Ozark Empire News

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

November 2026

Greetings and welcome to November. As we look back on our chapter's recent activities, I am incredibly proud of the impact we are making right here in the Ozarks. Our core mission has always been to support the uniformed services community, their families, and survivors—and right now, our members are putting that mission into active practice.

Expanding Our Veteran Outreach

Our latest endeavor—visiting veterans and surviving spouses of veterans residing in local nursing homes—has been a resounding success. Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, these visits have brought meaningful companionship and a reminder of our enduring gratitude to those who served before us.

We have been warmly welcomed by the local care facility staff, who appreciate the unique bond our members share with their residents. Because this initiative is going so well, we are actively planning to expand the number of facilities we visit. I am pleased to announce that our next milestone will be an inaugural visit to the James River Nursing and Rehabilitation facility (formerly James River Care Center) on December 7, at 1400 hours. If you would like to join us for this upcoming visit, please reach out to Chuck Guy to coordinate. Your presence can make a massive difference in a fellow veteran's day.

Coffee with Chuck (CWC)

I also want to highlight the steady success of our monthly **Coffee with Chuck (CWC)** meetings. These informal gatherings continue to serve as a fantastic touchpoint for regular fellowship, casual networking, and open discussions. Thank you to everyone who consistently shows up to pour a cup, share a story, and keep our friendship ties strong. Our next meeting will take place on Monday, November 2, at 1000 hours at Traveler's House Coffee and Tea-2151 West Republic Rd., Springfield, MO 65807.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward it has become evident that our chapter will be dissolving as there are no volunteers who have stepped forward to embrace the necessary leadership positions to maintain a functioning chapter. Therefore, our final official meeting will take place next month. Closing the chapter does not preclude folks getting together on their own. The two initiatives mentioned above should continue after the chapter folds. The visitation initiative will continue under the umbrella of MOAA National, as those that lead are all lifetime members of the same. Frank Bridges has committed to continue coordinating the CWC monthly meetings as they have proven beneficial to participants and very often the chapter. These meetings have forged close friendships and a true commitment to one another.

Our Christmas gathering will take place on the **FIRST** Friday in December as this date worked best for our special entertainment. We will meet at our usual spot, DAV on East Sunshine and we can gather for happy hour at 1800 hours, with festivities to begin at 1830. As usual, Dean Smith will send out a notice requesting an RSVP so we can plan for dinner.

Important USA November Military Dates

- **All of November 2026**: **Military Family Month** and **Warrior Care Month**, honoring the service, commitment, and sacrifices of military families and wounded warriors.[1]
- **Tuesday, November 10, 2026**: **Marine Corps Birthday**, marking the establishment of the U.S. Marine Corps at Tun Tavern, Philadelphia, in 1775. [1, 2]
- **Wednesday, November 11, 2026**: **Veterans Day**, a federal holiday honoring all military veterans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces (originating from the WWI armistice signed on November 11, 1918). [1, 2, 3]

***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.*

Current advocacy efforts on the MOAA webpage:

No Shutdown Should Stop Servicemember Pay: Support the Pay Our Troops Act of 2026

During a government shutdown, our dedicated uniformed servicemembers continue to safeguard our national security – at the risk of not being paid. Congress must ensure their financial security.

Halt TRICARE's Plan to End GLP-1 Coverage for TRICARE For Life

Support MOAA's efforts to protect GLP-1 weight-loss medications for retirees covered by TRICARE For Life.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Fix the TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap

This bill would expand TRICARE eligibility to young adult dependents up to age 26, bringing TRICARE in line with commercial plan requirements.

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.

Don't Let Veterans' Life Insurance Fall Behind Inflation

Contact your senators and urge them to support the Fairness for Servicemembers and Their Families Act, which will require the VA to regularly review and update life insurance coverage limits for servicemembers and veterans, ensuring they keep pace with inflation and rising market costs.

Parity for Surviving Spouses: Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

Bipartisan legislation in the House (H.R. 2055) 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 Leave Parity for USPHS Servicemembers

MOAA is committed to addressing parity gaps in U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps benefits and personnel policy. Please join us in urging members of Congress to support legislation that would align USPHS Commissioned Corps leave policy with that of the other uniformed services.

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.

EVERYONE Remember to VOTE, November 3, 2026. As Citizens, this is our Right, and our RESPONSIBILITY.

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 retired military and annuitants webpage 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 https://www.ltcfeds.com.

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 https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil.

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 www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE/index.shtml 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 www.va.gov.

October Chapter Meeting Recap



Our chapter was able to host Dan Head, representing the Missouri Veterans' Home, located in Mt Vernon. The Mt Vernon facility is one of several located around the state, is situated on 14 acres, and has a capacity of 200 beds, though some are unavailable at the present time, due to facility renovations and upgrades. Each wing of the local facility houses 50 beds, in a combination of single and double rooms. They maintain a full-time staff of 250 employees, as well as utilizing 65 volunteers. As such, they are able to meet all their residents' needs, including full time nursing care, physician care, restorative and physical therapy, barber shop and cosmetology services, dietary, environmental, laundry, and social services needs. Eligibility for admission is any Veteran, with a documented need for full-time skilled nursing care, and be able to be cared for within the facility's capabilities. Their staff is thoroughly vetted with background checks and documented training and education to be able to fulfill staffing needs.

The Mount Vernon Veterans' Home has been included among the facilities slated to be visited by our chapter members, as they reach out to veterans, to enable them ro revisit their service experiences. This outreach effort has been well received, by the veterans encountered, as well as the facility staff where these individuals reside.

Serving older Veterans every step of the way

As you age or experience illnesses that impact your daily routines, you may need additional care, and VA is fully equipped to meet your needs wherever you are in your health journey. VA provides a variety of services and support to aging and disabled Veterans. Partnering with community providers, VA helps to ensure that Veterans can maintain independence and autonomy as they rise above the challenges of aging, disability or serious illness.

Resources for older Veterans

There are a variety of resources and programs for older Veterans that can help them build a routine and support system to remain independent.

- Veteran Decision Aid provides a checklist to help you narrow down which VA resources and what kind of care is best for you, with help creating a personalized health plan by and for Veterans like you.
- Veteran Directed Care allows you and your caregiver(s) to create an individualized plan for assistance and personal care that fits your needs and lifestyle. Through this program, you can get help developing a spending and care plan to help you live independently in your own home or community.
- Palliative Care focuses on keeping symptoms in check so that you can carry out day-to-day activities. Palliative care aims to improve your overall quality of life, whether that's physical, mental or emotional well-being.
- Adult Day Health Care is a VA support program designed to help with personal care tasks while also providing opportunities for you to socialize with others and engage in your community. These activities are flexible and can be adjusted to best fit your schedule and needs.

Community resources

VHA also provides a wide range of community resources online, over the phone and in-person to help you find support and address specific needs. These include:

- Benefits Checkup is a free service that helps you identify what programs and care you qualify for.
- The National Aging and Disability Transportation Center promotes transportation options for older adults and caregivers, allowing more flexibility and freedom for senior Veterans.

If you are enrolled in VA health care, speak with your primary care provider to find out if you are eligible for geriatric and extended care services.

It's never too late to apply for the VA health care you've earned. If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran who has not yet applied for their VA health care benefits, learn how to get started.

Please mark your calendars for Friday, December 4, social hour to begin at 6pm. We are fortunate to host the BarberShop gents, as they perform for us again this year. Dean will be working with our chef, to prepare a delicious meal. More information will be forthcoming.

November US Military History

1620 - Mayflower Compact is signed in Provincetown Harbor, near Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Peregrine White is the first child born to Pilgrims in the New World
1775 - Continental Congress passes resolution authorizing “two battalions of Marines to be raised” for service as landing forces for the recently formed Continental Navy
1868 - Ulysses S. Grant is elected as the 18th US President
1902 - Dr Walter Reed dies of a ruptured appendix at the age of 51. His research led to discovery of the vectors involved in typhoid and yellow fever
1903 - Panama declares independence from Colombia, with backing of the US government
1918 - At the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the Great War ends.
1921 - Exactly three years after the end of World War I, the Tomb of the Unknowns is dedicated at Arlington Cemetery, during an Armistice Day ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.
1941 - Combined Japanese Fleet receives Top-Secret Order No. 1: This orders the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Mayala, Dutch East Indies, and Philippines
1943 - Battleship Oklahoma, sunk during Japanese attack of Dec 7, 1941, is refloated
1945 - 24 Nazi leaders went on trial before an international war crimes tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany
1956 - Soviet tanks and troops crushed protests in Hungary
1962 - Space Shuttle Columbia (STS-5) completes its first operational flight, including launch of two commercial satellites
1974 - Pioneer 11 sends photos back to NASA from Jupiter
1979 - Student followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini storm and overrun the US Embassy in Tehran, taking 63 Americans hostage. The hostage crisis ended in 1980 after 444 days, following the death of the Shah, and election of Ronald Reagan.
1982 - Newly completed Vietnam Veterans Memorial opens in Washington DC
1989 - Berlin Wall falls
2014 - One World Trade Center officially opens, replacing its predecessor 13 years after the September 11 attacks

Surviving Spouse Corner: Find Support Wherever You Live

By: Roy Yenchesky

A military surviving spouse who lives far from a military installation or VA facility still has access to a wide network of national organizations dedicated to providing support, guidance, and community. One of the most accessible starting points is **Military OneSource**, which offers 24/7 phone and online assistance, confidential counseling, financial guidance, and help navigating survivor benefits. Because services are delivered virtually, surviving spouses can receive personalized support without traveling long distances.

The **VA’s Office of Survivors Assistance** also provides extensive online tools, benefit explanations, and direct inquiry support. Surviving spouses can explore programs such as Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, education benefits, and health care options through online guides, downloadable resources, and telephone support. The VA also offers virtual counseling, caregiver resources, and grief support through its Vet Centers and hotlines.

Several national nonprofit organizations play a major role in supporting surviving spouses regardless of location. **MOAA** offers survivor-specific guidance, legislative advocacy, and access to both local and virtual chapters. **MOAA’s Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter** is especially valuable for those who do not live near a military community.



Chaplain's Corner

By Becky Hutchings

Hope this finds you all well. It seems like this year has flown by. Here we are in November already. As I write this article, the weather is still warm, so it doesn't really feel like fall yet. The nights are cool and the days are still fairly mild.

Regardless of the weather, we are approaching the time where we celebrate Thanksgiving. While we reserve a special day for this celebration, the Bible has the following to say about Thanksgiving. (Taken from AI What does the Bible say about Thanksgiving).

The Bible describes giving thanks as a core command, a constant spiritual posture, and a natural response to God's character and salvation

- **A Direct Command & Circumstances:** Believers are instructed to give thanks continually in all circumstances as God's will (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:18). [1, 2, 3]

- **An Antidote to Anxiety & Worship:** Scripture connects thankfulness with prayer to alleviate anxiety (Philippians 4:6) and views it as the proper way to enter God's presence (Psalm 100:4). [1, 2, 3]

- **Focus on God's Character:** Thanks is rooted in God's enduring love, goodness, and salvation rather than just material blessings (1 Chronicles 16:34). [1, 2, 3]
- **How Gratitude is Expressed**: **Worship, Sharing, and Action:** Expressed through songs of praise, publicly declaring God's deeds, and living out daily obedience in Jesus' name. [1, 2, 3]

An interesting note about Thanksgiving: In 1953, food corporation Swanson **overestimated how much turkey** would be consumed on Thanksgiving and had to get creative with 260 tons of leftover poultry. Using 5,000 aluminum trays and an assembly line of hand-packers, they created a Thanksgiving-inspired meal with the aforementioned turkey, cornbread dressing, gravy, peas, and sweet potatoes. The dish was sold for a grand total of 98 cents, and in the first full year of production, they sold ten million of them, the first "TV Dinner", birthing the prepackaged frozen meal industry.

No matter how you celebrate Thanksgiving, it is easy to combine our tradition(s) with the Bible and its teaching to us humans about remaining in a continual state of gratitude and thanksgiving for all that God has done for us.

Hopefully your family tradition will include good food, time with family and friends, and making some new traditions.

Make sure to include gratitude to God for all we have been given. And, save me a piece of pie!

May you be encouraged.

November 2026 Meeting

DATE: Friday, 20 November 26
PLACE: DAV Hall, Chapter 11
2525 E Division Ave
Springfield, MO

TIME: 1100 – Social Hour
50/50 drawing, to support DAV.
Drawing at the close of the presentation.
1200 – Meal

MENU: Catered **Luncheon Meal**

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

Program: **Hillary Roberts, Associate Professor of Nutrition, Missouri State University**

RSVP: By Monday, 16 November
To: LtCol Dean Smith, USMC, Retired
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: (OPEN)

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: (OPEN

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

2026 OEMOAA Monthly Schedule

Regular Chapter meetings will be held at Noon, on the 3rd Friday of the month, unless otherwise noted.

2026 Dates

Nov 20: Nutrition for Seniors
Dec 4: Evening Meeting!!
Springfield Sound Barbershoppers

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 www.moaa.org

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 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.