

"If" by Rudyard Kipling

Inspiration comes in many forms. While we are often caught up in what we perceive as modern day problems, we tend to forget that men have dealt with the same obstacles all along and great wisdom can be found in classic literature. One such example is *If* by the great late Victorian era poet Rudyard Kipling. The classic dispenses timeless on honor, character, strength and humility that is accessible to all ages on the journey to becoming a better and more attentive person, from teenagers all the way into adulthood.

*If you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too;
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
 If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
 And treat those two impostors just the same;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
 And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
 If all men count with you, but none too much;
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*

Indeed, no toxicity here. I am quite certain that people who model the advice embodied in this poem are more likely to be the kind of people that this world needs to overcome much toxicity.

President's Corner

Greetings, it was good to see everyone at our September meeting. As I said there for those of you who were not able to attend, I hope everyone had an enjoyable, restful and relaxing summer break. I look forward to seeing more of you at our October meeting. I am looking forward to the rest of the fall presentations. Tom Dalzell has worked very hard over the summer to line up some excellent speakers for our meetings. His hard work along with that of many others was reflected in MOAA National once again recognizing our chapter as a Five Star Chapter. Thank you to all for everything you do and especially to Tom who puts the packages together to get us recognized. I would also like to welcome Evelyn Cox to the board of directors, and say thank you for volunteering to serve on the board. As you know we are a volunteer organization and can not effectively run without the help of our members. If anyone else is interested in becoming a board member please see myself or any other board members. There are always positions to fill and most are not very arduous to do. As it says in every communication MOAA sends to me, Never Stop Serving. This applies not only to MOAA but also those other organizations and causes that support our local veteran population. This month's



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Presidents Corner Cont'd from page 1

presentation was given by New Freedom Farm and I was surprised at the number of members who were not aware of the great work they do. Of course, they are my neighbors here in Buchanan so I am very familiar with them. How many of us know of a worthy organization that may benefit by presenting at one of our meetings or just being recognized in our newsletter. While I was familiar with New Freedom Farm, I was not familiar with Project Healing Waters who presented to us several years ago. Healing Waters helps veterans heal through fly fishing which is something I love to do. As a result of that meeting, I have become involved with them and guide for them regularly, which I find very rewarding. If you know of any other organizations that are helping our local veterans, please let myself, Tom Dalzell, or any other board member know so we can reach out to them and see how we can help them also. As I learned and sometimes forget, never assume as it... well you know, and never be the senior man with a secret, At our recent board meeting I learned that the governor signed into law a provision that lets National Guard be buried in Veteran Cemeteries at no cost. I was not aware until it was brought up by the Roanoke Valley Veterans Council that an indigent member of the Kentucky National Guard was unable to be buried in a veteran's cemetery in KY because he had never been nationalized under title 10 and only served under state authority. Thank you to our state legislators and governor for recognizing the service of the National Guard, regardless of statute they are called to operate under, and allow them to have the same burial benefits as those who served either on Title 10 or active duty. It was pointed out that early voting in Virginia is now available. I encourage everyone to exercise your right to vote for the candidate of your choice. I hope they will be one who in addition to supporting causes and issues that are critical to you also support the goals of a strong military, taking care of those who served and protecting the benefits they were promised.

Sincerely,
Matthew Haag
CAPT USN (Ret.)

OUR MISSION

As the community face of the Military Officers Association of America, the Southwest Virginia Chapter's mission is to advocate for a strong national defense, be an influential provider and supporter of programs, benefits and services for our military community, and a source of social fellowship for our members.

OUR VISION

To Be An Influential Military Organization in Southwest Virginia.

MOAA LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

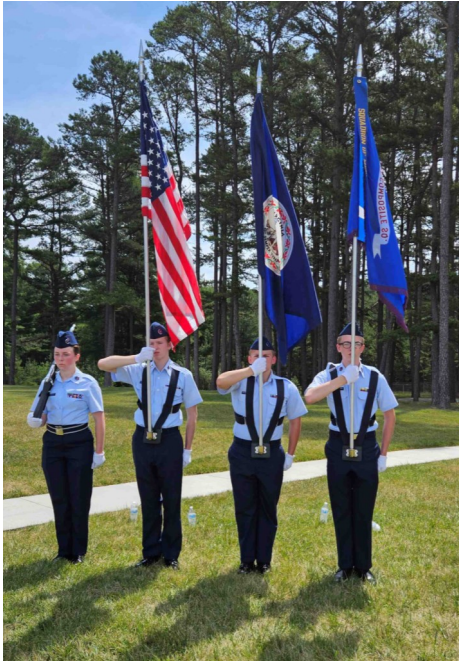
The Southwest Virginia Chapter received the Military Officers Association of America **Five Star Level of Excellence Award for 2021**. The Levels of Excellence (LOE) Award is one of MOAA's most prestigious awards earned by chapters. The award is a look back on 2021 calendar year programs, initiatives and successful experiences.



Chapter President CAPT Matt Haag, USN (Ret) sharing the Chapter Level of Excellence Award for 2021 with COL Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret)

MEMORIAL DEDICATION FOR BRIGADIER GENERAL SCOTT VAN CLEEF, USAF

On Saturday 8 July 2023 a Memorial Stone Dedication was held in honor and memory of Brigadier General Scott Paul Van Cleef, USAF, (Ret) at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia. The Memorial Stone was furnished and dedicated by the Roanoke Air and Space Forces Association, Chapter 285. The Civil Air Patrol Roanoke Composite Squadron presented the Colors, led the Pledge of Allegiance and led those assembled to the monument site for the unveiling of the monument stone. The guest speaker was Dr. Robin Thompson, AFROTC Instructor at VMI, Detachment 880, who introduced special guests, family and some military guests and spoke highly of General Van Cleef's involvement with the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA. Southwest Virginia Chapter Surviving Spouse representative Mrs. Mary Lou Summers and Mrs. Judy Foster Vice Chairman of the Virginia Veterans Cemetery Volunteers attended the event.



BLUEGRASS CONCERT FUNDRAISER FOR VITTLES FOR VETS

On Saturday 22 July 2023 **Vittles For Vets** sponsored a Veterans Benefit Bluegrass Concert with Lonesome Heart at the Little River Bluegrass Barn in Radford, Virginia. The concert featured Lonesome Heart along with special guests Micaiah McLellan and Colonel Don Sowder, a 50/50 raffle, gun auctions, giveaways with emcee Nick McNeil leading the program. All proceeds will go to feeding Veterans who are in need around the New River Valley with Vittles for Vets. This event raised \$2,700, enough to feed one vet for an entire year. In the below photo, Chapter Board of Directors member **Col Don Sowder, USA (Ret)** is playing the upright bass and singing with The Lonesome Heart Bluegrass Band for the opening number. While this was the first time for this event, all in attendance felt it should be scheduled as an annual event.



Lonesome Heart Bluegrass Band

BRAIN INJURY SERVICES OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

On Saturday 12 August 2023 members of the Southwest Virginia Chapter participated as members of the HOST COMMITTEE welcoming all for an Appreciation Event Celebrating Veterans, Brain Injury Survivors and their Families for reception and base- ball game at the Salem Memorial Baseball Stadium.



Please join the Host Committee for an **Appreciation Event Celebrating Veterans, Brain Injury Survivors and their Families**

Featuring Guest Speaker

Dr. Clay Mountcastle
Virginia War Memorial Director (VMI '94)



Introduced by:
Major General Jim Archer
(USA Retired)

SALEM MEMORIAL BASEBALL STADIUM
Saturday, August 12, 2023

5:00 pm Reception • 6:05 pm Game Begins



Please RSVP by August 5th
Joan Washburn, Coordinator
540-293-1310
joanwashburn@gmail.com

Guest \$ 50
Friend \$250
Patron \$500
Sponsor \$1,000
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- Perry C. Taylor, Jr. "Ace", President RV Veterans Council
- LTC Dan Karnes
- Captain Matthew Haag, President
- Senator John Edwards
- SW Chapter Military Officers Association
- Mayor Sherman Lea
- Senator David Suetterlein
- Colonel Tom Dalzell
- Councilwoman Trish White-Boyd
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- Virginia Veterans & Family Support Program

"Many thanks to the SW Chapter of the Military Officers Association for all their support."

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- New Hope Support Services
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*Partial Listing, all sponsors will be recognized at event.

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For more information contact Joan Washburn, 540-293.1310

We are an IRS 501(c)(3) charitable organization serving Southwest and parts of Southside Virginia.

Welcoming remarks were given by Salem Mayor Renee' Ferris Turk who spoke about the great facilities at the Salem Memorial stadium and the other facilities in the great city of Salem. Mayor Ferris Turk then introduced Colonel Thomas Dalzell, USMC (Ret) who spoke a little about MOAA and the Southwest Virginia Chapter and then introduced Major General James Archer USA (Ret). Major General Archer spoke about the Brain Injury Services and what they do for veterans and others in the Roanoke Valley and then introduced the guest speaker Dr. Clay Mountcastle, Executive Director of the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia. Dr Mountcastle reminisced about several individuals he encountered in his career and the value of the services provided by Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia. Dr. Mountcastle was presented a gift by Ms. Brooke Miles, Chair Brain Injury Services for his presentation. Over 170 were present to hear the speakers, enjoy a picnic dinner, watch a Red Sox baseball game and witness the unveiling of the Brain Services new logo and name and attend an art show for survivors of brain injury.



Michigan First District Representative Jack Bergman Advocates for Higher Quality of Veteran Care

21 September 2023

Washington - This week, Rep. Bergman questioned health officials in a House Veterans' Affairs Committee (Subcommittee on Health Oversight) Hearing on the quality of care provided by the VA. The hearing, which probed the Federal Supremacy Initiative of the Veterans Administration, underscored the need for a higher standard of quality care for Veterans, regardless of location or individual healthcare needs.

Rep. Bergman pressed the panel of medical professionals on the restrictions in place that limit the scope of care for Veterans, and reminded all present that healthcare outcomes for those who greatly sacrificed for our country should not be fueled by personal promotion or heavy-handed red tape. Bergman also underscored outliers in VA capabilities when providing and covering contemporary care procedures, further highlighting the shortcomings of Veteran healthcare and the ample room for improvement. Moreover, Rep. Bergman urged his colleagues and panelists to consider rural and remote access to medicine for Veterans like those in the First District.

In concluding his remarks, **Rep. Bergman stated**, “we need to make sure as best we can, as members of Congress, that what is being done at all bureaucratic levels within the federal government, in this case especially Veterans Administration, is being done for the right reasons with outcomes for Veterans in mind, not outcomes for the bureaucracy.”

You can watch Rep. Bergman’s questioning by copying the below address on your browser.

<https://bergman.house.gov/components/redirect/r.aspx?ID=4645-1508304>

Surviving Spouse Liaisons Honored

By MOAA Staff

MOAA recognizes surviving spouse liaisons who have made outstanding contributions in one or more of the following Surviving Spouse Advisory Council mission goals: educate, encourage, and engage.

The 2023 recipients of the Surviving Spouse Liaison Excellence Award are: Cheryl Toland, surviving spouse liaison, Washington Council of Chapters and Mount Rainier Chapter: Whether she’s there to provide comfort through a hug or help track down needed forms and information, Toland has made it her mission to be there for surviving spouses during their time of grief. She keeps abreast of national and military regulatory changes and communicates those to chapter members. This also includes keeping in contact with local legislators and congressional members and their staff to make sure that sudden changes don’t cause an unexpected impact on a grieving family.

Lt. Col. Roy Yanchesky, USA (Ret), surviving spouse liaison, Wichita (Kan.) Chapter: In addition to keeping members of his chapter updated about military survivor benefits, Yanchesky also maintains close contact with chapter officers and members whenever the chapter has an illness or loss in its membership to ensure the surviving spouse has the support he or she needs. He contacts surviving spouses and families of deceased members and assists them in contacting the applicable support agencies so benefits are not interrupted or missed, sends letters of condolence, and volunteers any assistance grieving family members might request in processing benefits. He also assists chapter members in obtaining military honors for funerals through local military organizations or veterans groups and helps family members procure new ID cards as needed.

Final COLA Prediction: Where the 2024 Increase Could Land

20 September 2023; by MOAA staff

With just a few weeks before final calculations can be made, the annual cost-of-living allowance (COLA) for military retirees, VA disability recipients, Social Security beneficiaries, and others receiving certain federal payments for 2024 is settling in at a higher-than-expected figure ... one that's still well below last year's adjustment.

MOAA predicts the upcoming COLA will be 3.2%, down 5.5 percentage points from last year's 8.7% increase. It's the smallest figure in three years, but it's just the fifth time in 20 years the adjustment has reached 3% or higher.

[RELATED: [MOAA's COLA Watch](#)]

The Math

The COLA figure stems from the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), an inflation-tracking metric updated monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. CPI-W figures from July, August, and September are averaged, and the percentage increase of that number over the previous year's average results (known as the "base") is the new COLA rate.

The average of this year's July and August figures (300.725) would yield a 3.0% COLA increase when compared with last year's base (291.901). If the September figures continue the average rate of increase seen since May, the final figure will result in the 3.2% projection. A second higher-than-expected bump in CPI-W could move that figure up, but likely only by a tenth of a percentage point.

MOAA will update its [COLA Watch page](#) on Oct. 12, after the release of the September figures (likely mid-morning), to reflect the 2024 calculations.

MOAA's Role

The cold calculations make the process of an inflation adjustment for military retiree pay seem automatic and predictable. Unfortunately, that hasn't always been the case.

From proposals in the 1980s to eliminate the military retiree COLA entirely to a 2010 commission's report suggesting a deferral of all military retiree COLA until age 62, the adjustment regularly comes under scrutiny on Capitol Hill. The most recent major threat came in 2013, when a continuing resolution included language creating "COLA minus 1 percent" for retirees under 62 – a reduction to the military retirement benefit that would've cost younger retirees tens of thousands of dollars in earned benefits. MOAA rallied alongside our partners in [The Military Coalition](#) at the time to secure a change to the law in early 2014, before the change could take effect.

[RELATED: [Why COLA Is a Battlefield for Your Earned Benefits](#)]

More recent threats have come not by targeting military retirement pay, but by plans to change how the overall COLA is calculated. A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) proposal to move from CPI-W to a metric called "[Chained CPI](#)" would save the government more than \$250 billion over 10 years, per the CBO's math – with some of that money removed from the pockets of military retirees counting on their earned retirement income. This proposal has yet to take form in legislation. But as budget battles boil over on Capitol Hill and lawmakers look for cost-cutting solutions amid shutdown threats, MOAA stands ready to make your voice heard and protect all earned benefits, including the value of military retirement pay, from potential cuts. You can

keep up with MOAA's latest advocacy efforts by visiting [MOAA's Advocacy News page](#). And by registering for MOAA's [Legislative Action Center](#), you'll be able to contact your lawmakers about issues of importance to MOAA and the wider uniformed services community.


NEW FREEDOM FARM, INC. HEALING HUMANS THROUGH HORSES

On 21 September 2023 Ms. Deborah Ingram, Resource Advocate Community Development for New Freedom Farm, Inc provided an in-depth summary of the purpose and mission of New Freedom Farm. In the United States, veterans commit suicide at a rate of 22 individuals per day. The farm itself is a safe place for veterans and first responders suffering from trauma, depression/anxiety, substance use, and other issues. Staff and volunteers engage visitors to the farm by encouraging therapeutic interaction



The Problem...

- Many veterans feel as though no one understands them.
- Veterans do not want to be labeled by insurance companies, analyzed by therapists or feel trapped indoors.
- For veterans haunted by memories of traumatic events, suicide can seem to them to be the only way out.
- Chronic & repetitive reliving and an inability to make the internal war stop.
- Flashbacks & Re-experiencing
- Avoidance & Isolation




with the farm's equine residents, farm chores, and peer-to-peer support. These visits help veterans and first responders with feelings of isolation, communication, trust, and social skills. The end-goal of these interactions is to empower veterans and first responders to heal by realizing their efforts and contributions and assisting with reintegration into civilian life.

The Solution...

- New Freedom Farm is a place where veterans can feel safe without schedules or defining structure.
- Some veterans report that other types of therapy were not effective in relieving their symptoms.
- Veterans may have a love of, or interest in, animals, farming and gardening, including horses.
- The veteran may relate to a horse as a respected symbol of power.
- Veterans recognize physical and mental health benefits from interacting with horses, being outdoors, and moving around in a receptive setting.
- Veteran to veteran approach



American Heroes with American Icons

- "If you add in a wild mustang that has been ungentled, never ever touched, the veteran needs to learn communication skills and patience."
- Being present
- Program how it works
- BLM Compliance top 5 Facilities in the USA
- GFAS Accreditation 4/21 Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries first veteran/mustang Program in history



Why New Freedom Farm?

- New Freedom Farm was founded by U.S. Navy Veteran, Forensic Nurse, Lois Dawn Magill after a personal struggle with PTSD and substance abuse.
- After lots of feedback from fellow veterans; we have often heard that the typical therapy setting was not working.
- Every day 22 Veterans a commit suicide in our country.
- A Safe Sober Place to Just Be!



Just as New Freedom Farm is a safe place for humans, it is also a dedicated safe haven for its equine residents. The horses and other animals that live on the farm have come from their own traumatic situations, including abandonment and auction. The animals that reside at New Freedom Farm are what make the programs unique and will remain permanent inhabitants of the farm. One exception to this is the wild mustangs that make their way to this idyllic farm. Veterans chosen to participate in the Wild Mustang program may be eligible to assume responsibility for the animal if it is deemed appropriate for all.



The farm also offers unique service opportunities, including the New Freedom Farm Honor Guard and the mandated service program for individuals referred through local courts. New Freedom Farm is dedicated to helping those who have served our country and their families. Veterans and first responders are never charged for their visits to the farm. New Freedom Farm is a non-profit organization founded by veteran and retired forensic nurse investigator Lois Dawn Magill in 2016. Lois founded New Freedom Farm out of her personal understanding of PTSD and the therapeutic benefits of being around horses. Located on 26 level acres in Buchanan, VA, the farm is home to a number of equines, including wild mustangs, mares and their foals saved from slaughter, mini horses, and mini donkeys, among others. New Freedom Farm is dedicated to helping those who have served our country and their families. Since 2016, the farm's residents and programs have grown and continue to find new ways to serve veterans, first responders, and their families.

Mission Statement: New Freedom Farm provides refuge and rehabilitation from trauma to veterans and first responders, and equines, including the American Mustang. **Vision Statement:** New Freedom Farm envisions a future where all veterans and first responders are empowered, healthy, and supported, and all equines have peaceful homes.

Continued from Page 9 "New Freedom Farm"

Why NFF?

- New Freedom Farm targets its market focus on two groups: veterans with PTSD, substance abuse and/or traumatic brain injuries and their families.
- Our property is flat, handicap accessible, and we provide broader access across the property with a golf cart made available for transportation on the farm.
- Networking has been done with many veteran's groups through meetings & community events.
- By leveraging technology, the farm enjoys a strong social media presence in the broader community.
- We are located 28 miles from the Salem Veterans Administration Hospital.



Veteran Needs...

The following is a summary of Veteran Statistics for PTSD, Substance Abuse, TBI and Suicide as listed on www.VA.gov :

- As of September 2014, there are about [2.7 million American veterans](#) of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (compared to 2.6 million Vietnam veterans who fought in Vietnam).
- There are 8.2 million "Vietnam Era Veterans" (personnel who served anywhere during any time of the Vietnam War).
- At least 20% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have PTSD and/or Depression.
- Vietnam veterans also report high lifetime rates of PTSD ranging from 10% to 31%.
- PTSD is the third most prevalent psychiatric diagnosis among veterans using Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals.
- 50% of those with PTSD do not seek treatment. Out of the half that seeks treatment, only half of them get "minimally adequate" treatment.



Collaborations

- Virginia Tech
- Virginia Tech Calvary Cadets
- US Federal Court Probation
- Angels of Assisi
- ARCH Services, Inc./Goodwill
- VA Medical Center, Salem, VA
- Botetourt County Community Court Corrections
- Roanoke County Community Court Corrections
- Botetourt County Commonwealth Attorney's Office
- Lynchburg Area Veterans Council
- Roanoke Area Veterans Council
- Bureau of Land Management to foster mustangs
- VFW
- American Legion
- Combat Veteran Motorcycle Association
- Keep Virginia Clean Lithia Roadside pick up

How Will New Freedom Farm Continue to Grow?

- There is a rapidly growing interest in equine-assisted therapy supporting the psychological health and family relationships of service members, veterans and their families worldwide. More than 30 major VA Medical Centers in the U.S. are participating in Equine Assisted Activities and that number is growing rapidly, particularly with returning combat veterans with PTSD.
- Our operation will likely expand as we begin to offer more services to these veterans and their families. There are a growing number of veterans asking for help with their PTSD and substance abuse issues. In our immediate vicinity alone there are 15,560 veterans.
- New Freedom Farm will continue to bring new visitors to the Buchanan and Botetourt County Area.
- There is a possibility of employing 3-8 people from our community.



Continued from Page 10 - “New Freedom Farm”

Accomplishments from the start

- Community Service workers
- Council for Community Service
- Buddy Check 22
- Army veterans horse clinics
- Veteran Suicidal / Relapse Save Committed
- Calls from across the United States
- Military Vehicles club
- DAV Veterans Council
- Case management homeless veterans, household goods, physical moving
- Admin / Board Meetings / Accountant / Strategic Planning
- Boy scouts Pine Wood Derby, Girl Scouts Ice Cream social, Church Life Group
- Radio stations, live radio
- Monument terrace, HOG Dealer in Lynchburg
- Hospice for Veterans
- Veterans and RT from Across the Country
- 4/7/18 Freedom Fest #1 817 COLD
- Barnyard Breakfast, BBQ and impromptu gatherings
- New Electric in Barn / Generator
- Week of filming, upcoming documentary
- Healing Waters, Guitars for Veterans, Honor Fest
- Team Rubicon staging for local emergency construction operation

WHAT DO WE NEED AND HOW CAN YOU HELP

- Of course, funding. Our current yearly operating budget is \$275,000.00 not including allocations for capital improvements.
- Staples gift cards
- Home Depot gift cards
- Select NFF as your Amazon Smiles designated charity
- Select NFF as your Kroger designated charity
- Gravel/stone dust arena replenishment
- Postage stamps
- Equine vet care account
- Feed account
- Staffing salaries
- Grant Writer
- Funding for roof canopy at covered riding arena



SWVC Chapter President CAPT Matt Haag, USN (Ret) presenting Ms. Deborah Ingram, New Freedom Farm, a token of appreciation for her excellent presentation



A veteran and his family



MOAA Joins Advocacy Groups Offering Fixes in Fight Against Food Insecurity

By: Jen Goodale 20 September 2023

MOAA joined with other groups advocating for military families to author a Sept. 14 letter to Congress recommending much-needed improvements to DoD's plans for addressing food insecurity in the ranks – a wide-ranging problem that's so far been met with a very limited solution.

Many servicemembers and military families are struggling with some level of food insecurity, [according to DoD](#). The 2020 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty members revealed 10% of servicemembers, mostly junior enlisted, report very low food security as defined by the parameters developed by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). To address this issue, Congress required DoD to develop and implement the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) in the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

[TAKE ACTION: [Ask Your House Member to Strengthen the Basic Needs Allowance](#)]

The BNA is a supplemental monthly payment for qualifying servicemembers, including Guard and Reserve component members on active orders. The allowance is based on gross household income and federal poverty guidelines for family size. The threshold for eligibility is 150% of the federal poverty guidelines, a figure increased once officials recognized the limited reach the BNA would have at the initial threshold of 130%.

Unfortunately, even with that uptick, the BNA helps less than 3,000 servicemembers. The letter to members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees – co-authored by MOAA, [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#), and the [National Military Family Association](#), and signed by 14 other advocacy groups – urges them to include much-needed improvements to the BNA in this year's NDAA. It recommends:

- Full exclusion of the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) as part of a servicemember's income for determining eligibility.
- Exclusion of government food assistance as part of a servicemember's gross household income.
- Streamlining and simplifying the notification and application process for the BNA to remove barriers and eliminate stigma that may prevent servicemembers from seeking needed assistance.
- Requiring DoD to increase transparency about who is eligible to receive BNA, coordinate efforts with USDA to identify servicemembers at risk of food insecurity, provide education on the BNA and other nutrition assistance programs available, and maximize program participation and utilization of available supports.

[[READ THE LETTER](#)]

Ultimately, Congress must do more to address overall servicemember compensation to ensure military families do not face food insecurity challenges. Because that will take more time to accomplish, the BNA must be improved to provide necessary support to families in the immediate.

Failure to secure meaningful and lasting solutions will result in a program similar to the BNA's predecessor, the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA), which was eliminated in the FY 2016 NDAA in CONUS locations due to inefficiencies and lack of program use.

In a standalone effort to improve the BNA, Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.) introduced legislation which would eliminate BAH from the BNA eligibility calculation. The Military Food Security Act ([H.R. 1764](#)) would result in 21 times as many military families receiving aid, according to a [RAND study](#). It's time to address the issue of food insecurity with an effective, easy-to-navigate program.

[TAKE ACTION: [Urge Lawmakers to Support Improvements to the Basic Needs Allowance](#)]

You can make a difference by contacting your House member today and [asking them to co-sponsor this legislation](#). As members of the uniformed services community, we have a duty to take care of one another, and this is an important step in the right direction.

MOAA'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

MOAA's Legislative Priorities for advocacy as the 118th Congress continues its work. Their focus remains on all seven of the uniformed services and their service-earned entitlements.

- Compensation and Service-Earned Benefits
- Military Housing
- Health Care for Currently Serving and Retirees
- Health Care and Benefits for Veterans
- Service Families
- Survivors
- Guard and Reserve

As protecting health care and service-earned benefits is a challenge, MOAA will press forward to engage Congress to shape outcomes in these vital areas. There are steep hills before us. Our nation has a rising debt of more than \$30 trillion and a deficit of more than \$3 trillion. Because of this, MOAA anticipates robust attempts to control federal budgets, reduce or eliminate unprogrammed expenditures, and reduce entitlements. MOAA needs you to be ready to reach out to your legislators and keep that engagement going as necessary to make sure your voice is heard. **Details at <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/advocacy/moaas-legislative-priorities-118th-Congress/>**

VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS/JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL INITIATIVES

- JLC 2023 Initiatives: JLC 2023 Approved Initiatives
- JLC 2023-01 Expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Service Members to also include “Died in the Line-of-Duty”
- JLC 2023-02 Real Property Tax Exemption Effective Date.
- JLC 2023-03 Removal of Age Requirement Income Tax Subtraction
- JLC 2023-04 Appropriate \$400,000 (GF) for State Veterans Cemeteries; Eliminate Spouse/Dependent and Guard/Reserve Burial Fees
- JLC 2023-05 Virginia National Guard State Park Admission
- JLC 2023-06 Virginia National Guard Income Tax Exemption

A summary of the approved 2023 JLC Initiatives Policy papers for each initiative can be accessed on the JLC webpage at: <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2>



VA Won't Restart Health Records Overhaul Until Summer 2024 ... or Later

15 September 2023

[Veterans Affairs officials](#) aren't planning to restart [deployment of its new electronic health records system](#) until at least next summer, but lawmakers are warning even that may be too optimistic, given continued software problems.

Leaders from the House and Senate are negotiating legislation that would mandate stricter oversight plus performance benchmarks for the [embattled \\$10-billion medical records project](#), which remains stalled due to reliability and usability issues.

"It's simple: this project has to deliver results, or end," [House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mike Bost](#), R-Ill., lectured VA officials at congressional hearing on Thursday. "It cannot be allowed to stumble along and spend money forever."

[RELATED: [What Current VA Beneficiaries Should Know About the PACT Act](#)]

It was the second fractious hearing this week on the 10-year records overhaul project. VA leaders heard similar warnings Wednesday from [House Appropriations Committee](#) members who are frustrated that not a single site is using the new software successfully. VA program planners [halted all deployments last April of the reportedly bug-ridden Millennium records system](#), which is administered by [Oracle Cerner](#). The project was announced by [President Donald Trump in 2017](#), but only five VA medical sites have installed it, and all report numerous problems with tracking patients' care history.

VA administrators told Congress at the Wednesday hearing that they hope to deploy the system to new sites sometime in summer 2024 and expressed optimism that the records overhaul project can get back on track.

Dr. Neil Evans, acting program director for VA's records project, said they are working to simplify and streamline the system to better respond to staff and veteran needs.

[RELATED: [New VA Campaign Highlights End-of-Life Benefit Offerings](#)]

Oracle Cerner Executive Vice President Mike Sicilia called the program difficulties thus far "unacceptable and frankly embarrassing" but also told lawmakers he is confident the past rollout errors can be corrected. Witnesses at Thursday's hearing were more skeptical. "The majority of staff are still frustrated at the amount of time that things take to process or file," said Scott Kelter, director of the [VA Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington](#), one of the few sites using the Millennium records system. "Right now, it's still double or triple what it used to be." Most lawmakers on the appropriations committee voiced reluctant support for moving ahead with the Oracle Center software. "We have spent too many billions of dollars for this to fail," said Rep. John Carter, R-Texas.

[RELATED: [VA to Review Link Between Burn Pit Toxins and Additional Cancers](#)]

But several Republicans on the veterans committee predicted the project's demise. "Five years out and we're still having to bring people in to basically rebuild the system," said Rep. Greg Murphy, R-N.C. "That's not what a new electronic medical record is supposed to be. It's absolutely inexcusable. There are other systems out there that are much better and could well translate to the needs of veterans and VA." In lieu of clear congressional consensus on whether the project should be abandoned, both Bost and [committee ranking member Rep. Mark Takano](#), D-Calif., said they are working with Senate counterparts to find ways for Congress to put new checks on the project before billions more in taxpayer funds are spent. Takano said that a modern health records system is a necessity for VA, which is currently using the [45-year-old VistA](#) system — the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture — at most sites. But he also said that given the past problems with deployment, "we need new legislative action to force some of the structural and accountability measures that are necessary to get this program on track." Bost said that will include assurances that the few sites using the software already "have been made whole" before additional medical centers are added. Lawmakers did not offer any timeline for when legislation may be voted on in the House or Senate.

[RELATED: [New VA Travel Reimbursement Program Is Failing Veterans, Review Finds](#)]

VA officials are requesting almost \$2 billion in funding for the ongoing electronic health records project in fiscal 2024, but Congress has yet to finalize that budget request.

VA Marks 100 Years of Health Care for Women Veterans

By: René Campos, 18 September 2023

The VA celebrated its [100th anniversary](#) of delivering health care to women veterans on Sept. 14. It was an honor to attend the VA headquarters-sponsored event marking the occasion as MOAA's veterans service organization representative and as a woman veteran. I found myself reflecting on my own journey using VA health care over the course of my 30-year Navy career and as a veteran using the system for 20 years — admiring the service of my brave sister comrades who came before me. Kicking off the event was the newly confirmed VA deputy secretary, Army and Iraq combat veteran [Tanya Bradsher](#), who previously served as VA's chief of staff. A fourth-generation veteran, Bradsher is also the first women deputy secretary and the highest-ranking woman in VA history, and the first woman of color to serve in the position.



Tanya Bradsher, newly confirmed deputy VA secretary, speaks during a Sept. 14 event marking the centennial of the VA offering care to women veterans.

The History of VA Health Care for Women

The [history of women serving in America's wars](#) reflects an enduring bravery ingrained in the very fabric of our country. More than 600 women lost their lives during World War I, for example, and many more returned home disabled.

[RELATED: [New VA Campaign Highlights End-of-Life Benefit Offerings](#)]

Unfortunately, it has taken decades for women to gain full access to VA health care system after World War I. Though women who served as Army and Navy nurses during that conflict were authorized hospitalization and medical care on March 1, 1919, after the armistice, VA medical facilities were not prepared to care for them.

It was not until 1923, when the governing board of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (to which VA traces its origin) approved hospital spaces for the Army and Navy nurses. At that time, there were about 52,000 women veterans in the U.S., and 25% of them had disabilities making them eligible for care.

VA officials highlighted the evolution of health care at the centennial celebration, noting how the system has adapted to the unique needs of women veterans. Since the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, the VA has continued to expand its mission to care for women and to provide gender-specific care.

VA Health Care Today

Our more than [2 million women veterans](#) make up the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population. More than 755,000 of those veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

[RELATED: [Find Out How You Can Take Part in the VA's Women Veterans Book Corner](#)]

MOAA and other veteran organizations have pressed Congress and the VA to further improve health care, benefits, and services for women veterans over the past two decades. While the VA has improved services in fertility, newborn care, maternity care, child care, sexual assault and trauma, and homelessness, the department recognizes there is more to be done. As the population of women serving in uniform continues to grow, the VA intends to target resources and services to meet the demand.

MOAA continues to work closely with the department and Congress to eliminate disparities in health care delivery and advance research programs for women, minority, and underserved veterans. Expanding access and services is key to ensuring equitable delivery of health and benefit services among all veteran populations.

MOAA Charities

Chapter members are encouraged to consider the following MOAA Charities in your planned giving.

- Support MOAA Charities by shopping with Amazon Smile
- Consider a bequest to The MOAA Foundation
- Consider a bequest to the MOAA Scholarship Fund
- Contributing cash and securities to MOAA Charities
- Setting up a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA)
- Establishing a Designated Scholarship
- How Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs) can provide income for life
- Donating via an IRA Charitable Rollover/Qualified Charitable Distribution

DO YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA undertakes annual MOAA Medal awards presented to distinguished JROTC Cadets/Midshipmen in 14 area high schools and the four ROTC Cadets/Midshipmen at Virginia Tech and Radford University? Did you know that these awards recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for leadership while a member of their respective JROTC/ ROTC Programs? These JROTC/ ROTC awards consist of a MOAA Medal Award and an appropriate Award Certificate. The chapter bears the cost of the MOAA Medal Awards, presentation folders and mailing costs.

Did you also know that the Southwest Virginia Chapter of MOAA has established two Leadership Awards presented to ROTC Cadets/Midshipmen at Virginia Tech and Radford University during each academic year? Recipients are to be juniors or who will be starting their final year in the coming fall of the academic year. The Leadership Awards were established to recognize the recipient's academic, community service and leadership qualities that demonstrate exceptional potential for military leadership while a member of the Virginia Tech and Radford University ROTC Programs. The two Leadership Awards each carry a \$500 monetary award and an appropriate Award Certificate. The chapter bears the cost of the two Leadership Awards, presentation folders and the two \$500 monetary awards.

The South West Virginia Chapter of MOAA has been a strong supporter of the Military Family Support Center. However, the Military Family Support Center has gone out of operation. The Southwest Virginia Chapter is looking into new options to restart the mission to identify and provide for the morale, welfare, and informational needs of military families (of all branches and components) who reside outside of the established support networks. During 2023 the chapter hopes to merge with another food pantry's to be able to provide supplies and distribute food stuffs to needy military families.

The South West Virginia Chapter of MOAA also supports the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia each year providing a MOAA Mobile Vehicle and with the Christmas Wreath Laying Program providing and placing wreaths on veterans' grave sites. The Chapter funded and dedicated a "Memorial Bench" at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, Virginia in honor of LTC James "Pat" Green, USA (Ret) who was the person most responsible for getting the cemetery located at Dublin, Virginia.

These programs are extremely important for the SWVC to continue as the community face of the Military Officers Association of America, to be an advocate for a strong national defense, to be an influential provider and supporter of programs, benefits and services for our military community, and to be a source of social fellowship for our members. The chapter has no regular financial stream except for chapter dues or donations. During the coming year we will be asking for your personal and financial support of our outreach programs and our monthly membership meetings.



Chapter Website Up and Running

The Southwest Virginia Chapter website is now up and running. To access the site go to **moaaswva.org**. The website is one of the primary means to keep in touch with the current membership, connect with potential members and keep members advised on current issues of importance to the active duty, retired and former military, their spouse and family. The Chapter also has a Facebook page at MOAASWVA

WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON AT MOAA

- Legislative Accomplishments?
- Legislative TAKE ACTION Center?
- Publications and Reports?
- Military Officer Magazine?
- Newsletters?

Log on to MOAA.org

MOAA Southwest Virginia Chapter
P.O. Box 3090
Roanoke, VA 24015-1090
Email: info@moaaswva.org
Webpage: www.moaaswva.org
Facebook: MOAA SWVA

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the Southwest Virginia Chapter (SWVC) of MOAA are a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitments to currently serving, retired, and former members of the uniformed services and their families and survivors. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, Public Health Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and their surviving spouses.

UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

19 October 2023 – Mr. Paul A. Levengood, PhD, President of The George C. Marshall Foundation on “General George C. Marshall.”

16 November 2023 – Board of Directors meeting. Program by LTC Roberta Chrissy, USA (Ret) on “Pentagon Survivors Tell Their Story.”

14 December 2023 – Program – CWO4 Lelia P. Jackson, USMC (Ret) from MOAA National to visit for installation of Officers and Board of Directors for the year 2024 and provide an update on MOAA issues, the PACT Act, NDAA for 2024.

18 January 2024 - Frank T. Stritter, Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on "Heroes of the D-Day Landing" or "D-Day: Just a Walk on the Beach."

A REMINDER THAT A GREAT LUNCH IS PROVIDED AT EACH MEMBERSHIP MEETING

FUTURE PROGRAMS BEING CONSIDERED - TBD:

1. **Mr. Mike Stewart, Roanoke Regional Airport Commission (RRAC) Director on "The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport - Current Status and The Future"**
2. **Virginia Tech "Center for Advanced Automotive Research" on the Smart Road.**
3. **Ms. Sara Stanford or Ms. Carly Harris on the "Sports Nutrition Program For Athletes At Virginia Tech"**
4. **CAPT Gary Powers, USN (Ret) on "History of the 303rd Bomb Group & RAF Molesworth, UK"**



**CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP
as of 30 September 2023**

Regular Members 109
 Surviving Spouses 9
 Total Members 118
 Talk to a fellow officer about joining the Southwest Virginia Chapter!

JOIN THE CHAPTER

Looking to join the Southwest Virginia Chapter? Want more information on how to join and become involved? Check us out on the chapter website at **moaswva.org** or on face book at **moaswva** then Contact COL Bob Brown, USA (Ret), Chapter Membership Chair at (540) 904-2810 or email at **rfbrown68@gmail.com**.



**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER - ENROLLMENT/RENEWAL FORM**

Name (First ,Middle, Last, Rank) _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Email Address _____
 Branch of Service _____ Retired _____ Active Duty _____ NG _____ Former Officer _____
 Date of Birth _____ Spouse Name _____ MOAA Membership ID No. _____

Annual Chapter Dues are \$30.00. Widows (ers) dues are \$15.00. Dues for those entering MOAA between 1 July and 31 December are \$20.00. Please mail dues payment to: **MOAA, Southwest Virginia Chapter, P.O. Box 3090, Roanoke, VA 24015-1090**

Note: The Chapter Newsletter *The Communique* is published quarterly and sent to the membership by email. Printed copies will be provided upon request. The next issue will be published at the end of September 2023.



Bring a fellow officer and their spouse to our next meeting.

NEVER STOP SERVING!

Featured in This Issue



Presidents Corner
 Memorial Dedication for BGEN Scott Van Cleef
 Bluegrass Concert fundraiser for "Vittles For Vets"
 New Freedom Farms, Inc. Healing Vets through Horses
 VA Won't Restart Health Records Overhaul Until 2024
 Final COLA Prediction: Where the 2024 Increase Could
 Land
 MOA fights Food Insecurity

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