



OFFICERS CALL



Military Officers Association of America Saint Petersburg Area Chapter

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025



MOAA-Saint Petersburg Area Chapter
 PO Box 40353
 Saint Petersburg, FL 33743
www.moaa.org

— DFAS

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 1-800-6982411
www.militarycoalition.org

— Health Care Committee-Survivors

www.militaryonesource.mil

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Raymond James Valor Golf Tournament — Honoring Service Through Sport

By John Rummel, CDR (ret), 1st Vice President

Celebrating Service and Community at the 7th Annual Valor Golf Tournament

On Saturday, November 1st, Raymond James hosted the 7th Annual Valor Golf Tournament at the renowned Copperhead Course at In-nisbrook Golf Resort, the celebrated home of the PGA's Valspar Championship. The day was marked by genuine camaraderie, heartfelt gratitude, and a collective dedication to supporting the Veteran community. Set against the picturesque landscape of one of Florida's premier golf destinations, participants gathered to make a meaningful impact while enjoying the sport.



Connecting Communities Through Sport

The Valor Golf Tournament is more than just a day on the greens; it acts as a bridge uniting military and first responder communities, financial services professionals, and nonprofit leaders committed to service. Over seven years, the annual tournament has raised an impressive \$1.6 million, with this year's event alone generating over \$400,000. These funds directly benefit 23 nonprofit organizations, including the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Chapter, underscoring the tournament's powerful role in giving back.

Engaging Youth: Boca Ciega High School JROTC Unit

A standout moment from the tournament was the enthusiastic engagement of the Boca Ciega High School JROTC unit, under the leadership of Senior Instructor COL (ret) Jay Jackson. The Cadets captivated participants by sharing insights into their program and showcasing various equipment, such as an air rifle and drill team gear. They initiated a spirited challenge for golfers: a successful tee shot into the fairway meant the cadets would do pushups; a missed shot required the golfers to perform the pushups themselves, all while encouraging donations to the JROTC unit. The activity was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from both golfers and VALOR leadership, widely considered the best experience on the course. The Boca Ciega JROTC unit was rewarded with over \$1,400 in cash donations from generous participants. Special appreciation goes to COL Jackson and his team for their energy and commitment, ensuring a memorable experience for all involved.

Honoring Sacrifice: Guest of Honor COL (ret) Gregory Gadson

This year's tournament was distinguished by the presence of Colonel (ret) Gregory Gadson as the guest of honor. COL Gadson, an actor, motivational speaker, and 25-year Army Field Artillery Officer, shared his remarkable story of service and resilience. Severely injured in Iraq by an I.E.D. attack—which resulted in the loss of both legs above the knee and a severely damaged

continued on pg. 2

arm—COL Gadson underwent extensive surgeries and continued his service on active duty. He became the first director of the U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program and later served as Commander, U.S. Army Garrison at Ft. Belvoir, VA, making history as the first double amputee to lead a major Army installation. His keynote address touched on overcoming adversity and cultivating character through diligence and accountability, deeply inspiring everyone in attendance and epitomizing the tournament's dedication to honoring service and perseverance.

President's Note



John Kieffer

Major, USA (Former)
President

St Petersburg
Area Chapter

Text: 813-919-9161

Email:

johnkieffer1234@aol.com

Reflections on My Tenure as Chapter President

As we prepare to transition into a new year, I am reminded that this moment marks the conclusion of my service as your chapter president. Serving in this role has been the greatest honor of my career, and in keeping with our guiding slogan, "Never Stop Serving," I look forward to continuing to serve alongside all of you as we work together to fulfill the important missions of both our chapter and MOAA.

Gratitude for the Board of Directors and Advisory Board

For my final president's message, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to each member of our chapter's Board of Directors and Advisory Board. Your dedication and efforts have been instrumental in our chapter's operations and numerous accomplishments. I am sincerely grateful for your partnership and support.

CMDR John Rummel, USN, Ret.

As our 1st Vice President, CMDR Rummel has played a pivotal role in connecting the chapter with the Raymond James Valor program, which has enabled us to secure funding for essential equipment needs across the five JROTC schools we support. Our Facebook page serves as a living archive of photos highlighting these activities, with many posts featuring cadets proudly holding checks that represent the substantial funding provided through this partnership.

LTC David Warren, USA, Ret.

LTC Warren, in his capacity as 2nd Vice President, assumed the responsibility of editing our newsletter, Officers Call. This role included the challenging task of prompting and motivating the Board—myself included—to provide timely content. When the Treasurer position became unexpectedly vacant, LTC Warren stepped up to serve as Acting Treasurer, diligently tracking our funds and presenting the Board with comprehensive monthly financial reports.

COL Tony Clark, USA Chaplain Corps, Ret.

Our chapter has greatly benefited from COL Clark's wisdom and leadership. As our chaplain, his invocations have been inclusive and deeply relevant to national observances and current events. In addition to this, his position as a Community Access Manager with Boley Centers has provided an invaluable connection to outreach opportunities within the veteran community, opportunities that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Throughout my tenure, COL Clark has also been a trusted advisor, assisting in the management of our Executive Committee and membership meetings.

LTC Pauline Mallory, USA, Ret.

LTC Mallory's contributions have far exceeded her official role as Surviving Spouse Liaison. No one in recent chapter history has worked harder to personally reach out to members, letting them know their membership is valued and ensuring our rolls remain current. As a former chapter president, she has offered the Board her wealth of experience and sound advice on best practices. I am particularly grateful for the many times she answered my calls—even while fishing with her spouse, David—to assist with various chapter matters.

CPT Tina Manley, USA, Ret.

Although officially an Executive Advisory Board member, CPT Manley has served as our Board's recording secretary, diligently taking detailed notes and producing prompt, accurate minutes from each monthly Executive Committee meeting. More recently, she has also taken on the vital position of Membership Chair, further contributing to our chapter's success.

MAJ Tom Pederson, USAF, Ret., and Denise Pederson

MAJ Pederson, another valued Executive Advisory Board member, and his spouse, Denise, make up our extraordi-

President's Note cont.

nary Hospitality team. They have managed our meeting logistics with the Bayou Club, handled RSVPs, and ensured meal requests were properly conveyed. Before each luncheon, they prepare personalized name and meal selection cards with attached drawing tickets. On luncheon days, they arrive early to staff the greeting table, welcome guests, handle payments, and help raise funds through the 50/50 raffle. Additionally, Mrs. Pederson now coordinates the chapter's bimonthly Ladies Lunch.

Recognition of Advisory Council Leadership

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our Advisory Council members. I extend my sincere gratitude to former chapter president, CAPT Pete Gunderson, USN, Retired, and LTC Richard Dusinski, USA, Retired. Their thoughtful and insightful guidance over the past two years has been instrumental in steering the chapter through challenges and successes alike. Their leadership and commitment have had a lasting, positive impact on our organization.

Special Appreciation for CAPT Jim King

Additionally, I wish to recognize CAPT Jim King, USN, Retired, for his prior service on the Advisory Council. His generosity in inviting our chapter to utilize the Bayou Club, of which he is a member, for our luncheons and executive meetings has greatly enhanced our gatherings and strengthened our sense of community. CAPT King's support is deeply appreciated by all members of the chapter.

Looking Ahead with Gratitude

It has been a true privilege to serve alongside such exceptional chapter members. With this team's ongoing leadership, I am confident that our chapter will continue to excel among Florida chapters as we move into 2026 and beyond.

Appreciation for All Members

Most importantly, I wish to thank each and every chapter member for your dues, your generous donations, your participation in MOAA's online legislative action "Quorum," and your enthusiastic attendance at our luncheons. You are the reason our chapter is so outstanding. Thank you once again, and remember to never stop serving.

John Kieffer
MAJ, USA, Former
President, MOAA-Saint Petersburg Area Chapter

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From the Desk of the Editor



Dave Warren
Editor OC

Season's Greetings to the St Petersburg Area Chapter of MOAA

Happy Holidays to all members of the St Petersburg Area Chapter of MOAA! As we approach the end of another successful year, we look forward to our final membership luncheon for 2025, scheduled for December 19th. This gathering is especially significant, as it marks the election of officers for the 2026-2028 term.

Board of Directors and Advisory Committee Nominations for 2026-2027

The following individuals have been nominated to serve on the Board of Directors and Advisory Committee for the upcoming term:

- President: CDR John Rummel
- Vice President: COL Tony Clark
- Treasurer: LTC Dave Warren
- Secretary: CPT Christina Manley
- Surviving Spouse Liaison: LTC Pauline Mallory

Executive Advisory Board

- Kathy Patton
- MAJ Pederson
- LTC Dusinski

Membership Ballots and Dues Renewal

Ballots for officer elections have been sent out to members. In addition, dues renewal notifications for 2026 have been distributed. Please note that starting January 1st, dues will increase to \$40. Members who renew early or use automatic renewal via Cheddar Up will continue to pay the current rate of \$30.

Chapter Activities in 2025

This year, our chapter actively participated in the Raymond James Valor Foundation and Annika golf tournaments. Through these events, we contributed to fundraising efforts and enhanced public visibility for JROTC units in Pinellas County. Be sure to read the articles about these activities and other chapter highlights as we reflect on the past year.

Best Wishes for 2026

We wish everyone a healthy and happy New Year as we look forward to an exciting 2026!

A Date in History...

December 14th 1799 – **George Washington, the American revolutionary leader and first president of the United States, dies of acute laryngitis at his estate in Mount Vernon, Virginia.** He was 67 years old. George Washington was born in 1732 to a farm family in Westmoreland County, Virginia. His first direct military experience came as a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia colonial militia in 1754, when he led a small expedition against the French in the Ohio River valley on behalf of the governor of Virginia.

December 16th 1773 – **In Boston Harbor, a group of Massachusetts colonists disguised as Mohawk Indians board three British tea ships and dump 342 chests of tea into the harbor.** The midnight raid, popularly known as the "Boston Tea Party," was in protest of the British Parliament's Tea Act of 1773, a bill designed to save the faltering East India Company by greatly lowering its tea tax and granting it a virtual monopoly on the American tea trade.

December 25th 1776 – **During the American Revolution, Patriot General George Washington crosses the Delaware River with 5,400 troops, hoping to surprise a Hessian force celebrating Christmas at their winter quarters in Trenton, New Jersey.** The unconventional attack came after several months of substantial defeats for Washington's army that had resulted in the loss of New York City and other strategic points in the region.

January 6th 1777 – General Washington establishes winter quarters for the exhausted Continental Army in the hills surrounding Morristown, New Jersey.

<https://thisdayinusmilhist.wordpress.com>

Current Board Officers

President: John Kieffer MAJ USA FMR
1st VP: John Rummel CDR USN Ret.
2nd VP: Dave Warren, LTC, USA Ret
Treasurer: Dave Warren, LTC, Acting Treasurer
Secretary: Christina Manley CPT, USA (ret)
Spouse Liaison: LTC Pauline Mallory

VA Office of Survivor Assistance

<https://www.va.gov/SURVIVORS/FAQs.asp>

Executive Advisory Board, Term Expires 31 Dec 2025

Peter Gunderson CAPT USN Ret.
 Richard Dusincki LTC USA Ret.

Term Expires 31 Dec 2026

Tom Pederson Maj USAF Ret.
 Anthony Clark COL USA Ret.

Contact Information

Committee	Chairperson
Advertising/Website	MAJ John Kieffer
Awards	CAPT Pete Gunderson
Hospitality & Reservations	Maj Thomas Pederson Mrs. Denise Pederson
Law	Maj Bert Carrier
Legislative	Vacant
Membership	Christina Manley CPT, USA (ret)
Personal Affairs	LTC Pauline Mallory COL Tony Clark
ROTC & JROTC	CDR Rummel
Scholarships	Vacant
Surviving Spouses	LTC Pauline Mallory
Transition	Vacant
Visitation	Vacant

Your Executive Board for 2024



President
MAJ John Kieffer



1st Vice President
CDR John Rummel



2nd Vice President
LTC David Warren,
USA Ret



Secretary
Christina Manley
CPT, USA (Ret)



Treasurer
Dave Warren Acting
Treasurer



Spouse Liaison
LTC Pauline Mallory



Hospitality & Reservations
Denise & Maj Tom Pederson



Chaplain
COL Tony Clark

MOAA Membership Luncheon

Date: December 19th, 2025, Bayou Country Club - Cost \$30 per meal

Schedule

- ☐ **11:00 AM:** Social
- ☐ **11:30 AM:** Call to Order
- ☐ **11:45 AM:** Meal Served

Menu Options (please choose one)

- 1. Philly Cheese:** Thinly sliced steak, melted provolone cheese, onion, and green pepper on a hoagie roll.
- 2. Shrimp 'n Grits:** Served with stewed okra, tomatoes, and bell peppers.
- 3. Steak Bowl:** Char-grilled skirt steak (medium rare) with wild rice, tomato, avocado, red onion, carrots, and chimichurri sauce.

All meals include coffee, iced tea, rolls, and dessert.

Special Activities

- ☐ Election of Officers for 2026, Wine/Liquor Drawings, 50/50 Raffle (3 tickets for \$5)

Reservations: Please send your meal selection(s) by **Tuesday evening, December 16th.**

Email: mtgfoodstpete@gmail.com. **Text:** 727-688-9908 (Tom Pederson)

When reserving, please include your name, meal choice, and number of guests.

If you have dietary restrictions or allergies, let us know in your reservation.

Cancellation Policy

If you need to cancel, please notify us as soon as possible.
Cancellations after the meeting date may incur the meal cost.

Hospitality and Reservations



Denise & Maj Tom
Pederson

Meal Selections for January 16th MOAA Luncheon meeting at the Bayou Country Club: 11 AM Social; 11:30 Call to Order; 11:45 Meal served.

1. Philly Cheese: Thinly sliced pieces of steak and melted provolone cheese with onion and green pepper on a hoagie roll.
2. Mediterranean salmon salad: Grilled salmon, grape tomatoes, cucumbers, kalamata olives, pepperoncini, red onion, feta cheese & avocado over spring mix served with Greek dressing
3. Steak Bowl: Char-grilled skirt steak prepared medium rare with wild rice, tomato, avocado, red onion, carrots, and chimichurri sauce

All served with coffee, ice tea, rolls and dessert.

Cost is \$30 per meal. Salmon additional \$5. There will be drawings for wine/liquor.
50/50 Raffle also available: 3 tickets for \$5

Reservations/meal requests: Email: mtgfoodstpete@gmail.com **or Text:** 727-688-9908 (Tom Pederson)

Please have requests in by Tuesday evening, January 13th.

NOTE: If you order a meal and are not able to be at the meeting, let me know as soon as possible.
If not cancelled prior to the meeting date, you will be responsible for the meal cost.

Surviving Spouse



LTC Pauline
Mallory,
USA, Retired

The Importance of the MOAA Ladies and Friends Luncheon

Significance of the Luncheon

The MOAA Ladies and Friends luncheon holds a special place within our chapter. It stands as a vital aspect of our outreach efforts, providing meaningful engagement and support not only for our Surviving Spouses but also for all women in our community. Currently, this initiative has become particularly valuable, as several of our members are currently fulfilling roles as full-time or part-time caregivers.

Monthly Gatherings and Support

Our group now comes together monthly with the simple but important purpose of enjoying one another's company and offering mutual support. These regular meetings foster a sense of community and ensure that members have a space to share experiences and encouragement.

The next meetings of MOAA Ladies and Friends will be 12 December and 12 February 2026.

The December 12 meeting is at Noon at Athenian Garden Restaurant, 6940 22nd Avenue N, St Petersburg, FL. Denise Pederson is the POC and questions or RSVP's can be submitted via email to: p3teach@gmail.com or cell 727-656-4139

LTC Pauline Mallory, USA RET
Chapter Surviving Spouse Liaison



Ladies Luncheon

Dear MOAA Ladies,

Please join a wonderful group of women as we explore and experience various restaurants in our local area. This is a great time to enjoy the tasty food and share memorable stories of our family and military related events of the past. It is always exciting to hear of the travels and experiences of others! Bring a friend with you – the more the merrier!!

Time 12:00 noon

December 12th – Athenian Garden
6940 22nd Ave N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33710

February 12th – Location to be announced

A reminder will be sent by email prior to each function.
These luncheons are open to all MOAA ladies and friends!

Denise Pederson
p3teach@gmail.com



Luncheon Report

Pinellas County Veterans Treatment Court: A Lifeline of Accountability, Healing, and Hope

—By Christine Manley CPT, USA (ret)

MOAA–St. Petersburg Chapter Luncheon Speaker Highlights

This month's MOAA–St. Petersburg Chapter luncheon featured an exceptional panel of speakers who presented a comprehensive overview of one of the community's most impactful programs for veterans: the Pinellas County Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) and its companion Veterans Court Mentorship Program. The panel included Judge Steve Berlin and Mr. Darron Hymes, who play key roles in the leadership and ongoing success of these transformative initiatives.

Understanding the Pinellas County Veterans Treatment Court

The Pinellas County Veterans Treatment Court is a specialized diversion program designed to support military veterans who are facing challenges such as substance abuse, mental health issues, trauma, or reintegration difficulties, and who have become involved in the criminal justice system. Rather than focusing solely on punitive measures, this court emphasizes:

- Accountability
- Treatment
- Rehabilitation
- Long-term stability
- Successful reintegration into civilian life

The court acknowledges that many veterans experience service-related conditions—including PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), depression, chronic pain, military sexual trauma, and substance abuse—that may contribute to legal troubles. By intervening early, Veterans Court offers a structured and therapeutic path to help veterans rebuild their lives.

Eligibility and Program Structure

To participate, individuals must be U.S. military veterans and agree to take part in a 10-12 month intervention program, which includes:

- Regular court appearances
- Intensive supervision
- Mandatory treatment for mental health, substance abuse, or dual diagnoses
- Random drug and alcohol testing
- Case management
- Compliance with medical and psychological care
- Participation in the Veterans Court Mentorship Program

Graduation from the program can lead to reduced or dismissed charges, allowing veterans to move forward without a conviction that could limit their opportunities. Importantly, the program does not remove accountability—it reinforces it by pairing responsibility with care, structure, and strong community support.

The Court's Impact on Local Veterans

Veterans Court goes beyond being a legal alternative—it serves as a crucial lifeline for veterans who need structured support to address service-related challenges. The program helps participants:

- Address underlying issues such as PTSD, anxiety, trauma, TBI, chronic pain, and addiction
- Rebuild relationships and achieve family stability
- Avoid incarceration and homelessness
- Access VA benefits and healthcare

Luncheon Report cont.

- Secure employment, education, and financial stability
- Regain dignity, confidence, and a sense of purpose

Judges Todd and Berlin have witnessed firsthand the transformation of participants—from instability and crisis to stability and independence. These outcomes are often far more successful than those achieved through traditional sentencing.

The Veterans Court Mentorship Program

As explained by program manager Mr. Darron Hymes, the Veterans Court Mentorship Program is a cornerstone of the entire process. Each participant is paired with a trained Veteran Mentor—a fellow service member who understands military culture, deployments, trauma, and the complexities of reintegration. Mentors provide support throughout the 10-12 month program by offering:

- Personal Support & Accountability
- Weekly check-ins
- Encouragement to meet treatment goals
- Guidance during stressful or emotional court phases
- Shared understanding through military experience

Stability & Connection

Reinforcing structure and discipline
 Preventing isolation, crisis, or relapse
 Peer camaraderie to build trust and motivation
 Practical Assistance
 Help with VA appointments
 Understanding medical and mental health treatment
 Connecting with community resources

Support for employment and personal goals

Many program graduates attribute their success to the guidance and encouragement provided by their mentors. Research has demonstrated that veteran-to-veteran mentorship significantly increases program completion rates, reduces recidivism, and fosters long-term stability. Mr. Hymes stressed that mentors act as “battle buddies,” walking alongside participants throughout their journey of healing and accountability.

For those interested in volunteering as mentors or learning more about supporting the program, please contact Darron Hymes at (321) 689-7201. Together, we can continue to change and save the lives of our local veterans.

2025 Chapter Donations

Donor Recognition

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals and organizations who generously contributed to our chapter in 2025. Their support plays a vital role in sustaining our mission and activities throughout the year.

List of Donors

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| □ Judy Bush | □ Christa Harrison | □ Marty Brown |
| □ Pauline Mallory | □ Raymond James Valor Foundation | □ John Rummel |
| □ Christina Manley | □ Richard and Martha Hull | □ Tony Clark |
| □ David Warren | □ Joanne Taylor | □ Mary Smarkos |
| □ Halvor and Kathleen Gunderson | □ William Bartlett | □ John Kieffer |

We sincerely appreciate each contribution and the continued commitment to our chapter.
 Thank you for making a difference in 2025!

MOAA St. Petersburg Supports

2025 ANNIKA Driven by Gainbridge at Pelican — A Celebration of Golf, Legacy, and Community

By John Rummel, CDR (ret), 1st Vice President

MOAA St Petersburg Chapter's Involvement

The MOAA St Petersburg Chapter was honored to support the fifth annual LPGA ANNIKA Driven by Gainbridge golf tournament, held at the prestigious Pelican Golf Club in Bellair, Florida. This event provided a remarkable platform to showcase the talents of elite women golfers while simultaneously honoring veterans and first responders. It also served as a source of inspiration for future generations by integrating sport and education. Our chapter's involvement underscored our ongoing commitment to service and community engagement.



Honoring Those Who Serve

In recognition of the sacrifices made by military members and first responders, the ANNIKA tournament extended complimentary admission to all active duty, reserve, and retired military personnel, as well as veterans and first responders. Our chapter took pride in contributing to the event in several meaningful ways:

- Maj John Kieffer, Chapter President, served as a flag tender during the special Veteran's Day event, paying tribute to those who have served.
- Col (ret) Tony Clark, Chapter Chaplain, volunteered as a walking scorer throughout the tournament week, helping ensure the smooth operation of the event.
- Other chapter members assisted at the Hero Outpost hospitality venue located at the 12th hole, providing a premium viewing experience, refreshments, and a welcoming environment where veterans could relax and connect with one another.

Supporting the ANNIKA Foundation and Gainbridge Assists

The tournament was established in partnership with golf legend Annika Sörenstam and Gainbridge. It supports the ANNIKA Foundation, which is dedicated to empowering young women through golf and education by offering opportunities for personal development and athletic achievement. In addition, the event highlighted the Gainbridge Assists initiative—a collaboration with Parity and the Women's Sports Foundation—designed to uplift organizations that support girls and women in sports and education.

Ongoing Commitment

The MOAA St Petersburg Chapter remains steadfast in its support of events that honor military service, foster a sense of community, and help create opportunities for future leaders. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the ANNIKA Driven by Gainbridge tournament and participating in similar initiatives that celebrate excellence, service, and the transformative power of sport.

Happy Birthday

U. S. Space Force Birthday December 20, 2019

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Happy 6th Birthday!



November Luncheon photos



Guest Speaker Steve Berlin



Mark Clement, Dave Warren, Marty Brown



Tony Clark, John Kieffer, Guest Speaker Darron Hymes,



Cadet Col Rodriguez, John Rummel, John Kieffer, Col Jackson, (ret) Northeast High School OIC



Cadet Colonel Rodriguez, Northeast High School JROTC Battalion Commander



Denise and Tom Pederson

JROTC

Northeast High School JROTC Veteran's Day Ceremony

By John Rummel, CDR (ret), 1st Vice President

Honoring America's Heroes

On Veteran's Day, Northeast High School united its students, JROTC Cadets, staff, and families to pay tribute to America's heroes. The ceremony highlighted the presence of the Northeast JROTC Battalion, made up of 175 cadets, who presented a striking image in their drill helmets and sabers—items acquired through the FY25 MOAA Chapter Raymond James VALOR grant. The professionalism and pride exhibited by these cadets reflected the guidance and instruction provided by LTC (ret) Kevin Miller and 1SG (ret) Joseph Walker.

Ceremony Highlights

With precision and respect, the ceremony showcased the commitment of the cadets and the mentorship of their instructors. Throughout the event, cadets took time to reflect on the true significance of Veterans Day and the sacrifices made by those who serve or have served in the United States armed forces.

Keynote Address

LTC (ret) Miller welcomed CDR (ret) John Rummel, Chapter 1st Vice President, to deliver the keynote speech. His address emphasized the value of service—whether in military uniform or through community involvement. He reminded attendees that honoring past sacrifices on Veterans Day requires taking action in the present, such as expressing gratitude to veterans and supporting them through service and engagement in the community.

The Meaning of Service

Service to the nation forms a unique bond among those who have served, fostering a spirit of gratitude and pride for the sacrifices made to preserve freedom. Veterans Day stands as an important occasion to honor all who have worn the uniform, recognizing not only those who gave their lives but all who have contributed to the nation's defense. The event encourages ongoing support for veterans, promotes military service among younger generations, and invites the sharing of personal stories. Through recognizing the courage and commitment of service members, the community is strengthened and future generations are inspired to uphold the ideals of service and vigilance.



Kiwanis Breakfast Club of Seminole Field of Honor Ceremony

By John Rummel, CDR (ret), 1st Vice President

Honoring Veterans Through Community Tradition

The 2025 Field of Honor Ceremony, organized by the Kiwanis Breakfast Club of Seminole, took place on Wednesday, November 5th in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. This annual gathering brought together the Seminole community to pay tribute to veterans representing every branch of the armed forces. Since its inception in 2015 with only 24 flags, the event has grown remarkably, displaying an impressive 625 flags this year. Each flag was placed prominently in front of City Hall, the Post Office, and the Seminole Recreation Center, adorned with a custom color streamer featuring the honored veteran's name, rank, years of service, and military branch logo. Every flag was sponsored by a member of the community, demonstrating Seminole's profound commitment to recognizing those who have served. The St Petersburg MOAA Chapter notably sponsored 15 flags in honor of its members and spouses, especially those who passed away in the past year.



Ceremony Highlights

The ceremony began with welcoming remarks from COL (ret) Wayne McKenney, who provided a brief history of the Field of Honor and expressed gratitude to the volunteers whose selfless efforts made the event possible. Following this, COL (ret) Tony Clark, the Chapter Chaplain, led a heartfelt prayer focused on remembrance and service, setting a thoughtful and reflective tone for the proceedings.

Keynote Address

CDR (ret) John Rummel, serving as the Chapter's 1st Vice President, delivered the keynote address. He encouraged everyone present to honor and support veterans by acknowledging their sacrifices, sharing their stories, and engaging in meaningful acts of service within the community. His speech highlighted the nobility of military service, its vital role in strengthening the nation, and its power to inspire future generations. He called upon both veterans and civilians to celebrate service, provide opportunities for youth, and dedicate themselves to building a stronger nation through gratitude, remembrance, and ongoing service.

Community Involvement and Impact

The Field of Honor Ceremony stands as a testament to the strength of community spirit. Each year, volunteers, sponsors, and local organizations collaborate to ensure the event's continued success. The increasing number of flags and participants is a clear reflection of Seminole's lasting respect and appreciation for its veterans.

Continuing the Legacy

As the ceremony came to a close, attendees were reminded to honor veterans not only on special occasions, but throughout the year. This ongoing commitment involves sharing veterans' stories, supporting military families, and nurturing a spirit of service among future generations in the Seminole community.





Our Mission: The Raymond James National Veterans Inclusion Network (Valor) supports all branches of the military, military spouses, first responders, and their families, aiming to foster camaraderie, networking, and community involvement. We partner with local and national nonprofits across the country to collaborate, support, promote, and amplify each other and fellow veterans/ first responders.

Recruiting & Retention

Valor recognizes the sacrifices that military members, veterans, spouses and their families make for our nation, and our priority is to make Raymond James their employer of choice. Applicants with a military background and military spouses can send their resume to be reviewed by a team that understands the nuances of a military resume. **Scan here** to email us!



Community Outreach & Engagement



Valor aims to support the veteran community nationwide through national and local outreach programs. We partner with local veteran organizations across the country to collaborate, support, promote, and amplify each other and fellow veterans in their communities and nationwide. **Scan here** and learn more about our nonprofit partners.

Annual Golf Tournament

Our annual Golf tourney fundraiser supports veteran/ first responder nonprofits in their commitment and mission to help our community and give back to those who have already given so much. Proceeds of this tourney are directly donated to numerous non-profits. **Scan here** to learn about **#GolfToGiveBack**



Military Spouse Network



Valor's Military Spouse Network supports and connects military spouses within Raymond James. This network also supports recruitment of military spouses looking to transition into a corporate career. The program focuses primarily on three key areas - professional development, recruitment, and support. **Scan here** to connect with us.

RAYMOND JAMES

Helpful Links and Contacts

National

<https://www.moaa.org/>

For general and Legislation Action Information.

Note: MOAA is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization!

State

<https://flmoaa.org/>

For Florida specific information about Florida Council of Chapters

Surviving Spouse Advisory Council

Surviving Spouse Virtual chapter: mssvc02@gmail.com

SSAC Chair and Board Member: virginiagailjoyce@gmail.com

Local

<https://www.moaastpetearea.com/>

For membership eligibility and membership application as well as other chapter related information.

Instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/moaa_st_pete_area/

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/925278824641972>



Visit your Chapter's Web page and social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram) on a regular basis. Don't forget the Florida Council and National sites. chapter web and social media accounts!

Editorial Policy

The St Pete Area Chapter of MOAA is nonpartisan in the content that is published on our website, <https://www.moaastpetearea.com/> Facebook account (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/925278824641972>) and newsletter, The Officer's Call. The information presented is for both the public and members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) in support of our military members. Our organization focuses on the protection of benefits for our service members and in keeping with a strong military.

Membership in MOAA and the Chapters is open to any Active Duty, Retired or Former officers or Surviving Spouse from those services shown below.

Never Stop Serving

MOAA 2025 Calendar

	EC*	Membership Luncheon**	Ladies Luncheon***
December	2	19	12

*EC meets the 1st Tuesday of each month at the Bayou Club, Private Dining Room, 1830 hrs.
<https://www.bayouclubgolf.com/>

**Monthly Luncheons are held on the 3rd Friday each month at the Bayou Club, Banquet Room, 1100 hrs. social, 1130 lunch.

***Ladies Luncheons are held the 2nd Thursday every other month. Place/Time TBA

Always check with the [Chapter Facebook page](#) for update times/dates/location!!
 (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/925278824641972>) **or website** (<https://www.moaastpetearea.com/>) **for location or time changes.**

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Please contact OC editor @ editoroc1@gmail.com

Chaplain's Message



COL Tony Clark
Chaplain

Reflections on the Maccabean Revolt and Hanukkah: Lessons for the Holiday Season

Scripture Readings and Historical Context

Throughout November, daily scripture readings in both the Episcopal/Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions feature passages from the First Book of Maccabees. These selections recount the Jewish revolt led by Judas Maccabeus against the oppressive rule of Antiochus Epiphanes IV during the Second Century BC. The story centers on the courage and faith of Judas and his followers, who overcame foreign occupiers and restored the desecrated Temple, dedicating it once more to the service of the LORD.

The Miracle of Hanukkah

The rededication of the Temple is commemorated in the annual celebration of Hanukkah, which this year is observed from the evening of December 14 through December 22. The festival recalls how, after cleansing the Temple, the Maccabees found only a single uncontaminated container of olive oil for the menorah. Despite having enough oil for just one day, they lit the menorah, and the oil miraculously lasted for eight days—the time needed to prepare new oil under conditions of ritual purity. For a more detailed account of this story, see https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/102978/jewish/The-Hanukkah-Story.htm.

Lessons from the Maccabean Revolt and Hanukkah Observance

Spiritual Cleansing and Preparation

One key lesson from the Maccabean revolt and the rededication of the Temple is the importance of periodic cleansing—both of physical spaces and of our own souls and spirits. Drawing from an Episcopal/Anglican perspective, the liturgical season of Advent, which often coincides with Hanukkah, serves as an opportunity to prepare our personal and spiritual lives for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. This season invites us to engage in “soul searching” and spiritual house cleaning in anticipation of the holidays.

Offering Light and Encouragement

Hanukkah, known as the festival of lights, takes place during winter, a time when nights are long and days are short. The tradition of lighting candles serves as a powerful reminder of how even a single candle can illuminate an entire room. This imagery encourages us to offer light, encouragement, and comfort to those who may experience the holiday season as a time of darkness or depression. Consider whom you might bring hope and support during this time.

Remembering Our Identity

Finally, the celebration of Hanukkah is a meaningful reminder for Jews and Christians alike to “remember who you are.” Like the message conveyed by Mustafa in Disney’s *The Lion King*, Hanukkah calls us to recall that we are people of a great story, a people of resistance, light, and hope. May the celebrations of Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa inspire you to remember your identity and encourage you and your loved ones throughout the New Year.

Dates to remember

Rosa Parks Day	Dec 1	Wright Brothers Day	Dec 17
GivingTuesday	Dec 2	December Solstice	Dec 21
St Nicholas Day	Dec 6	Last Day of Chanukah	Dec 22
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	Dec 7	Christmas Eve	Dec 24
National Guard Birthday	Dec 13	Christmas Day	Dec 25
Chanukah/Hanukkah (first day)	Dec 15	Kwanzaa (first day)	Dec 26
Bill of Rights Day	Dec 15	New Year's Eve	Dec 31

In the News...

The Florida Holocaust Museum: Honoring Memory and Advancing Education

Introduction

On Friday, October 17, 2025, our organization had the privilege of hosting Ms. Maureen Murphy, Director of Development at the Florida Holocaust Museum. Ms. Murphy delivered an inspiring presentation that highlighted the museum's mission and recent advancements.

Museum Mission and Commitment

The Florida Holocaust Museum is dedicated to honoring the millions of innocent men, women, and children who suffered or lost their lives during the Holocaust. The museum's central mission is to educate individuals from all backgrounds about the intrinsic worth and dignity of human life, aiming to prevent the occurrence of future genocides.



—Photo source: The Florida Holocaust Museum Facebook page

Recent Developments and Notable Exhibits

Ms. Murphy shared news of the museum's grand reopening in September, which followed extensive renovations totaling over \$8 million. These upgrades were designed to provide a more immersive and visitor-focused experience. Among the museum's new exhibits are:

- “Thor” – A Danish Fishing Boat: This historic vessel was used in 1943 to rescue Jews, serving as a powerful symbol of courage and compassion.
- “Dimensions in Testimony” – Interactive Survivor Experience: Utilizing advanced technology, this exhibit allows visitors to ask questions and receive video responses from Holocaust survivors, preserving their stories for future generations.

Key Accomplishments

- Elie Wiesel Collection Acquisition: The museum has obtained 800 boxes of archival materials from Elie Wiesel's New York office and 100 boxes from Gratz College. These items are now being curated by the museum's staff.
- Preservation of Artifacts: During the museum's closure, over 25,000 artifacts were safely transferred to the Collections, Preservation, Research and Education (CPRE) facility. Restoration efforts focused on signature installations, including the Boxcar and Thor.
- Expansion of Digital Learning Tools: The museum maintained its educational impact throughout the closure by offering on-demand curriculum, virtual field trips, and teacher training programs.
- Advancement of Partnerships: Collaborative efforts continue with organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, Yad Vashem, national educational institutions, Jewish Federations, USF (including WUSF), Eckerd College, the St. Petersburg museum community, and Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPPC).
- National Accreditation: The museum is recognized as one of only three Holocaust museums in the United States accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

Opportunities for Involvement

Ms. Murphy encouraged members to actively support the Florida Holocaust Museum by becoming members, volunteering, serving as docents, or contributing through tribute gifts, memorial donations, and sponsoring museum events.

Acknowledgment and Closing Remarks

After the presentation, John Kieffer, President of the MOAA chapter, presented Ms. Murphy with a \$250 donation. He praised Ms. Murphy and her team for their unwavering dedication to sharing Holocaust stories and preserving history. Mr. Kieffer also reflected on his own meaningful experiences volunteering at the museum and the profound impact of its exhibits.



MOAA-Saint Petersburg Area Chapter
PO Box 40353, Saint Petersburg, FL 33743



Personal Data	Applicant	Spouse
Last Name		Last Name
First Name		First Name
Middle Initial		Middle Initial
Nickname		Nickname
DOB (dd/mm/yyyy)		DOB (dd/mm/yyyy) May use 2050 as the year
Phone		Phone
Email		Email

Addresses

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Snow Bird _____ From month _____ To month _____

Military Data	Status	Applicant
Rank or Spouse	Service	Active, Former or Retired
		MOAA#

Membership Dues

Member	Spouse	Member Name Tag	Spouse Name Tag	Total Amount Sent
\$30.00	\$25.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	

Local Life Dues for Member or Spouse

Age	Under 55	56 to 70	71 to 90	over 90
Cost	\$425.00	\$375.00	\$300.00	Free

Send check payable to SPA MOAA to the above PO address

Membership is open to Active Duty, Former, Retired, National Guard and Reserve, Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Uniformed Services and their Sur-viving Spouses. Per chapter bylaws, all chapter members must be members of MOAA (national). If not a national member please call 1-800-234-6622 to speak to a service representative or visit MOAA.org to join. Note: **MOAA is an independent, nonprofit, politically non-partisan organization!**

Note: By joining, you authorize the use of your image in official MOAA publications!