



NEWS RELEASE

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Wakulla County Celebrated Memorial Day

Crawfordville, Florida – On Monday, May 26, 2008 at 10:00a.m., the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners joined a large crowd of local officials, veterans, citizens and families to celebrate Memorial Day on the Courthouse Lawn as part of their annual ceremony. VFW Post 4538 was in charge of flag detail for the ceremony and the placing of the wreath was accomplished by the Sheriff's Color Guard in honor of all who have served, and continue to serve, from our community. Taps was played by Specialist Taylor Wagner as the wreath was placed in honor of our brave men and women in military uniform.

Lila, F. Strickland served as Mistress of Ceremonies for the celebration. A long time resident of our County and a Veteran herself, Ms. Strickland joined Brianna Nelson in leading the national anthem. Thereafter, the invocation and recognition of those who have fallen from the County was lead by Rev. Dennis Hall, Pastor of Pioneer Baptist Church of Crawfordville. Pastor Hall stated "there have been three from Wakulla County who has given their lives while serving in The Global War on Terror, including Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), they are Sgt. Javier J Garcia, Lance Cpl. Charles A Hanson Jr. and Chief Petty Officer Matthew J. Bourgeois."

Chairman Ed Brimner noted that audience members included veterans from Normandy to the Gulf War, stating that "many of the sacrifices made by those veterans amongst us today are not known by most people, but they are so very appreciated". Commissioner George Green stated that "we honor the families of our fallen soldiers and we are fortunate to live in a Country as great as ours...God Bless America." Commissioner Howard Kessler said the he was "thankful for all of the veterans who serve today, just as I am thankful for my father who served with General Patton all through Europe. If not for these men and women, I might not be here today."

Guest speaker, Sheriff David Harvey gave tribute to the fallen as well as to the living. Sheriff Harvey states "right now a soldier in Iraq is putting on a flak jacket and camouflage while preparing to fight for our freedom." The Sheriff also gave honor to the last known WWI soldier Mr. Frank Woodruff Buckles who is 107 years of age. "I'm here for the same reason you are, to remember" said Sheriff Harvey.

The new County Veteran Service Officer, Mr. J.D. Johnson was introduced; he stated that "since the birth of our nation we have been involved in thirteen wars or conflicts. Over that time from

1775 to 2008 there has been 654,641 who have made the ultimate sacrifice, this includes 3,619 casualties from hostile death in the present global 'war on terror.' It is only fitting that we would want to stop from our busy schedules to honor and give thanks to our fallen loved ones. Yet so many Americans view this day as just another three-day weekend. But not you, Wakulla County. Therefore, we thank you for your love and support and you should be applauded, too."

In 1966, the federal government, under the direction of President Lyndon Johnson, declared Waterloo, N.Y. the official birthplace of Memorial Day. They chose Waterloo-which had first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866 because the town had made Memorial Day an annual, community wide event during which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags.

In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in May. Memorial Day is a special day reserved to express gratitude for our departed soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsmen and merchant mariners. It is a time to rededicate ourselves to advancing their unfinished work by never losing sight of and never forsaking the noble cause for which they were prepared to give their last full measure of devotion. Their example of strength and perseverance and sense of duty gives us resolve.

For additional information related to this story, please contact Jessica Welch, Public Information Officer for Wakulla County, FL.

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