

County honors veterans with policies, jobs, perks

By Hector Flores

Charlotte County is home to more than 22,000 veterans, including more than 150 county employees. On Tuesday, the County Commission will vote on a Veterans Day proclamation to honor our veterans.

Charlotte County honors veterans throughout the year through its services, policies and facilities. County facilities have Purple Heart parking spaces reserved for combat wounded vets. The County Commission has proclaimed Charlotte County a Purple Heart County in remembrance and recognition of medal recipients.

The 2020 1% local option sales tax list approved by the commission — and passed by voters in November — contains \$4.5 million for improvements to the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park. The 2014 1% local option sales tax funded the Veterans Memorial Park at G.C. Herring Park in Englewood as well as earlier improvements to Gaines Park. The commission also allocated funding to the Vietnam Wall of Southwest Florida in Punta Gorda.

The county's Human Resources Department has a veterans preference policy that recognizes the post-service economic challenges faced by citizens who have served and gives them a favorable competitive position for county jobs.

Our Veteran Services Division helps eligible veterans and their dependents access benefits to which they are entitled. Certified veteran services officers are available to help veterans and dependents navigate the application process for getting pension, disability, education, funeral, health care, job and survivor benefits. They can also help veterans apply for home loans and life insurance.

To speak to a veteran services officer, call 941-764-5579 for the Port Charlotte office or 941-681-3716 for the Englewood office. The Veteran Services Division offices are located at 1050 Loveland Blvd., in Port Charlotte and 6868 San Casa Drive in Englewood.

Thank you for your service.

Veterans Day

The Charlotte County Veterans Council has scheduled a Veterans Day Ceremony for 11 a.m., Nov. 11 at the William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park, 20499 Edgewater Drive in Port Charlotte.

The ceremony will include a joint color guard and a groundbreaking for memorials dedicated to veterans and first responders. The First Responders Memorial will honor Charlotte County first responders including sheriff, police, firefighters and EMTs. The Military Service Memorial will honor all veterans of U.S. military services. Both memorials will be topped by eternal flames.

The ceremony will also feature a special check presentation to assist in funding the memorials.

William R. Gaines Jr. Veterans Memorial Park is named for Charlotte High School graduate and U.S. Marine William R. Gaines, Jr., who was killed in the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. The park is dedicated to honoring veterans and first responders.

*Readers may reach County Administrator Hector Flores at
Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.*