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From left, County Commissioners Bubba Williams, Geneva Davis, Bobby Blizzard and Bill Schwendler Jr. with the Navy League pose for a photo in front of a Georgia flag Tuesday that is touring all 159 counties in the state. Alexander Cain / The Union-Recorder

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Published February 06, 2008 12:07 am - Baldwin County became the latest location on Tuesday to be visited by a Georgia state flag criss-crossing the state to make an appearance in all 159 Georgia counties.

USS Georgia flag makes stop in Baldwin

Alexander Cain
The Union-Recorder

Baldwin County became the latest location on Tuesday to be visited by a Georgia state flag criss-crossing the state to make an appearance in all 159 Georgia counties.

The flag is making its way through every county in Georgia as part of Gov. Sonny Perdue's "USS Georgia Flag Project," an effort to take the Georgia State flag across the state and eventually to Kings Bay to reunite with the submarine USS Georgia, where it will be permanently displayed on the submarine after a ceremony returning the USS Georgia to service on March 28.

The project is being coordinated through the State of Georgia, the 16 Georgia Regional Development Centers across the state and the Navy League, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating U.S. citizens of the importance of naval action regarding U.S. security and the men and women that have dedicated their lives to sea service.

A brief ceremony was held inside the County Commissioners' chambers at the Baldwin County Courthouse early Tuesday morning to officially include Baldwin among the more than 60 counties that have welcomed the flag so far.

A color guard from the Baldwin High School Naval JROTC unit attended the ceremony to add support from Baldwin County for Tuesday's event.

"The submarine is almost the length of two football fields. It will carry 154 cruise missiles," Naval League member Bill Schwendler Jr. said. "Today we are celebrating the crews that work on these boats. It's not an easy task and takes a special type of person. When they're out on duty, there's not a lot of contact with home. We want the crew of the USS Georgia to know that this state supports them in their efforts."

That support was confirmed by the county through a certificate presented to Middle Georgia RDC representative Diane Swain, who will return to her organization's offices in Macon as the flag continues on its path across the state.

The Georgia's future was jeopardized in 1994 when the Nuclear Posture Review determined that the U.S. military had a surplus of Trident submarines, according to a press released issued by Gov. Perdue's office.

The submarine is 560 feet in length, displaces more than 18,000 tons of water when submerged and can carry a crew of 15 officers, 139 enlisted crew members and up to 66 Special Operations Forces for a sustained, long endurance deployment, the release states.

Baldwin County Commissioner Geneva Davis was among a group of several county commissioners that attended Tuesday's ceremony.

"For me, it means a lot to know that things like this are possible. It's also very educational to the public, and I'm surprised that we didn't have more people attend," Davis said.

Commissioner Bobby Blizzard doesn't need to take an educational point of

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view — he has personal experience when it comes to serving in the nation's armed forces.

"It's an honor to be here today. I served as an aircraft mechanic in the navy, which makes it a bit more personal for me. I think this is a great experience for our county," Blizzard said.

A smaller ceremony was held on Tuesday afternoon at City Hall where Milledgeville Mayor Richard Bentley presented Schwendler and Grumman Club president and Milledgeville resident Lew Luliucci with a proclamation marking Tuesday as "USS Georgia and the Men and Women of Its Crew Day" in Milledgeville.

"The final ceremony in Kings Bay will have the governor there, who will present the flag to the skipper," Schwendler said. "I think the crew will know that we've tried our best to make sure it's known that the USS Georgia is back in town."



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