Flagler County residents spent Memorial Day honoring those veterans who have paid the ultimate price in the defense of freedom, but also those men and women of the Armed Forces who continue to their own health and safety in harm’s way to protect our great nation.

“I realize this is for those who have fallen, but the veterans still deserve a round of applause,” said keynote speaker Major Thomas Hall, JROTC instructor at Matanzas High School.

The Memorial Day event is sponsored by the Flagler County Commission and the Flagler County Veterans Advisory Council. Veterans groups to participate include: American Legion Post 115, Amvets Post 113, DAV Chapter 86, Italian American War Veterans Post 7, Jewish War Veterans Post 300, Marine Corps League 876, Military Officers Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Flagler County Veterans Service Office, VFW Post 8696, and the Knights of Columbus 2264 Color Corps.
Flagler County Children’s Librarian to retire after 26 years

Flagler County’s Children’s Librarian Theresa Owen is retiring after 26 years of service to the county’s youngest patrons.

“There are parents now bringing their children to her programs, who were the youngsters when she started her career here,” said Library Director Holly Albanese. “We wish her well on the next chapter of her life, but she will truly be missed by all.”

A reception will be held for Owen from 2 to 4 p.m. Friday in the Garden Room of the Palm Coast branch of the Flagler County Public Library, 2500 Palm Coast Parkway Northwest, at the intersection of Belle Terre Parkway. Refreshments will be served compliments of the Friends of the Library.

Owen began her career with Flagler County in 1990 when the Library was located at the Palm Harbor Shopping Village storefront, now known as Island Walk.

She received the county's top honor in 2007 when she was presented with the Outstanding Achievement Award for her innovative programming that included her staff building an igloo out of milk cartons to provide an “Eskimo” experience for the children who crawled inside to read their books.

Owen also created an educators corner to house materials and books for parents who are home schooling their children.

Later she implemented the PAWS to Read program, a joint venture with the Flagler Humane Society, where children between the ages of 4 and 8 are invited to the library twice monthly to read to dogs.

“Theresa has been dedicated to enriching the lives of the county’s children, and she will be greatly missed,” said County Administrator Craig Coffey. “Her influence on our community will continue to be felt for years to come.”

Flagler County receives ‘Distinguished Budget Presentation Award’

Flagler County is being praised for the seventh consecutive year for its annual budget presentation.

The Government Finance Officers Association presented the county with its Distinguished Budget Presentation Award at Monday’s Board of County Commissioners meeting. The presentation to the Financial Services Department was made by Myriam Lemay, who is the treasurer for the Volusia/Flagler chapter of the Florida Government Finance Officers Association.

Flagler County’s 2015-2016 fiscal year budget was rated in four categories: as a policy document, as a financial plan; as an operations guide; and, as a communications device.

“This award is the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting,” said Stephen Gauthier in a correspondence with County Administrator Craig Coffey. “Its attainment represents a significant achievement by your organization.”

Lorie Bailey-Brown, Financial Services Director, has worked on award-winning budgets for the county going back to the first budget that received the award – the 2009-2010 budget under Tom Klinker, the former director of the department.

She and her staff – Tammy Patten, budget manager, and Kelly Freshcorn and Lauren Shank, budget analysts – are in the midst of pulling together the 2016-2017 budget.

“Staff is mindful of the Government Finance Officers Association standards as they prepare the budget,” County Administrator Craig Coffey said. “There is some very detailed information the GFOA asks for, and they are looking for a document that stands out above the rest.”
**St. Elizabeth Ann Seton provides food cards for veterans**

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church recently presented 28 gift cards to Flagler County Veterans Services Officer Sal Rutigliano for distribution to veterans who could use some extra assistance.

“We participated in the Health and Wellness Fair at the church,” Rutigliano said. “This year Father Jason Trull decided to donate the proceeds in the form of these gift cards for veterans.”

The cards are issued from local grocery stores in the amount of $30 each. Rutigliano and Eric Flores Febles, assistant Veterans Services officer, will issue the cards to veterans who have sought the services of their office, and are in dire need.

“We already work with veterans who meet the criteria to distribute the cards,” Rutigliano said. “There are veterans in need right here in Flagler County. While we often have some of these cards to distribute around Thanksgiving and Christmas, the need is still here at other times during the year.”

Veterans needing assistance in completing and filing claims related to service-connected disability compensation or applying for non-service connected pension, should contact the Veterans Services Office at 386-313-4014 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**Access Flagler First celebrates its 5th anniversary, still going strong**

Access Flagler First has been bringing together social service agencies for those who need it for the past five years and is going stronger than ever.

“Azalea Health is the newest member in a long list of agencies that support Access Flagler First,” said Joe Mayer, community services director. “Most of the agencies have contributed to this one-of-a-kind program since its inception.”

Commission Chair Barbara Revels, along with commissioners Frank Meeker and Charlie Ericksen attended the celebration on behalf of the Flagler County Board of County Commissioners.

“What a success that Flagler County has been able to participate in this program that was started by Janet Nickels (program manager for Flagler County Human Services) and Pastor Charles Silano of Grace Tabernacle Ministries,” Revels said. “The need is here in the community and we are lucky to have all of these contributing entities and agencies supporting it.”

Free goods, services and information such as: food, clothing, the federal WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutritional program, SNAP (food stamps) and phones are available at the event. Access Flagler is held from 1 to 4 p.m. on the first Friday of every other month at Cattlemen’s Hall on the Fairgrounds.

“We provide food for about 350 families,” Silano said. Fresh fruit and vegetables were bagged and boxed along with dry goods and non-perishable food.

Ericksen regularly volunteers at the event.

“I like helping out,” he said. “It’s quite a production – really something to see people of all ages working together to help others. There is work to do and it gets done.”

The next Access Flagler First will be held at 1 p.m. August 5.

“It is very satisfying to help others,” said Judy Murgitroyde, who has volunteered at Access Flagler First for nearly two years. “Everyone here embraces our community.”