



MARCH-APRIL 2026



MOAA-Saint Petersburg Area Chapter
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Note	Page 2-3
From the desk of the Editor	Page 4
This month in US History	Page 4
Executive Board	Page 5
Contact Information	Page 5
Hospitality & Reservations	Page 6
MOAA Ladies Luncheon	Page 6
Surviving Spouse	Page 7
Chaplain's Message	Page 7
Gold Star	Page 8
From MOAA's President	Page 9
Community Commitment	Page 10
Legislative Action Center Info	Page 10
In Support - Bay Pines	Page 12
Luncheon photos	Page 13
Five Star LOE and Harris Award	Page 14
Helpful Links & Contacts	Page 15
MOAA 2025 Calendar	Page 16
Membership Application	Page 17

My Warrior Place

—By John Rummel, CDR (ret)

Supporting Healing and Hope: My Warrior's Place

One of Florida's most heartfelt non-profit organizations serving those who have served is My Warrior's Place, a 501(c)(3) veteran and first responder retreat founded on love, sacrifice, and an unwavering commitment to healing our nation's heroes. Our chapter was honored to welcome the CEO of My Warrior's Place as a guest speaker at the MOAA St. Petersburg Chapter Membership Luncheon on 17 March. Members heard firsthand about the mission, impact, and continuing needs of this outstanding organization, creating a meaningful connection between our chapter and the vital work being done to support veterans, first responders, and their families.



A Founder's Story of Loss, Purpose, and Service

My Warrior's Place was founded by Kelly Kowall, a Gold Star mother whose son, U.S. Army SPC Corey Kowall, was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2009. In the aftermath of her son's death, Kelly witnessed firsthand the emotional toll borne not only by families, but also by fellow service members, veterans, and first responders who often grieve in silence.

Determined to transform personal loss into meaningful action, Kelly created My Warrior's Place as a safe, understanding environment where those who serve—and those who have lost—can find peace, connection, and renewal. What began with simple boating outings for grieving families and veterans evolved into a full retreat and recovery organization devoted entirely to giving back to those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

Who My Warrior's Place Serves

My Warrior's Place supports Veterans and active-duty military, first responders (law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs), and Gold Star, Blue Star, and Silver Star families. All services are offered in a non-clinical, peer-supported setting designed to reduce stress, foster camaraderie, and promote emotional well-being.

Programs That Heal Through Connection and Nature

Programs at My Warrior's Place emphasize the healing power of nature, shared experience, and compassionate understanding. Key programs and offerings include:

President's Note

Advocacy in Action 2026: Your Voice. Our Mission. Real Impact.



John Rummel
CDR (ret), President
St Petersburg
Area Chapter

Advocacy has always been at the heart of MOAA's mission and in 2026, that mission is front and center through MOAA's Advocacy in Action (AiA) 2026 initiative, the association's annual nationwide campaign to advance critical legislative priorities for the uniformed services community.

Advocacy in Action is more than a single day on Capitol Hill. It is a yearround effort that brings together MOAA members from across the country to influence legislation that protects earned pay and benefits, strengthens health care access, and supports service members, veterans, retirees, and families. While hundreds of MOAA members and staff will gather in Washington, D.C., on April 15, every member, regardless of location, can participate and make a meaningful difference.

MOAA's 2026 Advocacy Priorities

For Advocacy in Action 2026, MOAA has identified four core federal legislative priorities that directly affect service members, veterans, retirees, families, and survivors. These priorities form the foundation of MOAA's advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill and through member outreach nationwide.

1. End the "Wounded Veteran Tax"

MOAA continues its longstanding effort to eliminate the unjust offset that reduces military retirement pay for combat-injured veterans who receive VA disability compensation. This effort centers on passage of the Major Richard Star Act, which would allow eligible veterans to receive both benefits concurrently without penalty.

Why it matters: Combatinjured retirees should not lose earned retirement pay because of injuries sustained in service to the nation.

2. Protect Military Pay During Federal Shutdowns

MOAA supports legislation such as the Shutdown Fairness Act, which would ensure uninterrupted pay for all active-duty service members, including Reserve and National Guard members on drill status, during federal government shutdowns.

Why it matters: Service members should never face financial uncertainty due to political gridlock while continuing to serve.

3. Protect Veterans From Predatory Claims Practices

MOAA advocates for legislation to restore and strengthen penalties against unaccredited individuals and companies that charge veterans excessive or illegal fees for assistance with VA disability claims. These protections aim to safeguard veterans from deceptive and exploitative practices.

Why it matters: Veterans deserve ethical, accredited assistance when accessing benefits they have earned, without being exploited for profit.

4. Improve Access to HighQuality Military and Veterans Health Care

MOAA is working to strengthen access, transparency, and accountability across DoD and VA health care systems. This includes addressing barriers to care, protecting TRICARE access, and ensuring timely, highquality treatment for beneficiaries.

Why it matters: Reliable access to quality health care is essential to readiness, retention, and longterm quality of life for the uniformed

Membership Engagement Makes the Difference

What makes Advocacy in Action especially powerful is member participation. MOAA emphasizes that advocacy is not

President's Note cont.

limited to professional lobbyists or national leadership; every email, message, and conversation with an elected official helps reinforce MOAA's influence. Whether you are contacting lawmakers from home or participating alongside others during the April advocacy event, your involvement directly supports MOAA's ability to advance its legislative agenda.

Participation is intentionally designed to be accessible. Through MOAA's Legislative Action Center, members can easily send prepared messages to their federal representatives, ensuring they are informed about issues affecting the military and veteran community. The process takes only a few minutes, but the cumulative impact of thousands of members speaking up together is substantial.

Our Chapter's Role

As a chapter, we have an important opportunity, and responsibility, to support Advocacy in Action by encouraging participation and awareness among our members. Advocacy strengthens our chapter's voice just as it strengthens MOAA nationally. When our members engage, we demonstrate that our chapter is active, informed, and committed to "Never Stop Serving."

I encourage every member of our chapter to take part in Advocacy in Action 2026 by registering as an advocate, staying informed on MOAA's 2026 priorities, and reaching out to elected officials when called upon. Engagement in advocacy complements everything else we do as a chapter, from community service to fellowship, by ensuring the policies that affect our members are shaped with our input. Engage directly through its Legislative Action Center, which provides prepared messages and tools to contact federal lawmakers quickly and effectively. Member participation, through either emails, calls, or meetings, remains one of the most influential drivers of legislative success.

Together, our voices matter. By participating in Advocacy in Action 2026, we honor our service, support those still serving, and help secure a stronger future for the entire uniformed services community.

My Warrior Place cont.

- **Retreat and Respite Stays** that provide a tranquil retreat environment where individuals and families can stay for short-term respite, reconnect, and decompress from the demands of service or grief.
- **Boating, Fishing, and Outdoor Activities** to include kayaking, canoeing, fishing, and boating experiences that encourage reflection, conversation, and relaxation in peaceful waterfront settings.
- **Peer Support and Fellowship** opportunities for veterans and families to connect with others who truly understand the challenges of service, loss, and transition, helping reduce isolation and build resilience.
- **Memorial and Reflection Spaces** that honor fallen warriors and provide a place for remembrance and quiet reflection.

Investing in the Next Generation: The JROTC Compass Program

In addition to its work supporting veterans and families, My Warrior's Place also invests in developing future leaders through its JROTC Cadet Compass Program. This immersive leadership development initiative is designed for JROTC cadets ages 16–18 and focuses on building essential life skills including leadership, communication, resilience, and teamwork. Conducted on site at My Warrior's Place, the weekend program combines interactive workshops, group exercises, and experiential learning in a structured, supportive environment. By helping cadets develop confidence, adaptability, and integrity, the Compass Program reinforces core values shared by both My Warrior's Place and MOAA while strengthening the leadership pipeline for our nation's future. Boca Ciega JROTC sent their senior instructor, COL (ret) Jay Jackson, USA, and six cadets to participate in the My Warrior Place inaugural Compass Program event for JROTC units in April. We look forward to hearing more about their experience at an upcoming membership event.

Why It Matters to MOAA Members

MOAA's mission of advocating for and supporting the uniformed services community aligns closely with the work of My Warrior's Place. Their focus on dignity, healing, and peer connection resonates deeply with veterans who understand that service does not end when the uniform comes off. Our Chapter members can support My Warrior's Place by making a charitable donation, volunteering time or professional skills, and/or sharing awareness with fellow veterans and families. To learn more or contribute, visit www.mywarriorsplace.org.

From the Desk of the Editor



Dave Warren
Editor OC

We residents of Pinellas County have successfully navigated another spring break, accommodating an influx of college students, high school students, and families. As we approach May and June with rising temperatures, it is important to remain vigilant about hurricane season, which commences on June 1st and concludes on November 30th.

This spring, our chapter has been actively engaged in supporting various organizations. Featured articles in this issue highlight our involvement with the VA Bay Pines Stand Down, the VA Bay Pines annual Veteran Baby Shower, and our March guest speaker, Kelli Kowall of My Warrior Place. In collaboration with My Warrior Place, we coordinated with Boca Ciega High School to send 6 cadets, accompanied by their senior instructor to participate in a leadership and adventure weekend in Punta Gorda. John has provided an insightful article about this organization in the current edition.

We are presently conducting a membership drive, offering complimentary lunch or dinner to National MOAA members residing in Pinellas County who are interested in attending one of our chapter meetings. Our efforts have resulted in the addition of five new members, along with several spouses set to join us at our April and June membership meetings. The initiative continues with mail/email outreach to approximately 850 MOAA members in Pinellas County, extending invitations to join our chapter. These actions support a national campaign to inform MOAA National members about the existence and impact of our local chapter in serving the veteran and active duty community.

We are also placing special emphasis on the MOAA Advocacy Program, which enables members to easily send emails to local congressional representatives and senators to advocate issues of importance to veterans, reservists, National Guard members, active duty families and surviving spouses. For further information, please consult the [MOAA National advocacy webpage](#) to learn how simple it is to communicate with your congressional representatives. [MOAA Advocacy Action 2026](#)

Wishing everyone an enjoyable summer. Please note that there will be no membership meetings in July or August; however, there will be informal gatherings in Saint Petersburg during these months.

This month in US History

April 1776

In April 1776, the American colonies moved rapidly toward independence, highlighted by North Carolina adopting the Halifax Resolves on April 12 as the first official call for separation from Britain. Concurrently, George Washington marched his army from Boston to New York, and Congress opened colonial ports to international trade in defiance of British restrictions.

Key events from April 1776 include:

- **April 4-5:** George Washington began moving his army toward New York following the British evacuation of Boston, receiving celebrations in Rhode Island.
- **April 12:** North Carolina's Provincial Congress unanimously passed the Halifax Resolves, authorizing their delegates in the Continental Congress to vote for independence.
- **Early April:** Abigail Adams wrote to John Adams famously urging him to "remember the ladies" in the new code of laws.
- **Throughout April:** Congress, spurred by the popularity of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, began drafting the [Model Treaty](#) to seek foreign alliances and opened ports to trade, effectively breaking economic ties with Britain.
- **April 17:** Washington ordered strict maintenance and clean conditions for soldiers in occupied barracks.

Current Board Officers

President: John Rummel (USN, Ret)
1st VP: Col Tony Clark (USANG, Ret)
Treasurer: LTC David Warren (USA, Ret)
Secretary: CPT Christina Costelo-Manley (USA, Ret)
Spouse Liaison: LTC Paulina Mallory (USA, Ret)

VA Office of Survivor Assistance

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

Executive Advisory Board, Term Expires 31 Dec 2027

MAJ Tom Pederson (USAF, Ret)
 LTC Richard Descincki (USA, Ret)
 Mrs. Kathi Patton (Spouse)

Term Expires 31 Dec 2026

Vacant
 Vacant
 Vacant

Contact Information

Committee	Chairperson
Advertising/Website	MAJ John Kieffer
Hospitality & Reservations	Maj Thomas Pederson Mrs. Denise Pederson
Law	Maj Bert Carrier
Legislative	LTC Terry Carr
Membership	CPT Christina Manley
Personal Affairs	LTC Pauline Mallory COL Tony Clark
JROTC	CDR John Rummel
Scholarships	Vacant
Surviving Spouses	LTC Pauline Mallory

Your Executive Board for 2026



President
CDR John Rummel



1st Vice President
Col. Tony Clark,
USANG (ret)



Treasurer
Dave Warren



Secretary
Christina Manley
CPT, USA (Ret)



Spouse Liaison
LTC Pauline Mallory

Hospitality and Reservations



Denise & Maj Tom
Pederson

Meal Selections for **May 15th** MOAA Luncheon meeting at the Bayou Country Club: 11 AM Social; 11:30 Call to Order; 11:45 Meal served.

1. Mediterranean Salmon Salad: Grilled salmon, grape tomatoes, cucumbers, kalamata olives, pepperoncini, red onion, feta cheese & avocado over spring mix with Greek dressing
2. Philly Cheesesteak: classic Philly cheesesteak with grilled red pepper, grilled onions and provolone cheese served with fries
3. Chicken Piccata: Sautéed chicken finished in a lemon butter sauce with capers served over angel hair pasta with Caesar Salad

All served with coffee, ice tea, rolls and dessert. Cost is \$30 or \$35 for Salmon.
Make reservations/meal requests by Tuesday, May 12th evening to:

Email: stpetemoaamail@gmail.com Text: 727-470-7428 (Dave Warren)

Meal Selections for **June 18th** MOAA evening meeting at the Bayou Country Club: 5 PM Social; 5:30 Call to Order; 6:00 Meal served.

- 1 Grilled Sirloin topped with demi glaze topped with crispy onion straws served with mashed potatoes and asparagus with balsamic glaze
2. Oven Roasted Grouper with tropical fruit salsa served with mashed potatoes and asparagus with balsamic glaze
- 3 Creamy Tuscan Chicken with sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, and parmesan cream sauce served with mashed potatoes and asparagus with balsamic glaze

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

Cost is \$40.

Make reservations/meal requests by Tuesday, Jun 15th evening to:

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

No luncheons scheduled for July and August. Luncheons resume in September.

MOAA Ladies Luncheons

Every other month the MOAA ladies gather together for wonderful conversation and yummy food. The April luncheon was held April 10 at Bonefish Grill, Tyrone location. There will be no gatherings in the summer. Here are the luncheon dates for the remainder of the year: September 11 and November 13 at noon. The locations will be announced later. I will always send an email reminder prior to the event.

I look forward to our next gathering. See you in September!

Fondly,

Denise Pederson

p3teach@gmail.com

727 656-4139 Cell



Surviving Spouse



LTC Pauline
Mallory,
USA, Retired

Happy Spring! There seems to be quite a bit of activity as we head into spring. Since we focus on the women's side of things, I'll mention a few.



Every second Friday of the month, our chapter ladies, plus friends, meet with other military wives and female veterans for lunch. This was started several years ago after the Women's Wives Club disbanded and COVID hit. We started meeting as MOAA Ladies and Friends not specific to our St Petersburg Chapter and not specifically to Surviving Spouses. There is a special bond to meeting as women and we have so enjoyed meeting together to get better acquainted and to encourage each other in whatever situation of our life journey we are presently in. We have surviving spouses, care givers and female veterans in our "group". Several "members" have joined together to work on various "projects" like the Veteran Standdown and the Women Veteran's Baby Shower.

In April we met at Bonefish Grille where Kelly James, the Facility & Women Veteran Outreach Coordinator spoke to us about several programs specifically for our women veterans. Our Chapter is supporting the Baby Shower on April 25 for women veterans who are going to be mom's. Our chapter has applied for a grant to further help these women.

As always, please continue to go online and contact your legislators regarding MOAA Advocacy issues, especially those related to surviving spouses and full-time care givers. Also, join the online Surviving Spouse Chapter and/or book club group. I look forward to seeing some of your names as new members. Write a letter to mssvc02@gmail.com and ask for an application. Once the application has been received by the Membership Chair, Zoom meeting invitations will be sent to the new member. Each invitation identifies the speaker and the topic.

Our next MOAA Ladies and Friends will be May 8 at Athenian Gardens on May 8 at Noon. Every other month we will meet at Athenian Gardens. On the alternate months will venture out to somewhere "new."

Chaplain's Message



COL Tony Clark
Chaplain

How do you observe Memorial Day?

My observance has morphed and changed over many years. As an Army Chaplain and pastor, I led or participated in community-wide Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Armed Forces Day ceremonies for over three decades.

Quite honestly, those years of service—combined with the weight of numerous military funerals and casualty notifications—took an emotional toll. Upon retiring, I gave myself permission to step back from the large ceremonies and transition into a "quieter," more personal experience.

This quieter observance evolves year by year. Since moving to St. Petersburg in 2020, I've often visited the Pinellas County War Veterans Memorial Park. I use the walking trails and the Memorial Center as a space to pray, reflect, and mourn. This year, my observance will likely involve a day hike somewhere in Central Florida to find that same solitude.

Memorial Day is a time to honor and remember those who died in service to our nation. For me, that time of honor and remembrance has a specific name: Army Specialist Jeffrey Mattison Wershow, killed in action in Iraq on July 6, 2003. Jeffrey was a Soldier in my unit. We connected through his Jewish faith; I was the one to notify his parents of his death and participate in his funeral. His loss is personal, and I sort through those memories every year.

I've learned that observing Memorial Day is not a "one size fits all" proposition. Whether it is a community-wide event or a solitary hike, both styles work because they contain the necessary ingredients: reflection, honor, and remembrance.

In whatever ways you choose to observe the day, may it be a meaningful time of honor and remembrance for those who gave "the last full measure of devotion."

Gold Star

Honoring Gold Star Families and Gold Star Spouses This April

—By John Rummel, CDR (ret), President

April is a meaningful time for reflection and gratitude as we honor Gold Star Families, the survivors of fallen service members who gave their lives in service to our nation. Within this month of recognition, Gold Star Spouses Day offered a special opportunity to acknowledge the profound sacrifice, strength, and enduring resilience of surviving spouses.

The St. Petersburg MOAA Chapter extends its deepest gratitude and respect to Gold Star Spouses and to all Gold Star family members. While the loss of a loved one can never be fully understood by those who have not experienced it, we recognize that the sacrifice of military service extends beyond the individual to the family who stands beside them. Gold Star Spouses carry forward a legacy of service, love, and commitment; often while navigating grief with remarkable courage and quiet resolve.

Gold Star Families include spouses, children, parents, and loved ones whose lives were permanently changed by that sacrifice. Their resilience, devotion, and continued engagement in their communities honor the memory of those who served and remind us of the true cost of our freedoms.

As a chapter, we believe recognition must be more than symbolic. It is a commitment to:

- Remember and honor the fallen and their families
- Listen with compassion and respect
- Offer support, inclusion, and gratitude, today and everyday

This April, and especially on w, we encourage our members to pause and reflect, to reach out with words of appreciation, and to reaffirm that Gold Star Families are not forgotten. Your strength inspires us, and your loved ones' service will always be remembered.

On behalf of the St. Petersburg MOAA Chapter, thank you to all Gold Star Spouses and family members for your sacrifice, your resilience, and the legacy you so faithfully carry forward.



From MOAA's President

Show Your Support for Our Signature Advocacy Event

—Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret)
MOAA president and CEO

Every spring, as MOAA members prepare to come to Washington for our annual fly-in event, Advocacy in Action (AiA), I'm reminded of what truly sets MOAA apart. We are honored to represent members across the country who do not just believe in our mission but are participants and tireless advocates for the all-volunteer force — individuals who step forward to ensure the voices of those who serve and have served are heard.

That commitment endures regardless of how priorities and issues evolve on Capitol Hill. MOAA and our members hold the line on issues impacting the force, grounded in a shared sense of purpose that goes beyond officers and surviving spouses. There is a deep responsibility and a genuine passion to advocate for the well-being of the entire uniformed services community, across all services and every stage of service.

This year, that focus is reflected in four key issues we will bring directly to Congress: The Major Richard Star Act, the Shutdown Fairness Act, the GUARD VA Benefits Act, and the Military CARE Act. I encourage you to learn more about these priorities and how they impact our community.

Our in-person meetings on Capitol Hill keep these priorities where they belong: in front of Congress. And when those face-to-face conversations are reinforced by outreach from more than 350,000 MOAA members nationwide, it sends a clear message that carries real weight. That is why I would ask that you, and every other MOAA member, take a few minutes to review this year's AiA topics and stay connected through our advocacy tools.

Next Steps

- Register for MOAA's Legislative Action Center to stay connected and contact your lawmakers.
- Review all four Advocacy in Action topics on the AiA website and share these issues with your network.

On April 15, MOAA's volunteer leaders will be visiting your elected representatives in Washington and calling on them to support the all-volunteer force. We need your voice to show lawmakers how important these issues are to those who serve and have served, along with their families and survivors.

Thank you for standing with MOAA and for your continued commitment to our shared mission.



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Legislative Action Center Card



TAKE ACTION!

GROUND ZERO

Open your browser and go to www.moaa.org

STEP 1

Click Log In and enter your MOAA username and password ***IF this is your first time, you must enter correct address that is displayed in the box that is shown.***

STEP 2

From the top menu, click Advocacy

STEP 3

Select Legislative Action Center from the dropdown

STEP 4

Browse the list and choose a campaign you support ***IF responding to a "Take Action" Alert, the campaign will appear on screen.**

STEP 5

Review the pre-written message and personalize if desired

STEP 6

Click Send to submit your message to Congress

STEP 7

Look for the confirmation screen – your action is complete

***IMPORTANT: Make sure cookies are enabled in your browser or the site may not load properly.**

NEVER STOP SERVING

Dates to Remember

APRIL

Month of the Military Child

Military Saves Month

April 1 - April Fool's Day

April 3 - Good Friday

April 5 - Easter

April 5 - Gold Star Spouses Day

April 9 - National Former POW Recognition Day

April 12-20 - Passover

April 14 - Air Force Reserve Birthday

April 15 - Purple Up! Day

April 22 - Earth Day

April 23 - Army Reserve Birthday

April 30 - National Military Brats Day

MAY

Month of the Military Caregiver

National Military Appreciation Month

May 1 - Silver Star Service Banner Day

May 8 - Military Spouse Appreciation Day

May 13 - Children of Fallen Patriots Day

May 16 - Armed Forces Day

May 10-16 - Armed Forces Week

May 25 - Memorial Day



Community Commitment

Annual Veteran Homeless Stand Down at the Bay Pines VA Medical Center

—CPT (Ret) Christina Manley

The MOAA Saint Petersburg Chapter demonstrated its unwavering commitment to veteran support through its active participation in the Annual Veteran Homeless Stand Down hosted at the Bay Pines VA Medical Center on Saturday, April 25, 2026. This impactful community event brought together service organizations, volunteers, and healthcare providers to serve hundreds of veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Stand Down is a critical outreach initiative designed to provide immediate relief and long-term support resources to vulnerable veterans. Against this backdrop, the MOAA Saint Petersburg Chapter played a meaningful role by hosting a resource table focused on essential health and hygiene needs—often among the most urgent yet overlooked concerns for individuals facing housing instability.

Chapter members and volunteers engaged directly with veterans throughout the day, offering not only supplies but also compassion, respect, and a sense of community. The Chapter distributed prepackaged hygiene kits thoughtfully assembled to address daily personal care needs. Each kit included toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, body wash soap, shampoo and conditioner, body lotion, facial tissues, and facial wipes. In addition, the kits contained first aid essentials, Fixodent denture cream for dental care, and feminine hygiene packets to ensure inclusivity and dignity for all recipients.

Beyond the distribution of supplies, the Chapter's presence reinforced the importance of continued advocacy and outreach for veterans in need. By participating in the Stand Down, MOAA Saint Petersburg Chapter helped bridge gaps in access to basic necessities while also connecting veterans with additional services available on-site, including medical care, housing assistance, and benefits counseling.

Events like the Bay Pines Veteran Homeless Stand Down highlight the power of collaboration between veteran-focused organizations and the broader community. The MOAA Saint Petersburg Chapter's contribution exemplifies how local leadership and volunteerism can make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have served our nation.

Through initiatives such as this, the Chapter continues to uphold its mission of supporting uniformed service members, veterans, and their families—ensuring that no veteran is forgotten, especially in times of hardship.



Thanks to everyone who participated in this event!

In Support

MOAA Saint Petersburg Chapter Announces Support for Bay Pines VA Medical Center Annual Veteran Baby Shower

—CPT (Ret) Christina Manley

The MOAA Saint Petersburg Chapter (MOAA-SP) is proud to officially announce its support for the upcoming **Bay Pines VA Medical Center Annual Veteran Baby Shower**, a meaningful community outreach event dedicated to honoring and supporting our veteran families as they welcome new life.

The event will be held at the Bay Pines VA Medical Center courtyard on **April 25, 2026**, with MOAA-SP members beginning **table setup at 9:00 AM** and the event commencing at **10:00 AM**.

In a show of strong commitment to our local veteran community, the MOAA-SP Chapter has formally voted and approved a **\$500 donation** to support this year's event. These funds have been used to purchase high-demand baby care essentials identified by event coordinators, including **blankets, pacifiers, teething rings, and baby wash**—items that will directly benefit participating families.

Looking beyond immediate support, MOAA-SP has also submitted a grant request to Military Officers Association of America (MOAA National) seeking **\$5,000 in funding**. If approved, this grant will enable the chapter to assemble and distribute **MOAA Birthing Gift Baskets** to veteran families following delivery.

This year, the Bay Pines VA Medical Center anticipates supporting **87 families and celebrating the arrival of 89 newborns**. In response, MOAA-SP members will come together to personally prepare each gift basket, ensuring that every family receives a thoughtful and practical collection of items designed to ease the transition into parenthood. These **birthing baskets** will include carefully selected, high-quality items intended to provide comfort, care, and encouragement during this important life milestone. More importantly, they serve as a visible reminder that the military community continues to stand beside its veterans—not only in service, but throughout every stage of life.

Through this initiative, MOAA-SP reaffirms its mission to support military families and strengthen community bonds. The chapter extends its heartfelt congratulations to the growing families and its deepest appreciation to the Bay Pines VA Medical Center for hosting such an impactful event.

MOAA-SP members look forward to participating in this special occasion and sharing in the joy of welcoming the newest members of our veteran community. Together, we proudly offer our continued support, encouragement, and blessings to these families as they begin this new chapter.

For more information about MOAA-SP and its community outreach efforts, please contact the chapter directly or attend one of our upcoming meetings.



Please reach out to your shopping sources and ask them if they would like to advertise. The price per size is available on the web site.

This is a direct add to over 150 military officers and spouses.

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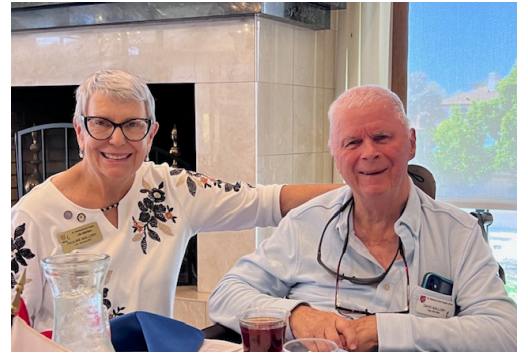
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Luncheon photos



March Executive Committee Meeting





St. Petersburg MOAA Chapter Earns Five Star LOE and Harris Award:

Celebrating excellence in leadership, outreach, and communications

—By John Rummel, CDR (ret), President

We're proud to share outstanding news: the St. Petersburg MOAA Chapter has been recognized with the Five Star Level of Excellence (LOE) Award, and also received the Harris Award for our website and chapter communications (including our newsletter). These honors reflect a year of steady service to our members, strong advocacy for the uniformed services community, and a commitment to keeping our chapter informed, connected, and engaged.

The Five Star LOE Award is one of MOAA's highest chapter recognitions that is awarded to affiliates that demonstrate exceptional performance across key areas such as leadership and governance, membership, legislative advocacy, community support, and program delivery. Earning Five Star status signals that our chapter is not only active, but operating at a consistently high standard with measurable impact.

The Harris Award recognizes excellence in affiliate communications, specifically the quality, usefulness, and accessibility of information shared through chapter channels. Receiving this award for our website and newsletter is a testament to the team effort behind timely updates, clear event details, advocacy alerts, resource sharing, and a newsletter that helps members stay connected to what matters most.

These achievements belong to all of us. Thank you to our leadership, newsletter coordinator (LTC Dave Warren), authors, editors, and web/content volunteers who contribute time and talent behind the scenes. And thank you to our members ... your participation, feedback, and support are what make our programs stronger and our voice more effective.

Let's keep the momentum going. Please continue to attend events, share our website resources, respond to calls for legislative action, and invite a friend or colleague to join MOAA and our chapter. If you have story ideas, photos, or updates you'd like included in the newsletter, or if you'd like to help with communications, we'd love to hear from you.



Congratulations on a job well done!



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!

MOAA 2026 Calendar

2026 Meetings and Luncheons

	Executive Committee Mtg*	Membership Luncheon**	Ladies Luncheon***
May	6	15	N/A
June	3	19	12
July	1	N/A	N/A
August	5	N/A	XX
September	2	18	N/A
October	7	16	9
November	4	20	N/A
December	2	18	13

*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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