



The Standard Bearer
The North Shore & Chicago Chapter of
THE MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

Newsletter

Vol. XXXVI, No. 10 December 2025

December Holiday Program



Happy Holidays! The Chapter Board Members wish each of you a happy holiday spent with loved ones and good health and happiness in 2026.

Our holiday meeting will be held on December 14th at Dover Straits, 890 US Highway 45 in Mundelein. The social hour begins at 12:30 pm with the meeting at 1:00 pm followed by lunch and entertainment.

In what has become a holiday tradition for us, the **Heavenly**

Harps will visit us again on December 14th for our holiday luncheon. **Heavenly Harps** is a family endeavor of two loving parents and five talented children who enjoy music. Having studied all types of music and instruments from an early age, the members of **Heavenly Harps** will captivate your heart with the sounds of music.

The group started with a small Celtic harp. About 15 years ago, Sandi Grutzius' husband, Steve, had surprised her with a small Celtic harp. The piano playing mother of seven appreciated the gesture, but was too busy with her children. Instead the delicate string instrument struck a chord with the Orland Park resident's four daughters: Mallory, Morgan, Marisa and Mia. Today, the four sisters perform together as **Heavenly Harps**. The beautiful young ladies play their four harps, two flutes and two violins for special occasions throughout Chicago and the suburbs.

From the President's Desk

This is my last column as your president. It has been a quick two years. The Chapter appears to be strong and stable and should grow more so with the new executive board. I thank the board that worked with me- **Lt. Col. Haley, LTC Johnson and Chaplain Pfeffer; MAJ Farr; Capt. Jablonski; CW5 Saller, CW2 Lopez and Elke Friedman**. I extend a special thanks to **Col. Gill** who successfully accomplished multiple roles both within and as an extension of

the Chapter, and which contributed to the Chapter receiving MOAA LOE awards both years.

My best to the new Chapter officers, **COL Garrison** and **Col. Kott**, and the other members of the next board. Finally, I hope that I can continue to serve.

LTC John DeReu. USA (Ret), President

Message from Incoming President

Thank you so much for this exciting opportunity as Chapter president. It is a profound honor to be entrusted with the Chapter's leadership, and your support and confidence humble me. I look forward to leading us through a productive two years as we never stop serving.

For many, the upcoming holiday season is the most wonderful time of the year. We have the chance to slow down and spend time with family and friends. We are surrounded by the sounds of the season. It is a time to start traditions or cultivate the ones passed down through the years. We appreciate our good fortune and quietly give thanks for this moment.

However, for some, the holiday season can be difficult. The holiday expectations maybe overwhelming. Maybe we feel isolated and alone. Perhaps it's been a challenging year, and it feels like there's nothing worth celebrating. It is up to each of us to reach out and help those who may be struggling with this time of year. It starts with the people we see every day—our colleagues, our family, and our friends. There's never a better time to reach out and say, "You matter to me." If you find yourself struggling, or know someone who is, don't be afraid or ashamed to ask for help—many people want to help.

Happy holidays!

COL Matthew Garrison, USA (Active), President Elect

Chapter News

Legislative Report

The Illinois legislature is not in session. Meantime, The Illinois Association of County Veterans Assistance Commissions, being led by Lake County VAC will be chairing a committee of key veterans groups such as American Legion, VFW, AMVETS, MOAA (North Shore & Chicago), and others to develop a legislative plan for 2026 with focus on addressing Illinois VAC needs by updating the Illinois Military Assistance Act of 1947.

In commemoration of our recent Veterans Day, and on behalf of our Chapter I sent short letters to the Illinois Governor and the McHenry County board expressing our thanks as well as just raising the flag. It's important to maintain these relationships particularly now as funding is becoming more difficult. In addition, Chapter President John DeReu sent similar thank you letters to the Lake and Winnebago county boards.

MAJ Dean Farr, USA (Ret), Director of Legislative Affairs (State)

Volunteer Possibilities

Consistent with the MOAA Motto “Never Stop Serving”, consider serving at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center or Hines VA Hospital Fisher Houses. These programs would call for 2-6 people to prepare a Sunday night meal at one or the other location. The meal might be principally hamburgers and potato salad.

We also have an opportunity to serve at the USO at O’Hare. These shifts are four hours long and parking is provided in the short-term lot. Interacting with troopers probably gives those who serve more than the troops who are served.

In either case above, contact Col. George Gill, USMCR (Ret.) for more information (847-778-575).

Also, you may also want to serve at the Northern Illinois Food Bank warehouses which are in Lake Bluff and Rockford. The task here is to repackage food items from bulk to smaller packages for distribution to local food pantries. You can sign up on the internet. You can also contact Capt. Allan Ayers, USMC (Fmr) for more information.

The 2026-2028 Chapter Board of Directors

At the December 14 meeting, the following new Executive Board will be sworn in:

President	COL Matthew D. Garrison, USA, Active
Vice-President	CW5 Alfred Saller, USA (Ret.)
Secretary	Col. James F. Kott, USAF (Ret.)
Treasurer	Lt. Col. James E. Haley, ILANG (Ret.)
Director of Legislative Affairs (State)	MAJ Dean Farr, USA (Ret.)
Director of Legislative Affairs (National)	LTC John DeReu, USA (Ret.)
Director of Membership	Capt. Jacob P. Jablonski, MIANG, Active
Director of Programs	CW2 Eliseo T. Lopez, USA (Ret.)
Director of Publications	LTC Kenneth L. Johnson, USA (Ret.)
Director of Legal Affairs	Capt. Howard M. Lang, USN (Ret.)

Mark Your Calendars

Due to the number of Chapter members who travel to warmer places during January and February, we do not hold regular meetings in January and February; however, we do and will meet for an informal, pay as you go breakfast on January 28th, 2026, at Butterhill’s in Northbrook. More information will be sent to you.

For March 15, we are scheduled to have MG David Harris, Director of the Illinois Department of Revenue, speak to us. In April, we will meet on the 19th.



Dover Straits

890 E. Route 45, Mundelein

Sunday, December 14, 2025

Heavenly Harps to perform

Entrees from a Special Menu, plus soup, salad and dessert

● 1230 Friendship Hour - 1300 Luncheon - 1400 Program ●

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● RESERVATION REQUEST (Deadline is December 12) ●

TO: CW2 Eliseo Lopez, 26533 N. Wilton Road, Wauconda, IL 60084-2430

Phone: 847-452-2414 email: elopez1989@yahoo.com

FROM:

NAME _____ RANK/SVC _____

GUEST/SPOUSE _____

Please reserve ____ places at the MOAA meeting on **Sunday, December 14th** at Dover Straits, Mundelein @ \$35.00 per person.

____ This will be my first attendance at a meeting of this Chapter.

____ I will need a ride to the meeting. ____ I would be happy to drive someone.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ payable to *North Shore and Chicago Chapter MOAA*