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Star Spangled Banner Chapter of MOAA

March 2026 Newsletter

Contents: April 25th paws4vets Fundraiser, President's Message, Feb 25th Dinner Meeting Recap, JROTC & ROTC news, Legislative & Membership Update, Future Event Dates

Annual paws4vets Fundraiser

Bull, Shrimp & Oyster Roast

Saturday, April 25th, 2026

4-8pm

Columbus Gardens

4301 Klosterman Ave, Nottingham, MD 21236

Music by: "Double Play"

Delightful Buffet, Cash Bar, Raffles, Auctions, Wheels of Chance

Tickets are on sale now on the website or via the mail-in form below. You may use PayPal on the website or choose to send a check! NO MONEY WILL BE COLLECTED AT THE DOOR!!!!!!

Tickets are \$60.00 per person or \$550 for a table of ten.

Call Colonel (ret) Rita M. Kurek, chairperson for tickets.

410 574-5330 (H) or 410 294-4913 (C)

or mail order form below with check **by March 31st!**

Name: _____

#Tickets @\$60 _____ or Table(s) of 10 @\$550 _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

I would like tickets mailed _____ or pick up at will call _____

Make Checks Payable to: *Star Spangled Banner Chapter of MOAA*

Mail to: Rita M. Kurek, 1231 Engleberth Rd., Essex MD 21221

NEW THIS TIME!!! You may also purchase tickets (both individual and tables of 10) on our website at www.starspan.org, then click **Chapter Info/Calendar/Upcoming Events/paws4vets Fundraiser.**

You may pay with PayPal or Check. Unlike other dinner meetings, you will need a ticket for this event in advance. No ticket sales or payments at the door! All PayPal tickets sales will be at Will Call.

Gather your friends and family now to support a great cause!! Sell a table of ten and receive our paws4vets coin!



Front



Rear



Donations & Volunteers Needed

We need your help for donations, auction baskets, gift cards, event tickets, or corporate sponsorships for our paws4vets event in April. If you can donate items yourself, put together a themed basket, solicit your favorite theatre, jewelry store, golf course or like business to donate an item or two, please arrange to deliver all donations to the Chairperson, Col (Ret) Rita M. Kurek **by March 31stth**.

We will also need several volunteers to work at least one hour before or during the event to help with set up, registration table, raffle sales, and auctions. ***This is a Chapter Fundraiser-please don't leave the work to a select few!*** Please call or email Rita Kurek to volunteer now!!!! rmkurek@aol.com or 410-294-4913.

This has been a very successful event in the past with fantastic food, great entertainment, many fun chances to win prizes and the paws4vets service dogs and clients in attendance-gather your friends and family, join us and volunteer to help raise funds for our veterans in need of psychologically trained service dogs for PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injuries and Suicidal Ideation. Together we make this a SUCCESS for our vets in need!!

THANK YOU!!!

President's Message

COL (Ret) George Stakias, USAR

Our major fundraiser for the **paws4vets** foundation is soon approaching and I encourage every member to attend this very fun event for such a worthy cause and I'm hoping many members once again will sell a table of ten in addition to selling the Grand Raffle tickets you have been sent.

Together we make a difference for our fellow veterans in need!!

Recap: Annual Meeting, February 25th, 2026



Our guest speaker BG Reid J. Novotny, U.S. Cyber Command's Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer, and the Department of War's Cyber Force General Lead, gave a short overview of AI and the Cyber Force Generation. Much of what he does is classified but he assured us that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is everywhere and we and other countries are using it daily to enhance and often disrupt each other's operations. Cyber warfare is used both offensively and defensively to interrupt foreign enemies' ability to conduct war as well as to defend our own country's capabilities. Although BG Novotny's speech was cut short by a family commitment, he graciously engaged and shared information with many of our members during the pre-dinner social time.

The following photos were from the 25 Feb 2026 Dinner Meeting



Linda & Chuck Rishell, Jim Shelley and Mike Spencer



Guest Col Andrew Bilinski, Speaker BC Reid Novotny and Charles Blomquist



Tom Lowe and Bill Bilo



Dave Paolucci, Randy Everett and Rob Paolucci



Ernie Schultz & Jane, Derald Jendersee & Guest Paul Gain and Ted Knach



Clay Maas, Bill Gray and George Stakias



BG Novotny addresses the group. President George Stakias presents the FSK Bust to Speaker BG Reid Novotny.

ROTC & JROTC News: Col (ret) Frank Hilsher, ROTC Chairman, Col (ret) Rob Paolucci, JROTC Chairman

Col (r) Frank Hilsher reports that across CONUS, our Army Professors of Military Science (PMS) are a close-knit group of Army Field Grade officers. He spoke with LTC Damon Knauss, PMS at Morgan & Coppin State Universities about the recent Old Dominion ROTC tragedy of the deadly shooting of LTC Brandon Shah. LTC Knauss knew LTC Shah personally and shared that he was preparing to retire, not already retired as reported in the press. Currently all ROTC Units that we support are busy preparing for staff rides, military balls, award ceremonies and a large Joint University Field Training Exercise (FTX) held in April. Some cadets are attending class in civilian clothes, maintaining a low profile while on campus. Our Chapter will prepare MOAA Awards for outstanding Cadets this spring. We will present the Army Officer's Guides during Commissioning ceremonies as requested by the cadres.

Col(r) Rob Paolucci is currently contacting all Baltimore City & County High School JROTC cadre to ascertain their requests for the MOAA Leadership Award as well. He will be contacting members who have agreed to present these awards once ceremony dates and awardees are determined.

Legislative Update: LTC (ret) Bill Gray, Chairman

Legislation – Pending Bills in 2026 Maryland Legislative Session

The 2026 Session of the Maryland Legislature will end on April 13th, and the session is getting very busy!

To give an example, there are at least four bills that have bounced between both houses that appeared before the House Ways and Means committee on Tuesday March 24th! They are:

- HB 139/ SB9 that deals with granting a Sales Tax-Free Day on Veterans Day to all Veterans.
- SB 194 that expands Income and Property Tax Incentives to include Veterans of Space Force.
- HB 420 / SB 242 that modifies the definition of an “eligible veteran” under the provisions of the law governing occupational or professional licensing.
- SB 96 that modifies the wording of who is eligible for benefits under the Sheila E. Hixson Behavioral Matching Grant Program.

Our StarSpan website information on Legislation is being updated for the 2026 Session and should be current before the end of March. In the interim, please check on your local representatives and reach out to them on bills that affect Active and Retired Uniform Service Members.

Membership Update: LTC (ret) Bill Gray, Chairman

Please pay your dues for 2026 promptly! Some of you have prepaid for several years so you can find out if your dues are up to date by keying into Chapter Info, Membership, Members Only on the website at www.starspan.org. You will be directed to make certain that you are properly signed in, and then your membership status will appear. If it does not show "Paid", you may go to the "Renew your membership online" or notify our Membership Director.

Under the Chapter Info, Recruiting heading, the Recruiting Brochure has been updated. It is easy to print and deliver to prospective members. If the individual has questions, refer them to Bill Gray or if they want to send in their dues, refer to Rita Kurek, Treasurer.

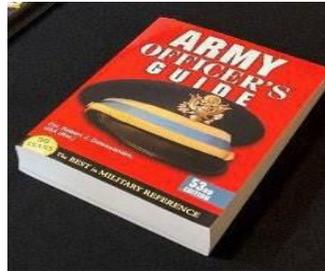
If you have questions on any of this, please call, drop an email or text me.

LTC (Ret) Bill Gray, 2nd VP, Legislative & Membership Chairperson
Email: graybillo@verizon.net
Cell: 410-746-2861

Pay Dues Online or mail to:

Col (Ret) Rita M. Kurek, Secretary-Treasurer
1231 Engleberth Rd.
Essex, MD 21221
rmkurek@aol.com
Cell: 410-294-4913

It's **March** and many of you have not paid your dues for 2026! Please pay your ***\$30 Dues Now*** to avoid being dropped off the mailing list!! If you open the website at www.starspan.org, and login, it will tell you if you are **current!** Dues help pay for the Army Officer Guides we present to newly commissioned 2nd LTs each year at our three supported ROTCs.



New Members are always welcome!!
Recruit your colleagues!

Our next paws4vets event will be 25 April 2026. Tickets are available now!!!
See the Flyer above in this Newsletter for more information.

Future Chapter Events for 2026:

<i>DATE</i>	<i>EVENT</i>
25 April 2026 4-8pm	Paws4vets Fundraiser-Tickets Needed! No Sales at Door!! Venue: Columbus Gardens, 4301 Klosterman Ave, Nottingham, MD 21128 Band: Double Play POC: Rita Kurek (410) 294-4913 See order form above in this newsletter.

16 September 2026 6pm	Dinner Meeting Speaker:TBD Venue: Pappas Restaurant & Sports Bar, Cockeysville, MD 21030 POC: George Stakias (410) 707-6947
11 November 2026 6pm	Annual Dinner Meeting Speaker and Venue TBD POC: George Stakias (410) 707-6947

This letter is published by the Star Spangled Banner Chapter. It is a 501(c)19 nonprofit affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). The Star Spangled Banner Chapter is one of more than 400-plus chapters affiliated with National MOAA. Our chapter is a non-partisan veterans' organization.

MOAA and its affiliates are dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and ensuring our nation keeps its commitment to currently serving retired and former members of the uniformed services, their families, and survivors. Our chapter supports national MOAA's federal legislative actions and MD Council's State legislative priorities.



*** Newsletter Online: www.starspan.org Newsletter Editor and
Distribution: COL Rita M. Kurek, USAF (Ret) C: 410 294-4913 H: 410 574-
5330 rmkurek@aol.com

The Star Spangled Banner Chapter of the **Military Officers Association of America** is the oldest, continuously operating MOAA chapter in Maryland. Founded in 1964, we provide camaraderie with purpose and align with MOAA's national mission: a strong national defense, taking care of our country's veterans, and protecting the benefits of all who have served and currently serve. Our chapter membership is open to commission and warrant officers of all eight services.