

A Fitting Tribute

The month of May is celebrated each year as Military Appreciation Month with special commemorations, promotions, and events to let those that defend our freedoms know how much we as individuals and as a community are thankful for the service and sacrifice given by those who wear the uniform of our country. The Military Affairs Committee of the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce has for years worked to coordinate many appropriate and meaningful tributes to our military throughout the month of May. The planned activities for this year are equally stellar in their efforts to let the military know how much they mean to Pensacola.

Part of the appreciation effort each year is to encourage citizens and businesses to fly the American flag throughout the month. Many, many businesses and private citizens comply with this request. However, relatively few American flags adorn our public right-of-ways during May or for any of the other patriotic holidays. For a proud military town, we should do better. To that end, the Chamber of Commerce is joining forces with the Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board (DIB) to create a program whereby individuals, businesses, organizations, families, etc. can sponsor the installation and placement of an American flag on one or more of 226 pedestrian-scaled historic light poles along some of the major thoroughfares in Downtown.

For a one-time sponsorship of \$100, a new nylon flag, wooden pole, bracket, and banding can be installed on one of the light poles where none now exists. For that sponsorship, an engraved stainless steel plack will be placed on the base of the street light pole where the new flag flies noting the sponsor of the flag or in whose honor or memory the flag was placed. The plack will remain in place year-round for the life of the flag (expected to be between 3 and 4 years). Sponsoring the placement of a new American flag along one of the targeted streets in Downtown Pensacola is a terrific way to remember or thank our military heroes.

Forms to sponsor a new American flag are available in the offices of the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, the DIB, or online at www.downtownpensacola.com. Flag sponsorships are available on a first come first served basis. The new American flags will first appear along the streets of downtown on Memorial Day and will be flown each patriotic holiday thereafter for as long as the flags last.

This program intends to line both sides of Palafox Street/Place (from Wright to Main), Main Street, (from Tarragona to Baylen), and DeVilliers Street (from Wright to La Rua) with these majestic symbols of our nation. I can't think of a more appropriate tribute to our military – and one that reminds us over and over throughout the year how much they mean to us and how much we truly appreciate their sacrifices past and present. I hope you will join me and the DIB in helping to put a significant part of the heart of our historic community awash in red, white, and blue for Memorial Day and beyond. What a beautiful and fitting sight it will be.