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2026 DeSoto Economic Development Summit to showcase ‘Change that Counts’

*Open summit will focus on future development in DeSoto, downtown rejuvenation,
entrepreneurship, AI and healthcare.*

DeSoto County, Fla—DeSoto County will bring community leaders, business owners, and residents together this spring to explore practical ideas shaping the county’s future at the 2nd Annual DeSoto Economic Development Summit.

Held Thursday, March 26, from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the summit will focus on this year’s theme, “*Change that Counts*,” highlighting downtown revitalization, entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence in health care, and opportunities for sustainable growth in DeSoto County.

The summit includes local and national speakers and panels, networking opportunities and hands-on interaction. Find out about the DeSoto County planning and development process, the state of our utilities system, new businesses on the horizon, and the historic rural renaissance.

Keynote speaker, Shellie Phelps of Biggest Fish Consulting, is sponsored by Florida Power & Light, who recognizes the power of community innovation. Phelps is a force in the realm of neighborhood revitalization and economic development. She has taken her success in revitalizing Wetumpka, Alabama, to the rural communities of Florida.

Phelps has become a recognized authority on fostering creative community growth through collaboration. Her presentations inspire and empower audiences with insights into the transformative power of partnership, the role of the arts, and authentic branding in revitalizing small towns and creating stronger, more vibrant communities.

Because artificial intelligence (AI) is a primary factor in business, the economy, education and healthcare, the County reached out to Peter Justen, founder & CEO of AmeriTrust Solutions, to present at the event. AmeriTrust provides technology that modernizes benefit programs for state and federal governments, helping agencies reduce costs, accelerate approvals. The company is particularly focused on rural healthcare provider.

Justen, a “serial entrepreneur,” recently received the Health innovation Leadership Award at the 15th Annual World Leaders Summit.

The summit, held at the Turner Agri-Civic Center, 2250 N.E. Roan Street, in Arcadia, includes breakfast and lunch. The charge for attendees is \$10 at the door. Exhibitor cost is \$50 and includes a display table and two tickets. Attendees and exhibitors can register at [Tinyurl.com/Desotosummit2026](https://tinyurl.com/Desotosummit2026).

The DeSoto Economic Development Summit is open to residents, business owners, entrepreneurs, educators, and community leaders who want to be part of shaping the county's future. Registration for attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors is now open at www.GoDeSotoFL.com. Those interested in participating are encouraged to register early and join the conversation about the changes that will help DeSoto County grow and thrive.

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