

Metro Detroit Meteor, 2024-003, March 2024

Good morning. This is the third 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. If you have content of interest to the membership or would like to play more of a role in developing the newsletter, please let me know.

Recruiting New Members. This newsletter is one tool we plan to use to focus on retaining current members and encouraging new ones to join. Please feel free to share this newsletter with fellow officers you know and invite them to join. The chapter web site includes the chapter member application and applications can be emailed to you if you request them.

Communication Update. Chapter Web Site and Web Presence. In addition to the chapter's web site at www.semimoaa.org the chapter publishes this newsletter and maintains a MOAA web presence. <https://www.moaa.org/chapter/southeasternmichigan/>

Legislative Update/MOAA Advocacy in Action (AIA) Legislative Campaign. The national MOAA legislative campaign, Advocacy in Action, is being held in Washington DC from 15 to 18 April 2024. MOAA chapter members from Michigan, teamed with a MOAA national staff member, will meet with Michigan's Congressional delegation to advocate for the following legislation:

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

If you have not signed up for the MOAA Legislative Action Center, I encourage you to do so and make use of the already-prepared email messages that you can send to your Congressional members. Note also that you do not need to be a chapter or MOAA member to send emails via the Legislative Action Center.

The following information is a summary from the article entitled **Next-Level Advocacy** on pages 10 and 11 of the March 2024 issue of the Military Officer Magazine. Some key points about legislative advocacy:

We may have neutral or partisan viewpoints, when communicating with legislators and their staff members, we must engage with all elected officials, not just the ones we like or support.

Instead of communicating with Senator Smith or Representative Jones, you may be working with a legislative staffer. Besides the potential disappointment of not collaborating with the Senator or Representative, many staffers may appear quite young. Just as on large military staffs, staff officers are counted on to make recommendations that senior staff decide on and implement. Therefore, staffers are key players and important to you and your advocacy; they have the ear of your Congressional representation. Said another way, they are the lens that focuses your bright light so it can be seen best to maximize results. These staffers may include:

- The military legislative assistant.
- The veteran's legislative assistant.
- The legislative director.
- The district (for House Representatives) or state (for Senators).

Courteous, civil, professional rapport with staffers does help.

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Board of Directors Update. The chapter Board of Directors meets each month. Chapter members are welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings normally held via Zoom. If you are interested, please request to receive a meeting notice by emailing yapler@comcast.net

General Membership Meets April 18 Noon Luncheon at Mulligans, Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

Earlier last week, chapter members were emailed the advance registration form for the Southeastern Michigan Chapter April 18, 2024, luncheon meeting at Mulligans at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Mount. Clemens. The meeting begins at 1130AM with a buffet luncheon at Noon. Chapter members and their guests are encouraged to attend. Access to the base requires a current military ID card. At the meeting, we will be providing a briefing on chapter plans for 2024 and ongoing efforts to support passage of the Richard Star Act, restore Basic Allowance for Housing to 100%, and actions to protect TRICARE FOR LIFE. The meeting dress code is casual.

The buffet luncheon menu includes:

Tossed Salad, Top Round of Beef Au Jus, Herb Baked Chicken, Mashed Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetable, Rolls Assorted Cookies, and Beverage

The cost of the event is \$25 per person and advance registration is required by April 8, 2024.

The MOAA Motto. What Does “Never Stop Serving” Mean? The motto of the Military Officers Association of America is **Never Stop Serving**. This may mean different things to different people. A continuing set of questions comes to mind:

Why do you want to be a MOAA or chapter member?

What do you expect and what do you receive; does it match?

What is in it for me/you?

Does what we do as an organization match what we should be doing?

For reference, our by-laws discuss the chapter purpose as: “...The purposes of the chapter shall be to promote the purposes and objectives of the Military Officers Association of America; foster fraternal relations among retired, active duty, and former officers of the uniformed services and their reserve components; protect the rights and interests of active duty, retired, and reserve component personnel of the uniformed services and their dependents and survivors; provide useful services for members and their dependents and survivors; and serve the community and the nation...”

As President, I offer the following commentary after looking at the above and solicit your feedback:

At the risk of being fired as chapter cheerleader, we serve everyday whether we are members of MOAA, a chapter, or not. And some of us are serving, or being served, ...and loved...in many beautiful, noble ways. Our health and the health of those we love matters. Please do not sell yourselves short.

Serving can be considered a function of “the three Ts, Time, Talent, and Treasure.” Sometimes, sweat equity is preferred over financial donation. And vice versa. And sometimes, we can serve outside what we would consider as “our comfort zone”.

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We are an experienced and talented group. More hands make lighter work. But some great achievements started with just one hand. There is something to be said for teamwork and “companionship in task.” We call that camaraderie.

It really helps to enjoy and perceive value in what we do. But we are often individual beholders of beauty and that perception matters.

Regardless of what we do, we should resist the temptation to grow downtrodden, bitter, or frustrated. Sometimes effort races close to result.

Results of Chapter Leadership Meeting with Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA

On March 11, members of the Chapter Board of Directors met with Mary Johnson, President of the Michigan Council of Chapters of MOAA and Mark Benjamin of the Northwestern Michigan Chapter of MOAA. The purpose of the meeting was to review the MOAA chapter assessment for Southeastern Michigan and offer support and recommendations to help the chapter remain viable, grow, and flourish. These assessments are part of a nationwide MOAA initiative to review operations of all chapters and ensure chapters as the backbone of MOAA remain healthy and effective. The following were major takeaways from the meeting:

- The chapter should consider setting a regular, standard meeting location.
- The chapter should establish a personal affairs program to meet the needs of chapter members.
- The chapter should develop a formal recruiting program with focused recruiting events.
- The chapter should encourage members to fill appointable positions and committees to redistribute chapter functions previously absorbed by the chapter President during the COVID pandemic.
- The chapter should take more of a role in holding events that support the community with an additional goal of fund-raising.

Selfridge Air Show Information, June 8 and 9, 2024 Consistent with the goal increasing chapter involvement in community events, the chapter is seeking volunteers to work at the Selfridge Air Show on 8 and 9 June. The event will feature the Thunderbirds, the Air Force aerial demonstration team. There will also be opportunities for volunteers to serve in setup Thursday 6 June and tear down Monday 10 June. Of note is that some opportunities will be strictly volunteer, and others will be paid positions.

Opportunities include:

- Concessions- working in a food booth or stationary food/drink cart (***)Concessions can earn donations towards our organization***)
- Fun zone Volunteers (non-donation earning)
- S.T.E.A.M. Zone Volunteers (non-donation earning)
- Parking

The concessions will involve anywhere from 3-5 volunteers to zones that are up to thirty-six volunteers. There will also be stationary carts which provide soda/hot dogs/beer/lemonade/frozen lemonade which require from 2-3 individuals per cart.

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Volunteers can work a full day or can support a shift. Please see the shift times below. Lunch is provided. Full days are extremely helpful, but we understand people have busy lives and we are grateful for whatever time you can give 😊 We need volunteers for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday June 7th, 8th, and 9th.

The first shift is 0600-1230.

The second shift is 1130-1800.

The full day is 0600-1800.

There is no minimum or maximum as to how many shifts or days an organization can cover. The more shifts your organization can cover, the higher the donation. You can have friends/family/organization members involved on your team and their donation will still go to your organization (they just must let me know). Not everyone has to volunteer at the same time as we know everyone has different availability. For those volunteering at the same time, we do our best to place the members of your organization together within the same booth/cart. As far as age goes, our concessionaire would like the volunteers to be at least 15 years of age, but we are flexible if they can perform their duty. If there are a few younger volunteers, we just ask that there is an adult present.

Donation:

The air show event vendor is offering a donation to organizations that are willing to help with the concessions at the event 😊 The vendor provides a donation to us dependent upon attendance/sales, which is then distributed to your organizations equally per shift worked. In turn, the more volunteers, and shifts that you can support, the higher the donation to your organization will be. At this time, we do not know the value of each shift as we are unsure of what the final vendor donation amount will be and unsure of what the final volunteer count will be.

FOR EXAMPLE: In 2022, each person who covered a shift received \$75 (1 person covering one full am or pm shift) to their organization.

For example: (Once again this is not guaranteed earnings for 2024)

12 Individuals worked 12 morning shifts- $12 \times \$75 = \900 donation

5 individuals worked 1 full day (2 shifts each) = \$750

Paid Positions (non-donation):

Our concessionaire is looking for individuals to volunteer to cover positions such as a cashier, selling novelty air show items, runners (Saturday June 8th & 9th), and put up (June 6th)/tear down (June 9th) of the booths. These volunteer positions are one shift that would need to be covered from the time the booth opens until the time it closes. They are offering \$8/hour for anyone willing to help support them. At the end of the weekend when all shifts are complete, a check will be written and sent to you at the address that you provide 😊 We do our best to get the checks out timely. Everyone that is interested in helping to support will need to complete the attached application for vetting purposes. This form can be completed and either a photo taken or have it scanned back to the email.

****Paid Positions available** - \$8/hour (non-donation earning)**

- Thursday- Set up: Time 8am- 6pm

- Sunday- Tear down: Time 4pm- 10pm

- Saturday & Sunday: Vendor Cashiers, Runners, Novelty Workers - Time 7:00 am until 6pm

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Any individual looking to work at the Air Show must complete an application. This is used for vetting purposes to access the base. If you are interested in joining us in volunteering at the Air Show, please contact the chapter point of contact, Rich Higgins at rlhigginsjr@yahoo.com

VA Resources-Suicide Prevention and Awareness. Veteran suicide is a major problem in America. The following information addressing Suicide Awareness and Suicide Prevention is provided from the VA web site.

<https://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health/suicide-prevention/>

Oakland County Veterans Fair April 25. Please see the link to the Oakland County Veterans Resource Fair which will be held from 9-12 in the morning on April 25, 2024, at the Troy Civic Center, 3179 Livernois Troy, MI 48083.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/oakland-county-veterans-resource-fair-tickets-692471359477?aff=oddtcreator>

Michigan Veterans Home, Chesterfield, Michigan

There are 210,000 veterans in metro Detroit. There is a new veteran's home in Chesterfield in Macomb County that adds to the veterans' homes in Grand Rapids and Marquette.

The Chesterfield Veterans home is home for 128 veterans: Every resident at the home enjoys a private bedroom and bathroom.

The home includes four home-like neighborhood buildings. These measure more than 29,000 square feet; each neighborhood can accommodate thirty-two residents. Additionally, the residents all have a shared kitchen, dining facilities and living spaces.

The home includes a 33,000-square foot community center: This space houses administrative offices, occupational and physical therapy spaces and amenities like a multi-faith prayer room, café and bistro, barbershop, beauty parlor, multi-purpose rooms and a large space for full membership and community gatherings.

The surrounding grounds are designed for additional recreation and exercise opportunities, with walking paths and gardens. The property is home to deer, turkeys, hawks, and a family of American eagles.

All buildings are connected via heated and air-conditioned corridors, allowing members to move through the neighborhood buildings and community center while staying indoors.

Every day, the home's extensive, professional staff will focus on long-term and short-term care, rehab and therapy, dementia and memory care and palliative care. An in-house pharmacy, pastoral care, and specialty clinics (such as dental and vision care) are also available.

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Please see the link below for more information and a visual tour of the Chesterfield home. If you are interested in volunteering at the home, please contact chapter point of contact Rich Higgins at rlhigginsjr@yahoo.com

<https://www.michigan.gov/mvh/locations/michigan-veteran-homes-at-chesterfield-township>

From the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. Two Million in State Grants to Help Homeless Veterans March 06, 2024

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) is distributing \$2 million in state grants to thirteen nonprofit organizations that support homeless veterans and their families across Michigan. The grants, of about \$150,000 each, will be used for a variety of initiatives intended to assist homeless veterans. These efforts include creating homes out of shipping containers in Wayne County, renovating a 19-room homeless shelter in Flint and creating a four-unit transitional housing complex in the Upper Peninsula. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the state Legislature allocated \$2 million to veteran homelessness prevention for fiscal year 2024. The governor has proposed another \$1.5 million for veteran homelessness prevention in her FY25 budget.

“Michiganders who served our state and nation in uniform deserve our respect and our support,” Whitmer said. “With these grants, we are facing veterans’ homelessness head-on across Michigan. From renovating a shelter in Flint to creating a transitional housing complex in the U.P., we are taking action to ensure those who put their lives on the line to keep us safe have the support they need to thrive. This is a bipartisan priority so let us keep funding it in our next balanced budget.”

A recent report from the MVAA on the state of veteran homelessness says there is an “urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the challenges faced by our veteran population.” According to the Homeless Management Information System, there were 1,657 homeless veterans in Michigan in 2023, although that figure represents only those veterans who received services. The actual number of homeless veterans is much higher.

“Many factors can lead a veteran to become homeless, including mental health issues stemming from PTSD, addiction and a difficult transition to civilian life,” said MVAA Director Brian L. Love. “To prevent veteran homelessness, it’s critically important to connect veterans to the resources they need to thrive, whether that’s health care, emergency assistance, education benefits or help finding and keeping a good job,” Love said.

Enjoy the 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). Volunteers staff the centers, 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. There is a television, flight monitor, and complimentary wi-fi.

Chapter members interesting in volunteering at the Freedom Center can contact Roy Yaple at yapler@comcast.net

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VA Healthcare, Pension and Compensation. PACT Act? 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 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 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.

AI Brainstorming Scenario and Application Results with VA Facilitator Ed Ruckle. Ed Ruckle is a 20-year Air Force veteran who has dedicated himself to assisting and educating veterans in all things relating to Veterans Affairs benefits. His YouTube channel, Veteran Facilitator, contains over five hundred videos and related resources on veteran benefit topics. Ed also participates in the Thursday 4PM weekly Zoom coffee call and the Sunday Noon Zoom podcast. A recent initiative associated with chapter Veterans Affairs support have been brainstorming sessions about how Artificial Intelligence applications can be used to develop responses to scenarios or questions that may be posed by chapter members or other veterans. Artificial Intelligence can process massive amounts of information at extremely high rates of speed to produce tailored responses so it would seem logical to explore if and how AI could be used to address the needs of veterans with questions about VA benefits.

Here is a scenario response (see italics) from a hypothetical veteran who has heard about a person called the VSO and has a question about what a VSO is. The AI application took about a minute to generate the response.

Thanks for reaching out about VA Healthcare and Veteran Service Officers (VSOs). Let me break it down for you quick.

A VSO is like your wingman in navigating the VA system. They are trained to help vets like us understand and access the benefits we have earned. Do you need one? It is up to you but having someone in your corner can make things a whole lot easier.

Getting a VSO is simple. You can find one through organizations like the VFW, American Legion, or Disabled American Veterans (DAV). You do not have to join these groups to get help from a VSO, though it can be a promising idea because they often have dedicated VSOs ready to assist.

Now, about county VSOs. These are local folks who work directly with your county government. They are there to help you with VA claims, healthcare, and other benefits. Just reach out to your county office or check online to find one near you.

Hope this clears things up for you. Do not hesitate to reach out if you have any more questions.

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Here is another VA and AI example. The hypothetical veteran had a house fire and his military files including his medical records were destroyed. See the AI response below in italics.

Hey there, fellow veteran! Sorry to hear about your records going up in flames. Here is what you need to do:

Request Your Records: Start by filling out Standard Form 180 (SF-180). You can get this form online or from the National Archives website. Do not sweat it; it is straightforward.

Provide Details: When filling out the form, make sure you give as much info as you can about your service. Stuff like your full name, service number or Social Security number, dates of service, and branch of service.

Send It In: Once you have the SF-180 all filled out, send it to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). They are the ones who handle this stuff. You can mail it or fax it; whatever works best for you.

Be Patient: It might take a bit for them to process everything, especially with all the requests they get. So, hang tight and give them some time to work their magic.

Check Your Mail: After a while, keep an eye on your mailbox. That is where they will send your new records once they have dug them up.

Review Your Records: Once you get your hands on your new records, give 'em a once-over. Make sure everything looks right and if there are any mistakes or missing info, you can follow up with the NPRC.

Chapter members, if you have a question about where we could apply Artificial intelligence and develop a response to your VA scenario, please contact the newsletter editor, yapler@comcast.net

Surviving Spouse Corner. From the MOAA Military Officer Magazine, March 5, 2024.

Surviving Spouse Corner: Are Your Personal Documents Ready for an Emergency?

By: Renée Brunelle Matthews

March 05, 2024

Emergencies can strike unexpectedly, leaving individuals and families grappling with chaos and uncertainty. Whether it is a natural disaster like a hurricane or earthquake, a house fire, or a medical crisis, being prepared can make all the difference in navigating through the turmoil. One often-overlooked aspect of preparedness is having essential documents readily accessible for yourself or a trusted person.

It might sound simple, but having your important documents organized and easily accessible can significantly expedite critical decision-making during emergencies. Imagine being evacuated from your home due to an impending hurricane (yes, that has happened to me), and in the rush to leave, you forget to grab essential documents like identification, insurance policies, or medical records. Having these documents readily available in a designated "important documents kit" ensures you have the necessary information on hand to prove your identity, access medical care, or file insurance claims promptly.

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Also, having your documents prepared in advance can alleviate stress and anxiety during already tense situations. Emergencies are inherently chaotic, and the last thing you want to worry about is rummaging through drawers or files, searching for vital paperwork. By proactively organizing your documents and keeping them in a secure location, you can focus on prioritizing safety and addressing immediate needs rather than scrambling to gather paperwork under duress.

Another compelling reason to have your important documents ready for an emergency is to safeguard against loss or damage. Disasters such as floods, fires, or earthquakes can destroy physical documents stored in homes or offices. While some documents can be replaced, others, like birth certificates, passports, or irreplaceable family heirlooms, might be lost forever.

Digitally storing copies of essential documents in secure cloud storage like Everplans or on encrypted USB drives provides an extra layer of protection against physical damage or loss, ensuring critical information remains accessible even if the originals are destroyed.

International Armed Forces Night, May 10, Troy MI, Mark Your Calendar. The International Armed Forces Council will hold its annual International Armed Forces Night on Friday evening May 10, 2024, at the American Polish Cultural Center 2975 East Maple Road, Troy, Michigan. The event social hour will begin at 6PM with dinner at 7PM This event is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy camaraderie with our Canadian and Polish allies, a great meal, spirited entertainment, and dancing to a live orchestra. Advance registration is required by 3 May. Please see the email flyer with this newsletter.

Meeting and Speakers Bureau. Chapter members who know of a speaker of interest are encouraged to contact the Chapter President with recommendations. We are looking for interesting speakers to provide a 20–30-minute presentation during our in-person meetings. Topics can be varied and include but are not limited to military matters or local events or causes. Novelty, creativity, humor, and interesting audio/visual presentations are always appreciated.

Ad Hoc Book Report. By Roy Yaple. Book and Author: *The Wager* by David Grann. David Grann is also the author of *Killers of the Flower Moon* which has been released as a movie at local theaters.

As a regular visitor to my neighborhood Barnes and Noble and an avid reader of primarily non-fiction, I have seen copies and references on best sellers lists to the book, *The Wager*, by David Grann. After watching a 60 Minutes episode about the author which illustrated his detailed writing research, I was quite impressed, finally broke down, and purchased the book. As a Navy veteran, the book cover also intrigued me. The story starts out in the 1740s when England is at war with Spain. The early part of the book provides background of the main characters and the lives of the sailors that man their ships. The recruiting practices in the British Navy of the 1740s are certainly much different than the US Navy of the late 20th century. Having worked to maintain and preserve a metal hull in corrosive salt water during my Navy career, I found reading about the efforts to build and maintain large wooden ships and their sails fascinating. *The Wager* was part of a small squadron sailing out of Portsmouth England in search of a massive Spanish Galleon. If found and captured, the Galleon would be a huge treasure haul for England. The ensuing pages describe the voyage of the *Wager* and the other ships in the squadron as they travel south across the equator, down the coast of South America, and around the treacherous waters of Tierra del Fuego where the Atlantic and Pacific meet in some of the most dangerous, storm-racked waters on Earth. The vagaries of open-ocean voyaging, a sudden attack of deadly scurvy, and storm upon storm finally climax in shipwreck.

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But not on warm tropical shores; instead think cold, wet, windy, thirsty, sick, and hungry. No emergency beacon, no signal flares, no cell phones or even notification of a search. Leadership, authority, military discipline, survival....??? That is for the rest of the story.

I am a big fan of *The Wager* and found it a great read. It is the type of book that made we want better sea legs, a good rain slicker, a hot beverage, and plenty of citrus. It is a great book to see man against man and against the elements. I would strongly recommend you pick up a copy or check out your local library if you can find it there.

Upcoming 2024 Southeastern Michigan MOAA Chapter and Board 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 March 21, 7PM, Board of Directors, via Zoom

Thursday June 20, 1130, location TBD

Friday, September 20, Mulligans, Selfridge Air National Guard Base

Tuesday, November 7, 1130AM, location TBD