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GVC ONLINE

14 Consecutive Years of 5-Star Levels of Excellence!

6 Consecutive Years of MOAA Communications Awards!

MOAA Legislative Action Center: <https://moaa.quorum.us/>

GVC Membership Information email: info@gvcmoaa.org

SERVING ALL MILITARY, VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

***** May 2024 *****

PRESIDENT’S CORNER

Time is just flying by, hard to believe it is May already! I guess that’s not a bad thing, that puts summer and summer weather right around the corner. Amen!

With our second chapter dinner of the year under our belt we are still off and running. If you couldn’t make it to the dinner, please read the article on it below; our guest speaker, Shawn De Fries, Associate Director of the VA Finger Lakes Health Care System, was fantastic and impactful. And I think you will find next month’s chapter dinner guest speaker, Dr. Robert Nye, President of Finger Lakes Community College and retired Army Colonel, interesting as well.

With each chapter dinner we target one specific charity for donations, with June’s dinner we are asking for your support of the Rochester Veterans Outreach Center. Find out more about the Rochester Veterans Outreach Center here: <https://veteransoutreachcenter.org/>.

This is our last newsletter until August; keep an eye out for email updates on summer activities.

Did you notice the change in the numbers in the header for consecutive years of MOAA Awards? GVC was recently notified it has once again been awarded Five-Star Levels of Excellence and Five-Star COL Marvin J. Harris Communications awards for 2023. I sincerely thank the officers and board members of this chapter who made this happen, because it takes hard work and dedication to our mission to Never Stop Serving®.

Upcoming Honor Flight Rochester Missions:

Mission 83: May 25-26, 2024

Mission 84: June 15-16, 2024

UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS

Sun 9 Jun 2024, 1 pm / 2 pm

Location: Canandaigua Yacht Club

Guest Speaker: Robert K. Nye, President, FLCC & COL, USA, Retired

Designated Charity: Veterans Outreach Center

MOAA National & the Genesee Valley Chapter are nonpartisan.

Sun 8 Sep 2024, 1 pm / 2 pm

Location: Canandaigua Yacht Club

Designated Charity: Honor Flight Rochester

Guest Speaker: TBD

NY Council of Chapters Convention 2024

15-18 Sep 2024 (Sun-Wed)

Peek'n Peak Resort, Clymer, NY 14724

Sun 27 Oct 2024, 1 pm / 2 pm

Location: Spencerport Legion Post

Designated Charity: Wreaths Across America

Guest Speaker: TBD

Sun 8 Dec 2024, 1 pm / 2 pm

Location: Brook Lea Country Club

Program: Annual Holiday Party

... and Ugly Sweater Contest!

Designated Charity: Veterans Outreach Center

In addition to these events, keep an eye out for information on other upcoming chapter events, such as a GVC Day at a Rochester Red Wings game... still working on a date, but it will be an afternoon game on a Sunday this summer.

We are also researching another boating cruise type of event this summer, so watch for information on that as well.

NYS Lifetime Liberty Pass

NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is now offering Lifetime Liberty Passes.

Check the website below for more information:

<https://parks.ny.gov/admission/lifetime-liberty-pass.aspx>

VA Finger Lakes Health Care System, Associate Director Speaks to GVC Members

We were very fortunate to have Shawn J. De Fries, Associate Director of the VA Finger Lakes Health Care System speak at our most recent chapter dinner at the Rochester Yacht Club on 28 April 2024. Mr. De Fries explained the VA Finger Lakes Health Care System serves 33,000 Veterans across the Finger Lakes, Greater Rochester, and Southern Tier of New York, as well as the Northern Tier of

Pennsylvania, with Medical Centers in Bath and Canandaigua, two outpatient Clinics in Rochester, as well as Clinics in Elmira and Wellsville, New York, and a Rural Health Clinic in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania.

In October 2023, they opened a brand new, state-of-the-art Outpatient Clinic in Canandaigua. The next phase of Canandaigua's Major Construction Project, projected to be completed in 2026, will include new small houses or cottages for Community Living Center Residents. These new cottages will truly help ensure a "home like" environment for Residents.

Mr. De Fries also relayed some great statistics about the VA Finger Lakes Health Care System. "I also want to share some amazing news that was published nationally this past week. VA, through patient surveys, tracks the TRUST that Veterans have in our care and VA Finger Lakes is ranked 11th in the entire Nation at 94.8%, and we have had the 2nd largest improvement of any VA in the top-25 since 2018 (up from 87.2%)."

Mr. De Fries went on to explain about the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (or PACT) Act. The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefit expansion in VA history and expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. In addition, three new groups of Veterans became eligible for VA health care years earlier than originally called for.

Here's what that means for Veterans:

If you served in Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, or Afghanistan, you can enroll.

If you deployed to any combat zone after 9/11, you can enroll.

If you deployed in support of the Global War on Terror, you can enroll.

And even if you never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or serving on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead,

asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more – you can enroll, too.

Bottom line: all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards – at home or abroad – are eligible to enroll in VA care.

This recent inclusion of three new cohorts of Veterans being eligible for care, will allow us to enroll even more Veterans in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Please help us spread the word. You can refer Veterans at any time to our Enrollment & Eligibility teams at Bath, Canandaigua, and Rochester and if you know of any outreach opportunities, we have a full time PACT Act Outreach Officer, Jason Richards, who is always looking for new avenues to connect with Veterans.

Mr. De Fries also talked about the incredibly important work being done to prevent suicides among Veterans. Over the past year, they focused on screening more Veterans, identifying those who are at risk and providing them timely care. Due to this initiative, they are now assessing an additional 9,000 patients a year for risk of suicide. We all can play a vital role in spreading awareness of suicide prevention and connecting Veterans with help. If you didn't know, the 24/7/365 Veterans Crisis Line can now be reached simply by dialing 988 (then Press 1). That is 988 (then Press 1).

Together we can ensure that Veterans have the support they need to overcome difficult life challenges.

He also spoke of another great news local story; their Optometry Team's work on screening won them a national award and their efforts are now being shared with other sites across the country.

Mr. De Fries also extended an invitation to all of us to join them on Memorial Day in the Bath National Cemetery. As the leaders in the National Cemetery Administration most appropriately remind us, "we each die two deaths, the first when breath leaves us for the last time and the second the last time someone speaks our name or tells our story. It is the second death that we must ensure never

happens." Together we must ensure every Veteran's story continues to be told. We hear those same sentiments in the Wreaths Across America program.

And lastly, and maybe most impactful, Mr. De Fries shared his personal story of his combat tour in Iraq; the impact and horrors that war can bring, the loss of life or life altering injuries of fellow comrades and the mental anguish that goes along with those experiences, some of which leads to members succumbing to their thoughts of despair and ultimately, and sadly, suicide. Yet despite those challenges and in the face of adversity, the desire to do good prevails and is a constant reminder of why we serve and continue to serve.

If you were at the dinner listening, you felt Mr. De Fries' words hit you hard.

We were truly honored for Mr. De Fries to take the time out of his busy schedule to spend an afternoon with us.

The Wall that Heals in Yates County
8-11 Aug 2024
thewallthathealsyatescounty.com

"The Wall that Heals," a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, will be in Yates County from Thursday, August 8, through Sunday, August 11, 2024, at Fireman's Field, 110 Hicks Street, Penn Yan.

The exhibit is a 3/4 size replica version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which is 375 feet in length and stands 7.5 feet high at its tallest point. Visitors will also be able to do name rubbings of over 58,000 individual service members names on The Wall. The 53-foot trailer that carries The Wall that Heals transforms into a mobile education center and features several historic aspects of The Wall.

For more information or would like to volunteer, please contact the Yates County Veterans Services Office at (315) 536-5196.

If you would like to donate to help support this event, please make checks payable to: Penn Yan Elks Lodge #1722, 133 Main Street, Penn Yan, NY 14527 and note "The Wall" in the memo.

Our very own GVC member Win Harper is one of the Co-Chairs for this event and recently wrote the following article for the Middlesex Heritage Group Quarterly Newsletter.

The History of the United States is a story of war. We fought against the British in the Revolutionary War to establish our Nation, and we fought among ourselves in the Civil War to maintain our Nation. We fought WWI and WWII to save the world, and we did.

Wars are always controversial. After the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, there was still one vote against declaring war on Japan.

The Vietnam War, however, was probably the most disruptive and polarizing one ever.

In the past few years, I have written about my experience upon returning to the United States after my 13-month tour of duty in Vietnam. I have also written about our local veterans and the Wreaths Across America Program.

"The Wall That Heals," a 3/4 replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., will be in Penn Yan at the Fireman's Field August 8-11. There is a poster in this newsletter with more details about the Wall, and there is a website (thewallthathealsyatescounty.com) and QR code that you can use to get more detailed information.

2.7 million men and women were in Vietnam, and "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall was dedicated on Veterans Day in 1982, fulfilling one veteran's promise to never forget those who served and sacrificed during the Vietnam War." The wall pays tribute to the men and women who served and lost their lives during the war.

One of the most powerful features of the Wall is that "visitors can see the reflection of

themselves in the names on the black granite walls, connecting the living to the lost."

I know about 50 men on the Wall. 45 of them are from my Marine Corps Officer Candidate School class in 1966.

One of the greatest tragedies of war lies in the unrealized potential of those who perished. How might those individuals have contributed to our world had they not been taken from us at such a young age?

Three names on the Wall are especially significant to me.

Don Perkins went to Artillery School with me at Fort Sill in the Summer of 1967. He was from Chicago and rumored to be an heir to the Kool Aid fortune. We spent a lot of time together in class, socializing, and playing basketball. He probably could have got an exemption from serving, but chose to join the Marine Corps. He was killed February 2, 1968, in Hue.

Bill Jerro was also an artilleryman. We called him Jiminy Cricket because he could make the sound of a cricket. He was killed his third day in Vietnam at Con Thien.

Bob Toth was an 18-year-old Marine from Elkhart, Indiana. He was on my Forward Observer team for about a month before he was transferred to another team. He was killed at Khe Sahn in April 1968.

Locally, Joe Valesko from Cottage City, and Art Herod from Gorham, were killed in Vietnam. You may have known them or their families. I am sure that you know other Vietnam Veterans.

Having the Wall that Heals in Penn Yan is a significant accomplishment facilitated by Doug Gibbs, the Director of Veterans Affairs for Yates County, who spearheaded its arrival and serves as the chairman of the committee responsible for bringing the wall to our area.

Here are 3 ways you can participate:

1. You can Volunteer: On the website click on **Volunteer Opportunities**. You will see a description of the positions available, and you can choose a day and time online. You can volunteer multiple times.

2. You can go on a Tour: There will be an educational trailer and guides from the Vietnam War Memorial Fund. The tours last about 45 minutes. You can schedule a group or join a tour at the site.

3. You can make a donation: Click on **I Want to Donate**.

Wars leave scars. Many of us Vietnam Veterans felt mentally and physically isolated and alone when we returned. The Wall That Heals is an opportunity for us and for the Community to come together as a Nation to reflect on a turbulent time in our history. The Wall That Heals is an opportunity to better understand the significance of the War and its effects upon those who served and to honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our Country.

GVC Member in the 2024 National Veteran Golden Age Games (NVGAG)

Nearly 1,000 Veteran athletes will converge on Salt Lake City for the 2024 National Veteran Golden Age Games. Celebrating its 38th year, the National Veterans Golden Age Games offer sports and recreational competitive events designed to improve the quality of life for all older Veterans, aged 55 years and over. The Games serve as a showcase for the rehabilitation value that wellness and fitness provide in the lives of older Americans.

Through its "Fitness for Life" motto, the Golden Age Games offers sports competitions and health education sessions to demonstrate the value that sports, wellness, and fitness provide to assist senior Veterans live an active and healthy lifestyle. The National Veterans Golden Age Games is a qualifying event for the National Senior Games.

This is exciting because we have our own GVC Member, Nancy Swanson, participating in the National Veterans Golden Age Games this year; she tells of her story in the paragraphs below...

Our local group of veterans from the Finger Lakes VA (Rochester, Canandaigua, Bath) consists of 24 members of which 18 members are attending the National Veteran Golden Age Games in Salt Lake City this coming August. The leaders are 2 VA Recreational Therapists; Lucy Olson and Kristie Nothnagle.

Practice sessions are held year around so members can be prepared to play their sport of choice. It is a fun group of veterans from all branches of the armed services. Throughout the year, they have fund-raising activities to help the veterans who are attending the games. Last week, they had a fun raising activity at the Roseland Bowling Facility in Canandaigua which included 3 games of bowling, 50/50 raffle, and a silent auction.

I have attended the NVGAG for the past two years, which were held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Des Moines, Iowa. It is always a fun week where you meet hundreds of veterans from all over the United States, including Hawaii and Alaska. Last year, I met a new badminton doubles partner from Detroit. Her name was "Mad Dog." We had fun playing badminton as a team and have kept in contact through the year developing a close friendship.

This year, we will play badminton doubles together and probably compete against each other in singles badminton... I look forward to the competition!

MOAA 2024 Advocacy in Action (AiA)

This year's campaign took place on April 17th, where all members of Congress were visited on one day in Washington DC. New York's team met the mission and visited all 28 of New York's legislative offices. However, the mission is not complete and could use your help... use MOAA's Legislative Action Center, <https://moaa.quorum.us/> and *Take Action Now!*

GVC Support Coordinators

If you need help, contact:
Nancy Swanson, (585) 944-5637, or
Tim Vaughan, (585) 412-6425

Your Chapter Dues at Work...

GVC donates to Honor Flight Rochester, the Veterans Outreach Center, Wreaths Across America and The MOAA Foundation. Additionally, we conduct MOAA ROTC/JROTC awards programs each spring for cadets and midshipmen. We are extremely grateful for the support of our membership toward these programs.

GVC Chapter Dues

GVC chapter dues are due each January and are \$25/year. You may contact Norma Weissend at nweissend@gvcmoaa.org if you have a question concerning your dues status. Your membership matters and we sincerely thank you!

Surviving Spouse Liaison

Kathy Green is the chapter's Surviving Spouse Liaison (SSL). You may contact Kathy at, kgreen@gvcmoaa.org.

Did you know a MOAA member's Life membership will transfer to the surviving spouse upon a death notification to the MOAA Member Service Center (800) 234-6622 or msc@moaa.org? Reach out to Kathy if you have any questions regarding Surviving Spouse membership.

Check out MOAA's Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter by emailing mssvc02@gmail.com or go online at: [MOAA - Surviving Spouse Corner](#)

NY Yankees Military Salute Weekend

NY Yankees Military Appreciation Weekend:
Friay 30 August to Sunday 1 September 2024.
See the GVC March newsletter for more details.

GVC/MOAA BOARD MEMBERS 2023-2025

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Your MOAA & GVC Membership Matters!

Tim Vaughan, Col, USAF (Retired)
MOAA GVC President
Never Stop Serving®

**GENESEE VALLEY CHAPTER
MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

**Sunday, June 9, 2024
Canandaigua Yacht Club
3524 County Road 16 (West Lake Rd), Canandaigua, NY 14424**

**1300 - Social Hour (Cash Bar)
1400 - Dinner**

ENTRÉE CHOICES / \$45 each

Delmonico Steak & Baked Potato, or
Chicken & Artichoke French & Wild Rice, or
Grilled Salmon Bruschetta & Wild Rice

All meals come with:

Salad, Vegetable, and
Berry Burst Cake
Coffee, Tea and Cash Bar

Guest Speaker:

**Dr. Robert K. Nye
President
Finger Lakes Community College
(FLCC)
(& Retired Army Colonel)**

Reservations due ASAP, but NLT Wednesday May 29, 2024

Cancellations NLT 1200 hours, Monday, June 3, 2024

Questions: Jean Vaughan (716) 239-0383 / jvaughan@gvcmoaa.org

Participants attending the event may be photographed or recorded for MOAA chapter products.

PLEASE CLIP HERE AND SEND FORM BELOW * DRESS: Business Casual *****

**RESERVATION FORM FOR SUNDAY June 9, 2024, GVC MEETING at
Canandaigua Yacht Club, 3524 County Rd 16 (West Lake Rd), CDGA, NY 14424**

ALL Name(s) Attending: _____

Steak _____ Chicken _____ Salmon _____

Check included for _____ meal(s) at \$45.00 each, Dinner(s) Total \$ _____

Veterans Outreach Center Donation \$ _____; Grand Total \$ _____

Please make checks payable to **GVC MOAA** and mail to:

**GVC MOAA
c/o Jean Vaughan
3464 Lincoln Hill Rd
Canandaigua, NY 14424**

***** DRESS: Business Casual *****

**Genesee Valley Chapter
Military Officers Assn of America
PO Box 20874
Rochester, NY 14602-0874**



May 2024 Newsletter

First Class Mail



Wegmans **MRB** | *group*



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at every stage.**

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