

# THE CATAWBA VALLEY OFFICERS DISPATCH



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**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, CATAWBA VALLEY CHAPTER**  
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## **President's Comments: LTC "Davy" Davenport**

Let me first address a recurring issue that has recently taken center stage at National MOAA. Military pay and benefits for active duty, Guard, Reserve and retired military personnel are at risk of eroding, and that's going to impact recruiting, retention, and quality of life. This is happening because some politicians seek to capitalize on a nebulous post-Afghanistan peace dividend to fund massive social and environmental programs. Plus, force modernization has necessarily been accelerated due to national security concerns, and some senior leaders in the DoD feel it's necessary to partially fund the modernization of military capabilities by minimizing pay, earned benefits, and quality of life programs—perhaps because the recent Defense Budget plus-up is zeroed out by the increased cost of armaments. Then there's the rapidly rising cost of living that dilutes buying power for military families—including retirees—as they shop for life's necessities and health care. Our military must recruit and retain highly talented and motivated volunteers who constitute the true source of our nation's military strength. By the way, most of them start their own families within a few years of entering military service. We're competing with the civilian sector to bring in quality recruits, and we're competing with corporate America to retain experienced officer and enlisted servicemembers after investing huge money to train them in their given specialty. That's why military pay, benefits, and overall quality of life features must continually be kept at least on par with the civilian sector. MOAA's number one legislative priority for 2022 is: "Sustain pay raises and adequate BAH for the troops and COLA raises for retirees." MOAA's other legislative priorities all directly address military pay and quality of life issues. Three hot ones are: the Major Richard Star Act, the Stop Copay Overpay Act, and ensuring an ECI pay raise of at least 4.6%. Let's each do our part to influence this pending legislation by capitalizing on MOAA's superb new "Take Action Center" at website [www.moaa.quorum.us](http://www.moaa.quorum.us).

Military Spouse Appreciation Day is on May 6<sup>th</sup>. You may wonder, is the life of the military spouse a glass that's half empty or one that's half full? Being a military spouse is a calling unto itself, and the sacrifices are significant. There are frequent household relocations, with little choice on where to live—sometimes in overseas hotspots! Career opportunities for the spouse are usually limited, often with long breaks in employment. The spouse's military partner has long duty hours and is often away on temporary duty, deployed to a faraway land, or on a ship at sea; so, the spouse must singlehandedly manage children and household. Plus, the spouse often lives with the worry about potentially becoming a Gold Star surviving spouse. On the other hand, the spouse has exciting travel experiences far beyond hometown USA. He or she occasionally enjoys attending military ceremonies and dinner events in storybook settings such as: a Dining In, an annual Marine Ball, or an awards banquet. Even more importantly, the spouse vicariously enjoys the pride of his or her spouse's elevated role in the military as promotions occur. Plus, the spouse is truly a proud member of the prestigious military community. In fact, a 2021 Maru public opinion poll ranks the military fourth out of 28 career fields, in terms of prestige. So, in the final analysis, the spouse's glass is certainly more than half full. With that said, let's all be sure to give our spouses a thank you hug on Military Spouse Appreciation Day!

**Insights into the Pandemic:** The Guest Speaker at our recent General Membership meeting/dinner was Dr. Kathy Wilson (MD), a pulmonary critical care specialist who practices medicine at Catawba Valley Medical Center. She couched here presentation as being the musings of a critical care specialist. The doctor went over the spectrum of DNA and RNA viruses, including stable and unstable viruses. She then presented three fictitious composite patients in the form of COVID case studies, including symptoms, diagnosis, and outcomes. The Doctor also shared her personal care experiences in the ICU, from which only two out of ten COVID patients normally survive. This clearly reflected the challenge critical care providers face as they come to know their patients and families, only to see many of them lose the struggle to recover from COVID. The upshot of her presentation was that the future of COVID is still an open-ended unknown. However, based on the diminished number of cases and hospitalizations, she anticipates that the impact of this virus will ultimately be reduced to that of the common cold. Our Chapter President, Colonel “Davy” Davenport, presented a token memento to Dr. Wilson in gratitude for her very comprehensive and highly enlightening presentation.



*Dr. Kathy Wilson speaks at chapter event*

USG Public Domain Photo



*Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno, Italy*



**Memorial Day:** May 30<sup>th</sup> is Memorial Day, a time in which we remember the military heroes who came before us and are no longer with us. Memorial Day is the special time we publicly honor them. National and local events feature ceremonies and speeches that manifest our respect for those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. But even beyond that, ceremonies will be held all over the world at memorial sites managed by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). Twenty-six of the memorial sites are U.S. cemeteries that are the final resting place of those who never returned home from war. U.S. Government officials and military personnel from nearby bases and embassies always conduct Memorial Day ceremonies at those overseas sites, like the one shown on the left that holds 7,800 war dead. You can view all the ABMC sites by visiting website [www.abmc.gov](http://www.abmc.gov), which includes a search feature for names of both the buried heroes and those Missing in Action from WWI and WWII. Also, the National Moment of Remembrance is at 3:00 p.m. local time on Memorial Day, during which there’s one minute of silence to remember and honor all servicemembers who died while serving our country, including those who never returned home.



Shop via "smile.amazon.com" to support the MOAA Foundation

**TAPS:** Sadly, we lost chapter member Lt Col Ted Hayes; he passed away this past March. Ted was a Past President of our Chapter, and he was our chapter's much admired "fire and brimstone" Chaplain for many years. Lt Col Hayes was a highly respected Air Force senior officer, and a truly wonderful gentleman.

**JROTC Medals:** As is done each year, Lt Col Jane Harmon (USMC-Ret.) procured and distributed MOAA JORTC Award medals and certificates to our supported JROTC units at nineteen different area high schools. A special thanks to Jane and to those chapter members who kindly visited many high schools during their respective award ceremonies to present the MOAA Medal to each JROTC unit's selected cadet.

**USPHS Members are Military Veterans:** USPHS members are entitled to receive the special NC "Veteran" driver license. USPHS members and retirees simply submit a "Statement of Service" (issued by the USPHS Commissioned Corps of Personnel and Readiness) when they apply for the license at their local DMV office.

**USPHS & NOAA Left Behind:** The retired military state tax exemption initiative was passed by the state General Assembly as part of the 2022 fiscal budget and was signed into law by Governor Cooper. However, this bill did not include USPHS or NOAA retirees. Colonel Jeri Graham (MOAA Board Member) has started the process of engaging with state legislators to include these retirees in the NC military tax exemption. Learn more about this initiative or make inputs by e-mailing Colonel Graham at: [jjgrahamusa@gmail.com](mailto:jjgrahamusa@gmail.com)

**Free Lifelong Park Passes:** The National Park Service will now offer Gold Star Families and all US military veterans free lifetime access to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas, including national parks, wildlife refuges, and forests. The entrance fee waiver does not cover expanded amenity or user fees for activities such as camping, special recreation permits, reservation fees or special tours. Free Interagency Annual Military Passes are what's currently used. However, new lifetime passes will be available to distribute later in 2022. Full info on the free park passes is at: <https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/veterans-and-gold-star-families-free-access.htm>

**Articulate Matter Claims:** The VA has recently been processing service-connected disability claims for new presumptive conditions related to environmental exposures during military service. New conditions have been added to the list of medical conditions presumptively associated with exposure to Agent Orange; they are: bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism. Plus, the VA subsequently added: asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis (to include rhinosinusitis) on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas. In addition, nine rare respiratory cancers were just added for Veterans health care and disability claims—see the list on page five! Veterans who were previously denied service-connection for any of these conditions but had symptoms manifest within 10 years of military service will need to file a VA Form 20-0995 supplemental claim for a Decision Review Request. For more info on how to file a claim, veterans and survivors can visit VA's website ([www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)) or call toll-free at 800-827-1000.

**Tank Driver to Truck Driver:** America has a deficit of 80 thousand truck drivers. According to the White House, Trucking moves 72 percent of goods in America and is a lynchpin in our goods movement supply chain. Therefore, they just launched the Veterans Trucking Task Force to encourage separating and retiring military servicemembers to become truckers. Their concept is that if a military servicemember can handle a tank or an armored personnel carrier, they surely can handle an 18-wheeler. The truck driver apprenticeship program has been expanded; waivers are being granted based on military experience, and states have received funds to expedite the CDL licensing process. More info available at: <https://va.org/news/in-order-to-save-america-the-white-house-wants-veterans-to-work-in-trucking>

**Foothills Stand Down:** The Spring 2022 Veterans Stand Down is being planned for our area and will be held on June 17<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. It will be run by Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans, at the Catawba Valley Community College, Tarlton complex, in Hickory. Our MOAA chapter (with USAA) made a significant donation for the event and, therefore, is now one of the Stand Down's major sponsors. The Stand Down event provides a spectrum of services and support for local Veterans: food, clothing, medical, dental, counseling, job placement, etc. To become a volunteer staff member or to donate, visit website [www.foothillsstanddown.com](http://www.foothillsstanddown.com)

## - NEWS FROM THE FIVE MILITARY BRANCHES -

ARMY: Installations Command is leading a contracted project to rapidly construct barracks using 3-D printing technology. The technique uses proprietary “Lavacrete,” and these are the largest printed buildings in America.

NAVY: The Navy is offering a \$25,000 signing bonus to recruits for any rate (specialty) if they agree to report for bootcamp between April and June. The signing bonus is in addition to other bonuses for hard to fill rates!

MARINES: To extend rations with no outside support, a Marine unit recently tested “21<sup>st</sup> Century Foraging Concepts.” They bought foodstuffs from local merchants and used field kitchens to prepare two hot meals daily.

AIR FORCE: The first smart-locker facility was just installed at Robbins AFB, GA. These lockers (much like Amazon’s Internet-connected lockers) notify addressees and allow parcel pickup outside of post office hours.

SPACE FORCE: To counter newly emerged threats in the space domain, Space Force leaders are asking their private sector and foreign partners to help develop more resilient and distributed satellite-based infrastructure.

**2021 Calendar:** *Board Meetings:* 23 June, 25 August, 27 October, 15 December

*General Membership Meetings/Dinners:* 26 May, 22 September, 1 December

**Benevolent Fund:** Our designated charities are: MOAA American Patriot Scholarship Program (**MOAA-APS**), Purple Heart Homes (**PHH**) and Welcome Home Veterans (**WHV**). Donate by sending a charity-specific (any or all three) annotated check to Treasurer: CDR Dave Olson, 485 26<sup>th</sup> Ave NE (Unit A), Hickory, NC 28601.

### ————— CHAPTER PRINCIPALS, DIRECTORS AND STAFF —————

Chapter President: LTC “Davy” Davenport

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: *Vacant*

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: LTC James Cole

Treasurer: Commander Dave Olson

Secretary: Major Dennis McClish

Chaplain: Reverend (WO3) Robert Herron

Programs Chairman: *Vacant!*

Director: Colonel (Dr.) Don Gemeinhardt

Director: Colonel Joe Cansler

Director: *Vacant!*

Legislative Liaison: Colonel (Dr.) Dana Tucker

Surviving Spouses Liaison: Colonel (Dr.) Tucker

Membership Chair: *Vacant!*

JROTC Coordinator: Lt Col G. Jane Harmon

Personal Affairs & TOPS: *Vacant!*

Newsletter/Website: Colonel John Liburdi

**Join National MOAA and this Chapter:** MOAA is the country’s leading organization protecting the rights of military servicemembers and their families. Those who belong to MOAA not only lend their voices to a greater cause, but they also gain access to extensive benefits tailored to the needs and lifestyles of military officers. MOAA members proudly hail from every branch of the uniformed services. To them, MOAA has made the same promise that they have made to their country: Never Stop Serving! Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The MOAA Catawba Valley Chapter covers six counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Iredell and Lincoln. Our chapter is active in the community through its Benevolent Fund (explained above) and JROTC support. The chapter also engages in ad hoc charitable support and activity, with emphasis on homeless Veterans. Please note that National MOAA and its affiliated chapters are nonpartisan, without any political party affiliation, bias, or designation. A one-page chapter membership mail-in application form is available via the “Join Chapter” button on our chapter website homepage at: [www.moaacvc.org](http://www.moaacvc.org). Also, you can learn more about MOAA National and join at either Basic, Premium or Life level by visiting website: <https://www.moaa.org/content/join-moaa/why-join-moaa>

*The MOAA "Take Action" website is now at: <https://moaa.quorum.us>*

***VA Expands List of Burn Pit Exposure Conditions***

Expedited VA benefits are being offered to affected veterans who served in the Persian Gulf since Aug. 2, 1990, as well as Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti or Uzbekistan on or after Sept. 19, 2001. According to VA Secretary Denis McDonough, "If you suffer from any of those (below) conditions ... you may be eligible for disability benefits without having to prove causality between your service and your condition." The nine rare respiratory cancers that were just added as eligible conditions for VA health care and expedited disability claims are:

- Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx
- Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea
- Adenocarcinoma of the trachea
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea
- Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung
- Large cell carcinoma of the lung
- Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung
- Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung
- Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung

*Tell prospective members about our chapter website: [www.moaacvc.org](http://www.moaacvc.org)*

**----- RESERVATION FOR GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING/DINNER AT LHCC -----**

This is my reservation for MOAA Catawba Valley Chapter's General Membership meeting/dinner being held on **May 26<sup>th</sup>** at Lake Hickory Country Club. The social hour in the club's lounge will start at 6:00 p.m. and dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. Guest Speaker for the evening will be CW4 Jay Garbus, President of MOAA's NC Council of Chapters; he'll provide insights into military related issues and legislation in our state.

Name of Attendee(s): \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

Menu Selection(s): Cordon Bleu \_\_\_\_\_ / Baked Salmon \_\_\_\_\_ / Veggie Plate \_\_\_\_\_

***AS A PRECAUTION, WE ARE STILL REQUESTING THAT EVENT ATTENDEES BE ONLY THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE "UP-TO-DATE" ON THEIR COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION VACCINATIONS!***

Please send this slip and your check (**\$30.00 per attendee**) to arrive no later than May 23<sup>rd</sup> (a Monday) to:

**CDR Dave Olson, 485 26<sup>th</sup> Ave NE (Unit A), Hickory, NC 28601**