

Excerpts from
“Veterans Helping Veterans” Radio Show, 2/9/2021

MOAA

MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization.

With more than 350,000 members from every branch of service - including active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, former officers, and their families – MOAA is a powerful force speaking for a strong national defense and represents the interests of military officers at every stage of their careers. We are the leading voice on compensation and benefit matters for all members of the military community.

MOAA was founded in 1929. The first leaders of the association hoped that, by joining together, they could provide assistance and advice to other military officers.

By the beginning of World War II, MOAA's leaders realized that they needed to reorganize and expand to become an effective force on behalf of their members. MOAA moved to Washington, D.C., in 1944 with a membership of 2,600.

The association changed its name from The Retired Officers Association (TROA) to the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) in 2003. Through an act of Congress in 2009, MOAA was granted a federal charter.

This gave MOAA an expression of congressional support for all of the group's activities as a veterans service organization. It also enabled all state-level MOAA affiliates to represent

veterans on governor-level veterans advisory councils. At the Chapter level, we interface with County and City elected officials on legislative issues which impact veterans. Thru the Veterans Council, we enjoy a strong working relationship with Rob Medina, who is Congressman Bill Posey's staff representative to Indian River and Brevard Counties.

Today, MOAA is the country's largest military officers' association. MOAA's purpose also has grown to include career transition assistance, military benefits counseling, educational assistance to children of military families (to include enlisted), and strong involvement in military professionalism activities.

Membership is open to active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the uniformed services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Memberships also are available for surviving spouses of deceased officers.

Between MOAA National and the local Chapters, are state councils; for us, the Florida Council of Chapters. The Council serves 42 Chapters from the Florida Panhandle to the Florida Keys by means of Council officers' visits, a Council newsletter, an electronic e-mail net and Web Site, quarterly Board meetings, annual Leadership Seminar, and an annual Convention. The Council provides significant support to our Chapter Officers and Board on information management, policies and procedures, and best practices.

Membership beyond the national level...in a local chapter...in our area the Indian River Chapter... provides members many additional opportunities to serve the local community. There are over 15,000 veterans in Indian River County!

OUR CHAPTER, IRC MOAA

The motto of MOAA is “Never Stop Serving,” and many of our Chapter members are in the “give back” stage of life. By joining our Chapter, members can take their past military service, and the sense of camaraderie brought on by shared experiences, to another level. We currently have 110 members, to include 13 surviving spouses.

Our Chapter provides direct financial support to the local Gold Star Mothers Chapter, the Space Coast Honor Flight, scholarships for deserving students in our county, and the Veterans Council of Indian River County. Many of our members continue their “officership” service through active leadership roles in the Veterans Council as well, serving as board members, Council officers, and directors of Council programs.

These programs include Veterans Helping Veterans, which assists local veterans with home repairs, and, Vets in the Classroom, providing civics classes to local elementary school children. Chapter members also play key roles in the annual Veterans Council sponsored Memorial Day and Veterans Day observances on Veteran’s Island. Chapter members retired LTC Curtis Holden and retired COL Patty Ryan were the speakers for the 2019 Veterans Day ceremonies in Vero Beach and Sebastian.

If you have fond memories of shared experiences with fellow officers from your active-duty days, Chapter membership provides a great opportunity for camaraderie with a purpose.

Chapter luncheon meetings feature distinguished speakers to inform and entertain, and an opportunity to connect with other members with similar backgrounds and interests.

Recent speakers include Ralph Turner, USA retired, COO of the Indian River Cleveland Clinic, retired Navy Captain and former NASA astronaut Winston Scott, and LTG (retired) Robert Caslen, former Superintendent of West Point, former Commissioner of Baseball Fay Vincent, and Vero Beach City Planner Jason Jeffries.

The MOAA National magazine, and the newsletters and websites of both MOAA National and our Chapter (find us at “Indian River Chapter Military Officers Association of America”), provide our members with the latest information on local, state, and national issues, changes to military benefits, and articles about members, speakers, interesting places and military history.

Chapter funding is primarily through Member dues and donations. Other fundraising activities have been of recent restricted by COVID. A notable exception was a highly successful and creative auction conducted as part of our virtual annual meeting and Christmas party via Zoom. Also noteworthy, our Chapter was awarded two \$5000 grants from MOAA National last year, all of which we used to support the veteran assistance programs of the Veterans Council. We also contributed \$1000 to the Vero Beach Air Show, and \$3000 to Indian River State College for veteran related scholarships.

Our Chapter was awarded the Chapter Level of Excellence Award by MOAA National for 2018 and 2019. We hope to receive this award for 2020 as well. Every year, Chapters compete to receive the Level of Excellence Award. This award is based on the Chapter’s calendar year programs and events.

Joining MOAA National and our local Chapter is simple and inexpensive...\$78 per year for membership in both. For details about becoming a member, call or text Carroll Oates at 954-494-

8742, or Jim DiMarzo at 772-713-9898. Or visit our Chapter website at ircmoaa.org.

OUR VETERANS SERVICE PARTNERS

Veterans Council of Indian River County

Our MOAA Chapter is one of 25 local veterans service organizations affiliated with the Veterans Council....

The American Legion, VFW, Vero Beach Vets, Vietnam Vets, Disabled Vets, Marine Corps League, Navy League, the Seal Museum, to name a few.

The Veterans Council coordinates our efforts and resources to optimize our combined impact on the 15,000-veteran population of Indian River County.

Many of our chapter members fill active leadership roles in the Veterans Council, serving as board members, Council officers, and directors of Council programs.

Our Chapter also provides uniformed retired officers to present awards at local Junior ROTC units.

To learn more about services provided by the Vets Council, go to their website at www.veteranscouncilirc.org and select "SERVICES." A vet can initiate an inquiry right on the website by selecting "CONTACT." Or call the Council at 772-410-5820.

Gold Star Mothers

American Gold Star Mothers, is a private, nonprofit organization of American mothers who lost sons or daughters in service of the United States Armed Forces.

It was originally formed in 1928 for mothers of those lost in World War I. Its name came from the custom of families of servicemen

to hang a banner called a service flag in the windows of their homes. The service flag had a star for each family member in the Armed Forces.

Living servicemen were represented by a blue star, and those who had lost their lives in combat were represented by a gold star.

Today, membership in the organization is open to any mother who is a U.S. citizen or legal resident, and has lost a son or daughter in active service in the U.S. military. This is regardless of the place or time of the military service, regardless of whether the circumstances of death involved hostile conflict or not, and includes mothers of those missing in action. In the past few years, membership has expanded to mothers who's loved one sought help for PTSD, but died by suicide from the battle within.

The Indian River County chapter of the Gold Star Mothers was founded by Michelle Dale, whose son, Dale Kridlo, was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2010. Michelle is an Honorary Affiliate Member of our MOAA Chapter. Last year we contributed \$750 to the Gold Star Mothers to help fund their 2nd Annual Walk-A-Thon for Military/Veteran Suicide Awareness.

The Honor Flights

In our area the flights are conducted by the Space Coast Honor Flight. Their mission is to take World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam Veterans to visit their War Memorials in Washington D.C. The flights represent a unique opportunity to show our gratitude to these heroes who gave so much to ensure the freedoms we have today. Everything is provided for the veteran at no cost to them...air fare, ground transportation, and meals, and the trip is done in one very long day. To enhance the experience each Veteran is paired with a Guardian Escort, who is

sometimes a family member, and has a wheelchair available. Traveling with the vets are several staff members to include a medical doctor and videographer.

Our Chapter provides an annual \$400 grant to the Space Coast Honor Flight to fund the cost for a Guardian Escort, who must pay his or her own way.

NextGen

The Next Generation Veterans of Indian River County is a group of local veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Any vet, reservist, guardsman or active-duty service member who has served after 1990 is considered a NextGen vet. Their mission is to create a network for younger vets, provide a venue for social support, combat misconceptions about returning vets, and represent their generation by positively engaging the community. NextGen has commissioned a monumental sculpture to be installed near the entrance to Veterans Memorial Island titled "Words From War." They realized there are few monuments nationwide representing our men and women who have, and still are, fighting the longest war in US history. They are committed to correcting that situation. The monument was created by renowned sculptor Ross Power. Over 48,000 pounds of precision cast concrete replicate T-Walls, a symbol of safety known to all desert combat veterans. Forty-eight words are boldly cast into the three walls, words that come directly from the Iraq/Afghanistan combat vets who engaged in deeply personal interviews with the artist.

We look forward to participating in the dedication ceremony, which is projected for spring 2021. Our Chapter contributed \$1000 last year to help fund the project.

The Work War I Monument

WWI, 1914-1918, The Great War, the war to end all wars, the first modern war, ranks among the deadliest conflicts in human history:

20 Million Deaths and 21 million Wounded. Deaths included 9 million Military and over 10 million Civilians. US deaths totaled 117,000, 8 of them from our local area. Compare that to 59,000 in the Vietnam War.

The man who created Veterans Memorial Island, Mr. Alex MacWilliam, was a WWI veteran, but there is not yet a memorial to his war on the Island. Our Chapter, in conjunction with the Marine Corps League, intends to fix that. The project is in the preliminary planning stage. Our target date to dedicate the new monument on Veterans Island is Nov 11, 2021, Veterans Day.