



**Ocala, Fla. (Dec. 16, 2025)** – At its Tuesday meeting, the Marion County Board of County Commissioners **unanimously approved** the creation of the **Marion County Veterans Hall of Fame**, presented by the **Veterans Helping Veterans USA** organization. This new program is designed to recognize and honor local veterans for their service, leadership and contributions to the community.

The Local Veterans Hall of Fame was developed through direct input from Marion County's veteran community, following discussions and ideas shared during Veterans Quarterly Meetings. These meetings were launched by Marion County Commissioner **Craig Curry**, who was authorized by the Board to serve as the liaison to local veterans' organizations.

**Veterans Helping Veterans** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting veterans and their families through a variety of programs and initiatives. The organization focuses on providing resources for housing, employment, education, and healthcare, while also fostering community engagement and recognition of veterans' service and achievements.

The program will celebrate the outstanding achievements of Marion County veterans and will create a meaningful pipeline of nominees for the **State of Florida Veterans Hall of Fame**, which the local program will be modeled after.

"This initiative allows us to honor our local heroes while strengthening Marion County's standing at the state level," said **Chairman Carl Zalak, III**. "This is truly an act of sacrifice with a Marion County Address. It is a lasting way to recognize service, preserve stories and ensure our veterans continue to be represented and celebrated."

**Todd Belknap, Executive Director of Veterans Helping Veterans**, added, "This will be one part of a larger vision to share the stories of our local veterans. Veterans Helping Veterans has launched a podcast series on our website that also helps tell the stories of our local heroes."

**Captain Steve Petty**, recently inducted into the State Veterans Hall of Fame, commented, "This is a step in the right direction to help honor those in our community who have served. Our service put our lives at risk to protect people we never knew."

The nomination criteria and selection process were also presented to the County Commission. Nomination forms, related media articles and more details about this initiative can be explored at [www.vhvusa.org/veterans-hall-of-fame](http://www.vhvusa.org/veterans-hall-of-fame).