

## ***Metro Detroit Meteor, 2024-002, February 2024***

**Good morning.** This is the second 2024 edition of the Metro Detroit Meteor, the chapter newsletter of the Southeastern Michigan Chapter of MOAA. The newsletter will come to you via email as a normal delivery; it can be mailed to you if you request it.

**We Seek New Members.** This newsletter is one tool we plan to use to focus on retaining current members and encouraging new ones to join. Please share with fellow officers you know and invite them to join. Welcome aboard to the following new or renewing chapter members.

Rich Higgins  
Preston Plews  
Gordon Wesley  
John Young  
Jack Stewart  
Karen McGuire  
Pete Tousignant

**2024 Southeastern Michigan MOAA Chapter Meetings.** Meetings of the general membership will be held on the following dates in 2024:

Thursday April 18, 1130, Mulligans, Selfridge Air National Guard Base  
Thursday June 20, 1130, location TBD  
Friday, September 20, Mulligans, Selfridge Air National Guard Base  
Tuesday, November 7, 1130AM, location TBD

The Chapter Board of Directors meets separately each month via Zoom for administration of the chapter. Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend these Board of Directors meetings. If you are interested in attending a Board meeting, please let me know and I will send you the Zoom link. The next Board meeting is scheduled for 7PM on 29 February via Zoom.

**First Chapter Web Site Operational.** The chapter's first web site is up and running at [www.semimoaa.org](http://www.semimoaa.org). Thank you, Well Done and Congratulations to webmaster Rich Higgins. Rich has created a wonderful site and we are fortunate to have Rich grace us with his expertise and talent. Please feel free to check out the site as I think you will find it very well done and informative.

**Future Positive for KC-46 Tankers to Come to Selfridge.** From the Air Force Times of January 12, 2024, Courtney Mabeus-Brown. Michigan's Selfridge Air National Guard Base could soon become the next home of the Air Force's newest refueling jet.

Selfridge Air National Guard Base (SANGB), in Mount Clemens was reported as the preferred location for basing of a dozen KC-46A Pegasus tankers. The plan is contingent upon completion of an environmental review projected for completion in 2025. The aircraft would begin arriving in 2029, replacing the eight KC-135 Stratotankers when they begin to retire in 2027. Selfridge was among 16 Air Force locations seeking the aircraft. Selfridge is home to the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing, made up of the 171st Air Refueling Squadron and the 107th Fighter Squadron.

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**Name Changes to Army Installations.** Military installation name change information is provided courtesy of Jack Blanchard.

<u>Previous</u>	<u>New</u>
Fort Pickette, VA	Fort Barfoot, VA
Fort Lee, VA	Fort Gregg-Adams, VA
Fort A.P. Hill, VA	Fort Walker, VA
Fort Rucker, AL	Fort Novosel, AL
Fort Hood, TX	Fort Cavazos, TX
Fort Benning, GA	Fort Moore, GA
Fort Gordon, GA	Fort Eisenhower, GA
Fort Bragg, NC	Fort Liberty, NC
Fort Polk, LA	Fort Johnson, LA

**Legislative/MOAA Advocacy in Action (AIA) Legislative Campaign.** Advocacy in Action is an annual spring legislative campaign organized by MOAA and held in Washington DC. Selected MOAA members from all 50 states travel to Washington to receive briefings and visit Capitol Hill to meet with their state's House Representatives and Senators. Michigan Council of Chapters President Mary Johnson and a representative from the Northwest Michigan Chapter of MOAA will represent Michigan at the AIA event this spring on April 15-18, 2024. They will be teamed with a MOAA staff member and meet with Michigan's Congressional delegation to advocate for support of key legislation including:

- a. Passage of the Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S.344).
- b. Passage of the BAH Restoration Act (H.R.2537/S.1823).
- c. Legislation to protect TRICARE for Life.

You can support them by finding more information on the legislation and transmitting pre-drafted emails found within the Legislative Action Center at [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)

**Veterans Affairs Benefits News.** From the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs newsletter of 31 January 2024. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released the "2023 VA Federal Benefits Booklet for Veterans, Dependents, Survivors and Caregivers." The booklet explains the numerous VA benefits and services to veterans, their families, and caregivers, as part of VA's initiative to support and empower our country's heroes. This tool directs veterans through the many services and benefits available to them on the federal level. It includes information on everything from health care and educational assistance to housing aid and career development initiatives. Veterans can access the booklet on VA's website, [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) To learn more about your earned benefits, including state and federal resources, you can also contact the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) at 1-800-642-4838 or visit [www.michigan.gov/mvaa](http://www.michigan.gov/mvaa)

**Awards-ROTC and JROTC Season Starting Up for MOAA Medals.** We have already begun to receive requests for MOAA medals from ROTC and JROTC programs. We are planning to support award ceremonies at the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University and twelve area high schools. If you have questions about which schools are supported, please contact [yapler@comcast.net](mailto:yapler@comcast.net)

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**Air Travel Opportunity, Freedom Center at Detroit Metropolitan Airport.** The Freedom Center at Detroit Metropolitan Airport includes veteran lounges at gate D17 in the Evans Terminal and at gate A43 in the McNamara Terminal. The lounges are free and open to all active duty, former and retired military, and their dependents. All you need is a military ID (or a driver's license reflecting veteran status). The centers are staffed by volunteers, many of them former airline employees or veterans themselves. The centers provide a place to relax and enjoy a bottle of water, cup of coffee or a snack.

**Volunteer Service Opportunities at the Freedom Center.** Chapter members and spouses are encouraged to consider volunteering at the Freedom Center at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Volunteers meet and support active-duty personnel as well as veterans and military dependents in a private, corporately supported, volunteer-staffed military lounge, like a USO. Volunteer qualification criteria include:

1. Volunteers must apply, complete, and meet all security screening requirements and obey all airport safety and security regulations once screened.
2. Volunteers can serve with their spouse if both are credentialed.
3. As a guideline, individuals are expected to schedule and serve at least three shifts per month and couples are asked to serve at least four shifts per month.
4. Shifts, if available, may be scheduled adjacent to each other. That is, shifts can be scheduled back-to-back.
5. Absent extraordinary circumstances, volunteers are expected to commit to serve on a regular basis for at least one year.
6. Volunteers must provide their own transportation to the airport.
7. Volunteers are not paid and are not reimbursed by the Freedom Center for mileage or other incidental expenses.
8. Volunteers are required to promptly inform Matt Garris and Len Rose if they are not able to cover scheduled shifts or if they no longer wish to serve at the Freedom Center.

If you have are interested in volunteering, please contact Matt Garris or Len Rose below.

Matt Garris  
Matt@MIFreedomCenter.org  
(313) 744-7507  
(734) 904-4168

Len Rose  
coordinator@mifreedomcenter.org  
(313) 744-7507

**VA Healthcare, Pension and Compensation. Got questions, been to a Zoom meeting?** Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend the weekly 4PM Thursday Zoom coffee and the noon Sunday Zoom podcast on VA Healthcare and Disability Claim topics. Please contact chapter member Henry Storm at [ancientgrape@gmail.com](mailto:ancientgrape@gmail.com) for links to these weekly Zoom events or access them via the Veteran Facilitator channel on YouTube. If you are in the White Lake or Milford area, please feel free to contact Henry or Roy about the VA breakfast meetings, Monday, and Friday at 7AM at the Leo's Coney Island in White Lake and Wednesday at 7AM at the Americus Grill in Milford. Breakfast is pay as you go and a wonderful place to enjoy fellowship with other veterans and ask questions on VA-related topics.

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**AI Brainstorming Sessions with VA Facilitator Ed Ruckle.** The chapter President has begun meeting with Ed Ruckle, principal architect of the Veteran Facilitator YouTube Channel. Ed is also a longstanding participant in the Thursday afternoon and Sunday noon VA Support Zoom calls with chapter member Henry Storm. One of the benefits of Artificial Intelligence is that it provides a tool to process and organize large amounts of information at very high speed. Ed and I have been brainstorming how the technological power of Artificial Intelligence can be combined with the human touch to assist veterans in navigating the VA system. We anticipate providing continuing updates in this newsletter.

**Surviving Spouse Advisory Liaison-Southeastern Michigan MOAA and Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter.** MOAA is made up of about 360,000 members. About 44,000 members are surviving spouses. When a MOAA lifetime member passes away, that national MOAA membership passes automatically to the surviving spouse. Surviving spouses interested in joining a local chapter are welcome to do so. Surviving spouses may also join the MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter. There is also a Surviving Spouses and Friends Facebook group which has over 850 members and provides updated information on important surviving spouse issues-- especially regarding the SBP/DIC offset and legislation important to surviving spouses and their families. If you have questions about options for you as a surviving spouse, please contact the Surviving Spouse Liaison, Noreen Diedo at [nkucha2969@aol.com](mailto:nkucha2969@aol.com) You can also find more information in the Surviving Spouse Corner on the MOAA site <https://www.moaa.org/content/search-results/?keyword=Surviving%20Spouses>

**International Armed Forces Night, Mark Your Calendar.** The International Armed Forces Night will be held on Friday May 10, 2024 at the American Polish Cultural Center in Troy, Michigan. More information on signing up to attend this evening event will be forthcoming.