

## **NF/SGVHS Middleburg VA Clinic Renaming Ceremony in Honor of Andrew K. Baker**

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System (NF/SGVHS) held its Middleburg VA Clinic Renaming Ceremony in honor of Chief Petty Officer Andrew K. Baker on January 17, 2023. Chief Baker tragically perished while aboard a Trident 615, an HH-60H "Sea Hawk" helicopter, that crashed at sea on March 13, 1997, as a part of the USS Kennedy's Composite Training Unit Exercise.

The Andrew K. Baker VA Clinic opened September 15, 2020 and has 20,000 net usable square feet. There are 47 employees – 40% who are Veterans – and serves over 15,000 enrollees with over 25,000 encounters during FY2022. Services include Clinical Video Telehealth Services, Diabetic Education, Immunizations, Lab Work, Mental Health, Primary Care, PTSD Services, Women's Health, and more.

On Monday, December 5, 2022, President Biden signed into law S. 2159, which states:

*S. 2159, which designates the community-based outpatient clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs located at 400 College Drive, Middleburg, Florida, as the Andrew K. Baker Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic;*

*Thank you to Senators Rubio and Rick Scott, Representative Cammack, and the entire Florida delegation for their leadership.*

In attendance at the renaming ceremony was NF/SGVHS Interim Executive Director, Ms. Wende Dottor who provided remarks, Associate Director of Primary Care & Outpatient Clinics, Mr. Josh Pridgen, Associate Director of Operations, Mr. Chad Adams, and Andrew K. Baker VA Clinic Leadership and Staff. In addition, representatives from Senator Marco Rubio and Senator Rick Scotts' offices gave remarks on behalf of the Senators, and Congressman Aaron Bean and Congresswoman Kat Cammack provided remarks as well. Finally, members of the Baker family attended including his widow, Chief Warrant Officer Tina Baker (retired), two grandchildren, and the ceremony ended with remarks from Chief Petty Officer Drew Baker, son of Chief Petty Officer Andrew K. Baker.

During the ceremony, Ms. Dottor stated how the VA was honored to acknowledge the life and service of Baker by renaming the county's clinic after one of its hometown heroes. She further stated, "When the citizens of Middleburg drive by and see the clinic name, or when veterans enter the Andrew K. Baker VA Clinic, they will know they are honored and recognized for their service and sacrifices and that this clinic is their clinic." Ms. Dottor also presented Chief Drew Baker with a Director's Coin and letter and deployment basket filled with goodies in anticipation of the son's upcoming deployment.

Remarking on the journey to pass legislation to rename the clinic, Congresswoman Cammack stated, "Today was a momentous day. It was truly incredible to see this project finally come to fruition after years of work and I'm honored to have been able to

work so closely with Ms. Tina Baker, the widow of Chief Baker, while striving to carry on her husband's distinguished legacy. Now, Chief Baker will be remembered forever, and it is my greatest privilege to have been a part of this project." Congresswoman Cammack also presented two flags flown over the U.S. Capitol and two copies of the Congressional record - one of each to the Baker family and Andrew K. Baker VA Clinic, and a framed copy of the legislation naming the Andrew K. Baker VA Clinic for the Baker family.

The widow of Chief Andrew Baker, Tina Baker, said, "My husband's sacrifice has meant a lifetime of service for the Baker family. We are inspired to live a life for the greater good and in service to our country and community. I hope when people see Andy's name on the building that it is a remembrance of all who has served including the sons and daughters of military members."



Ms. Wende Dottor, Congresswoman Kat Cammack, Congressman Aaron Bean, delegates from Senator Rubio and Scotts' offices, and former Congressman Ted Yoho pose for a picture with members of the Baker family.

\*The following photos were taken from The Florida Times Union article: [Northeast Florida veterans clinic renamed for Andrew K. Baker \(jacksonville.com\)](https://www.floridatimes.com/news/northeast-florida-veterans-clinic-renamed-for-andrew-k-baker/)



U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack (left) and her predecessor, Ted Yoho, flank Chief Petty Officer Andrew "Drew" Baker, his children Alice, 10, and Andrew Kenneth Baker III, his wife Navy Hospital Corpsman Deanna Baker and his mother Tina Baker. They attended a Tuesday ceremony renaming the Middleburg VA clinic after the late Baker patriarch, Chief Petty Officer Andrew K. Baker, who died in a Navy helicopter crash in 1997. *Bob Self/Florida Times-Union*



Chief Petty Officer Andrew K. Baker died in 1997 when the Navy helicopter he was on crashed at sea. The VA Clinic in Middleburg, where he lived, has been named after Baker. *Provided By Tina Baker*





A framed copy of legislation renaming the Middleburg VA Clinic as the Andrew K. Baker Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic was on display at the renaming ceremony. U.S. Rep. Kat Cammack is shown speaking in the background. *Bob Self/Florida Times-Union*



Chief Petty Officer Andrew "Drew" Baker holds back his emotions as he speaks about his father, the late Chief Petty Officer Andrew Baker, and the other men killed in a 1997 helicopter crash. Drew Baker was part of a ceremony renaming the Middleburg VA Clinic after his father. *Bob Self/Florida Times-Union*