



# Officers' Call

Newsletter of the Lake & Sumter Counties Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
November 2024



## Presidents Message

LTC Don Hansen, USA (Ret), Chapter President

### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

When I wrote last month's column I had no idea that we would be having another hiatus of monthly meetings. Hurricane Milton certainly reminded me that Mother Nature has a mind of her own and the best laid plans of man - - etc. Not only did we have to cancel our October meeting but it cost us being able to hear the presentation of the Senior Warden of the Coleman Federal Correctional Complex. Hopefully we will be able to get him back next year.

This month is our Annual JROTC Recognition Dinner honoring the six high school JROTC units in our two county catchment area and the six cadets that received our MOAA Medal and Ribbon last May for being the top underclass person in their unit as well as their senior instructors.



Cadet Wesley Gantz

SMSgt Davis Watkins, USAF (Ret)

Eustis High School Air Force JROTC Unit



Cadet Gracious Wright

Major Glen Tussing, USAF (Ret)  
Leesburg High School Air Force JROTC Unit

(Continues on next Page)

### OUR NEXT MEETING

**Wednesday  
Nov 13th  
5:30 p.m.**

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



### OUR MEAL

Our dinner will be catered by Mission BBQ and will be our traditional Turkey Dinner.

### COST

Meals are **\$25.00/person** if you **register and pay** online. Meals are **\$25/person** following the deadline and **\$25/person** if you pay at the door.

### RSVP

**No Later Than, 10:30  
a.m. on Friday  
Nov 8th**

[Click Here](#)

or contact Tim or Annette Balliett at [tabal-liett46@gmail.com](mailto:tabal-liett46@gmail.com) or 352-728-2945.



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

## Presidents Message Continued



Cadet Deangelo Cortina  
Major Andrew Scott, USAF (Ret)  
Mount Dora High School Air Force  
JROTC Unit



Cadet Clarissa Mulero  
Lt. Col. John Pylant, USMC (Ret)  
South Lake High School Naval  
JROTC Unit



Cadet Kayden Kelly  
Sp.4 Dylan Woodard, FLNG  
South Sumter High School NNDCC  
JROTC Unit



Cadet Alexa Swavely  
LTC Al Nevarez, USA (Ret)  
Umatilla High School Army  
JROTC Unit

## Presidents Message Continued

Our dinner will be catered by Mission BBQ and will be our traditional Turkey Dinner. The price per diner is \$25 just as in years past. I look forward to seeing you there.

We had our second recruiting outing of the year on October 19th, this time in Spanish Springs Town Center and a number of our members joined Al and Tom at the tent meeting and talking to folks checking out the vendors. As noted in our summer Newsletter, we plan on doing this a couple of times a year.

We have started working with the Suleiman Family Restaurants, one of our strongest supporters of our annual Military Charities Golf Tournament. We have agreed to encourage our members to have a meal at one of their restaurants in The Villages on one specific day each month and in return the Suleiman Family will give our Scholarship Fund 20% of what our food (does not include drinks) bill was for that day. All we have to do is write MOAA on the top of the bill after we pay and make sure our waiter/waitress knows it goes to MOAA. Our October date was the 15th at the Prima Italian Steakhouse in Brownwood. Our November date will be the 19th at the Havana Country Club Restaurant at 2484 Odell Circle in The Villages. Any meal that day, all day. Also, friends and neighbors can also help if they eat at the restaurant that day by writing MOAA on their bill. By having a great meal out, you are contributing to our scholarship fund.

In addition, David Suleiman will be providing one free meal (up to \$25) a week for 52 consecutive weeks at the Havana Restaurant for our MOAA chapter to auction off. A value of \$1,300 if you eat there every week. What we are doing is selling 250 tickets at \$20 each and the lucky winner will be drawn on April 11th at our Military Golf Tournament Awards Dinner. The winner will not have to be present to receive the prize as we will contact him/her if they are not at the dinner. The funds that we raise will go directly toward our Scholarship Fund.

A final note: Chapter member COL Jody Nelson, USA (Ret), contacted me right after getting my email about eating at the Prima Restaurant on October 15 and she told me she would donate 20% of her sales from her store, The Spice & Tea Exchange, on that date as well toward our scholarship fund. Thank you SO VERY MUCH Jody. COL Nelson has been a HOLE SPONSOR for our tournament from when we started that method of fund raising for our tournament five years ago.

Our meeting on November 13th will be our last meeting of 2024 as we are dark in December but our January program should be a good one and we anticipate our caterer will again be Live Fire Chefs of Ocala with Chef Patrick. Stay safe, be smart, and remember, **NEVER STOP SERVING!**





## Membership and Recruiting

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret), Membership Chairman

A **heartly welcome** to the following members who recently joined our Chapter:

Herbert Andrade, COL, USA, retired  
Gary Mau, Capt, USAF, retired  
Thomas Sgritta, 1LT, USA, former officer



We currently have 298 Chapter members. All 298 are also members of National MOAA!!

**CONGRATULATIONS** to all of you that have renewed your Chapter membership!! Of our 298 members, 129 of you have renewed (less than 50% :( ). That leaves 169 members to renew your membership before December 31. This is important as our standing (and subsequent awards/money) with MOAA National depends on these renewals. A quick reminder – those members 90 years young and older get free Chapter membership. Same goes for one of dual spouses – where both are eligible to be members – only one needs to pay Chapter dues.

If you're not sure if you need to renew, you can check out your status online. Or just call/email me and I'll let you know.

## CHAPTER OFFICERS

### ***President***

LTC Donald Hansen, USA (Ret)

### ***Past President***

CAPT Paul Hauser, USN (Ret)

### ***First VP***

Lt Col Bruce Hacker, USAF (Ret.)

### ***Second VP***

Pam Fillmon Sherrill

### ***Treasurer***

CWO3 Dennis Storey, USA (Ret)

### ***Secretary***

SMSgt Rhonda Storey, USAF (Ret)

### ***Chaplain***

Maj Daryl DesJardin, USAF (Ret)

### ***Legislative Liaison***

Lt Col Bob Bienvenue, USAF (Ret)

### ***State Legislative Liaison***

Col William Wojciechowski, USAF (Ret)

### ***Membership***

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret)

### ***Personal Affairs***

LtCol James O'Hagan, USMC (Ret)

### ***Community Affairs***

Col Marcus Sherrill, USAF (Ret.)

### ***Surviving Spouse Liaison***

Catherine (Cathie) Stevens

### ***Provost***

COL Kevin Harvey, USA (Ret.)

### ***Recruiting***

MAJ Thomas Lutes, USA (Ret.)

### ***Newsletter***

LTC Luke Emerson, USA (Ret)

### ***Web Site:***

[www.lakesumtermoaa.org](http://www.lakesumtermoaa.org)

### ***Information:***

[info@lakesumtermoaa.org](mailto:info@lakesumtermoaa.org)

[Follow us on Facebook](#)

### ***Mailing Address:***

Lake & Sumter Counties Chapter –  
MOAA

P O Box 666

Lady Lake, FL 32158-0666

## Chapter Awards



**2023**



**2023**

## Membership and Recruiting (Continued)

COL Al Arnold, USA (Ret), Membership Chairman

Our Chapter membership dues have still not increased (yea!!) - only \$20/\$10 for regular membership/surviving spouse. There are 3 ways to renew: 1) in person, 2) by mail, or 3) online.

1. I will be at our meeting on November 13 at the Eisenhower Recreation Center in case you'd like to renew in person.
2. You can do it **by mail** by printing/using the application at the end of this newsletter, include a check payable to MOAA and mailing to: MOAA, PO Box 666, Lady Lake, FL 32158.
3. Or you can do it **easily online** and pay via PayPal or by credit card at the following address: [http://www.lakesumtermoaa.org/member\\_registration.cfm](http://www.lakesumtermoaa.org/member_registration.cfm), then click "Renew Membership" and follow the subsequent prompts.

A couple folks were having issues renewing online. They called me and we were able to fix things. So, don't hesitate to call/email me if you need assistance.

Stay safe.

## Chaplain's Corner

Maj Daryl DesJardin, USAF (Ret), Chaplain

With the concern of sounding cliché during Thanksgiving season, this month's word is gratitude. Florida and our neighboring states were on the receiving end of a powerful 1-2 punch combination recently with Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Take a moment and remember the anxiety you may have experienced as you attempted to forecast if Milton's cone of probability would impact your life or the ones you love. I'm confident that many of your northern family and friends encouraged you (ahem...cautioned you, yelled at you) to join the mass exodus, and get out of Florida. Some left, other stayed. None were wrong in their choices. And then the post-Milton complaints started: Why do local Villagers feel a sense of entitlement and fill their gas tanks while there are people trying to return to their homes who cannot find gas? What is wrong with the Recreation Department that my pickleball courts are still closed? Open them up and we'll blow them off! I cannot believe that my favorite restaurant is not open yet (day after Milton's trek through town)!

As Milton cleared St. Pete Beach, my friend and beach resident Mike reflects in a Facebook post: "I've been home since about noon today, and after a few much-needed hours of sleep, (my wife) came home too. The wind chimes outside are softly dancing in the breeze, and the weather is perfect - cool, crisp, and calm, as if nature decided to give us a break after the storm. It's the kind of night that makes you stop and take it all in: the sky is so clear, clouds dancing by, and the stars are bright without the usual glare of streetlights or the buzz of machines. It's quiet in a way you don't really notice until everything shuts down, and while I wouldn't wish a hurricane on anyone, there's something peaceful about this calm after the storm. I'm beyond thankful to God that our home is still standing. Sure, we missed the worst of it by about 30 miles, but we definitely got our share of the wind's fury. Some siding peeled off, but that's a small fix in the grand scheme of things. The important stuff is all intact. As I sit here with a cold beer, trying to unwind from the last 48 hours of 200 mph mental chaos, I can finally breathe a little easier. You know, we don't always stop to appreciate the little things; our routines, our comforts, until something shakes them up. These last two hurricanes have definitely cleared out our garage (whether we wanted it or not), but the stuff that really matters was kept safe, far away from the howling winds. Sometimes, it takes a storm to remind us just how blessed we are. For tonight, I'm just thankful. Thankful for the roof over our heads, the clear skies, the quiet, and most of all, that we're home, together."

Gratitude is focusing on the good things in life. It's when you notice and appreciate the positive things around you, recognize the kindness and help you receive from others, and feel thankful for what you have, rather than focusing on what's lacking. Practicing gratitude shifts your focus from negativity to positivity, improves mental health and well-being, strengthens relationships and increases resilience and happiness. But Chaplain, how can I practice gratitude? Keep a gratitude journal or write thoughts of gratitude in social media, share thanks with someone daily personally (if service industry, maybe add an extra large tip too), reflect on good experiences as you prepare for bed and write gratitude notes or texts.

Michael J Fox, retired actor and Parkinson's Disease cure advocate proclaims: "Gratitude makes optimism sustainable." I challenge that to be our battle cry as we face the daily "hurricanes" of life and living.

# SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS

Please Support our Golf Tournament Hole Sponsors



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JIM & EILEEN GOULETTE  
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 12<sup>th</sup>, 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup>:

*"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 12<sup>th</sup>.

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



## DSLO SUCCESS IN FLORIDA

Critical legislation for the benefit of military families and veterans has been successfully passed. ***There will be more to do during the 2025 legislative session.*** A list of the current priorities forming the basis of the State Report Card ratings are on the MOAA website. Even though Florida shows up in the "Red", progress on enacting bills in support of the DSLO priorities has been fair but implementing the provisions has been reasonably effective. Florida's Report Card follows.

2024 DSLO State Policy Priorities  
Florida Report Card: Rating 3/10 - RED

Military Access to Quality Family Child Care. Passed 2023

Military Spouse Employment and Economic Opportunities  
Audiology-Speech Pathology. Passed 2024

Teacher Mobility. Passed 2023

Licensed Professional Counseling. Passed 2023

Nurse Licensure. Passed 2016

Physical Therapy Licensure. Passed 2024

Psychology Interjurisdictional. Passed 2023

Child Abuse Identification and Reporting. No Action

Concurrent Juvenile Jurisdiction. No Action

State Support for Military Families With Special Education Needs. No Action

Open Enrollment Flexibility. Passed 2020

Defining Armed Forces in State Policy. Passed 2022

Military Family Anti-Discrimination Status. No Action

State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence. No Action

## State Legislative Update (Continued)

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

### STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT

There is no change from the October 2024 report because, as a result of the upcoming General Election, newly elected and incumbent legislators will not be seated until January 2025, and will undergo an orientation and receive committee assignments. The legislative session will not begin until March 2025. Many of the bills affecting veterans and military retirees that languished in committee during the past session will again find sponsors and appear for consideration. These include waiving of driver license and renewal fees for disabled veterans, discounted property taxes and an increase in the property tax exemption for disabled veterans, to name just a few.

### 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:

For Village Residents

SECO is a CO-OP Electric Company. Upon the passing of your spouse be sure to call them to notify of the death.

When you notify them you will be entitled to a check for the CO-OP closing out the joint account or account in his name. Then they will set up an account in your name only.

SECO will require a copy of the death certificate, an account number, and contact phone number. You can send this information to:

[customerservice@secoenergy.com](mailto:customerservice@secoenergy.com). You can also mail this information or take to the SECO office.



### Chapter Shirts & Name Tags

**Custom  
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& 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