

NEW YORK STATE CAPITAL DISTRICT CHAPTER OF THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The NYS Capital District Chapter and the Military Officers Association of America are non-partisan member organizations that honor, assist, and advocate for all who serve and have served honorably in the uniformed services of the United States of America.



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4-Star Chapter – 2022

5-Star Chapter: 2021, 2020, 2018 & 2017

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HIGHLIGHTED CHARITY for this issue → VETERANS & COMMUNITY HOUSING COALITION (VCHC)

Each Spring we highlight this local veteran support program, the *Guardian House* for homeless female veterans and the *Vet House* for homeless male veterans, operated by the **Veterans & Community Housing Coalition (VCHC)** of Saratoga County. The VCHC supports needy veterans in *Saratoga, Warren, Washington, Fulton, Montgomery, Schoharie and Schenectady Counties* with transitional housing, peer support programs, temporary financial assistance, help to obtain/maintain housing, and help to secure VA benefits, health care, employment, and other public aid. They are also in the process of establishing transitional housing for homeless female vets *and their dependent children* (“*Foreverly House*” - See our Nov-Dec 2021 Newsletter.)



The VCHC seeks and accepts donations from the local community to support their veterans. *To help them, we will be collecting the following types of items at our April meeting:*

- Household Items
- Cleaning Supplies
- Personal Care Items
- Pillows
- Twin Size Comforters
- Twin Size Sheet Sets
- Towels and Washcloths
- Gift Cards to help veterans to purchase food, clothing, gas, and other essential items

To donate directly to the VCHC, please see the VCHC website <http://www.vchcny.org/transitional> for more information.

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

OUR NEXT CHAPTER LUNCHEON MEETING IS APRIL 7, at EMMA JAYNES

1475 US 9, Clifton Park, NY 12065

We're meeting in the alcove at the rear of the main dining room.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yet another treat for American History buffs! We welcome one of our newest members ***Mark O'Rourke***, Captain (former) USA, who will tell us about the *MOVIE HE IS PRODUCING* – “*Saratoga: The Turning Point*”. Check out his website here: <https://1777.org/>

DRESS CODE: **Casual** – but, please, no torn jeans or sweatshirts

PROGRAM:

1300 hrs: *Check-in; Pay for your meal; Buy your 50/50 tickets; Pay-as-you-go bar; Mix & mingle*

1345 hrs: *Welcoming remarks; Pledge of Allegiance; Prayer for Service Members*

1400 hrs: *Lunch served*

1430 hrs: *Guest Speaker Presentation*

1530 hrs: *Announcements; 50/50 drawing; Farewell*

Continued on next page

FARE: A lunch that features:

A choice of one entree, with vegetables and/or potatoes depending on entrée:

- Braised **Beef** Short Ribs in a Puffed Pastry Shell
- **Chicken** Parmesan
- Pecan Crusted **Salmon**
- Honey-maple **Pork** Tenderloin

A choice of one dessert:

- Lemon Cake *or* Peanut Butter Pie

Alcoholic beverages are **not** included, *but a bar is available and you may start your own individual bar tab, or pay as you go at the bar.*

COST: \$40 per person

RESERVATIONS: Please call or email CHRIS COSTIGAN by **Thursday, APRIL 4th**, to confirm your attendance in advance. If you prefer, you may mail the luncheon reservation form found at the [very end](#) of this newsletter, along with your payment (check) to Chris, so he receives it by the due date above.

Chapter Meetings For 2024 – Updated

MEETING DATE & TYPE	MEETING LOCATION, NOTES
<i>MAR 23, Board of Directors Meeting</i>	<i>1100-1300 hrs (+/-), Emma Jaynes restaurant (lunch)</i>
APR 7, Luncheon Meeting	1300-1600 hrs, Emma Jaynes restaurant; Guest Speaker: Mark O'Rourke will talk about the movie he is producing on the battle of Saratoga!
JUN 9, Luncheon Meeting	1300-1600 hrs, Veterans of Lansingburgh pavilion on the Hudson; Guest Speaker: COL Alain Fisher, Commander US Army Watervliet Arsenal
<i>AUG xx, Board of Directors Meeting</i>	<i>TBD</i>
OCT 6, Luncheon Meeting	<i>Guest Speaker: [tentative] Capt Jon Guagenti, NYANG, Transport and evacuation missions in the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021</i>
<i>NOV 16, Board of Directors Meeting</i>	<i>TBD</i>
DEC 8, Holiday Party-Annual Business Mtg	TBD

May 12th is the deadline for submitting **news articles, photos, bio's, stories, or reviews of books, movies, food, or drinks** for the *next* issue! Please e-mail your input to newsletter editor Al Memole at ammmemole@gmail.com.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to our five (5) newest members who joined our Chapter since the beginning of 2024:

1. **Laurie Gates**, LT (former) USN, sister of our Chapter VP, COL Kathy Gates. Laurie is a true North Country woods-woman who enjoys a variety of outdoor activities and challenges.
2. **Christine Richardson**, LTC USA Ret. Christine, commissioned from Siena ROTC as a Military Police officer, recently moved “home” to Albany from her last duty station, West Point, NY, where she held several positions, including Operations and Alumni Affairs. She served in Desert Storm (101st Airborne) and Bosnia.
3. **Lance Richardson**, MAJ USA Ret., the other half of the Richardson military team, taught Sciences at West Point – biology and chemistry! An Infantry and Special Forces officer, Lance also served in Desert Storm with the 101st and in Bosnia, and several other Balkan countries. He is also a veteran of numerous discreet overseas deployments.
4. **Mark T. O’Rourke**, Esq., CPT (former) USA. Mark serves on the Board for the NYS Military Museum, and is the Producer / Managing Member for the independent feature film project, Saratoga: The Turning Point.
5. **Michael P. Golden**, Major, New York State Naval Militia, and Captain (former) USMC. Michael is currently the Deputy Director, Office of Special Investigation (Unemployment Insurance fraud), NYS Department of Labor. He is also heavily involved in other military-related organizations, serving as Registrar for the *Sons of the American Revolution*, Junior Vice Commander for the *Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War*, Junior Vice Commander for the *Military Order of the World Wars*, and the Veteran Committee member for the *Town of Milton Revolutionary War Committee*.

If you know former, retired, or still-serving military officers who aren’t yet MOAA members, or Chapter members, please invite them to join us and hand them a membership application (or send them the link): [Joint MOAA-Chapter Membership Application](#)

Chapter Dues For 2024

Annual Chapter dues for 2024 were due on January 1. Annual dues are **\$30**. If you have not yet paid dues for 2024, please pay promptly. You have three payment options:

1. **ONLINE**. Pay online by credit or debit card through the MOAA website. See instructions for paying online here: <https://chapterdues.moaa.org/Membership.aspx>
2. **MAIL**. Send a personal check made out to NYS CDC MOAA to our post office box at NYS CDC MOAA, PO Box 373, Waterford, NY 12188-0373, or mail it with your February luncheon reservation added to the luncheon payment.
3. **IN PERSON**. Pay by check or cash at the door when you attend our February meeting.

FYI – You can find all this information on our Chapter website: https://cdnymoaa.org/?page_id=1076

Please make every effort to pay your dues since dues are a critical part of our revenue stream which enables us to not only stay fiscally viable but helps us continue to support our veteran community partners.

Continued on next page

Thank you to all the members listed below who have paid their dues for this year:

Ed Balaban
Skip Bebernitz
Emanuel Biondi
Harold Brockman
Myles Caggins III
Stephen Cipperly
Ray Clark
Chris Costigan
David Erickson
Anthony Ficara
Ralph Folger

Kathy Gates
Laurie Gates
[Michael Golden](#)
Al Memole
[Vincent Memole](#)
Joseph Peck
Patrick Piccirilli
Sean Piccirilli
[Christine Richardson](#)
Merle Schreckengost
[Thomas Walsh](#)

Chapter News

- **LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT**

(Submitted by Pat Piccirilli, Legislative Affairs Committee)

It's that time of the year and so here are the three issue areas comprising this year's **Advocacy in Action (AiA)** campaign as approved by MOAA's board of directors on Jan. 19th.

1. The Major Richard Star Act: The Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 1282/S. 344) would end an unjust offset for combat-injured veterans who lose a dollar of service-earned retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation. The bill has a supermajority of bipartisan support – more than 325 House co-sponsors and more than 70 in the Senate – thanks in part to past grassroots efforts from MOAA and partners in [The Military Coalition](#). Some points to bring up to your legislator include the fact that retirement pay is earned for years of service and is provided by DOD whereas disability compensation is for a lifelong injury and is provided by the VA-two different payments for two different reasons from two different agencies. Docking retirement pay of 27,000 combat injured service members to pay for other programs is an injustice. Also roughly half of the veterans are covered by Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) which was developed to recover some, or all of their retirement. However, it is estimated that most of these service members would benefit more from receiving their full retirement pay concurrent with the VA disability benefit. This legislation would provide the option to retain CRSC or service earned retirement pay.

The plan at this point is to keep up this momentum and secure the bill's inclusion in the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). It's time for lawmakers to push this long-delayed step toward concurrent receipt for all past the finish line.

2. The B.A.H. Restoration Act: The BAH Restoration Act (H.R. 2537/S. 1823) reverses DoD policy capping the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) at 95% of local rental and utilities costs – a policy that's placing a financial burden on servicemembers and families in the middle of a nationwide rental shortage and ongoing recruiting challenges. Restoring this benefit – it was cut by Congress incrementally beginning in 2015 – would make a difference in the quality of life for all who serve, but especially among junior enlisted members and their families, who rely on this allowance as a large percentage of their compensation. Language requiring an incremental increase reached the late stages of the FY 2024 NDAA process but ultimately was not included in the final bill. **We must send a message to lawmakers that “close isn't good enough – servicemembers deserve a full housing allowance”, and more progress must be made this legislative session.**

Continued on next page

3. **TRICARE For Life:** Protecting TRICARE For Life (TFL) remains a key issue for all MOAA members – those already covered by TFL and Medicare, along with those who'll use the benefit when they turn 65. MOAA remains concerned about a [Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\) report](#) suggesting two measures which would severely weaken the benefit – enrollment fees topping \$1,100 per family, and cost-sharing requirements including an \$850 deductible and up to \$4,675 in potential yearly medical bills.

Legislators seeking solutions to budget gaps must hear a clear message: Maintaining TFL is not just a national obligation to those who spent decades in uniform, it's also critical to ensuring key influencers in the recruiting process aren't discouraged from recommending uniformed service to future generations. While TFL fees or cost shares aren't part of any current legislation, we must counter CBO's misguided options with our grassroots advocacy efforts. The next CBO release is slated for December of this year, following the elections; MOAA will update our members as soon as we get the report.

As a side note, *Skip Bebernitz* and I are honored to be on the team representing the state of New York during this upcoming AiA event. We are joined by *Matt Sprenger*, Mid-Hudson Chapter president.

While the three issues above represent National MOAA's AiA efforts there are still many issues that we need to bring to our legislators' attention. Some of these are listed below:

- Arlington Cemetery expansion “**Expanding America’s National Cemetery Act**” H.R.1413
- Dental Care for reservists “**Dental Care for our Troops Act**” H.R. 4220/S. 2046
- Allow retiring service members to apply for DoD civilian positions without waiting six months post-retirement “**Retain Skilled Veterans Act**” H.R. 939/S. 334
- Remove service earned disability benefits from HUD's income calculations. The “**Home for the Brave Act**” H.R. 6179. This act will also remove Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from HUD's income calculations.
- Reduce the burden on transitioning active-duty military spouses employed by federal agencies. “**Resilient Employment and Authorization Determination to Increase the National Employment of Serving Spouses (READINESS)**” H.R. 6462

One other resource for keeping up to date with legislation and happenings on Capitol Hill is www.moaa.org/advocacy-news.

Make your voice heard! Take action here, at MOAA's Legislative Action Center: <https://moaa.quorum.us/>

MOAA is NOT an organization of officers concerned *only* about officers. We are an organization of officers dedicated to protecting the earned benefits and welfare of ALL RANKS in all of the uniformed services.

• **OUR LAST LUNCHEON MEETING, FEBRUARY 11TH at EMMA JAYNES**

Our first ever meeting at Emma Jaynes restaurant was a success! The alcove was a little bit tight, but, other than that, the ambiance was pleasant, the staff was attentive, and the food was excellent. We had sixteen members and guests present (three others had to cancel), including three first-time attendees: new members *Lance and Christine Richardson* and *Donna Neary*. The highlight of the meeting was the multimedia slideshow presentation on “**African American Soldiers of the American Revolution**”, presented by local historian, *Jeannette Folger*, daughter of Ralph and Vicki Folger. It’s a shame that so many of us know so little about our own country’s history, especially the roles played by Black Americans. Jeannette explained that Blacks fought on both sides. In the early going in the northern colonies, free Blacks served alongside Whites in the integrated militia units and the Continental Army. Among them were individuals who had impactful roles. (Peter Salem, James Armistead Lafayette). But their overall contributions are an inspiring part of our national heritage.



PHOTOS: Above right – Jeannette Folger recounts the life and tragic death of patriot Crispus Attucks; At right – Dining in the alcove, left to right – Christine Richardson, Donna Neary, Rocco Acquilano, Vicki, Ralph, and Jeannette Folger, Skip Bebernitz, Mary Balaban, and Vince Memole. (Photos by Ed Balaban)



OTHER NEWS OF INTEREST

• **STRIDE ADAPTIVE SPORTS’ 19th ANNUAL WOUNDED WARRIOR SNOWFEST – March 1-3**

STRIDE honored and challenged thirteen warriors at this year’s Snowfest at Jiminy Peak with skiing and snowboarding events. <https://www.stride.org/wounded-warriors/>

• **RENSSELAER COUNTY HONOR-A-DECEASED-VETERAN CEREMONY**

The County will honor deceased WW II veteran *PFC John J. King, US Army*, in the Legislative Chambers, 99 Troy Rd, East Greenbush, **Monday, April 10, at 8:30 a.m.**

• **WEST POINT BAND WINTER SCHEDULE (also linked from our website)**

Saturday, April 13, 3:00 p.m., "The Long Gray Line", North Salem High School, North Salem, NY

CHAPTER PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – *SHARED MEALS & CAMARADERIE*

I would like to share my observations and thoughts on a series of three dinner events that I attended on three successive weekends, which reflect on MOAA and part of our Chapter mission: to promote camaraderie among officers.

The first event was our own Chapter luncheon meeting on February 9th. We didn't surpass our goal of at least 20 attendees, but we would have had 19 if it weren't for sickness. But, it's not the number of people that counts; it's the socializing and interactions. There were many lively conversations filling the alcove. From those came some surprising connections and shared acquaintances among members new and old. And, we were all drawn together listening to the presentation of American military history by our guest speaker. The luncheon showed once again that, although we are an eclectic lot, we have many things in common, including a shared purpose.

The following Sunday, I tagged along with Chapter members *Skip Bebernitz* and *Chris Costigan* to attend a Mid-Hudson Chapter luncheon meeting. Skip and Chris were going as NYS Council of Chapters (CoC) President and Eastern Region VP, respectively. Part of their Council duties is to check up on Chapters and assess their organizational health and needs. I went because I had met several Mid-Hudson members at CoC conventions and liked them, and wanted to see them and check out their venue (very nice!). I had a great time sitting between fellow newsletter editor *Bob Pascoello* and *Kimberly Sprenger* whose husband *Matt* was sworn in as the new Chapter President. Skip did the swearing in and also presented a MOAA recognition award to outgoing President *Jack Carlson* for his outstanding service to MOAA and his Chapter. It was an honor and a pleasure to spend time with a sister Chapter at one of their important meetings.



NYS CoC President Skip Bebernitz administers the oath to new Mid-Hudson Chapter President, Matthew Sprenger, COL USA Ret. (photo by Al Memole)

Saturday February 24 was a very different event. *Lt Col Jake Miller*, Commander of the AFROTC Detachment at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) had graciously invited me and my wife Mary to the **New York Capital District R.O.T.C. 71st Annual Joint Service Military Ball**, at the Hilton Garden Inn, Troy. I met Jake last year when I presented a MOAA ROTC award to one of his cadets. Arriving at the venue, Mary and I waded through throngs of “twenty-something” cadets and midshipmen. Now, you might think that would make us feel old, but, surprisingly, we felt young! Their youth and energy reminded us of our younger days. We had a nice time meeting some of these cadets and midshipmen. We also got to chat with Jake and his wife, Navy Commander *Dave Latta*, RPI's NROTC Commander, and his wife, *LTC Luis Mejia-Roman*, head of Army ROTC, and one of his instructors, *Major Effe Oghre* (I might have spelled MAJ Oghre's first name incorrectly).

We sat and conversed with Navy *LT Tucker Bonow*, Commander of the Naval Support Facility in Saratoga Springs, and his wife, NROTC HR assistant *Charlie Davis*, and NROTC Marine instructor, *Gunnery Sergeant Pat Shanahan* and his “date” – his nine-year-old daughter. Guest of Honor, *Captain Thomas P. O'Donnell*, USN, Commodore, Submarine Squadron TWELVE, gave an inspiring and often humorous talk that emphasized the importance for officers to develop a war-fighting spirit and attitude.

In both opening and closing remarks, our hosts were very kind to give a “shout-out” to MOAA and to thank publicly Mary and me for attending, an example of local veterans organizations that support their programs. This just reinforces the point that officers must never stop serving, and that we belong to a greater fraternity of arms.



LEFT: ROTC cadets and midshipmen fill up one half of the ballroom. In the foreground, Army NCOs and MAJ Oghre engage in lively discussion. (Photo by Al Memole)



RIGHT: ROTC cadets and midshipmen fill up the other half of the ballroom. In the foreground, Mary Memole is enjoying her night out. (Photo by Al Memole)

As things were wrapping up (for some of us), a young cadet rushed up to greet me. *Jesus Castillo* recognized my name when he heard it. I had the honor of presenting the MOAA JROTC award to him in 2021 when he was a junior at Albany High School (*Senior Military Advisor is our own MAJ Dave Erickson*). At that same ceremony, he assumed command of Albany High’s Sgt. Henry Johnson Battalion – the highest position in the JROTC program. We spoke again at the following year’s award ceremony when, as a graduating senior, he relinquished command. He told me then that his plan was to become a military pilot and eventually fly for a commercial airline. Now at Hudson Valley Community College and cross-enrolled at RPI for ROTC, he is still unwaveringly pursuing those same goals. I have no doubt that he will succeed. I was very moved that Cadet Castillo remembered me. It illustrates that sometimes a gesture that seems relatively minor, like awarding a medal, can make an impression or have an impact that we cannot perceive at the time. We do it, just the same. *Al Memole*



THEN & NOW
At left, Al Memole and JROTC Cadet Jesus Castillo in 2021. (Photo by Lawrence Clarke)
At right: Al Memole and ROTC Cadet Jesus Castillo in 2024. (Photo by Mary Memole)



CHAPTER OFFICERS

CHAPTER OFFICE	INCUMBENT	E-MAIL
President	Alfred M. Memole, LTC USA, RET	pres@cdnymoaa.org
1 st Vice President	Kathy E. Gates, COL USA, RET	1vp@cdnymoaa.org
2 nd Vice President	VACANT	2vp@cdnymoaa.org
Secretary	Ralph Folger, LCDR USNR, RET	secr@cdnymoaa.org
Treasurer	Patrick J. Piccirilli, LTC USAR RET	treas@cdnymoaa.org

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VACANT	VACANT

* Immediate Past-President ** Former President

LUNCHEON RESERVATION INFORMATION

Date: **APRIL 7, 2023**

Location: **EMMA JAYNES, Route 9**
Clifton Park, NY

Time: **1:00 PM** – Check-in; Social Mixer // 1:30 – 3:45 PM – Dinner & Guest Speaker

Price: \$40 per person (Please make checks payable to: **NYS CDC MOAA.**)

To pay Chapter dues for **2024** add **\$30** to your total.

Please make your reservation Not Later Than **Thursday, April 4th**

Send reservation form and check to: **Chris Costigan**

153 Paisley Road
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

OR e-mail Chris at costigan4@hughes.net **OR** call him at: 518- 884-2943 (h) or 518-755-5697 (c)

**Mail-In Luncheon Reservation Form**

Your name: _____

Number of persons attending: _____