



Officers' Call

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

January 2025



Presidents Message

LTC Don Hansen, USA (Ret), Chapter President

Happy New Year - 2025! Hopefully you all had a very merry Christmas. Karen and I spent our Christmas in Las Vegas but didn't win a dime. Thankfully we didn't lose anything either. We did enjoy seeing the new hotels built since our last trip there which was the week of 9-11-01. We flew in on Sunday, 9 Sep., saw a show Monday night, and woke up Tuesday morning, turned on the TV to watch the news while eating our breakfast in bed, only to see the horror caused by the terrorists that morning back East. All the shows shut down on the strip and all the rental cars and some buses and taxis were rented to take everyone back to their homes as the airport shut down immediately and didn't re-open until that Friday. I think the only planes flying that week were our military and a few Saudi aircraft that flew back to Saudi Arabia. Interesting since I don't believe any commercial aircraft were allowed to fly out of the U.S. until that Friday. I suspect all of you also know what you were doing and where you were when you first heard of the tragedy that morning.

Our January Speaker, LTC Jim Press, USA (Ret.), will be presenting on a Civil War topic "A New Look at General Robert E. Lee" and Pam Fillmon will give a short presentation on her ancestor's notorious involvement in the Civil War. Our caterer will be Chef Patrick of Live Fire Chefs of Ocala since they did such a great job last September. The Chef is preparing a garden salad with ranch & balsamic vinaigrette, Cavatappi pasta San Marzano Pomodoro sauce - Italian style meatballs, Alfredo pasta, Garlic Parmesan rolls and Sautéed broccoli.



(Continues on next Page)

OUR NEXT MEETING

**Wednesday
Jan 8th
11:30 a.m.**

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



OUR MEAL

Our dinner will be a garden salad with ranch & balsamic vinaigrette, Cavatappi pasta San Marzano Pomodoro sauce - Italian style meatballs, Alfredo pasta, Garlic Parmesan rolls and Sautéed broccoli.

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
Jan 3rd**

[Click Here](#)

or contact Tim or Annette Balliett at tabal-liett46@gmail.com or 352-728-2945.



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

Presidents Message Continued

The Golf Committee is busy selling tickets for a prize (valued at \$1300) offered by the Suleiman Family Restaurants. For \$20 a ticket (only 250 being sold) you have a chance at winning a free meal (up to \$25) each week at the Havana Country Golf Club Restaurant for one year (52 weeks). The money raised will be applied to our Scholarship fund. We anticipate all tickets will be sold within the next two months as we have already sold 40% of them. All but 20 tickets have been distributed to our Golf Committee members to sell but I reserved the 20 to offer to our members who are at the luncheon on January 8th. We are planning on drawing the lucky winner at our February 12th chapter meeting.



The Suleiman Family Restaurants are also donating 20% of our food bill to the chapter when we eat at a particular Suleiman restaurant on a particular date each month. All you have to do is write "MOAA" on the top of the bill when it is presented. We ate at the Prima Italian Steakhouse on October 15th and at Havana on November 19th. No "Dine to Donate" in December, but we will again eat at the Prima Italian Steakhouse in Brownwood on January 21st. Hope to see all of you there that day as it doesn't matter if you are eating lunch, "lunner", or dinner on that date. Those donations from the Suleimans also go toward our Scholarship fund.

We got excellent coverage from The Villages Daily Sun on December 6th, bottom of first page of Section D, Local & State News, when they printed the above photo of our Bill Wojciechowski presenting Marie Bogdonoff, President of Villagers For Veterans, a \$5,000 check we received from a grant given by the MOAA Foundation to assist the V4V in running Ashley's Cottage, a home for homeless female veterans to assist them getting back on their feet. Well that's all for now so I hope to see you all at our first luncheon of the year on January 8th and I again wish you a Happy New Year and offer this resolution for our new year to all of you: **NEVER STOP SERVING!**



Membership and Recruiting

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret), Membership Chairman



Happy New Year to one and all!! I certainly hope 2025 is as good or better than 2024 for you.

We currently have 297 Chapter members. All 297 are also members of National MOAA!!

I'd like to start on a positive note. Thanks to all 215 members who have renewed your Chapter membership for 2025. Your continued support is noted and goes a long way in our philanthropic activities.

That said, there are still 82 members who have not renewed. In the coming weeks, we'll be making a phone call to find out when you plan to renew and if not, why not. Sincerely, if you do not plan to renew, we'd like to know why and what we can do to make things better.

Over the last couple months, I've heard from quite a few of you about how our website doesn't work or isn't user friendly. We'd like to rectify all those issues, but need to know exactly what your issues have been. So, please email me with a description of what you tried to do and what your issues are. A couple datapoints – accessing our website from your phone can cause issues and sometimes using an Apple product too. These are security related and believe we cannot help with them. Also, sometimes your browser “remembers things” and handshakes do not happen correctly; the solution for this issue is to delete temporary files and do a browser refresh/restart.

Stay safe.

CHAPTER OFFICERS

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LTC Donald Hansen, USA (Ret)

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Lt Col Bruce Hacker, USAF (Ret.)

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Newsletter

LTC Luke Emerson, USA (Ret)

Web Site:

www.lakesumtermoaa.org

Information:

info@lakesumtermoaa.org

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Mailing Address:

Lake & Sumter Counties Chapter –
MOAA

P O Box 666

Lady Lake, FL 32158-0666

Chapter Awards



2023



2023

Chaplain's Corner

Maj Daryl DesJardin, USAF (Ret), Chaplain

"You say you want a resolution. Well, you know...we all wanna change ourselves." So sorry, John Lennon! I couldn't help "adjusting" the opening lyrics of "Revolution" out of my head as I thought about this month's topic. It is the time for the annual ritual of dramatic New Year's resolutions fueled by the hope of immediate and significant personal life change.

But the reality is that few smokers quit because of a single moment of resolve, few obese people have become slim and healthy because of one dramatic moment of commitment and few people who were deeply in debt have changed their financial lifestyle because they resolved to do so as the old year gave way to the new. Few marriages have been changed by the means of one dramatic resolution.

Is change important? Yes, it is for all of us in some way. Is commitment essential? Of course! There is a way in which all of our lives are shaped by the commitments we make. However, could it be that true life turnarounds simply don't happen in big, dramatic moments of change?

I'm convinced life transformation is more of a mundane process than it is a series of a few dramatic events. Personal heart and life change is always a process. And where does that process take place? It takes place where you and I live everyday. And where do we live? Well, we all have the same address. Our lives don't careen from big moment to big moment. No, we all live in the utterly mundane.

Most of us won't be written up in history books and several decades after we die, the people we leave behind will struggle to remember the event of our lives. Most of us live in the mundane...the little moments. The little moments of life are profoundly important precisely because they are the little moments that we live in and that forms us and where change happens.

You see, character is not set in two or three dramatic moments of completed resolution, but in 10,000 little moments. The character that was formed in those little moments is what shapes how you respond to the big moments of life. Little moments such as:

1. Develop a "stop doing" list to let go of habits or events that no longer serve you.
2. Make amends with someone from your past.
3. Practice "digital detox" for a set number of hours each week. Instead use that time enjoying the company of your partner or a friend...or even some alone time in meditation.
4. Offer a ride to a convalescing or other non-driving neighbor once a month.
5. Prioritize "self kindness" by speaking to yourself with compassion.
6. Participate in golf tournaments and charity walks/runs to raise awareness and funds for good causes. (Hint: April 11th!)

Remember, the key to keeping resolutions is being consistent. Choose one or two that resonate with you or, better yet, develop your own, and make a plan to put them into action! I hope that we wake up each day in 2025 committed living in the small moments of our daily lives with open eyes and humbly expectant hearts.

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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-Action-Center#Legislative-Action-Center>



MOAA's Advocacy in Action Campaign— Status Update



Congress Remains in Recess

Congress is not returning from their end of September recess until November 12th, one week after election day. There is much for them to accomplish when they get back in session that directly impacts the military community:

- Passing the Defense Authorization and Appropriations Bills
- Finishing up the other appropriations Bills including for the VA



The Continuing Resolution passed before the start of the latest recess will expire on December 20th and if the two items above haven't been taken care of Congress will be faced with preventing another threat to shut down the government. The rancor during this election season being what it has been, it is fair to question whether Congress will be able to do that.

What is the Status of the MOAA's Priorities for the NDAA

The House passed their bill in August to include a 19.5% pay increase for junior enlisted members E-4 and below. The Senate Armed Service Committee draft version would boost the pay of servicemembers E-3 and below by 5.5% -- just a single percentage point more than the overall military pay raise.

Other House provisions for generous food and housing increases and housing improvements were not included in the Senate draft. And the provisions of the Star Act were not included in either bill/draft.

MOAA has been focused on these Quality-of-Life provisions going back to April.

A renewed emphasis is now ongoing in advance of Congress's return to work.

MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), emphasized the pay raise issue in a Military Times commentary of October 7th:

"There has always been a deep appreciation for the sacrifices and dedication of our uniformed services ... full resourcing is always difficult, and the military is only one part of a limited national budget that must address a wide range of priorities."

He further went on to say:

It is "disheartening to hear decision-makers downplay and dismiss a clear priority — the fair compensation of our junior enlisted servicemembers — when the real issue is insufficient funding and not a lack of need ... Ignoring and dismissing the clear indicators of need, doing nothing or simply deferring action should not be an acceptable option,"

Legislative Update (Continued)

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

Click on the following links to urge our elected representatives to support these MOAA Legislative Priorities:

[MOAA | Urge Congress to Support a Substantial Pay Raise of our Junior Enlisted Troops](#)

[Urge You Legislators to Pay Full Housing Costs](#)

[Urge Your Legislators to Support Concurrent Receipt for Combat-Injured](#)

Read about the other MOAA priorities for the NDAA here:

[MOAA - Pay, Health Care, and More: How the House and Senate NDAA Versions Stack Up](#)

What is Congress's Plan for Finalizing the NDAA

Senate leadership has agreed that rather than finalizing their own version (that was released by the Senate Armed Service Committee as S 4638), they are assembling a **manager's package** of amendments that both sides agree would become part of the Senate's substitute NDAA.

MOAA reported they will be looking for opportunities with the Senate to include those additional priorities into that **managers package** in the coming weeks.

Instead of a formal Joint Conference between House and Senate negotiators to reconcile the differences, lawmakers are planning to instead informally iron out differences between the Senate Armed Services Committee bill (with the manager's package included) and the House-passed measure (HR 8070). Those bicameral talks and predicted final action on the bicameral NDAA would be during the lame duck session to be convened on November 12th.

MOAA will be advocating to ensure the bill that does go back to the respective Houses for a final floor vote **does the most good for the most members of the total force**.

Become a part of **One Powerful Voice** by going to the [Legislative Action Center](#) on MOAA's website and engage in this important *Legislative Campaign*.

State Legislative Update

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



STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The Florida Legislature convenes on March 4, 2025. Representative Danny Perez has been installed as Speaker of the House and Senator Bill Nelson, as Senate President. Committee members have been assigned and met for organizational meetings. However, they must be officially sworn in on March 4. Additional meetings are planned for mid-January and February. On another note, the Florida Veterans Council announced that one million dollars has been budgeted to offset the costs of dental care for homeless and low income veterans. The Council will be asking the Legislature to fund four million dollars to offset the costs of needed repairs to state veterans homes. Nine of the eleven state veterans homes are completely filled with some vacancies in Orlando and Port St Lucie.

VILLAGERS FOR VETERANS (V4V) REPORT

The MOAA Community Partnership Grant has been successfully concluded for this fiscal year. This grant provided \$5,000 from the national MOAA Foundation to fund projects in support of Ashley's Cottage, a transition house for women veterans as they return to civilian life. An additional \$3,000 came from our Chapter funds. Dollars were used to create and stock a food pantry to include meat and non-perishable goods, an outdoor, gas fired BBQ grill and an irrigation system. V4V is in the process of constructing an Ashley House facility in Eustis, Florida, and the Chapter will again be submitting a grant to the MOAA Foundation to aid that project.

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 16 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

Catherine Stevens, Surviving Spouse Liaison

DID YOU KNOW:

VA Surviving Spouse Information

Call the VA if the deceased is receiving payments authorized by the VA. Also inquire if spouse is due to receive any benefit payments. 1-800-827-1000

Veterans Group Life Insurance Claims 1-800-419-1473 or online at [benefits/va.gov](https://benefits.va.gov).

If you live in The Villages there are two resources to call:

Dennis Storey

DAV Department Service Officer

Located in the VA Outpatient Clinic on Mulberry Lane

352-674-5097

And/or call

The Veterans Service Center located in the library building on

Powell Rd. Call 352-689-4400 for questions or appointment.



Chapter Shirts & Name Tags

Custom Apparel & Gifts

3451 Wedgewood Lane

The Villages, F: 32162

Tel 352-750-1600



Editorial Policy

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:



The Council Communique

Florida Council of Chapters
Military Officers Association of America

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 APPLICATION

Today's Date: ___/___/___

Membership is open to those who have served duty as a commissioned or warrant officer in any of the seven uniformed services of the USA, and who are members of national MOAA. Chapter membership is separate from national membership and carries its own dues. Members age 90 and over become Chapter Life Members with no dues.

First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____
Last Name: _____ Suffix: _____
Type Membership: ___ Regular ___ Surviving Spouse
Status: ___ Active Duty ___ Retired ___ Former Officer
Rank: _____ Service: _____
Date of Birth: ___/___/___ Spouse's Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ St: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

___ I am a current MOAA Member. Member#: _____ Life Annual Basic
___ I wish to join National MOAA. Please contact me with information. (circle one)

Annual Dues Fee: Regular Member: \$20 Surviving Spouse Member: \$10

This is an application for: a new Chapter member or Renewal

We are a 501(c)(19) tax deductible organization. We welcome voluntary donations to our Junior ROTC Scholarship Fund, which may be included with your dues.

Dues: _____
JROTC Donation: _____
Total Submitted: _____

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

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

Need more info? Contact COL Albert (Al) E. Arnold, III, USA (Ret), Membership Chairman, 703-470-3886