



Upcoming Chapter Event

Thursday, March 20 – Our March dinner meeting will be held at the Traverse City Elks Club beginning at 5:30 pm. The club is located at 625 Bay Street in Traverse City.

The guest speaker will be chapter member John Wemlinger, who will be speaking on “Leadership and the Call to Service.” See the attached flyer for more information. Please RSVP to Todd Sanders by noon on March 10th.



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

MOAA on the Hill: Key Veterans’ Priorities Outlined During Joint Hearing - Caregiver support and ending the wait for toxic-exposed veterans lead the list, along with ongoing VA budget concerns. Click [here](#) to read the article.

These MOAA-Backed Bills Protect the Value of Your Survivor Benefits - Learn how the bipartisan Love Lives On Act and Caring for Survivors Act will make a difference for those who’ve lost loved ones. Click [here](#) to read the article.

From Military Officer Magazine: The Push for a More Perfect PACT Act - The 2022 legislation contained generational reforms for toxic-exposed veterans. But there is more work to do. Click [here](#) to read the article.

TRICARE Contacts: Who to Call with Coverage Changes and Problems - Unsure where to start as you navigate a complicated system? This guidance will help. Click [here](#) to read the article.

Join MOAA’s Work to Restart Key Financial Protections for Servicemembers - Programs to prevent scams, enforce lending limits, and educate the force are all on hold ... and could disappear entirely. Click [here](#) to read the article.

Check Out the Best Spring Break Military Discounts - From cruises to amusement parks to your local zoo, find out where you and your family can save. Click [here](#) to read the article.

Does the Smaller TRICARE Pharmacy Network Put Your Health Care at Risk? - A new report, part of MOAA’s work to preserve your earned benefit, provides details on the impact of pharmacy network cuts. Click [here](#) to read the article.



FROM THE PRESIDENT – CDR Mark Benjamin, USCG (Ret.)

President, NWMI Chapter of MOAA

The goal of this President’s column is to simply say: THANK YOU!

Winter presses on with a real Michigan winter for a change. As an avid skier, I find this weather just about perfect: well, until about mid-March!!

So hard to believe that an entire year has passed since I relieved Tom Haase as your Chapter President. As I look back, I see so many things for which to be grateful: Greg and Karen Movsesian, with their great work on the silent auction; Bob Stovall stepping in on ROTC/JROTC issues; Dan Warren picking up our traditional scholarship program; and Mike “Wildman” Wildman just knocking it out of the park with membership and Bylaws. Then there is Curt Erickson leading the way on Newsletters and recently stepping in to assist Tom Haase with treasurer duties. Chris Buday volunteered to become Secretary and John Brian stepped in as Chaplain, a far more important job than many realize.

More recently, Todd Sanders has taken on Vice President while Angie Morgan has stepped up to begin creating our chapter website. Chris Johnson is Legislative affairs, Peggy Joyner-Johnson is now our Chapter representative to the Grand Traverse Area Veterans Coalition, filling the important position providing outreach to other Veterans organizations. In addition, Todd Brown will soon be taking over the chapter newsletter while Julie Brown will work as our Surviving Spouse Liaison and Personal Services Officer.

I simply can’t thank all of you enough!! Your excellent work and willingness to contribute, to give back, to Never Stop Serving is pitch perfect!!

So, where to now? I do believe that there is a large military officer population in our area that is still untapped. We can continue to grow this Chapter by branching out more in our community, serving our community and the Grand Traverse area. One great help in recruiting and reaching out to the younger generations will be thru our website and on Facebook. These are today’s communication methods, and we will begin communicating with one another and our community thru these methods as soon as possible.

Mark Benjamin

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the Northwestern Michigan Chapter of MOAA are non-partisan, non-profit organizations, chartered to better the overall well-being of its members – military officers and surviving spouses.

We seek to be the leading military service organization in our region. Our chapter’s principles are:

- Love of Country
- Pride in our Armed Forces
- Commitment to Service

2025 Northwestern Michigan Chapter Structure

Board of Directors:

Immediate Past President CDR Thomas Haase, USCG (Ret.) thaase76@gmail.com
 Director (USCG Liaison) CDR Ryan Hawn, USCG ryan.d.hawn@uscg.mil
 Director MajGen Michael Lehnert, USMC (Ret.) .. wontolla44@gmail.com
 Director Brig Gen Scott Dennis, USAF (Ret.) sldennisf16@gmail.com

Chapter Officers:

President CDR Mark Benjamin, USCG (Ret.) mebmd11@gmail.com
 Vice President Maj Todd Sanders, USMC (Ret.) sanders.todd.m@gmail.com
 Treasurer CDR Thomas Haase, USCG (Ret.) thaase76@gmail.com
 Secretary CDR Chris Buday, USN (Ret.) cbuday@earthlink.net
 ROTC/JROTC Liaison Officer Maj Bob Stovall, USA (Ret.) lrstovall@comcast.net
 Membership Chair LCDR Mike Wildman, USN (Ret.) wildmike50@gmail.com
 Legislative Liaison LTC Christopher Johnson, USA (Ret.) cljpai87@gmail.com
 Programs Officer Maj Todd Sanders, USMC (Ret.) sanders.todd.m@gmail.com
 Newsletter CWO4 Curtis Erickson, USCG (Ret.) curtis_erickson@outlook.com
 Scholarship Chair CAPT Dan Warren, USCG (Ret.) warrendr@earthlink.net
 Personal Affairs Officer CPT Julie Brown, USA (Veteran) jbrown@reagan.com
 Surviving Spouse Liaison CPT Julie Brown, USA (Veteran) jbrown@reagan.com
 Chaplain LTC John Brian, USA (Ret.) airborneranger840@yahoo.com

You can visit the MOAA online Legislative Action Center at: www.moaa.org/takeaction

2025 Chapter Events

2025

Board Meetings

- May 15
- August 14
- November 13

Quarterly Dinner Meetings

- March 20 at the Elks Club in Traverse City. The guest speaker will be John Wemlinger. See the attached flyer for more information.
- June 13 at the Traverse City Elks Lodge 323 in Traverse City. The *silent auction* to help finance our Scholarship Fund will be held that evening. The guest speaker will be Michelle Gallagher, Executive Director, Northern Michigan Chapter of the Red Cross.
- September 11 at the U. S. Coast Guard Air Station, Traverse City – The guest speaker will be CDR Ryan Hawn, Commanding Officer, USCG Air Station Traverse City.
- December 12 our annual Chapter Christmas Gala and Scholarship Awards Dinner will be held at the Traverse City Golf and Country Club; Guest speaker: TBD.

Other Events

- Friday, May 16: Mini Golf Tournament at Pirates Cove in Traverse City.
- Thursday, August 21: Golf tournament and picnic at the Elk Rapids Golf Course.

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New Member Profile

LTC Mike Maasberg, USA (Ret.)

Mike was born and raised in Midland, Michigan, was graduated from the United States Military Academy (West Point), and was commissioned as an Armor officer. After graduating from the armor officer basic course, and the airborne and ranger schools, he married Susan in her hometown of Hagerstown, Maryland.

Mike spent 24 years on active duty: two tours in the Federal Republic of Germany, one tour in Vietnam as an advisor. He also attended graduate school at Michigan State University followed by teaching at the Army's Toxic and Hazardous Materials Agency. Mike spent the last five years on active duty leading the ROTC program at Eastern Michigan University.

Following his retirement in 1993, Mike and Susan moved to Acme Township. He taught chemistry and mathematics at Northwest Michigan College (NMC) for 19 years. Susan taught biology and religion at St. Francis High School for 17 years.

Both Mike and Susan are now retired and are living the good life. They continue to be active in the community: Mike with the Kiwanis Club of Traverse City, and Susan as a member of the Zonta Club of Traverse City.

Mike and Susan have three grown children: daughter Anne and son-in-law Joe live here in Traverse City with their grandchild T.J.; their son David lives and works in Northville, Michigan; and their youngest daughter, Maggie, is a Lieutenant Colonel U.S. Army engineer, and is currently the Chief of Staff at the Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Please Update Your Contact Information

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

New Member Profile

LCDR Hal LaLonde, USN (Ret.)

Hal enlisted in the Navy's Delayed Entry Program at the age of 17 and was assigned to the University of Michigan. Upon graduation he became an Ensign in the Navy's Surface Warfare Branch.

Following this assignment, he was assigned to three ships during his Navy career: USS Reeves, USS Moosbrugger, and USS Abraham Lincoln. He also performed staff work in Germany and Korea, as well as two teaching assignments (Miami University in Ohio and the Naval Academy).

Following his retirement, Hal and his wife, Kelly, moved to Traverse City, where he worked teaching math and physics for the Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS). Kelly completed her MBA and worked as a CPA for a local firm.

Hal and Kelly have two grown sons, Donald and Martin.

The LaLonde's are active in community volunteering at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Saint Vincents, Sleeping Bear National Park, and Northwest Michigan Community College. He is a member of the Cedar Rod and Gun Club where he continues to enjoy target shooting. He is always happy to bring fellow veterans to the range for practice.

In 2020 Hal established an endowment at the University of Michigan and works with a team of Native Americans to award a commissioned officer's sword to a graduating senior in the NROTC program. This award will be expanded to include graduates of the Army and Air Force programs next year.

Hal and Kelly are happily retired and are living northwest of Traverse City in the Timberlee area.



Never Stop Serving!

2024 Annual Christmas Gala and Scholarship Awards Dinner

Our annual Christmas Gala and Scholarship Awards Dinner meeting was held December 12. A large crowd was present at the Traverse City Golf and Country Club to enjoy the evening's events.

Chapter president Mark Benjamin hosted the evening's events, which included the election of officers for the 2025 calendar year. This year's officers are contained in the table on page 2 of this newsletter. Chapter Vice President Greg Movsesian introduced the evening's guest speaker, Mr. Bruce Byl.



Mr. Byl spoke to us on the subject "Persistence makes Dreams Possible." Mr. Byl is the President and Chief Executive Officer of his own company, and is also an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and investor.

The highlight of the evening was the awarding of eight thousand dollars in scholarships to seven deserving area students. Scholarship Chair Dan Warren hosted the scholarship presentations that were made by Mark Benjamin.

Mallory Lowe, a 2024 Leland High School graduate who is attending the University of Michigan received the returning a \$750 scholarship award. She was not able to attend the awards dinner, so she will be presented her scholarship certificate at a future chapter dinner meeting. Her grandfather, Harvey James Beute, served as a medical specialist in the U. S. Army National Guard from 1960 to 1965.

Lini Czerwonka, a 2024 Traverse City Central High School Graduate, received a \$750 scholarship award. She is currently attending Northwestern Michigan College and is pursuing a degree in Nursing. She is on-track to complete her bachelor's degree by the age of 20. After she receives her college degree, she plans to join the military. Lini's mother, Michelle, served in the U. S. Navy from 1994 to 1998, and her father Greg served in the U. S. Coast Guard from 1989 through 2022.

Elizabeth Davis is a senior at Traverse City St. Francis High School, and she received a \$1,000 scholarship award. She is involved in student council, National Honor Society, various youth groups, cheerleading, and has performed in her school musicals. She plans to pursue a degree in secondary education, to include social studies and Spanish. Elizabeth's grandfather, Larry "Tub" Horman served in the U. S. Navy from 1958 to 1962.

Natalie Moore is a senior at Kalkaska High School, and she received a \$1,000 scholarship award. She is involved in student council, National Honor Society, various youth groups, and is a dance teacher assistant at Aiden Dance Academy. Natalie plans to pursue a degree in Actuarial Science and Mathematics. Her grandfather, Stafford Wood, served in the U. S. Army from 1969 to 1981.

Kelly Burch is a senior at Cadillac High School, and she received a \$1,000 scholarship award. She has been involved in creating various school clubs. One noteworthy start-up is a club named "Sending Sunshine", the first United States-based chapter of the Canadian non-profit organization. Kelly is involved with the National Honor Society, youth government, the American Red Cross, YMCA, and is the head school yearbook editor. She wants to pursue a degree in Speech Language and Hearing Sciences and/or Communication Sciences and Disorders. Her grandfather, James Ziska, served in the U. S. Navy from 1958 to 1961.

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Tristan Demlow is a senior at Grayling High School, and he received a \$1,500 scholarship award. With a newfound passion for rocket flight and light waves, Tristan plans to pursue a degree in either astrophysics or software engineering and hopes to work in the space industry following college. He is involved with youth leadership, basketball, cross country, track and field, and National Honor Society. Tristan's father, Joshua, served in the U. S. Marine Corps from 2001 to 2005.

Jacqueline Hearne is a senior at St. Mary Catholic School in Lake Leelanau, and she received the \$2,000 "Bob Kutulis Scholarship Award". A leader throughout her life, she is president of her class and is a member of the National Honor Society. Her goal is to become a teacher. Jacqueline is involved in youth groups, business groups, takes flight lessons, plays soccer and volleyball, runs cross-country, and is on the ski team. She is also a club sailing instructor and a youth soccer coach. She plans to pursue a degree in English with a minor in Classical Education. Jacqueline's grandfather, Dr. John Codd, served in the U. S. Air Force as a general surgeon from 1969 to 1971.



The 2024 Scholarship Awardees. From left-to-right: Chapter President Mark Benjamin, Michelle Czerwonka, Kelly Burch, Elizabeth Davis, Natalie Moore, Jacquelin Hearn, Tristan Demlow, and Chapter Scholarship Chair Dan Warren. Not shown: Mallory Lowe.

Thank you to those of you who donated to the Scholarship Fund in 2024: Roy Aydelotte, Fritz Barrett, Mark Benjamin, Chuck Billadeau, Eric Boals, John Brian, Bruce Buchan, Chris Buday, Steve Chapman, Steve Chowen, Marty Colburn, Greg Czerwonka, Scott Dennis, Curt Erickson, Brad Graft, Tom Haase, Mary Johnson, Richard Kay, Mike Lehnert, John Lindsey, Jeff Link, Larry Manthei, Greg Matyas, Randy McClure, Huch McLeod, Angela Morgan, Greg Movsesian, Tom Petzold, Rhil Rosi, Ed Slosky, Deborah Smith, Shirley Snare, Jim Stephenson, Walter Topp, Dan Warren, Mike Wildman, and Bob Kutulis. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

A special thanks to the Scholarship Evaluation Team for their hard work: Dan Warren, Shannon Riley, Dick Kay, Mike Wildman, Christie Hawn, Bob Stovall, and Scott Dennis.

THE LARGER OUR NUMBERS, THE GREATER YOUR VOICE.

Why MOAA chapter membership matters.



MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM FOR MOAA AND NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Name _____
Rank _____ Branch of Service _____
 Active Retired Former Reserve National Guard Surviving Spouse
Spouse name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Date of Birth _____ Telephone _____
Email _____

(To ensure delivery of MOAA communications, please provide a personal email address)

Are you a member of MOAA? Yes No Unknown

MOAA Member Number (if known) _____

Not a MOAA national member yet? Check here to receive a BASIC Membership at no cost to you.



Upgrading to **PREMIUM** membership gives you immediate access to a full spectrum of career and financial resources, exclusive publications, college scholarships for dependents, and countless discounts on products and travel.

Visit moaa.org/join to learn more.

How did you hear about MOAA Chapter involvement? _____

Are you a member of any other MOAA Chapter(s)? Yes No

If yes, which one(s)? _____

To complete enrollment:

- Fill in this form and email it to wildmike50@gmail.com. Do not include credit card information. Or,
- Mail it with a check made out to NWMI Chapter MOAA, and mail it to:

Mike Wildman, 702 Ahgosa Trl, Traverse City, MI 49686.

You will be opted in to receive e-communications from MOAA and your local chapter. You will be able to opt out of any further e-communications at any time. MOAA will not sell or share your personal information.

Chapter Membership and dues information

Get to know and enjoy the company of fellow officers in northern Michigan.

As members, we engage socially; award scholarships to deserving students; maintain a strong civic presence; and support legislation to preserve and enhance the benefits for active, veteran, and retired members of the armed forces of the United States of America.

Chapter eligibility is limited to MOAA members who have paid their chapter dues.

Chapter dues are \$20 per year, or \$55 for three years, and are payable on January 1 of the year after your membership has expired.

"Never Stop Serving"

Revision 20240110



Northwestern Michigan Chapter
Never Stop Serving

Dinner & Chapter Meeting March 20, 2025

Special Guest Speaker –
John Wemlinger
Retired Army Aviator
Award-winning Author



John is a retired US Army Colonel with 27 years of service and is a veteran of the Vietnam conflict where he flew helicopters. His awards and decorations include the Army Senior Aviator Badge, The Defense Superior Service Medal; the Legion of Merit; The Defense Meritorious Service Medal, The Army Meritorious Service Medal and The Army Commendation Medal.

He is the author of five novels in which he writes about what he knows best: America's veterans and the issues confronting them. Four of his books have won awards including his most recent novel, *The Cut*, which was named by the State Library of Michigan as a 2022 Michigan Notable Book. He lives in Onekama, Michigan, with his wife, Diane, and their border collie, Sydney.

"The Cut" is a piece of historical fiction that John was asked to write to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Onekama, Michigan. It tells the David and Goliath story of struggling farmers who are being taken advantage of by Big Lumber in the 1870-1871 timeframe.

5:30 pm at the [Traverse City Elks Club](#)
625 Bay St., Traverse City, MI 49684



Baked Chicken Thighs
Chicken Penne Alfredo
Ceasar Salad, Red Skin Potatoes, Normandy Blend Vegetables
Cash Bar Available
\$50 Per Person – Payable by Check or Cash at the Door
Donations for the Scholarship Fund Welcome
Chapter Dues Accepted

RSVP to Todd Sanders at sanders.todd.m@gmail.com ,
click [HERE](#) , or scan this QR Code

Please RSVP before noon on March 10th

