

# Officers' Call

Newsletter of the Lake & Sumter Counties Chapter
Military Officers Association of America

April 2025



## **Presidents Message**

LTC Don Hansen, USA (Ret), Chapter President

Well April is finally here, the first full month of Spring, which brings us April Fool's Day, Easter, Earth Day, and Arbor Day. It also is the month of our only money raiser for the chapter, the 17th Annual Military Charities Golf Tournament being held on the 11th at the Harbor Hills Golf and Country Club. More on that later.

Last month's meeting was really well attended and we heard great presentations by Kevin and Andrea Harvey and LTC Perry Blackburn, USA (Ret.) on working the Division WARFIGHTING program at Ft. Leavenworth and Perry's participation in the invasion of Afghanistan in early 2002. Perry also talked about his non-profit organization dedicated to feeding, sheltering, and evacuating American citizens, allies, and partners left in Afghanistan after the hurried U.S. withdrawal in 2021. Perry even wore the same ball cap he wore during the invasion by the "Horse Soldiers" twenty-three years ago! He said it's never been washed.











(Continues on next Page)



Check out the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs for Florida Veteran Legislation.

#### OUR NEXT MEETING

## Wednesday Apr 9th 11:30 a.m.

Location Eisenhower Recreation Center 3560 Buena Vista Blvd Wildwood, FL 34785



#### **OUR MEAL**

Our luncheon will be catered by Chef Patrick and the Live Fire Chefs of Ocala who will be serving Grilled Chicken Marsala with Alfredo Pasta, Confetti Rice, Garlic Butter Green Beans along with a loaded Garden Salad and Dinner Rolls

## COST

Meals are \$20.00/person if you register and pay online. Meals are \$20/person following the deadline and \$20/person if you pay at the door.

## **RSVP**

No Later Than, 10:30 a.m. on Friday Apr 4th

## Click Here

**or** contact Tim or Annette Balliett at <u>tabal</u>-<u>liett46@gmail.com</u> or 352-728-2945.

## **Presidents Message Continued**

Also as part of our meeting, we had Carole Thompson and her husband Don join us again in order to pull the winning ticket for our "Free Meal a Week for 52 Weeks at the Havana Restaurant" Raffle Certificate. Carole is the person in charge of the Suleiman Family Restaurants' support of area charity organizations. The ticket she pulled was our own Cathie Stevens, our chapter's Surviving Spouse Liaison. On the 20th of March,



Carole, Cathie and I met at the Havana Restaurant to register Cathie's Certificate with Manager Fabian Gomez. Cathie certainly looks happy since the prize is worth \$1,300 if she uses the certificate every week for the next year. Because of David Suleiman's contribution of the certificate to our chapter, we were able to raise \$5,000 for our JROTC Scholarship fund in our Raffle.

On the 18th of March, we had our fifth "Dine To Donate" day at the Prima Italian Steakhouse. Altogether the Suleiman Family Restaurants have donated and allowed us to collect over \$600 toward our JROTC Scholarship Fund just by eating at the monthly restaurant and writing MOAA on the top of the bill we are presented with. They then donate 20% of the food bill back to our chapter in addition to providing \$10 meal coupons to anyone putting \$5 in our JROTC Donation Jar at the hostess stand that day. Our April "Dine To Donate" day will be April 15th at the Havana Country Club Restaurant at the corner of Morse Boulevard and Odell Circle. Please join us there.



On Saturday, March 22nd, Tom Lutes, Al Arnold and Jim O'Hagan set up our tent at the Brownwood Town Square during their Farmer's Market in order to answer questions about our chapter and to encourage eligible veterans to join our chapter. The day was a huge success as we received five new members that day in addition to visiting with scores of interesting people. In addition to Tom, Al, and Jim, Daryl DesJardin and Marc and Pam Sherrill also provided help at the tent.

The caterer for last month's meeting was Fenney Grill Caterer who provided a great Taco Style Buffett. It was their first time to cater for us and they did an excellent job. This month we will be visited again by Chef Patrick and the Live Fire Chefs of Ocala who will be serving Grilled Chicken Marsala with Alfredo

Pasta, Confetti Rice, Garlic Butter Green Beans along with a loaded Garden Salad and Dinner Rolls.

Our speaker this month will be Stewart E. Dunaway, a 5th generation native Floridian, who worked for and retired from Siemens Telecom in Lake Mary. He and his family then moved to Hillsborough, NC, and he

spent 15 years working for the North Carolina State Archives transcribing original records and publishing them as reference books. When he retired from that activity he had published 265 volumes spanning 96,000 printed pages. While working on these transcripts he started his pursuit of learning more about the Revolutionary War while correcting the scores of historical markers in the state. Stewart has authored and co-authored a number of books on the RW in NC including "The Battle at Lindley's Mill" (2009) and "The Revolutionary War In North Carolina" (2013)(a compilation of five different books). His presentation will be on "The Revolutionary War in the South," a topic most of us never learned about in school other than the Battle of Yorktown, VA.

Now a word about our 17th Annual Military Charities Golf Tournament which will take place on April 11th at the Harbor Hills Golf and Country Club. All 108 golfer positions were accounted for by the middle of February and we have increased our Sponsorship donations by over 50% so we are well on track to have a successful tournament once again. If you want to participate in the "World Fa-



mous" Silent Auction and after tournament dinner but are not a player in the tournament, NO PROBLEM. The dinner is just \$20 and you can pay at the door. We suggest you arrive NLT than 5 p.m. and all you have to do is give me your name and number in your party either by calling (352-461-0624) or email (karen.donhansen@gmail.com). Hope to see you there.

Well that's all for now. Remember to be safe, use common sense, and above all: **NEVER STOP SERVING!** 

## Membership and Recruiting

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret), Membership Chairman

A hearty welcome to the following members who recently joined our Chapter:
Gail Chapman, CDR, USN, retired
Edward Cook, CDR, USN, retired
Barbara Fieldman, CAPT, USN, retired
Rick Hand, CDR, USN, retired
Brenda Lance, CAPT, USN, retired
James Martin, CAPT, USCG, retired
Norman Moser, CDR, USN, retired
Chris Paddock, CAPT, USN, retired
Yvonne Pitts, LCDR, USN, retired
Jerry Poh, LTC, USA, retired
Christine Quedens, CAPT, USCG, retired



We currently have 283 Chapter members. All Chapter members are also members of National MOAA!!

We ended 2024 with 300 active Chapter members. Of the 300 members, 7 moved and did not renew. We had 3 deaths. There were 29 members who, for whatever reason chose not to renew their Chapter membership. And we have had 22 new members this year thus far. That gets us to 283 Chapter members. So, we really need your help to get our numbers back over 300.

A <u>BIG</u> shout out to **Tom Lutes** for organizing a very successful recruiting event at Brownwood farmer's market on Saturday, March 22. We got 5 new members with promises for a few more. Helpers included Pam Fillmon, Don Hansen, Jim O'Hagan, Marc Sherrill, and yours truly. If you'd like to help



# **CHAPTER OFFICERS**

#### President

LTC Donald Hansen, USA (Ret)

#### Past President

CAPT Paul Hauser, USN (Ret)

#### First VP

Lt Col Bruce Hacker, USAF (Ret.)

#### Second VP

Pam Fillmon Sherrill

#### Treasurer

CWO3 Dennis Storey, USA (Ret)

## Secretary

SMSgt Rhonda Storey, USAF (Ret)

## Chaplain

Maj Daryl DesJardin, USAF (Ret)

## Legislative Liaison

Lt Col Bob Bienvenue, USAF (Ret)

## State Legislative Liaison

Col William Wojciechowski, USAF (Ret)

## Membership

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret)

## Personal Affairs

LtCol James O'Hagan, USMC (Ret)

## Community Affairs

Col Marcus Sherrill, USAF (Ret.)

#### Surviving Spouse Liaison

Cathie Stevens

## Provost

COL Kevin Harvey, USA (Ret.)

## Recruiting

MAJ Thomas Lutes, USA (Ret.)

#### Newsletter

LTC Luke Emerson, USA (Ret)

#### Web Site:

www.lakesumtermoaa.org

### Information:

info@lakesumtermoaa.org

Follow us on Facebook

## **Mailing Address:**

Lake & Sumter Counties Chapter – MOAA

P O Box 666

Lady Lake, FL 32158-0666

## Membership and Recruiting (Continued)

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret), Membership Chairman

with future events, please let Tom know (lutesaware@aol.com). We only do this a couple times per year and it's only for a couple hours.

Thought you might like to see some demographic information about our Chapter member

					Surviving										
	USA	USAR	ARNG	NOAA	Spouse	USAF	USAFR	Air Guard	USCG	USMC	USMCR	USN	USNR	USPHS	Honorary
Active															
Former	10	2	1			5				3		7	1		
Retired	84	11	10	3		47	6	3	6	8	1	48	5	3	
Surviving Spouse					16										
Honorary															3
Total	94	13	11	3	16	52	6	3	6	11	1	55	6	3	3

Albany NY	1	Fruitland Park	2	Okahumpka	1	Regular	251
Alexandria VA	2	Hernando	1	Ormond Beach	1	Over 90	19
Astatula	1	Howey in the Hills	1	Oxford	4	Dual spouse	10
Astor	1	Inverness	1	Palm Coast	1	Honorary	3
Bolton Landing NY	1	Lady Lake	12	Pensacola	2		
Brookfield MO	1	Lake Kathryn	1	Sorrento	1	Total	283
Canton OH	1	Leesburg	12	Springfield VA	1		
Center Hill	1	Mount Dora	7	Stafford VA	1		
Clermont	3	Ocala	1	Summerfield	7		
Eustis	3	Ocklawaha	1	The Villages	210		

As always, if you have questions or need more information, call or email me.

Stay safe.

## Chaplain's Corner

## Maj Daryl DesJardin, USAF (Ret), Chaplain

As the Norwegian Cruise Line Encore glides through the engineering marvel that is the Panama Canal, I find myself drawn to the profound spiritual metaphors that emerge from this remarkable passage. For military officers who have navigated both literal and figurative waters throughout their careers, this transit offers unique perspectives on faith that transcend specific religious traditions. The Panama Canal stands as humanity's response to a seemingly insurmountable geographical barrier. What was once an arduous journey around an entire continent has been transformed into a direct passage connecting two great oceans. This transformation mirrors the spiritual journey many of us undertake – finding pathways through life's obstacles that initially appear impossible to overcome.

## Rising and Falling Waters: Lessons in Humility and Elevation

The lock system of the Panama Canal functions on a beautifully simple principle: vessels must be raised and then lowered through a series of chambers to complete their journey. Ships entering from the Atlantic side are lifted up to Gatun Lake before being gradually lowered to meet the Pacific. Those arriving from the Pacific experience the opposite sequence. This process reminds me of spiritual teachings across traditions about humility and exaltation. As military leaders, many of us learned that true leadership requires both the humility to serve and the courage to rise to challenging circumstances. Scripture tells us, "Whoever humbles himself will be exalted," a principle demonstrated physically as our massive vessel submits to being lifted by the rising waters.

## **Patient Progress: Moving Forward in Faith**

Perhaps most striking about the Canal transit is its deliberate pace. Our ship, capable of sailing at 22 knots in open water, proceeds at barely 3 knots through the narrow channels. The journey cannot be rushed; each lock must be navigated with precision and patience. In our military careers, many of us learned the value of strategic patience – understanding that some objectives require careful timing rather than brute force. This same wisdom appears in various faith traditions. The Quran teaches that "Allah is with those who are patient," while Buddhist teachings emphasize that patience leads to peace and clarity. Christian scripture reminds us that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" – a testament to patient trust in what lies ahead even when progress seems slow.

## **Guides Along the Way**

Our vessel doesn't navigate the Canal alone. Specialized pilots board the ship to guide it through the narrow passages, lending their expertise to ensure safe passage. Similarly, in our spiritual journeys, we benefit from the guidance of those who have traveled the path before us – chaplains who served alongside us in uniform, religious leaders in our communities, and mentors who help illuminate the way forward.

## Waters that Unite Rather than Divide

What strikes me most about this engineering marvel is how it transforms a barrier into a connection. Where once an isthmus divided two oceans, now flows a channel of communion. This reminds me of how faith at its best serves not to divide humanity but to connect us across our differences. As military officers who have served alongside colleagues of various faiths and backgrounds, many of us have witnessed how shared values of service, sacrifice, and integrity transcend religious boundaries. The waters of the Canal don't distinguish between vessels flying different flags – all are welcomed to make the passage.

#### **Reflection in Still Waters**

As our journey through the Canal continues, I'm reminded of the words found in Psalm 23: "He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul." There is something restorative about this transition between oceans, a moment to pause and reflect on both where we've been and where we're headed. For those of us who have navigated the sometimes turbulent waters of military service, retirement offers its own kind of passage – a transition that benefits from spiritual reflection. Like ships passing through the Canal's locks, we too must adjust to new elevations and horizons in life's journey. The Panama Canal stands as testimony to human ingenuity, cooperation, and perseverance. As we sail through its gates, may we reflect on our own spiritual passages with gratitude for the waters that have carried us, the guides who have directed us, and the divine providence that continues to chart our course forward.

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CAPT JANET ARNETT, USN (Ret)

## Legislative Update

Bob Bienvenue, Lt Col, USAF (Ret), Legislative Liaison

## **MOAA Legislative Update:**

http://www.moaa.org/takeaction/?
tab=Legislative-ActionCenter#Legislative-Action-Center

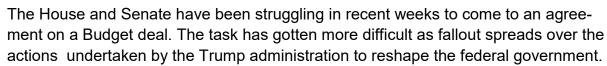


## MOAA's Advocacy in Action Campaign— Status Update



At midnight on December 20<sup>th</sup> the House passed the third Continuing resolution for FY 2025 with a majority of Democrats voting for it.

Lawmakers are now less than a month away from the March 20<sup>th</sup> deadline (set in the December CR) to pass legislation in order to prevent a funding lapse — or risk the first shutdown in years.





The procedure known as "budget reconciliation" to pass a funding package ahead of the mid-March deadline was surfaced on the Hill last week. This approach would allow the Congressional Republican leadership to bypass the 60-vote threshold needed for most bills to pass the Senate. Speaker Johnson is pushing for this in order to plus up border and defense funds and greenlight trillions of dollars in tax cuts and significant spending cuts. The House plan would also raise the debt ceiling by \$4 trillion as lawmakers face a ticking clock to prevent a national default this year.

If there is any good news in all of this is that HR 5009 "Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement Act and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year FY2025."

cleared the House on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> and was signed by President Biden last December. It's provisions must be supported by a complimentary Appropriations Bill.

Democrats have suggested they would support a Defense Appropriations Bill to do just that. House and Senate appropriators would need to come to agreement on that approach to preclude the drastic effect that another CR would have on Defense operations for the remainder of this Fiscal year (and beyond).

## **Update February 21st**

The Senate voted 52-48, to adopt a budget resolution, intended to deliver on some of President Trump's agenda.

The House Budget Committee advanced its budget resolution the previous week – competing against the Senate's Plan. The full chamber is expected to vote on it in the coming days. Speaker Johnson has laid out a timeline to pass their package out of the House by early April, with the hopes of it reaching the President by sometime between late April and Memorial Day.

## The Legislative Landscape Ahead

Congress operates in a challenging environment, with an increasing number of bills, fewer floor votes, and a growing reliance on omnibus packages. Hyper-partisan politics and fiscal constraints further complicate the path to meaningful legislation.

For MOAA's members, these trends matter because they affect how and when critical decisions on benefits, pay, and support systems are made. Without vigilance, smaller but impactful changes — like TRICARE

## Legislative Update (Continued)

Bob Bienvenue, Lt Col, USAF (Ret), Legislative Liaison

fees and pay caps — could erode the benefits members have earned.

MOAA's strategy is built to adapt to this environment. By remaining nonpartisan and focusing on collaboration across party lines, MOAA ensures its priorities are not sidelined by political gridlock. This approach is key to navigating today's legislative hurdles and delivering results for members.

In advance of the on-site visits to our legislators in their DC offices in April by the *Florida Advocacy-in- Action* teams, we will be asked to send messages requesting the support of our elected officials on bills that have provisions in sync with MOAA's legislative goals. Read more here:

**MOAA - MOAA's Legislative Priorities for the 119th Congress** 

Sign-in to MOAA's Legislative Action Center MOAA | Action Center to be informed on pending bills and Key Advocacy Issues, especially as the CR deadline approaches in just a few weeks.

## State Legislative Update

William Wojciechowski, Col, USAF (Ret), State Legislative Liaison

## STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Florida Legislature convened on March 4th and ihas much to consider during the coming months. All proposed bills have now been considered with a limited percentage to be actively heard in committee. Thirty five bills, 21 House Bills+14 in the Senate dealing with military and veterans affairs, have been proposed. Those of most interest to our MOAA membership include the following:

- --- One House bill and two Senate bills deal with property tax exemptions or discounts for disabled veterans.
- --- One House bill deals with an increase of the Homestead Exemption for disabled veterans.
- --- One House bill and one Senate bill dealing with a property tax exemption for surviving spouses of disabled veterans.
- --- Two bills dealing with toll exemptions for disabled veterans and Purple Heart recipients.
- --- Two bills deal with rental assistance for qualified veterans.
- --- One House bill deals with a sales tax exemption for disabled veterans and veterans organizations.
- --- House and Senate bills adding Social Work and School Psychologists to the compact that allow for credentialing of military personnel and their spouses without having to make formal applications to practice in Florida.

The other bills under consideration deal with providing incentives for veteran grown businesses, providing a veterans preference incentive for hiring veterans and their spouses, giving seniority and credit for retired military service for State employment and penalties for wearing military uniforms and decorations by unauthorized personnel.

## State Legislative Update (Continued)

William Wojciechowski, Col, USAF (Ret), State Legislative Liaison

## VILLAGERS FOR VETERANS (V4V) UPDATE

**Villagers for Veterans (V4V)** and our MOAA chapter are documented community outreach partners which means V4V carries a high priority philanthropic relationship with MOAA. Browsing the V4V website, <u>villagersforveterans.org</u>, you will note the services provided by this organization of volunteers--many of them MOAA members. These services include the following:

housing, service dogs, medical and mental health, job placement and career support, adaptive equipment and home modifications and women veterans. In addition to donations and MOAA support, funds are raised through a continuing list of entertainment events as noted below.

April 15---Dueling Pianos

April 24---Elvis Tribute Show

April 26---Juanita Lolita Comedy show

May 6---Kentucky Derby Party

Detailed information, ticket prices and ticket purchases can be made online through the website link noted above, Volunteer assistance is always welcomed and appreciated.

## **IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

MOAA's status as a tax-exempt veterans organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. We all need to be particularly attentive to this *non-partisanship restriction* during this very active political campaign season, when we are wearing our MOAA hat either individually or on behalf of our Chapters.

MOAA is a registered *lobbyist* with Congress. This legal designation pertains to the nature of communications with elected officials and staff. Maybe a better term to describe their effort is *advocacy:* 

the association does play an active role in the field of military personnel matters and especially proposed legislation affecting the career force, the retired community, and veterans of the uniformed services and advocates for a strong national defense it does not, as an association, become involved in matters pertaining to military strategy or individual weapons systems of the various services. The association believes that such decisions can be made only by those who have all of the facts available to them: today's actively serving military leadership.

MOAA has been recognized for the past 18 years by *The Hill News* as a TOP Lobbying Organization based on its effective advocacy on the issues defined in its governing documents and resolutions, presenting and supporting legislative proposals that provide for the fair and equitable treatment of members of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, military retirees, family members, survivors, and veterans as defined in its federal Charter in 36 USC, chapter 1404.

The Editorial Policy of this Newsletter is consistent with the discussion above.

## **Surviving Spouses Corner**

Cathie Stevens, Surviving Spouse Liaison



# Happy Easter

Just a few words to talk about emotional support during a holiday. I think a priority is Self-Care. It's important to take care of your physical and mental health through activities like exercise, healthy eating, and getting enough rest.

Reach out to friends, family, support groups or grief counselors for emotional support. We are so lucky in The Villages to have many activities throughout every day to keep us socially and physically occupied.

It's important to remember that if you are experiencing grief to realize it's a natural process and it's OK to feel a range of emotions, including sadness and confusion. Cherish the memories you have and celebrate the life of your deceased spouse.

Have a wonderful Easter Holiday weekend however you plan to spend the time.

## Cathie





## **Editorial Policy**

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MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization. It is our Chapter responsibility to adhere to MOAA standards in all regards. Membership is open to anyone who has served as a commissioned or warrant officer in any of the eight military services, or is the surviving spouse of an individual who was a member or was eligible to be a member of MOAA.

This newsletter is a publication of the Lake and Sumter Counties Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America. It is intended for wide distribution to all MOAA members in Lake, Sumter and Marion Counties, Florida.

Input for Officers' Call, including text and pictures, can be emailed to the editor:





Click above to see what's going on in the state!



# LAKE & SUMTER COUNTIES CHAPTER MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

## P.O. BOX 666 Lady Lake, FL 32158-0666

MEMBERSHIP A	APPLICATION		Today's Date://						
Membership is open	to those who	have served	duty as a c	commissione	d or wa	rrant			
officer in any of the	seven uniformed se	rvices of the	USA, and who	o are memb	ers of nati	ional			
MOAA. Chapter mer	mbership is separate	from nationa	l membership a	and carries it	s own due	S.			
Members age 90 and o	over become Chapte	r Life Membe	ers with no due	S.					
First Name:			Middle Initia	l:	_				
Last Name:			Suffix:	_					
Type Membership:	Regular	Surviv	ing Spouse						
Status:	Active Dut	yRetire	dFormer	Officer					
Rank:		Service	:						
Date of Birth:	/ /								
Mailing Address:									
City:			St:	Zip: _					
Phone:		Email:							
I am a current Mo I wish to join Nat					Annual (circle one)	Basic			
Annual Dues Fee: Re	gular Member: \$2	0 Survivii	ng Spouse Men	nber: \$10					
This is an application	n for: a new (	Chapter mem	ber or	Renewa	ı				
We are a 501(c)(19) t to our Junior ROTC	_								
	_	•			Dues:				
			J	ROTC Don	ation:				
				Total Subn	nitted:				

Membership application may also be submitted at <a href="http://www.lakesumtermoaa.org/Join?showall=0">http://www.lakesumtermoaa.org/Join?showall=0</a>

Make Check Payable to: MOAA Mail to: MOAA, PO Box 666, Lady Lake, FL 32158