

August 2021

ILCouncilMOAA.org

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Never Stop Serving!!!

**“NEVER
STOP
SERVING”**



President’s column for the August (State Fair) Newsletter

Four Illinois MOAA Chapters had folks manning the MOAA information table at the State Fair on Veterans Day at the Fair, August 15th. We had great weather, and a good turnout despite the COVID restrictions. I was privileged to present 2nd place trophies to the JROTC competitors (see pictures and narrative nearby) along with a \$150.00 check to the Waukegan team who ended up in second place overall. As I indicated in an earlier e-mail, we were able to get MOAA “advertised” with the Governor and other dignitaries during the main program and when we handed out the JROTC awards. For the eight of us representing the Council and four Chapters, it was a successful day. THANKS to DR, DF, DK, GB, RS, JF, and JM (you figure out who was there!) for their time and service at the Fair!

On a second note, I participated in a Councils and Chapters meeting on the 18th. From that meeting:

Victoria is back and heading up the efforts to assess Chapter and Council health – more on that in the coming months.

LOE results, along with travel invitations and instructions are to be released on 20 August. The MOAA HQ visits to Chapters and Councils continues to need to be “flexible” in response to COVID restrictions et al.

There is a renewed emphasis on Chapter Health and how the ~400 Chapters can grow membership, develop grass root advocacy, and become engaged in community activities.

17 September is the roll out of the new data system with changes to the MOAA website, the Committee Module, and other IT tools to aid in membership communications, development, and effectiveness. Be looking for those changes.

The October *Military Officer* magazine will have a 20-page insert highlighting various MOAA Chapters.

I am looking forward to seeing y’all at Cantigny on 25 September. Travel safely!

Semper Fi & Never Stop Serving! Bob

From the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator

As in previous years, the IL State Fair and the Illinois Department of Veteran Affairs (IDVA) once again honored Veterans and Gold Star Survivors at this year's IL State Fair in Springfield on August 15, 2021.

The day began with a yellow rose ceremony to remember our Illinois Fallen Service Members and to honor our Illinois Gold Star Survivors. Governor J.B. Pritzker presented each Gold Star Survivor with a yellow rose, which he or she then laid at the base of the battle cross memorial. As the Survivor came forward, Mark Patterson of IDVA, read aloud the name of the fallen service member.

After the ceremony, Veterans, Survivors, and State Fair attendees perused the benefits expo, which took place in "The Shed" across from the pavilion where the rose ceremony occurred. Wearing my fulltime hat, I staffed the Survivor Outreach Services table and provided resources and referrals to many Veterans, Survivors, and State Fair attendees.

Some of the resources I provided included how to obtain military service records, guidance for a Survivor in filing for VA benefits after her spouse's death, and providing a shoulder and a listening ear for a veteran who recently lost a battle buddy to a sudden, unexpected death.

Despite the shroud of the COVID pandemic, attendance was higher than anticipated. The weather was perfect for being outdoors. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with so many veterans and survivors.

If you have never been to Veterans and Survivors Day at the IL State Fair, check it out next year! It really was an enjoyable day. Below are some photos from the rose ceremony and the benefits expo.

Gold Star Survivors receiving the ceremonial yellow rose from Governor Pritzker.



From the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator

Visitors at the Benefits Expo



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Legislative Priorities for MOAA in 2021

By MOAA Government Relations Staff

Here are MOAA's priorities for advocacy as the 117th Congress begins its work. Our focus remains on all eight of the uniformed services and their service-earned entitlements.

As protecting health care and service-earned benefits continues to be a challenge, MOAA will press forward in engaging Congress to shape outcomes in these vital areas. There are steep hills before us. Our nation has a rising debt of more than \$27 trillion, and a deficit of more than \$3 trillion.

In view of this, MOAA anticipates robust attempts to control federal budgets, reduce or eliminate unprogrammed expenditures, and reduce entitlements. MOAA needs you to be at the ready to reach out to your legislators, and keep that engagement going as needed to make sure your voice is heard.

Our priorities may be updated, as warranted, during the next two years this Congress is in session. Together, we can succeed.

- Recognize the COVID-19 Pandemic Changed the Landscape for Many of Our Priorities
- Protect the Value of the Military Health Care Benefit
- Protect the MHS Pharmacy Benefit and Achieve Flexibility in TRICARE Pharmacy Copays
- Address Barriers to Accessing Care Within the MHS, Including TRICARE Coverage Gaps and Mental Health Care Access Challenges
- Achieve Concurrent Receipt of Service-Earned Retirement Pay and VA Disability Pay
- Protect Family Support Programs, and Ensure Military-Provided Services (Housing, PCS, Child Care) Are Affordable, Readily Available, and Meet Quality Standards
- Reform the Presumptive Process to Support Veterans Claiming Service-Connected Disabilities for Toxic Exposures
- Achieve Equity of Benefits, Protections and Administrative Support for Guard/Reserve Members Consistent With Their Active Duty Counterparts
- Sustain Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Foundational Missions and Services
- Protect Arlington National Cemetery as an Option for Those Currently Eligible to Receive Full Military Honors, Through Expansion of Our National Cemetery
- Sustain Pay Raises for Service members and COLA Raises for Retirees
- Improve Survivor Benefits
- Ensure the Coast Guard Receives Pay During a Government Shutdown

Comments from the Council Chaplain

The month of August is traditionally the month for the Illinois State Fair. This year to the delight of many it has happened after an absence of a year. It is a time to showcase many Illinois agricultural products, seemingly endless supplies of waffles, hot dogs, cotton candy, information about veterans' matters including a fine display from our MOAA Council, headed by Col Tyler, political speeches, worship services, several types of music and just plain socializing among people from around the state and other states as well. My wife Cindy and I attended Veterans' Day and I played in the Three Tenors Band the next Day.

Some have questioned the existence of the fair in that it has at times lost money. I think it was Gov Thompson, Illinois' longest-serving governor to date, who didn't think it had to show profit. I don't recall his reasoning but I have come to believe that people are more likely to buy goods and services if they can see them. And so if many buy a certain brand of ketchup for example because they have seen it, this will cause the manufacturer to hire more employees who will spend their incomes and pay more taxes. So the State will benefit, or so the argument goes.

Overall though The Fair or any fair in the state should remind us the freedoms we enjoy as Americans, the right to peaceably assemble, to travel to and fro, to air one's opinions and to have them met with respectful silence, to come up with an idea and have it marketed at a price we the manufacturer set- all freedoms which any civilized society values and promotes, and, as the tragic events in Afghanistan have shown, the right and duty to question our government's policies involving foreign affairs.

I hope we do all we can to promote our State Fair and other fairs throughout the State for the fellowship they promote and the freedoms which are implied throughout.

Blessings to all,

Ralph Woehrmann

CH Major USA RET

Illinois Council of Chapter Presidents, Chaplain.

2021 State Fair coverage



2021 State Fair coverage



2021 State Fair coverage



2021 State Fair Coverage





2021 State Fair Coverage



COL Tyler and State Representative Dan Caulkins at the August Lincoln Land Chapter meeting



Council of Chapters

New Website

The Council has a new website. Address is <http://www.ilcouncilmoaa.org>

If you have any items or input for the website, contact MAJ (USAF, Ret) Dave Knieriem at the following email address: dknieriem@casscomm.com

MOAA is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent, nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organization.

While MOAA is permitted by law to lobby—and does so actively—its status as a tax-exempt veterans organization precludes it from participating in political activities, which are defined as intervening directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Stated briefly: the association may advocate issues, but it may not advocate the election or defeat of particular candidates or political parties. This newsletter follows the policies of MOAA National.



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Being Forgotten!

Now and Always
We'll be There.



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