



**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

29 January 2026

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Middle Tennessee Chapter, it gives me great pleasure to submit our "Level of Excellence Award" addendum to our application for the 2025 calendar year.

This addendum supports our narrative response portion of the MTC LOE for the 2025 membership year. It is intended to provide validation of our abbreviated comments.

Respectfully,

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

## 1. Advocacy

- Our Chapter policy of not having currently serving politicians or their staff as speakers was extended for 2025 due to the politically divided climate that existed at the state and national level. Chapter members did participate in the 2025 Tennessee Veteran's Day on the Hill held by the TNVET organization (of which we are a member through our MOAA TN Council and Chapters membership). The event was held on 29 January 2025. Chapter members visited the offices of State Senators and Representatives from the districts in the MTC catchment area as well as visited many of the legislators who did not have veteran constituents in attendance at the event. Unfortunately, there was once again generally no interest in the state legislature to support the TNVET issues as none of the initiatives were included in the Governor's 2025 budget. This is expected to change in 2026 for one issue (funding property tax relief for 100% disabled veterans) as it gained a great deal of favorable press coverage.
- Our Legislative Chair (CDR Ted Edwards, USN (Ret)) also fills that role for the Chaplains Virtual Chapter, and as such he was chosen to participate in person at the national Advocacy in Action event in 2025. He informed us of the reception he received during the event, and requested we initiate action with the TN elected officials during and following the actual event. Our efforts in support of these initiatives resulted in several email responses acknowledging our emails and mailings, but little actual support for any legislation.
- The emphasis our Chapter placed on participation in the MOAA Legislative Action Center (LAC) increased in 2025. To explain the LAC's ease of use, a live demonstration of this advocacy tool was held during our February 2025 luncheon meeting. The continued emphasis, coupled with the live demonstration appears to have allowed the Chapter to achieve modest success. Based on data gathered by MOAA on LAC participation 64 registrants from our Chapter took 277 actions (numbers provided from the January 1 – September 30, 2025, quarterly action report from the Council & Chapter Legislative Leaders page on the MOAA website). This is an ongoing initiative which is stressed at each monthly meeting and in each monthly newsletter.

## 2. Community Engagement and Outreach

- Using 2024 Community Outreach Grant funding of \$2,000, the chapter hosted a military spouse employment seminar in February 2025. This seminar featured in-person and virtual speakers who educated 20 attendees on various employment topics. Attendees were provided with breakfast and lunch, along with gift bags filled with items to help them in their employment pursuits.
- On 25 March 2025, MG Tommy Baker, USA Retired, Commissioner of the TN Department of Veterans Services spoke to our Chapter about veterans' services organizations in TN and the role that they play in conjunction with the activities of our State Government.
- On 19 September 2025, Chapter members and their families participated in Operation Stand Down TN's (OSDTN) Operation Commissary food bag assistance event, packing more than 200 food bags that were distributed across the OSDTN support area of 20 counties the following week.
- On 7 November 2025 MOAA Chapter members and their families participated in the OSDTN Heroes Breakfast featuring CAPT Scott Kelly, USN (Ret) as the keynote speaker. The event raises funds to support the ongoing initiatives of OSDTN.

- In 2025, we applied for and received a MOAA Community Outreach Grant for \$2000 in support of OSDTN's Operation Holiday Market. The event was held on 17 December, and our Chapter provided 40 veterans and their families receiving services from OSDTN with \$50 grocery store gift cards.
  - Our Chapter provided monetary support to the Centerstone Military Services, the Fisher House, Mathew 25 (veterans housing and outreach services), OSDTN, USO Nashville and Ft. Campbell, and the MOAA Foundation in the amount of \$250 each during 2025. We also held a toy drive in support of the USMCR Toys for Tots drive at our 18 November meeting.
  - In 2025, we provided eight scholarships in support of military family members and local veterans currently attending college. These included four fully endowed scholarships administered through MOAA, as well as one fully endowed veterans' scholarship at Lipscomb University in Middle Tennessee. Additionally, our chapter donations again supported three \$1,500 scholarships for student veterans at three Middle Tennessee universities: Lipscomb University, Belmont University, and Tennessee State University. Beyond these eight scholarships, our scholarship contributions also enabled us to donate an additional \$2,875.20 in non-designated funds to the MOAA Scholarship Fund.
  - 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 nine 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.
  - Mrs. Patricia Berquist continues as our MTC Surviving Spouse Liaison, and she has continued to provide specific individual support to Chapter surviving spouse members as well as military 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).
3. Recruiting and Retention:
- Our Chapter recruited seventeen new members in 2025. Six of those fell into the 40-60 age range. 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. 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 try to keep our members engaged 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. 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.
  - We enjoyed the brief availability of the Near Real Time report (NRT) in 2025 and look forward to having access to it in 2026. The last report we saw in March 2025 was much more manageable in size. It still contained some ages that we have found to be no longer interested in joining a Chapter, but it was an improvement.
4. Leadership Succession:
- At each luncheon, our Board encourages members to consider joining our Chapter leadership team to participate in our board meetings and witness how we operate. Individual Board members contact 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 quickly 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, TNVET, TN Council and Chapters meetings 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 we continue to rethink the amount of time we had allocated to each of the two positions leading to becoming President. Our previous path involved being 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President for two years in a learning role, then 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President for two years responsible for speakers for programs, followed by two years as President. We continue to encounter 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.
  - We continue to revise/update the appendices to our Bylaws for areas of responsibility assigned to Board positions as we encounter new opportunities and challenges. Our ongoing intent is to provide documented positional guidance for both Chapter members interested in joining our Board as well as those who have already assumed leadership positions. We have found that these descriptions are never quite finished, and now our process is to discuss and document revisions at Board meetings and then update the documents as agreed upon.
  - To improve the training of new Chapter officers, we periodically update the Dropbox application that we have for the Chapter. This repository allows us to post critical documents regarding past meetings, major decisions. Etc. for use by various leaders to complement direct mentorship by others.

- Motivation has seldom been an issue for our Chapter leaders as they have always taken great pride in the accomplishments of the Chapter. We recognize our leaders and their accomplishments in our monthly meetings as often as possible. When an accomplishment warrants a higher level of recognition, we utilize the MOAA Leadership Award and periodically the MOAA President's Award.

5. Training:

- We provide a wide range of instructional 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 satisfies 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 Affiliated Council & Chapter meetings as they are scheduled. Multiple Chapter leaders attend most of the Affiliated Councils and Chapters Zoom meetings. Following these training sessions, the topics become items on our next MTC Executive Board agenda so that the lessons learned and guidance received gains a broader audience. When possible, our leaders attend the scheduled MOAA Regional Leadership Workshops/Seminars; however, individual scheduling for attendance is frequently an issue.
- 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. As mentioned in the next section, we normally have three to four Board members attend the TN CoC quarterly meetings. Two of our members currently hold leadership positions in the Council (Mrs. Patricia Berquist as Council & Chapters Surviving Spouse Liaison and COL Doug Minton, USA Retired as Council & Chapters Membership Chair).

6. Does your chapter participate in your state council?

- Yes.

2025 Middle Tennessee Chapter LOE Addendum Page

MTC members and the President of the TN Council of Chapters participating in the TN Veterans (TNVET) Day on the Hill with the Tennessee Legislature 29 January 2025.



MTC Member LCDR Bea Henderson, USN (ret) presenting the MOAA Leadership Medal at the Vanderbilt University Naval ROTC Spring Awards Formation 10 April 2025.

MTC Member LTC Mike Patenaude, USA Retired presenting the MOAA Leadership Medal at the Creek Wood High School JROTC Awards Ceremony 6 May 2025.



MTC Members and spouses participating in the Chapter's Annual Memorial Day Remembrance at the Middle TN State Veterans Cemetery 24 May 2025.

MTC Member Spouses and Surviving Spouse Members attended the MTC Surviving Spouse presentation by Mrs. Patricia Bergquist, MTC Surviving Spouse Liaison on 27 May 2025.



MTC Chapter members and spouses packing food bags at Operation Stand Down TN (OSDTN) in support of OSDTN Operation Commissary 19 September 2025.

MTC Members participating in the OSDTN Operation Holiday Market, handing out grocery gift cards on 17 December 2025 to 40 veterans and their families who receive services from OSDTN. Our participation in this event was funded by a 2025 MOAA Community Outreach Grant for \$2000.



(Note: additional event and program photos are available upon request.)