

# FINDING TIME TO LEAD

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By Barbara Bryant

Tom Neubauer spends a lot of time every day talking about his community's military mission and the programs that support it.

Even Florida Gov. Rick Scott was surprised to learn recently that Neubauer has a separate full-time job running a real estate company with his wife Margaret. But it's easy to get confused. Neubauer has a way of downplaying the extent and impact of his activities by shining the spotlight on others.

He notes Larry Dantzler was president of the Bay County Alliance when it lobbied successfully to bring F-22 training to Tyndall Air Force Base in 2003. He credits Scott and the Florida legislature with recruiting lawmakers and former service members to the Florida Defense Support Task Force, which has helped pass more than 75 defense-friendly laws. And he points to former Congressman Allen Boyd and a four-star general for getting top Air Force leaders to visit when the community wanted to replace two departing F-15 squadrons with a squadron of combat-coded F-22s.

"The secretary and chief of staff expected to face an angry mob over the loss of the F-15s," he said. "Instead, they were met with proclamations of support for Tyndall and the Air Force from every mayor and county commissioner."

He also praised 22 leaders of public schools, colleges and businesses in the communities surrounding Tyndall for paying to travel to Holloman Air Force Base, where they spent a day and a half describing to relocating military members and their families the high quality of life they would enjoy in the communities that support the base.



“That was an important exercise for us, because it caused us to focus on the toll prolonged deployments take on military families, the many sacrifices they make and on what we can and should do to support them,” he said.

But there’s no question Neubauer’s leadership is behind much of the community’s success. He and his wife are former “Air Force brats” whose fathers flew in wartime, giving them the desire to “give back” to the military as civilians—no matter what it takes.

“We all have the same amount of time, and the way I spend mine feels in no way like a sacrifice,” Neubauer said. “I love what I do and get an enormous amount of inspiration and support from the Bay Defense Alliance,” whose members include community organization leaders and retired military personnel, including several installation commanders who had served at Tyndall and Naval Support Activity Panama City.

“I view that as a testament to our support for active-duty personnel and veterans.”

