

Coastal Carolina Clarion Newsletter

August 2020 issue



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President's Message – Five Star Level of Excellence Award

I am proud to report that our Chapter – Coastal Carolina is the recipient of the [Five Star Level of Excellence Award](#) (LOE) for 2019. Congratulations to our Immediate Past President, Marie Senzig and to our Board for all their efforts. Thank you to the LOE team comprised of Mike Kennedy, Marie Senzig and Mark Sandvigen, who compiled and composed 2019 Chapter accomplishments and initiatives. Mark additionally was responsible for organizing the information, editing, and presenting to MOAA National.

Our Board is diligently working to incorporate Pitt and Lenoir Counties into our Chapter. Of importance are several ongoing initiatives that we support, such as the ROTC and JROTC programs, Scholarships, and Veteran assistance. There are opportunities to increase our Chapter membership in these two counties as well. We are all recruiters, so if you are aware of any officers who might benefit with a MOAA membership and be interested in joining our Chapter, please have them contact Mike Kennedy, 1st Vice President.

The North Carolina State Meeting was conducted virtually on August 15th. There were many important topics covered in the meeting, however, of note, the MOAA State and local Chapter Legislative Liaisons continue to work with State and National Legislative and Veterans Affairs to advocate key legislation that affects our active and retired military. Mark Sandvigen, who is our Chapter's Legislative Liaison will cover some of the information in more detail in this newsletter.

Coastal Carolina Chapter – Board of Directors currently has a Director opening. If there is an interest to serve, please contact me to discuss.

Stay well and hopefully soon we will all be able to arrange for a Dinner or Luncheon Social.

Military Order of the Purple Heart - August 7, 2020 was Purple Heart Day. One of our members, Capt. Kevin Hynes, USAF was featured along with two other Vietnam Veterans in a MOAA inspired tribute to these Purple Heart recipients. Kevin was wounded in a rocket attack and is credited with the title of the article and film, "It's Not an Award You Want to Get". You can read the article on [MOAA's webpage](#) and there is a link to the film as well.

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Voting - This election year will be like no other you have ever experienced. Many of the people we depend on to keep our democracy vibrant and strong will opt-out of voting for fear of the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19). Here are some facts to chew on:

- 17,000 registered voters in Craven County, 13,000 of which have NEVER voted!
- In March 2020, your general election ballot was determined by 3% of the registered voters.
- Many poll workers are baby-boomers and have decided to not to volunteer for fear of contagion, putting voting precincts in jeopardy.

- **Registration** – If you are a new resident of North Carolina, or have never voted, you can register and find your precinct on the [Craven County's Voter Information page](#). If you are a registered voter, but need to update your information, many voter registration services are on the [DMV website](#).
- **Absentee Voting** - You are getting this electronic newsletter because you are tech-savvy. If you decide to vote "Absentee", go online to the [Craven County Board of Elections](#) and order your Absentee ballot now.

If you know someone who is NOT computer savvy and would like to vote, you can assist them in obtaining a ballot using the Absentee Ballot request form. To ensure voter integrity, just identify yourself in Section 7 of the request form and you will have ensured that everyone is represented. You can either fill this form out using your computer or print it out and fill it in by hand. Either way, Never Stop Serving!

You will be able to track your absentee ballot and whether it was processed this year through [BallotTrax](#). Once the voting process has been activated, BallotTrax will come online and you can monitor your ballot either online or through your smart phone.

- **Early Voting** – North Carolina State law provides a polling place for every 20,000 people in our county, we have five locations. In addition, Craven County will keep the polls open on the weekends for 17 days of early voting. Here are dates and times you can use:

General Election – Tuesday, November 3, 2020

One-Stop Voting (Early-Voting – Dates and Times)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Starts Thurs. Oct. 15 | Ends Sat. Oct. 31 |
| • Monday-Friday | 8 am – 7:30 pm |
| • Sunday, Oct. 18 | 9:30 am – 7:30 pm |
| • Saturday, Oct. 24 | 8 am – 7:30 pm |
| • Saturday, Oct. 31 | 8 am - 3 pm |

Closed Sun. Oct. 17 and Closed Sat. Oct. 25

LOCATIONS

1. **New Bern - Board of Elections, 406 Craven St, New Bern 28560**
2. **New Bern - Berne Square, 2684 ML King, Jr Blvd, New Bern 28562**
3. **Cove City - Cove City Fire Dept, 425 S Main St. 28523**
4. **Vanceboro - Vanceboro Fire Dept, 375 NC Hwy 43 28586**
5. **Havelock - New Beginnings Ministry of Faith, 30 Park Lane, Havelock 28532**

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- **General Election** – If you plan on voting on November 3rd, please know that precinct volunteers have been trained to maintain social distancing, deep cleaning of the voting kiosks after each voter, and will be appropriately attired (masks, etc.) to ensure your safety. Voting this year will be a slower than usual process so please be patient.
- **Final Item** – If you do not feel comfortable helping someone register, or get an absentee ballot, call me and I will assist them. **Contact: Mark Sandvigen, (252) 631-2932, or on my cell (703) 434-0834.**

Census - The census can shape many different aspects of our community. The most important, the U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 2, states that census results determine how many seats in the House of Representatives each State gets. North Carolina is in jeopardy of losing a Congressional seat in the lower house (House of Representatives). If everyone responds, we stand a chance of gaining a seat! To date, NC has only 64% of the census forms filled out. Do your part if you have not done so already by responding to and filling out the [Census Form](#). **The Deadline is September 30, 2020.**

Covid-19 rumor-mill – It is unfortunate that there is so much inaccurate information being passed around during the lock-down. We have all had our email boxes cluttered up with the latest rumor or unsubstantiated finding. I would encourage everyone to become their own sleuth and chase down and verify the last worst thing that people have repeated to you. As an Admiral I worked for once told me, "The first report is 'always' wrong."

For example – MumFest is cancelled, MumFest has moved to Lawson Creek Park, there will be no exhibitors, no entertainment, blah blah blah. Here it is straight from Karen Genua of SwissBear:



SwissBear is happy to announce a safely re-imagined MumFest, now appropriately renamed MumFeast!

This month-long weekends only event will be an expansion of Downtown New Bern's very successful Friday and Saturday evenings dining in the streets. Downtown streets will close at 5pm Fridays and remain closed through 9:30pm Saturdays so participating restaurants can provide "Feasting in the Streets". Stores will have sidewalk and street displays, and a handful (6-8) of artisans will be safely positioned in the streets each weekend as well.

One of the most talked about components from 2019 will be here to stay -- the mum arch and maze in Union Point Park! Not only will you be able to walk through the maze and take pictures by the arch, but downtown streets will be decorated with mums as they have for the past five years. There will be local live music to enjoy outside to keep a highlight of prior years' safely in place.

If you are unable or uncomfortable attending, you can still enjoy some of your best-loved seasonal foods by taking advantage of our curbside pickup on South Front Street. A curated selection of "festival-style" food will be available at the lot on the corner of South Front and Craven each weekend. Favorites like funnel cake, fried Oreos, sausage sandwiches, tacos and more will be available. And with curbside pickup you can take your order home or enjoy it in one of our beautiful City parks.

MumFeast! will be held on Middle, Pollock and Craven streets weekends in October. Join us in Downtown New Bern as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Main Street and MumFest during the month of October with the safely re-imagined

Go out and have some fun!

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CCMOAA Events - In the same spirit as MumFeast, the CCMOAA Board is also looking to reimagine both our fund-raising events such as Wreaths Across America, and our Toys for Tots charity. Discussions on organizing our activity and event schedules have been both creative and clever. We are fielding our ideas with organizers and host locations to ensure safe and enjoyable events so please stay tuned.

Legislative Actions – This year like no other, will find the National Defense Authorization Act being used like a piggy bank to off-set the stimulus packages the US Congress passed due to the flu virus. MOAA does a terrific job of meeting with the respective congressional committees, doing the research Congress needs for effective decisions, and communicating directly with us. Their efforts are more effective if they are backed by our collective voices. During the lock-down, take a few minutes to go to the [Advocacy Page](#) and send in the pre-scripted messages to your representatives. These issues are important as they affect you and your benefits, but those currently serving as well.

Senate Passes NDAA Amendment to Cover Additional Agent Orange Presumptives

By: Cory Titus

The Senate passed an amendment to its version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Wednesday that would add three medical conditions to [the list of Agent Orange presumptives](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/) (<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/>), a MOAA-supported move that would expand benefits to tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans.

The amendment, introduced by Sen. Tester (D-Mont.) would add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinson's-like symptoms to the list. It passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 94-6.

The 32 military and veterans organizations in support of this amendment [sent a letter last week](#) to Senate and House leadership voicing the need to care for these veterans. These organizations were supported by MOAA's grassroots efforts, which included thousands of messages sent in support.

Attention now turns back to the House, where an identical amendment was proposed in a bipartisan fashion by Reps. Josh Harder (D-Calif.) and Pete Stauber (R-Minn.), along with 15 other cosponsors. That measure did not make it out of the House Rules Committee, as it did not meet certain technical criteria for a floor vote. However, with the provision included in the Senate's version, the House Rules Committee requirements are no longer applicable, and there is another opportunity to include this provision in the final bill. With the House version of the NDAA recently passed and the Senate's final vote imminent, the next step is for the chambers to work out differences in the NDAA conference.

File Your Taxes ... Even If You Can't Pay

By: Vera Wilson

July 15 was Tax Day 2020. As we all know, it was extended from the usual April 15 deadline because of the pandemic. Unfortunately, a not-so-small number of us let the deadline pass without taking any action at all. I get it — you know you owe money that you can't pay, so rather than file and face the ugly truth, you evade it by not filing at all. But here's the problem: If you don't file, there's a late-filing penalty. It's usually a monstrous 5% of the taxes owed for each month (or part of a month) that your return is late, up to five months. If your return is over 60 days late, the minimum penalty is the smaller of \$435 or 100% of the tax owed. The maximum penalty is 25% of the unpaid tax. Compare that to the less costly late payment penalty, which is only .5% of the taxes owed for each month (or part of a month) that return is late. The rate increases to 1% after the IRS issues a final notice of intent to levy or seize property. The maximum penalty is 25% of the unpaid tax.

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So let's recap. Say you owe \$2,000 and you file and pay four months out. You'll owe \$435 for *filing* late, but you'll only owe \$40 for *paying* late (plus interest). The definite takeaway is to file as soon as possible, even if you can't pay. Don't let incomplete information keep you from filing — you can always file an amended return. If you wait too long, the IRS will file a substitute return for you and send you a tax bill, which is usually higher than if you had prepared your taxes yourself.

Penalty relief is available. [Check out the IRS website for reasons penalties can be waived \(https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/penalty-relief\)](https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/penalty-relief). Interest on the amount due will be charged until you pay (rates vary over time), and it's rarely waived. Servicemembers may qualify for an extension to file and pay based on their military status. You must notify the IRS that your ability to pay has been materially affected by your military service. Don't forget to take into account the penalties associated with not filing or paying your state-level taxes. Sure you're due a refund? No late filing penalties apply, so take your time, but not too much. You have three years from the due date to file.

Five Facts About REACH, the VA's New Anti-Suicide Effort

By: Tony Lombardo

The White House and the VA launched a new national anti-suicide campaign this month with an emphasis on supporting veterans.

The REACH campaign is part of PREVENTS, the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicides, a three-year effort President Donald Trump created by executive order in March 2019. MOAA supports PREVENTS, and we called it a "much-needed call to action" in [testimony delivered in Congress](#) earlier this year. Here's what you need to know about the new campaign:

1. What is REACH? It's both an awareness campaign and a call to action – and not just for veterans. [VA states](#) the mission is "to educate all Americans that suicide is preventable and to encourage them to REACH to those in need to provide hope. It also encourages people who are hurting to REACH to find help."

2. Who is leading the charge? The president's executive order created the PREVENTS Task Force, which includes leadership from VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. Its lead ambassador is Karen Pence, wife of Vice President Mike Pence and mother of a Marine Corps officer.

"We owe it to [veterans] and all Americans to play a critical role in preventing suicide," Pence said in a PREVENTS webinar July 8. "We're facing an epidemic of suicide right now."

3. What do the numbers say? Despite years of suicide prevention efforts across DoD, the data reveal a sustained challenge that needs more research and new solutions.

- On average, 132 Americans die by suicide each day, accounting for 47,173 suicide deaths in 2017.
- The number of veteran suicides exceeded 6,000 each year from 2008-2017.
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death among all ages and the second leading cause of death among those ages 10-34 in the United States.

4. Has COVID-19 affected efforts? If anything, the campaign is well-timed. A PREVENTS Roadmap summary released in June notes, "The long-term psychological stress resulting from the pandemic and the massive disruption to our mental health delivery system threatened the mental health of those already vulnerable and increased the likelihood that many more Americans would suffer — resulting in a possible increase in deaths by suicide."

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5. How can you get involved? Visit the REACH website, [wearewithinreach.net](https://www.wearewithinreach.net/) (<https://www.wearewithinreach.net/>). There you can sign up for campaign updates. You're encouraged to use the hashtag #REACHnow to "tell your network, it's time to REACH to prevent suicide."