



Piedmont Chapter



ARMY NAVY AIR FORCE MARINES COAST GUARD SPACE FORCE NOAA USPH

January 2026 Newsletter

Stay current on News of Interest to you....

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	VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE		JOIN OUR CHAPTER Choose SC as your state and Piedmont as your Chapter		SUPPORT OUR CHARITIES

Piedmont Chapter – President’s Message



HAPPY NEW YEAR! I pray each of you and your family had a safe and **Happy Thanksgiving** and a very **Merry Christmas Season**. And I pray each of us will have a safe, enjoyable, healthy and prosperous 2026.

A BRIEF 2025 RECAP: WHAT A YEAR WE HAD!

- We celebrated our 62nd Chapter birthday at our 20 November meeting.
- We started 2025 with 83 members; very sadly we lost 2 [Major Leonard Krolak, USMC (Ret) and Master Sergeant Jerald Rookstool, USA (Ret)]; and added 13 for a net gain of 11 - **most of them younger** – so, we start 2026 with 94 members.
- We continued to meet bi-monthly to enjoy the camaraderie of our members and spouses with excellent luncheons and dinners and superb, interesting guests speakers – including MG Todd McCaffrey, our SC Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- We completed our transition to a 501(c)19 non-profit, tax-exempt, charitable veterans’ organization, organized a Fundraising Committee and a JROTC Scholarship Committee, and began raising funds internally to support our M. J. “Dolly” Cooper Veterans Cemetery, our Richard M. Campbell Veterans Nursing Home, and established a competitive scholarship program to award a stipend to an outstanding graduating high school JROTC student going to college with intent to join an ROTC program and serve our country.
- We established and filled a new Board position for our Piedmont Chapter, the Director for Public Relations and Publicity, to improve local community awareness of who we are, what we do, and why it’s important to our communities.
- We outsourced technological help to Spin Nest Marketing and rolled out our new website in November. It does everything we need it to do and is super easy to navigate. **IT IS LIVE!!!!** Check it out - google it at www.moaapiedmontsc.org. All members - please send current chapter info and photos to hcannon80@yahoo.com to keep it updated and fresh.
- As we closed out 2025, our membership has graciously and generously given about \$37,000. THANK YOU to those of you who have stepped up and done so!!! We have \$5,000 “fenced” to re-landscape the Carillon area at our veterans’ cemetery, have given \$2,300 to our veterans’ nursing home for the “general fund” that provides needed items for residents whose family, the VA system or healthcare can’t provide, and we now have a little over \$30,000 (including interest) in our JROTC Scholarship Fund to award a scholarship this year for the first time in our chapter’s history. WELL DONE, PIEDMONT CHAPTER!

SOME OF OUR 2026 GOALS / CHALLENGES:

- **Maintain continuity in our Chapter leadership** - Officers and Board of Directors. Again, I sincerely thank those of you who are serving - you are a very dedicated, accomplished and professional group that I am so proud to serve with.
- **WE NEED A NEW CHAPTER SECRETARY!** – please let me know if you are interested or have a candidate.

- **Increase membership to 100.** That will take all of us. Each member - please bring a MOAA eligible guest to at least 2 of our 6 membership meetings this year.
- Renew and maintain our current members. I want each of our 94 current members to stay with us – we need the support of each of you! And for those of you who are healthy enough to make it, please plan to join us for each of our membership meetings. If you need a ride, please let Howard Stammerjohn or me know – we'll help or find a nearby member to help. Let's continue to enjoy the camaraderie of our fellow members.
- Start raising funds from local businesses and outside entities for our JROTC scholarship and the organizations and activities we support – AND - continue giving from our membership. More on ways to do that in a separate notice later.
- Improve / expand our relationships with the Clemson ROTC and our high school JROTC programs.
- **Award our first JROTC scholarship!**
- Expand / increase local awareness of the Piedmont Chapter.

RECENT HAPPENINGS:

- This past Veterans Day, Capt. Carl Sharperson, USMC (Fmr) and I had the great privilege of speaking at 2 of our JROTC high Schools. What a joy to see respect for our country and our flag by the JROTC cadets and all the students.
- We sang Happy Birthday to our Chapter at our 20 NOV meeting; had good attendance, a delicious luncheon; a super talk by Attorney Joel Collins on “The Oversized Influence of South Carolina on the Establishment of Our Nation;” and had a demonstration of our new website by Ms. Marie Cole, Spin Nest Marketing.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Hilda and I will host our quarterly “New Member Welcome and Orientation” tentatively on Friday, 9 January at 0930 at our home.
- Our Thursday, 15 JAN 2026 membership meeting will be an 11:30 luncheon at Tucker's Restaurant in Anderson. We will welcome our newest member, COL Kevin Smith, USA (Ret), PME of the Army JROTC program at West Oak High School, and his wife, Elizabeth. Our guest speaker will be either MG Robin Stilwell, SC Adjutant General, or his Deputy, MG Jeff Jones, to update us on “The State of the South Carolina National Guard.” What a great start for our chapter for 2026. We will also swear in LTC Neil Lark, USA (Ret) as our Chapter Vice President. It promises to be another very interesting and informative talk with a great luncheon and the opportunity to enjoy the camaraderie of other members and spouses.

You can RSVP at: www.moaapiedmontsc.org. Please join us for this important meeting and bring a MOAA-eligible guest.

REMINDERS:

- In addition to bringing a MOAA-eligible guest on 15 JAN, please let me know if you have a potential MOAA member I can give MOAA and Chapter info to.

• Remember to wear your service-related hats, shirts, sweatshirts, etc. when out and about. I do. It's a great MOAA and chapter conversation starter, and I get "thank you for your service" comments often.

THIS DAY, 1 JANUARY, IN AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY:

- 1776 -- The Continental Congress established the first regiment of Artillery – the official start of Army Artillery.
- 1804 -- The tradition of the Marine Band "serenading" the Commandant was established.
- 1947 -- The American and British occupation zones in Germany, after WWII, merged to form what became West Germany.

Respectfully,

Mel

Mel Case; Colonel, Infantry (Ret)
President, Piedmont Chapter, MOAA
904-304-8871
melcaseusma64@comcast.net



Piedmont Chapter – 15 January MOAA Membership Meeting

Date/Time: 1130 Thursday, 15 January 2026

Place: Tucker's in Anderson

Address: 3501 Clemson Blvd, Anderson 29621

Speaker: MG Jeffrey Jones, The Deputy Adjutant General of SC
"The State of the SC National Guard"

Cost: \$25 per person (includes tax and gratuity)

RSVP and pay at www.moaapiedmontsc.org (follow the "Event and Activities" prompt)

or Mail Checks: Alex Glass, 106 Moorhaven Dr, Liberty, SC 29657

Email: aglass1949@gmail.com / Phone: 843-801-1509

Checks payable to: Piedmont Chapter, MOAA

Dinner RSVP Date: NLT, 13 January 2026

If paying at the door use a CHECK NOT CASH!

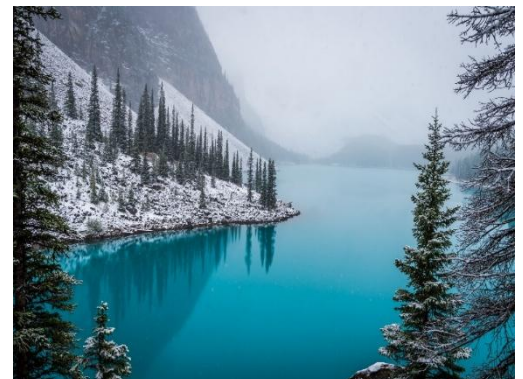
Thank you

Spouses and guests are encouraged to attend. If you are a prospective member and wish to attend this function, and/or join the chapter, please send in your reservation or contact the following:

Chairperson Membership:

Howard Stammerjohn

Phone: 864-964-1631 / Email: piedmont.moa@aim.com



November Meeting Speaker's Recap

Atty Joel Collins:

- Attorney and Educator
 - Graduated from Clemson and USC Law School
 - Was to "shadow" Harvey Gantt at Clemson. Harvey Gantt was the first African American student admitted to Clemson (1963). He became an architect and served as mayor of Charlotte. They remain close friends to this day.
 - Established the law firm Collins & Lacy in Columbia, SC
 - Member of the Judge Advocate General Corps, USA and served in Vietnam
 - Adjunct Professor at Clemson and the Honors College at USC
 - President of the American Board of Trial Advocates
 - Credits his success to hard work, exacting standards and maintaining strong professional relationships. He hopes to focus more on teaching in the coming years.
- Atty Collins spoke about "The Oversized Role of South Carolina on the Revolutionary War".



Some key notes of his presentation:

- The leader of the SC Colony drew up a petition to the Crown in London stating, "We do not recognize you as our leader due to the lack of protection for members of the SC Colony. These same sentiments are reflected in the articles drafted by the Continental Congress in 1776.
- 1765 - SC sent 3 Representatives to the Stamp Act Congress in New York to address the tax imposed by England on all paper products.
- Of all the slaves brought from Africa, 65% came through Gadsden's Wharf in South Carolina. The wharf has since been incorporated into the International African American Museum in Charleston, SC
- 1776 – At the Second Continental Congress, South Carolina sent 4 Delegates to help draft the Declaration of Independence. All 4 of these Delegates were formally trained lawyers, more than the number of formally trained lawyers from all the 12 other Colonies combined.
- 29 June 1776 Battle of Sullivan's Island – This was the worst defeat ever for the British Navy.
- The SC State flag is one of the most recognized of all the states...second only to the Lone Star of Texas. The SC flag was designed by Col William Moultrie. He chose blue to represent the uniforms worn by soldiers from SC during the Revolutionary War. The white crescent represents a gorget which was a metal collar worn around the soldiers' necks. The Palmetto tree was added in 1861 to commemorate Col Moultrie's valiant defense of the palmetto log fort on Sullivan's Island.
- He agreed with historian George Bancroft who said "South Carolinians suffered more deaths, dared more and achieved more than the men of any other state" during the Revolutionary War.

Piedmont Chapter – Proposed Meeting Dates, Venues, and Speakers For 2026!

19 Mar 26: 1130 Luncheon – Tucker's in Anderson

Speaker: ED Litoborski, Amateur Astronomer

Piedmont Chapter – New Members / Membership

2026 Chapter membership renewal is underway. There are 50 Chapter members that will have the opportunity to re-up and continue the fine work that is underway. We are making a difference, and we need all hands onboard. We ended the year with a membership of 94....highest in Chapter history. So, let's keep the ball rolling!

Wear that military gear and keep those chapter business cards handy. When you meet a potential member, please obtain their email address and/or phone number for me to follow up. Tell your contacts how we support **ALL** veterans, of **ALL** ranks, and **their military families.** Thank you for your membership, dedication and faith in MOAA and the Piedmont Chapter mission.

"Never Stop Serving"

Howard



Guest Speaker Attorney Joel Collins



Webmaster Marie Cole

Piedmont Chapter – Birthdays

JANUARY

Tom Allen
Steve Davis
Jordan Doshier
Alexander Glass
Carl Sharperson
Dan Tollison
Tom Turner
Linda Wilson

FEBRUARY

Randy Bannister
Hal Cannon
Neil Lark
Marilyn Morrey
Jeff Stevens
Don Warmuth
Mary Rosenberger
Micah Shipe



If you don't see your name mentioned in YOUR month,
Please call Howard Stammerjohn, (Membership), 864-964-1631

Treasurer's Report

We will end 2025 in good financial shape with a cash balance of close to \$4000. End of year donations were strong, and I hope as you consider your charitable commitments for 2026 you will remember our chapter support priorities. See you at the January luncheon! Richard Vail's name tag was drawn for the free meal at our upcoming January meeting.

JROTC Scholarship

The JROTC Scholarship Committee is on track to award a JROTC Scholarship in March 2026.

V/R, John Benson

Fundraising

The Piedmont Chapter webpage is now operational and can be accessed at the following link:
<https://www.moaapiedmontsc.org/>

- As briefed at the November Chapter luncheon, the new webpage supports a wide range of Chapter-related functions from online fundraising contributions and membership applications (both new member initial applications as well as current member renewals), too allowing members the option to RSVP and pay online for Chapter luncheons and dinners.

Notable Chapter Fundraising Update:

- A Qualified Charitable Distribution of \$20,000 was received from a Chapter member with specific allocations to support re-landscaping at the M.J. "Dolly" Cooper Veterans Cemetery, provide a general fund for the Richard M. Campbell Veterans Nursing Home, and to support the Chapter Scholarship Fund.
- Please send photos and information to Hal Cannon. (hcannon80@yahoo.com).

V/R, Hal Cannon

Our Own Backyard

The local ID replacement in the Clemson area has moved! Their building is undergoing renovation that'll take approximately one year. They are now temporarily located at 107 Rockmount Rd, Easley SC 29640. Hours are Tuesday-Friday 0800-1545 (lunch 1200-1300) 803-299-1353. Call before you go, they're experiencing computer issues due to the move.

<https://www.cac.mil/Next-Generation-Uniformed-Services-ID-Card/>

SC Legislative Affairs

South Carolina's 2025-2026 session (leading into 2026) has several key veteran bills, including **S. 695** for safeguarding benefits and curbing predatory fees, **S. 754** expanding free state park access to all SC vets, **H. 3943** offering a new income tax credit for disabled vets, and **H. 3453** addressing tuition for veteran's children. These bills aim to protect veterans from scams, ease park access, provide tax relief, and clarify educational benefits, reflecting ongoing state efforts to support service members and their families.

- [**South Carolina Safeguarding American Veterans' Benefits Act \(S. 695\)**](#): Aims to regulate who can get paid for helping veterans with claims, setting limits on fees and preventing guarantees of benefits, notes [Fast Democracy](#) and LegiScan.
- [**Free State Park Access \(S. 754\)**](#): Expands the free entry to South Carolina State Parks to *all* resident veterans, not just disabled ones.
- [**Disabled Veterans Income Tax Credit \(H. 3943\)**](#): Creates a nonrefundable state income tax credit for disabled veterans, tied to their disability rating, up to \$5,000 annually, reports [SC Statehouse](#).
- [**Veteran's Children Tuition \(H. 3453\)**](#): Modifies free tuition for children of veterans, potentially requiring residency since birth for qualification, according to the [SC Statehouse](#) and [SC Department of Veterans' Affairs](#).
- [**Veterans' Homes Criteria \(H. 4385\)**](#): Directs the SC Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish admission/discharge criteria for Veterans' Homes.

What to watch – Next Steps in the Session

- **H.3453** is currently in the Senate Education Committee - that's where final action will matter for tuition assistance expansion.

Many of the bills listed by SCDVA as “of interest” still lack strong momentum, whether they move forward at all may depend on committee interest, budget priorities, and public advocacy.

Even for passed bills (like S.218 or H.3563) - implementation will matter. For example, how DVA sets admissions/discharge criteria for veterans' homes will directly impact veterans.

Troops to get 3.8% pay raise under proposed defense bill

U.S. service members will receive a 3.8% pay increase beginning Jan. 1 under the final version of the annual defense bill announced by the House and Senate. The proposed fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act makes several changes to Defense Department personnel policy, including a 3.8% across-the-board military pay raise consistent with the Trump administration's proposed budget request, as well as personnel policy alterations designed to improve troops' quality of life.

The proposed legislation authorizes \$900.6 billion for the department, more than \$8 billion over the president's budget request. While the bill authorizes the higher amount, congressional appropriators, who dictate the actual funding, will determine the legislation's final top-line, which could shift as a result. However, defense appropriators have signaled that they will protect the 3.8% pay raise proposed by Trump. The increase means that an E-4 with four years of service would see a boost in base pay of roughly \$134 a month.

Piedmont Chapter – Surviving Spouse Corner

Compensation Claim By: Nora Durham

December 02, 2025

Master Sgt. Stephen J. Caruso/Air Force

I have been a surviving spouse for 24 years. My husband, a 33-year veteran of the Marine Corps and a naval aviator, died in 2001 from heart disease. He was never a member of MOAA.

I became acquainted with MOAA in 2019 during a visit to Washington, D.C. It was a chance meeting during [Advocacy in Action](#), at which time some in the group learned I was the widow of a Marine Corps officer. I was led to the registration booth and immediately became a MOAA member. I learned there are approximately 47,000 surviving spouse members of MOAA — representing about 12% of the association's members. I'm now a proud Life member.

This brief encounter started a journey for me to be as active as possible. I became my local chapter's surviving spouse liaison and then a member of the Surviving Spouse Advisory Council (SSAC).

[FREE MOAA WEBINAR: [Understanding Your VA Benefits](#)]

Through my involvement with MOAA, I learned about [VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(DIC\)](#). As my husband served in Vietnam and was exposed to Agent Orange, it was determined his exposure subsequently caused the heart disease that contributed to his death. This qualified me to receive this benefit. With the help of a local veterans service officer (VSO) and the [VA Office of Survivor Assistance](#), I will receive this tax-free monthly compensation for the rest of my life.

If you are the surviving spouse, child, or parent of a servicemember who died in the line of duty, or the survivor of a veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness. You might be eligible to receive this tax-free monetary benefit. [Visit the VA's website to learn more.](#)

For additional information and support, contact a local VSO if one is available in your community. Not all VSOs are as helpful as others, but I finally found mine.

To prepare for opening a VA claim for disability or other benefits compensation, applicants must possess the following documents:

Military discharge (DD Form 214) original or certified copy is best for military service information (branch, dates of service, Reserve or National Guard service dates, etc.)

Medical records (military and/or civilian) if available, and if applying for a service-connected disability, contact information for civilian medical providers who treated the veteran for military-related illnesses or injuries (i.e., doctors, specialists, hospitals, etc.)

Bank deposit information (i.e., voided check) — the VA will automatically deposit into this account if benefits are awarded.

If the above documents are not available, veterans or surviving kin can request them online at www.archives.gov/veterans.

[RELATED: [Do You Know Where Your Military Paperwork Lives?](#)]

Gordon Johnson
Chaplain



Carl Sharperson with Cadet Carter



Clemson commissioning: 2nd Lt Wilson Monroe being sworn in by brother 1st Lt Monroe

Piedmont Chapter 2026 Board of Directors

OFFICERS

President	COL Melvin E. Case, USA	904-304-8871
VP/Programs	LTC Neil Lark, USA	864-934-1042
Secretary	(open)	
Treasurer	CPT Alex Glass, USA	843-801-1509
Past President	LtCol Wayne Watson, USAF	864-296-1815

DIRECTORS

Public Relations/Publicity	COL Dale Ellenburg, USA	864-225-1073
ROTC/JROTC Awards	CDR Janelle Merritt, USN	864-617-1153
Membership	LtCol Howard Stammerjohn, USAF	864-964-1631
Newsletter	CDR Alan Erisman, USN	678-778-0183
Legislative Affairs	COL Wayne Beam, USA	843-814-7145
Social Media/Facebook	Ms. Marie Cole	
Webmaster	Ms. Marie Cole	
Chaplain/Personal Affairs	Rev (Col) Gordon Johnson, USAF	864-633-4995
Hospitality	Sharon Jacobs, Surviving Spouse	864-245-5501
	Penny Schriver, Surviving Spouse	864-224-4374

For Chapter property, anyone having equipment should notify TBA, Secretary, by email: TBA (the record keeper of all the Chapter property).

Next Board meeting: 1000 03 February at the Ravines clubhouse



HELP MILITARY FAMILIES TODAY

ACT NOW: Now is the time to urge your senator to help military families by securing financial relief for the U.S. child-care industry. You may have noticed some changes to the Take Action Website, it is now even easier to reach out to your lawmakers on these issues, as well as track what MOAA is engaging in the halls of Congress. To learn more about the new changes, [click here!](#)

Take Action Now



HELP THOSE IN NEED

Donate to help address emerging needs among currently serving and former uniformed service members, retirees, and their families. Every donation, no matter what the size, makes a positive difference in the lives of uniformed service members and their families across the country.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Donate Now!

HELP SUPPORT OUR SPONSOR!



Association Member Benefits Advisors:

AMBA works with small and large associations nationwide. We have the expertise to meet any association's needs, regardless of cultural, geographic, and economic conditions.

Contact Person: Michele Armesto, CLU, RHU

Telephone: 202-251-9488

Contact

Email: michele.armesto@amba.info
[Sponsor Website](#)

JOIN MOAA!

BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR CHAPTER

Join MOAA: If you want to join MOAA national go to [MOAA National](#).

To join our chapter, choose **JOIN**, choose the state of **South Carolina**, and choose the **Piedmont Chapter**.

To
about

[Become a Member Now!](#)

learn more
the

National MOAA membership benefits,
click [HERE](#)

Disclaimer: The Piedmont Chapter of MOAA is affiliated with the South Carolina Council MOAA and the national MOAA organization and all are nonpartisan.

“If you want something you’ve never had, you must be willing to do something you’ve never done”

-Thomas Jefferson

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

A reminder from National MOAA: "As an organization exempt from federal taxation under Sec 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code, MOAA and its affiliates must take care to avoid engaging in partisan political activities. Under the IRS rules, we are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office."

PIEDMONT CHAPTER LINKS:



MOAA SOCIAL LINKS:

