



Northwestern Michigan Chapter

November 2023

Next Chapter Event

Friday, December 15 – Our Annual Christmas Gala and Scholarship Awards Dinner Meeting will be held at the Traverse City Golf and Country Club beginning at 5:30 pm. The country club is located at 1725 South Union Street, Traverse City, MI 49684. Dr. Nick Nissley, President of Northwestern Michigan College. See you there!



In case you missed it – News from MOAA (Click on the links to open them):

- **TRICARE Toolkit: Flu Vaccine Coverage.** Peak flu months run from December through March. Prevention begins with an annual vaccine. <https://www.moaa.org/content/topic-and-landing-pages/moaas-tricare-toolkit/tricare-toolkit-flu-vaccine-coverage/>
- **Veterans Claims for Benefits Surge Since PACT Act Became Law.** Claims under the act account for nearly 4 in 10 of all claims filed since it took effect in August 2022. <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/health-care-and-earned-benefits/veterans-claims-for-benefits-surge-since-pact-act-became-law/>
- **JCS Chair Warns of Stark Consequences Brought by a Yearlong Stopgap Budget.** The move would create a personnel budget shortfall approaching \$6 billion and force a recruiting slowdown. <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/recommended-reads/jcs-chair-warns-of-stark-consequences-brought-by-a-yearlong-stopgap-budget/>
- **VA Exceeds Annual Goal for Housing Homeless Veterans.** "We're going to keep pushing ... until every veteran has a safe, stable place to call home in this country they fought to defend." <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/recommended-reads/va-exceeds-annual-goal-for-housing-homeless-veterans/>
- **VA Plans Outreach to Screen 3 Million More Veterans for Toxic Exposures.** The effort targets those who've enrolled with the VA but do not receive medical care from the agency. <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/health-care-and-earned-benefits/va-plans-outreach-to-screen-3-million-more-veterans-for-toxic-exposures/>
- **NDAAs Update: MOAA Priorities in Play as House, Senate Begin Final Negotiations.** This must-pass legislation could address TRICARE changes, housing costs, and much more. <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/advocacy/ndaas-update-moaa-priorities-in-play-as-house,-senate-begin-final-negotiations/>
- **Legislators Back MOAA-Supported Plan to Help End Hunger in the Ranks.** Read the bipartisan letter on behalf of a critical provision in the FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. <https://www.moaa.org/content/publications-and-media/news-articles/2023-news-articles/spouse-and-family/legislators-back-moaa-supported-plan-to-help-end-hunger-in-the-ranks/>



Northwestern Michigan Chapter MOAA

FROM THE PRESIDENT – CDR Tom Haase, USCG (Ret.)

Greeting all! It looks like we are finally going to get a touch of winter after a wonderful stretch of nice weather in the middle of November.

You will probably receive the newsletter about the same time as the invitation for our December 15th meeting at the Traverse City Golf and Country Club. Please do your best to carve out the time to attend the December dinner. We have a great program lined up with Dr. Nick Nissley, the current President of NMC speaking. We will be conducting our election of Officers for the upcoming term, and I will be passing the baton to CDR Mark Benjamin, USCG (Ret).

Thank all of you for your continued membership in our Chapter. Our motto of “Never Stop Serving” is on display in the actions of our members on a daily basis. I am so impressed with all the contributions you make in our community and beyond. Keep up the good work.

Thank You to the members of our Board of Directors for their hard work throughout the last two years. In particular, I want to recognize the work done by Major General Mike Lehnert, USMC (Ret) and Brigadier General Scott Dennis, USAF (Ret) who have served our Chapter from the early days as Treasurer and Scholarship Director. I am happy to report that they will both be staying on the Board as Directors.

Tom Haase
President, NWMI Chapter of MOAA

2023 Northwestern Michigan Chapter Structure

Board of Directors:

Immediate Past President	Capt Bob Kutulis, USAF (Ret.)	kutulis@charter.net
Director (USCG Liaison)	CAPT Andy Schanno, USCG	andrew.g.schanno@uscg.mil
Director	TBD	
Director (Elected)	TBD	

Chapter Officers:

President	CDR Thomas Haase, USCG (Ret.)	thaase76@gmail.com
Vice President	CDR Mark Benjamin, USCG (Ret.)	mebmd11@gmail.com
Treasurer	MajGen Michael Lehnert, USMC (Ret.)	wontolla44@gmail.com
Secretary	Tom Bratton, USAF Veteran	thomas.a.bratton@gmail.com
Membership Chair	Col Greg Movsesian, ANG (Ret.)	gmo50@outlook.com
Legislative Liaison	CDR Andy Clayton, USCG (Ret.)	gaclayton@gmail.com
Programs Officer	CDR Mark Benjamin, USCG (Ret.)	mebmd11@gmail.com
Communications/Newsletter	CWO4 Curtis Erickson, USCG (Ret.)	curtis_erickson@outlook.com
Scholarship Chair	Brig Gen Scott Dennis, USAF (Ret.)	sdennisf16@gmail.com
Personal Affairs Officer	Karen Movsesian	themovsesians@gmail.com
Surviving Spouse Liaison	Karen Movsesian	themovsesians@gmail.com
Chaplain	LT Vince Lobisco, USN (Ret.)	lobisco1@sbcglobal.net

Upcoming Events and Quarterly Dinner Meetings

CDR Mark Benjamin, USCG, Ret.
NWMJ Chapter Vice President and Programs Chair

Friday, December 15, 2023: The Annual Christmas Gala and Scholarship Awards dinner will be held beginning at 5:30pm at the Traverse City Golf and Country Club. A traditional Holiday Dinner will be served. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Nick Nissley, President, Northwestern Michigan College.

Thursday, March 14, 2024: Quarterly dinner Meeting. Cambria Suites, Traverse City.

Thursday December 12, 2024: Annual Christmas Gala, Traverse City Golf and Country Club.

Chapter Member Receives Writing Awards

Congratulations to chapter member John Wemlinger, who recently received two awards from the Military Writers Society of America. His books "Before the Snow Flies" received a gold award and "The Cut" received a silver award. Wemlinger was the guest speaker at the chapter's June 2022 meeting and talked about the story behind "The Cut".

Editor's Note: Earlier in November John was interviewed by Alan R. Warren on his "House of Mystery Radio Show" podcast, and talked about John's latest book, "The Road to Empire". The interview aired on West Coast affiliates of NBC Radio.

Some of the previous authors interviewed on Warren's radio show have included James Patterson, James Comey, David Baldacci, and Brad Meltzer.

You can listen to John's podcast using this link: <https://www.alanwarren.com/hom-podcast-episodes/episode/5b087f81/john-wemlinger-the-road-to-empire>

Do Not Feed the Sharks!

Individuals and companies known as "Claim Sharks" are known to approach veterans both at home and in retirement homes. They offer a veteran to assist or consult with them in filing claims for VA benefits.

The veteran then finds that they have been charged large fees for services that their county veterans affairs office offers at no charge. Like a "Loan Shark", once you are in, you can't get out, and may be subject to new and hidden fees whenever you get a new rating, no matter who does the work. Some of their predatory practices include promising an increased disability rating and expediting VA claims decisions. They frequently use confusing tactics or ambiguous language in contracts to mislead their prospective clients or coerce them into signing a contract.

As a veteran, you can protect yourself by always working with VA accredited representatives, not signing contracts, not agreeing to pay for medical consultations, and not providing access to protected health information or personal identifiable information.

Who is NOT a Claim Shark?

- Your county's Veterans Affairs Office representative
- VA-accredited veterans service organization representatives, like the VFW
- VA-accredited claims agents
- VA-accredited attorneys
- Attorneys assisting with the Camp LeJeune lawsuits who do not charge excessive fees.

(The information in this article was provided by the Veterans of Foreign Wars)

Please Update Your Contact Information

Please take a moment to review and update your contact information on your profile at [MOAA.org](https://www.mooa.org). We especially need you to review and/or add email addresses, as many appear to be missing or inaccurate. Thank you!

NWM MOAA 2023 Scholarship Update

Brig Gen Scott Dennis, USAF (Ret.), Scholarship Chair

The chapter is gearing up for our eighth year of scholarship awards to deserving Northern Michigan children and grandchildren of military members. We have contacted all counselors in our region and applications are arriving daily.

Last year we gave out \$7,000 to seven very deserving students. This year we are on track to match or exceed that based on our members' generosity. Because of the outstanding support from our chapter this program has grown significantly and has become a well-known and established program in Northern Michigan.

The scholarship board will form and evaluate applications and make a recommendation on this year's scholarships over the week of thanksgiving. When approved we will notify students and invite them to attend our Christmas Gala on the 15th of December at the Traverse City Country Club. Please mark your calendars, this has always been a special night. This year we have Nick Nissley from NMC joining us for the celebration of our student scholarship winners.

As you consider your end of year giving, help us get started in 2024 by considering support to our NWM MOAA Scholarship program. We continue to make a huge impact on these young people as they start their college careers, and that impact can last a lifetime.

You can send your donations to either Tom Haase, Mike Lehnart, or myself. Recommendations or suggestions on how to improve the program, or referrals to students that we can pass an application to are appreciated.

Please make your checks payable to: Northwestern Michigan Chapter, MOAA

Proposed Chapter Board Meetings for 2024

The dates for upcoming chapter board meetings have been tentatively set for next year. Board meetings are normally held at the Traverse City Elks Lodge at noon. The lodge is located at 625 Bay Street in Traverse City (Bay Street and US-31/Division Street).

All current chapter members are invited to attend the board meetings. The meeting dates are as follows:

- February 15, 2024
- May 9, 2024
- August 8, 2024
- November 7, 2024

Grand Traverse Area Veterans Coalition News

The Coalition is still needing Olsen's Grocery receipts. These are turned in, with a percentage of sales going to the Veterans Suicide Prevention group 22 2 None. Give your receipts to Mark Benjamin or Curt Erickson.

Officer Elections to be Held at December Quarterly Meeting and Scholarship Dinner

Elections for our 2024 officers will be held at the December Quarterly Meeting and Scholarship Dinner at the Traverse City Country Club.

The proposed slate of officers for 2024 includes:

- President – Mark Benjamin
- Vice President – Greg Movsesian
- Secretary – Tom Bratton
- Treasurer – Tom Haase

The officer-selected chapter positions for 2024 include the following:

- ROTC/JROTC Chair – Bob Kutulis
- Membership Chair – Mike Wildman
- Legislative Chair – Andy Clayton
- Scholarship Chair – Deb Haase
- Surviving Spouse Liaison – Karen Movsesian
- Newsletter – Curt Erickson
- Director – Mike Lehnert
- Director – Scott Dennis



**Northwestern Michigan Chapter
Annual Christmas Gala and Scholarship Awards Dinner Meeting**

Friday, 15 December 2023

**Traverse City Country Club
1725 South Union Street, Traverse City, MI
5:30 PM**

Guest speaker: Dr. Nick Nissley, President, Northwestern Michigan College

Northwestern Michigan Chapter Change of Watch

A traditional holiday fare will be served buffet-style, and includes:

- Machus Salad, Biscuits, and Rolls
- Carved Turkey Breast, Pan Gravy, Cranberry Sauce, and Stuffing
- Roasted Ham with Dijonnaise
- Mashed Potatoes
- Sauteed Green Beans
- Roasted Squash Wedges

\$55.00 per person.

Member Name: _____ Guest Name: _____

	<u>Amount Due</u>
Number of Meals: _____ @ \$55.00.....	\$ _____
Scholarship Donation:.....	\$ _____
Chapter Membership Dues (\$20/year, \$55/3 years)	\$ _____
Total Amount Due	\$ _____

Reservations to: Karen Movsesian, 8079 Aarwood Trail NW, Rapid City, MI 49676

Email: themovsesians@gmail.com or text/call 313-318-4703

Advance payment is preferred, but you can pay at the door.

Check payable to NW MI Chap MOAA.

RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED NLT 5 pm Sunday, December 10, 2023