

PRESS RELEASE: 24-26

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**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
*Bay Pines VA Healthcare System*

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## **Bay Pines VA Announces Plans for Annual Memorial Day Ceremony**

BAY PINES, Fla — Today, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System announced details for the annual joint Memorial Day Ceremony at the Bay Pines Cemetery.

This year's ceremony is Monday, May 27, 2024, at 11 a.m. and will be cohosted by all three elements of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, Bay Pines National Cemetery, and the St. Petersburg Regional VBA Office.

"Memorial Day serves to remind us all of the price of freedom and to remember the heroes who have passed in defense of our country and freedom around the globe," said Bay Pines Director and CEO Paul M. Russo. "We invite all to share in this remembrance as we honor our fallen, recognize Gold Star mothers and share our appreciation for the families and friends who keep their loved one's memories alive."

Guest speakers for the event include Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Director and CEO Paul M. Russo, St. Petersburg VA Regional Office Executive Director Juliana Boor, and Bay Pines National Cemetery Assistant Director Roberto Pizarro.

Dr. Marianne Matthewson-Chapman, U.S. Army Maj. Gen. (retired) will serve as the keynote speaker. From 1975 until her retirement in 2008, she served in the California, Pennsylvania, and Florida Army National Guard. Dr. Marianne Matthewson-Chapman is a Veteran of Operation Desert Storm where she served as the chief nurse of a medical team that supervised the establishment of 44 combat support hospitals in five countries.

Her legacy of service also includes the establishment of 63 National Guard/Reserve demobilization sites, the first outreach program for individual ready reserve members, and the creation of a combat Veteran call center. On May 15, 2000, she became the first woman to earn the rank of major general in the Florida Army National Guard.

Dr. Matthewson-Chapman is the recipient of the Legion of Merit, the Florida Cross, the Bronze Star, Order of Medical Military Merit, and an inductee in the Florida Women's Hall of Fame.

**For additional information on this release or future coverage opportunities**, please contact Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Public Affairs Office at [VHABAYPublicAffairs@va.gov](mailto:VHABAYPublicAffairs@va.gov). See the latest news, stories, and Veteran health care information on our official [website](#) and [Facebook](#).

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