



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Belleview Hosts Freedom Walk to Honor 9/11 Victims and First Responders

Belleview, FL — On the evening of September 11, 2024, the City of Belleview hosted its annual Freedom Walk at the Belleview Community Center to remember those lost during the tragic events of 9/11 and to honor the first responders who serve their communities selflessly every day. The event was attended by local first responders from Marion County and the Belleview Police Department, veterans from American Legion Post 284, members of the Ocala Ft. King Lions Club and Ocala Lions Club 200, and families from across the community.

The event began with a solemn presentation of the colors by American Legion Post 284, followed by a heartfelt rendition of the National Anthem and "God Bless America" by the Belleview High School Chamber Singers. It set a the tone for the evening, as attendees reflected on the lasting impact of September 11, 2001.

Belleview's Mayor Christine Dobkowski addressed the gathered crowd, underscoring the importance of continued remembrance. "In Belleview, we have a longstanding tradition of coming together to honor the victims and heroes of 9/11. Every year, this event serves as a powerful reminder of the courage and resilience shown by our first responders, not only on that day but in their daily service to our community. It's important for us to remember their sacrifice and continue showing our gratitude. This day also reminds us of how united we are in Belleview—standing strong together, no matter the challenge," said Mayor Dobkowski.

Sergeant Mike Miley of the Belleview Police Department offered personal reflections on how 9/11 shaped the lives of those who were young at the time and changed the world they grew up in. He noted how the day revealed the strength and unity of the nation and the bravery of first responders who run towards danger to help those in need.

Florida State Representative Ryan Chamberlin spoke about the impact of the day, the sacrifices of the passengers aboard Flight 93 and the resilience of the American people in the face of adversity. Noting that the passengers made the ultimate sacrifice to protect others, and their courage is a testament to the strength of the American spirit.

Community engagement was a key theme of the night. Local businesses showed their support, with Gregg Smith Automotive providing refreshments for attendees. Sandi McKamey, Belleview's City Administrator, notes that "Events like the Freedom Walk serve as a bridge, connecting generations through shared experiences of gratitude and reflection. It's not just about looking back on the events of 9/11, but also about strengthening the ties in our own community today. By coming together, we are showing our support for those who serve, for those we lost, and for each other."

Robert Vass, Events and Promotions Manager for the City of Belleview, added his thoughts on the evening's success. "Seeing so many members of the Belleview community come together tonight is incredibly moving. The strength of this community is in its ability to unite, not just in times of hardship but in moments of reflection like this. It's clear that the spirit of 9/11—the unity, the resilience, the shared sense of purpose—still lives on here in Belleview. That's what makes this event so meaningful year after year."

For more information about upcoming city events, visit www.belleviewfl.org.