

# **Ozark Empire News**

Ozark Empire Chapter, Military Officers Association of America
2131 West Republic Road, Box 164, Springfield,
Missouri 65807



May, 2025

### A Word from the Chapter President

May is National Military Appreciation Month. Please make note of a few of those special days as follows (taken from the following link:)

https://www.operationwearehere.com/significantdaysobservances.html

May 1, 2025 - Silver Star Service Banner Day honors our wounded, ill, and dying military personnel by participating in flying a Silver Star Banner.

May 9, 2025 - Military Spouse Appreciation Day, set aside to acknowledge the contributions and sacrifices of the spouses of the U.S. Armed Forces.

May 13, 2025 - Children of Fallen Patriots Day honors the families our Fallen Heroes have left behind — especially their children. It's a reminder to all that we have an obligation to support the families of our Fallen Patriots.

May 17, 2025 - Armed Forces Day A day to pay tribute to men and women who serve in the United States' Armed Forces.

May 26, 2025 - Memorial Day (Decoration Day), commemorates all who have died in military service for the United States. Typically recognized by parades, ceremonies, visiting memorials and cemeteries.

Our Chapter once again received the Level of Excellence Award for 2024. From MOAA Newsletter (April 23, 2025):

- Level of Excellence Awards-2024: Out of almost 400 MOAA affiliates, 168 councils and chapters earned LOE award recognition this year. These councils and chapters excel at supporting and fostering programs that directly support the MOAA mission and their communities.
   See the full list (HTML)
- Make note of future events and tours that have been scheduled for our membership by Frank Bridges. Be sure to notify Frank if you have not signed up but still wish to attend. Of particular note to our membership this month, we have learned that the date we had previously chosen to have as our annual visit to the Springfield Cardinals game, June 17, has been designated by the Cardinals as their Pride Night. Therefore, they have offered to reprint our tickets for June 19. We have taken them up on that offer. So, be sure to **re-mark your calendars** for **June 19** 
  - For all who are Premium or Life members of MOAA, a free Survivor's Planning Guide is available for download. It can be obtained at <a href="https://www.moaa.org">www.moaa.org</a>.
  - As always, our newsletter is freely available on the chapter website: <a href="www.OEMOAA.org">www.OEMOAA.org</a> as well as via email to all members. If anyone wishes to receive this newsletter via US Mail, please make that known to a Board Member or the Newsletter Editor, and we will be happy to accommodate.

**Chapter Mission Statement**: To stimulate patriotism in our community and serve those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any of the eight uniformed services, as well as their surviving spouses. The Ozark Empire Military Officers Association of America (OEMOAA) is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). MOAA and its affiliated chapters are nonpartisan.

#### LEGISLATIVE ACTION REPORT

### TOP PRIORITY: Military Spouses Can't Wait - Add Them to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit

Military spouses face a 21% unemployment rate, five times the national average, due to frequent moves and challenges tied to military life. Congress must incentivize employers to hire military spouses by adding them as a target group under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program.

## TOP PRIORITY: Ask Congress to Address the Hazardous Unaccompanied Housing Conditions Rampant in the Military

Thousands of servicemembers live in unsafe, substandard military housing due to years of underfunding and lack of oversight. Congress must require DoD to publicly report the condition of unaccompanied housing and ensure funding is used for necessary improvements.

### TOP PRIORITY: Stop the 34-Year Wait - Deliver Toxic-Exposed Veterans the Care They've Earned

Millions of veterans exposed to toxic substances during their service are forced to wait decades –more than 34 years, on average – before they can access VA care and benefits for service-connected illnesses. Congress must pass legislation to bolster the legal framework for creating presumptive conditions, ensuring toxic-exposed veterans receive timely care.

### TOP PRIORITY: Honor Veteran Caregivers - Pass the Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act

Veteran caregivers make profound personal and financial sacrifices to care for aging and disabled loved ones. Congress must pass the Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act to provide these caregivers with the education, employment, and retirement support they deserve.

### Ensure Servicemembers Can Afford Housing—Restore Full BAH

Our troops don't get to choose where they serve—but they should always be able to afford a home. Tell Congress to restore full Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and support military families.

### Urge Lawmakers to Resume CFPB Operations for Servicemembers

Contact your representative and urge them to support the continued work of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) in conducting supervisory examinations for the Military Lending Act (MLA) and resuming work in the Office of Servicemember Affairs, which protects military families from predatory financial practices.

### Stand with Our Wounded Warriors: Advocate for the Major Richard Star Act

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to support the Major Richard Star Act, which would authorize combat-injured veterans to receive their full DoD retirement pay earned for years of service and their full VA disability compensation for lifelong injury.

### Urge Your Representative to Cosponsor the Support Military Families Act

Contact your representative and urge them to cosponsor the Support Military Families Act to ensure military spouses who work for the federal government can keep their jobs and support their servicemembers and families.

### Parity for Surviving Spouses: Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

Bipartisan legislation in the House (H.R. 680) would align Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payments with other federal survivor benefits. Ask your legislators to show their support and make a long-overdue correction to this injustice.

### Love Lives On: Protect Surviving Spouses' Right to Remarry

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to support the Love Lives On Act to secure the right for surviving military spouses to remarry at any age and retain their benefits.

### Support IVF Parity for Military Families

The IVF for Military Families Act would require TRICARE to cover assisted reproductive technology, including IVF, for active duty servicemembers and their families. Urge your lawmakers to support this effort to give military families the same options as those that they have sworn to serve and protect.

### Improve **OB-GYN Access** for Military Families

The TRICARE OBGYN Treatment and Access without Lags in Care Act (TOTAL Care Act) would launch a five-year pilot program allowing TRICARE Prime beneficiaries to receive obstetrical and gynecological care without a referral. Tell your lawmakers to support this effort to reduce delays and strengthen access within the TRICARE benefit.

### Lend Your Support for the MOAA-Backed Bill to Support Military Sexual Trauma Survivors

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to support the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act to improve essential care and services in the Veterans Health Administration and ensure greater assistance when military sexual trauma (MST) survivors are applying for disability benefits through the Veterans Benefits Administration.

## New Survivor Benefit Plan Payment Setup Coming Soon for Some Retirees

### By: Kevin Lilley

April 22, 2025

Retirees who pay monthly Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) or Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan (RCSBP) premiums via "direct remittance" instead of having the premium deducted from their retirement pay must change how they submit those payments in the coming months.

Affected retirees should have received instructions on making the change from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) in March, according to a recent article at DFAS.mil, but some retirees with outdated contact information may not get the materials. **No action is required from those whose SBP/RCSBP payment is deducted from their retirement pay.** 

## [RELATED: Change Your Address With DFAS | Change of Address Request Form (DD Form 2866)]

In June, SBP/RCSBP payments that had been submitted to the Treasury Department's Centralized Receivables Service must be submitted instead to DFAS Retired and Annuitant Pay. Those who receive a bill via postal mail will receive new payment instructions with their June invoice. Those who make automated payments can act early to set up new payment options:

- Pay DFAS Electronically: Fill out this online form with payment information. Retirees will need their billing statement and either bank account or debit card details.
- Request a VA Deduction: Those paying by direct remittance often do so because their retirement pay is offset by VA disability compensation. To have SBP/RCSBP premiums deducted from VA payments, fill out this online form and upload it to DFAS online or mail it to: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, U.S. Military Retired Pay, 8899 E 56th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46249-1200.

• Pay DFAS by Mail: Send monthly premium payments to: Defense Finance and Accounting Service, DFAS-CL, SBP Remittances, P.O. Box 979013, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000.

[MOAA WEBINAR RECORDING: What You Need to Know About SBP]

For more information on the changeover or other DFAS issues, contact the agency at (800) 321-1080 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Eastern, or visit the DFAS Customer Service webpage.

### Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) has received a prestigious 5star rating for cleanliness from Becker's Hospital Review

Dear Veterans, Stakeholders and Community Partners,

We are pleased to announce that the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) has received a prestigious 5-star rating for cleanliness from <a href="Becker's Hospital Review">Becker's Hospital Review</a>. This recognition places VHSO among an elite group of only six hospitals in the state of Arkansas that have achieved this distinguished rating.

The 5-star rating is based on the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys, conducted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). These surveys provide a national, standardized measure of hospital patients' experiences during their recent inpatient stays. The data from these surveys, collected between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, was most recently updated on January 8, 2025.

Dr. George Velez, DHA, MBA, FACHE, VHSO Medical Center Director, expressed his gratitude and dedication in response to the award, stating: "We are very honored to receive this recognition. Our team works diligently to maintain a clean and safe environment for our patients and we understand the critical role cleanliness plays in patient safety."

We are incredibly proud of our team's hard work and commitment to providing the highest standards of cleanliness and safety for our Veterans.

Proud to serve our Nations Heroes.

Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks

### IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

**Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) Telephone Center** - Call DEERS at 800-538-9552, Monday through Friday, excluding U.S. federal holidays.

**Defense Finance and Accounting Service** - The agency that pays military retirees and annuitants can be reached at 800-321-1080, or through AskDFAS online. Visit the <u>retired military and annuitants webpage</u> for more information about pay matters such as tax forms, pay verification, Direct Deposit, myPay and more.

**Federal Long-Term Care Insurance** Program - The program provides long-term care insurance to help pay for the costs of care you need if you can no longer perform everyday tasks (activities of daily living) by yourself because of chronic illness, injury, disability or the aging process. For assistance, call 800-LTC-FEDS (800-582-3337) or TTY 800-843-3557 to speak with a program consultant. You can also visit <a href="https://www.ltcfeds.com">https://www.ltcfeds.com</a>.

**Identification Cards** - Call 800-525-0102 for location of the nearest issuing facility, or visit the site locator.

**Legal Offices** - Assists members with preparing wills and powers of attorney, and answers certain legal questions. Visit the Air Force Legal Assistance website at <a href="https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil">https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil</a>.

Medicare - 800-633-4227 or visit www.medicare.gov.

**Social Security Office** - Call toll free 800-772-1213; commercial 410-965- 8019; or write to Social Security Administration, Office of Public Inquiries, Windsor Park Building, 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235. Visit the website www.ssa.gov for more information.

**TRICARE Mail-Order Pharmacy Program (Express Scripts, Inc)** - In United States, call toll free 800-282-2881; or overseas, call 866-275-4732. Visit <a href="https://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/index.shtml">www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/index.shtml</a> for more information.

**Veterans Affairs** - For benefit inquiries call 800-827-1000; life insurance 800-669-8477; status of headstones and markers, 800-697-6947; special issues such as Gulf War/radiation/Agent Orange/Project Shad call 800-749-8387; GI Bill and education matters call 888-442-4551. Visit the website at <a href="https://www.va.gov">www.va.gov</a>.

### **From our Chapter Travel Agent**

### **Frank Bridges**

On all of our tours, please feel free to bring a friend or two. If we start getting larger numbers this may have to be reconsidered.

### Our Tour Schedule:

0	Wilson's Creek	May 10	1:30 PM
0	Cardinal's Baseball Game (Thursday Evening)	June 19	7:00 PM
0	OTC Center for Advanced Manufacturing	Sept 16	1:30 PM
0	Greene County Emergency Management Center	Oct 14	1:30 PM
0	Air & Military Museum of the Ozarks (\$6/Person)	Nov 19	1:30 PM
0	Wreath Laying MO Vet Cemetery	Dec TBD	11:00 AM

• Frank reports that our next scheduled tour will be to Wilson's Creek Battlefield, on Saturday, May 10, beginning at the Visitor Center at 1:30pm. We are hoping for an even larger turnout to tour the battlefield, learn more about the battle itself, and the efforts to protect and preserve the area.

### **May US Military History**

- 1787 Four years after the United States won its independence from England, 55 state delegates, including George Washington, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin, convene in Philadelphia to compose a new U.S. constitution.
- **1844** USS Constitution sets sail from New York on a round the world cruise. She remains in active service to the present day
- 1861 American Red Cross is founded by Clara Barton and Adolphus Solomons
- **1864** A dismounted Union trooper fatally wounds J.E.B. Stuart, one of the most colorful generals of the South, at the Battle of Yellow Tavern, just six miles north of Richmond.
- **1865** Union Army holds Grand Review of Troops in Washington, DC, a parade which would last for two days
- **1865** The last battle of the Civil War, fought near the Rio Grande River, ends in a Confederate victory.
- **1868** By proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, the first major Memorial Day observance is held to honor those who died "in defense of their country during the late rebellion."
- 1904 The United States begins construction of the Panama Canal.
- **1918** The U.S. Post Office and the U.S. Army began regularly scheduled airmail service between Washington and New York through Philadelphia.
- **1921** A major race riot broke out in Tulsa, Oklahoma. As many as 200-300 people are believed to have died.
- **1922** Lincoln Memorial dedicated by Chief Justice William Howard Taft
- **1942** A bill establishing a women's corps in the U.S. Army becomes law, creating the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs) and granting women official military status.
- **1947** Japan's post-war constitution goes into effect
- **1961** President Kennedy approves sending 400 Special Forces troops and 100 other U.S. military advisers to South Vietnam.
- **1968** Following 34 days of discussion to select a site, United States and North Vietnam begin formal negotiations in Paris. Cease-fire officially signed in February 1973
- **1968** Originally known as Decoration Day, the Last Monday in May was officially designated as Memorial Day
- **1974** In the Rajasthan Desert in the state of Pokhran, India successfully detonates its first nuclear weapon.
- **1997** Russian President Boris Yeltsin, together with President Clinton and 16 other NATO leaders, sign agreement to give Russia a voice in NATO affairs
- **2003** Schools reopened in Baghdad, Iraq, for the first time since the start of war.
- **2010** The Times Square car bombing attempt was foiled when two street vendors discovered a car bomb and alerted a New York City Police Department (NYPD) patrolman to the threat after they spotted smoke coming from a vehicle
- **2011** Barack Obama announces that Osama bin Laden, the suspected mastermind behind the September 11 attacks has been killed by United States special forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan.
- **2014** VA's Office of Inspector General announces investigating 26 agency facilities for allegations of doctored waiting times. VA Director Eric Shinseki resigns.





Amber Allen, representing MU Extension, was once again with us, this time sharing about early recognition of Alzheimer's Dementia, and the importance of being aware of early signs of the disease. While it is not at this time reversible, with appropriate early recognition and intervention, its progress can be mitigated. While it is important for us all to be familiar with the early signs of Alzheimer's Disease, the real benefit comes from seeking professional help and guidance, if and when concern arises. Online resources are available at <a href="https://www.alz.org">www.alz.org</a>, or at 800-272-3900.

Amber is scheduled to be back with us in June, this time to discuss another important topic for us all: Senior Safety and Fall Prevention. Medical professionals tell us that falls are not only more prevalent in the senior population, but also can lead to increased morbidity. Prevention is key.

### **ROTC/JROTC Awards Report**

It's spring and the Junior and Senior ROTC Awards Ceremonies are underway. OEMOAA has been well represented at local high schools, as several of our members have been active, presenting MOAA awards to local JROTC cadets. Lieutenant Frank Bridges was at Ozark High School, where he presented the MOAA Medal to Cadet First Sergeant Barney Miller. Additionally, several Ozark HS Cadets received appointments to military service academies, including Cadet Lieutenant Colonel Asa Wells (Air Force Academy); Cadet Major Jackson Niemoth (US Military Academy at West Point); and Cadet Second Lieutenant Rylee Gardner (US Naval Academy). Also, Cadet Captain Jacob Giles received a four year ROTC Scholarship and will attend Texas A&M. Ozark High School JROTC Cadets have received over 1,000 trophies for their performances in drill and marksmanship in the last eight years. They are a major player on the National Scene in Drill and in 2020, 21 and 22 they won the National Three Position Air Rifle Marksmanship title. Presently, the Ozark Corps has over 250 members and over 375 family members attended the Awards Ceremony on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Chuck Guy presented the MOAA Medal at Nixa Hgih School to Cadet Mason Adair, a third-year Cadet in good standing, of high moral character, who has demonstrated a high order of loyalty to his unit, school and Country and has shown exceptional potential for military leadership. LTC Brennan Cook (RET) Senior Instructor, announced that Cadet Adair has been selected to be the Battalion S2 for the coming year with the rank of Cadet Major.

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Steve Vanderhoof presented the MOAA Award to Cadet Alexander P. Long at the Bolivar High School Awards Ceremony. On April 23rd Capt Ron McCall presented the MOAA Award to Cadet Layton Files at the Branson High School Awards Ceremony. On April the 23rd the MOAA Award was presented to Cadet John Vollman at the College of the Ozarks. On April the 24th Colonel Carl Boswell presented the MOAA Award to Cadet Blake Beeman at the Republic High School Awards Ceremony. On April 25th Adm Hank Molinengo presented the MOAA Award to Zavier Bumgarner at Willard High School. Frank Bridges presented the MOAA Award to Cadet Ade Zuccrini at Missouri State University Awards ceremony on April 25th.

As of this writing, there are still six awards to be presented. Many thanks to the OEMOAA Chapter members for their willingness to step up and represent.





### Chaplain's Corner



By Becky Hutchings

Remember that old show tune, "March went out like a lion. A whippin' up the water in the bay. Then April cried and stepped aside. And along came pretty little May!"?

(<a href="https://rodgersandhammerstein.com/song/carousel/june-is-busting-out-all-over/">https://rodgersandhammerstein.com/song/carousel/june-is-busting-out-all-over/</a>). We all breathe a sigh of relief when the weather decides to settle down into warm and sunny days. May generally offers us that token, as if apologizing for its previous erratic behavior.

On a more serious note, May represents military appreciation month. The last Monday of May marks Memorial Day. Although many people associate Memorial Day with cookouts and parades, its true meaning is to honor members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives in service. This holiday developed over many years from traditions of adorning the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers. In modern times, many observers use the day to remember loved ones who died, or to visit cemeteries and decorate or maintain graves, particularly those of former military members. (https://www.military.com/military-appreciation-month)

There are several other days throughout the month of May where various groups of people are celebrated. Early May includes the National Day of Prayer, a day when people of all faiths are invited to express their religions, often in service of praying for military members past and present.

The Bible tells us this: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13; ESV). As we move throughout the month of May, let's remember to say a prayer for those families that have lost loved ones who served, those that are currently serving, and those who are living with the consequences of serving, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

I'm not sure how you will celebrate your veteran(s) during the month of May; once again, you will find me at the grave of my veteran placing flowers, and praying for those that have been touched by a veteran's sacrifice.

May you be encouraged and blessed.

- Our April meeting was not as well attended as previous meetings. Several responded they would be outof-town. We also have some that have been ill or are recovering from surgery. The DAV staff have welcomed us to continue meeting for the rest of this calendar year at their facility. December meeting is still
  not settled, however this will be announced soon.
- Our caterer has been willing to accept meal suggestions and a few have mentioned they would like to have healthier options. This information will be shared with her.

Coffee With Chuck (CWC), a non-OEMOAA event, just a time to gather and swap stories, will be on the first Monday of the month at Panera Bread, on South Campbell. September will be an exception as the first Monday is Labor Day. We will usually be situated at a large table, immediately to the left upon entering. One of our topics of discussion this month will be ideas for increasing our chapter membership and participation..

### May 2025 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 16 May 25

PLACE: DAV Hall, Chapter 11 2525 E Division Ave Springfield, MO

**TIME:** 1100 – Social Hour

50/50 drawing, to support Honor Flight of the Ozarks.

Drawing at the close of the presentation.

1200 - Meal

MENU: Luncheon Meal, options as outlined on page 6

**Cost:** \$20/plate. (NOTE: 50/50 Drawing, and Donations for Honor Flight of the Ozarks will also be accepted)

**Program**: Kevin Weaver, Executive Director, The Warrior's

Journey

**RSVP**: By Monday, 12 May

To: LtCol Dean Smith, USMC, Retired 417-761-1816 or das1302@icloud.com

LtCol Smith will acknowledge ALL reservations received. If you do NOT receive a confirmation, please contact him directly.

### **ELECTED CHAPTER BOARD OFFICERS**

PRESIDENT: Becky Hutchings

1ST VICE PRESIDENT: Anthony Willis, Colonel, USAF, Retired

2ND VICE PRESIDENT: Frank Bridges, LtCol, USA, Retired

SECRETARY/TREASURER: Dean Smith, LtCol, USMC, Retired

IMMED PAST PRESIDENT: Ron McCall, Capt, USAF, Retired

**APPOINTED CHAPTER OFFICERS** 

CHAPLAIN: Becky Hutchings

**LEGISLATIVE CHAIR:** Anthony Willis, Colonel, USAF, Retired

AWARDS COORDINATOR: Frank Bridges, LtCol, USA, Retired

SURVIVING SPOUSE LIAISON: Becky Hutchings

AMBASSADOR: Chuck Guy, Colonel, USA, Retired

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR Chuck Guy, Colonel, USA, Retired

WEBMASTER: Keith Oxby, W/O British Navy

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** Ron McCall, Capt, USAF, Retired

### 2025 OEMOAA Monthly Schedule

Chapter monthly meetings will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday, unless otherwise noted.

#### 2025 Dates

May 16: Kevin Weaver, The Warrior's Journey

June 20: Amber Allen, "Wits Workouts" June 27: **Springfield Cardinals Game** Summer Break – July & August

Sep 19: Jennifer Henderson, VSO Briefing

Oct 17: Great Southern Bank, "Fraud Avoidance"

Nov 21: Missouri State Parks

Dec 5: Twin Oaks, Mulligan Room, TBA

Jan 2026: Kavan Stull, Harry Truman in WWI

Ships are safe in the harbor, but that's not what they are built for

You can't have a new reality with an old mentality

If someone could only see your actions and not hear your words, what would they say are your priorities?

Fear doesn't stop death – it stops life.

We encourage all eligible members to also join our National organization, Military Officers Association of America. Information regarding membership options can be accessed at <a href="https://www.moaa.org">www.moaa.org</a>

Our chapter maintains a presence on Facebook. We strive to keep this page current with information about chapter activities and opportunities. Members can access that page by following this link: www.facebook.com/groups/712416736284579

### **OEMOAA NAME TAGS**

Some members and their spouses prefer a solid plastic name badge with a magnetic clasp. The member cost is \$10 per badge, payable in advance. Order forms will be available at the next two meetings. You can also email Dean Smith (das1302@icloud.com) anytime and he will send you the form by return email. Please return completed forms to Dean at a meeting with the \$10 per badge fee. Nametags will be ready at the next regular dinner meeting. Yes, the name tags with the pin clasp will continue to be provided at no cost.