

1. Advocacy

The Middle TN Chapter (MTC) efforts to educate members on MOAA's key advocacy issues for the 118th Congress began at every luncheon and were a constant theme in every Newsletter article by our Legislative Liaison. Updates on bill sponsorships were discussed and members were encouraged to utilize the MOAA Legislative Action Center, as well as to contact legislators when they were home in their respective districts. Our Legislative Liaison's advocacy in this area led to his being nominated for the 2022 Colonel Steve Strobridge Legislative Liaison Award. Additionally, our Surviving Spouse Liaison briefed chapter members about specific legislation impacting spouses at multiple luncheons. MTC members actively advocated for the top priorities like the Major Richard Star Act, restoration of BAH to 100% and reversal of TRICARE pharmacy cuts and discussed responses they received from elected officials.

The annual TNVET Veterans Day on the Hill was cancelled the night before the 2023 event due to inclement weather. Given the cancellation, we urged our members to contact their state representatives individually, requesting action on four pending state legislative topics as well as several additional issues being discussed. The primary issues being addressed in 2023 were: (1) An electronic voting process for deployed Active Duty and Reserve members, (2) Legalize the prescription and dispense of medical cannabis for veterans (3) Restoration of a second free state license plate for 100% disabled veterans, and (4) Implementation processes related to documenting the hiring of veterans for state employment.



The MTC President hosted a table at Congressman (Dr.) Mark Green's Academy Service Day on 9 September 2023. The Congressman was thanked for his co-sponsorship of the Major Richard Star Act and encouraged to support MOAA's other legislation.

Photo (at left) of MTC President, Lt Col. Karon Uzzell-Baggett, USAF Retired and Congressman Mark Green and his wife Camilla at his Academy Service Day on 9 September 2023. A representative from Senator Bill

Hagerty's office also received detailed MOAA legislative summary sheets for the Senator to consider.

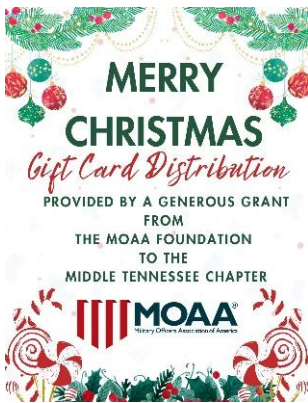
2. Community Outreach

In 2023, MTC was the recipient of two new Community Outreach Grants, in addition to completing the engagement portion of a 2022 grant.

Matthew 25 (M25) – chapter members participated in a one-day, career development seminar for over 20 M25 veteran residents and provided breakfast for attendees. Photo (at right) showing chapter members participating in the MTC event. The seminar educated attendees on resume preparation, interview skills and job search techniques.



The attendees were also offered mock interviews to practice these skills. Our 2022 grant funds were used to purchase essential computers and printers for the M25 residents; however, equipment arrival delays meant the engagement occurred in 2023.



Operation Stand Down TN (OSDTN) – MTC received \$2,000 to provide grocery store gift cards to needy veterans vetted by the non-profit during the Christmas holidays. The gift cards allowed veterans living in affordable housing the opportunity to purchase fresh proteins and desired cultural food items to celebrate the holidays. The OSDTN Christmas Holiday Market, a new concept, took place on 19 December 2023, with 40 veterans receiving gift cards. Photo (at left) showing MTC MOAA signage for the OSDTN event.

Operation Wind Down – our project with the Alzheimer’s Association of Middle TN was approved and funded in 2023; however staffing and logistical concerns pushed the actual event to March 2024. The goal of this event is to provide education and relaxation for military-affiliated dementia caregivers. The chapter received \$2,250 for this project.

The chapter was grateful to receive \$300 through the MOAA Community Sponsorship Program. This funding allowed the chapter to purchase a flag and tablecloth personalized with the chapter’s name. Photo (at right). This will allow proper recognition during community outreach events.



The 2023 MTC scholarship drive culminated with \$6,489.20 collected. This amount enabled MTC to fund three \$1,000, one-time veteran’s scholarships at three local universities; as well as complete our fourth endowed MOAA scholarship and contribute an additional amount to the MOAA Scholarship Fund.

MTC made charitable donations to five local non-profits and the MOAA Foundation for military family support in 2023. The donations are drawn from general chapter funds and amounted to \$250 each.

The chapter continued its support of 13 JROTC and 3 ROTC programs in the Middle TN area. Outstanding cadets in each program received MOAA certificates and medals signifying their achievements and potential to serve as outstanding military members.



Photo (at left) is of the Vanderbilt Army ROTC awards program on 20 April 2023.



Photo (at right) is of the Antioch High School Army JROTC Awards program on 13 April 2023.

The contributions of our area’s fallen soldiers were commemorated at the chapter’s annual Memorial Day observance held on 27 May 2023 at the Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery. Photo (at right). We were joined by Mr. Michael Renfrow, Deputy Director of the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System, Department of Veterans Affairs, for this solemn event.



3. Recruiting & Retention



This year MTC repeated its participation at the Bob Woodruff Foundation’s “Got Your 6” VetFest, which saw increased area attendance in 2023. MTC members met with and distributed information to interested participants. Photo (at left) of Chapter members who participated in our recruiting booth at the Bob Woodruff Foundation’s “Got Your 6”

VetFest on 15 July 2023. This year the event increased its outreach to an estimated 600 attendees. MTC also manned a table at the Franklin, Tennessee Vet Fest, when this event resumed after a 2-year hiatus. Both events provided venues for the Chapter to court a younger veteran demographic in our catchment area. As a bonus, staff members of the district Congressional officials in attendance were also educated on MOAA’s top priorities. In addition, several other veterans’ organizations received their first introduction to MOAA and its mission.

Our Chapter members continue to be the MTC’s best recruiters! Members bring an acquaintance to a meeting and the rest of our membership embraces them with a level of camaraderie that few can resist. We added fourteen members during 2023 (five of whom fell into the 40-60 age category).

Chapter members continued to stay engaged during our luncheons featuring pertinent speakers from the local area or through virtual presentations. These speakers included an expert veteran elder care lawyer, a top State of Tennessee official who is a military spouse, and representatives from all three administrations of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Each presentation was well received as indicated by the array of questions/comments that were directed at the speakers.

We continued to celebrate special observances (Women in the Military, Military Spouses, Vietnam Veterans, etc.) by focusing on applicable chapter members again this year. Photo (at right) of our 27 June 2023 meeting where we recognized Women in the Military.



As an example of that impact, an increased number of military and surviving spouses attended our May luncheon and the June luncheon saw more women military officers attend our celebration of their faithful service to the Nation.

4. Accessing the NRT

Our Chapter Membership Chair and President accessed the Near Real Time recruiting report eight times during the 2023 membership year. The report has been only moderately beneficial due to the zip code errors in our catchment area. This issue has been reported to our State Council as it is a state-wide issue, and it will be addressed in 2024 by the Council.

5. Leadership Succession

Identification of potential chapter leaders continued as a subject of virtually every MTC Board meeting and monthly luncheon in 2023. Anyone that participated in our outreach activities or had been active in our monthly meetings on a regular basis became a candidate for consideration. At that point a Board member having a connection with that individual was asked to approach the member to determine his or her possible interest in joining our Board. If that contact was favorable, then one of our Officers met with the member to discuss potential leadership positions the member might serve in and provided relevant Chapter and MOAA documents for review prior to a final decision being requested. Every event or meeting provides a mentoring opportunity, and this was considered a key element of the selection process. Historically the Chapter used a two year time frame in each Board assignment to allow the member to grow into his or her responsibilities and gain experience in our procedures. However; we are now having to consider one-year assignments as many members seem reluctant to commit for multiple years. The process remains open to the circumstances of the individual candidates and how they can best be integrated into the needs of the organization.

In 2023, we continued to add verbiage to our existing Board position profiles and identify additional roles that needed to be defined as new responsibilities. This continues to be a work in process. These profiles are documented as addendums to our MTC By Laws, which were last approved by the general membership on 24 January 2023, and which are posted on the MTC website for members to review.

Our current leaders are motivated primarily by accomplishments of the Chapter, and the encouragement of the members. Additionally, we have utilized the MOAA Awards capability to recognize superior individual accomplishment. In 2023, one member was nominated for and received the MOAA Outstanding Service Award.

6. Training

The MTC President traveled to Birmingham, AL for the 2023 Mid-Atlantic Region Council and Chapter Leaders Workshop; as well as attending most of the virtual Council & Chapters workshops. The Board meetings following each of the in-person and virtual workshops, always included a detailed brief on pertinent topics/issues that had been introduced.

The MTC Legislative Liaison was an active participant in the monthly State Legislative Exchange Forum hosted by MOAA. This has turned out to be a very interesting opportunity to see how Chapters in other States address issue similar to what is faced in Tennessee.

The MTC President, Membership Chair, and Surviving Spouse Liaison attended the quarterly Tennessee Council of Chapter (TN CoC) virtual and in-person meetings. These meetings provided a good deal of actual implementation training on items being presented in the MOAA workshops. (Note: The MTC Surviving Spouse Liaison also serves as the TN CoC Surviving Spouse Liaison.)

Finally, CAPT Bud Schneeweis, USCG Retired, a MOAA Board member, spoke at our 24 October 2023 MTC meeting and provided the attendees with a broad range of information on what MOAA looked for in their affiliate chapters.



Photo (at left) CAPT Bud Schneeweis, USCG Retired and a MOAA Board Member, meeting with Middle TN Chapter Board members following his presentation on 24 October 2023, at which he presented the Chapter with its 10th consecutive 5 Star Levels of Excellence Award.

And finally, the last question, 7. Does your Chapter belong to a State Council? Yes