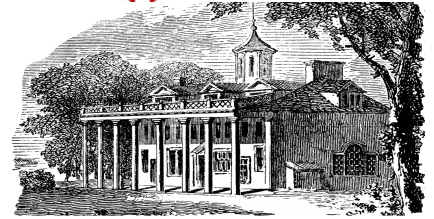


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The Despatch



Mount Vernon, Virginia Chapter - MOAA
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Mount Vernon Chapter

5 Star Level of Excellence



Awards



Adventure in Cambridge

LCDR Marty Schaller, USN (Ret), Scholarship Chair



Over the years, serving as the chapter’s Scholarship chair has sometimes been a bit like participating in a mini drama, as we become familiar with each successful applicant’s background, their aspirations and the outcome of their efforts. Most have excellent outcomes because of their preparations and pursuits. We have sent many students to the service academies and to upper tier universities over the years, but I believe that is the first time in over ten years that our chapter has sent a student to Harvard College - especially to enter the Marine Option program with the NROTC unit.

Anjali Ghafoerkhan is that student. I met her when she came to Richard E. Byrd Library in Springfield to interview for a scholarship grant. She had been accepted by the NROTC Unit at the University of Virginia, but Harvard College had wait-listed her. Anjali

acknowledged UVA’s reputation, but felt that a position in the NROTC Unit at Harvard was worth fighting for. About the time that she graduated from Garfield High School, Anjali was notified that she had been accepted by Harvard! On the way, Anjali did basic naval orientation at Great Lakes Illinois Naval Training Center after graduating from high school. She was about to become part of the contingent of three new Marine Option midshipmen. She advised that they are the first Marine Option students at Harvard in five years! She quipped: “The few. The proud...”

She says “Life at Harvard has been challenging, but I am adapting well to it. I have been greatly enjoying the Marine Option specific training (thus far including an introduction to land navigation, weapon safety and hiking). I think my favorite part has been the bonds I have formed with my fellow midshipmen. They’ve made every crazy early morning tolerable and given me things to laugh about, regardless of whatever stress or exhaustion I am dealing with.”

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November 2024

JROTC Scholarship continued on p. 5



Smash on Station

Esteemed colleagues,

We must continue to serve veterans in need during the holiday season. We all have deployed during many administrations through our long and illustrious careers, and we stayed focused on the mission assigned and the task at hand. November offers reminders to be thankful and to serve during the holidays celebrated this month.

Chapter News

Chapter Schedule to the end of 2024 – The Annual Business meeting and luncheon is scheduled for Saturday, November 16th from 1130-1300 at GLORY DAYS GRILL, 3141 Duke St, Alexandria, VA. Our guest speaker will be Col Diana Kupchella USAF(Ret), RN, JD and the current VCOC President. She plans on discussing the role of the VCOC and legislative activity. We will also have the installation of officers for 2025-2026.

November Observances – On November 10th 1775, A Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of the Continental Congress. In memory of all Marines, we who are Marines commemorate the birthday of our Corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history, not the least of which was being born in a Tavern!

November 11th is Veterans Day, a federal holiday in the United States observed annually to honor military veterans. Finally, 28 November is Thanksgiving Day, a day for all people to give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon them and for what they have.

Final Thoughts:

Personally, November has always been a reflective month. The right to vote and the concept of E Pluribus Unum are established tenets within our country. The holiday of Thanksgiving always provided family gatherings to be grateful for what we have and who we are as Americans. Finally, as I joined the Marine Corps in 1975, the 10th of November has held a special place on the November calendar. I celebrate the legacy of the Corps of which I was so proud to be a member of and to serve this great Nation. “America belongs to the People. It does not belong to Congress. It doesn’t belong to special interest groups. It doesn’t belong to the courts. It belongs to “We the People”...” John Jay, Founding Father.

**Never stop serving.
Semper Fidelis,
Smash**

NEVER STOP SERVING



Happy birthday!!! 🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸🇺🇸

👉👉 @marines

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MVC MOAA Legislative Corner

COL Kevin Catron, Legislative Chair



Virginia Veterans Eligible for the Virginia Military Survivors Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) Receive a Scare this Past Summer!

With the long summer now behind us, I am getting caught up on some of the legislative news and updates affecting local veterans. Couple this with my own recent

retirement from the Air Force, I was interested in researching benefits that directly impact our retirees and eligible veterans.

I was shocked to read about Virginia's efforts to repeal certain educational benefits for qualifying veterans and retirees. The VMSDEP is a Commonwealth of Virginia program that provides education benefits to spouses and children of qualifying veterans who have been rated by the VA as totally and permanently disabled or, receive at least a 90 percent disability rating. Specifically, if you qualify, the VMSDEP would cover up to 8 academic semesters at a Virginia public college and university. VMSDEP is one of only a few state-mandated tuition waiver programs, which means VA schools are required to waive tuition for prospective students who meet all eligibility requirements.

Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of retirees and veterans who receive a 90 percent or higher VA rating, leading to increased financial burdens on state schools. According to the State Council of Higher Education, during the 2022-23 school year, total waivers topped over \$65 million with eligible students topping 6,000, up from about 1,000 a decade prior. As result, the state budget proposed cuts on May 13, 2024, which would have required students' income to be factored into future decisions about tuition waivers. This would have meant significant education benefits being covered by the VMSDEP.

Virginia HB 6004 and SB 6012, signed into law by Governor Youngkin in July of 2024, repealed this change. The law now invests an additional \$90 million from a general fund surplus over the biennium — atop a prior \$40 million allocation — to fully cover the cost of the program. This is a huge victory for thousands of prospective Virginia high school children who counted on the program for their future education!





MVC-MOAA 2024 Events-Calendar



| DATE | LOCATION | EVENT / SPEAKER / TOPIC |
|---|--|---|
| Wed. Oct 2 7pm - 8pm | Virtual | BOD Meeting. 4 th QTR VCOC report; Legislative Cmte proposes Natl objectives. |
| Fri. Oct 25 8 am-1 pm | Wells Field House, 2104 Goethal Rd, Bldg 1810, Ft Belvoir | Annual Retiree Appreciation Day. This event is to show appreciation to all the retired service members/spouses from all the branches of military services, located in the NCR. To get on base, if you don't have a military or government ID, you will have to enter base through Tully gate off of Jefferson Davis Highway and Fairfax County Highway. We will be co-located with VFW Post 609. |
| Sat.Nov16 11am-1pm | Glory Days Grill 3141 Duke St, Alexandria | Lunch Brunch. Annual Business Meeting. Speaker TBD. <i>Lunch served at 11:30am. Officer Installation and Speaker to follow.</i> |
| Sat.Dec14 (Tentative) 9:30am-3pm | Alexandria Natl Cemetery; Social | Wreath Laying Holiday Social This is becoming an annual tradition for the Mount Vernon Chapter. Please join us for the annual Wreaths Across America day at Alexandria National Cemetery. We will be joining veterans from local VSOs, Boy Scouts, various military affiliated youth organizations, and numerous supporters from around the community. Following the wreath laying, we will conduct our holiday social at a place to be determined. |

Wreaths across America

Again, this year the Mount Vernon Chapter, MOAA is participating in the Wreaths across America Project, the national effort that remembers and honors our veterans and educates all generations about their sacrifice. We are supporting them with the purchase of wreaths in the coming months for their placement at Alexandria National Cemetery on **December 14, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.** Mount Vernon Chapter also uses this as a fundraising effort that helps service members and their families in the Fort Belvoir Community.

To learn more about Wreaths across America, go online to www.wreathscrossamerica.org.

To order Mount Vernon Chapter, MOAA sponsored wreaths for Alexandria National Cemetery go online to www.wreathscrossamerica.org/VA0020P This provides the easy steps to order wreaths.

This year Mount Vernon Chapter, MOAA has a goal of sponsoring 100 wreaths for Alexander National Cemetery. Please feel free to share this information with family members and friends so they too can participate in this very special effort. **The cutoff date for placing orders is December 3, 2024.**

If you need additional information, contact Bob Patrick, MVC Wreaths across America representative, at patbobval@verizon.net or call at (703)964-6022.



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