

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
Central Florida Chapter



FOCUS



May 2025 Volume 68 Issue 3

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Serving Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties



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Dates to Note:

May 13<sup>th</sup> – MOAA CFC Luncheon  
June 10<sup>th</sup> – MOAA CFC Luncheon

May is Month of the Military Caregiver  
May is National Military Appreciation Month  
May is Mental Health Awareness Month  
May 1<sup>st</sup> Silver Star Service Banner Day  
May 1<sup>st</sup> National Day of Prayer  
May 8<sup>th</sup> Victory in Europe (VE) Day  
May 9<sup>th</sup> National Military Spouse Appreciation Day  
May 11<sup>th</sup> Mother's Day  
May 13<sup>th</sup> Children of Fallen Patriots Day  
May 17<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces Day  
May 22<sup>nd</sup> National Maritime Day  
May 26<sup>th</sup> Ascension Day  
May 26<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day  
June is PTSD Awareness Month  
June 6<sup>th</sup> D-Day Invasion Anniversary  
June 12<sup>th</sup> Women Veterans Day  
June 14<sup>th</sup> Flag Day  
June 14<sup>th</sup> Army Birthday  
June 15<sup>th</sup> Father's Day  
June 19<sup>th</sup> Juneteenth Day  
June 23<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Birthday  
June 27<sup>th</sup> PTSD Awareness Day

**President's Message**

It is with great pride I announce that our 2025 JROTC Scholarship Selection Board chose 8 of the finest cadets in Central Florida! We are now up to 37 JROTC High Schools in our catchment area. Without the generosity of our chapter members to contribute to our scholarship fund, our ability to issue a check for \$1,000 to each cadet would not be possible. I thank you for seeing the goodness of our program and supporting the future leaders of our military! I would be remiss if I didn't thank members of our chapter for making our scholarship program a reality on April 12th: LTC Dean Ptaszynski, COL Kin La Fate, LTC Mike and Vicki Gillett, CDR Randy Fiebrandt and our photographer Nita Seng. I hope you take the time to read the attached bios of each of the 8 cadets. We honored the cadets, their family and cadre on April 12<sup>th</sup> with a luncheon, and each year I remind myself that this is the most celebrated luncheon of the year with our members. I want to also thank COL Bob Brogan for overseeing and keeping track of the MOAA JROTC Leadership Medal program with our 37 JROTC High Schools (no easy task to keep up with). Several of our chapter members continue to present the MOAA medal to the Junior Cadets, and it's always exciting to see the delight on the cadets faces as they cheer on their fellow cadets!



*This **Memorial Day on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of May**, it's up to all of us to honor the legacy and memory of our fallen noble heroes who we memorialize on what makes our nation exceptionally extraordinary, For some of us, every day is Memorial Day as we accept the deaths of those we know who gave their lives for love of country and democracy we so cherish. We look upon them as our own beloved sons and daughters knowing their patriotic sacrifices live on through safeguarding their memories by future generations to come. President Reagan reminded us that "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction."*

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## MOAA FL Council of Chapters:

[www.flmoaa.org](http://www.flmoaa.org)

MOAA National: [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)

## MOAA Take Action Center:

<https://moaa.quorum.us/>

## Next MOAA CFC Event is a Luncheon on May 13<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am \$24:

Our next Chapter meeting is a Luncheon at 11:30am on May 13<sup>th</sup> and will be held at the DoubleTree Orlando East - UCF Area. The DoubleTree is located at 12125 High Tech Ave, Orlando. Please note the hotel sits back off the road and may not be immediately visible. There will be a full Salad Bar with Cubed Chicken, Turkey, and Ham to customize your own Chef Salad, AND Pepper Steak, Garlic Mashed Potatoes (gravy on side) and Grilled Vegetables. We have a special Costco birthday cake! The price for the lunch is \$24 per person and can be paid in cash, check, or credit card. As always, we will be asking for your generous JROTC/ROTC scholarship contributions! **RSVP NLT than May 9<sup>th</sup>** to this email, or email [lorraine holland@hotmail.com](mailto:lorraine holland@hotmail.com) or call 407-221-1388.

Please come out to enjoy a wonderful event with your fellow chapter members and hear informative information from our Central Florida Quilts of Valor representative **Valerie Philon**, and witness two of your 95-year young MOAA members be presented their Quilts!

**Save the Date: The June luncheon will be on June 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:30am.**

I want to welcome CPT's Ashley and Stephen Orf who joined our MOAA family (both West Point graduates). Ashley is active in the veteran community as the VFW Auxiliary Senior Vice President of Winter Springs Post 5405. We all send her and Stephen our best wishes to welcome their first bundle of joy this September (their baby will be our newest Honorary MOAA family member).

***I encourage you to attend our May 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter Luncheon to help celebrate LT Ted Goodwin and COL Carol Reagles 95<sup>th</sup> May birthdays and hear informative information from our Central Florida Quilts of Valor representative Valerie Philon, who will honor Ted and Carol with a Quilt of Valor to thank them***

**and honor them for their years of service.** For those of you that will be taking vacations during the upcoming months, please make memorable memories, and safe travels on your journeys!

Cheers, Lorraine



## **Florida Council of Chapters Communiqué'**

The April Edition of the MOAA Florida Council *Communiqué* is available on the Council Website ([www.flmoaa.org](http://www.flmoaa.org)) or click below. The *Council Communiqué* has items of interest including our Legislative Advocacy efforts, activities of the State's 37 Chapters, and much more. *The Communiqué* is published on the even numbered months (February, April, June, August, October, and December) to keep Florida MOAA members updated and engaged on events. There is usually a topical quiz on various issues. (*The first one to tell me the April answer at the next luncheon, gets a prize*).

Randy



## **MOAA National Col. Marvin J. Harris Communications "Five Star" Award Recipients!**

Each year, MOAA national recognizes chapters and councils doing an outstanding job communicating with their members by awarding the Col. Marvin J. Harris Communications Award. The award is given to the chapters and councils with the best newsletters and websites from among MOAA's 400+ affiliates. Our chapter, once again, received the "5 Star" or highest rating. We exceeded the requirements for this award with our state-of-the-art website, a first class printed and electronic monthly Newsletter—THE FOCUS. Congratulations to Ken Dold - Webmaster, Randy Fiebrandt the Editor of The Focus, and Pat Green and Tom Love for their input into the Focus Newsletter. Randy is a double dipper for not only receiving the award for our Chapter Newsletter but also receiving the award for the FCoC Communiqué' Newsletter! I thank all our Chapter administrators for clearing the bar to receive this distinction and keeping our members informed and engaged. The award will be presented by your Chapter President at our monthly luncheon May 13<sup>th</sup>. Job Well Done!

## **MOAA Central Florida Chapter Celebration JROTC Scholarship Program**

The success of the Cadet of the Year scholarship program depends upon nominations of deserving cadets by the senior JROTC instructor at one of the 37 high schools in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties with JROTC detachments. The nominations are accompanied by a written recommendation from the nominating senior instructor. Each cadet nominated is interviewed in dress uniform by a diverse selection committee composed of three retired officers who are members of the Chapter. The interviews last approximately 15-20 minutes. Factors considered by the selection committee include but are not limited to: military bearing and appearance in uniform, cadet JROTC assignments, Advanced Placement

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and Honors classes taken or completed, GPA, school activities, service in the community and plans for future military service.

Three of us spend two Saturdays interviewing the top two senior cadets that the cadre instructors select from each school. On average we end up interviewing about 25-30 cadets. The competition is fierce, and we usually select the top 8-10 cadets based on our donations from our members (each cadet is awarded \$1,000). Our JROTC luncheon is a favorite luncheon event as it's an opportunity to showcase our future military leaders and recognize them with the generous financial donations from our chapter members for their achievements. It's also an opportunity to show our gratitude to the cadre instructors and family members.

The Chapter believes the cadets benefit from the interviewing process whether they win a scholarship because they will be interviewing for positions throughout their lives. It was a privilege to share in the exciting achievements of not only what the cadets have accomplished in High School, but we shared in the excitement that two received Service Academy



*Our 2025 recipients and their plans: Cadets Kovac (AF), Sanchez (AFROTC), Torre (USMA), Kirtley (USCG), Kallin (NROTC), Ferraro (TBD), Peebles (USAFA), Costanza (TBD).*

Appointments, and some qualified for ROTC Scholarships, and one is enlisting in the Coast Guard! Each year I think I can't be more impressed with our selection of cadets, and each year I hear and see more potential for military service in the cadets we selected. On behalf of all three selection board members, I want to thank the hard-working Cadre Instructors who take their job seriously to train and mold our future leaders, and the family members who help guide and support their children who in many cases want to follow in their footsteps and serve our country. Job well-done Cadets!

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**Cadet Lorena Kovac** is a senior at Timber Creek High School and a dedicated four-year member of AFJROTC. During this time she has been active throughout the unit serving as Deputy Group Commander. Her future plans after graduation are to serve in the United States Air Force, commissioning through ROTC or possibly enlisting.

**Cadet Haley Sanchez** has been a part of JROTC at Timber Creek High School for four years holding many different positions including Drill Team Commander and for the 24-25 School year, Group Commander. She plans on continuing her involvement in ROTC in college while attending the University of South Florida. “My passion is medicine; I plan to become a doctor in the U.S. Air Force and hope to be part of an Expeditionary Medical Support team, providing life-saving care in deployed environments.”

**Cadet Antonio Torre**, of West Orange High School, says, “Ever since I was a boy, I aspired to be the man who stands in the gap for what matters most. My purpose is to lead others with a servant's heart and live a life committed to duty, honor, and country. I am honored to receive this scholarship from our previous leaders to help equip the next. Your contributions to our country and sowing seeds into the future will better equip me to be commissioned as an infantry officer and, eventually, a Green Beret officer who will be a competent combat leader who leads by example.” Cadet Torre has been selected as a member of the Class of 2029, U.S. Military Academy at West Point where he plans on majoring in War Studies.

**Cadet Colonel Ethan Kirtley** is the Apopka JROTC Battalion Commanding Officer. He has been the Armed Regulation drill team Commander for the past two years. He is also a Chief in the Sea Cadets. Ethan is very active in Apopka's National Honor Society and the community. Ethan is set to join the United States Coast Guard after graduation.

**Cadet Colonel Magnuson Kallin** is a student at Seminole High School in Sanford Florida and the Corp Commander of AFJROTC Unit FL-872. He is a 4th Year cadet who holds the rank of Cadet Colonel leading a Cadet Wing of 257 cadets on 2 campuses. He has earned the Distinguished Cadet Award and the Air Force Association Award. He recently led his unit to an “Exceeds Standards” during our Headquarters inspection. In the summer of 2024, he was awarded the AFJROTC Flight Academy Scholarship, an intense 8-week program where he completed his Private Pilot's License. Cadet Kallin has a 3.8 GPA and has accumulated over 230 community service hours in AFJROTC alone. During his 4 years in AFJROTC he has been a member of the Raiders Physical Fitness Team, Captain of the Marksmanship Team, Joint Leadership Academic Bowl (JLAB) and the Color Guard. He is also a member of the schools Leadership Team. In March he earned an NROTC 4-year Scholarship and hopes to attend NROTC at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

**Cadet Colonel Fiona Ferrero** is a native of France and has lived here for about seven years. She is a dedicated member of the Ocoee HS FL-20064 Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC). She demonstrated leadership and service through involvement in Key Club and public service work with Senator Marco Rubio's office, assisting in legislative research and community outreach. Currently, she serves as the Deputy Group Commander in her JROTC Unit, where she actively contribute to mentorship, training, and unit operations. “I am committed to making a lasting impact through service, discipline, and excellence.”

**Cadet David Glen Peebles**, of West Orange High School, says, “My dream is to serve others before myself and defend our nation with the same excellence as the remarkable men and women who

came before me. I am incredibly grateful to the generous donors of the MOAA Scholarship Fund for their support. With their help, I am better equipped than ever to pursue my goal of serving as either a Special Tactics Officer in the United States Air Force or an Astronautical Engineer in the United States Space Force. Cadet Torre has been selected as a member of the Class of 2029, U.S. Air Force Academy.

**Cadet Colonel Sophie Costanza** is the Cadet Group Commander at Celebration High School. In this leadership role, she leads over 200 AFJROTC cadets across seven periods of instruction and all after school clubs and competitive teams. She is also the Commander of our Kitty Hawk Honor Society and Color Guard 2. She has been critical to many competition wins, to include back-to-back AFA State Drill Teams Championships, being named 10th in the Nation at the All-Service National Physical Fitness Competition in Daytona, numerous top awards at school meets throughout the state and most recently the overall winner of the Kowboy Roundup Drill and Physical Fitness Competition going up against 22 other schools. She is a dual enrolled student at Valencia College with a heavy AP and Honors course load background. Her other school activities include, yearbook, theater and Varsity Flag Football.

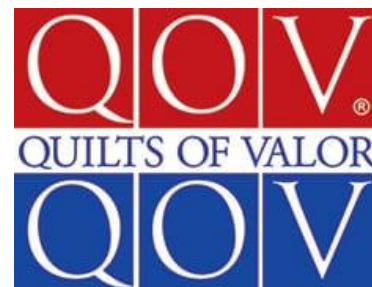
We are also in the process of presenting Leadership medals and certificates to Juniors in the 37 JROTC high school units in our catchment area and Leadership Medals to the outstanding cadets in the UCF ROTC program. Chapter members have attended most and made face-to-face presentations, representing MOAA. Thanks to Chapter President Lorraine Holland, Program coordinator Bob Brogan, Kent Miller, Charles Smith, Dean Ptaszynski, Randy Fiebrandt and Joe Hines. Many of the recipients of the Leadership Medals will serve on the JROTC Staff in Leadership Positions next year. A more complete report will appear in the next Focus.

*COL Bob Brogan, USA(Ret) and  
C/LTC Rylan Parker at Lyman HS  
on April 9<sup>th</sup>*



## **Central Florida Quilts of Valor**

The mission of Quilts of Valor is to bestow a universal symbol and token of thanks, solace, and remembrance to those who serve in harm's way to protect and defend our lives and freedoms. Quilts of Valor are made by the loving hands of countless volunteers who wish to thank those who have served and to honor their service and sacrifice. Quilts of Valor honors members of our active military and veterans by showing them how much we appreciate their sacrifice and service with a unique "Quilted Hugs of Gratitude". Quilts of Valor provide comfort, love and healing to those who have given so much. For questions, contact our local Quilt of Honor **Valerie Philon** at [davephilon@att.net](mailto:davephilon@att.net) Please review the qualifications below and nominate a deserving military member or veteran with the request form found at <https://www.qovf.org/>



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Examples are not limited to the following:

- Purple Heart Recipients
- Those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress
- Those with traumatic brain injuries
- Those dealing with the effects of Agent Orange
- Those who have served multiple tours

**Our Community Salutes Celebrated  
140 Recruits on April 16th Edgewater  
High School**



Our Community Salutes" (OCS) Orlando ceremony was April 16th at 7pm at Edgewater High School and recognized and celebrated our Central Florida (and surrounding areas) High School Seniors who have contracted and taken an oath with their local Recruiter to join the military. We had 500+ total attending, 140 recruits and their families, recruiters and VIP's. MOAA National helps promote OCS, and I've had the good fortune of helping with the event and attending the last two years. OCS connects High School Enlistees and their family members with the military community at large to become advocates and support them before they make their journey on active duty. By meeting members of the military community, the parents are armed with valuable information to seek out support if needed. I hosted a MOAA table and thoroughly enjoying talking with parents, new recruits, and recruiters. If you read the May MOAA magazine, pages 38-43 you will see my input to the OCS article on why this is a very special event to me! Hint: the military became my family after I enlisted in 1975, and now the veterans are my family!

**Law Offices of Hoyt & Bryan Free Virtual Veterans Earned Benefits  
May 14<sup>th</sup> 9:30 – 11:30**

For those of you that attend our monthly luncheons, you may remember congratulating CAPT (ret) Randy Bryan who recently retired from the Navy Reserves last year in the JAG Corps with 31 years of dedicated service. I've known Randy since 2004 when I met his Grandma who befriended my Grandma in the Lutheran Haven nursing home. Randy holds monthly free virtual informative sessions on various topics, and when he holds a **virtual session geared to our veterans**, I like to recommend any veteran or family member to attend to get the latest information about our veterans' benefits. Randy does not handle service-connected disability claims. An invitation from Randy: Are you a military veteran—or do you know someone who is? Many veterans aren't fully aware of the extensive benefits they've earned. Join us on May 14th at 9:30am for an informative session covering veteran medical benefits, service-connected disability compensation, non-service-connected pension program, and more. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to access the support and resources available to those who've served. Randy C. Bryan, J.D., B.C.S. Board Certified by the Florida Bar in Elder Law and Wills, Trusts and Estates Hoyt & Bryan, LLC, 254 Plaza Drive, Oviedo, FL: 32765 call 407-977-8080

Register at <https://hoytbryan.com> or click this link.

[Register Now](https://hoytbryan.com)

## **The Orlando VA Healthcare System (OVAHCS) Memorial Day Ceremony on Friday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00**

The Orlando VA Healthcare System (OVAHCS) will host a Memorial Day ceremony on Friday, May 23 at 10 a.m. to honor and remember the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our Nation. The event will take place at the amphitheater located at the rear entrance of the Orlando VA Medical Center in Lake Nona.

Cindy VanBibber, Director of Cape Canaveral National Cemetery, will serve as the keynote speaker. A proud U.S. Army Veteran, VanBibber brings more than 25 years of combined military and federal service to her role. She has dedicated her career to ensuring Veterans and their families receive the honor and respect they deserve, particularly in their final resting place. Her leadership at Cape Canaveral National Cemetery has helped uphold the NCA's sacred mission of memorializing those who served with dignity and reverence.



Orlando VA Director/CEO, Timothy J. Cooke emphasized the importance of community remembrance and Veteran support. “Memorial Day is a time for reflection and gratitude,” said Cooke. “This ceremony is a solemn reminder of the cost of freedom and an opportunity for our community to come together in honor of those who gave all.”

### **Event Details:**

- **Date/Time:** Friday, May 23 at 10 a.m.
- **Location:** Amphitheater at the rear entrance of the Orlando VA Medical Center, Lake Nona, Orlando, Fla.
- **RSVP Requested:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TQG5VTL>
- **Parking:** Available in the east and west parking garages, as well as the south parking lot near the emergency department

Attendees are asked not to park in the Community Living Center or Domiciliary parking areas. Golf cart shuttles will be available to assist guests to and from the event location.

## **MOAA 2025 Federal Legislative Priorities for Veterans, Military & Families**

MOAA has five issues for members to bring to lawmakers, this month and beyond.

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1. Improving unaccompanied housing to support readiness and quality of life | *Write Your Lawmakers Today*
2. Advancing the report Ending the Wait for Toxic Exposed Veterans to ensure timely delivery of earned benefits | *Write Your Lawmakers Today*
3. Passing the Military Spouse Hiring Act to expand employment opportunities
4. Enhancing stability and accountability in the military health system | *Share Your Story With MOAA*
5. Improving caregiving support for families of veterans | *Write Your Lawmakers Today*

MOAA combines the voices of active, reserve, retired and former officers - as well as their spouses and survivors - on behalf of the entire military community. If you aren't receiving MOAA.org email updates, [sign up for The MOAA Newsletter](#). You can choose how often you want to hear receive emails as well as which topics are included in your newsletter.

### **How Can Your Voice Be Heard to Help Advocacy in Action (AiA)?**

Please click on the following link [takeaction.moaa.org](https://takeaction.moaa.org)

**Your support for these efforts is crucial. Here's how to be an effective advocate:**

1. Email your legislators with a MOAA-suggested message.  
Visit [takeaction.moaa.org](https://takeaction.moaa.org) to find pre-written emails outlining MOAA's advocacy positions. Enter your ZIP code, and they'll be delivered right to your senators and representative. Some members ask us whether these pre-written messages are effective; our experience says yes. Legislative staffers know a constituent who takes the time to send a message is one who will vote in November.
2. Make a phone call.  
Call (866) 272-MOAA (6622), MOAA's toll-free line to the U.S. Capitol switchboard, to be connected with your legislators' offices. Congressional staff members track constituent calls, and elected officials pay close attention. You can find talking points at [takeaction.moaa.org](https://takeaction.moaa.org).

### **Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) Newsletter Available:**

FDVA's latest monthly email subscription newsletter, 'Forward March' is out (click) **April 2025 Edition of the Forward March Veterans' Newsletter** and launched its inaugural edition in January 2020 and the subscriber base has grown to 64,000 in the latest issue. No-cost subscriptions are available on website [www.FloridaVets.org](https://www.FloridaVets.org)

If you seek no-cost advice or counseling regarding Veterans' issues, please contact one of our State Veterans' Service Officer at (727) 319-7440 or via email at [fdva.vso@fdva.fl.gov](mailto:fdva.vso@fdva.fl.gov). Our team of Hope Navigators is also hard at work connecting Veterans and their families with information and resources to improve their quality of life. Contact one of our Hope Navigators today at [HopeNavigators@fdva.fl.gov](mailto:HopeNavigators@fdva.fl.gov) or call (833) GET-HOPE.

You can also learn more about Veterans' issues by following us on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and LinkedIn. A free Mobile App is also available by visiting <https://app.floridavets.org>.

In addition, the 2025 edition of the *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide* is now available in online and hardcopy. FDVA is working together to ensure a positive future for Florida Veterans and

their families and ensures the Sunshine State continues to be the Nation's premier State for Veterans, their families and survivors. They are honored to serve you.

<https://www.flipsnack.com/qcausamagazine/fdva-benefits-guide-2025/full-view.html>

State legislators are in Tallahassee considering important legislation and crafting a balanced budget during the final weeks of the 2025 Florida Legislative Session. I'm confident our agency's budget will be voted on favorably and several pieces of key Veteran-related legislation will make it to a final floor vote. We'll have a comprehensive update in the May issue of the FDVA newsletter. In the meantime, you can find the status of Veteran-related legislation in the current session by visiting our website at <https://floridavets.org> and clicking on "Veteran Legislation."

## **Help Bring our Florida Vietnam Veterans" Enduring Spirit" to the Forefront!**

I present a challenge to all who read this: **Florida is short signing up 315 Florida Vietnam Veterans to overtake New York to become the #1 State in the Nation for Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)!** *The Florida State VVA website is: [www.vvafsc.org](http://www.vvafsc.org) You don't have to be a Vietnam Veteran to sign-up for the bi-weekly Florida E-Recon newsletter to read current and past issues, and you can sign-up right from the website. The site identifies there are 30 Florida VVA Chapters, and the state has 6,003 members and 883 Auxiliary members. The National VVA website is [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org). Please help recruit fellow Floridian Vietnam Veterans in Florida and lets kick New York to the number 2 slot in the Nation for Vietnam Veterans!!!!*

At a recent VVA Florida State Council in Lake Mary I had the good fortune of hearing and meeting the National President of VVA Jack McManus. He sums up exactly why veterans like me that have come after Vietnam Veterans owe a debt of gratitude we could never repay: "We have changed the way veterans are treated by our country. If those changes, especially the respect and dignity for sacrificing in service to the nation, are to be forever, then the vestiges of the VVA spirit must endure. I really believe that VVA has a future. That future will continue after we move on down our own lifetime's road. It is that intangible thing in the hearts and souls of every proud VVA and AVVA member. It's our VVA spirit."

Membership to VVA is open to U.S. military veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in Vietnam between November 1, 1955, and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between August 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975. This is by far the best bang for your buck for life membership in a Veteran Service Organization.

For a **one-time payment of \$50 for a LIFE membership**, the VVA application website: <https://vva.org/who-we-are/membership-2/>

## **Membership Includes**

A FREE subscription to our award-winning magazine, *The VVA Veteran* provides

- Updates on issues and legislation affecting veterans, as well as unique articles on the people, places and history of the Vietnam experience
- Notices of special events
- Help connecting with other veterans

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- Assistance with questions related to VA Claims

For those of you that are looking for a meaningful conference with fellow veterans, look no further than the VVA National Convention in New Orleans, Aug 5-9 2025 Go to the Convention website for the most up-to-date information: <https://conference.vva.org/>

## **Military Spouse Appreciation Day** **May 9th 2025**

National Military Spouse Appreciation Day is a presidentially approved holiday and is celebrated on the Friday before Mother's Day in May. This year it will be observed on Saturday, May 9th, 2025. "A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it." -- George A. Moore

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength. Loving someone deeply gives you courage." -- Lao Tzu



**May is Military Appreciation Month**, a time to pause and reflect on the service and sacrifice of those who have served our country. Military Appreciation Month is also a time to acknowledge those who serve alongside veterans. The spouses, partners, and children of service members carry the weight of long absences, emotional distance, and silent struggles. Caring for the whole family is how we truly honor their service

**The Children of Fallen Patriots Day on May 13<sup>th</sup>** salutes the sacrifice of military children who have lost a parent in the service to our country. This day helps to raise awareness of the sacrifices and struggles children must endure in the wake of their parents' death. The numbers are staggering and in the past 25 years, more than 15,000 children have lost parents in military conflict. This date reminds us to applaud their resilience and strength and show appreciation for the young people whose lives were forever changed. May 13th was selected as the date of observance due to being the day Arlington National Cemetery was established in 1864. Note: Beginning May 7, 2025, individuals over the age of 18 who enter Arlington National Cemetery **in a vehicle** should be prepared to present a REAL ID at the security check point.

## **What is Memorial Day and why do we honor it?**

The origins of the holiday can be traced back to local observances for soldiers with neglected gravesites during the Civil War.

The first observance of what would become Memorial Day, some historians think, took place in Charleston, S.C., at the site of a horse racing track that Confederates had turned into a prison holding Union prisoners. Blacks in the city organized a burial of deceased Union prisoners and built a fence around the site, Yale historian David Blight wrote in The New York Times in 2011.





Then on May 1, 1865, they held an event there including a parade – Blacks who fought in the Civil War participated – spiritual readings and songs, and picnicking. A commemorative marker was erected there in 2010.

One of the first Decoration Days was held in Columbus, Mississippi, on April 25, 1866, by women who decorated graves of Confederate soldiers who perished in the battle at Shiloh with flowers.

On May 5, 1868, three years after the end of the Civil War, the tradition of placing flowers on veterans' graves was continued by the establishment of Decoration Day by an organization of Union veterans, the Grand Army of the Republic.

General Ulysses S. Grant presided over the first large observance, a crowd of about 5,000 people, at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia on May 30, 1873. The orphaned children of soldiers and sailors killed during the war placed flowers and small American flags atop both Union and Confederate graves throughout the entire cemetery. This tradition continues to thrive in cemeteries of all sizes across the country.

Until World War I, Civil War soldiers were solely honored on this holiday. Now, all Americans who've served are observed.

## What REAL ID Rules Mean for Military-Connected Travelers

**By: Kevin Lilley**

All DoD-issued identification – to include IDs with indefinite expiration dates – will remain valid for airline travel after new REAL ID compliance rules take effect May 7, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials confirmed with MOAA.

DoD IDs, including those issued to dependents, are [on the official TSA list of acceptable identification](#) “and will still be an acceptable form of ID following the implementation of REAL ID,” an official said via email. VA-issued [Veteran Health Identification Cards](#) (VHICs) are also on the approved list.

MOAA has fielded concerns from members who have encountered long delays or other challenges when using DoD-issued IDs at airports. Military.com first reported on issues faced by holders of IDs with [“INDEF” expiration dates](#) in 2024; at the time, TSA reportedly was considering removing “INDEF” IDs from the approved list because of issues with screening technology.

Asked what a military-connected traveler should do if their ID card is rejected, a TSA spokesman told MOAA via email that “[a] military ID should not be rejected, as it’s an acceptable form of ID. If this does happen, they should ask for a Supervisory Transportation Security Officer (STSO).”

For more about the REAL ID changeover, travelers can:

- [Access Florida-specific guidelines.](#)
- Get [answers to frequently asked questions](#) about the REAL ID process.

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- Contact [TSA Customer Service](#).

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