



COUNTY CONNECTION

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★ THE PATRIOTIC ISSUE ★

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Marion County Commissioners
David Moore, District 1
Kathy Bryant, District 2
Stan McClain, Vice Chair, District 3
Carl Zalak III, Chairman, District 4
Earl Arnett, District 5

Marion County Administrator
Dr. Lee A. Niblock

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Scan the QR code with your smartphone to visit Marion County online.

MISSION STATEMENT

Marion County provides professional and resourceful public services for our citizens through strategic planning and cost-effective implementation of county initiatives, generating positive results that set the standard for quality local government.



TOP STORY



By Barbra Hernández, APR

Hundreds of county and state officials, veterans, community partners and citizens came together on June 20 for a Site Selection Tour and Community Rally in support of a state veterans' nursing home for Marion. The event took place on the proposed site for the nursing home, in the northeast corner of Southwest 80th Street and Southwest 80th Avenue, Ocala (On Top of the World).

Marion County is being considered as an ideal location to site a 120-bed nursing home funded through the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Five other Florida counties are also in the running.

The June 20 event offered the approximately 500 attendees an opportunity to meet state selection committee representatives and provide public comment

in support of the new facility being sited in Marion. Event attendees also enjoyed live music from Kingdom of the Sun Concert Band and light refreshments, and showed their patriotic spirit.

Community partners for the event included: On Top of the World Communities, Inc., Beautiful Moments Party Rentals & Supplies, Inc., Bob Evans Restaurant, Brooklyn's Backyard, Fresh Green Tomato Catering Company, Kingdom of the Sun Concert Band, McLauchlin & Company, The Mojo Grill & Catering Company, Reaching Up and Incorporation, Smallcakes, Southeastern Youth Fair, Tillman & Associates Engineering, LLC and Waste Pro USA, Inc.

Turn to page 2 to learn why Marion County is the ideal location for a state veterans' nursing home.

Why Marion County

The **Ideal**
Location for a
State Veterans
Home



Veteran population
of 650,000 within
75-mile radius
from site



Convenient access
to hospitals and
talent pool



Award-winning
Veterans Services
department



Close proximity to
state roads, major
cities and The Villages
(nation's fastest
growing metropolitan
area)



Strong community,
governmental and
business support



One-of-a-kind
Ocala-Marion County
Veterans Memorial Park



NEWSFLASH

Honoring Our Heroes

Compiled by Stacie Causey

Marion County residents gathered to honor their heroes throughout the month of May with three special ceremonies. Read on to learn more about these special events that recognized our brave men and women – those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our safety and freedoms, and those we are fortunate to still have with us.



351st Deployment Ceremony

On May 10, 2014, military leaders, families and community members joined together to support the 351st Military Police Company (Combat Support), which was set to be deployed later that month as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. **Continues on page 4**

MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

SUMMER Reading Program

FIZZ!
BOOM
READ



June-July

352-671-8551 :: library.marioncountyfl.org

Community sponsor:



Stay connected!





Honoring our Heroes

Local officials and residents gathered to remember and honor America's fallen heroes at a special event on Memorial Day (May 26, 2014) at the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park.



IN HONOR OF MARION COUNTY
LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS
KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| BILL HUDSON | 1908 |
| PERRY BOSTICK | 1924 |
| HENRY GORDON | 1924 |
| NATHAN HATTAWAY | 1930 |
| EDWARD PORTER, JR. | 1951 |
| M. O. TUCK | 1955 |
| R. I. WOOTEN | 1955 |
| CURTIS YOUNGBLOOD | 1955 |
| C. M. STARRY | 1955 |
| A. O. WARREN | 1958 |
| BILL RUTHERFORD | 1926 |
| BURREL DAUKINS | 1996 |
| BRIAN R. LITZ | 1881 |
| CHELSEA R. RICHARD | 2004 |
| | 2014 |

Fallen Officer Memorial

County, city and local officials joined law enforcement officers on May 15, 2014, to honor those killed in the line of duty at the Marion County McPherson Governmental Complex for the annual Fallen Officer Memorial ceremony.

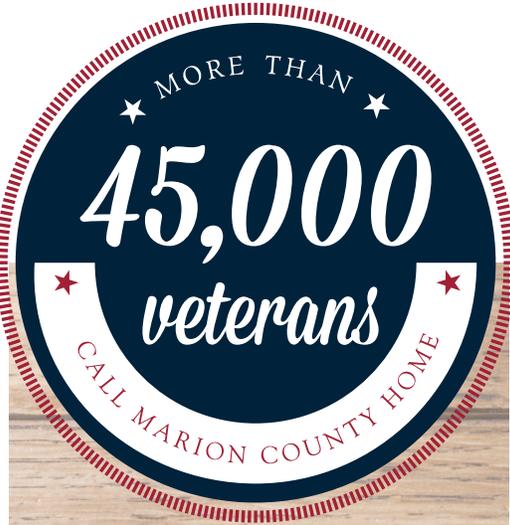
Are You a Veteran? Know a Veteran Who Needs Assistance?

By Elaine Delorio McClain

More than 45,000 veterans call Marion County home, and the staff at Marion County Veterans Services is available to help them and their surviving spouses through the process of obtaining Veterans Administration benefits.

Last fiscal year, staff helped veterans and their families obtain more than \$14 million in benefits, which included compensation, pension, health care, education, death and burial benefits. Obtaining those benefits can take a lot of patience and paperwork, so staff has created a helpful checklist that shows what items applicants should compile when preparing to file. The second page of the checklist contains explanations and definitions of the back-up documents required. **Click here to view the checklist.**

Does the process still look daunting? Staff at Veterans Services can assist every step of the way. Contact Marion County Veterans Services at 352-671-8422 or VeteransServices@marioncountyfl.org. Visit the department online at www.marioncountyfl.org/VeteransServices.



Calendar of Events

Find out what events are coming up in Marion County – check the online [calendar of events!](#)

Adopt a Shelter Cat Summer!

\$5 cat adoption fee!
Now through July 31

Adoption fee includes:
spay/neuter, rabies vaccine,
license and microchip.

Center hours:

Tues.-Fri., 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Animal Center:

5701 SE 66th St., Ocala
(Baseline Road, next to the landfill)



www.MarionCountyFl.org/Animal

Marion County Hero Receives State Recognition

Compiled by Stacie Causey

Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) Lieutenant Scott Chappell was recently awarded the Florida Fire Chief's Association 2013 Search and Rescue Responder of the Year for his demonstration of excellence and ongoing commitment to the fire fighting profession.

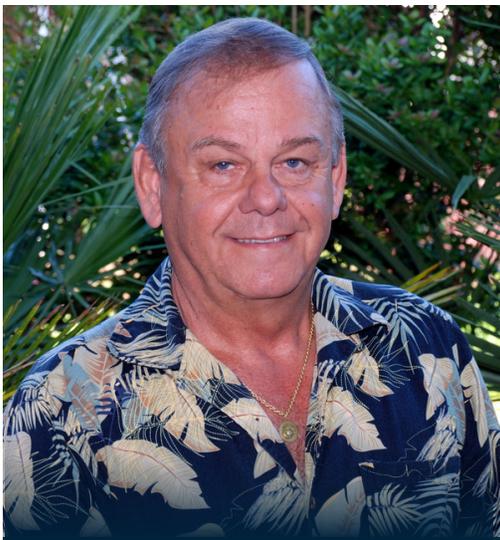
Chappell was hired by Marion County Fire Rescue in 2000. In 2001, he began sharing his expertise with others as an instructor at the Florida State Fire College, where he currently serves as the Urban Search & Rescue/Hazardous Materials Coordinator.

In February 2007, he was promoted to lieutenant and began leading the A-shift crew of MCFR Silver Springs Shores Station 17, where he currently serves and oversees monthly, department-wide training programs. Chappell is a member of MCFR's Technical Rescue Team and the Florida US&R Task Force 8, and is acting president of the Marion County Firefighter Benevolence Fund. He served as the program coordinator for the College of Central Florida's Fire Science Program and is on various committees and work groups for US&R/Hazmat and the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP). He also holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Florida and a master's in Public Administration from Barry University.

"Lieutenant Chappell represents the type of leader every organization hopes to employ. The extra hours he commits to training and development certainly make MCFR better. Through his work with the Benevolence Fund, he's also made a profound impact on the community and the lives of other fire service members," Fire Chief M. Stuart McElhane said.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



RON OPPLIGER
SENIOR VOLUNTEER
COORDINATOR

Professional designations: Owner of my own parts store after many sales positions in the automotive industry.

When did you start with Marion County? 2010.

What led you to your current volunteer position with Marion County Veterans Services? After retiring, I wanted to give back to the community and needed something to keep me busy. I just couldn't quit and not do anything. I stopped at the Veterans Services office and found out about the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park. Volunteering at the park continues the service I began with the Marine Corps in Vietnam.

Are you from Marion County originally? If you've lived other places, where have you lived? I'm originally a Nebraska native and moved to Florida with my family in 1986. I've lived in Ocala since then.

What's your favorite or most rewarding part of your volunteer job? Helping kids on field trips to the memorial understand military history and meeting all kinds of people. Also, being a Vietnam vet, the Veterans Memorial Park has finally made me feel like I've arrived home...finally.

What is your typical day, week or month like? Great! I'm a crossing guard, which really gets my day started, and then I have the honor to volunteer at the park two days a week. It is so awesome for me to meet so many veterans from different wars and hear their stories.

What would you like for residents to know about your volunteer work or the park? If you haven't ever been to the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park, you are missing a very valuable part of the American history experience. I think veterans of any conflict would find it emotionally healing to become a volunteer at the park and get involved with other vets at our many events, including guiding school kids when they come on field trips.

What do you listen to on your way to work? Local radio station news and music.

What are your hobbies/interests? Golfing, working in my yard, travel.

If you could be or do anything else – what would you do or be? Nothing else, because I've been fortunate enough to do everything I always wanted to do.

Compiled by Stacie Causey

Title/Department: Senior Volunteer Coordinator at the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park, Veterans Services.

Educational background: High school diploma.