



# All fun and games at the GATOR BOWL

**N**orth Florida Branch 53 member **Bob Henning** retired in 2005 and no longer walks a route, but he has never slowed down.

As a volunteer for the Gator Bowl, one of the oldest annual college football bowl games, which was played on Dec. 27 in 2025, Henning kept track of his steps. "I walked over 14,000 steps that day, so I was a little tired after that game," he said.

This was the 21st year that Henning has worked at the Gator Bowl, held each year in Jacksonville, FL. The game is usually played on or around New Year's Day and is one of the oldest bowl games to be televised.

**Henning and his daughter Lisa pose for a photo after he won the Volunteer of the Year award at the Gator Bowl last year.**



Along with the football game, the Gator Bowl has events and activities for attendees. Henning was in charge of the games for children held in different areas around the stadium before the main event. He worked from 2 p.m. until kickoff at 7:30, when he got to sit and watch the game.

"I'm what they call a volunteer captain. I have oversight of all the interactive games. It changes from year to year what I'm doing, but for the last three years, I've done that, the interactive games for the kids and stuff when they come in. So, they have a field goal thing. They've got passing at targets, soccer, that stuff," he said.

About 60 volunteers keep the events going each year with Henning. Each of them get two free tickets to the game. In the December game, Henning watched the University of Virginia Cavaliers defeat the University of Missouri Tigers 13-7 with 32,000 other football fans at EverBank Stadium.

Henning's Gator Bowl tenure began after he volunteered for another football game—the NFL's Super Bowl in Jacksonville in 2005.

"I was a volunteer to Super Bowl, and I was working three of the interactive games they had there the whole week of Super Bowl. And one of the

people from the Gator Bowl came up to me and asked me if I'd be interested. I said, 'Yeah.' So, I've been doing it ever since." He helped manage the Gator Bowl parade, a major part of the annual festivities that featured marching bands, floats and community groups, but has since been phased out. He then became event captain for the pregame interactive games.

Henning began his career delivering mail and serving his country at the same time. Joining the Navy in 1966 after high school, he became a postal clerk on the aircraft carrier *USS Ticonderoga*. After two cruises to Vietnam, he was transferred to a Navy post office at Subic Bay in the Philippines until his discharge in 1970.

The next year, he took a letter carrier job with USPS in his hometown of West Palm Beach, FL. In 65 days, Henning became a steward and never looked back. He began a long career of service through the union.

Henning ended up transferring to new cities several times for family reasons—he has been a member of five NALC branches in Florida and New England. At three of those branches, Henning served as branch president.

Henning also served in a long list of other leadership positions for all of his

55 years of NALC membership, ranging from food drive coordinator, scribe, AFL-CIO delegate and state association district chairman to arbitration advocate.

As with many active NALC members, Henning's union experience stems from his family roots.

"My dad was a machinist with Pratt and Whitney Aircraft in West Palm when I was growing up," he said. "So, when the opportunity presented itself, I became active with the union."

Henning still finds ways to serve his brethren in the military as well. Two or

three times a month since 2021, Henning volunteers for eight-hour shifts at a lounge for active-duty military service members and veterans at the Jacksonville Airport.

"We supply coffee, snacks, some refrigerated items and some hot pockets and stuff like that where they could heat it up. And we have a big TV in there and lounge chairs and stuff," he said.

Ever the volunteer, Henning was on his way to the airport lounge in 2024 when he received a phone call with the news that he had been chosen as Volunteer of the Year for the Gator Bowl.

"When I got the call about my Volunteer of the Year award at the Gator Bowl, I was surprised and grateful," Henning said, but added, "I do not do volunteer work for awards, I do it for the gratification I feel when doing it for the public."

Henning recalled a fellow member of his current branch, **Lloyd Pearson**, who, before he died at age 102 in 2023, gave Henning advice that he carries with him to this day.

"He told me that his key to longevity was to stay busy," Henning said, and it continues to keep him on the move. **PR**

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Every penny of donations to DRF goes directly to individual carriers or branches needing assistance—no administrative costs are deducted.

The foundation provides aid in the form of supplies or grants, and it maintains a trained volunteer network to respond quickly to disasters. Grants are provided for property damage sus-

tained to a primary residence, automobile or personal property from natural disasters, and are provided only to NALC members. The application for a relief grant is on the foundation's website, [nalc.org/disaster](http://nalc.org/disaster).

Donations can be sent to: NALC Disaster Relief Foundation, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144; or made by credit card at [nalc.org/ndrfdonate](http://nalc.org/ndrfdonate).

Below are additions and corrections to 2025's donors to DRF that came in after the December 2025 *Postal Record* went to press. **PR**

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