

Coastal Carolina Clarion Newsletter

June 2020 issue



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President's Message: Proposed Expansion of Coastal Carolina MOAA

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, our Chapter Board still maintains a high level of activity. We remain in contact via email, text and phone to discuss ongoing Chapter initiatives. We met virtually on June 9th to discuss important planning for the remainder of the calendar year and our next Board meeting is scheduled for August 13th.

Of note, the next MOAA State meeting is scheduled for August 15th. The format, in person or virtual is still pending the governor's guidance. Prior to this meeting, I will be representing the Board's questions to the NC State Leadership – what questions you ask? Due to the active involvement of CCMOAA in Eastern NC, we have been asked to consider expanding our chapter to absorb the following counties: Green, Lenoir, and Pitt. There are a lot of details to work through before accepting or declining this request. We will not do this in a vacuum, but will ensure that you, our membership, are kept informed at each step of the negotiations.

We are hopeful that we will be able to resume our Chapter Social Dinners / Luncheons in the Fall. Stand by. I hope everyone is healthy and as mentioned in previous newsletters, please let us know if any of our members and veterans need assistance.

Recruitment:

Congratulations to our First Vice President, Mike Kennedy on his laser-like focus on our chapter's recruitment efforts. Based on Mike's work done with the committee module, we have been awarded \$50 from NC State MOAA and \$50 from National MOAA for achieving 100% membership for both National and our local chapter. These monies will be put aside for our Student Scholarship program for 2021.

Chapter Events: Summer, Fall, Winter Dinners / Luncheons Prospective Schedules

Many thanks to our Second Vice, Randy Bogle, for keeping an eye on all things social. Based on his report to the Board, we will delay any further event discussions until the August Meeting. Without a full understanding of the Governor's roll-out of Phase III of the viral response, there are too many unknowns. Items that are a part of what makes MOAA and our chapter special will be revisited once we can get together, such as, installations/introductions of officers, honor our awardees, present our new chapter awards, and provide you with chapter updates.

Scholarships:

Our thanks to Gail Bateman, the Scholarship Selection Committee, and you – our generous members. Once again, you have stepped up and provided funding for, what can only be considered - a banner scholarship year! As your Board of Directors, we have had to undertake several work-arounds on your behalf. We mailed to the five scholarship recipients their \$1000 dollar checks and MOAA scholarship certificates. In addition, we enclosed a heartfelt letter of apology for the dinner cancellation noting that something as important as their award had to be handled through the mail and without ceremony. Like the Brooklyn Dodgers motto of old, "Wait till Next Year".

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Legislative Action:

In Clarion Newsletters in the past, we have presented to you the ramifications of the 2017 National Defense Appropriations Act (DCAA), most especially the drawdown in medical billet reductions and military treatment facility (MTF) reorganization. I am pleased to report that our efforts along with MOAA chapters nationwide sent 20,808 calls to action to the members of Congress, we conducted 286 virtual VSTH Meetings which is 53% percent of the seats—an impressive accomplishment with everything going on. Between these efforts and phone calls or direct emails we reached all of the 535 voting members of congress. So...

With the attention of Congress, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, the Hon. Thomas McCaffery, announced during a June 11 press call that MTF restructuring will be delayed for months. He cited the Defense Health Agency's work on the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as instability in TRICARE provider networks, as reasons for the slow down. He said medical billet reductions are also likely to be impacted.

Our efforts continue to make a difference to both our active duty and retired communities.

Make Your Voice Heard: Call, Write, and Post to Preserve the Military Health Care Benefit

By: Kevin Lilley

Thousands of supporters have used MOAA's Legislative Action Center (<http://takeaction.moaa.org/app/write-a-letter?0&engagementId=507024>) to ask their lawmakers to preserve the military health care benefit. This Virtual Storm sends a clear message to our leaders, but MOAA members and others can emphasize the importance of this issue by reaching out in other ways. "COVID-19 limits our in-office time with these legislators, but that doesn't mean we should avoid direct communication," said Col. Dan Merry, USAF (Ret), MOAA's vice president for government relations. "Lawmakers know their constituents have a vested interest in issues when they take the time to engage with their offices personally. Your lawmaker needs to know how important this care is to you and your family. That can start with a simple phone call."

The Legislative Action Center also provides easy access to phone numbers for representatives; talking points to engage staffers or the lawmakers themselves on what they can do to stop medical billet reductions and military treatment facility (MTF) reorganization; and a brief feedback section to inform MOAA of your interaction.

Why take the extra time? Re-evaluating military medical reforms in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic will strengthen your earned benefit and ensure continued access to high-quality care for you and your family. Without action from Congress, these reforms – based on outdated and incomplete analyses – could weaken a system already stressed by pandemic response efforts.

More Ways to Help

Join a Chapter. Not a member of your local group? Find it here (<https://ebiz.moaa.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Default.aspx?TabId=161>). Chapters offer grassroots support for all MOAA advocacy efforts, even more important now as lawmakers and staffs spend more time in their districts.

Activate Your Network. Send the links above to friends, co-workers, fellow officers, or anyone else who will be affected by this reform effort.

Hidden Heroes: Military Caregivers Face Unique Challenges Amid COVID-19

By: Amber Monks

The coronavirus pandemic has taken a toll on countless communities but has affected one vulnerable population on several unexpected levels: Caregivers of veterans. These "hidden heroes" face increased demand for medical supplies, and isolation from their support network, along with increased risk of infection for their veterans and themselves.

In a time when caregivers need support more than ever, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation (<https://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org/>) continues to take the journey with them during uncertain times. MOAA has partnered with the foundation in the past, including on Tips for Lifelong Caregiving, a comprehensive website offering

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financial and other guidance. Recently, MOAA asked Rashi Venkataraman Romanoff, vice president of programs and partnerships at the foundation, to share resources to help those affected by the COVID-19 crisis and educate community members on how to help neighbors in need.

“Military caregivers and military families have really been disproportionately affected by the current crisis,” Romanoff said. “A lot of these veterans were already in an immunocompromised or immunosuppressed state.” The pandemic has also led to unwelcome supply issues, she said. “For things like wound care or ventilator support, these caregivers are now in competition with state public health systems, hospitals, and health care providers,” Romanoff said. “Access to medical supplies has really emerged as a top need. We’re seeing that the prices for these supplies on average through some subsequent survey work are increasing about between 40 and 50%.”

Since the start of the pandemic, new concerns have arisen among caregivers. People who live in rural areas have seen decreased delivery options and limited access to essential needs in grocery stores and pharmacies. Caregivers have had an elevated concern of securing back-up care as everyone is at a greater risk of infection. And they are worried what will happen if they become unable to care for their veteran due to the coronavirus. The concern of increased isolation has also been a top finding of the foundation’s research. Romanoff said. “One of the things we’ve found even before this crisis hit is that military caregivers often feel isolated from communities, because they’re doing this work at home,” she said. “It’s not readily apparent that these caregivers are doing this work each and every day. That can be very isolating to experience day in and day out.”

How to Help

“This is a really good time to get to know your neighbors.” Romanoff said. “If there’s someone in your neighborhood or if there’s someone in your community that is in the role, reach out, maybe offer to make a meal. Even a quick phone call can be a nice way to let someone know you are thinking of them.” Setting up time to communicate with friends and family can alleviate mental stress and create a sense of connectedness during physical isolation periods, she added. The Dole Foundation has consolidated many of its resources online so that they are accessible to all during the pandemic. They’ve also launched a new webinar series with Wounded Warrior Project and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs titled “Caregiver Community Connection” that is aimed at bringing timely resources and activities to caregivers and their families.

Florida Chapter Runs Care Packages for Troops Project

By: Contributing Editor Blair Drake

Members of the Sarasota (Fla.) Chapter have supported U.S. servicemembers through the Support our Troops initiative for the past 17 years, distributing more than 50,000 boxes for care packages. Members of the community fill the preaddressed boxes with suggested items and mail them to deployed U.S. troops.

Traditionally, members gather prior to a parade (Memorial Day or Veterans Day) for a “box party,” where they assemble the 1,000 boxes, which are delivered from the U.S. Postal Service on a pallet about 7-feet tall. Members place in each large, priority mail flat-rate box a letter from the chapter, suggested items to send and items to avoid, tips for writing a personal note to troops, and instructions for mailing the box, including how to fill out the customs form. Each box also is addressed senior leaders of various units serving overseas, who will distribute the care packages to servicemembers in their units. Cost to the chapter is minimal; they pay for printing the letters and address labels and other office supplies such as paperclips and rubber bands. The U.S. Postal Service provides the boxes. And during the parades, a local car dealership typically provides a pick-up truck for chapter members to use. The cost of postage is covered by the those who send the care packages.

While there is no way for the chapter to track how many packages actually are sent to troops, Wozniak said the chapter often receives thank you letters and certificates of appreciation from the units.

“We all served,” he said. “We all know what it’s like to be overseas and away from home. To get something like that is very special. That’s why we enjoy doing this project for the troops.”

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