totally disabled veterans) Individual Unemployability
- ◆ Aid & Attendance/Housebound
- ◆ Appeals Notices of Disagreements Request for Rapid Appeals Management Reviews
- ◆ Appeals to the Federal Veterans Board of Appeals

## Veteran Non-Taxable Income Benefits (Disability Compensation & Pension)

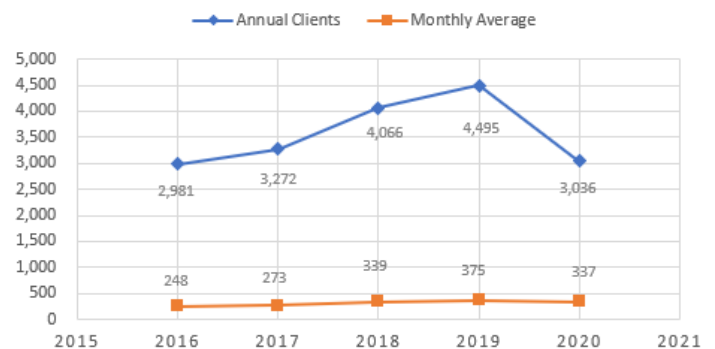


*Income Benefits directly impact Jackson County serving as a subsidy to those unable to work in the same capacity as well as allowing a guided process for Veteran's benefits.*

## Population - Jackson County



## ACTIVE CLIENTS BY MONTH/YEAR



*With 2019 showing the highest client count in over four years, Veterans Services has had to seek multiple avenues for providing services i.e., by phone, mail, and email to ensure the highest level of consistency.*



# LONG TERM RECOVERY

## Annual Report 2020

The Restore Renew Rebuild Jackson initiative was created in response to Hurricane Michael that devastated Jackson County. However, the scope of the initiative goes far beyond simple rebuilding. Citizens, County and City governments, private businesses and other stakeholders rallied together to use the hurricane as a catalyst to restore the spirit of Jackson County, renew our vision, and rebuild our future together.

### Hurricane Michael Projects

Hurricane Michael made landfall on October 10, 2018 as an unprecedented Category 5 Hurricane in the Florida Panhandle region with maximum sustained wind speeds of 140 knots (161 mph) and a minimum pressure 919 mb. The storm caused catastrophic damage to Jackson County leaving several County owned Buildings, Parks, and Equipment in severe disarray. Our efforts since the storm have been ongoing as we strive to either make the necessary repairs or move forward with a complete replacement on some projects. See below for a list of current and completed projects:

- ◆ Citizens Lodge Roof Repair Project
- ◆ County Administration Building and Finance Office Repairs
- ◆ Spring Creek Park Repair Project
- ◆ Endeavor: Debris Removal Project
- ◆ Private Property Debris Removal



# FACILITIES

## Annual Report 2020

We have continued doing our normal maintenance of the buildings along with trying to keep them dry until repairs can be made to them. We have worked to keep the Heat and Air Conditioning working at the Endeavor Sheriff's Office and have made other repairs as needed to the building and systems such as Ice machine, Freezer and Cooler. We replaced the roofing on 2- Utilities' well buildings and 2- Utilities sewer pumping stations. We have done some remodeling on the New Fire Rescue/ Tax Collector's office in Graceville, and we are still working on the Fire Rescue side. We have continued to maintain the Jackson County Jail and have started to clean the outside in preparation to paint the outside of the building. We have started mowing the Autism school, Chapel, White House, Gym and entrance areas of the Endeavor property.

We hope to see our buildings repaired from the Hurricane Michael damages. We plan to keep all our buildings and systems in good working order for our employees and the public to use.

The Facilities Department is responsible for all of the County owned buildings providing services such as:

- ◆ Installations
- ◆ General Construction (walls, doors, cabinetry, counters, wood works, welding)
- ◆ HVAC Assessments & Minor Work
- ◆ Moving (Offices, Buildings)
- ◆ Painting
- ◆ Basic Housekeeping
- ◆ Grounds Work—Mowing, Landscaping
- ◆ Tile Work
- ◆ Minor Roof Work
- ◆ Minor Plumbing



Total # of  
County  
Maintained  
Buildings: 41

"The Board authorizing new employees for Facilities has enabled our Department to meet more goals for the County. Additionally, this has allowed for a more proactive instead of reactive mindset. For us it isn't just a job—it's a mission...."

-James Watkins, Director



## HURRICANE MICHAEL

We have done our normal maintenance of our buildings and the Jackson County Jail, until Hurricane Michael then we worked to keep our buildings dry inside. We worked with FEMA ,GPS Strategies and the Insurance inspectors to access our damages to our buildings and grounds.



# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## Annual Report 2020



The mission of Community Development is to encourage economic development, efficient and orderly growth management, building strong neighborhoods, to promote and protect agriculture, and preserve the area's unique natural resources. The Comprehensive Plan, codes and ordinances are adopted to promote the health, safety and welfare of the residents and visitors of Jackson County.

The Community Development Department is responsible for promoting the orderly growth and environment of the County through planning, building, affordable housing, and enforcement of codes. The office provides the citizens and developers accurate information and courteous assistance.

The County's adopted Comprehensive Plan is the policy document that provides for growth management within the jurisdiction. The County relies on the policies stated in the Future Land Use Element (FLUE) of the adopted Comprehensive Plan. Included in the plan the Future Land Use Map depicts the location and distribution of the land use categories. These land use categories and associated policies are the controlling factors in what development is appropriate for a specific parcel of land. Residential and General Development Orders are submitted to the Planning Division. Once development orders are approved, property owners or businesses may apply with Building Services for construction permits and inspections to ensure Florida Building Codes are met.

The County promotes workforce housing and the Department manages housing grants to provide safe and decent housing options for our citizens. The health and safety of all residents helps maintain quality standards that are important to achieve the wellbeing of our community and the highest property values possible. Code enforcement strives to achieve voluntary compliance of code violations and works with residents that face unexpected hardships.



Jackson County Code Enforcement

## DIVISION SERVICES PROVIDED

- ◆ **Building Services** provides the public with the necessary information to help in the development and permitting of new construction within the county. The permitting and inspection procedure established is required by Florida Statute and ensures contractors follow the State of Florida Building Codes. Proper permitting and inspections reduce the threat of fire and damage caused by flooding, winds, tornadoes, and hurricanes, thus paving the way for a safer working and living environment. The division issues building permits, reviews construction plans, and performs inspections and maintains contractors licensing.
- ◆ **Code Enforcement** promotes compliance with community standards through enforcement of applicable County Code of Ordinances in the unincorporated areas of the county for residential and commercial properties, as well as public health and safety ordinance violations. The Division also works to accomplish neighborhood revitalization and the quality of life through the Dumpster Program which is a means of residents who, due to limited financial resources and/or physical limitations are experiencing difficulties in correcting a violation of the Jackson County Code of Ordinances.
- ◆ **GIS Mapping** services updates the Future Land Use Map which depicts the location and distribution of the land use categories. These land use categories and associated policies are the controlling factors in what development is appropriate for a specific parcel of land. The categories include the 2030 Future Land Use Map, Overlays District Map, Future Transportation System, Wetlands and General Soils maps.
- ◆ **Housing Grants** provides safe, decent, affordable housing for its citizens by maintaining partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, affordable housing developers, non-profit organizations, and others who share the common goal of producing affordable housing. The County receives funds from Florida Housing Finance Corporation, State Housing Initiative Partnership Program (SHIP) for the purpose of meeting the housing needs of the very low, low, and moderate income households, to expand production of and preserve affordable housing, and to further the housing element of the local government comprehensive plan specific to affordable housing.
- ◆ **Planning** provides services for development review including residential and commercial site development and subdivision plats, long-range planning, land use change and map amendments, FEMA flood zones. The Division assist the Planning Commission who make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map are the main tools to assist the development goals and objectives. Including the required elements such as capital improvements, future land use, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water and natural groundwater natural resource conservation, recreation and open space, housing, and intergovernmental coordination.

Building Department	
Inspections	3,585
Permits	5,654
Permit Fees	\$502,467.40

GIS	
New Addresses	1,757
New Streets	0
New Projects	48
Closed Projects	48

Code Enforcement	
Complaints/Inquiries	528
Cases Open	36
Cases Closed	45
Citations Issued	4
Lien Searches	55
Referrals for Assistance	32
Site Visits	477
Dumpster Program	2

Housing	
SHIP Purchase Assistance	8
SHIP Rehabilitation Assistance	5
SHIP Disaster Recovery	5
HHRP Home Replacement	7
Travel Trailer Pilot Program*	33

\*Travel trailers utilized to house survivors of Hurricane Michael through the agreement with Chipola Baptist Association.

Planning	
General Development Order	16
Residential Development Order	353
Home Occupation GDO	3
Cell Tower	2
Signs	19
Small Scale Amendment	1
Temporary Use Permits	2
Variances	4



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# CORRECTIONS

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## Annual Report 2020



### JACKSON COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

*2737 Penn Avenue  
Marianna, Florida 32448*



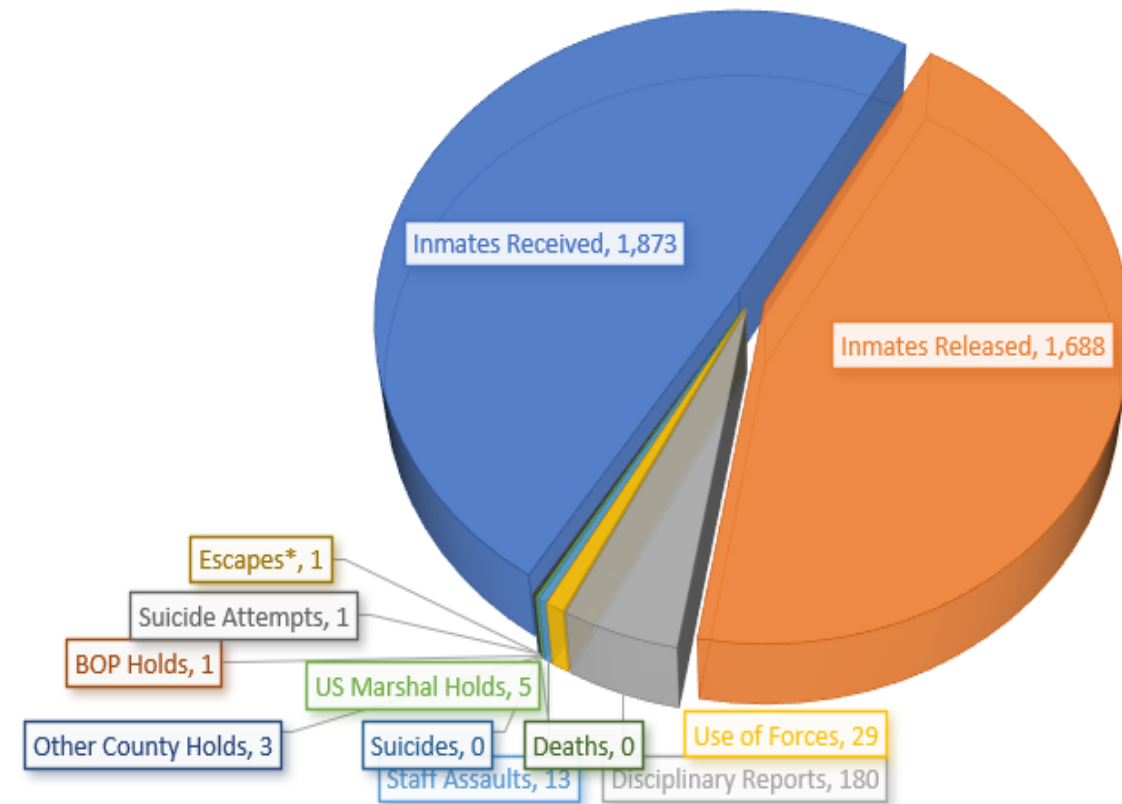
*"I would like to thank the Board of County Commissioners and Administration staff on all the encouragement and support with providing the tools employees needed to accomplish task and goals since Hurricane Michael and through out the COVID pandemic. During this time I have seen staff and other departments go above and beyond to help each other..."*

*-Chief Jammie Jeter*

The Jackson County Correctional Facility (JCCF) is located in Marianna, Florida, and is operated by the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners. JCCF is a county jail which houses pre-trial, pre-sentenced, county and state sentenced males and females, as well as juvenile offenders who have been adjudicated as adults. The facilities objective is the care, custody, and control of the inmates incarcerated and insuring the safety of the public.

JCCF is a 327-bed facility which is comprised of twelve pods designated as follow: one trustee pod, one juvenile pod, two female pods, three maximum security pods, one misdemeanor pod, four general population felony pods, three medical cells and four administrative cells. The facility employs 41 full time Correctional Officer's positions with 3 Correctional Officers on the auxiliary list.

## FY 2019-20 DEPARTMENTAL STATISTICS



# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## Annual Report 2020

The Jackson County Emergency Management Office day to day operations involve operational response to identified threats that range from man-made issues such as Hazardous Materials/Terrorist Incidents/Active Shooter/Bomb Threats to natural incidents that involve flooding/weather related events. In activation operation's the Emergency Management Office is the focal point for all emergency responses to on-going threats such as hurricane/tornadoes/other incidents as previously identified.



### MISSION:

Provide a highly trained and capable emergency management operation focused on the safety and welfare of the community through the preservation of life, health, property, and the environment. The program stands ready to PREVENT incidents through comprehensive programs, RESPOND to incidences when they occur, PREPARE for future threats that may develop, direct RECOVERY programs to save life and property and reduce local threats through MITIGATION programs.



Statistic Tracked	Data/Detail Tracked (to be used for non-statistical tracking)	Total # Logged	Description
Planning/Information	Developed Plans for EOC Workers & Public Shelter	2	Developed ESF Training Plan and a Non-Congregate Shelter Plan at the Risk Shelter for COVID19 Pandemic.
Meetings/Stakeholders	Meetings with Stakeholders	17	ERTF Meetings with Stakeholders and LMS Meetings for revised 5 year LMS Plan and to rank HMGP (Hurricane Michael) projects.
Emergency Response Equipment	Upgrade EOC Equipment	50	Replaced Televisions, projectors, added redundant communications (Satellite, cell phone and Southern Linc phones).
Training	EM Coordinator is required to participate in training and exercises for the EMPG Grant	13	10 on-line classes; 1 in person class; 2 exercises.
Emergency Response/Warning	Systems for Emergency Response/Warning	2	Installed the Weather STEM Station at the Communications Tower and participated in reassessment of river flood levels (actions/flood levels).
Incidents	Emergency Response/Information	30+	HAZMAT incidents, Tropical Storm, Sinkholes, River Flooding Forest Fire, COVID19 Pandemic (many weather alerts/watches/warnings).
Planning/Information	COVID 19 Response	106	Developed Situation Reports for COVID19 Pandemic.
Planning/Information	COVID 19 Response	72+	Participated in statewide/regional planning calls.
Alerting	Weather/Related Hazards	125+	Provided hazard related warning/advisory for weather/informational. advisory threat information
Response	COVID 19 Response	270	Assisted/provided 270 requested missions for COVID 19 response for local agencies.
Planning/Response	Hurricane Sally Response	8	Put in 8 mission requests for Hurricane Sally.

***“Training of personnel to work in the EOC has been completed and annotated. We will be pushing forward on additional training to better equip personnel working in support operations to do their jobs during activation. ..”***

***-Rodney Andreasen, Director***

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# FIRE RESCUE

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## Annual Report 2020



*"I am excited about the forward progress of our department and the County, even through the pandemic, we have steadily moved forward. I would like to thank my employees for their dedication and the commissioners for their leadership and the decisions they've made to continue positive progress. ..."*

*-Chief Charlie Brunner*

Jackson County Fire Rescue is a career Fire Rescue Department that provides both fire protection and advanced life support emergency medical services transport to all the municipalities and unincorporated areas of Jackson County. Our department has 40 career full time employees including a Fire Chief, Fire Marshal, Business Office Manager, and Administrative Assistant along with 36 combat firefighters. Jackson County Fire Rescue currently has 5 stations with a 6th opening in Fall 2020. The mission of Jackson County Fire Rescue is to protect life and property from fire and other emergencies through incident response, public education, and code enforcement. It's the departments endeavor to deliver the highest level of care, including Advanced Life Support, to our residents. As a customer driven organization, it is our mission and number one priority to deliver the best possible service to our customers.

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



EMT/Firefighter James "Mike" Wiggins started in the fire service in 1999 and joined Jackson County Fire Rescue in 2000.

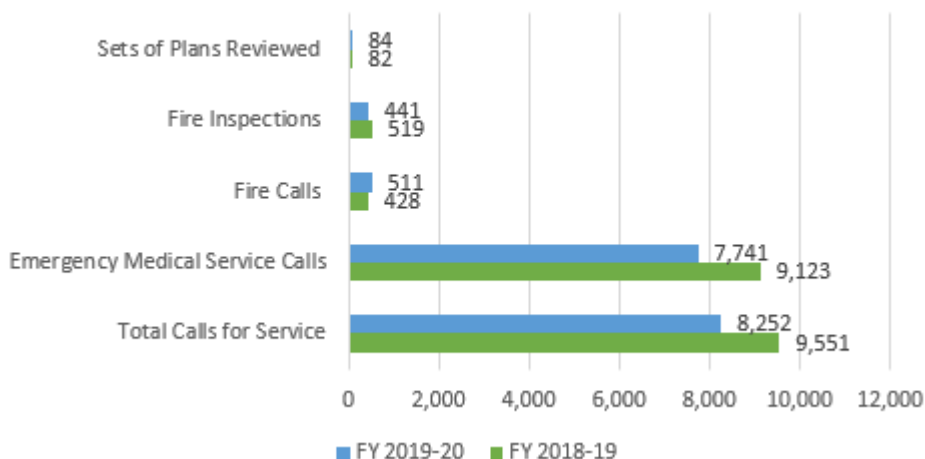
As a senior firefighter, Mike is passionate about training and developing new employees.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Received one new ambulance off of FL Dept. of Health EMS Matching Grant
- ◆ Received (6) Lucas Chest Compression Devices off FL Dept. of Health EMS Matching Grant
- ◆ Remounted 2 ambulances onto new chassis
- ◆ Opened new Fire Rescue Substation in Malone
- ◆ EMT/Firefighters Jason Almaguer and Kristofer Baber graduated Paramedic School at Chipola College, successfully gained their National Registry and State of Florida Paramedic Licenses and promoted to Paramedic/Firefighters
- ◆ Received 623 Stop-the-Bleed Kits from FL Dept. of Health EMS Matching Grant to place in each classroom county wide across the school district

### Fire Rescue Stats





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# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

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## Annual Report 2020



The function of the Jackson County Road and Bridge Department is to repair and maintain the existing county roads and rights-of-ways promptly, efficiently, and economically to all citizens of our County and other County Departments.

Within this mission, the department is responsible for, but not limited to:

- ◆ Grading of County Owned Dirt Roads
- ◆ Maintenance and Repair of County Owned Wooden and Concrete Bridges
- ◆ Maintenance and Repair of Asphalt Roadways
- ◆ Right of way mowing and brush cutting
- ◆ Shoulder construction and repair
- ◆ Tree trimming and removal within the County Right of Way
- ◆ Responding to service requests from Citizens within the County
- ◆ Assist other county departments as needed

*"As the Public Transportation Director, I take great pride in trying to make the roads of Jackson County better each day as we move forward in time. With over 1000 miles of paved and dirt roads in the County, this is a very big task. With the help of over 30 employees, we set out each day to try and perform our tasks at a very high level, which will result in very good end product. At the end of the day, I want the citizens of Jackson County to be able to travel on well maintained and safe roadways.*

*-Scotty Taylor, Director*

### Two Large Projects Finished in FY 2019-20:

- ◆ Peacock Bridge (Resurface)
- ◆ Highway 162 (Resurface)

FEMA Work has begun for District Roads for 4177 and Road Signs for 4399.

*Approximately 890 unpaved  
miles graded each year*

### Responding to Emergencies

Department personnel also respond to emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week for removal of roadway debris, clearing storm related debris from roadways, and repair of roadways due to an immediate safety issue.

## FLEET MAINTENANCE

Jackson County Fleet Management is committed to providing exceptional customer service and support to all County departments under the direction of the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners. Fleet Management has adopted industries best practices to provide safe, reliable and cost effective vehicle repair and maintenance services.

Fleet Maintenance services and repairs all County vehicles and heavy equipment. The total number of vehicles and pieces of heavy equipment is over 300. Fleet maintenance performs preventive maintenance and repairs on the entire fleet. They also handle the purchase of fuel and track fuel usage for the entire fleet.



# PUBLIC WORKS

## Annual Report 2020

During the inception of the Public Services Division, the goal was to streamline many different services provided by the Board of County Commissioners to produce a higher quality of servitude to the citizens of Jackson County. The division is made up of 4 different departments including Animal Control, Parks, Recycling and Utilities. The main goal of adding all these departments was to allow more continuity between these county departments so that employees could work on like projects together and lend additional help when needed.

*"It is the goal of all Public Works employees to take ownership and pride in all their work. This ensures a sense of service in their actions every day as they strive to provide necessary services to those that live and those that visit Jackson County..."*

*-Rett Daniels, Director*

## DIVISION SERVICES PROVIDED

Animal Control is made up of two full time employees that answer calls from the public as well as assist the Jackson County Sheriff's Department to answer calls and ensure public safety and animal well being. The Animal Control department is guided by county ordinance as well as state statute to ensure pet owners are abiding by these rules and regulations. Animal Control answers a plethora of calls ranging from nuisance animals, missing pets, dog bites even animal neglect and abuse. It is the goal of the department to work with all citizens to ensure their concerns are addressed in a professional and timely manner at all times.

### Animal Control

Over 2,000 Calls Answered

The Parks department is made up of four full time employees that are tasked with maintaining safe and sustainable public spaces for the use of all Jackson County citizens and tourists alike. Some main attractions we under the supervision of the Parks department are Citizens Lodge, Blue Springs, Spring Creek many boat ramps on Lake Seminole, Chipola River and Compass lake. In addition to that they are tasked with the grounds maintenance of several county buildings such as the Health Department, Emergency Operations Complex, County Administration building, Supervisor of Elections and the Probation office. It is a true privilege to be responsible for the landscape that makes up Jackson County.

### Parks

Over 17,000 Visitors to Blue Springs





The Recycling Department primary function is to facilitate the collection and processing of recyclable materials generated in Jackson County. With this goal in mind we have shifted our focus to primarily a commercial cardboard operation with the availability for citizens to bring household recyclables as well as some hazardous waste. All recycling handled for Jackson County is the result of two full time employees that go out into the county to collect materials and one in the warehouse to process and sell.

#### Recycling

Over 1,500 Tons of Recycled Materials



The Utilities Department is made up of five full time employees that oversee the production and distribution of water as well as the collection and transportation of wastewater for our customers. Water distribution includes pumping the water from the aquifer, pumping it through a series of filters, storing it and treating it with chlorine before it goes into the distribution lines. All water is tested regularly per state requirements and monitored for contaminants. The wastewater system is made up of a mixture of gravity sewer lines and sewer force mains that run between lift stations before coming to a central point where is pumped to a wastewater treatment facility.

#### Utilities

Over 255 Million Gallons Sold (over 420 Customers)



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# A YEAR IN REVIEW

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## Annual Report 2020

*During an interview recently, Judy asked the question – tell us what you know about Jackson County – Past, Present, and Future...it warranted a lot of thought and varied responses that were all across the spectrum. As we have been compiling the data for the Annual Report we kept thinking what other information would be important to share. We asked the directors this question and decided to include some of their responses on how 2019-20 impacted them, and what they are feeling about Jackson County—Past, Present, and Future.*

As a lifetime citizen of Jackson County I have witnessed this great County go through many ups and downs. I remember thinking as a child how blessed we were to live in Graceville. Graceville at that time was a thriving and growing Community; that has changed over the years however what has not changed is the way I feel about living there. It is still a wonderful community with a loving spirit. (and in my humble opinion has the best restaurants in Jackson County). As a child I remember riding my bicycle on the sidewalks of the Baptist Bible Institute which has grown into the Baptist College of Florida and is currently recognized as one of the best theological colleges in the Southeast.

I spent 14 years of my professional life at the Campbellton-Graceville Hospital; the hospital opened the year I was born and was a thriving and central part of our community for over 50 years. It was devastating to our town and the County when it was closed (along with approx.. half of the small rural hospitals nationwide) due to healthcare reform and changes in Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement. The closure of the hospital has limited healthcare and emergency services to the second most populated area of Jackson County. However, in recognition of this the County is currently preparing to open a Fire and Rescue Station in Graceville which will bring much needed Emergency Services back to that part of the County. Also, the Northwest Florida Community Hospital operates an urgent care center 6 days a week which also provides primary care to the citizens of that area.

In 2016 I went to work for the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners. I feel blessed that God gave me the opportunity to join this organization and enabled to be part of a team that works tirelessly to meet the needs of the citizens of this great County. Since that time the County has faced many obstacles; however we have faced them head on and without hesitation. The leaders of the organization have empowered the department leaders and staff to make decisions and implement necessary changes as needed (within reason). This results in issues/problems being addressed without hesitation and provides continuous flow of operations. The leaders are always available to listen and provide guidance in instances where the solution is not always obvious or requires planning for the future.

We are currently in the process of recovering from the aftermath of 3 major disaster events. The floods of 2014, Hurricane Michael and most recently the floods from Hurricane Sally. The Board, County Administrator and Deputy County Administrator work around the clock to address issues and formulate plans for the future. With renovations underway on County Buildings and roadways and with the redevelopment the Endeavor Property (formerly known as the Dozier School) the future of Jackson County is looking very bright.

As a citizen of one of the outlying communities with Jackson County I would like to see the County undertake an effort to create new and innovative ways to bring the municipalities together to form a consortium with the goal of growth and prosperity.

My plans are to continue to work for JCBOCC until the day I retire. It is not always an easy job but it is a very rewarding and it gives me a sense of pride to tell people I work for the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners.

-Judy Austin, HR

*"The Information Technology Department has had a busy 2019/2020 year. In addition to rebuilding and upgrading most of our information and communication system infrastructure, we were tasked with ensuring County operations remained efficient in the transition to remote working due to COVID-19. This has included setting up equipment and peripherals allowing County staff to telework and making certain County meetings were hosted remotely while ensuring public meeting requirements were satisfied. With the pandemic changing the landscape of how we think about delivering resources and connectivity, we strive to continue adapting and delivering high quality services for our users and the public....."*

-Josef Stackowicz, IT

*"Jackson County is a beautiful place to live and there is much to be proud of with our history, agriculture and natural resources. As we reflect on the past year, we see so many positive changes resulting from the disasters of Hurricane Michael and Covid-19. With great teamwork each department made wonderful contributions to recovery and redesigning public service. Our County truly experienced a whirlwind, but with the resilience of the leaders and survivors we are rebuilding Jackson County one family, and one business at a time. Community Development is privileged to serve the public who are starting their businesses and home construction. We see and participate in the progress of individuals that are reconstructing their lives by assisting through service and with housing grants. Great and wonderful things on the horizon with new opportunities for community growth, economic and workforce development, housing and business improvements, technological advancement, new advancements in agriculture, preservation of our lands and waters, and promising tourism. The future looks bright, and together we are all making our County a beautiful place to live and call home."*

-Wendy Schlesinger, Community Development

As I look back over the past fiscal year that ended September 30, 2020, I remember that we had scheduled programs and activities for people of all ages and interests well into the summer months. In January we had a Gaelic/Americana musician present a program of traditional and original music. We had an African American History month program in February that featured "Africa's Great Civilizations," a 6-part DVD program that was phenomenally successful. Our story time programs were growing in attendance, even at the Graceville location. Our Greenwood location was experiencing growth with monthly programs about genealogy, needle arts, and board games. More and more community groups were utilizing the meeting rooms at the library. We had financial literacy programs presented by a local credit union. The very popular African Drumming program was presented at Marianna and Graceville. We had the Floridingers perform at Graceville and Marianna. We had our annual Dr. Seuss Birthday Party celebration on the same day that we presented one of two basic crochet classes. And the 2<sup>nd</sup> basic crochet class was a week later. Then the pandemic hit and the library closed on March 18.

Some of the programs that were cancelled included a book signing by a local author who had published a book about the effects on Marianna of Hurricane Michael; a soap making class; a four week poetry writing workshop; a bee keeping class; summer reading entertainment programs featuring balloon art, live animals, and live theatre. As the pandemic raged, we took advantage of the time to perform many collection maintenance tasks, weeding activities, etc. We loaned staff members to other departments who needed help. We lost at risk staff members who decided to retire following taking time off to protect themselves from COVID-19. And we waited and wondered if and when things would get "back to normal."

Now seven months later we have reopened to the public with protective barriers in place, continual sanitation practices, and 1/3 less public computers. While people kept talking about "when things get back to normal," I felt that we had to establish a new normal. Thus we have proceeded to forge ahead and tried to find new ways to interact with the public and keep the public library a valuable resource for our citizens. I have gotten two discontinued databases back on line (NovelistPlus and Learning Express) and this week am hoping to have hoopla available for use. Hoopla provides free simultaneous use (no holds, no waiting, and no overdue fines) of comics, music, tv shows, movies, e-audiobooks, and e-books to Jackson County citizens with library cards. Comics, music, and tv shows are a new offering for us. I am hoping to attract new users with those three media.

We also have had to think of different ways to offer services that won't put the public or library staff at risk. Just today when I suggested that winners of a scavenger hunt would, indeed, need to be present to claim their prize, a staff person pointed out to me that we don't want to have a crowd in the building. I keep forgetting the limitations we are experiencing.

But we have also participated in partnerships with other local agencies to try and encourage reading and getting out of the house to experience a story walk throughout downtown Marianna. We are sponsoring a scavenger hunt that will get people out and into local businesses and then back into the library to turn in their loot and register for the prize drawings. We have been doing a live on Facebook story time that was then available on our website. And I tried to get photographic equipment to enable us to do more virtual classes and programs. Although the grant was not awarded, I am making a list of items to turn in for Cares purchasing so that we can move forward with reaching more people who are truly isolated in their homes.

I think my biggest realization during all of this is that even though the pandemic has been a very bad experience on many levels, it has also encouraged, even required, innovation and outreach. And that is never a bad thing.

-Deborah Hynes, Library