Western North Carolina
Military Officers Association of America

Winter Newsletter
2026

An Affiliate Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America

Save the Dates 2026

BOD Mtgs.	Chapter Mtgs.
April 14	February 21
July 14	August 15
October 6	November 14

Chapter Picnic

May 29, 2026

The Western North Carolina Military Officers Association (WNC-MOAA) is an affiliate Chapter of National MOAA, is nonprofit and politically nonpartisan.

The mission of WNC-MOAA is stated in the bylaws and referenced in the newsletter and website.

Chapter meetings are held quarterly on Saturdays in February, May, August, and November.

February and August meetings are held at the Hendrick-Rhodes Veterans Center, 900 N Main St, Hendersonville. May is our Annual Chapter Picnic. November is our Annual Meeting at Champion Hills Country Club.

Registration information for the Friday, February 21 meeting is on the last page of this newsletter.
Spouses and guests are welcome at all Chapter meetings.



From the President's Desk:

Moving Forward Together in 2026

Dear WNC-MOAA Members,

As we move into 2026, I encourage each of you to stay engaged and connected with our chapter. Whether that means attending general membership meetings, participating in satellite or social events, supporting advocacy efforts at the federal and or state level, getting involved in community outreach, or simply reaching out to fellow members, every contribution matters. WNC-MOAA continues to be a strong and active chapter because of the involvement, energy, and dedication of its members.

With committed officers, active members, engaged surviving spouses, and strong ties throughout Western North Carolina, WNC-MOAA is well positioned for another successful year. Plans are already underway for our third Annual Chapter Picnic coming up in May, and more details will be shared soon. This event has become a favorite gathering and an important opportunity to reconnect with familiar faces while welcoming new ones into our chapter community.

At our November 15 Annual Meeting, the membership approved updated Chapter Bylaws, an important step in ensuring our governance structure remains strong, current, and aligned with how we operate as a chapter. That same afternoon, nine individuals were formally installed into key leadership positions. I extend my sincere appreciation to all board members for their dedicated service over the past two years and congratulate those who are assuming new or continuing roles. I would also like to recognize our Satellite Chairs, John O'Donnell in the Smoky Mountains, Rod Honeycutt in Woodfin, and Ernie Reynolds in Black Mountain, whose leadership and local engagement continue to strengthen our reach across the region.

Equally important are the appointed positions that support the Board and the Chapter. Without the members who volunteer their time and expertise in these roles, we could not support our chapter members to the extent that we do. I would like to recognize Rick Devereaux as Senior Advisor, Dr. Vivianne Wersel for Legislative Affairs at the Federal level, Tricia Vinson for Legislative Affairs at the State level, Jeff Snyder, in addition to being Vice-President, he is our JROTC Liaison, Sharon Woodcock as our Surviving Spouse Liaison, and John O'Donnell as our VA Liaison. Their commitment and service make a meaningful difference.

Congratulations are also due to Herb Mench, Jeff Snyder, Kevin Ritter, and Doug Abbotts for their outstanding service to the chapter and the board over the past two years. Their efforts were

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From the President's Desk: Moving Forward Together in 2026 *(continued from page 1)*

recognized with the National MOAA Leadership Award, a well deserved honor.

I want to especially recognize Sharon Woodcock for her continued work connecting surviving spouses with resources, providing timely information to chapter leadership and members, and ensuring our Surviving Spouse community remains informed, prepared, and connected. Sharon could use an additional Surviving Spouse to assist her in this important role, and if you are interested, please reach out to me.

Our next General Membership Meeting will be held on February 21, and we are pleased to welcome some of the Leadership team from Veterans Restoration Quarters, who will provide an update on their work and ongoing efforts. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

This is also a reminder that it is time to pay your 2026 chapter dues if you have not already done so. Chapter dues directly support our ability to deliver meaningful programs and services, including JROTC leadership awards, chapter donations to local veteran-focused organizations, support for chapter meetings and our annual picnic, and the administrative functions necessary to keep the chapter running effectively. We continue to offer the option to pay up to three years of dues at the current rate, allowing you to lock in today's pricing even if dues increase in the future. Dues may be paid through our Cheddar Up site at my.cheddarup.com/c/dues-wnc-moaa-2026 or in person at the February meeting.

One of our goals for 2026 is to increase chapter membership by ten percent. I encourage each of you to invite someone you believe would be interested in joining WNC-MOAA to attend a luncheon or share information about one of our upcoming events or activities. Details on how to do that are included on the last page of this newsletter. In addition to growing membership, we also need to continue increasing volunteer involvement and participation in chapter activities, which is essential to sustaining the energy and impact of our programs.



As your returning President, I thank you for your continued support and engagement. I am always open to new ideas, suggestions, and conversations, and I hope to see and speak with many of you in the months ahead. Please feel free to contact me at president@wnc-moaa.org anytime.

Steve Watkins
President, WNC-MOAA Chapter
'Never Stop Serving'

WNC-MOAA Supports Wreaths Across America Across Western North Carolina

Members of WNC-MOAA once again answered the call to honor our nation's veterans by supporting Wreaths Across America ceremonies across Western North Carolina. From mountain communities to regional veterans cemeteries, chapter members and families volunteered their time to place wreaths, speak names aloud, and pause in quiet remembrance of those who served.

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of our members and supporters, WNC-MOAA met its chapter goal for wreath sponsorships. Reaching this goal ensured that more veterans across our region were honored during the holiday season and reinforced the impact we can make when we come together in service.

Thank you to everyone who participated and helped ensure that our veterans are remembered, honored, and taught to future generations. ***Never Stop Serving***



The 2026 National Defense Authorization Act

What Passed and Why It Matters to the Military Community

Congress has enacted the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), setting defense policy priorities that affect active-duty servicemembers, Guard and Reserve forces, retirees, military families, and survivors.

SURVIVING SPOUSES & SURVIVORS While no major new survivor benefit programs were created, the NDAA preserves authorization for survivor support services, family readiness programs, and health care access. These provisions help ensure continuity of care and support for surviving spouses and dependents.

Clarification on Pay Raises and Survivor Benefits: The military pay raise authorized in the FY2026 NDAA applies only to active-duty, Guard, and Reserve servicemembers. The NDAA does not provide direct pay increases for military retirees or surviving spouses. Instead, retirees and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) recipients receive annual Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) based on inflation and applied separately from NDAA pay raises.

RETIREE & HEALTH CARE ACCESS The NDAA improves access to care by expanding TRICARE specialty care travel benefits and preserving protections against staffing reductions at military treatment facilities, benefiting retirees, survivors, and families alike.

PAY & FORCE READINESS The NDAA authorizes a 3.8% military pay raise for active-duty, Guard, and Reserve members, supporting recruitment, retention, and readiness across the force.

FAMILIES & QUALITY OF LIFE The bill extends key family support programs, including expanded child care options, continued DoD Impact Aid for schools serving military-connected children, and strengthened oversight of child safety at military child development centers.

TRANSITION & SPOUSE SUPPORT A spouse transition assistance pilot program allows military spouses to access employment and career counseling before a servicemember separates or retires, recognizing the economic impact of military service on spouses.

MOAA ADVOCACY WATCH The Major Richard Star Act, which would eliminate the offset between VA disability compensation and military retired pay for certain combat-injured retirees, was not included in the FY2026 NDAA. It remains stand-alone legislation, and advocacy efforts continue.



Photo: Vivianne Wersel

BOTTOM LINE The FY2026 NDAA advances progress on pay, family support, health care access, and spouse transition assistance, while underscoring the continued need for advocacy—particularly for retirees and surviving spouses.

Together, informed and engaged MOAA members continue to make a difference for servicemembers, retirees, survivors, and family members. MOAA's continued advocacy reminds Congress that military families and survivors must remain a priority.

Compiled & Submitted by: Dr. Vivianne Cisneros Wersel

WNC-MOAA Federal Legislative Affairs

National MOAA Surviving Spouses Advisory Board



MOAA's Legislative Action Center

Learn more about MOAA's key advocacy issues and contact your elected officials using MOAA's messaging platform.

(https://moaa.quorum.us/)

*Click here to - **TAKE ACTION***



Winter 2026

State Legislature Update

Changes in General Assembly representation and who sits in the state Governor's office are extremely important as we see in the national news, as well as various local city news/mayorships. Your vote matters and being informed is very important. It is our goal to give you unbiased information, either general in nature, or veteran related to assist in ensuring you are informed. Due to budget and Medicaid battles between the governor and legislature, a decision was made mid-December 2025 not to have any General assembly votes in NC prior to the short session starting in April 2026. The 2025 long session was never actually officially adjourned, with scheduled meetings each month. Left are Feb 9-12, Mar 9-12, Apr 6-9 with the short session starting 21 April. Primary focus is not veteran related, but the overdue state budget, Medicaid, Hurricane Helen disaster recovery, education, tax reform and anything associated with the upcoming election (district maps, voter ID and similar). Remember the State House is short one representative to have a supermajority and override a governor veto.

Of great importance are the primary voter dates. On January 12th (so already started) absentee voting by mail starts and February 6th is the voter registration deadline for the primary. On February 12, early primary voting begins, February 17th is the deadline for absentee ballot requests and 3 March is PRIMARY ELECTION DAY. Primary elections determine which candidates advance to the general election ballot. If a candidate is not selected in the primary, they will not appear on the November ballot. Take time to learn about the candidates and participate thoughtfully in the primary process.

We have a change of leader at the state level within the MOAA NC Council of Chapters supporting State Legislation Advocacy. I have finished my two-year stint filling that position and as of 8 January 2026, COL(R) Herb Segal has been sworn in my place. Herb just finished as president of the Triangle Chapter, is an amazing individual and has been involved in various legislative efforts over the years. He and I work great together and so you have a great team supporting state legislation advocacy moving forward. I believe his bio is on the Triangle chapter website if you are interested. I am continuing to support our WNC chapter in this role.

For veteran issues, we have a full list, but the number one priority continues to be property tax related. If you remember from past newsletters, several 2025 bills were introduced, none made the cutoff (crossover list) for the short session, although they did create a bill H432 to study and vote on a path forward on the topic. Our recommendation is for them to utilize H341, the best compromise bill of all recommended, with any shortfalls within a specific county to be supplemented by the state. This is how other states handle the situation. Posted online 14 Jan, a state government reporter wrote an article for WRAL news focused on who benefits from property taxes (local communities rather than the state) and services provided that aren't nice to have but needed services. Governor Stein seemed to side with the local counties rather than the state legislature in the article. It is speculated that some municipalities are using revaluations of homes as an excuse to increase property taxes for additional revenue. It was noted that 71 counties did a re-evaluation and, in all counties, home prices increased and each county responded by lowering property tax rates (not necessarily for lower taxes, but to lessen the bite somewhat). A potential 'threat' is that if property taxes were cut, then services could be impacted or revenue would have to be raised in an alternative way. More work will be done in committee with expected meetings each month per the above schedule.

As mentioned in the last newsletter in the September budget continuing resolution they changed the management of the NC scholarship for children of Wartime Veterans and took it away from the Department of Military & Veteran Affairs (DMVA) & gave it to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA). It is the only scholarship changed by name and it now has no veteran management at all; a first for this scholarship. On 11 Jan, The Daily Tar Heel did an article stating over 100 UNC recipients were notified in November their spring 2026 awards would be reduced or prorated by 25% and no new applicants will be allowed for the 2026-27 academic year.

https://dailytarheel.com/article/university-veteran-children-scholarship-potential-cuts-20260112

These changes have created real and immediate challenges for affected students and their families, particularly upper-level students with limited flexibility to absorb sudden reductions in financial support or identify alternative resources on short notice. Stable and predictable administration of education benefits is essential for veterans' families as they plan and complete degree programs. WNC-MOAA encourages continued awareness of these impacts and thoughtful engagement with state leaders to emphasize the importance of maintaining reliable support for North Carolina's military-connected students.



Patricia Ann Vinson

LTC, USA (Ret)

State Legislative Affairs Team

WNC-MOAA's Annual Meeting Highlights

The Western North Carolina Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (WNC-MOAA) held a very successful Annual Business Meeting on Saturday, November 15, 2025, at Champion Hills Country Club. The meeting was attended by the largest number of members we have seen in a number of years, reflecting the continued strength and engagement of our chapter.



TC Roberson High School Air Force JROTC Color Guard

The meeting opened promptly at noon with a Presentation of the Colors by the TC Roberson High School Air Force JROTC Color Guard, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and an invocation. New members and guests were introduced, including our guest of honor, Jay Garbus, Immediate Past President of the North Carolina MOAA Council of Chapters, who later officiated the installation and swearing-in of the newly elected WNC-MOAA Board of Directors.



Kevin Ritter receives MOAA Leadership Award from Steve

Several important chapter updates were shared during the luncheon, including the kickoff of the Veterans Restoration Quarters Christmas Drive, a review of 2025 grants and donations awarded to support veterans and veteran-focused organizations, and updates from both the Smoky Mountain Satellite and the Black Mountain VFW, which recently reopened following storm repairs.



Herb Mensch receives MOAA Leadership Award from Steve

Following lunch, the formal business portion of the meeting began with confirmation of a quorum and reports on the chapter's strong financial health and growing membership, now totaling 126 members. The chapter also took time to recognize outstanding service. National MOAA Certificates of Appreciation were presented to Herb Mensch and Jeff Snyder in recognition of their many years of dedicated contributions to WNC-MOAA. Doug Abbotts and Kevin Ritter were also recognized for their leadership, service, and commitment to the board and chapter over the past two years.



Jeff Snyder receives MOAA Leadership Award from Steve

Members unanimously approved the 2026 chapter dues, updates to the chapter bylaws, and the slate of officers and directors for the 2026–2027 term. The meeting concluded shortly after 2:00 p.m., marking a productive and uplifting afternoon of fellowship, recognition, and forward planning for the chapter.



Doug Abbotts receives MOAA Leadership Award from Steve



2026-2027 Board (L-R) - John O'Donnell, Vic Marshall, Jim Gough, Joe Neubert, John Odell, Steve Salter, Donna Culp, Steve Watkins, Jeff Snyder, and Jay Garbus (NCCOC) - Not Pictured: Rod Honeycutt, Jim Steinbaugh, Ernie Reynolds & the appointed officers

Veterans Health Legislation Update

(Submitted by: Dr. Vivianne Cisneros Wersel)

Recently, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health held a hearing to review legislation aimed at improving veterans' access to health care, mental health services, and specialty care. These issues are especially important to surviving spouses and families who often rely on VA-connected systems such as CHAMPVA, community care, and specialty providers. Several of the proposals discussed focus on improving access in rural and underserved areas, increasing transparency for CHAMPVA users, and strengthening mental health and brain injury care. For families in Western North Carolina, these efforts could reduce travel burdens and improve access to timely, high-quality care.

Bills at a Glance

- H.R. 2283 – RECOVER Act: Supports nonprofit mental health providers serving at-risk veterans.
- H.R. 2426 / S. 702 – Veterans Mental Health and Addiction Therapy Quality of Care Act: Requires independent review of VA and community mental health care quality.
- BEACON Act (discussion draft): Expands research and treatment for chronic mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI).
- Veterans Health Desert Reform Act of 2025 (discussion draft): Improves access to care for veterans in rural and underserved areas.
- H.R. 6526 – Clarity on Care Options Act: Creates a searchable CHAMPVA provider directory.
- H.R. 6652 – U.S. Vets of the Freely Associated States Act: Expands VA care access for eligible veterans and families.
- H.R. 4509 – NOPAIN for Veterans Act: Increases access to non-opioid pain management.
- H.R. 6444 – Blast Overpressure Research and Mitigation Task Force Act: Studies long-term effects of blast exposure.
- H.R. 5999 – Opioid Antagonist Access Act: Strengthens overdose prevention efforts.
- H.R. 6001 – Veterans with ALS Reporting Act: Improves tracking and research related to ALS.

Advocacy Note

Surviving spouses have a powerful voice in shaping veterans' health care policy. Staying informed, sharing personal experiences, and engaging with elected officials helps ensure that legislation reflects the real needs of veterans, surviving spouses, and their families-especially those living in rural communities.

TAKE ACTION

MOAA | Action Center

Smoky Mountain Satellite Update

From John O'Donnell, Smoky Mtn Chair: we had a good meeting on 6 November 2025 at the Main Street Diner in Waynesville. It was fun and productive. We welcomed two new members at this meeting, Betsy Bird and Roger Gilmore, both former Navy officers.

Several MOAA members participated in placing wreaths during the Wreaths Across America event at Greenhill Cemetery in Waynesville on Saturday, 13 December 2025. The chapter members included Donna Culp and Lonnie Pizza. Lonnie also dedicates many hours to this project every year.

Greenhill Cemetery Opening Ceremony



Woodfin Satellite Update

Woodfin Satellite Supports Veterans Lunch at The Man Cave



Some of the members of the Woodfin Satellite met at The Man Cave to support the 3rd Friday Free Veteran Lunch, a monthly community event dedicated to serving local veterans. In November, WNC-MOAA sponsored and served lunch, providing meals to more than 30 veterans who attended.



Traci serving dessert

The Woodfin Satellite Chair, Rod Honeycutt, coordinated the gathering and provided a Woodfin Satellite update, while Steve Watkins shared chapter-level news and upcoming activities. The event offered a meaningful opportunity for direct service, conversation, and connection with local veterans in the Woodfin area, reinforcing WNC-MOAA's ongoing commitment to community engagement and support.



Jimmer Stewart, David Peeler, Traci Smith, Steve W, and Rod H

WNC-MOAA Continues to Support Veterans After Hurricane Helene

Although Hurricane Helene struck Western North Carolina more than a year ago, its impact continues to be felt by veteran families who are still working to recover and rebuild. In November, WNC MOAA made two separate donations to veteran families who were significantly affected by the storm, reinforcing the chapter's commitment to standing with veterans not only during times of immediate crisis, but throughout the long recovery that often follows.



Joe Neubert, Tricia Vinson and Steve Watkins making the presentation

One donation was made to support a Marine veteran and his family whose home sustained extensive damage during Hurricane Helene. With little left to salvage, their recovery has required time, perseverance, and continued community support. More than a year after the storm, WNC MOAA's assistance reflects an ongoing commitment to providing meaningful support as this family continues the difficult process of rebuilding their lives.

The second donation supported a Navy veteran and his family in Madison County who lost their home and everything inside it as a result of the hurricane. Through collaboration with community and volunteer partners, WNC MOAA helped reinforce the network of support that veterans and their families rely on when unexpected hardship strikes.

Both veterans were deeply appreciative of the support and of being selected to receive assistance. During the November presentation, one veteran shared that he was surprised to hear from WNC-MOAA. When asked why, he replied, "Because I am not an officer." Steve Watkins response was simple and heartfelt: *"But you are a veteran, and we support all veterans regardless of rank."*

That exchange captures the spirit of WNC-MOAA. Our mission is rooted in service to all who have worn the uniform - enlisted and officer alike - and in ensuring that no veteran feels forgotten, especially in times of long-term recovery.

These efforts reflect WNC MOAA's enduring commitment to support all who have worn the uniform and to remain engaged with veterans and their families long after the headlines fade. This is how the chapter lives its promise to Never Stop Serving.



Steve making the presentation (not pictured Joe Neubert & Tricia Vinson)

Stay Alert Protect Yourself from Membership Scams

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) frequently communicates with members through email and online channels regarding membership information. Unfortunately, scammers sometimes attempt to imitate these messages, which can make it difficult to tell legitimate communications from fraudulent ones.

If you receive an email, text message, or online communication about your MOAA membership that seems suspicious, do not respond. Instead, contact the MOAA Member Service Center immediately at 800-234-6622 to verify whether the message is legitimate.

MOAA also provides scam prevention resources at MOAA.org/scams to help members protect themselves from fraud.



The following MOAA-specific information may help you identify suspicious messages:

- Life members whose dues are paid in full will never be asked for additional dues payments.
- Spouses of deceased Life members inherit their membership at no additional cost.
- Spouses are not eligible for membership, and MOAA will never solicit a spouse to join, although surviving spouses are eligible for membership.
- Basic and Premium members may receive renewal or upgrade communications from MOAA via mail, email, text message, or phone.

If you are unsure whether a message is authentic, do not reply to the message and instead contact the MOAA Member Service Center at 800-234-6622 for confirmation.

If you believe you have encountered a scam or have questions about a message you received, please reach out. Staying informed and cautious helps protect all members of our community.

Why "I Am a Veteran" Matters in the Exam Room

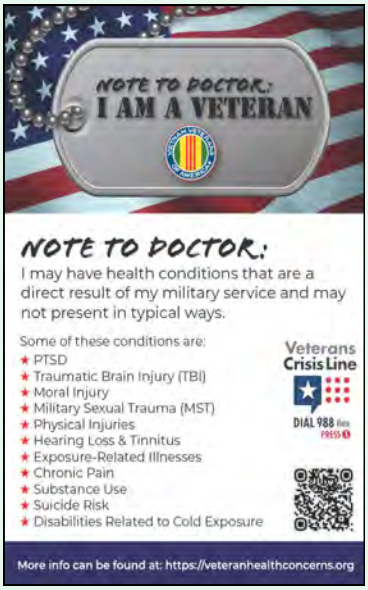
Submitted by Steve Watkins

By now, most in our Western North Carolina military community know that service to our country changed our lives - not just in terms of duty and sacrifice, but also in ways affecting our long-term health. What many veterans and family members *don't realize*, however, is that where and when you served - even decades ago - can influence your health today.

The *"Note to Doctor: I am a Veteran"* website (https://veteranhealthconcerns.org/) organizes health issues by service era - from Korea, Vietnam, Expeditionary service, through the Persian Gulf and Global War on Terror (GWOT) - and shows that many illnesses and injuries have been associated with military service, even if they don't show up until years after discharge.

This article highlights major categories of service-related health concerns and, importantly, why veterans and spouses should bring these up with their doctors - because speaking up can lead to diagnosis, care, possibly VA benefits, and improved quality of life.

1. Mental Health & Behavioral Health Conditions



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and substance use issues affect many who served - regardless of era. These conditions can stem from combat experience, training accidents, stress during service, or military sexual trauma.

These disorders are not signs of weakness, and they often get worse if unaddressed. VA and civilian healthcare providers offer effective treatments - from counseling and therapy to medication support - and recognizing symptoms is the first step.

Signs to watch for: changes in mood, sleep problems, irritability, loss of interest, increased alcohol use, or trouble adjusting to civilian life.

Why talk to your doctor: Early discussion increases access to treatment, resources (including the VA Crisis Line), and can prevent escalating problems like isolation or health decline.

2. Injuries, Neurological Conditions & Brain Health

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) - from blast exposure, falls, or accidents - can happen during service or training and may go unrecognized at the time. TBIs can result in memory issues, headaches, and mood changes long after service.

Another risk is Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), especially among veterans of Gulf War service.

Why talk to your doctor: Many neurological conditions have effective strategies to slow progression and improve daily functioning - but they require early recognition.

3. Environmental & Exposure-Related Health Risks

Veterans may have been exposed to hazardous substances depending on their deployment location and duties. These include:

- **Agent Orange and dioxin exposure** (especially Vietnam era) - linked to cancers, diabetes, Parkinsonism, and other conditions.
- **Burn pits and airborne hazards** (GWOT/ Iraq/Afghanistan) - associated with respiratory and systemic illnesses.
- **Radiation exposure** - relevant for some service roles; VA has registry exams for potential effects.
- **Leishmaniasis and other deployment-linked infections** - seen in certain regions like Southwest Asia.

Why talk to your doctor: Some exposures are linked with "presumptive" conditions through VA policy - meaning a health issue *is presumed* to be related to service, making it easier to secure care and benefits if you get diagnosed and document it.

4. Hearing, Vision & Sensory Health Issues

Many veterans experience hearing loss or tinnitus due to noise exposure in service (firearms,

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Why "I Am a Veteran" Matters in the Exam Room (Continued from page 8)

aircraft, machinery). Vision changes and sensory issues are also notable in GWOT veterans.

Why talk to your doctor: Hearing and vision problems can subtly worsen over time - affecting balance, safety, communication, and quality of life - but they're often highly treatable with early detection.

5. Infectious Diseases & Physical Health Conditions

Depending on service location, veterans may have been exposed to diseases like tuberculosis (TB) or other infections. Some gastrointestinal conditions - such as dysentery - are also recognized in certain campaigns.

General physical conditions - heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease, arthritis - are also more common among veterans than civilian populations due to the rigors of service and exposures.

Why talk to your doctor: Standard medical care often improves outcomes when these conditions are caught early, and documenting service ties can help with VA benefits if applicable.

6. Trauma & Service-Related Physical Injuries

Conditions such as amputations and other lasting physical injuries are especially prevalent among recent conflict veterans.

Why talk to your doctor: Rehabilitation, prosthetic services, pain management, and adaptive care can dramatically improve independence and function.

Putting It All Together - What You Can Do

⇒ *Tell every healthcare provider that you are a veteran.* Your service history (locations, dates, duties) is *medical information* - and it matters.

⇒ *Ask about specific issues even if symptoms seem mild.* Conditions linked to service can emerge years later and may be overlooked if not discussed.

⇒ *Talk about your exposures and experiences - physical and emotional.* Veteran-specific conditions are real health issues, not "just part of aging"



⇒ *Ask about VA screening, registry exams, and presumptive benefits.* There are programs and exams specific to exposures like burn pits, Agent Orange, radiation, and more.

Final Thoughts

Veterans - and those who love and support them - deserve the best possible health care. Many service-related health issues *are treatable or manageable*, and you cannot get help if you don't speak up about them.

If something feels "off" - whether it's chronic fatigue, mood changes, breathing problems, or unexplained symptoms - *bring it up at your next visit*. Your doctor needs to know your whole story to provide the right care. And as spouses and family members, your encouragement can make all the difference in prompting that conversation.

Never hesitate to advocate for the health you earned through your service.

Mark Your Calendars - Everyone is Welcome

21 February 2026 - Chapter Mtg - 11:15am-2:00pm, Location: VFW, 900 N Main, Hendersonville

21 March 2026 - When Two Becomes One: Survivor Planning Workshop - Time: TBA, Location: Blue Ridge Community College

28 March 2026 - Woodfin Satellite - Spring Morning Breakfast meeting - 9:00-10:00am, Location: The Man Cave, Asheville

18 April 2026 - Blue Ridge Honor Flight Welcome Home celebration, AVL Airport

29 May 2026 - 3rd Annual WNC-MOAA Chapter Picnic - Mills River Park



Veterans Score a Major Victory in the Long Fight Over Gulf War Illness

Summary adapted from Military.com, January 22, 2026

After more than three decades of advocacy and unanswered questions, Gulf War veterans achieved a significant policy breakthrough in January 2026 regarding the condition commonly known as Gulf War Illness. The development represents one of the most important acknowledgments by the Department of Defense of the long term health impacts associated with service during the 1990 to 1991 Persian Gulf War.



According to reporting by Military.com, the Department of Defense has formally revised its position on potential chemical exposures experienced by U.S. service members during the conflict. In correspondence with veteran advocacy organizations, the Department now states that many Gulf War veterans were likely exposed to chemical nerve agents rather than possibly exposed. This shift in language is particularly significant for veterans who have spent years seeking official recognition of their experiences and symptoms.

The policy change centers on the demolition of an Iraqi munitions complex at Khamisiyah in March 1991. Subsequent analysis determined that the destruction of the facility may have released low levels of nerve agents such as sarin and cyclosarin into the atmosphere, potentially exposing U.S. and coalition troops operating in the area. For years, veterans and advocacy groups argued that the government's use of vague terminology minimized the seriousness of these exposures. The updated guidance reflects a more direct acknowledgment of what many veterans have long believed.

The Department of Defense also committed to updating official health and exposure information on government websites to reflect the revised language. In addition, officials indicated they would continue efforts to locate, restore, and release records related to Gulf War exposures, addressing longstanding concerns about transparency and incomplete documentation.

Gulf War Illness is a chronic multi symptom condition affecting a substantial number of veterans who served during the conflict. Symptoms reported by veterans include persistent fatigue, joint and muscle pain, gastrointestinal problems, headaches, memory and concentration issues, and other neurological complaints. Studies estimate that roughly one quarter to one third of U.S. troops deployed to the Gulf War have experienced symptoms consistent with the condition.

For decades, Gulf War Illness was frequently described as medically unexplained, leaving many veterans without clear diagnoses or effective treatment pathways. Recent progress has begun to change that landscape. In 2025, a dedicated diagnostic code for Gulf War Illness was approved, improving consistency in diagnosis and enabling better tracking and research within the health care system. Combined with the Department of Defense's updated exposure guidance, these steps mark meaningful progress toward validation and care.

Veteran advocacy organizations played a central role in achieving this outcome. Groups such as Vietnam Veterans of America have pressed for years for clearer language, improved research, and accountability related to Gulf War exposures. For affected veterans, the latest developments provide long overdue acknowledgment and may improve access to medical care, benefits, and future research opportunities.

While the policy changes directly affect Gulf War veterans, the implications extend to today's service members and younger officers as well. The issue highlights the importance of environmental and toxic exposure awareness, accurate record keeping, and sustained advocacy to ensure long term health consequences of military service are recognized and addressed.

The story of Gulf War Illness is still unfolding. While this milestone represents significant progress, continued research, transparency, and veteran focused care will be essential to fully address the needs of those affected. The recent developments demonstrate that persistent advocacy can lead to meaningful change and reinforce the importance of caring for service members long after their service ends.

Source Military.com, Daily News, Investigations and Features, January 22, 2026. Author credited in original publication

WNC-MOAA Answers the Call from Asheville VA Hospital



Jen Watkins along with Paula & Jeff Snyder shopping for VA snacks

WNC-MOAA members have already made two trips to Sam's Club, resulting in two deliveries of snacks to the Asheville VA Medical Center. These donations are greatly appreciated & support both veterans receiving care and hospital visitors.

To continue this effort, WNC-MOAA has reopened our Cheddar Up campaign with a ***$500 GOAL***. Donations can be made at https://donate-ashvamc.cheddarup.com

Thank you for supporting our local veterans

WNC-MOAA 'Never Stop Serving'

Steve making a 2nd delivery to Vicki at the Asheville VA



WNC-MOAA's - Warm Hands Warm Feet Donation Campaign

When the need was identified, the WNC-MOAA Chapter once again demonstrated how effectively it can rally support in service to veterans. Through the Warm Hands Warm Feet Holiday Donation Campaign, chapter members and members of the local community came together to provide winter essentials and comfort items for residents of the Veterans Restoration Quarters in Asheville.

The campaign was coordinated by Joe Neubert and quickly gained strong participation. While many donations came from WNC MOAA chapter members, a significant number were contributed by local community members who learned about the drive and wanted to help. That broad support reflects both the visibility of the chapter in Western North Carolina and the shared commitment across the community to care for veterans during the winter months.

A critical partner in the effort was Guidon Brewing, which generously sponsored a drive up drop off location in Hendersonville. The convenient location and welcoming atmosphere made it easy for donors to contribute and helped spread awareness of the campaign. A special thank you goes to Mike and Connie of Guidon Brewing for their hospitality and support.

The campaign collected an impressive number of donations including more than 200 pairs of socks, 25 pairs of gloves, 19 beanie hats, 45 boxes of colored pencils, 16 pencil sharpeners, 75 adult coloring books, 50 puzzle books, a limited quantity of snack packs, and 450 dollars in monetary donations. These items provided not only warmth and practical assistance but also opportunities for relaxation and creativity for VRQ residents.

The drive up drop off was supported by a number of chapter volunteers and the chapter extends its sincere thanks to everyone who helped make the campaign successful. The donations were delivered to Veterans Restoration Quarters by Joe and Debbie Neubert along with Steve and Jennifer Watkins.



Jen, Steve & Joe making the donations to Ruth at the VRQ



At Guidon Brewing after the drop-off - (l-r): Lisa L, Jen Watkins, Jeff Snyder, Debbie Neubert, Paula Snyder, Portia Odell, Joe Neubert, John Odell, Tim L

The Warm Hands Warm Feet campaign is another strong example of how the WNC MOAA Chapter works alongside local partners and neighbors to support veterans in meaningful ways. Through collective effort and generosity, the chapter helped ensure that VRQ residents felt supported, valued, and remembered during the holiday season.



WNC-MOAA Shirts and Caps!

We're excited to announce that WNC-MOAA shirts and caps are available! Show your Chapter Pride with these stylish pieces, featuring the embroidered WNC-MOAA logo. We expect to have a limited supply at our chapter meeting, so make sure to check them out!



Shirts: These classic grey shirts are available in assorted sizes, with the WNC-MOAA logo embroidered on the left chest. *Price - $35.00*.



Caps: Choose between tan or grey, both with the embroidered WNC-MOAA logo. *Price - $27.00*.

To order your gear and represent WNC-MOAA, visit https://my.cheddarup.com/c/wnc-moaa-gear to place your order today!

Surviving Spouse Corner: Making a VA Benefits Compensation Claim

Through her involvement with MOAA, Nora Durham learned about a benefit that has made a lasting difference in her life: VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). DIC is a tax-free monthly benefit available to eligible survivors of service members and veterans who died from service-related causes.

Nora's husband served in Vietnam and was exposed to Agent Orange. It was later determined that this exposure caused the heart disease that contributed to his death. As a result, Nora qualified for DIC. With the assistance of a local Veterans Service Officer (VSO) and the VA Office of Survivor Assistance, she now receives this tax-free compensation for the rest of her life.

Surviving spouses, children, or parents of a service member who died in the line of duty, as well as survivors of veterans who passed away due to a service-connected injury or illness, may be eligible for this benefit. The VA encourages survivors to explore their eligibility and learn more through official VA resources.

Nora emphasizes the importance of working with a knowledgeable Veterans Service Officer. While not all VSOs provide the same level of assistance, persistence can pay off. Finding the right advocate was key to successfully navigating the process.

To prepare for filing a VA claim for disability or survivor benefits, applicants should gather the following documents whenever possible:

- Military discharge paperwork (DD Form 214), preferably an original or certified copy
- Additional military service information, including branch and dates of service
- Medical records, military and civilian if available, along with contact information for civilian providers who treated the veteran for service-related conditions
- Bank deposit information, as VA benefits are paid by direct deposit

If these documents are not readily available, veterans or surviving family members may request records online through the National Archives.

This information is shared to help ensure surviving spouses and families are aware of benefits they may have earned through their loved one's service.

Source: "Surviving Spouse Corner: Making a VA Benefits Compensation Claim,"

MOAA Author: Nora Durham, Member, MOAA Surviving Spouse Advisory Council



Travel with Those Who Understand Service

MOAA Vacations provides expertly planned travel experiences created specifically for the military community. From escorted land tours and river cruises to ocean voyages and independent travel, each trip is designed to be worry-free, value-packed, and enriching.

Travelers enjoy exclusive savings, special amenities, and the confidence of working with professionals who understand military life and the importance of attention to detail. Whether you are exploring historic destinations, relaxing on a cruise, or checking off a bucket-list adventure, MOAA Vacations makes traveling easy and rewarding.

Open to MOAA members, surviving spouses, and eligible family members.

Learn more and start planning your next journey at:
MOAA Vacations

Phone: 800-211-5107 or Email mail@moaavacations.com

MOAA membership required. Offers and availability vary by trip.

Have You Visited Our Website and 'Liked' Our Facebook Page?

www.wnc-moaa.org & Facebook: ***WNC- MOAA***

The WNC-MOAA website is a comprehensive and valuable tool that you can use to make the most of your MOAA Membership. Some of the things you can find on our website include:

Events Calendar: Check out our "Events" page to view an updated calendar of upcoming MOAA events.

Newsletters: Access the latest issue of our award-winning Chapter Newsletter, as well as archived editions for reference.

Photo Gallery of Events: Browse photos from our luncheons, special meetings, conventions, and more! If you've attended a WNC-MOAA event, you might just spot yourself in one of the albums.

Facebook: Follow us at *WNC-MOAA* on Facebook to view photo albums, like and share posts, and stay informed on chapter news and events.

Please note: By attending a WNC-MOAA event, you grant permission for your photographic image to be captured and used in our publications, including our website, newsletters, and social media platforms.

WNC-MOAA Service That Fits Real Life

Submitted by Steve Watkins

Across Western North Carolina, WNC-MOAA members quietly do what they have always done. *They show up!*

For many veterans and families, this feels familiar. During military service, especially in the post 9/11 years, support often came from the people closest to you. Unit members who understood the pace and pressure. Spouses who stepped in without being asked. Help was informal, practical, and rooted in shared experiences. Someone watched the kids when plans changed. Someone offered a ride. Someone listened without needing an explanation.



That same spirit continues within WNC-MOAA.

Showing up does not always mean attending a meeting or serving on a committee. More often, it means fitting support into lives already full with work, family responsibilities, appointments, school schedules, deployments remembered, careers rebuilt, and daily demands that leave little extra time.

Over the past year, members have supported one another in ways that reflect that reality. A shoulder to be there for during a difficult time; sitting alongside a member while making a conference call with TRICARE or MOAA Member Services; coordinating carpools so someone can get a new ID card without losing a full day of work; offering a ride to a doctor appointment; meeting for lunch simply to check in and be present for another member, veteran, spouse, or surviving spouse.

For former military spouses, this kind of connection often carries special meaning. Many remember the quiet networks that formed during active duty years. The neighbors who understood sudden schedule changes, solo parenting stretches, and the stress that came with uncertainty. Within WNC-MOAA, spouses and surviving spouses continue to find that same understanding. Support that does not require explanation. Conversations that acknowledge both service and sacrifice. A sense of belonging that recognizes the role families played then and continue to play now.

Some of the most meaningful support happens quietly. Members helping one another move household items when needed. Home cooked meals shared when a household experiences a medical emergency. Staying connected when someone cannot easily step away because of work commitments, children, or spouse / parental caregiving responsibilities.

This kind of service adapts to real life. Just as it did within military units, no one is expected to do everything or be everywhere. People contribute when they can, in ways that make sense for their season of life. The support is practical, flexible, and grounded in trust rather than obligation.

Alongside this personal support, WNC-MOAA continues to serve the broader veteran community throughout the Western North Carolina region. The chapter partners with local organizations, supports veterans and families facing hardship, welcomes veterans home, and maintains active WNC satellite involvement across Western North Carolina. These visible efforts grow out of the same culture that defines the quieter moments. Someone in the Chapter notices a need and responds.

For many members, the value of WNC-MOAA is not measured by how often they attend events. It is measured by knowing there is a community that understands military service, family pressures, and the transition to civilian life, and that shows up when it matters.

In that way, WNC-MOAA feels less like joining something new and more like returning to something familiar. A place where shared service creates connection, where support is personal, and where the bonds formed in uniform continue long after service has ended.

'Never Stop Serving'

Continuing the Call to Serve: Board Member Introductions



This year, members have the opportunity to get to know Jim Gough, who serves as the WNC-MOAA Board's U.S. Marine Corps Representative. Jim is a retired Marine Corps Major who served 20 years as an armor officer, including command of B Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, Task Force Ripper, 1st Marine Division during Desert Storm. Following his military service, Jim continued supporting the Marine Corps as Director of Transportation Services within Headquarters Marine Corps. He and his wife, Maureen, also a Marine veteran, relocated to Hendersonville in late 2023. Jim remains deeply committed to serving veterans and the local community and also serves as Quartermaster for VFW Hedrick-Rhodes Post 5206. His continued dedication reflects the spirit of service that defines WNC-MOAA.



Members will also be introduced to John Odell, who serves as the WNC-MOAA Board's Navy Representative. John retired from the U.S. Navy after 22 years of service in cryptologic maintenance, retiring as a Lieutenant (O-3E). A Navy Mustang, John's career began as an enlisted Sailor and progressed through commissioning to officer service, including leadership as an Electronics Materiel Officer and Department Head. After military retirement, John continued his professional career in naval electronics and facilities engineering. He and his wife, Portia, have called Penrose home since 2012 and enjoy traveling together. John values staying connected to military service and is active in several veteran and service organizations, including the U.S. Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association and the Knights of Columbus. His experience and perspective add depth and continuity to the Board.

Leave a Legacy of Service in Western North Carolina

Support the Mission of WNC-MOAA for Years to Come

The Western North Carolina Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (WNC-MOAA) is built on a simple but powerful commitment: never stop serving. Our members put that into action every day - honoring hospice patients through our partnership with Four Seasons Hospice and the We Honor Veterans program, purchasing wreaths for veterans' graves across the region, supporting Blue Ridge Honor Flight, helping fund JROTC programs in local high schools, backing Vet Smiles to restore dignity through dental care, preparing and serving monthly meals at the Veterans Restoration Quarters (VRQ), and supporting the Western North Carolina VA Hospital and Clinics through drives for hygiene items, snacks, and other critical needs.

Now, we invite you to extend that commitment through a lasting gift: a legacy donation.

What Is a Legacy Gift?

A legacy gift - also called a planned or estate gift - is a meaningful way to support WNC-MOAA through your will, trust, or beneficiary designations. It allows you to leave a gift without affecting your finances during your lifetime. You can give a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or name WNC-MOAA as the beneficiary of a retirement account or life insurance policy.

Why It Matters

Your gift helps ensure that WNC-MOAA remains a force for good across the mountains of Western North Carolina for years to come. It will support:

- Outreach and meal service at the VRQ
- Donations and support to the WNC VA Hospital and Clinics
- Wreaths Across America placements throughout our region
- JROTC recognition and leadership development
- The Vet Smiles dental care initiative
- Veteran honor ceremonies in hospice care
- Blue Ridge Honor Flight send-offs and welcome homes
- Chapter programming, events, and advocacy efforts

Rooted in Western North Carolina

Our chapter serves communities across Asheville, Hendersonville, Waynesville, Franklin, Brevard, Black Mountain, and beyond. A legacy gift lets your values live on - strengthening local efforts that support, honor, and connect veterans throughout the region.

How to Make a Gift

Making a legacy gift is straightforward. Here's sample language for your will or trust:

> *"I give and bequeath to the Western North Carolina Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, a 501(c)(19) nonprofit organization, the sum of $____ (or __% of my estate) to support its veteran-focused mission in Western North Carolina."*

You can also name WNC-MOAA as a beneficiary of a retirement account, bank account, or life insurance policy.

We'd Be Honored to Talk

If you've already included WNC-MOAA in your estate plans - or would like to learn more - please contact Steve Watkins at president@wnc-moaa.org or speak with any board member. We'll respect your privacy and ensure your gift is used according to your wishes.

Western North Carolina is our home. Service is our legacy.
Your gift ensures we 'Never Stop Serving'.



Purpose of the Western North Carolina Chapter, Military Officers Association of America, Inc.

The purposes of the Chapter shall be to promote the purposes of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA); foster fraternal relations among retired, active duty, and former officers of the uniformed services and their reserve components; protect the rights and interests of active duty, retired, and reserve component personnel of the uniformed services and their dependents and survivors; provide useful services for members and their dependents and survivors; and serve the community and the nation.

Ref: WNC-MOAA bylaws updated, amended, and approved November 15th, 2025 can be found on our website at

https://wnc-moaa.org/chapterbylaws/



From the Treasurer's Desk: Financial Update & Looking Ahead

Good afternoon, I hope you are well. I am Steve Salter, your new Treasurer. In the spirit of "Never Stop Serving," I volunteered to take on these duties as Doug Abbotts neared the end of his term. During our Board meeting last month, two actions stood out to me. First, the Board approved the Fiscal Year 2026 Chapter budget. I was grateful for this step, as it provides a clear benchmark against which we can measure our financial progress. Second, we received word from MOAA headquarters that the Chapter would be provided contact information for more than 1,000 individuals who reside in our region, are MOAA National members, but are not currently registered with WNC-MOAA. If our outreach results in even 10% of these individuals choosing to join WNC-MOAA, it would nearly double our Chapter dues revenue. The financial strength that would result would open doors to new opportunities to further support our fellow veterans and their families. I will keep you posted as we move through our first quarter. Overall, the financial position of our Chapter remains very solid, and I look forward to an engaging and productive fiscal year ahead.



Steve Salter
WNC-MOAA Treasurer
2026-2027

FY 2026 CASH FLOW REPORT - 1/17/2026

INCOME	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	YTD	Budget	Diff
Membership Dues	$510.00				$510.00	$4,000.00	$3,490.00
Miscellaneous Income					$0.00	$200.00	$200.00
Donations					$0.00	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
VA Donations					$0.00	$500.00	$500.00
Chapter Meeting & Raffles					$0.00	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
Badges					$0.00	$50.00	$50.00
Surviving Spouse Dues					$0.00	$100.00	$100.00
NCCOC					$0.00	$300.00	$300.00
MOAA HQ					$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Wreaths /America donations					$0.00	$500.00	$500.00
Gear pass thru					$0.00	$200.00	$200.00
Total Income	$510.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$510.00	$11,850.00	$11,340.00
EXPENSES							
NCCOC Dues					$0.00	$200.00	$200.00
BCVC					$0.00	$50.00	$50.00
Recruiting & Retention					$0.00	$500.00	$500.00
Web/Digital Services					$0.00	$400.00	$400.00
Liability Insurance					$0.00	$538.00	$538.00
IRS tax filing					$0.00	$50.00	$50.00
USPS/Shipping	$210.00				$210.00	$200.00	$10.00
Administrative Supplies	$12.20				$12.20	$300.00	$287.80
JROTC Awards					$0.00	$200.00	$200.00
Speaker Gifts					$0.00	$0.00	$200.00
Badges					$0.00	$50.00	$50.00
Donations					$0.00	$4,000.00	$4,000.00
Meetings Expenses/Rafles	$125.00				$125.00	$6,000.00	$5,875.00
Smoky Mtn Satellite Support					$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Woodfin Satelite Support					$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
President's Travel					$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Wreaths/America expense					$0.00	$500.00	$500.00
Gear pass thru					$0.00	$200.00	$200.00
Total Expenses	$347.20	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$347.20	$13,188.00	$13,040.80
NET INCOME / NET LOSS					$162.80	$1,338.00	
(RESERVE) BANK BALANCE			12/31/25		$14,048.58		

Hails and Farewells and TAPS

Hails

Meril-Lee Jones, Surviving Spouse
Mark Wilson, MAJ (Fmr)

Farewells

None Reported

TAPS

Robert "Bob" Rebscher

'NEVER STOP SERVING' … CHAPTER INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We Honor Veterans - Since November 2014, WNC-MOAA, in partnership with Four Seasons Hospice, has honored ***over 1,000*** veterans with special pinning ceremonies to salute veterans in hospice care and thank them for their service. To learn more and get involved, contact **John Knapp, 828-702-3317** j.knapp4@att.net

VRQ - The Chapter continues to serve our area's homeless veterans by providing a lunch prep/ serve crew on the 4th Wednesday of every month at the Veterans Restoration Quarters (VRQ). We also provide the 5th Wednesday lunch crew in applicable months. The VRQ is a converted motel that provides shelter, counseling, and vocational training for the area's homeless veterans. Chapter members arrive at 9:30 to prepare for the lunch meal then, at 12:00, serve the meal to the residents of the Veteran's Restoration Quarters. The Chapter is very proud to have been serving our area's veterans with this effort since 2015. If you would be interested in joining our crew, please contact the Chapter's VRQ volunteer coordinator, **Jeff Snyder, at jsnyder243@aol.com.**

Veterans Restoration Quarters (VRQ)

Blue Ridge Honor Flight transports American veterans to Washington, DC two times each year to "visit memorials dedicated to honor their service and the sacrifices of themselves and their friends." There are opportunities to donate, as well as learn more about applying as an honoree, guardian, or volunteer. For more information, contact **Steve Watkins at 608-225-0594 or steve.watkins@blueridgehonorflight.com or www.blueridgehonorflight.com**

Next flight: April 18, 2026

JROTC is active in 18 high schools throughout WNC. Our Chapter provides support to these units in a number of ways, to include presentation of the annual MOAA Leadership awards for a rising Senior in each unit. Chapter members present the awards on behalf of the Chapter at unit award ceremonies held in the spring. For more information about supporting the award presentations, and other information about supporting JROTC, contact Jeff Snyder at 757-570-1472 or jsnyder243@aol.com

Established in 2013, the Veterans Healing Farm's mission is "To enhance the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of our nation's Veterans and their families." This is accomplished through the creation of a safe, peaceful environment that fosters healing and camaraderie. Programs focus on brain health and includes Agri therapy (organic farming, beekeeping, medicinal herbs) as well as a variety of other therapies/ therapeutic activities, workshops, and live events. **To learn more: https://www.veteranshealingfarm.org/about**

Veteran Smiles Foundation is dedicated to helping veterans find their dental home all across North Carolina. Continuing the relationship with ECU Dental School of Medicine as established with the Sylva Community Service Learning Center (CSLC). Because of the success of the Sylva program Vet-Smiles programs are now partnering with the other CSLCs in Brunswick County, Robeson County, Lillington, Ahoskie, Elizabeth City, Davidson County, and Spruce Pine to reach more NC veterans. WNC-MOAA will continue its partnership with the Sylva clinic and coordinate efforts with VSF and NC Serves to continue to help identify veterans in need of dental care and a dental home for continuity of care. For more information, contact, **David McCracken, 984-233-3350, https://vetsmiles.org/**

The mission of the **Veterans History Museum of the Carolinas** is to honor our nation's veterans, to educate the public about our country's military history and the contribution of our servicemen and women, and to preserve important and unique historic artifacts. The Museum reflects a love of country and gratitude to those who serve it by remembering and celebrating their service. A world-class museum and great destination for visitors. For more information: **WNC-MOAA Museum POC: Duke Woodhull** dukewoodhull@gmail.com or go to: **https://theveteransmuseum.org/**

Join the WNC-MOAA Chapter

Pay Chapter Dues or Make Donations

If you like paying for things electronically and don't like writing checks, you can now pay for your WNC-MOAA *Chapter items online.*

You can do the following all online: you can PAY your Annual Membership Dues; make a DONATION to the Chapter's Operating Expenses; and you can even PAY for Chapter Activities (i.e. Quarterly General Membership Meetings).

- Go to my.cheddarup.com/c/dues-wnc-moaa-2026
- Select '**Join WNC-MOAA or Renew WNC-MOAA Dues'**
- Select your **'Member Dues' or 'Surviving Spouse Member'** option.
- Select if you need an optional **'Replacement Name Badge'**
- Select if you want to make an optional **'Donation'** if you would like to donate to the Chapter's Operating Expenses.
- Select the length of membership you would like (example - selecting a 3 years membership will protect you from any dues increase during those 3 years).
- Complete the contact information.

Cheddar Up

MOAA N C WNC-MOAA

WNC-MOAA Board of Directors and Officers 2026 - 2027

President: Steve Watkins, COL, USA (Ret)
1st Vice President: Jeff Snyder, Col. USAF (Ret)
2nd Vice President: ***Vacant - please volunteer***
Secretary: Joe Neubert, CPT. USA (Fmr)
Treasurer: Steve Salter, LT, USN (Fmr)
US Army Rep: Rod Honeycutt, COL USA (Ret)
US Navy Rep: John Odell, LT, USN (Ret)
USMC Rep: Jim Gough, Col, USMC
USAF Rep: Vic Marshall, Col. USAF (Ret)
At Large Rep: Jim Steinbaugh, CAPT, USN (Ret)
Black Mountain Satellite Chair: Ernie Reynolds, LTC, USA (Ret)
Smoky Mountain Satellite Chair: John O'Donnell, CDR, USN (Ret)
Woodfin Satellite Chair: Rod Honeycutt, COL, USA (Ret)
Membership Chair: ***Vacant - please volunteer***
Programs Chair: Jeff Snyder, Col. USAF (Ret)
Immediate Past President: Donna Culp, Capt. USAF (Fmr)
Chaplain: - ***Vacant - please volunteer***
Senior Advisor: Rick Devereaux, Maj Gen, USAF, (Ret.)
Newsletter Editor: Steve Watkins, COL, USA (Ret)
JROTC Liaison: Jeff Snyder, Col. USAF (Ret)
Legislative Affairs - Federal: Dr. Vivianne Wersel, Au.D.
Legislative Affairs - State: Tricia Vinson, LTC, USA (Ret)
Asheville VA Liaison: John O'Donnell, CDR, USN (Ret)
Surviving Spouse Liaison: Sharon Woodcock
Webmaster: Steve Watkins, COL, USA (Ret)

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

New number. Same support.

Dial 988 then Press 1

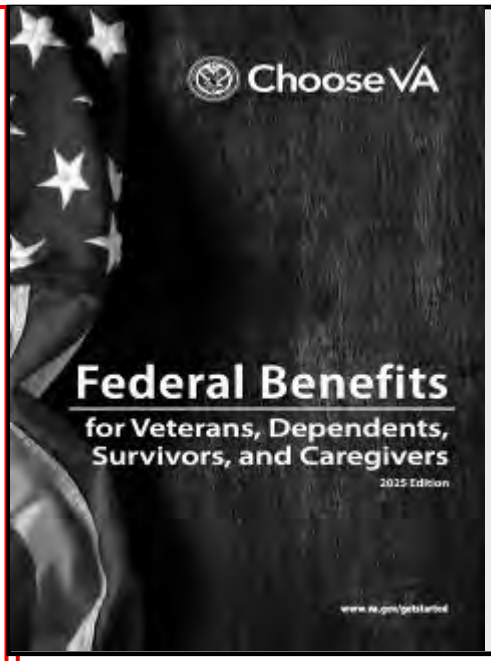
Please Share The New Phone Option For The Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 & Press 1

https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/



https://www.taps.org/mission

TAPS 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline is always available toll-free with loving support and resources at 800-959-TAPS (8277)



To download your copy go to:

2025-Federal-Benefits-for-Veterans-Dependents-and-Survivors.pdf

Keep Your MOAA Contact Updated

Moved?

New Email address?

New Phone Number?

Upgrade Your Membership?

MOAA:

Call the **Member Service Center** at:
(800) 234-6622 or (703) 549-2311
e-mail **msc@moaa.org**

WNC-MOAA:

Use the Join Form in this newsletter to change address, update contact Information, join, or renew.

Mail checks to:

PO Box 1984, Hendersonville, NC 28793

or go to

https://www.wnc-moaa.org/

For an electronic version of this newsletter go to the WNC-MOAA website

The Western North Carolina Chapter of MOAA has once again earned MOAA's highest honors for 2024, with the awards presented in 2025. We are proud to be recognized as a 5-Star Levels of Excellence Chapter and a 5-Star winner of the Harris Communications Award for both our newsletter and website!

THE LARGER OUR NUMBERS, THE GREATER YOUR VOICE.

Why WNC-MOAA chapter membership matters.

WNC-MOAA

MOAA Military Officers Association of America



WNC-MOAA CHAPTER & MOAA MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM (2025)

Name _____

Rank _____ Branch of Service _____

☐ Active ☐ Retired ☐ Former ☐ Reserve ☐ National Guard ☐ Surviving Spouse

Address _____

City _____ State ____ ZIP _____

Date of birth _____ Email _____ Phone _____

(To ensure deliverability of MOAA communications, please provide a personal email address.)

Are you a MOAA member? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown

MOAA Member Number (if known) _____

Spouse's information

Spouse's name _____

Spouse's email _____ Spouse's phone _____

Is your spouse a MOAA member or eligible to be a MOAA member? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Your Chapter interest: ☐ Attending Social Events ☐ Board of Directors ☐ Member Recruiting ☐ Legislative Affairs ☐ Newsletter Editing ☐ Public Affairs ☐ Spouse's Programs

Not a MOAA national member yet? Check here to receive a BASIC Membership at no cost to you. ☐ BASIC

And, for only $4 a month, you can upgrade to **PREMIUM** membership, giving you immediate access to a full spectrum of career and financial resources, exclusive publications, college scholarships for dependents, and countless discounts on products and travel. **Visit moaa.org/join** to learn more.

How did you hear about MOAA Chapter involvement? _____

Are you a member of any other MOAA Chapter(s)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which one(s)? _____

To complete enrollment:

- **Fill in this form** on your computer and email it to membership@wnc-moaa.org as an attachment ***or***
- **Print it** and fill it and mail it to:
  WNC-MOAA, P.O. Box 1984, Hendersonville, NC 28793 ***or***
  Scan it and e-mail it to membership@wnc-moaa.org
- Go to wnc-moaa.org for more information about our Chapter.

You will be opted in to receive e-communications from MOAA and your local chapter. You will be able to opt out of any further e-communications at any time. MOAA will not sell or share personal information.

Western North Carolina Chapter membership of MOAA

Chapter Dues are due January 1
(No Later Than March 1)

Member

☐ $35 - New Member (includes Spouse)

☐ $35 - Renew

Surviving Spouse

☐ $10 - New or Renew

Name Badges
(Badges are Magnet type only)

☐ All Badges - $15 each

Badge Name(s):

_____

_____

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Watkins at: membership@wnc-moaa.org or call/text 608-225-0594

Clear Form

Join us for a Luncheon!

MOAA

WNC-MOAA

Saturday, February 21, 2026

Location: Hedrick-Rhodes Veterans Center
900 N Main St
Hendersonville, NC 28792

Meeting / Lunch Registration: 11:15 AM Check-in / Social - 12:00 PM Lunch / Program

Registration & Payment must be received NLT Monday, February 16, 2026

Registration and Payment options

Option 1 (Preferred)
Register & Pay link or with QR code - $30 each

https://feb26-moaa.cheddarup.com

Option 2
Lunch by mailed check - $30 each

Mail Registration & Check to:

WNC MOAA
P.O. Box 1984
Hendersonville, NC 28793

Make checks payable to: WNC MOAA; Enclosed is my check for ____ meal (s) at $30 per person.

I / we plan on attending the WNC MOAA General Chapter Meeting on Saturday, February 21, 2026

Name:_____ Guest: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail:_____

Dress code: Country Club Casual – *Relaxed attire. Collared shirts required for gentlemen but not jackets. Men in collared shirts, polo tops, and slacks and women in simple blouses, fitted trousers, skirts, and dresses.*

PARKING INSTRUCTIONS: The main parking lot is located on the west side of the building. For those requiring handicapped parking, spaces are available on the east (back) side of the building, where a ramp provides safe entry into the meeting room. We will gather in the Multipurpose Room (Room 201) on the second floor, which can be accessed via stairs or elevator.

Service Beyond the Storm: The VRQ Story

We are pleased to announce our luncheon guest speakers will be members of the leadership team from Veterans Restoration Quarters (Veterans Village)

Marcus Laws, Director of the VRQ and Ruth Lolo, Volunteer Coordinator, will provide an update on the organization's long recovery following the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Helene. They will also share how Veterans Restoration Quarters continues its critical mission of supporting homeless veterans across Western North Carolina. This presentation will offer insight into resilience, recovery, and the ongoing needs of veterans in our community.

Don't miss this opportunity to be inspired!