



**Middle Tennessee Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America  
P. O. Box 50252  
Nashville, TN 37205-0252**

MOAA  
Affiliated Councils & Chapters  
201 North Washington St.  
Alexandria, VA 22314

13 February 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Middle Tennessee Chapter, it gives me great pleasure to submit our "Level of Excellence Award" application for the 2024 calendar year.

The addendum supports our narrative response portion of the MTC LOE submission for the 2024 membership year. It is intended to provide validation of our abbreviated comments.

Respectfully,

//Signed//

Larry Cotton  
CAPT, USN (Ret.)  
President, Middle TN Chapter, MOAA

Narrative Portion of the Application

1. Advocacy

- Our Chapter (MTC) has long had a policy of not having currently serving politicians as speakers, or of making visits to the local offices of our elected representatives during an election year, unless there are extenuating circumstances that call for such an action. This policy served us well in 2024 at both the State and Federal levels.
- Chapter members actively participated in the TN Veterans (TNVET) “Day on the Hill” event at the TN State Capitol on 31 January 2024. Chapter members visited State Senators and Legislators from the districts in the MTC catchment area and, after completing them, visited about 30 additional legislators who did not have veteran constituents in attendance. Unfortunately, there was generally no interest in the state legislature in support of any of the TNVET initiatives, as most of the initiatives required funding which was not included in the Governor’s 2024 budget. Our chapter participation in TNVET flows from TN CoC membership, so our active participation in TNVET is also a means of supporting TN CoC.
- In 2024 our approach to the Legislative Action Center (LAC) was introductory in nature, promoting the LAC tool for our members in support of issues relative to the military (rather than those of specific local politicians). We made a concerted effort to generate interest in the use of the LAC at every monthly meeting, on our website, and in our newsletters. We appear to have only achieved moderate success, although we have no means to confirm this assumption. This initiative will be carried forward into 2025, where we hope to gain greater usage by our members. We will have an online LAC demonstration at our January 2025 meeting.

2. Community Engagement and Outreach

- Our Chapter orchestrated a weekend retreat for military caregivers (“Operation Wind Down”) with generous MOAA Community Outreach Grant (COG) funding. This activity involved coordinating and executing all details for a retreat which focused on caregiving resources, relaxation and self-care techniques, plus brain health strategies.
- We addressed food insecurity by providing formerly homeless veterans living in transitional housing with grocery gift cards purchased through COG funding as part of the Operation Stand Down TN (OSDTN) 2024 Annual Holiday Market. Twenty-eight veterans and two veteran families received gift cards to purchase food for their own Christmas meals because of this endeavor.
- We continued to present MOAA leadership awards and provide support to three ROTC Programs (Vanderbilt University AROTC and NROTC, and Tennessee State University AFROTC).
- We also presented or provided leadership awards to thirteen JROTC programs in our local area. We attempt to have a wide range of Chapter members making these presentations and this year five different members make presentations.
- We have funded four fully endowed scholarships with MOAA, and one fully endowed veterans’ scholarship at Lipscomb University. This year we awarded three \$1500 scholarships to students who were veterans at Lipscomb, Belmont University, and Tennessee State University, and contributed an additional \$3349.20 in non-designated funds to the MOAA Scholarship Fund.
- MTC members supported an annual volunteer effort where we packed food bags for subsequent distribution during OSDTN “Operation Food Bag”. Members also sponsored a table at the annual OSDTN “Heroes Breakfast” event, hosting several Vanderbilt University ROTC Cadets in the process. We continued our annual toy collection at our November meeting in support of the USMCR “Toys for Tots” Program.

- Our MTC Surviving Spouse Liaison (Mrs. Patricia Bergquist) continued to provide specific individual support to military spouses/surviving spouses throughout our area. She also performs these duties as the TN CoC Surviving Spouse Liaison (as well as anywhere in the United States when the demand arises).
- We utilized MOAA Community Sponsorship Grant funding to purchase a new Chapter banner with the updated MOAA emblem to promote brand awareness at chapter and recruiting events. We provide a wide range of training for our Chapter members on a variety of subjects (examples: personal affairs, the MOAA LAC, and the availability of services for veterans) throughout the year, using our monthly meetings, our newsletter, special events and our website to provide information. This approach manages the needs and expectations of those who can attend our meetings as well as those who cannot.
- We began creating appendices to our Bylaws for areas of responsibility assigned to Board positions beginning in 2023, with the intent to describe position responsibilities, delineate position processes, and provide basic reference documents to help new or substitute Board members fully perform necessary duties. To date we have incorporated the following appendices in our bylaws: ROTC, JROTC, Legislative Liaison, Membership, Personal Affairs, Scholarship, Transition Assistance, Treasurer, and Secretary. We quickly found that these descriptions were never quite finished, and now our process is to discuss document revisions at Board meetings and update the documents as agreed upon. The process continues.

### 3. Recruiting & Retention

- Our recruiting does not focus on age or conflict, as much as willingness to get involved. Our members are encouraged to invite officers and surviving spouses to our chapter meetings as an initial step in the recruitment process at every luncheon and in every monthly newsletter. This is particularly effective when our members participate in informal veterans' gatherings in the community, since our members tend to be active in multiple civic organizations, formal and informal. Our best recruiters have always been our current members. We also staff booths at veterans' events (for example the annual Bob Woodruff Foundation Vet Fest in 2024) as a means of encountering prospective members.
- We engage our membership by providing value for them in a few different ways. The first is through a monthly program of lunch meetings with guest presenters. These meetings provide camaraderie, interesting information and good food. The connections and friendships that develop through these luncheons are of great value to many of our members. The second is through our Chapter's various service outreach projects coordinated by our board member and past presidents (mentioned in section 2). Our participants in these projects value their ability to continue serving and sharing that mission with other Chapter members. The third is through our board meetings (which are open to all members), and our annual report to our members, a year in review presentation at our luncheon each January. This transparency available at our Board meetings and on display at the annual presentation encourages ownership and confidence in our existing membership.
- New members and visitors are recognized at our monthly luncheons and encouraged to stand and introduce themselves. The shared information on their careers allows our members with similar stories to form meaningful connections. When a new member joins, we provide the meal at their first meeting free, and we do not collect dues from them for the year of joining. This allows them to decide if our chapter is the correct fit for them without committing any funds. This process continues to work well for us.

### 4. Leadership Succession

- At each luncheon, our Board members encourage members to consider joining our Chapter leadership team to participate in our board meetings and witness how we operate. Individual Board members are

constantly contacting members to evaluate their interest in becoming a future leader. We have found that when this process becomes repetitive in nature members begin to seriously consider and then commit to learning more.

- The MTC Board of Directors is comprised of a combination of past Chapter presidents and those who have stepped up to fulfill specific functions (Surviving Spouse Liaison, Treasurer, Chaplain, etc.) and, once we have identified a member who has indicated an interest in becoming a Chapter leader, members of this group begin working with that individual to explain current process and get them involved. This quickly identifies where that individual would best fit the needs of the Chapter.
- We mentor new leaders by getting them involved in service projects, ROTC & JROTC award presentations, and anything else that we accomplish under the Chapter name. Getting them involved is the first step in mentoring and eventually in leading the Chapter.
- Our leadership succession plan worked until it didn't, and now we are having to rethink the amount of time we had allocated to each of the two positions leading to becoming President. Our previous path involved being 2nd Vice President for two years in a learning role, then 1st Vice President for two years responsible for speakers for programs, followed by two years as President. We are now encountering very few takers on committing to that six-year period, and we are currently operating with only one Vice President in a compressed familiarization timeframe. This process continues to be a work in process as we adjust to individual circumstances.
- On 23 January 2024 we awarded Lt Col Karon Uzzell, USAF (Ret.) our immediate past President the MOAA Leadership Award, in recognition of her outstanding leadership and initiative on behalf of the Chapter. She took the Chapter to new levels of community involvement, spearheading our MOAA Grant proposals and our involvement with other veteran resources in our cachment area. Recognition of exemplary leadership will inspire others to step forward.

## 5. Training

- We provide a wide range of training for our Chapter members on a variety of subjects (examples: personal affairs, the MOAA LAC, and the availability of services for veterans) throughout the year, using our monthly meetings, our newsletter, special events and our website to provide information. This approach manages the needs and expectations of those who can attend our meetings as well as those who cannot.
- The Chapter President ensures that all Board members are aware of the timing and subject of each of the monthly MOAA Leader Roundtables and other quarterly meetings as they are scheduled. At a minimum, the Chapter President and the Membership Chair attend most of the Affiliated Councils and Chapters Zoom meetings. Following these training sessions, the topics become items on our next MTC Board agenda so that the lessons learned, and guidance received has a broader audience.
- We also use the TN Council of Chapters (TN CoC) meetings as training opportunities as we hear about how other Chapters succeed or fail in their initiatives. These meetings become a very collaborative workspace. We normally have three to four Board members attend the TN CoC quarterly meetings, and every TN CoC meeting involves insight as to whether something works or doesn't work for member Chapters, and this becomes eventual input for our Board meetings. Given the geographical proximity of several of the TN CoC chapters, we also frequently share speaker recommendations amongst Chapters.
- We began creating appendices to our Bylaws for areas of responsibility assigned to Board positions beginning in 2023, with the intent to describe position responsibilities, delineate position processes, and provide basic reference documents to help new or substitute Board members fully perform necessary duties. To date we have incorporated the following appendices in our bylaws: ROTC, JROTC, Legislative Liaison, Membership, Personal Affairs, Scholarship, Transition Assistance, Treasurer, and Secretary. We quickly found

that these descriptions were never quite finished, and now our process is to discuss document revisions at Board meetings and update the documents as agreed upon. The process continues.

6. Participation in a State Council

- MTC leadership actively participates in person or by Zoom at every TN Council of Chapters quarterly meeting. Our in person participation at most meetings consists of our Chapter President, a Chapter Past President, and our Membership Chair (also a Past TN CoC President). Our Surviving Spouse Liaison (also the TN CoC Liaison) normally joins via Zoom. We maintain MTC newsletters on the TN CoC website and provide Chapter updates for each of the quarterly TN CoC meetings. The TN CoC President was our speaker at the July monthly luncheon.

Middle TN Chapter (TN04) 2024 LOE Application

MTC recognition of our outgoing President (Lt Col Karon Uzzell-Baggett) with the MOAA Leadership Award at our 23 January meeting.



MTC members participating in the TNVET Day on the Hill with the Tennessee Legislature on 31 January 2024.

Participants at the MTC “Operation Care Giver” event on 16 March 2024. This was one of our events made possible through a MOAA Community Outreach Grant.



MTC members attending the 17 July 2024 Tennessee Council of Chapters Meeting.

MTC members who participated in the OSDTN 20 September 2024 “Operation Food Bag” event on 20 September 2024.



MTC members and Army ROTC Cadets from Vanderbilt University at the OSDTN “Heroes Breakfast” on 24 October 2024.