

# THE CATAWBA VALLEY OFFICERS DISPATCH



July 2026

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**MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, CATAWBA VALLEY CHAPTER**  
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## President's Comments: Colonel Dana Tucker

In the spirit of the time-honored adage, "Leave No Man Behind," we all need to act in support of those who are serving or have served in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Their pay (including retiree pay) is not protected during federal government shutdowns. Coast Guard members were in the very same unjust situation until a bill was passed in 2023 to protect their retired pay. And, it's incredibly ironic that the Coast Guard's "Paymaster" oversees payrolls for both USPHS and NOAA! Now it's time to enact the same pay protection for those two organizations via the "Pensions for Retired Uniformed Servicemembers Act" (H.R. 8732), a bipartisan House bill that would ensure retirees from the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and NOAA Commissioned Corps receive their pensions during any future federal government shutdowns. Please go to the MOAA Legislative Action Center and send pre-drafted e-mails to your respective members of Congress, encouraging them to cosponsor H.R. 8732. Just an aside here, while neither USPHS nor NOAA are armed military organizations, one stroke of the President's pen would militarize their officers and transfer them into the military branches during wartime or national emergency.

August 7th is Purple Hearts Day, a time when we honor our nation's warriors who were wounded or killed during military service. The award medal features George Washington's profile and his coat of arms. The Purple Heart has a rather complicated history, stemming from the Badge of Military Merit established in 1782. In fact, the reverse side of today's medal is inscribed with the words, "For Military Merit." The current Purple Heart has been awarded to members of the Armed Forces who were wounded or killed after April 5, 1917. Civilians in military related settings were also eligible to receive the award from 1942 through 1997, after which time only military members are eligible to receive the award. Despite that, there have been many cases of "Stolen Valor" in which civilians faked having been awarded the Purple Heart. Fortunately, the Stolen Valor Act of 2013 made it a crime for a person to fraudulently claim to have received a valor award specified in the Act, with the intention of obtaining money, property, or other tangible benefit by convincing another that they received the award. At any rate, it's wonderful to see how innovative battlefield medicine, miraculous surgery techniques, advanced pharmaceuticals, and high-tech prosthetics have eased suffering and largely healed many of our nation's wounded warriors. Likewise, we have MOAA to thank for their thus far successful—and continuing—fight to halt the downsizing of the DoD's medical corps and facilities that care for servicemembers, including Purple Heart recipients. And, I must say, it's rather gratifying for us that one of our chapter's designated charities is Purple Heart Homes, originally just a small organization in Statesville that has now achieved national prominence.

A few last thoughts here. Many thanks to Major Dennis McClish for having lined up a truly great Guest Speaker for our recent dinner at Lake Hickory Country Club. Plus, thanks to my fellow officers who kindly served as dignitaries at area JROTC Units—especially Jim McCauley—presenting annual MOAA Award medals to cadets. Of course, many thanks to Lt Col Jane Harmon for again handling all the logistics involved in providing the award packages to the nineteen JROTC Units. Also, let's all extend a hearty *Welcome Aboard* to our newest chapter members: USAF Major (Dr.) Tara Taylor and USN LT Peter Blinn, Jr. Finally, there's no membership meeting until September 17th. So, everyone please stay safe and enjoy some summertime "R&R" with family and friends!



*Colonel Tucker gives award to Cadet Jefferson Castro*



*Major McCauley presents award to Cadet Cecelia Hayes*



*Major McCauley present award to Cadet Payton Ball*



*Captain Felker gives Maiden's award to Chief Harms*

The end of academic year for area High Schools brought about many award ceremonies at which several of our chapter representatives presented National MOAA Award medals and certificates to the outstanding cadets in local JROTC programs. Major Jim McCauley was the main driver of this effort, appearing as the presenting dignitary for eight events! Jim says he enjoys the presentations because they recognize our communities outstanding young leaders who embody the values of service, dedication, and loyalty, and who carry on the tradition of the "citizen soldier," which we strive to promote—with main emphasis on good citizenship. Upper left photo is at Newton-Conover JROTC; upper right is Lincoln JROTC, lower left is West Lincoln JROTC, and the lower right is Maiden JROTC. Our chapter funded the MOAA Award medals and certificates, and USMC Lt Col Jane Harmon procured and distributed them to the nineteen JROTC Units.

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***New ABMC Flower Program:*** The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) has a new program that allows customers to send floral arrangements in honor of fallen service members buried, or named on the Walls of the Missing, at ABMC sites worldwide. This amazing new service offers both web-based and phone ordering for floral deliveries to commemorate service members honored at each of ABMC's 26 overseas cemeteries and three U.S. memorials. By visiting [www.ABMCflowerprogram.com](http://www.ABMCflowerprogram.com), customers can search for service members by name and site, choose their delivery window, and include a personalized message. The ABMC staff will place floral arrangements and offer customers the option to receive a graveside photo showing the arrangement in place.



*Dr. Roger Roark delivers Fort Dobbs historical presentation*

The Guest Speaker at our recent General Membership meeting was Dr. Roger Roark. His absolutely superb and totally fascinating presentation was on the French & Indian War and Colonial activity in the Southeast, focused on Governor Author Dobbs and nearby Fort Dobbs. He went through Governor Dobbs' military and political activities, both in the European and the Virginia/Carolina domains, which included his military role in command of warfighting activity. The Governor's massive Fort Dobs project cost \$1,000 and took six months to build in 1756, and the recent rebuilding of Fort Dobbs cost \$3 million and took three years to complete. Dr. Roark invested ten years of research work for the project and three years directly involved in management of the reconstruction project which resulted in an exact replica of the original massive fort on its original site. Historical significance aside, the new Fort Dobbs has transformed what was an obscure dot on historical maps into a world-class tourist destination. Fort Dobbs is located on the northside of Statesville; tours of the fort's interior are conducted by professional guides. Also, there's a special "Military Timeline" event on November 14<sup>th</sup> with displays and reenactments. For more info visit [www.fortdobbs.org](http://www.fortdobbs.org).

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**Revival of 1918 Medal:** The DoD just established a new Mexican Border Defense Medal (MBDM) to recognize service members deployed to the U.S. international border with Mexico for Defense Department support to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). To receive the new award, service members must have been permanently assigned, attached or detailed to a unit that deployed to participate in a designated DOD military operation supporting CBP within the area of eligibility for 30 consecutive or nonconsecutive days, from Jan. 20 to a future termination date yet to be determined. The MBDM is identical to the Mexican Border Service Medal, struck in 1918. The front of the bronze medal displays a sheathed Roman sword hanging on a tablet, along with an inscription that reads "For Service on the Mexican Border."

**Space-A Travel:** These days, Space-Available travel on military aircraft may be a more positive and enjoyable experience than traveling on troubled civilian airlines. The 145th Airlift Wing, at Charlotte-Douglas airport, has a limit of 15 Space-A passengers per flight. Admittedly, they don't originate a great number of C-17 Globemaster flights. So, two other options are the Air Refueling Wing at Seymour-Johnson AFB in Goldsboro, NC or the Airlift Wing at Joint-Base Charleston, SC. Learn more about Space-A travel locations and reservation procedures at website: [www.amc.af.mil/AMC-Travel-Site/](http://www.amc.af.mil/AMC-Travel-Site/), and Charlotte specific info is at: [www.145aw.ang.af.mil/Space-A/](http://www.145aw.ang.af.mil/Space-A/). Phone the 24-hour NC ANG Space-A recording (704-391-4135) to hear a list of currently available flights from NC airbases. Also, MOAA offers a Space-A webinar on August 26<sup>th</sup>. Sign up at: [www.moaa.org/spacea](http://www.moaa.org/spacea).

**BBB Scam Info for Military:** The Better Business Bureau website provides Military & Veteran Consumer Info, with a special section focused on fraud prevention for military & veterans. There are eight very robust sections of info covering all types of scams. Visit website: <https://www.bbb.org/all/bbbi/military-and-veteran-information>

**Surviving Spouse Liaison:** Our Chapter's Surviving Spouse Liaison is Mrs. Mary McClish. She has kindly provided some introductory information on page five. BTW: There's an MOAA Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter. You can simultaneously be both a Catawba Valley Chapter member and a Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter member. To join that Internet based virtual chapter, send an e-mail request to: [mssvc02@gmail.com](mailto:mssvc02@gmail.com)

## - NEWS FROM THE FIVE MILITARY BRANCHES -

ARMY: A recent large-scale exercise in Alaska proved to be a first and very successful employment of paratroopers who use unmanned aerial systems to strike enemy targets and defend against live drone attacks.

NAVY: The CNO recently directed that only Surface Warfare Officers will be given command of amphibious warships. Rationale for the change was to exclude naval aviators from commanding ships of the amphibious force.

MARINES: Marines on Okinawa have been testing a new Remotely Operated Ground Unit for Expeditionary Fires. ROGUE-Fires is a remotely operated tactical vehicle on land, provisioned with ship interdiction missiles.

AIR FORCE: USAF Basic Training has been revised as BMT-2. Less drill time and more physical fitness. Plus, team-based training with armaments and aircraft to instill “airmindedness” and readiness for Joint Combat Ops.

SPACE FORCE: Agreements were recently established with twelve companies to participate in the Space-Based Interceptor program to develop a missile defense system, to be a constellation of Low Earth Orbit interceptors.

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**Benevolent Fund:** Our four designated charities are: Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans (FVHV), Purple Heart Homes (PHH), Piedmont Veterans Assistance Council (PVAC), and Welcome Home Veterans (WHV). Make Benevolent Fund donations by sending a check to our chapter Treasurer. You may annotate the check to specify any of the above charities, or leave it to our Board of Directors that apportions out funds to the various charities. Captain “Judd” Taylor won the last charity raffle and generously donated his winnings to our Benevolent Fund.

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

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**2026**                      *General Membership Meetings/Dinners: Sep 17, Dec 8*  
**Calendar:**              *Board Meetings: Aug 27, Oct 22, Dec 17*

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### CHAPTER PRINCIPALS, DIRECTORS AND STAFF

Chapter President: Colonel Dana Tucker  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Captain “Judd” Taylor  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Major Jim McCauley  
Treasurer: Commander Dave Olson  
Secretary: Major Dennis McClish  
Chaplain: Vacant  
Programs Chairman: Vacant  
Director: LTC “Davy” Davenport

Director: Colonel Joe Cansler  
Director: Vacant  
Legislative Liaison: Colonel Dana Tucker  
Surviving Spouses Liaison: Mrs. Mary McClish  
Membership Chair: LTC “Davy” Davenport  
JROTC Coordinator: Lt Col G. Jane Harmon  
Personal Affairs & TOPS: Colonel John Liburdi  
Newsletter/Website: Colonel John Liburdi

**Join National MOAA:** 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 & Atmospheric Administration. Learn more about MOAA National and join at either Basic, Premium or Life level by visiting their website: [www.moaa.org/content/join-moaa/why-join-moaa](http://www.moaa.org/content/join-moaa/why-join-moaa)

**Join MOAA Catawba Valley Chapter:** Our chapter covers six counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Iredell and Lincoln. The 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 this affiliated chapter are nonpartisan, without any political party affiliation, bias, or designation. *A one-page chapter membership application mail-in form is available via the “Join Chapter” button on our chapter website homepage at: [www.moaacvc.org](http://www.moaacvc.org).*

*Our next newsletter will provide a reservation slip for our membership meeting /dinner occurring on September 17<sup>th</sup>.*

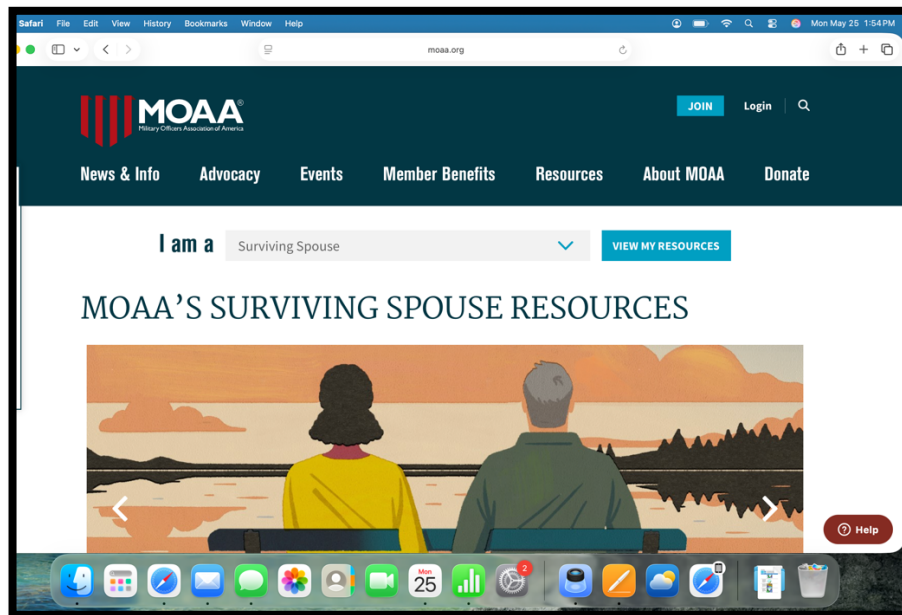
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## Introduction — Surviving Spouse Liaison (SSL)

I am the Surviving Spouse Liaison (SSL) for the Catawba Valley MOAA Chapter. My name is Mary McClish. My husband's is retired U.S Army Major Dennis McClish. We both support and enjoy the camaraderie of meeting with other members of our group on a regular basis.

I have been asked to insert a note in the Catawba Valley newsletter to increase awareness of the chapter and the role of SSL. There are many sources of support and information in the event a military spouse is left after the death of a husband/wife to make all the necessary connections for effective transition to single life.

It is very easy to go on the MOAA website ([www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)) and designate "I am a surviving spouse" on the first page of the site. There is a screen shot just below of what that looks like:



This is the first orientation step for being a surviving spouse. There are many articles there for education on what to do, who to call, etc. In addition, it gives sources to tap into for emotional support. BTW, there's a local Women of Warriors Support Group for wives and widows of U.S. Military Veterans. The woman-only group meets the first Thursday of each month at American Legion Post 544, located at 430 26<sup>th</sup> Ave NE in Hickory, NC. (*That group is not affiliated with MOAA or our chapter.*) Also, feel free contact me to assist in navigating through a new time in life.

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*FYI: - Receive this newsletter via e-mail by requesting to: [moaacvcnews@hotmail.com](mailto:moaacvcnews@hotmail.com)  
- Directly access the MOAA "Legislative Action Center" at: [www.moaa.quorum.us](http://www.moaa.quorum.us)*