Honoring veterans for their dedication and sacrifice to the community has always been a passion of mine. While I have not served in the military, I have always admired the brave men and women who have dropped everything to protect the precious freedom our nation affords us in its citizens.

When I went on a trip to my wife’s hometown in Pennsylvania, I saw several pole banners on display throughout the area paying homage to family members who served or are currently serving in the military. My first thought was that we could pull this off in Downtown DeLand, and make it even better! With the support of City Manager Michael Pleus and the DeLand City Commission, and along with the very generous sponsorship by AdventHealth to make this program possible for veteran’s and their families, we are now in our third year of the program.

I hope this is just the beginning of the program, as I know there are many deserving heroes who live among us. My favorite part is being able to tell the stories of our veterans, many of whom have blended into the background and go largely unnoticed. This year, I am beyond excited that we are able to honor a member of the Greatest Generation, Robert Ziller, who is one of the last thousand or so remaining survivors of the campaign to invade Normandy, France.

You may also notice that we switched our program with a wonderful publication highlighting our heroes.

— Chris Graham, Public Information Officer, City of DeLand

### An introduction to the Hometown Heroes program

### Chris Graham
City of DeLand

Sergeant 1st Class Curtis G. Andrews
Sgt. 1st Class Curtis G. Andrews is a native of DeLand. Born the oldest of five to Mrs. Hazel Collier, he attended the local DeLand schools. A 1976 graduate of DeLand High, he played basketball and football during his sophomore year.

In the meantime, during his junior and senior years, his academic path challenged him to pursue a career in music. As a result, Andrews became the first black student at DeLand High to head the percussion section during the years 1974-76. This career choice also earned him to also be inducted into the DeLand Band Hall of Fame.

Alongside his academic achievements, Andrews also served in the school’s ROTC program, which led him to be also be inducted into the DeLand National Guard during his senior year. Thereby, he was presented an opportunity for a second career choice, the military. Being a person of companion with love for mankind and his country, Andrews yielded his band scholarship to a close friend. He then enlisted in the U.S. Army to pursue the path of a telecommunications specialist. At TSC clearance level, where he pursued a degree in Information Systems Technology.

He also attended a plethora of communications and memes, which included the Marine Corps Staff College, the Army Good Conduct award, an Expert Marksmanship qualification, and Non-Commissioned Officer’s Professional Development Ribbon.

Since his retirement from the military, Andrews continued to operate in the field of communications, working for a variety of companies: BellSouth in Atlanta, Georgia, Sprint in Marietta, Georgia, and United States Logistics Command, ECEGM Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

Sgt. Andrews currently resides in DeLand and serves as vice commander of American Legion Orange Baker Post 187 and a loyal servant to many of the senior citizens in the community. He has two lovely daughters: Cyrelle G. Andrews and Cynthia G. Andrews.

Be sure to see these banners flying along Woodland Boulevard during July!

Corporal Gene Apathy
Gene Apathy was in the U.S. Army from 1945 to 1947, and was stationed in cities such as Paris and Berlin. With help from the GI Bill, he went to Indiana University, graduating in 1952. Apathy built his first home in 1954 when he started as a copy writer for Sears at the west-side Chicago headquarters.

When the Sears Tower (now the Willis Tower) was built, he transferred there and finished his career as a legal editor for Sears before retiring in 1985.

Apathy has crossed the country numerous times on his motorcycle and was an integral part of his son, Kirby, Nino Harley race team.

Seaman Jan Bout II
U.S. Navy 1962

Petty Officer 2nd Class
Jeremy Buck
U.S. Navy 2016-now

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

— President John F. Kennedy

Chris Graham
City of DeLand

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