



The Council Communiqué

Florida Council of Chapters
Military Officers Association of America



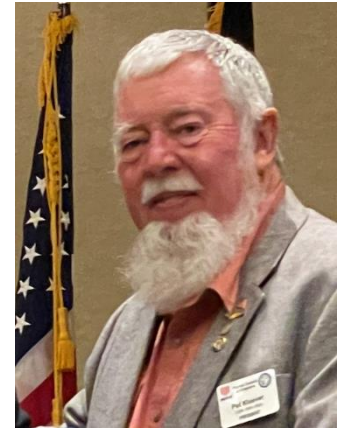
February 2024

Issue 180



President's Message

CDR Patrick R (Pat) Kluever, USN, Ret.
Naval Aviator (1320) - Navy Test Pilot School
Graduate (Class-71)



Mind Your Helm Coxswain! We have cleared the rocky shoals of 2023, and we've set course into new and uncharted waters of 2024.

First Mate Steve Bond did a great job in the next article covering the recent Leadership Training Seminar (LTS) in Orlando, so I'll focus on a few other items here.

With our Board's approval last Fall, we invested some of our treasury into investments guided by the FCoC Budget & Finance Committee with the sound advice of recently retired investment counselor Paul Loschiavo and a professional investment agent. The returns so far are noteworthy, and the status reported at each Board meeting, which Chapter leaders are all invited to attend.

We received resounding support from both MOAA national and Chapter leaders for the teaming concept with small groups for sharing best practices. We will incorporate that format into topical updates at future events and blend that session with more focused informational sessions for in-depth updates.

Marc Oliveri conducted a tour of the new FCoC website in the large session on Friday afternoon, and a workshop for webmasters on Saturday afternoon in the hospitality suite. A lesson learned is that we should put sessions together on one day that need internet access, and pay the extra cost of a sufficient number of accesses to support the goals of the session. My apologies to Marc and those who were frustrated by a slow internet service in the hospitality suite on Saturday afternoon.

MOAA national's confidence in MOAA Florida's strength and drive allows us to work collaboratively to test out new concepts - those uncharted waters I spoke about above. In 2024, with strong support from BK, and the Councils and Chapters team (Jim Carman, Tank and Dena) we will activate a MOAA Virtual Network in Florida. That effort has four goals; (1) add all Florida MOAA members to be an active informed team of concerned advocates for our pay and benefits, and MOAAs objectives, (2) establish a demand-pull from network participants for regular virtual updates of focused relevant information

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on their pay, benefits, taxes, insurance, etc., (3) make participants aware of geographic Chapters for membership as proximity allows, and (4) as the word spreads about the value (and ease) of participation, recruit new members to join MOAA. Steve provides more information about the network in the next article. We are working on the products to engage new participants, and establish that demand-pull from those on the virtual team as soon as non-Chapter-member contact information is available. A lynch-pin in making this contact information available is the successful transition to the new Association Management Systems (AMS), so we are hopeful for an on-schedule roll out by the end of March 2024.

MOAA national’s confidence in MOAA Florida’s strength and drive allows us to work collaboratively to test out new information

Steve did a great job in Orlando getting Area Vice Presidents and Chapter leaders on the same page with the current Chapter Health Assessment criteria. Now we can move on to refinement as needed and accurate assessments during 2024. Keep those four pillars of assessment in the forefront of planning during this year; (1) Membership, (2) Operations, (3) Leadership, and (4) Awards. 2024 Chapter assessments will be due to support the 17-18 January 2025 LTS in Orlando at the Rosen Centre. Look for registration to open in September 2025.

This year FCoC awarded \$100 for each “green” Chapter, and \$250 to the most improved Chapter - this year’s most improved Chapter was Tallahassee Chapter unanimously chosen by all Triad leaders - Congratulation!! To President Cheryl Walters and her team - Well Done & Bravo Zulu!! The Triad is discussing new methods of incentivizing Chapter leaders during 2024, but I think the “Most Improved Chapter” will be a repeating cash award category for awhile; plan ahead to both announce and demonstrate improvement of 2023.

BK, Tank and Dena helped us welcome new Florida Council and Chapter leaders in Orlando. MOAA National helped us bring those members to Orlando for training at this year’s event. Thank You to BK and General North for honoring that commitment!

Welcoming New Crew Onboard:

COL Joe Napoli, USA (Ret) I appointed Joe as Southeast AVP relieving COL Paul Loschiavo at the Fall Board meeting. Paul is taking is 38 foot cruiser on “the big loop” - up the east coast (Spring) - across and through the great lakes (Summer), down the central US river system (Fall) -

NOTABLE DATES FOR FEBRUARY & MARCH

February

- Black History Month
- Four Chaplains Day - Feb. 3
- USO Birthday - Feb. 4
- National Salute to Veteran Patients - Week of Feb. 12
- Valentine’s Day - Feb. 14
- President’s Day - Feb. 19
- Coast Guard Reserve Birthday - Feb. 19

March

- Women’s History Month
- Navy Reserve Birthday - Mar. 3
- Hug a GI Day - Mar. 4
- Seabee Birthday – Mar. 5
- Daylight Saving Time Begins – Mar. 10
- K-9 Veterans Day – Mar. 13
- American Legion Birthday – Mar. 15
- St. Patrick’s Day - Mar. 17
- Rosie the Riveter Day – Mar. 21
- Medal of Honor Day – Mar. 25
- National Vietnam War Veterans Day – Mar. 29

and back around Florida to home (Winter). Fair winds and flowing seas to Paul and Jill. Joe Napoli will be elected as SE AVP at the May Convention in Daytona Beach. Paul will continue to provide investment advice with on “the big loop”. Welcome Aboard Joe!

CWO2 Pierre Lewis, USMC (Ret) Pierre is our new Legislative Affairs on FCoC relieving LtCol Bob Bienvenue. Pierre and Bob started their turnover after the Fall Board meeting, and I appointed Pierre as FCoC LA at the recent Orlando Board meeting. Pierre and I will work together this year to plan the 2024 Advocacy in Action engagements in DC, and Pierre will attend the AiA event as a Team Lead. Welcome Aboard Pierre!

COL Bill Wojciechowski USAF (Ret) Outgoing FCoC LA Bob Bienvenue recommended establishing a Defense State Liaison Office (DSLO) Committee Chair and the Board approved that addition at the Fall Board meeting. Bill and Bob shared Bob’s vision for a DSLO Chair and Bill will start with a clean slate to handle those issues for the Florida Council. Welcome Aboard Bill!

FLORIDA CONVENTION 2024

We have an amazing hotel right on the beach in Daytona (Shores Resort & Spa) 13-14 May 2024 with 208 rooms to fill with great food, entertainment, awards, and critical updates for members and spouses. We chose weekdays to get better prices. On Sunday 12 May there is a catered welcome dinner for the setup team and attendees coming a distance, Wednesday 15 May is a 2nd morning Board meeting for FCoC and Chapter leaders, and the hotel offers an extended stay at the event rate (significantly discounted) for up to two days. The weekend rates go up again to ~\$350 per night. Elections will be held for Council President, Vice President and three Area Vice Presidents - we need all Chapters to be represented to ensure the needed presence for a valid election. **We Need You There!!**

Don’t forget that special person on Valentine’s Day – Wednesday, February 14th or be prepared to walk the plank.

STEER BY YOUR STAR AND NOT BY YOUR WAKE - WE HAVE PLACES TO GO AND GREAT THINGS TO ACCOMPLISH

Best Regards, Pat K.





Vice President's Message

COL Steve Bond, USA (Ret)

It was great seeing so many of our chapter leaders in Orlando at our recent Leadership Training Seminar!

The purpose of our annual Leadership Training Seminar (LTS) is to train chapter leaders to be effective in the larger MOAA organization. We focused this seminar on improving the health of our chapters across the State, but this one was different. As in the past, we heard from MOAA and Council leaders, including MOAA President and CEO, Lt. Gen. "BK" Kelly (USAF, Ret), MOAA Council and Chapter Director, CAPT Frank Michael. Our new council webmaster, LTC Mark Oliveri (USA, Ret), introduced chapter leaders to our new website, www.FLMOAA.org. It is now live and specifically designed to be a resource for chapter leaders. There was a breakout for all spouses to prepare and discuss 'survivorship' led by Pat Green and Renee Brunelle. The difference with this LTS was the small group workshops, centered on the Council's seven area, with Area Vice Presidents, along with new and experienced chapter leaders sharing ideas on building stronger chapters. The small group format allowed chapter leaders to discuss specific problems, share ideas, and most importantly, potential solutions. Overall, the comments we received on the LTS were extremely positive.

At the seminar, we also proposed three "big ideas" for the Council to implement as well. You will be seeing more on these over the coming months:

- **Member Databases (DB):** Chapters currently maintain three member DBs at the MOAA, Council, and Chapter-levels. This is cumbersome at best and lends itself to latency and inaccuracies. To resolve this, we are going to use the MOAA member DB—the Committee Module—as the base for the both the council DB and for chapters, with chapters adding in, their "associate members" (those not eligible for MOAA membership such as spouses, honorary members). At the LTS, we also discussed with the MOAA national reps the possibility of obtaining the DB for rest of the MOAA members in Florida--about 35,000 MOAA members residing in Florida, who are not in a chapter to our Council DB. Which brings me to the next idea.
- **Create a Florida-wide "Virtual Network":** We are going to create a virtual community of interest for all MOAA members in Florida. The significance of this is it takes us from an organization of 38 Chapters with 4,000 members, to an organization of 35,000 members! This will serve to reinforce MOAA's national legislative agenda, inform all the MOAA members residing in Florida of State legislative issues that we support, encourage our community service and charitable giving, invite them to our Conventions, and let them know of the great work being done in the state by our chapters, as well as encourage those non-chapter members to join their local chapter. At the LTS, we received approval from MOAA national to implement this concept.

- **Expand our State-wide Community Service and Philanthropy Efforts:** While chapters do an excellent job impacting their communities, we plan to leverage our chapter and member network to expand our charitable giving and community service State-wide. One example, we are currently working on a partnership with Southeastern Guide Dogs to help identify veterans that would benefit from a service or guide dog, encourage volunteer activities, and charitable giving with this organization.

I think everyone attending the LTS went away with ideas to make their chapters better, stronger, and more impactful in their communities. We plan to continue to build on the small group format for the future. The information briefings, reference material, and pictures from the LTS are available on-line. Click the button to download this information for use in your chapters or use the Quick Reference (QR) Code below to go to the link.



Oh, by the way, we are moving into a busy time of the year with the Advocacy in Action Campaign and our annual Convention in May. Thank you to all our volunteer leaders—I salute every one of you that continue to demonstrate what it means to “Never Stop Serving”!

Let me know if you have any questions.

Steve



Council Board of Directors Meeting



Words from the President & CEO




Florida Council of Chapters Military Officers Association of America Leadership Training Seminar

26-27 January 2024

**Briefing Charts,
Reference Material,
and Photos**

Scan the QR Code for the Link to
Seminar Workshop Material

Thank you to our Business Partners!

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Table Vendors























OK, time to get to work!



The President is listening!



Awards Galore!



Camaraderie with a Purpose!



Let's see if Frank Michael and MOAA can help!



It isn't work if you are having fun!

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2024

- 16 FEB 16: Harris Communication Award Input Due
- 16 FEB: Levels Of Excellence Award Inputs Due
- 16 FEB: Legislative Liaison Strobridge Nomination Closes
- 16 FEB: Surviving Spouse Excellence Award Nomination Closes
- 28 FEB: MOAA Community Outreach Grant submissions Due
- 29 FEB: Roundtable - Committee Module
- 01 MAR: Scholarship applications window closes
- 08 MAR: Tampa Chapter visit by Jim Carman
- 13-14 MAR: Virtual New Leader Training Workshop
- 28 MAR: Roundtable - Advocacy in Action 2024
- 15-19 APR: 2024 AiA Teams to Washington D.C.
- 25 APR: Roundtable - Marketing
- 13-15 MAY: 2024 Annual FCoC / West Volusia Chapter Convention - Daytona Beach -Shores Resort & Spa
- 30 MAY: Roundtable - Individual Awards Program
- 31 MAY: AMBA (Mercer) Ad Program Application Closes
- 27 JUN: Roundtable - Generational Recruiting
- 25 JUL: Roundtable - Chapter Health Update
- 14-15 AUG: Virtual Experienced Leader Training Workshop
- 29 AUG: Roundtable - Council / Chapter Visit Program
- 19 OCT (TBD): Fall virtual FCoC Board Meeting
- 24 OCT: Roundtable - Organizational Awards
- 21 NOV: Roundtable - Community Outreach
- 19 DEC: 2024 Review / 2025 Preview

2025

- 17-18 JAN: FCoC Leadership Training Seminar - Rosen Centre, Orlando



Chaplain's Message

By CH (COL) Anthony P. "Tony" Clark, ARNG (Ret)

"To be really happy and really safe, one ought to have at least two or three hobbies, and they must all be real." Winston Churchill

Alexa reminded me this morning that January is National Hobby Month and so it seems meet and right to reflect a bit on hobbies, most especially why they are important for our well-being. I spent a few minutes consulting Google about hobbies and found a wealth of articles outlining the importance of hobbies in our life. So why continue our current hobbies or start a new one?

For starters, hobbies promote active leisure. Active leisure may mean physically active in the sense of running, walking, swimming, hiking, or playing golf. Two of my hobbies fit in this physically active category: walking a monthly 5K (which requires regular walking throughout the month) and playing or practicing golf. Walking keeps my body moving (according to Tom Petty, if "you never slow down, you never grow old") and allows my mind to wander: mulling over the latest challenge at work, admiring the sunset, SQUIRREL!

Active leisure may also mean mentally active in the sense of crosswording, jigsaw puzzling, or reading. I think another one of my hobbies, cooking, falls into this category, especially when I'm adapting a recipe or creating a recipe from a combination of ingredients. These "mental" hobbies keep our minds active, keep us curious, and keep us on pace as lifelong learners.

Our hobbies, whatever they may be, also make us more interesting at cocktail parties and around the water cooler by adding layers to our identity. We are more than our job (or the job from which we retired): we are our hobbies as well. I am a retired Army officer AND a walker, cook, and golfer. And these added dimensions to our identity – our hobbies – can lead to new friendships and social connections.

Finally, this multidimensional identity because of our hobbies builds resilience. Many of us, for example, found our identity in uniform. When we (or anyone else who leaves work for the last time) hang up that uniform after retirement, it can shake our identity to the core. Who am I beyond my work identity? Hobbies help us navigate life well when another dimension of life struggles. Winston Churchill, for example, turned to painting when his political career took a wicked tumble in 1915

after the failed Dardanelles Campaign. His essay, *Painting as a Pastime*, is itself a fine apology on the importance of hobbies and pastimes for a life well lived.

Let me close this brief reflection on hobbies with a few questions to consider:

What are your hobbies? Have they changed over the years? How do they enrich your identity?

Do your hobbies challenge you? Do they bring satisfaction? Do they relieve stress?

What new hobbies might you consider? Can you try a 6-month trial to audition a hobby?

“The cultivation of a hobby and new forms of interest is therefore of first importance to a public man [and woman.]” Winston Churchill

2024 FCoC Convention Update

MAJ Pete Durnell, USAF, Ret
2024 Convention Planner

The holidays are now behind us, and we look forward to the New Year with anticipation. We all hope that 2024 will be a “good” year both for us individually and for the country. 2024, as you will not have failed to notice, is an election year so it will be time for all of us to do our civic duty and vote.

2024, as again you will not have failed to note, is time for us once again gather together, celebrate our accomplishments, outline our goals, and generally enjoy each other’s company. As a reminder, it will be May 12 through May 15, 2024, at The Shores Resort and Spa in Daytona Beach. I invite you to take a moment to watch a short video produced by the host chapter, the West Volusia MOAA Chapter, which welcomes you to the convention and gives a quick overview of our convention hotel and opportunities available in the Daytona Beach area. Please click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vp-sqWR30o8>

When you read this the FCoC web site will be up and running with the Convention Registration information and form there. Please register as soon as you can as the window for registration only runs through mid-April. The hotel will take back unregistered rooms that have been set aside for our use if they have not been filled by this date and, importantly, people who register after this date will likely have to pay the hotel’s full room rate.

Speaking of the full rate, our contract with the hotel allows us to offer two extra nights at the hotel at the same rate as you’d pay during the convention nights. You can extend your stay one night (Wednesday night) or two nights (Wednesday and Thursday nights). This is well worth doing as there is so much you can do in Daytona Beach. Or you can do nothing and just sit on the hotel’s terrace, by the pool, lounge on the beach, or hang at the tiki bar. There is also the hotel’s Spa. Please consider staying the extra day or two and pamper yourself.

So, what can you do if you extend your stay at the Shores after the convention? Here's a quick list of things to do:

- Tour Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (Wednesday at 10 AM)
- Daytona International Speedway
- Motorsport Hall of Fame
- Jackie Robinson Stadium (Games on Tuesdays and Sundays)
- Ponce Inlets Lighthouse and Museum.
- The Marine Science Center collocated with the Lighthouse.
- Golf at the LPGA Golf Courses.
- Hankster's Hot Rods Classic Car Showroom.
- Angell & Phelps Chocolate Factory
- Luau Fire and Hula Dinner Show
- Lady Dolphin of Daytona Dinner and River Cruise
- The Cici & Hyatt Brown Art Museum (all Florida art)
- The Museum of Arts & Sciences (MOAS)
- Tanger Outlets
- Top of Daytona Restaurant (next to the hotel)
- Drive over to ORLANDO where there might be a thing or two to do.

Fine, but what of the convention itself? The agenda is available on the FCoC web site so you can see it when you register. Some highlights: Sunday night there will be a Welcome dinner – space is limited. Monday's highlight will be the President's Reception to be held on the hotel's Ocean Terrace followed by a special Magic & Comedy Show presented by Todd Bogue, Florida Magician of the Year.

Tuesday is a full day of activities but keep an eye out for the Brunch which will start at 10 AM. We will have two speakers who you will be very pleased to hear; Volusia Sheriff Mike Chitwood who will talk about policing and interactions with veterans, and Brigadier General Richard Coffey, Commander of the Florida Air National Guard, who will talk about Florida's National Guard.

Following Brunch, the FCoC will present several sessions that will update members on MOAA and legislative matters. During this time starting at 1 PM spouses and others so interested can go to Lillian Place Heritage Center and the Hotchkiss House to view the collection and, importantly, have afternoon tea hosted by FCoC and MOAA. Starting at about 3 PM we are pleased to have the Copper Bottom Craft Distillery offer some of their special rums for tasting in the Hospitality Suite (this is a free event, but registration is needed so we can track participation – a donation is politely requested).

The big event of Tuesday will be, of course, the Military Ball. It will start with a pre-dinner reception at the top of the hotel overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Then back down on the ground level and in the main ballrooms for dinner, a keynote speech, presentations, and so forth. We will wind down the main part of the convention at the conclusion and wish everyone safe travels – except for those staying for the final board meeting or those who have extended their stay.

Please, at your earliest opportunity go to the FCoC web site and begin the registration process.....and many thanks for doing so.



Legislative Affairs

CWO2 Pierre Louis, USMC, Ret., Legislative Chair



	<p>MOAA Legislative Update: Read about the latest MOAA Advocacy News and Calls-to-Action here.</p>	
	<p>https://moaa.quorum.us/</p>	

This month, I want to revisit and amplify some of the comments and questions vetted at the recent Leadership Training. One of the objectives was to incorporate training that would allow members to understand and increase our activity in the Legislative Action and the Quorum sections.

The Legislative Action Center is a section on the national website that gives members the tools they need to effectively advocate for policy. This center is the most important part of our work to change policies that affect the benefits that veterans, active duty military (including the National Guard and Reserve), former officers, and their families have earned. Some of the most important things about the Legislative Action Center are:

1. The center keeps members up-to-date on important legislative problems that affect them. Members can get a better sense of the issues at stake by reading analyses of current bills, policy ideas, and government actions.
2. Members are notified quickly when important changes happen in the law. There are often calls to action in these alerts, telling members to talk to their chosen officials about important issues right away.
3. The platform has a number of tools that can help with lobbying. This includes notes and emails that have already been written and can be sent directly to lawmakers, as well as advice on how to talk to policymakers effectively and set up and run meetings with elected officials.
4. Members can see how MOAA's most important advocacy efforts are going. The center gives people up-to-date information on how new laws are doing in Congress, such as vote counts, bill amendments, and referrals to committees.

5. Members can make their advocacy efforts more specific by using the available tools. Members can find out how to get in touch with their individual congressional representatives, personalize their messages, and share personal stories or insights that show why the legislation being considered is important.
6. The Legislative Action Center of MOAA is also an educational resource. It has articles, webinars, and other materials that help members stay up-to-date on policy problems and advocacy strategies that affect the military.
7. The center invites members to work together and build communities. Members can have a bigger effect on policy decisions when we work together as a collective team for advocacy activities.

The Quorum area is the most important part of the LAC. This area shows a more advanced and data-driven part. It is a legislative tracking program that gives you actions taken and next-level information so we can keep an eye on and change the way policies are made. When it's added to the Legislative Action Center, it makes it much easier for us lobby in a number of ways:

1. Members can keep an eye on military-related bills at some stages of the legislative process. This means keeping an eye on things like new bills, changes to existing bills, committee orders, and votes on the floor. This is done by following the source links that are listed on the site.
2. The platform has strong analytics tools that look at data from the legislature. This can include things like sponsorship and co-sponsorship, and how likely it is that a bill will be passed.
3. The section, if used properly, can showcase the most important people in the legislative process, like committee members, and other groups whose goals are similar to yours.
4. National MOAA can get its members to move quickly by telling them about important legislative moments. For example, they can be told to call their representatives or join advocacy campaigns.
5. MOAA can use Quorum to make unique reports about changes in the law, the results of their lobbying efforts, and how involved their members are. This information is very important for figuring out how well their strategies are working and making choices based on facts.
6. Quorum makes it easier to talk to lawmakers in a focused way. If members want to, they can use the platform to write and send lawmakers and their staff personalized messages, position papers, or testimonies about certain legislative problems.

The table below provides a great depiction of our advocacy efforts. MOAA has a base of **362,000 members** and the State of Florida has approximately **38,000 members**.

Total number of Legislative Action Center users that have self-identified as members of the Florida Council	1086
Total number of Legislative Action Center users that have a Florida address (this includes those who have self-identified as belonging to a Florida Chapter or Council and those who have not)	2811
Percentage of Legislative Action Center users from Florida that have self-identified as members of the Florida Council	39%
Total number of National MOAA Legislative Action Center users	23,042

Percentage of the total number of Legislative Action Center users that have a Florida address	12%
Total number of 'Call to Action' letters sent on the Major Richard Star Act campaign in 2023 from Florida Council and Chapter members	1249
Total number of 'Call to Action' letters sent on the Major Richard Star Act campaign in 2023 from users that have a Florida address (this includes those who have self-identified as belonging to a Florida Chapter or Council and those who have not)	2835
Percentage of Legislative Action Center users from Florida that sent 'Call to Action' letters on the Major Richard Star Act campaign in 2023 that belong to the Florida Council	44%
Total number of 'Call to Action' letters sent in 2023	25,154
Percentage of the total number of 'Call to Action' letters sent in 2023 from Florida	11%
Total number of Legislative Action Center users that have self-identified as members of the Florida Council	1086

On January 18, 2024, President Biden signed a third Continuing Resolution. Consequently, the deadline that legislators often fail to meet in order to approve a comprehensive budget is of concern to everyone. The following is a link to request lawmakers to avoid a government shutdown and finish the much needed work of the appropriations process. [Ask Your Lawmakers to Pass a Budget](#), to mitigate a disruption to services, furloughs for federal employees, and other unintended consequences. So far, we have 12,965 Actions Taken and 7035 actions are needed to push this action to reach the next goal. Below is an excerpt from a recent article authored by Kevin Lilley on www.moaa.org. For a full reading of the article that addresses some salient points, please click on the link [The Budget Mess STILL Threatens Service member Pay. Ask Congress to Act](#)

By: Kevin Lilley - January 17, 2024

Another [short-term spending deal](#) – the third since the end of the last fiscal year – should keep the government open into March, again extending lawmakers’ frequently missed deadline to pass a full budget.

MOAA has continued its work to push Congress toward full funding – work supported by more than 10,000 messages to House members and senators via our Legislative Action Center.

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your Lawmakers to Pass a Budget](#)]

While we remain focused on eliminating the waste and budget uncertainty caused by these continuing resolutions, there’s an even greater uncertainty faced by those in uniform: Should these resolutions ever fail, resulting in a federal funding lapse, service members would need to stay on the job without pay until lawmakers resolved the situation.

During past budget battles, lawmakers secured funds [to prevent this very situation](#) – either via an already-passed defense appropriations bill or special legislation designed to protect service members' bank accounts. Such protections aren’t in place this time around, but as brinkmanship continues on Capitol Hill, it’s time for lawmakers to provide reassurance that they will, in fact, support our troops.

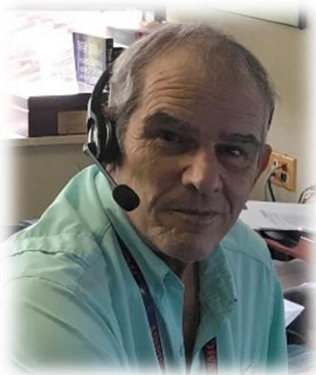


[TAKE ACTION: [Urge Your Elected Officials to Pay Service members During a Shutdown](#)]

MOAA's work on this issue takes place on multiple fronts. First, we've worked with Congress to introduce the Pay Our Troops Act (H.R. 5641) and the Pay Our Military Act (H.R. 5667/S. 2835), legislation which would not only secure the pay of those serving under DoD, but also members of the Coast Guard – an important expansion of previous legislation.

Following MOAA's collection of data from its diverse membership via the [Advocacy in Action Topic Input Form](#), they have determined the top three priority issues for discussion during AiA week: 1. The Major Richard Act, 2. BAH Restoration Act, and 3. Protecting TRICARE for Life. I will provide you with updates as we approach the April 15 Advocacy week.

“Never Stop Taking Action”



Personal Affairs

COL Paul Loschiavo, USMCR (Ret)
Certified Financial Planner (tm) & Puppy Raiser

Southeastern Guide Dogs (SEGD) & Mahomes

Jill and I went to the MOAA Convention in the summer of 2019. One of the “vendors” there was a woman from Southeastern Guide Dogs, an organization that breeds and trains guide dogs. While I went to MOAA meetings, Jill visited with SEG D. Before we left, she told Karen from SEG D that when our dog “passes on, we’ll train a dog.”

Flash forward to March 2023. Our hundred pound, twelve-year-old giant schnauzer lost the battle with Lupus. He was a great dog and we were both feeling pretty badly.

Within a week, I went to the SEG D website and filled out the application. Surprised for about a *minute*, Jill quickly got engaged with the process. She helped complete the application and accumulated the required references. Jill has top billing in this venture.

We read the 120 page manual, then took a written test. There was a Zoom interview and a Zoom inspection of our home.

Finally, they said “you’re approved.” We received *Mahomes* on June 8. He was seven weeks old at that point.

Between the manual, weekly Zoom training sessions, several “walk-and-talks” where we take Mahomes to a mall or Home Depot and he does a FaceTime exercise, and a gazillion rules about raising a Guide Dog puppy, *Mahomes* is now in his eighth month and growing nicely.

He’s a specifically bred Labrador-Golden Retriever who weighs about sixty pounds. Though he’s probably as big as he’ll be, he’s behaviorally a *teenager*. Yes, he keeps us hopping.

At about the four month point, he earned his “puppy coat” indicating that he’s a “Service Dog.” This allows him into just about everywhere.

He’s been to numerous restaurants, a bunch of stores, and recently did his first night in a hotel during the FCOC Leadership Training Seminar (LTS). Wherever he went, he was the center of attention. Fortunately, most people know that a dog wearing a service coat is *working*, and you should not try to pet the dog.

Coincidentally, SEGD was at this year’s LTS as a sponsor. In about six months, *Mahomes* will go back to SEGD for Puppy College for another year of training. If he’s great when he graduates, he’ll be a seeing eye dog for a visually impaired person. If he’s good, he’ll most likely end up as a service dog for a veteran battling PTS.

Pat Kluever and Steve Bond mentioned several times that FCOC will attempt to get a MOAA Grant for SEGD, and that’s *great!*

SEGD needs the money as it costs \$40,000 to train a service dog for a veteran and \$60,000 to train a dog to help a visually impaired person. The recipients of the dogs pay *nothing*.

But SEGD also needs puppy raisers. Currently, they have puppy raisers for nineteen puppies, and seven more puppies *looking for* raisers. (Jill and I are “raisers.”)

This is where *you* can come in. Few folks in the seventy-year-old range are looking to start raising a puppy who may last ten to twelve years. But when you take a SEGD puppy, you agree to keep and train a puppy for a three month, six month, or twelve month period. It’s hardly a lifetime commitment.

I’m not saying that raising a puppy is easy... it’s not. You need to “house-break” the puppy (this was not really that hard...), and you teach them simple commands such as “sit,” “down,” and “get busy.” But puppies have a ton of energy, and when they are awake, they are in motion. (And



puppy teeth are sharp!)

But there’s no doubt in my mind that there will be tears in our eyes when we drop him off later this year.



Jill and I don’t work for SEGD. We are raisers. We are also on the list of donors. If you think you might be interested in being a puppy raiser, connect with Jill or me. Send an email to paul.loschiavo.cfp@gmail.com and give me your phone number. We’ll call you.

Of course, you can go to guidedogs.org and connect with them directly.

Like going to Jump School, it can be hard while you’re doing it, but when you’re finished, you’ll feel great for having done it.

P.S. *Mahomes* got his name from a donor who paid five thousand dollars for the right to pick that name. *Mahomes* has a cousin in another litter named *Kelce*. No word on a female puppy being named “*Swift*.”



Florida Department of Veterans Affairs Update

Lt Col R. Steven Murray, USAF (Ret.)
Communications Director, Florida Department of Veterans Affairs

Governor’s 2024 Focus on Florida’s Future Budget Provides Vital Funding to Veteran Community

TALLAHASSEE – Gov. Ron DeSantis’ 2024 Budget provides timely and essential services and support to the State’s Veterans, their families and survivors through the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs (FDVA).

FDVA is a constitutionally chartered department responsible for serving the Nation’s estimated second largest Veteran population. Operating as the premier point of entry for Florida’s nearly 1.5 million Veterans, FDVA operates a network of State Veterans’ Homes and provides statewide outreach to connect Veterans with earned services, benefits and support.

“Florida is the State of choice for our Nation’s Veterans and their families, thanks to the powerful leadership and advocacy of Governor Ron DeSantis,” said retired Marine Corps Major General James S. “Hammer” Hartsell, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. “As



a Navy Veteran, Governor DeSantis spearheads our effort to ensure Florida is a national leader in honoring and supporting our Veterans. Since taking office, he and his administration have committed hundreds of millions of dollars to our department, helping to ensure a positive future for our nation's heroes. Working together toward a positive future for Florida Veterans and their families, Florida continues to be the most Veteran friendly and sought after state in the Nation."

The Governor's Focus on Florida's Future Budget invests an additional \$8.9 million to support equipment and capital improvements for the State Veterans' Nursing Homes. The budget also includes \$102 million to begin the construction of the ninth State Veterans' Nursing Home in Collier County upon federal grant approval. Once this new nursing home is complete, Florida will have the most state-funded veterans' nursing homes in the nation.

The Governor's Focus on Florida's Future Budget also continues a \$2 million investment to assist veterans in securing meaningful skills-based employment, provide employers a skilled talent pipeline, and to assist veterans in creating and operating a small business.

Included in this year's budget recommendation is an increase in the number of Veterans' Claims Examiners in Florida, reflecting an expanding population influx, the state's large Veteran population and the addition and expansion of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health care facilities.

The Governor's recommended budget funds a dental grant program that will enable deserving qualified Florida Veterans to receive no-cost dental care to improve their general health, as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports only 15 percent of enrolled Veterans are eligible for dental care.

Florida Veterans' Affairs Supports State's 1.4 Million Veterans

Operating as the premier point of entry for Florida's more than 1.4 million Veterans, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) operates a network of nine State Veterans' Homes and provides statewide outreach to connect Veterans with their earned services, benefits and support.

In 2023, FDVA State Veterans' Service Officers assisted more than 281,000 Florida Veterans in providing information and counsel on earned services and benefits. In addition, our service officers processed nearly 41,000 new claims on behalf of Florida Veterans and helped recover more than \$245 million in retroactive benefits for Florida Veterans and their families. If you seek no-cost advice or counseling regarding Veterans issues, please contact one of our State Veterans' Service Officers at (727) 319-7440 or via email at FDVA.VSO@FDVA.FL.GOV.

The 2024 Florida Legislative Session began on Jan. 9 and is scheduled to run for 60 days. FDVA is sponsoring two primary pieces of legislation this session. Senate Bill 174 and House Bill 725 seek to allow admission of eligible spouses to our network of State Veterans' Homes. Senate Bill 1004 and House Bill 727 seek to increase to property value tax exemption from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for service-connected disabled Veterans with a 10% or higher disability rating. You can follow the progress of all Veteran-related legislation and our agency's budget for the coming fiscal year by visiting the FDVA website at www.FloridaVets.org and clicking on "Veteran Legislation."



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February Quiz:

You may have noticed from the Notable Dates calendar that the USO's birthday was February 4th. Do you know what "USO" is an abbreviation for? And, do you know who the original six associations were that formed the USO?

Read through the Communiqué for the Answer





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Former, Active, Retired Military Officers, Warrant Officers & Surviving Spouses

JOIN A FLORIDA MOAA CHAPTER

- . Advocacy from the National to the State and Local levels**
- . Philanthropy and Community Service**
- . Camaraderie with a Purpose!**

MOAA chapters unite active duty, former, and retired officers and warrant officers from every branch of service, including the National Guard and Reserve, as well as their spouses. Membership in a chapter provides an opportunity to connect with fellow officers, networking, grassroots legislative advocacy, community service, philanthropy, and much more.

Connect with other, like minded officers committed to keeping our military strong and ensuring promises made to veterans are kept.

There are 39 MOAA Chapters in Florida. Find your nearest Florida MOAA Chapter now by visiting our website (www.MOAAFL.org) or scanning the QR Code:

www.MOAAFL.org/Membership.aspx



NEVER STOP SERVING

June 2023

Florida Council of Chapters "Chapter News"

Citrus County Chapter

By COL Mark Bodenheim USAR (Ret), Membership Director



Chapter officers and directors elected and installed for the 2024-2025 period during the chapter's annual installation dinner event are (left to right) Col. Pete Tan, USA (Ret), immediate past president; Lt. Col. Tom Pettigrew, USAF (Ret), Special Events Director; Maj. Bob Bugner, ARNG (Ret), Legislative Director; Col. Mark Bodenheim, USA (Ret), Membership Director, Communications Director; Maj. Rich Reddy, USA (Fmr), Secretary; Col. Max Schulman, USAF (Ret), Vice President; Ltjg Jeff Krug, USN (Fmr), President; and the installing officer Capt. Jim Carman, USN (Ret) from national MOAA. Not pictured were Capt. Terri Harrison, USN (Ret), Personal Affairs and Surviving Spouse Director; and Lcdr Gary Runyon, USN (Ret), Treasurer

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Citrus County Chapter president (center) Col. Pete Tan, USA (Ret), receives the 2022 national MOAA Five Star Levels of Excellence (LOE) award and the Five Star Col. Marvin J. Harris Communications award from (right) Capt. Jim Carman, USN (Ret), the national MOAA Vice President of Council/Chapter and Member Support. Also pictured (left) is the MOAA Florida Council of Chapters Middle Central Area Vice President Lt. Col. Dan Hill, USA (Ret). The LOE Five Star award is the highest national MOAA award a chapter may receive based upon its operations, communications, membership services and community engagement. The presentation took place at the chapter's annual installation dinner on Dec. 7, 2023 at Citrus Hills Golf and Country Club.



Lee Coast Chapter

Fred Bondurant

Sanibel Annual Veterans Day Celebration

Notwithstanding the issues of personnel changes at the city, traffic, ongoing construction and delays on the Sanibel Causeway, there was an outstanding turnout this year. Over 200 attended. Tom Broka took the lead for the Sanibel BIG Arts Concert Band after the untimely passing of Director August Thoma just weeks before the event. Doug Quelch continues to contribute by spearheading the annual essay contest for the Sanibel School after school program. We mailed the entries to Doug who read and judged them

The band began playing patriotic music at 1045 with the flag raising at 1100 by the Sanibel Scouts and the Honor Guard of the Sanibel Police. After the Pledge and singing of the National Anthem, Tim Moore gave the invocation. City council members were introduced and Mayor Richard Johnson gave some remarks. The essays were read and awards presented, courtesy of Bank of the Islands. Lt Col Bill Zacovic gave the address. Veterans from various wars were recognized and each Service Hymn was sung. Echo Taps ended the ceremony.

And FCOC Area Vice President Gary Nolan swore in the chapter officers.

(L-R) Cathy Moore, Treasurer, Shawn Stilly, Vice President, Tim Moore, President and Teresa Galgano, Secretary.



Gary Nolan hands Tim the ceremonial gavel.





LAST ROLL CALL CEREMONY

The Chapter honored our brothers who have passed over the last two years. The ceremonial table was set for five members and one spouse. The ceremony was led by Tim Moore, assisted by Shawn Stilley and Fred Bondurant.

Mc Dill AFB provided an Honor Guard that presented the flag for our ceremony.

Cape Canaveral Chapter

Marilyn M. Sanford, MOAACC Media Relations

Florida Tech ROTC Commissions Five New Army Lieutenants

On December 15, 2023, while the marquee flashed congratulations, Florida Tech ROTC cadets, family and friends gathered in the Hartley Room of the Student Union building for the Fall Commissioning Ceremony. In the ceremony, five new officers received their commissions as 2nd Lieutenants in the U.S. Army. The new lieutenants also completed the requirements to graduate from Florida Tech at the Fall commencement.

During the commissioning ceremony, the new officers took the oath of office and pinned on their new “gold bars”-----the rank insignia of Second Lieutenants. They heard messages and congratulations from the President of Florida Tech, John Nicklow (Ph.D.), and Guest Speaker Brigadier General Mark A. Holler (USA), recently retired as the Deputy Commanding General for 8th U.S. Army.

The new Army Second Lieutenants are:

- Oswaldo Cruces—An enlisted soldier who graduated from Florida Tech with a Master’s Degree in Business Management. He was commissioned as a Military Intelligence officer in the reserves.
- Mason Elizondo—A graduate of Merritt Island High School. He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Florida Tech in Computer Science and was commissioned into the reserves in the Cyber Branch.
- Chandler Hake—He attended High School in Pennsylvania and was the ROTC Cadet Battalion Commander at Florida Tech, where he graduated as a distinguished military

graduate with a B.S. Degree in Computer Science. He was commissioned as an active-duty Cyber Officer.

- Vincent Palermo—He graduated from High School in Pennsylvania and earned his B.S. Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was commissioned as an active-duty Military Intelligence Officer, detailed to Infantry Branch.
- Elysia Slattery—A graduate of Eau Gallie High School who earned her B.S. Degree from Florida Tech in Oceanography. She received her commission in the reserves as an Engineer Officer.

The new Lieutenants were also congratulated by LTC Rob Stillings, Florida Tech Professor of Military Science. The Cape Canaveral Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) was on hand to present the new Lieutenants with “Gold Bar” commissioning sets and membership in MOAA. Colonel Steve Bond, US Army-Retired, Past President of the MOAA Cape Canaveral Chapter (MOAACC) congratulated the new officers and wished them luck as they begin their journey as officers in the United States Army.



*MOAACC members with new Army Lieutenants:
(L-R) Col Steve Bond, MOAACC; 2nd LT Elysia Slattery; 2nd LT Vincent Palermo; 2nd LT Oswaldo Cruces; 2nd LT Chandler Hake; 2nd LT Mason Elizondo; LTC Hans Hunt (USA Ret.), MOAACC Student Affairs Committee*

Speaker LT Laurence Sanford (USNR, Fmr.), TMBC Current Affairs Forum

The January TMBC speaker was MOAACC member LT Laurence Sanford (USN, Fmr). His topic was The China Threat. TMBC is the Thursday Morning Business Club which is part of the MOAACC Current Affairs Forum.

Larry graduated from Boston College and earned an MBA from Babson College. He served as an officer in the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet, home ported in Yokosuka, Japan and San Diego, California. This was followed by 4 years in the CIA's clandestine services, including a two-year assignment in Hong Kong. He was an executive in several major international companies involving extensive travel, before founding a multi-million dollar distribution business in Metro Boston, Massachusetts.

Larry is now a Senior Analyst with the American Security Council Foundation (ASCF) located in Sebastian, Florida, with offices in Washington, DC. Of note, ASCF coined the slogan “Peace through Strength” and provided position papers for policymakers which President Ronald Reagan credited with winning the Cold War. ASCF continues to educate on threats facing our country, and Larry writes papers for publication and conducts podcasts for the foundation.

Larry also serves as president of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers - Florida Satellite Chapter (AFIO).



Larry Sanford, LT USNR, Fmr & CDR Don Reott, USN (Ret.) Current Affairs Forum Coordinator

Larry Sanford, LT USNR, Fmr



CAPT Winston Scott, USN (Ret) and Former Astronaut

The January MOAAC luncheon guest speaker was Winston Scott, a former NASA astronaut and retired US Navy Captain.

Scott was selected by NASA and reported to the Johnson Space Center in 1992. He logged 24 days, 14 hours, and 34 minutes as a mission specialist in space during his two missions, STS-72 Endeavour and STS-87 Columbia. He performed three spacewalks and retrieved two satellites while in orbit. He completed his first spacewalk, or EVA, lasting 6 hours and 53 minutes. His goal was to evaluate techniques used in the assembly of the International Space Station.

STS-87 was Scott’s longest mission and the fourth US Microgravity Payload flight. They launched in November 1997, and conducted several experiments such as the effects of zero gravity on physical functions of the human body. He performed two more spacewalks on this mission, which included manually capturing the Spartan satellite and testing EVA tools and procedures.

In addition to being a naval aviator and astronaut, Scott is a musician and has a second-degree black belt in karate. He graduated from Florida State University with a BS in Music, and also earned an MS degree in Aeronautical Engineering. In July 2005 he published his book *Reflections from Earth Orbit*. He currently resides in Melbourne and is Senior VP for External Relations and

Economic Development at FIT. He plays the trumpet for the Winston Scott Cosmic Jazz Ensemble, and directs a faculty band at FIT which they call called "TWITCHY", after the initials of each band member.



Capt. Stephen Cusick USNR (Ret), MOAACC Vice President; Capt. Winston Scott; Col. Richard Kniseley USAF (Ret), MOAACC President



Capt Winston Scott, USN (Ret)

COL Steve Bond, USA (Ret) Recipient of the MOAACC 2023 Distinguished Service Award

The Cape Canaveral Chapter (MOAACC) recently held its annual Installation Banquet at the Indian River Colony Club in Vieira. At the banquet, chapter members gathered to install the incoming officers and directors for 2024. The Chapter also recognized the 2023 recipient of its highest award, the Distinguished Service Award. COL Steve Bond (USA, RET) was awarded the chapter's prestigious eagle trophy and medallion, in recognition of his service.

Steve is a retired US Army Colonel, and a 29-year veteran of the US Army. He served first as an Infantry Officer, and then as a Military Intelligence Officer. After he retired from the Army, he worked in the defense industry, and then served as a US Government Senior Executive (SES), Transition Team Director in Iraq from 2008 to 2009. In keeping with MOAA's motto of "Never Stop Serving", he has worked in a variety of positions, including as the Cape Canaveral Chapter President; Army Liaison; Chairman of the Speakers Bureau; and editor and writer of the Chapter's bi-monthly electronic newsletter. He is also a member of the Veteran's Back to Class Program and others. Steve currently serves as the Vice President of the Military Officers Association of America Florida Council.



COL Steve Bond USA (Ret.) receives the 2023 Distinguished Service Award from LT. Col. Brian Whalen USAF (Ret.) 2023 President of MOAACC

Central Florida Chapter

CDR Randall Fiebrandt, USCG (Ret), Focus Editor/Communications

The MOAA Central Florida Chapter established a 501(c)3 non-profit “**Healing Through Expression**” therapeutic art program to help our veterans dealing with suicide and PTSD. Our chapter uses grant money to purchase art supplies for our veterans, and we participate in the monthly art classes at the Lake Nona VA. In addition, our chapter has sponsored two art showings for our veterans (with several more scheduled this year). We see firsthand every month just how calming and soothing the veterans feel when they express themselves through their art work.

A painting on its own is just a painting, and can only be interpreted by the viewer of the art. But when you add the artist to the painting, the painting comes alive when the artist discusses how it came to be. It’s vital that we pair the artist with the paintings to tell their story behind the painting. After having two art showings with our artists, we can attest that this has been instrumental to educating the patrons who view the art, and therapeutic to our veterans to let the public know the healing journey the veteran has gone down to create their art.

Some Veterans seeking relief from PTSD with traditional mental counseling therapy (“How does that make you feel”) does not work for everyone. Having a creative outlet to express oneself has worked wonders for many of our veterans. These are the very veterans we seek out!

MOAA Central Florida chapter reached out to the Orlando Shakespeare Theater to host a special event to support our veteran’s art community on January 21st. This special exhibition of visual art pieces created by veterans showcased art created locally by our veterans. Patrons attending the performance of Henry VI, Joan of Arc had a chance to visit the art gallery before and after the performance to view and purchase the veteran’s art, as well as engage with the veteran artists themselves!



CDR Thomas Keen, USN (Ret) Elected to Florida Legislature

CDR Tom Keen, a proud member of our MOAA Central Florida Chapter, recently won the Special Primary Election for Florida House District 35. CDR Keen served in the U.S. Navy from 1982 to 2003 as a Naval Flight Officer. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1978. His career experience includes working as a business executive and as a business development manager in the training and simulation market for an aerospace company. Tom has been affiliated with the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign War, Disabled American Veterans, the US Naval Institute, the US Navy League, and the Military Officers Association of America.



This was a special election to fill out the term of a vacancy in this position and he will have to run again this Fall in the General Election. Congratulations, Tom (and Good Luck)

Northwest Florida Chapter

Fred Westfall, NWFMOA Secretary and Defender Editor

First Sergeants Attend January Luncheon

First Sergeants from Eglin, Hurlburt Field, and Duke Field attended the NWFMOA January lunch meeting. Also joining them was the President of the Commando Airman & Family Support Group. They came at the invite of the Board to meet our members and provide feedback regarding our Annual Junior Enlisted Family Commissary Gift Card program. Each base received a specified allotment of the 300 Commissary gift cards we purchased based on their base's junior enlisted population. In addition to enjoying lunch with our members, a First Sergeant from



A First Sergeant from each base and the President of the Commando Airman & Family Support Group addressed the Chapter and shared some short stories regarding the impact of our Junior Enlisted Family Commissary Gift Card had on those it aims to help.

each base and the President of the Commando Airman & Family Support Group addressed the Chapter and shared some short stories regarding the impact this program had on those it aims to help. Their words captured fully what this program means to the junior enlisted assigned to our local community.

2023 was the fourth year NWFMOA has conducted this program. In the first three years (2021, 2022, 2023), we averaged 189 gift cards purchased. In 2023, that number skyrocketed to 300 gift cards purchased. We were able to do this thanks to the \$1,500 grant we received from the MOAA Foundation. We combined that grant with \$6,000 we raised thanks to the generosity of our Chapter members, local residents, Destin Chamber of Commerce, Eglin AFA, American Legion Post 235, VFW Post 7674, VFW Auxiliary Post 7674, Moose Lodge 2193, Emerald Bay Golf Club, and the Emerald Coast MAC to purchase the 300 Commissary gift cards.

In the recently approved 2024 Goals and Tasks, the NWFMOA Board set 300 gift cards as a Chapter goal again for this year.



American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

NWFMOA Chapter members Bert Everhart and Fran Hendricks participated in the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program on Sunday, January 7th at the American Legion Post 235, Fort Walton Beach. Bert was a judge and Fran served as a tabulator. Students from local high schools participated in the program. Each student presented a prepared speech (not to exceed 10 minutes) and was required to give an additional 3-minute speech. The students had no prior notice of the subject of the 3-minute impromptu speech other than it would be one of the Amendments to the US Constitution. The event's facilitator drew the envelope containing the Amendment to be addressed. That Amendment was the 23rd Amendment which extended the right to participate in

presidential elections to residents of the District of Columbia. Each student had 5 minutes to prepare their 3-minute speech.

NWFMOA Participates in Wreaths Across America

On December 16th, our Chapter participated in the Wreaths Across America event at the Beal cemetery. We had 7 NWFMOA members (pictured below) who participated in laying the wreaths and NWFMOA members B/Gen Patt Maney and Dr. Ed Merkle were part of the presentation ceremonies.



Pictured from left are Fred Westfall, Karl Eschmann, Jim Shoff, Dave Parisot, Fran Hendricks, Bob Gramm and Les Matheson.

NWFMOA Military Ball

On December 14th, our Chapter wound down our activities by celebrating the Christmas season at our annual Military Ball. Shown below are some of those present wearing their mess dress attire. Attendance topped 50 this year.



Gift Cards for Junior Enlisted Families

On December 1st, our Chapter presented more Commissary gift cards for junior enlisted families at Duke Field and the 7th Special Forces Group (A) (see photos below). (See the November 2023 Defender issue for article and more photos.) This is the fourth consecutive year that NWFMOA has done this project to assist young military families. Started in 2020 with Community Outreach grants from the MOAA Foundation, donations by Chapter members, and donations by local businesses and military non-profit organizations, our Chapter has provided a total of 900 Commissary gift cards of \$25 each to enlisted families of ranks E-4 and below and distributed by the First Sergeants Associations at Eglin, Hurlburt, the 7th Special Forces Group (A), the 919SOW First Sergeants Council, and via the Commando Airman & Family Support Group at Hurlburt Field. By partnering with these military organizations, we better assure that the neediest junior enlisted families (airmen and soldiers) in ranks E-4 and below receive the food purchase assistance provided. The total monetary value of these Commissary gift cards is \$22,500. THANK YOU to all who have supported this worthwhile program. We plan to do it again in 2024.



Dave Parisot and Chapter President Fran Hendricks presented 25 commissary gift cards to SMSgt Censabella of the 919SOW First Sergeant Council at Duke Field



Dave Parisot and Fran Hendricks presented 75 Commissary gift cards valued at \$1,875 to First Sergeant James Schultz of the 7th Special Forces Group (A)

On November 14th and 16th, our Chapter presented Commissary gift cards for junior enlisted families at Hurlburt Field and Eglin Air Force Base (see photos below). This is the fourth consecutive year that NWFMOA has done this project to assist young military families. Started in 2020 with a grant of \$3,575 from the MOAA Foundation and donations by Chapter members, our Chapter provided 143 Commissary gift cards of \$25 each to enlisted families of ranks E-4 and below through the First Sergeants Associations at Eglin, Hurlburt, and the 7th Special Forces Group (A), and via the Commando Airman & Family Support Group at Hurlburt Field. In 2021 we continued this project with a grant of \$3,750 from the MOAA Foundation plus \$1,300 in donations by Chapter members for a total of \$5,050. With these funds we purchased and distributed 202 Commissary gift cards at \$25 each to junior enlisted families.

With the positive feedback we received from the multiple First Sergeant Associations, we continued this program in 2022 and 2023. The MOAA Foundation Grant in 2022 was \$4,000, plus we added \$2,375 of local member and business donations for a total of \$6,375. This allowed us to purchase and distribute 255 gift cards. Our MOAA Foundation grant for this program in 2023 was \$1,500, but we added \$6,000 in donations from Chapter members and local businesses for a total of \$7,500. The 300 Commissary gift cards were distributed as follows: 75 cards each to the Hurlburt Field First Sergeants Association (\$1,875); Eglin First Sergeants Association (\$1,875); and, 7th Special Forces Group (A) First Sergeants Association (\$1,875). We also gave 25 gift cards to the 919th SOW First Sergeants Council (\$625) and 50 gift cards to the Commando Airman & Family Support Group at Hurlburt Field (\$1,250). By partnering with these military organizations, we better assure that the neediest junior enlisted families (airmen and soldiers) in ranks E-4 and below receive the food purchase assistance provided.

In the four years we have done this project, we have benefited 900 junior enlisted families. Our sincerest 'THANK YOU' to all who have donated to this program. Current plans are to continue this program in 2024.



Chapter President Fran Hendricks presented MSgt and First Sergeant Penrod and the Hurlburt Field First Sergeants Association with 75 Commissary gift cards of \$5 each on November 14th. Assisting with the presentation are Dave Parisot, Community Outreach Officer and Karl Eschmann, Chapter 1st Vice President. Chapter Secretary Fred Westfall is the 'man behind the camera'. The gift cards totaled \$1,875



On November 16th Chapter President Fran Hendricks, Community Outreach Officer Dave Parisot, and Board member Bob Gramm presented 75 Commissary gift cards of \$25 each to MSgt and First Sergeant Richard Gravely and the First Sergeants Association. The gift cards totaled \$1,875



On November 14th Chapter President Fran Hendricks presented Brooke Scott of the Commando Airman & Family Support Group at Hurlburt Field with 50 Commissary gift cards of \$25 each for junior enlisted families in Thanksgiving baskets. The gift cards totaled \$1,250. Assisting Fran were Chapter Community Outreach Officer Dave Parisot and 1st Vice President Karl Eschmann.

Veterans' Stand Down

November was a busy month for our Chapter's Community Outreach programs. Okaloosa County held its annual Veterans' Stand Down on Wednesday, November 8th, at the FWB Fairgrounds. Our NWFMOA Chapter was one of 40 local organizations who provide services for Veterans with a booth at this event. In our booth, we had over 1,000 items of new clothing which we purchased via the \$2,800 in grant funds we received last May from the MOAA Foundation's Community Outreach Grant program. Our inventory of clothing items distributed to male and female Veterans consisted of 57 pairs of men's and ladies' jeans, 10 pairs of sport pants, 32 men's T-shirts, 43 ladies' shirts, 75 pairs of men's boxer shorts, 4 jackets, 71 hoodies for men and women, 40 pairs of shower shoes, 96 sets of stocking caps & gloves, and 612 pairs of crew socks (men and women). The clothing items were primarily oriented towards the up-coming colder months. The clothing items were distributed to over fifty local Veterans.

Our NWFMOA booth was manned by members Dave Parisot, Dick Solt, Fran Hendricks, and Karl Eschmann. We sincerely thank the MOAA Foundation for providing the funds to purchase the clothing items.

Palm Beach-Martin Counties Chapter

COL Paul Loschiavo, USMC (Ret)

In December, MOAA PBM held its Annual Holiday Event. The Choir from the Dreyfoos School of the Arts provided the entertainment. The Inspector-Instructor of the local Marine Corps Reserve unit was the keynote speaker collecting Toys-for-Tots. The forty attendees from the chapter had a great time while donating a *huge* pile of toys. Some lucky kid even got a great bicycle for Christmas!



Pensacola Chapter

Jean Booton, Beacon Editor

Pensacola Chapter Memorial Ceremony / Officer and Director Installation

We had a beautiful and meaningful meeting on January 18 at the Mustin Beach Club. The occasion was our annual Memorial Ceremony honoring those members or spouses who passed away in the previous year. Father John Licari and RADM Joan Engel officiated and did a wonderful job. Thanks to all who participated in carrying a candle in each person's honor and remembrance.



RADM Joan Engel

Immediately ahead of the Memorial Ceremony, the meeting opened with the Presentation of Colors by the Air Force Junior ROTC Color Guard from Pensacola High School. These young people made us all proud by presenting themselves and the Colors in a totally "spit and polish" manner. They were sharply dressed and executed their duties precisely and professionally. It certainly gave me another reason to believe in the future of our great Nation. There is Hope!



We concluded the meeting with the installation of our new Officers and Directors for 2024-2026. Thanks to each of them for their willingness to "Never Stop Serving" as MOAA is fond of saying about our members. Well done to all. I look forward to working with them to continue to help PMOAA grow and prosper in our mission of service and

L-R CAPT Ken Pyle, President; LTC Karen Vinson-VanHouter; CDR Susan Ulloa; LtCol Bob Nelson; Maj Charles Booton; RADM Joan Engel; MAJ Molly Werner

Treasure Coast Chapter

Tom O'Bra, Col, USAF (Ret) - 1st VP

Patriots JROTC Scholarship Ball

The Florida Treasure Coast Chapter provides a yearly scholarship to a deserving JROTC graduating senior in each of eight high schools in Martin and St. Lucie counties. This year the chapter held its second annual fundraising military ball to support these scholarships. Under the direction of Col Tom O’Bra (Chapter 1st Vice President) and LTC Bobbie Williams (Chapter President), a committee was formed to plan the event. The committee consisted of several residents from the community where Col O’Bra lives, a few chapter members and a volunteer decorator. From October 2023 through early January 2024, the committee and chapter members sold tickets and planned the event. The goals were to have increased tickets sales and attendance over last year, and both of those were achieved with the sales up 14% and attendance up by the same amount.

This year’s Patriots JROTC Scholarship Ball was held on 13 Jan 2024 at the Santa Lucia River Club Ballroom in the Ballantrae community of Port St Lucie, Florida. It was a black tie, formal affair with dinner, military traditions, music and dancing. Sixteen cadets and eight instructors from the eight JROTC program were invited to attend the event. The color guard was provided by Port St Lucie High School JROTC cadets, with a fife and drum performance from Ft Pierce Central High School JROTC cadets and dance music by the Showcase Band. Guest speaker RADM Gene Price delivered an inspiring message on commitment and what it means to serve in the military. Eight of the senior cadets attending were potential recipients of the scholarship award. All attending cadets were awarded an MOAA chapter coin. There were 137 attendees in total including donors, cadets, instructors and their guests.

The event was an overwhelming success with not only the 137 attendees, but also more than four dozen personal, corporate and sponsor donations. More than \$13,400 was raised for the Chapter Scholarship fund. Eight scholarships will be presented at the high schools’ spring awards ceremonies. Plans are already in motion for next year’s event to be held on 1 February 2025.



COL Tom O’Bra & RADM Gene Price





Kingdom of the Sun Chapter

By Arlo Janssen, LTC, USA (Ret), Editor of the Sunbeams

The last event for the year 2023 was our Snowflake Gala held at the Ocala Elks Lodge on Wednesday night, December 20, 2023. The Snowflake Gala was jointly hosted by two military organizations--the North Central Florida Chapter of the Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW) and the Kingdom of the Sun (KOS) Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). The Snowflake Gala highlights included dinner and dancing and to a parade of military service songs by many KOS/MOAA and MOWW members in uniform.

On January 4, 2024, Kingdom of the Sun luncheon was held at the Braised Onion located at 754 NE 24th Avenue, Ocala, FL. The program featured the Installation of our newly elected KOS Officers and members of KOS Board of Directors. Member Emeritus, Frank Rasbury, LTC USA (Ret), served as the Installation Officer for this special ceremony.



Outgoing KOS President Joseph "Joe" Voge, MAJ USA (Ret), opens the January 4, 2024 KOS/MOAA meeting with KOS Chaplain Carolyn Smith, LTC USA (Ret).



KOS Member Emeritus and KOS past President Frank Rasbury, LTC USA (Ret), prepares to introduce and install the newly elected KOS Chapter Officers for 2024.

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Frank Rasbury, LTC USA (Ret), administers the oath of office to the KOS Chapter's 2024 Officers and new Members of Board of Directors.



Incoming Chapter President Craig Ham, COL USA (Ret), honors the outgoing President Joseph "Joe" Voge, MAJ USA (Ret), with a plaque for his services as KOS President for years 2022-2023.

South Central Florida Chapter

COL Mike Borders, USA (Ret)

South Central Florida Chapter Dinner/Social and Installation Ceremony

The South Central Florida chapter conducted a monthly dinner/social on 11 January in Sebring. Members and their spouses enjoyed camaraderie and fellowship, along with the opportunity to hear from the Southwest AVP, Col Gary Nolan, USAF (Ret). Gary spoke to the group about current activities and programs at both the MOAA National level as well as at the FCoC level. Gary then did the chapter the honor of installing the Board of Directors and Officers for the 2024-2026 term of office. A nice evening was enjoyed by all, who yet again, live the mottos of *Never Stop Serving* and *Camaraderie With a Purpose*.



Col Gary Nolan, USAF (Ret), Southwest AVP; Col Bob Brooks, USAF (Ret), Chapter President and Newsletter Editor; CPT Glenn West, USA (Fmr), Chapter VP; LTC Linda Tuthill, USA (Ret), Chapter Secretary, Surviving Spouse and Personal Affairs; Maj Bill Thacker, USAF (Ret), Chapter Treasurer; Maj Gil Uribe, USMC (Ret), Chapter Membership Chair; COL Ken Kirk, USA (Ret), Chapter Chaplain; COL Mike Borders, USA (Ret), Chapter IPP and Webmaster

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Tampa Chapter

Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret), Director for Communications

MOAA Tampa Leadership at My Warrior's Place in Ruskin for a Planning Retreat

By Sara Marks, CAPT NC USN (Ret) Photo Credit: Carol Zieres, COL USA (Ret)

MOAA Tampa held its second leadership planning retreat at My Warrior's Place in Ruskin on 19-21 January. It's a wonderful place for a retreat, with another location that is opening soon in Punta Gorda, Florida. Our Chapter's Leadership team completed strategic planning for the next year and moving forward to include MOAA Grant submissions, Gala planning, and review of plans for 2024. There was time since the weather permitted us to ride a pontoon on the river, a delicious cookout and fellowship.



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Historic Mayport Chapter

CDR Pat Kluever, USN (Ret)

Book Review By Authors of “Unwavering”

The authors of the book “Unwavering”, Judy Silverstein-Gray and Taylor Baldwin-Kiland, visited Fleet Landing Tuesday 5 December 2023 for a presentation on their book. The book chronicles the 1960’s social and business structure for women and wives of military service members, and the bravery required to “buck-the-system” to press the U.S. and North Vietnamese governments to identify, humanely treat, and ultimately return U.S. service members who were Prisoners of War (POWs) or Missing In Action (MIA).

Members of MOAA’s Historic Mayport Chapter’s Board hosted the authors and Patrick and Dawn Stratton (family of Dick and Alice Stratton) in the “Retreat” prior to the program. Returned POW Giles Norrington and wife Eileen Norrington joined the group for lunch. The authors discussed their military background (Judy-USCG & Taylor-USN), the research that went into the book, and the process of finding a publisher for the book. Our Board members and guests shared interesting, and some humorous memories of events from their military service.



(L-R Clockwise) (1) Bruce Osborne, Dick Beltson, Eileen Norrington, Giles Norrington, Taylor Baldwin-Kiland, Patrick Stratton, Dawn Stratton, Judy Silverstein-Gray; (2) Judy Silverstein-Gray, Dick Stratton, Alice Stratton, Taylor Baldwin-Kiland; (3) & (4) On Stage in Johnson Hall

A large gathering of about 95 residents, members and guests assembled for this event in Johnson Hall. Many in the audience had pre-purchased the book “Unwavering” with the intent to have their copy signed by the authors. A representative from local bookstore “BookMark” was on hand to

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provide books for those who needed a copy to be signed. To avoid open selling on campus, the MOAA Chapter paid for the 13 books provided by BookMark with the intent to deliver the signed books to those 13 individuals with request for reimbursement with a donation to the Chapter.

On stage behind a draped table Judy and Taylor traded the presentation sharing perspectives on women's roles and lack of authority in the 1960's and 1970's, repression of family involvement regarding POW or MIA service members, and finally the brave actions of wives to force action by the U.S. and North Vietnamese governments for identification, human treatment and return of POW and MIA service members. Several examples of the initiatives, actions, and results by wives of POS and MIA service members were discussed as well as post-return or post-notification lives of the wives and families. RPOW Giles and wife Eileen Norrington, RPOW Dick (Beak) and Alice Stratton, and son and wife Patrick and Dawn Stratton were in attendance and recognized. The authors added special recognition of Alice Stratton's resolve in supporting the POW-MIA effort, her strength in raising their three sons during the 6.5 years Dick was a POW, and her continued support to families after Dick's return as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Personnel and Families (1985-1989) by forming family support centers across the country and other family support initiatives. The author's received a standing ovation at the conclusion of their program. Chapter President Kluever presented Chapter coins to both authors and thanked them for honoring our POWs. MIAs and the families who were "Unwavering" in the resolve to bring their loved ones home from the battlefield.

Pearl Harbor Observance

Naval War College history professor retired Navy Captain Jim Ransom visited Fleet Landing for our annual Pearl Harbor Day observance. A large crowd of about 65 attendees listened to Captain Ransom recall the real objectives of a host of attacks by Japan on 7 December 1941. He remembered several examples of heroism at Pearl Harbor and he chronicled Fleet Admiral Nimitz's leadership during WW II. The top three goals of the Japanese in early December 1941 was to capture the resources of the southern Pacific rim, to complete their dominance of China, and to devastate the US Pacific fleet so it could not be used to thwart their consolidation of control over the resources it needed to solidify its dominance of the Pacific theater. As Jim provided details of heroic actions during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, he recounted his experiences during several tours in Hawaii, and the reverence exhibited during Navy re-enlistment ceremonies at the Arizona Memorial.

As a last topic, Jim covered the whirlwind journey of Admiral Chester Nimitz from DC on the day of the attack to becoming CINCPACFLT a few weeks later at the direction of FDR. Jim provided amazing details on the character, demeanor and the leadership style of Fleet Admiral Nimitz. He concluded with the hope the Navy would always have a ship named "Nimitz" to honor this extraordinary Navy leader. In typical fashion, Jim ended his program with his traditional donning of his Navy cap with the slide "Go Navy - Beat Army!". Thank You once again Jim for a stirring, meaningful, and well-delivered observance on Pearl Harbor Day.

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Answer to the Quiz

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Just prior to the onset of America's involvement in World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to unite several service associations into one organization to lift the morale of our military and nourish support on the home front. Those entities – the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board. (Note the six stars in the logo representing the original six associations.)

There are nine USO Centers in Florida, five on military facilities, and four at airports (Pensacola, Destin, Orlando and Tampa). Airport facilities are intended for use by Active duty members, Guard and Reservists (and their dependents), but they admit retired veterans on a space available basis. I volunteer at the USO Orlando Airport Center and we nearly always have room for retired members. All four airport centers are open from 0800-2000, 7 days a week.



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The MOAA Florida Council of Chapters (FCOC) is comprised of 38 Chapters with nearly 5,000 members and their families. FCOC is one of MOAA's largest Councils. MOAA has a membership of over 380,000 members in all 50 States.

The FCOC's primary communication vehicles are our bi-monthly publication, *The COUNCIL COMMUNIQUÉ* and our Website www.MOAAFL.org Ads run for one year.

The *COMMUNIQUÉ* is distributed electronically to all our chapters, MOAA Headquarters in Virginia, and our influential contacts across the state of Florida.

The *COMMUNIQUÉ* provides a unique forum for businesses to reach a select segment of the population. The membership is patriotic and professional. We encourage your business to reach out to our members by advertising in *The COUNCIL COMMUNIQUÉ*.

In appreciation of Businesses that also support the FCOC Annual Convention with Ads in the Convention Souvenir Program Book within the last year the FCOC offers a discount for the same size Ad shown on the following Order Form.

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Articles can be attached to an email. Microsoft Word works best (Arial 12). You can also type your information into the body of an email where it can be copied and pasted into the newsletter.

Pictures should have a .jpg or .png extension. If you are sending pictures from your chapter, please include the chapter name and the names of those in the picture. A few words on what the event is about will help interest the readers. Please ensure that you have the permission of persons in the photos for publishing.

If you have questions about your submission, contact

Randy Fiebrandt
rfiebs1953@gmail.com

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