



# BALDWIN SALUTES!



## Baldwin County's Active Duty and Veteran Guide

A specialty publication of



THE COURIER • THE ONLOOKER • THE ISLANDER • THE BALDWIN TIMES

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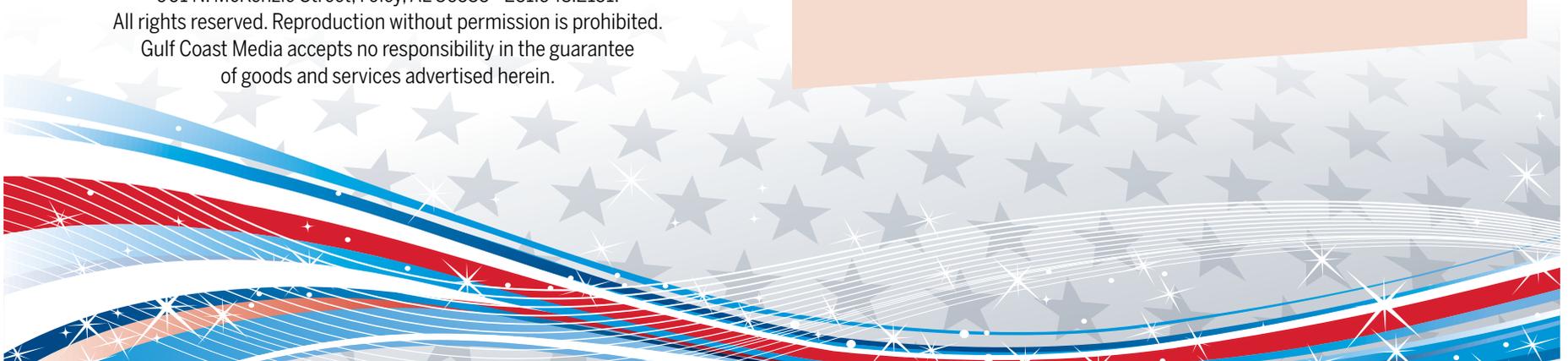
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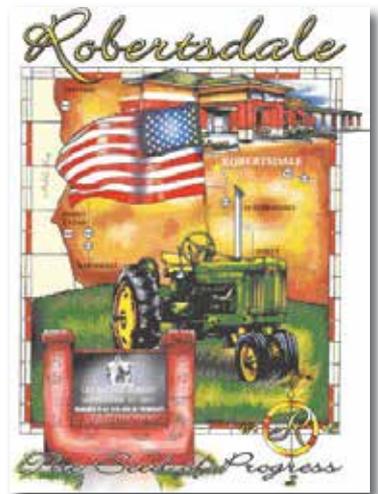




# Robertsdale



*Come  
Grow  
With Us!*



**MAYOR:  
Charles Murphy**

**CITY COUNCIL:  
Sue Cooper, Joe M. Kitchens,  
Paul Hollingsworth, Ruthie Campbell,  
Brent Kendrick**



**City Clerk: Shannon Burkett  
City Attorney: Ken Raines  
Chief Financial Officer: Ann Simpson  
Chief Of Police: Brad Kendrick  
Public Works Director: Scott Gilbert  
City Engineer: Greg Smith  
City Judge: Julian Brackin**

# Baldwin County Veterans Affairs office here to assist

By **MELANIE LECROY**  
melanie@gulfcoastmedia.com

Baldwin County has the fourth-largest veteran population in the state of Alabama. Raymond Williamson, Baldwin County Veterans Service Officer, wants to make sure veterans know where they can find assistance.

“We are your state tax dollars at work. We are trained and certified to assist you. Our biggest obstacle is veterans knowing we are here,” he said.

The Baldwin County Veterans Affairs office is tucked within the Baldwin County Satellite Courthouse building in Foley.

“If you need to order

records, find discharge papers, see if you qualify for VA medical coverage, file a claim. Whatever the case may be, we do all that here,” Williamson said.

Navigating the federal claims system is not always easy and often requires supporting documents to substantiate claims.

“So many people will come here after they have tried to file claims on their own. If a claim is filed incorrectly and it is denied you either must start the process all over and miss out on all that time, you could be receiving that benefit or appeal. Appeals are currently taking four to five years,” Williamson said.

The Baldwin County Veterans Affairs office can assist veterans and their families with:

- answering general questions via email, phone or office visit
- Original claims for disability
- Reopen claims for an increase in disability percentage
- Appeals
- Clothing allowances
- Combat-related pay
- File original nonservice-connected pension claims
- Survivor pension claims
- Medical expense reports for those receiving proportion amount pension
- Survivor benefit plan
- Dependent indemnity compensation claims

- Burial claims
- Healthcare enrollment or transfer
- Education benefits

Between April to June 2019 the office had 3,724 contacts with veterans and their families via letters, phone, email, and in-person visits, 697 of those were in-person office visits. However, Williamson knows there are veterans that still don't know this office exists.

“Every year that I have been here, our numbers have gone up mostly through word of mouth. We don't have the ability to advertise,” Williamson said.

The office is also available to those visiting the area from out of

## Want to know more?

**BALDWIN COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE**

**WHERE:** 201 East Section Avenue, Foley

**PHONE:** 251-937-0218

**EMAIL:** Ray.Williamson@va.alabama.gov

**WEB SITE:** www.va.alabama.gov

**FACEBOOK:** https://www.facebook.com/alsdva

state and residents that live outside of Baldwin county.

“I have veterans in my system from North Dakota, California, Panama City, and Semmes. Anyone can utilize our services, including the concerned friends of veterans. We are here to advocate for our veterans and their families,” Williamson said.

Williamson, a retired U.S. Coast Guard Senior Chief, is spending his retirement helping his fellow veterans.

“I have, as far as I am concerned, the best job in Baldwin county. I am just a veteran that gets paid to help other veterans. I love my job, and I am thankful that I can help the veterans and have them come back and thank us.”

## Original Oyster House honors military with a free meal on Veterans Day

The Original Oyster House restaurants will serve a free lunch or dinner to veterans and active military on Veterans Day, Monday, Nov. 11 from 11 a.m. to close at the Gulf Shores and Mobile Causeway locations. Please show your military ID or wear your uniform so we can salute you in person and thank you for your sacrifice.

“We want to thank all military personnel who served our country and who sacrifice so much in protecting our freedom. One way we can honor them is by providing a Gulf Coast seafood meal on Veterans Day. We also pay tribute to our service men and women with Military Mondays, providing

military a 10 percent discount every Monday,” stated founder David Dekle.

The Original Oyster House has become the “must-go-to” place for great fresh Gulf seafood, service and Southern hospitality and for its panoramic waterfront sunsets. A top-spot for handshucked and fire-grilled oysters, the Original Oyster House has also become legendary for its homemade gumbo, cheesy grits with blackened shrimp, as well as handcrafted desserts including its famous Peanut Butter Pie. In 2016, the Original Oyster House became the first restaurant in the state of Alabama to recycle oyster shells

through the Alabama Coastal Foundation. In July of 2019, an estimated 9 million oyster shells to date have been recovered from participating Gulf Coast restaurants.

The Original Oyster House (OOH) has two locations, Mobile: 3733 Battleship Parkway, on the Causeway and Gulf Shores: 701 Gulf Shores Parkway on the Original Oyster House Boardwalk. Both locations offer spectacular waterfront views and have been celebrated as the area's finest family restaurants for the past 36 years. For more information about the Original Oyster House, please visit [www.originaloysterhouse.com](http://www.originaloysterhouse.com) or call 251-928-2620.

**\*Free Veteran's Meal**  
**Veteran's Day, Nov. 11**  
11 am - to Close

**ORIGINAL OYSTER HOUSE**  
SINCE 1983

To Honor Veterans & Active Military we will serve a free meal this Veteran's Day, Nov. 11 from 11 am to close in recognition of your service. Military ID or military uniform is required to be applicable for the free lunch.  
\*Sorry, no to-go orders, dine-in military customers only.  
Alcohol and tip not included.

**All Veterans & Active Military FREE Meal!**

Original Oyster House Boardwalk, Gulf Shores 701 Gulf Shores PKWY 251-948-2445  
Mobile Causeway 3733 Battleship Pkwy Spanish Fort, AL 251-621-2188

Show Your Military ID or Wear Your Uniform

**NEED EXTRA COPIES OF A PAPER?**

For extra copies of an edition of a Gulf Coast Media newspaper, contact the GCM office, 901 N. McKenzie St. in Foley, to order them and arrange a pick-up time.



FILE PHOTO

# Veterans Cemetery in Spanish Fort holds memories of county's heroes

By **ALLISON MARLOW**  
allisonm@gulfcoastmedia.com

It was built to honor a century's worth of American veterans.

The Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery was dedicated on Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, 2012. The first burial came in April, 2013.

Of the 107 acres, only 22 have been cleared for use. Cemetery officials said 3,500 gravesites are currently available. Once they fill, the staff will clear another wooded field. The acreage is expected to continue to host burials for more than 100 years.

Maybe longer if current trends grow.

The Spanish Fort cemetery hosts more cremations than nearly any other veterans cemetery in the nation. At one time it was not common to have just one or two cremation ceremony in a year.

In Spanish Fort, crema-

tions average 10 a year.

Officials said the trend is cost driven to a point as families steer away from the steep costs of caskets. However, Ross said, the larger drive is a desire to be closer to nature.

Plans for new veterans cemeteries in other parts of the nation now often include designated areas for cremated remains and cremation gardens, a sign that the trend is catching on and growing.

Burial at the cemetery is open to any veteran that has been honorably discharged from active duty service. The Spanish Fort cemetery is the final resting place for several military members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.



## Want to be buried at the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery?

### ELIGIBILITY:

- U.S. Veterans with honorable discharge
- Legal resident of Alabama at the time of death; or
- Legal resident of Alabama when he or she entered the Armed Forces of the United States; or
- Legal resident of Alabama for a period of 10 or more years (any cumulative period of 10 or more years, regardless of residency at the time of death).

### ELIGIBILITY FOR VETERAN'S FAMILY:

- The surviving spouse of an eligible veteran that has been interred who remarries retains his or her eligibility for burial.
- Unmarried children who are under 21 years of age, or who are under 23 years of age and are pursuing full time education at an approved institution;
- Unmarried adult child of an eligible veteran of any age if the child became physically or mentally disabled and incapable of self-support by reason of mental or physical disability before reaching 21 years of age or before reaching 23 years of age if pursuing full-time education at an approved institution are eligible.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:** <http://www.va.state.al.us/spanishfort.aspx> or call 251-625-1338

# Understanding national POW/MIA Recognition Day

The third Friday of September is National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Across the nation, since 1979 when Congress passed a resolution, veterans organizations and groups gather to pay tribute to their brothers and sisters — comrades in arms — who never made it home from war. Each year the president issues a proclamation renewing the observance. All military installations fly the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag, which symbolizes the nation's remembrance of those who were imprisoned while serving in conflicts and those who remain missing. Posters are displayed at college and university campuses and public buildings to promote the day. Remembrance ceremonies and other events are held in places like the Pentagon, war memorials and museums.

The point of POW/MIA Recognition Day is to ensure that Americans remember and acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of

U.S. military personnel who, in answering the nation's call to arms, forfeited their individual freedoms as prisoners of war, or lost their lives and remain missing.

The Department of Defense lists 1,741 Americans as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. As of 2009 only 841 are accounted for since the end of the war in 1975. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), more than 83,000 Americans remain missing from World War II, the Korean War, the cold war and the Vietnam War.

Those who have served, and those currently serving in the uniformed services of the United States, are ever mindful that the sweetness of enduring peace has always been tainted by the bitterness of personal sacrifice. We are compelled to never forget that while we enjoy our daily pleasures, there are others who have endured and may still be enduring the agonies of pain, depriva-

tion and imprisonment.

Here is the symbolism of the POW/MIA service explained:

There is a small table which occupies a place of dignity and honor. It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They're referred to as POWs and MIAs.

We call them comrades. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families, so we join together to pay humble tribute to them, and to bear witness to their continued absence. The table is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her oppressors.

The tablecloth is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their country's call to arms.

The single rose in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. This rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep



SUBMITTED PHOTO

faith, while awaiting their return.

The red ribbon on the vase represents an unyielding determination, for a proper accounting of our comrades who are not among us.

A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate.

The salt sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait.

The glass is inverted, they cannot toast with us at this time.

The chair is empty.

They are NOT here.

The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope

which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to the open arms of a grateful nation.

The American flag reminds us that many of them may never return and have paid the supreme sacrifice to insure our freedom.



**Sgt Don Kral**

*U.S. Army  
Served 1955-1996*

An undeniably caring person who loved his country as much as he loved people. Thank you for your selfless service. It will never be forgotten, just like you never will be.

“Lovingly known as Sarge”

*From all those that loved you*



**Phillip James Reed**

*U.S. Navy  
Served 1965-1969*

The hardships endured through your unselfish service to our country will not be forgotten. God truly blessed us with your presence in our lives.

Your sense of humor and kind, caring dedication to your family and others created beautiful, lasting memories to carry in our hearts and minds forever.

*“HAPPY TRAILS”*

*The REED Family*



The US Armed Forces Honor Guard (AFHG) of Baldwin County, Alabama consists of veterans who have served in all branches of our country's military forces and who aspire to the motto “To Honor with Dignity and Respect” through the rendering of military burial honors to our fallen comrades. The rifle volleys, playing of Taps, flag folding and presentation provide a cherished and lasting memory for the veteran's loved ones. It is also our way to say thank you to the families for the faithful service these veterans have given to our country.

The AFHG is always looking for new members who can commit to our mission. For more information contact us with your name, branch of service, and contact information at [usafhgbaldwincounty@gmail.com](mailto:usafhgbaldwincounty@gmail.com).

**Current active members in AFHG are:**

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| James Bridges     | Tommy Langham |
| Frank Carroll     | Carl Lejsek   |
| Frank Connell     | Dave Mastrone |
| Larry DiAmco      | Ron Phinny    |
| James Dixon       | Don Stuart    |
| Judith Galloway   | Bob Tarr      |
| James Grupczynski | Archie Waters |
| James Kollasch    | John Whidbee  |
| Mike Krams        | Judy Whidbee  |

# A FINAL HONOR

## Want to help?

**WHAT:** U.S Armed Forces Honor Guard of Baldwin County, must be a honorably discharged veteran to volunteer

**CONTACT:** Via email at usafhgaldwincountyalabama@gmail.com or call Master Sgt. Judy Whidbee, Ret., at 251-545-6578



FILE PHOTO

## Volunteers determined to give every Baldwin County veteran a hero's farewell

By **ALLISON MARLOW**  
allisonm@gulfcoastmedia.com

Thirteen folds of a flag, three volleys of gunfire, 24 notes on the bugle - three simple ceremonies that take just minutes to deliver.

The men and women

who earn them sacrificed for their nation. Some gave their lives.

In Baldwin County, a group of former service members are working to make sure that everyone who wore the uniform is honored properly at their burial.

“We’re providing a service to our fellow veterans and they deserve this,” said Master Sgt. Judy Whidbee, ret., the group’s commander. “The heart-warming feeling you get when you hand that flag over to the spouse or loved one and

see the tears. The appreciation we receive from the family is way beyond what words that can express. It’s a wonderful feeling.”

The handful of military retirees has poured hundreds of dollars from their own pockets into

uniforms, rifles, ammunition and supplies to create the U.S Armed Forces Honor Guard of Baldwin County.

Recently they were granted ceremonial rifles by the Army and are leasing the former welcome center from the city of Daphne as a place to store equipment and hold meetings. The group is looking for donations to purchase a van to carry the equipment and volunteers to funerals.

Their days are dictated by the needs of the fallen.

Some weeks there is just one funeral. Others, there are funerals every day, sometimes more than one in an afternoon.

The grieving families they serve, cemetery officials say, are grateful.

Members of the honor guard have stood silent and stoic in driving rain. They have stood in the freezing cold until their knees began to shake. They have stood under the sweltering summer sun, silently fighting the urge to melt into the nearby shade.

They have already buried one of their own.

The group’s average age is 77. Whidbee stresses that they need more volunteers to come forward and help carry



on the sacred duty.

“We continue to press on and get older as the days go by but that doesn’t stop our guys,” Whidbee said. “I’m only 62 and there are people 20 years my senior with aches and pains. When it comes time to stand at attention and render honors they are there.”

She says the group needs veterans to come forward and help, even if they can only commit to one a day a month due to work schedules.

“We are reaching out to as many as possible who can come out and be part of the team,” she said. “We just need help.”

To serve on the honor guard, military members do not have to be retired military, but they must have been honorably discharged. Members who were honorably discharged for medical reasons may join as well. Potential members will need to submit a copy of their DD form 214.



### SMSgt Retired Rick Pintuff

*U.S. Airforce  
Served 1966-1989*

Vietnam Veteran 19th SOS

Thanking you for your devoted and honorable service!

*Your loving wife Elaine*



### Edward A. Strauss, Jr.

*U.S. Coast Guard  
Served 1942-1946*

Freedoms and privileges we have today wouldn’t be possible had it not been for your unselfish willingness to answer our country’s call to duty. That selfless service continues serving as an example to generations that followed.

Your kind, caring dedication to your family created wonderful memories. We miss and love you always.

*The Strauss Family*

# BALDWIN COUNTY VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS



## American Legion Posts

### Eastern Shore, Post 199

700 South Mobile St., Fairhope  
251-928-9132

### Baldwin County, Post 99

2101 S. McKenzie St., Foley  
251-943-3114

### Gulf Shores, Post 44

6781 Highway 59, Gulf Shores  
251-948-6119

### Lillian, Post 48

PO Box 701, Lillian

### Taylor-Stuart, Post 188

904 Hwy 31 South, Bay Minette  
251-937-0950

## Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts

### Post 3568 Bradley-McDowell Post

210 Newport Parkway, Bay Minette  
251-937-9274

### Post 5658 Kichler-Pippen Post

24230 US Highway 98, Elberta  
251-986-8201

### Post 5660 Gaston-Lee Post

950 Nichols Ave., Fairhope  
Fairhope  
251-928-8259

## Military Officer's Association of America

### Baldwin County chapter

Meets monthly  
Information: <http://bcmoaa.org/>

## Vietnam Veterans of America

### Joe Birindelli Chapter 864

Meets 4th Tuesday of each month, 1 p.m.  
Café Acadiana, Hwy 104, Silverhill  
Contact Ron Moore, 251-747-6796



## VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Coastal Alabama has a Veterans Counselor to assist you when applying for college and even while you are in it! Derrick Samuels served our Country for 21 years in the U.S. Navy and has earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Phoenix using his Post 9/11 VA education benefits. He started at Coastal Alabama Community College as the Veterans Counselor in 2017 and has assisted our student veterans along their higher education journey ever since. With a passion to help fellow veterans, Mr. Samuels actively recruits and advises students and/or their families who served in the military.

Coastal Alabama has over 100 programs of study including, Aviation (Powerplant Technology, Avionics, and Airframe Technology), Culinary Arts, and Health Sciences!

Contact Derrick Samuels for more information! [derrick.samuels@coastalalabama.edu](mailto:derrick.samuels@coastalalabama.edu) • 251-580-2292

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# A LOOK BACK



Veterans Day 2018



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Schools and civic organizations across the region painted Baldwin County red, white and blue last year to honor the hundreds of veterans who live here. School children sang and civic leaders helped tell our veterans how much our community appreciates their service.





# Riviera Utilities

413 E. Laurel Ave.  
Foley, AL 36535  
251-943-5001

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251-943-4999

700 Whispering Pines Road  
Daphne, AL 36526  
251-626-5000

Outage Reporting System  
251-625-4999



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# VETERANS DAY EVENTS



Veterans Day falls on Monday, Nov. 11.

## Alabama Bicentennial Veterans Day Celebration

» Nov. 11, 8 a.m.  
» USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park  
Alabama Bicentennial Commission will open Battleship Memorial Park on Veterans Day as our state's official site to celebrate Veterans Day. It will be a free admission day. Schedule includes: 1:45 p.m. - Photo of all Veterans, 2:45 p.m. - Emerald Coast Skydivers on field, 3 p.m. - Veterans Day Celebration and Parade of Flags; 7 p.m. - Veterans Day Concert.

## Fairhope Veterans Day Parade

» Saturday, Nov. 9, 10 a.m.  
» Downtown Fairhope, begins in front of the Fairhope Civic Center  
A sunset prayer service at 4:45 p.m. at Henry George Park at the Veterans Memorial, "Tears of Sorrow, Tears of Joy."

## Annual Veterans Day Weekend Program

» Saturday, Nov. 9, 8:30 a.m.  
» Blakeley State Park, Spanish Fort  
Blakeley's annual Veterans Day Weekend program offers a special opportunity to reflect on this area's Civil War heritage. We offer Civil War artillery demonstrations at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. At 9 a.m. we offer one of our popular "Civil War on the Eastern Shore" narrated cruises, which explores the major battles of the Mobile Campaign from the rivers along which its major actions took place. (Cruise tickets are \$27 for adults and \$17 for kids ages 6-12) At 11:30 a.m. noted author Christopher McIlwain, Sr. speaks on his research into the Alabama connection to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865. The program is supported in part by the generous support of the Pensacola Civil War Roundtable. For more information and to book cruise tickets, see our website: <https://www.blakeleypark.com>

## Daphne's Annual Veterans Day Program

» Friday, Nov. 8, 9:30 a.m.  
» Daphne High School  
Join the City of Daphne and Daphne High School for our annual Veterans Day program as we honor those who have served. Dogwood Trail Maids, U.S.S. Alabama Crewmates and many more special guests and speakers. Veterans, please plan to stay for a special reception in your honor following the program.

## Bay Minette Veterans Day Breakfast, Parade and Ceremonies

» Monday, Nov. 11, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
The North Baldwin Chamber of Commerce is excited to partner once again with the City of Bay Minette, our local Veterans organizations and our North Baldwin Advantage Partners to host the 2019 Veterans Day festivities in Bay Minette!  
Join us as we honor our local Veterans with a free breakfast program presented by Quincy Compressor at 8am on November 11th at the John F. Rhodes Civic Center, followed by the Annual Veterans Day Parade and ceremonies at the Eternal Flame on Courthouse Square and the Korean War Memorial in front of the Bay Minette Public Library.

For more information or to RSVP email [ashley@northbaldwinchamber.com](mailto:ashley@northbaldwinchamber.com) or call 251.937.5665 ext 2

## Robertsdale Veterans Day Ceremony

» Thursday, Nov. 7, 11 a.m.  
PZK Hall, 17833 Alabama 104 in Robertsdale. Ceremony presented by the George P. Thames Senior Center. Speakers include Dawn Biggs, city of Daphne volunteer coordinator and Leon McGee of American Legion Post 99 in Foley. Lunch will be served.

## Silverhill Veterans Day Program

» Monday, Nov. 11, 10 a.m.  
» Silverhill Veterans Memorial, Anderson Park on Main Street across from Town Hall.  
Program will include guest speakers and recognition of all veterans.

## Foley Veterans Day Parade

» Monday, Nov. 11, 10 a.m.  
» Begins and ends at the corner of Verbena Avenue and Alston Street (Foley Kids Park).  
Ceremony at Memorial after the parade.



JOHN UNDERWOOD / FILE PHOTO

Flags were lowered to half-staff during last year's Silverhill Veterans Day Program



JESSICA VAUGHN / FILE PHOTO

Flag ceremony at Foley High School last year



JESSICA VAUGHN / FILE PHOTO

Foley Veterans Day Parade



FILE PHOTO

Loxley Veterans Day 2018 ceremony



“GEARED TO GIVE”

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Veteran Coalition Members

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