



# The Volusia Officers Call

*West Volusia MOAA Chapter, INC. (WVMC)*

*An Affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America*



**Vol 33, No 9, MAY 2025**

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## ***MOAA's Mission***

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is 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, Space Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, or NOAA and their surviving spouses.

## ***President's Perspective—***



I am honored to announce that the West Volusia MOAA Chapter has been awarded the 2024 MOAA Levels of Excellence and the Col. Marvin J. Harris Communication Award. I want to especially express my appreciation to all the Board Officers for their input to the LOE. Without their dedication and devotion to the mission of MOAA we could not be considered for such a prestigious award. My appreciation goes out to MAJ Raul Gonzalez for his dedication to our website and his constant desire to keep our website updated and interesting, and to COL Jack Burtnett for his guidance and editorial skills, to continue to produce an interesting newsletter that appeals to all of us.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our May "Operation Camaraderie" event at the American Legion Post 6, in Deland. The party committee promises it to be enjoyable and fun, Members who are attending are asked to bring a side dish to share. Please let Pete Durnell or Raul know what you are bringing.

May is also the installation of our 2025-2026 Officer Board and our last monthly membership meeting.

A special thank you goes out to LTC Michael Magee for being so diligent in searching for interesting guest speakers and he promises to have many more in the upcoming year.

It has been an enjoyable year and I thank all the Officers and Directors on the Board and the membership for making my first year as your President a success.

*LTC Laura Wickett, USA, RET*  
*President*

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***MOAA Take Action Center -***<http://takeaction.moaa.org>***Legislative -***

MOAA representatives discussed ongoing concerns in key areas during a recent meeting with professional staff from both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, part of the work to protect service-earned benefits in the face of budget constraints and a compressed congressional calendar.

The talks covered four key areas: unaccompanied housing, military spouse employment, military health system (MHS) access to care, and veterans exposed to toxins while in uniform. Professional staff on both committees characterized the year ahead as primarily defensive, with limited opportunity for advancing new legislative priorities. Here's a look at what was discussed, and how you can keep up with progress on these critical issues.

**Unaccompanied Housing**

MOAA and committee staff discussed the potential impacts of the continuing resolution on planned unaccompanied housing improvements. Committee staff acknowledged the issue but noted that funding limitations and competing priorities may constrain options.

**Military Spouse Employment**

MOAA highlighted ongoing challenges facing military spouses in the federal workforce, including

(Continued on page 6)

***Credit Cards now accepted—***

Credit cards are now accepted for our luncheons. The meal cost using a credit card is \$25. The additional one dollar is to pay the servicing company that processes the credit cards. The meal cost if paying by cash or check is still \$24.

***Last Meeting (2 APR 2025) -***

President LTC Laura Wickett called the meeting to order at 1142 hours.

Attendance: 27

CH LtCol Chris Hoffmann gave the invocation followed by The Pledge of Allegiance.

LTC Wickett welcomed our members and guests: Our guest speaker is Mr. Jose Lopez from Heroes' Mile Veteran Recovery Center accompanied by co-worker Russ; and welcomed back CAPT Suzanne Bonner.

Lunch was served: Salmon, Rice, Snow Peas, and Chocolate pudding with strawberries for dessert.

LTC Wickett asked Maj Voelbel that the 50/50 drawings be done at this time. Then the members' free lunch drawing.

MAJ Pam Ring won the free lunch for the 7 May 2025 meeting/luncheon.

LTC Magee introduced our guest speaker: Our guest speaker is Mr. Jose Lopez, Acting Executive Director of Heroes Mile. Mr. Lopez is a U.S. Navy veteran serving in the crow's nest of the CVN Kennedy. He is accompanied today by Russ, a U.S. Army veteran and admissions counselor for Heroes Mile.

Mr. Lopez explained that the program helps veterans, both male and females, to detox from chemical addictions and offers mental health treatments. Adjusting the program to meet the individual's needs. They also help the veterans to get back into the VA system. He has brought veterans to the program from 41 different states.

Mr. Lopez stated that as of August of 2024, the VA has stopped supporting the Heroes' Mile program. Because of this, the program has been opened up to non-veterans. This was done to help keep the doors open. Heroes' Mile is a for profit company owned by Olgethorp. The facility can house 42 clients and is open 24/7. Currently there are 8 beds occupied.

LTC Wickett presented Jose Lopez with a certificate of appreciation and thanked him for speaking to us today.

LTC Wickett asked if there were any corrections to the 5 MAR 2025 Luncheon Meeting Minutes as posted in the VOC. Motion to approve the minutes as posted in the VOC was made by Col Jim Pugh and seconded by Ms. Lisa Hightower. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

LTC Wickett announced we are still accepting donations to replace the Presidents Board. Please send donations to Maj Pete Durnell.

LTC Wickett announced we will be having a spring picnic "Operation Camaraderie" on 17 May 2025 from 1000-1400 hours cost is \$10.00 at the American Legion Post #6, Deland. We look forward to seeing all of our members.

Maj Durnell updated the information on the SunRail trip to Winter Park: It will be on Wednesday, April 23, 2025. We will take the 9:40 A.M. train from DeLand and arrive in Winter Park at 10:36 A.M. Cost for Seniors is \$3.75.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

LTC Wickett stated the Slate of Officers for the ensuing year has been established. She asked if there were any nominations from the floor. There being none she asked for a motion to accept the Slate of Officers. A motion was made by Maj Curt Voelbel and seconded by COL Jack Burnett to accept the Slate of Officers. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Maj Curt Voelbel and seconded by Col Jim Pugh that we keep our dues at \$35.00 per member for the 2025-2026 year. Motion carried.

LTC Wickett called for reports:

Secretary's Report: LtCol Twila Davis- nothing to report.

(Continued on page 4)

*Last Meeting - continued from page 3*

Treasurer's Report: Maj Pete Durnell – reported the checking account balance as of 31 March 2025 is \$ 2856.67 and \$ 6756.81 in savings. There is a 12/month CD of \$6,060.80. Total assets of \$ 15,674.28. Note: \$2000.00 is earmarked for a JROTC Scholarship. Treasurers report is given for informational purpose and is subject to audit.

Maj Durnell also stated the President's Plaque donations to date are \$568.00.

**Directors and Committee Reports:**

LTC Michael Magee- stated there was a good turnout for Valor Day Event and that he has a couple potential speakers for the upcoming year.

2nd VP- MAJ Raul Gonzalez: Reported on the Veterans Stand Down, Ocean Center, 101 N Atlantic Ave, Daytona Beach, FL 21-22 March 2025 and John P. Thomas Memorial Volusia Valor Days, Volusia County Fair Grounds, 29-30 March 2025 1000-1600 hours were both good events. It is good to network with other organizations and to get our Chapter's name out there with the goal to recruit some new members.

He also stated there will be new bronze name tags available for purchase for Life Members of our Chapter.

**Directors**

Jack Burtnett-Director- nothing to report.

Maj Curt Voelbel -Director –nothing to report.

MAJ Shirley Burtnett-Director– thanked the American Legion Post 6 for lending us their tent for the event.

MAJ Pam Ring -Scholarship Chair – stated she is looking forward to presenting the JROTC Leadership Award to a female cadet at Deltona High School next Friday.

LTC Mike Galaty -Legislative Chair- stated April 16 is MOAA's Advocacy in Action Day when MOAA members visit legislators in D.C. He en-

couraged members to go into the MOAA website and take action on the legislative items.

Maj Curt Voelbel –Chief of Staff and Membership Chair- we currently have 49 members. The goal is 60. He has been working with MOAA staff to ensure our membership roster is correct. He explained the different levels of memberships available: Basic, Premium, Life. We currently have 29 Life members in our Chapter.

CW4 Thomas Jackson-Community Relations – excused.

CH LtCol Chris Hoffmann- Chaplain- shared the story of August Turak and how he overcame meaningless depression through a daring quest for Life's purpose by living with and learning from the monks of Mepkin Abbey. He learned that service and selflessness is the key to a successful life.

COL Jack Burtnett – Editor – stated he will be sending the next VOC from the middle of the ocean. He will send the deadline for the VOC to LtCol Davis to share with the Board members.

Ms. Lisa Hightower – Surviving Spouse Liaison –stated she has left a couple phone messages for Carol Dever but has not received a call back yet.

LtCol Twila Davis- Personal Affairs-gave a sympathy card to CAPT Suzanne Bonner upon the passing of her mother, sent a sympathy card to Carol Dever, and has prepared the Resolution of Condolences for LtCol Phil Dever to be presented to his family at a future date.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

LTC Wickett announced:

The Deland High School JROTC has extended an invitation to our members to attend their Military Ball on May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 1700-2200 at the high school. The cost is \$30 per person RSVP to LTC Wickett by 18 April 2025

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## Membership -

Membership stands at 49 with 29 being Life Members of MOAA National. Invitation letters have been mailed to 13 potential MOAA National members who do not belong to a local chapter and live in our area. Results will be reported at the May luncheon/meeting assuming we get some responses. Remember, the larger our numbers, the greater our positive impact on our community and advocacy mission.

Although we only had two potential leads from the Daytona Stand Down and Deland Valor Days events, we were able to network with other organizations that help Veterans. It was encouraging to see how many are so involved in our mutual efforts throughout Volusia County and Nationally. A big thanks to those WVMC members who helped at those two-day events. Hopefully every member will participate in them next year.

I continue to urge each of you to look for recruitment opportunities then strike up the conversation and lastly, if they are an officer, invite them to our next luncheon. If you need help closing the deal, have them contact me, Maj Curt Voelbel @ 386-479-3400 or LgtCurt@gmail.com

Finally, we should be proud of the fact that ALL our members are MOAA National members making us a unique chapter. I encourage you to upgrade from Basic to Premium or Premium to Life membership by going the MOAA Website - <https://www.moaa.org/content/join-moaa/why-join-moaa/> Information on Basic, Premium and Life membership is described. When on the website, scroll down to join.

*Maj Curt Voelbel, USAF, RET*  
*Membership*

## From the Chief of Staff -

At our April luncheon/meeting members voted in the affirmative on our new Slate of Officers and keeping our annual membership dues at \$35. Board Officers will be installed at our May luncheon/meeting.

### **SECOND APPEAL:**

***Maj Pete Durnell, our Treasurer, has done an excellent job keeping us financially sound and in compliance with Federal and State laws as well as MOAA's policies. However, at some time in the near future Pete will be moving to be with family in England. Therefore, we are looking for his replacement. Because he has developed easy to use spreadsheets, Pete estimates he spends about 30-40 hours a month working the position. Replacing him soon will allow for proper training and transition. If you have the skills and desire to help, please contact Pete or Curt Voelbel.***

Remember to stop by the table at our luncheon to purchase a bunch of potential winning 50-50 tickets @ 3 for a dollar and get your white ticket for the FREE lunch. The white ticket costs nothing and only dues paying members are eligible. Cash donations may be dropped in the buckets at the door for Veteran's Causes and JR ROTC Scholarships.

Sample Tee Shirts and Hats with our local chapter Logo will be on display for you to purchase or order. Pricing TBD.

***Veterans Causes:*** We support Barracks of Hope in Daytona. They provide transitional housing for up to 9 months to male and female veterans who have struggled with homelessness, addiction, and mental health. Single occupancy rooms are provided, along with mental health counseling, case management, and three meals per day. **Please bring to each luncheon "Hygiene Bags" filled with Toothpaste, Brush, Shampoo, Soap, Deodorant, etc. in a plastic Zip bag. They are also accepting casual sport type clothing such as gym ware.**

*Maj Curt Voelbel, USAF, RET*  
*Chief of Staff*

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***Last Meeting - continued from page 4***

Halifax Urban Ministries is hosting a fund-raising event Sunday 6 APR 2025 from 1200-1600 at Earl Brown Park, DeLand. This event is to raise funds to provide transitional housing for homeless veterans on the west side of Volusia County.

Executive Board Meeting will be held on 9 April 2025, 1000 hours at the American Legion Post 6. Members are welcome to attend.

Our next luncheon meeting will be 7 May 2025 1100 hours at the DeBary Country Club.

Meeting adjourned at 1335 hours.

*LtCol Twila Davis, USAF, RET*  
*Secretary*

**When MOAA Speaks, Congress Listens**

Learn more about MOAA's key advocacy issues and contact your elected officials using our messaging platform.

*LTC Michael Galaty Jr, USA, RET*  
*Legislative*

***Pictures from last meeting—******Legislative—continued from page 2***

barriers related to licensure portability and other employment obstacles. Committee staff expressed support and encouraged continued focus on the issue.

**Military Health System- Access to Care**

Committee staffers encouraged MOAA to continue advocating for reliable MHS funding amid concerns that DoD is redirecting resources away from health care, impacting both readiness and the benefit itself by undercutting the direct care system.

**Toxic Exposure**

MOAA discussed recommendations from its Ending the Wait initiative and raised concerns about ongoing challenges to access service-earned care and benefits. Committee staff asked what specific problems remain unresolved and whether DoD is still failing to acknowledge certain exposure-related conditions. To stay informed and support these efforts, visit MOAA's Legislative Action Center.

Jose Lopez, Director of Heroes Mile Veteran Recovery Center talks about the organization he operates and its mission to help vets.



President Laura Wickett presents Mr. Lopez with a Certificate of Appreciation for the interesting and informative talk.

## *The Chaplain's Corner -*



A number of years ago I realized that I could take interesting pictures with my camera. I enjoyed them and would share those that I thought were striking in beauty and awe. In some ways it is easy to take good pictures of large vistas in the Southwest. They are all around you.

I wanted to become an even better photographer. I read material by other photographers and learned some of their secrets. I tried duplicating what they did. That worked and I have become more aware of how best to show things in nature. However, what I wasn't expecting is that my eyes became more trained on seeing things intentionally. I suppose why most people don't have that same "eye" is because we are too busy or preoccupied to spend the time to notice little things.

I've noticed that when most people take pictures with their cellphone they don't even think about what might be in the background of the picture. They rush photos to get on to the next thing. I wonder if that is a problem with our culture generally.

I remember my grandparents telling me that when they were younger most houses had porches. When the weather was good they would be outside. Neighbors could walk by and conversations would happen. They would get caught up with the neighbors. Most of us now don't even know our neighbors.

There is a story that I read about a reporter who had been working on a story and a tree fell on her and she suffered a broken neck. Thankfully she did not become paralyzed, but the recovery time was significant. In addition to her injury, she had been caring for her ageing parents. She

was also the mother of two boys.

While she was recovering she saw how her father couldn't play ball with his grandchildren, but he could talk with them, hold their hands and even laugh. She realized it brought great joy to her father to help out that way. It gave her joy knowing the boys were getting to know their grandparents in a special way. She probably would not have noticed that if she didn't have the time to notice the little things right in front of her. She could see the beauty right in her own home that she might have missed if she hadn't been injured.

There is beauty all around us if we can take the time to notice. Take things slowly and pause to notice little things that you rarely even see. I would guess you will see things in a whole new way and how beautiful even the smallest things can be.

*LtCol Chris Hoffmann, USAF, RET*  
*Chaplain*



The next meeting, 7 MAY, will be held at the DeBary Country Club, 300 Plantation Club Drive, DeBary, FL 32713. The meal will be vegetable pasta with blackened chicken. There will also be a desert. The lunch cost is **\$24** per meal if paid by cash or check; \$25 if paid with a credit card. We ask that if paid with cash exact change helps. There will be no speaker; we will have the installation of officers this month.

Please bring your unexpired pantry items and your donation of toiletries for Barracks of Hope.

***Upcoming Meeting: 7 MAY 2025***  
***Following Meeting: 3 SEP 2025***  
***Upcoming Board Meeting: 14 MAY 2025***

Meetings are held at the DeBary Country Club, 300 Plantation Club Drive, DeBary, FL 32713. Social hour starts at 1100 hrs., lunch served at 1145 followed by an interesting guest speaker, then a short business meeting.

**JOIN WEST VOLUSIA MOAA CHAPTER  
FOR OUR THIRD OUTDOOR**

# **OPERATION CAMARADERIE PICNIC**

**SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2025, 10 AM to 3PM**

**American Legion "Adam Quinn" Post 6  
(1087 Biscayne Blvd, DeLand, FL 32724)**

*At the DeLand Municipal Airport*

**Hot Dogs, Hamburgers, Sides & More.**

**Soft Drinks included.**

**(American Legion Post 6 Canteen will be operational)**

**\$10.00 per person (pay onsite)**

**AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERSHIP NOT REQUIRED**

**RSVP: MAJ Raul Gonzalez to 386-366-4473**

**Or e-mail [majgonz@earthlink.net](mailto:majgonz@earthlink.net)**

**RSVP NO LATER THAN 09 MAY 2025**





*Photos -*



WW II armored vehicles on display at the Volusia Valor Days help at the Volusia County Fair Grounds.



WVMC table at the Volusia Valor Days event. Lee Anne Powell and Raul Gonzalez are working the table.



Reenactors dressed in German WW II uniforms. Volusia Valor Days.

Raul with Ms Veteran America 2024. Volusia Valor Days.



Curt Voelbel, Tom Jackson, and Raul Gonzalez working the WVMC and MOAA table at the Stand Down held in Daytona Beach.

WMVC April outing to Winter Park. From Left to right, Bert Davis, Pete Durnell, Alice and Mike Galaty, Stan and Laura Wickett, Lisa Hightower, Karen Wiltuck, Pam Ring and Twila Davis.





**The Volusia Officers Call**  
**West Volusia MOAA Chapter, INC.**  
*An Affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America*



### Items to Note -

#### Free Meals

Those attendees who win a free lunch from the "ticket drawing" will only be able to claim their free lunch at the NEXT meeting.

If you are receiving this via U.S. Postal delivery and if you have email, we can get the VOC to you more quickly and at less expense to WVMC. Please let the editor know your email by contacting him at [volusiaofficerscall@gmail.com](mailto:volusiaofficerscall@gmail.com)

*Notice: WVMC does not endorse any of the paid advertisers.*

New name tags are available from MAJ Raul Gonzalez at the monthly meetings or by contacting him at: [majgonz@earthlink.net](mailto:majgonz@earthlink.net). *The cost is \$15.*

Check out OUR website at [www.wvmoaa.org](http://www.wvmoaa.org) It has a lot of information and links to useful information for all vets. The website gives guidance about how prospective members can join MOAA and WVMC.

***National MOAA and the West Volusia MOAA Chapter are nonpartisan organizations.***

To help us serve you better, we are asking all members to send copies of their DD 214 to our Secretary, LtCol Twila Davis at (email): [flygirltcc@gmail.com](mailto:flygirltcc@gmail.com). If you feel more comfortable, redact your social security number.



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