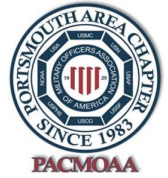




The Salute Online



Monthly newsletter of the Portsmouth Area Chapter, an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America, serving Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Smithfield, Franklin, and surrounding counties, Virginia, since 1983. Dinner meetings are the Second Thursday of each month except July and August. Although **MOAA** and **PACMOOA** actively lobby legislatures for all US uniformed services members, we are nonpartisan and do not participate in political activities.

VOLUME XXXX Issue X

LEARN MORE AT PACMOOA.ORG

DECEMBER 2021

REMINDER: Although MOAA and PACMOOA actively lobby legislatures for all US uniformed services members, we are nonpartisan and do not participate in political activities.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Greetings,

Our Christmas Dinner meeting is December 9, 2021, starting at 6:00 pm at Roger Brown's. We have a holiday menu, the Tidewater Concert Band, Toys for Tots, and donations for the Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless. Please RSVP to Sherry Ferki by Sunday, December 5, 2021. Regrettably, Karen and I will be unable to attend but will be with you in spirit!

This meeting also marks the end of my first year as your president. It has been fun, rewarding, and challenging. The most rewarding aspect has been the return to in-person meetings. The ability to interact with you, to get to know you and to fellowship with you, in-person, makes it an enjoyable term of office. I am proud to represent you and honored that you entrusted me with this responsibility. I am

optimistic that next year COVID will be under control and that we can continue our great work for our community.

Remember to bring a toy(s) for Toys for Tots and a donation for the Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless—both are deserving organizations. **Karen and I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

See you in January,

Bill Smith
COL USA (Ret)



COL Bill Smith USA (Ret), presenting CDR Ken App USN (Ret), two MOAA 5 Star Communications awards for the Salute newsletter and our Website PACMOOA TODAY, and MAJ Sherry Ferki USA (Ret), for the 11th Consecutive MOAA 5 Star Levels of Excellence Award to PACMOOA. All awards are for 2020.

PACMOAA
LEADERSHIP

See Pull down at leadership



CHAPTER NEWS

DECEMBER CALENDAR

- 06 HANUKKAH Ends
- 07 PEARL HARBOR DAY
- 10 PACMOAA Christmas Gala
- 16 Battle of the Bulge 1944
- 17 Wright Brothers Day
- 21 1st Day of Winter
- 25 CHRISTMAS
- 26 KWANZAA
- 31 NEW YEAR'S EVE

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

RON FRITZ
HAL HOSTETLER
BRUCE LALONDE

The December Christmas Gala Dinner with The Tidewater Concert Band

will be held on **Thursday, December 9th** at Roger Brown's Banquet Room

Sign in and social hour begins at 6 PM, with Dinner Served at 6:30 PM.

Special Buffett Menu

Harvest Salad with Raspberry Vin
Cornbread & Honey Butter
Roast Turkey
Brown Butter Baked Ham
Sweet Potato Casserole
Baked Green Beans
Cornbread Stuffing
Mashed Potatoes & Gravy
Assorted Dessert Pies
Water, Tea, & Coffee

Cost is \$30 (includes gratuity, tax & contribution to the Tidewater Concert Band). Please make your reservation no later than Sunday, December 5th with Sherry Ferki at 757-686-4650 or by email at navmedarmynurse@gmail.com .

A RESERVATION MADE IS A RESERVATION PAID

PACMOAA CHRISTMAS GALA 9 DECEMBER 2021

We hope to see many of you at our Annual Christmas Gala on Thursday evening 9 December. It will be wonderful to celebrate with each other again!! 'Tis a season of revelry and giving. Hal's Band known as the **Tidewater Concert Band will be performing**, along with a rendition of "The Night Before Christmas". The Churchland HS Marine Corps JROTC cadets will be collecting toys for the USMCR "Toys for Tots" program. Santa Claus will arrive and with the help of his elves will distribute gifts to members participating in this year's Pollyanna. Some members like to bring a small Pollyanna item (\$15.00 or so) to exchange. All in great fun.

We will also be collecting items for the Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless (PVH) as we have been doing since 2011. *See below for more specific on their needs.*

This Gala event is always a great way to end the year. It is a wonderful time to visit with friends, enjoy the holiday music and dance, if you dare. This is a great time to invite a friend so they can share an enjoyable evening with PACMOAA members. If you are not able to attend, we hope you and your families have a blessed Christmas and happy New Year and hope to see you next year. The holiday season can be stressful, especially for service members deployed away from home and family. Please keep our military members, their families and veterans in your thoughts and prayers.

Toys for Tots

Toys collect by Churchland High School MCJROTC at the Christmas Gala will be distributed locally at Military Circle in Norfolk. **Toys for all ages and genders are fine. Please buy new gifts and DO NOT Wrap Them! If you buy a toy that needs batteries, please attach package of batteries to toys.** Some parents may not have the extra money to buy batteries or may not be able to find them close to Christmas day. Thank you for any contributions you can make!!!



Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless

Detailed info in November newsletter per services provided by PVH. Ongoing needs listed last month includes: **thermal underwear for men and women, hand sanitizer (individual and large size), disposable gloves (non-latex), toilet paper, room deodorizer, disinfectant spray, chlorine bleach, mops, brooms, paper towels, and cleaning products.**

PVH can still use items we donated in past like laundry detergent, individual toiletry items like toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, and socks.



11 NOVEMBER 2021 PACMOAA BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

REPORTS:

President: Bill Smith

- Review of past year
 - Had 6 – 8 program meetings in 2020 and so far in 2021. When just a Zoom meeting, usually had 6-8 attendees including last year when Rep Emily Brewer spoke to us, coming directly from a called special session of the general assembly.
 - All programs available via Zoom, even if in person program since last fall.



- Club is healthy and gave 2 scholarships again this year.
- All board meetings now via Zoom.

1st Vice President/Programs: Hal Hostetler gave report for Karl Wilson

- Dec: Christmas Gala with Hal's band (Tidewater Concert Band), Toys for Tots, & collecting for Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless. Santa Claus will visit !
- Jan: Installation of Officers: Linc Smith, VCOC President

2nd Vice President/membership: Sherry Ferki

- Current membership numbers: 70 members., same number as this time last year. Started year with 71 members.
- New members this year: 7 – Bettye Hussey, James Rodney, Janet Boschen, Lois Yandle, Alex Konczey, Gordon Iiams, Barbara Iiams
- Deaths this year: 3 – Henry Boschen, Jim Yandle, Irene Wagner
- Other losses: 6 – 3 moved and 3 didn't renew (1 for medical reasons)
- Recruiting efforts this year: Membership brochure, emails and /or letters to monthly real time report per members/potential members for chapter, and Joint Recruiting Event in Williamsburg via zoom in Sept (very poor attendance and no new members).

3rd Vice President: Ken App/Communications

- Showed copies of newsletter , PACMOAA Today website and PACMOAA Facebook group (only 18 members).
- Reviewed how to use website to access all info available .
- Discussed that 3 newsletters are produced - 1 is emailed, 1 is mailed, and 1 is put on the website. The edition on the website does not have contact information for the Leadership Team on it.
- New Directory out in November.
- FEDVIP renewal mentioned.



Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: CDR Hans Sachse

- Overall status : Doing well. A copy of financial report projected for room to see.
- 2 to 3 year membership working well. Money for extra years is set aside to be used at the appropriate time.
- Dinner meetings: Doing much better than previous years. Able to cover the expense of speakers dinner without a deficit. No extra costs for room , etc. like at Hilton.
- Received USAA grant for \$300.00 again last year to help defray costs of June Scholarship dinner. Since no in person meeting last year for scholarship winners, used it this year.
- Balance in operating fund:
- Balance in scholarship fund: \$5,000 **NOTE: \$1500.00 going out in late Dec for 2021 scholarship winners and need to maintain at least \$1000.00 balance at all times.**
- Audit for 2017 : Jeff Westling- in progress

VCOC Rep.: Ken App

- **Thanked Dolly Cherrington for 11 years' service as VCOC representative!!**
- Reviewed info on VCOC website including Take Action, Biennial Luncheon, and Quick Links.
- New VCOC Leadership Team elected at October meeting.

- PACMOAA members on Board - Jim Stephan as Treasurer for 4th term. Sherry Ferki will serve as Surviving Spouse Liaison.
- Two PACMOAA members, MAJ Sherry Ferki USA (Ret) and Lt Col Jim Stephan, USAF (RET), presented with MOAA awards by COL Dan Merry, USAF (Ret) representing CEO and President LTGEN Atkins, USAF (Ret). The Biennial Memorial Service for members that died between Nov 2019 to Nov 2021 was conducted by Hal Hostetler.
Next meeting in Richmond. More info to follow later

Leg. Rep.: Hal Hostetler reported for Karl Wilson

- Hal - Reviewed proposed JLC 2022 Policy Initiatives , particularly “Expanding tax relief for surviving Spouses of Military Service Members to include “Died in the Line-of-Duty” not just “Killed-in-Action” as it currently exists.
- Bill Smith reviewed the status of Advocacy in Action issues
 - 2 didn’t get in to NDAA as it currently stands – *Parity for TRICARE for Young Adults* and *Providing a Basic Needs Allowance for Military Families Facing Food Insecurity* (ending hunger in the ranks).
- Congressman Scott speaker at Oct meeting

Personal Affairs Report: Sherry Ferki: See detailed info separately in newsletter.

Surviving Spouse Liaison Report: Sherry Ferki - See detailed info in newsletter.

Scholarship committee/JROTC Medals: Sherry Ferki

- **Continued support of scholarship program with donations allows PACMOAA to award 2 scholarships/year.**
- 2 scholarships awarded this year at June meeting
 - **Barrett Ferguson** from Smithfield HS. Attending Virginia Tech
 - **Jade Lewis** from Great Bridge HS. Attending Liberty University.
- MOAA Certificates and Medals awarded this year to 8 cadets – 5 via a virtual award ceremony for all Chesapeake JROTC groups, 2 in person by Hal Hostetler at Churchland and Smithfield HS, and 1 by Woodrow Wilson HS AJROTC instructor for PACMOAA.
- 6 JROTC groups covered by PACMOAA did not have awards this year or did not respond to PACMOAAs emails /calls.

AWARDS: Discussed in more detail later in newsletter
 COL Marvin J Harris Award for Website and Print newsletter
 MOAA Levels of Excellence Award
 MOAA Leadership Award : Sherry Ferki
 MOAA Outstanding Service Award- Jim Stephan (Picture at right)



BUSINESS ITEMS ADDRESSED:

1. **Election** – Scott Dickinson counted the ballots with the assistance of Ken App & reported on outcome. Many thanks to them!!

Congratulations to the new Leadership Team members:

1st VP: COL Hal Hostetler, USA (Ret)

2nd VP: MAJ Sherry Ferki ,USA (Ret)

Treasurer: CDR Hans Sachse, USN (Ret)

BOD: MAJ Steve Watkins, USA

BOD: Kay Watkins, Spouse of PACMOAA Member

Asked for volunteers for Secretary and Historian!

2. Discussed if members interested in upgraded dinner for Christmas with the possibility of higher price. Will be investigated more.
3. Sherry reminded members about Portsmouth Volunteers for the Homeless and that we usually donate a lot at Christmas.
4. Asked group to let us know if anyone has ideas about other ways to improve member involvement. No ideas at meeting.

SURVIVING SPOUSE LIAISON ANNUAL REPORT 2021

- Surviving Spouse Corner published on MOAA website every month and included in most newsletters.
- Surviving Spouse Virtual Chapter
- Virginia Military Widows Property Tax Waiver Facebook group instead of Virginia Military Widows: SBP-DIC Offset. Focused on increasing eligibility from KIA to Line of duty...
 - Proposed 2022 JLC Objective :To expand tax relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Service Members to include “Died in the Line-of-Duty”. Related to real estate tax for surviving spouse of a veteran who was determined by US VA to have a 100 % service-connected permanent and total disability.
- Archived MOAA Webinar: Survivor Planning and Benefit Issues Oct 2021 at <https://www.moaa.org/content/benefits-and-discounts/transition-and-careers/transition-center-webinars/preparing-a-spouse-for-survivorship/>

MEMBERSHIP

PACMOAA MEMBERS REMEMBERED AT 2021 VCOC BIENNIAL CANDLE MEMORIAL CEREMONY

29 October 2019	Betty Lambdin, Surviving Spouse
26 May 2020	CAPT Larry Anderson, USN (Ret) - PACMOAA member 33 years and Past President.
22 January 2021	CDR Henry Boschen, USN (Ret) - Charter member , Past President, and Chaplain for many years before Bob Steorts.
25 February 2021	MAJ James Yandle, USA (Ret) – Past Board Member and Hospitality Chair
22 May 2021	Irene Wagner, Surviving Spouse
Spouses of longtime PACMOAA members :	
17 June 2020	Eleanor Parker, wife of CAPT Bob Parker, USNR (Ret)
20 July 2020	Paula Turner, wife of COL Steve Turner, USAF (Ret)

PERSONAL AFFAIRS

PERSONAL AFFAIRS CORNER ANNUAL MEETING REPORT 2021

- **Planning ahead for your survivors is essential.**
 - MOAA has several publications that are great tools to help collect the important documents/information you need to have available.

- *2021 Personal Affairs Guide : A Personal Inventory for Peace of Mind*
- *2021 Survivor's Checklist.*

- Please let me know if you, a member of your family, or another PACMOAA member is ill and would like visitors or for us to remember them in the newsletter. We cannot support members when they need us unless someone notifies us.

Sherry Ferki, Personal Affairs Officer

Home number: 686-4650 Cell: 630-5608

SURVIVING SPOUSE CORNER

Surviving Spouse Corner: Know Your State-Level Military Benefits

By: Dr. Vivianne Wersel November 01, 2021

Many MOAA surviving spouses receive survivor benefits from DoD and the VA. Besides these benefits, state-level benefits are available to those who meet the criteria. State benefits are state-driven, unlike federal or VA benefits or entitlements.

Surviving spouses might not be aware of these state-level benefits because there is not a one-stop-shop website for military survivors.

Some states are more “military friendly” than others. The amount of benefits can vary from state to state; some offer as many as 60 and as few as 22 benefits to retired veterans, according to [the Center for a New America Security \(CNAS\)](#). The challenge is determining what benefits are passed on to the survivor after the veteran or servicemember dies. CNAS says military survivors receive less than 50% of what states offers to veterans.

To determine what state benefits are available to survivors, begin by looking at the individual state benefits for veterans using the [CNAS benefit finder](#). Next, locate the state you are targeting and then search for the “Beneficiary” category. It is important to verify eligibility, as many of the webpages might be outdated.

[RELATED: [MOAA's Military State Report Card and Tax Guide](#)]

Some state benefits include (but, again, vary from state to state):

- Academic scholarships
- Property tax exemption or reduction of property tax (For example: Military surviving spouses who receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation from the VA are eligible for up to a \$45,000 deduction in the assessed value of their home for property tax purposes.)
- Survivor Benefit Plan tax exemption for state tax
- Free admission to national parks
- Free fishing and hunting license

Being aware of state-level benefits can also help surviving spouses determine whether they want to stay or relocate to optimize their benefits. Many independent variables need to be considered, such as cost of living and proximity to family support. Knowing the state-level benefits is a helpful tool in this decision-making process.

Sherry Ferki, Personal Affairs Officer and Surviving Spouse Liaison

Home number: 686-4650 Cell: 630-5608

VCOC, MOAA & LEGISLATIVE

NDA Update: 4 Reasons to Contact Your Senators This Holiday – Don't Delay

November 23, 2021 *By MOAA Staff*

Senators headed home for the Thanksgiving holiday before wrapping up their version of the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), leaving a weeklong window for MOAA members to register their views on issues of critical importance to the military community.

This might be the last window to make your voice heard on these topics: The Senate will take up the bill Nov. 29, and with competing legislative priorities and the [sadly traditional](#) year-end budget crunch, it's unclear how much time will be left for NDAA deliberation. With so much going on, MOAA needs your help now more than ever to get these issues onto your senator's to-do list.

Here's why it matters: The House-passed NDAA (H.R. 4350) includes many MOAA-backed provisions for the military community likely to carry over into the Senate version – a pay raise in line with legislative requirements and a much-needed step [toward ending hunger in the ranks](#), for example. But other items on MOAA's priority list didn't make the House NDAA, and the only chance for them to be included in this legislation, which has passed both chambers annually for 60 years, is for the items to be part of the Senate version and be included in the final bill via the joint conference committee.

Below are details on four such provisions. Click the links to send a message to your legislator, but also consider a phone call via MOAA's dedicated congressional hotline, (866) 272-6622, which can connect you directly to your senators.

- [Reversing Planned Eligibility Changes at Arlington National Cemetery](#). MOAA members have been among the thousands of veterans and others who've registered major concerns with the flawed, discriminatory changes proposed to Arlington National Cemetery eligibility that would force many 20-year-retirees to change long-held burial plans. A Senate amendment (SA 4297) would require a joint DoD/VA report on the issue and prohibit any eligibility changes until the report's filing – a critical first step to a better solution for Arlington's space issues and for finding the next national cemetery.
- [Fixing the TRICARE Young Adult Coverage Gap](#). MOAA has long advocated for this much-needed improvement – one that would bring TRICARE in line with commercial plans and save military families thousands of dollars in health care costs for dependent children up to age 26. The current TRICARE Young Adult Program saw [yet another significant premium hike for 2022](#) and shouldn't be viewed as a viable alternative. A [Senate NDAA amendment](#) has made significant progress thanks to MOAA-backed support for similar legislation and [recent media reports](#) on the issue.
- [Helping Military Survivors](#). MOAA's work on behalf of surviving spouses has been among its [greatest recent legislative successes](#). The fix included in the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act – which has been introduced as [a Senate NDAA amendment](#) – seems minor compared with ending the so-called “Widows Tax,” but it would make a significant difference in the days and weeks after a loss. Learn more about the act and how it could save some survivors from unexpected financial disaster [at this link](#).
- [Addressing Concurrent Receipt](#). MOAA's support for the Major Richard Star Act dates to the bill's inception, but budget concerns prevented the House from including the text of the act in the NDAA via the amendment process. However, Sens. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) plan to submit a Senate amendment with similar language, and while final NDAA inclusion faces several hurdles, all of your representatives need to hear from you about the need to end the unfair offset of military retired pay with disability compensation for so many ill and injured veterans. MOAA's [incremental approach to this issue](#) will continue moving forward in coming years; don't waste this opportunity to continue our progress.

Congress, not just the Senate, is facing an overwhelming agenda, which includes addressing several time-sensitive crises in the coming weeks: the Dec. 3 continuing resolution deadline, dealing with the debt ceiling

prior to Dec. 15, and the president's Build Back Better Act. Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict how legislators will prioritize these other legislative issues relative to the FY 2022 NDAA – hearing from their constituents could make all the difference.

Budget Delay Could Cause Major Problems for Veterans Medical Care

November 23, 2021

This article by Leo Shane III originally appeared on [Military Times](#), the nation's largest independent newsroom dedicated to covering the military and veteran community.

If Congress fails to pass a [full-year budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs](#) in the next few months, the funding shortfall would have “serious ramifications” for veterans medical services, according to [the department's secretary](#).

“I’m very concerned about a full-year [budget extension], and we’ve communicated that concern to lawmakers, both Republicans and Democrats,” said Secretary Denis McDonough during a press conference Nov. 18.

“There will be very serious ramifications for community care. There’ll be very serious ramifications for direct care. I am very concerned about that.”

[RELATED: [State of the VA: McDonough Offers Outlook on Improvements, Challenges](#)]

A day earlier, House Appropriations Chair Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., and the panel's subcommittee chairs released a statement urging Republican colleagues to “come to the table” and help finalize the annual appropriations process in coming weeks.

The group said a lengthy budget extension would be “nothing short of catastrophic” for numerous government agencies.

In September, lawmakers approved a short-term extension of the federal budget until Dec. 3 in order to give them more time to work out funding disputes between the two parties. Lawmakers are expected to do another extension when they return from Thanksgiving recess later this month, since many of those disagreements have not yet been resolved.

That has prompted discussion about simply running all federal operations on fiscal 2021 spending levels throughout fiscal 2022. White House officials have decried the move as dangerous for a host of defense and domestic priorities, since money for new program starts and expansions would not be made available to government agencies.

[RELATED: [Still No Budget and No NDAA For FY 2022: Here's Why It Matters](#)]

The administration has requested a \$270 billion budget for Veterans Affairs for fiscal 2022, an increase of almost \$30 billion from the current yearlong spending level. Lawmakers also authorize advance appropriations each year for the department, to ensure that any budget disruptions from political infighting does not interrupt VA medical care or benefits delivery.

Members of the House and Senate have offered few objections to the White House's planned VA budget level, but the agency's spending is stalled alongside other more complicated issues like defense spending.

McDonough said running VA at fiscal 2021 spending levels for all of fiscal 2022 would leave numerous medical care expansion efforts without adequate support at a time when the department is looking to increase health care appointments deferred during the pandemic.

Officials have planned a significant boost in mental health care spending (up 13.5%, to \$10.7 billion) and assistance programs for veterans facing homelessness (up 14.5%, to \$2.6 billion).

He said that officials are making plans for the possible failure of Congress to adopt a new budget, but did not offer any specifics.

[RELATED: [Have a Question About Your VA Benefits? Try the New 'Ask VA' Portal](#)]

The VA budget has grown significantly over the last two decades. In fiscal 2001, it totaled just \$45 billion, roughly one-sixth of the White House request for fiscal 2022.

As US Troops and Families Go Hungry, They Don't Trust the Pentagon for Help

19 Nov 2021 Military.com | By [Konstantin Toropin](#)

Angela, an enlisted sailor, saw her baby daughter as a miracle when she was born two years ago. The little girl quickly took over her life, and the child's love of "Frozen" means that Angela can recite both movies from memory.

Now, as a single mother on active duty, she's fighting to put food on their table, doing battle with her chain of command.

The need to overdraft her bank account for baby formula, living off only chicken and rice, or applying for civilian low-income assistance, only to be rejected -- it all feels like a broken promise by the Navy, Angela, who has served for a decade, told Military.com in an interview.

"I have called my dad crying because I didn't even have money to buy bread or peanut butter and jelly because I was so broke," said Angela, whose name has been changed to protect her identity due to concerns about retaliation.

But she says the Navy has offered little assistance. Instead, leaders have intensified her struggles and insisted she find some way to make do.

"I've pretty much figured out that the Navy is not here to help you," she said.

Angela is among thousands of service members on active duty who struggle daily with hunger related to financial hardship, though the true scope of the problem is not fully known. It's a stark reality that some troops cannot feed their families while serving in America's all-volunteer force, despite its commitments to welfare, support services and benefits.

The gap in support means some service members are forced to rely on outside help like food pantries and relief organizations like the [Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society](#).

About 14% of enlisted active-duty families reported "low" or "very low" food security in [an annual 2020 survey](#), according to Denise Hollywood, the chief community and programs officer for [Blue Star Families](#).

Enlisted troops appear to be suffering the most. A total of 29% of the most junior enlisted ranks of E1-E4, a segment that includes more than 570,000 people and more than half of all enlisted in the military, reported facing hunger over the past year, [according to the advocacy group Feeding America](#), the largest hunger relief organization in the U.S.

In all, 160,000 service members struggled to provide food for themselves or their families, the group recently reported. A [pair of Army studies](#) found the problem was made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. [One of those studies](#) found that on one Army base, one in three reported being food insecure in 2019. The second study, done at a different Army base, saw that out of a sample of nearly 5,000 soldiers, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the percentage of food-insecure troops to almost double from 16% to 31%

The term food-insecure means a person or family finds themselves unable to reliably get enough affordable and nutritious food.

Of the 199 food banks Feeding America has across the U.S., 74 have a specific food assistance program for active-duty military families, and 34 are near a base and regularly help service members.

Military.com spoke with two other service members for this story who were struggling with hunger. Both are single mothers -- one stationed in Maryland and the other in Hawaii -- who said they did not trust their chain of command to help with their problems.

"I get told you need to buckle up and bear with it, you need to figure it out yourself," the Maryland service member said.

She said senior enlisted and officers would berate her with expletives wanting to know why she was complaining about her struggles. “Why are you making me look bad?” she said they would ask.

All three mothers said they were forced to seek mental health help as a result of their financial struggles. Two said they considered suicide.

Data collected by nonprofit organizations [going back to at least 2012](#) has documented the problem with hunger. However, historically [the Pentagon has not been forthcoming](#) with its own figures on the issue.

“The Navy is aware of the ongoing economic challenges that Sailors face, many of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and inflationary trends in the economy,” Priscilla Rodriguez, a spokeswoman for the service, told Military.com.

Angela’s financial struggles began after the birth of her daughter while she was stationed in Texas.

“There was a time when she was first born that I was overdrafting my account every single pay period because of diapers,” she explained.

The struggle to feed her child came quickly. Her daughter, who is lactose intolerant, required a specific type of baby formula, because Angela was unable to produce enough breast milk due to long work hours. That was a \$40 expense every week or two, she said.

Angela tried applying for WIC – the [government program aimed to help low-income parents](#) feed their children – but “they told me that I made \$1,000 too much.”

“We ran out of formula and I was over drafted,” Angela recalled. “I had to make do with what I had, and I had to early start her on applesauce ... that way, she was satiated enough.”

Eventually, Angela transferred to California, partly in an effort to be close to her daughter’s father who was also stationed on the West Coast. The cost of living there only made things worse.

Paycheck to Paycheck

Feeding America says there isn’t one cause of hunger among military families, with low salaries for enlisted members, high rates of unemployment for military spouses, and high costs of child care contributing to the broader problem. For many families, causes stack up, weaving a web of hardship that is difficult to escape.

But the cost of housing plays an outsized role, Vince Hall, Feeding America’s head of government relations, told Military.com in a phone interview.

“It’s shocking to see military families lining up for food assistance because they are often stationed in some of the nation’s most expensive housing markets but lack the compensation necessary to live in those markets,” Hall said.

That allowance, known as the [Basic Allowance for Housing](#), or BAH, is designed to cover costs of rent and utilities and it varies based on what region troops are stationed.

“In a community like San Diego, [the BAH] is often insufficient to find housing because the cost of living is 40% higher than the national average,” Hall said.

Angela, who is stationed in southern California, said she also worries about two single, pregnant sailors she oversees who live on base in barracks.

Navy policies don’t allow families to stay in the barracks. Once they deliver their babies, “they’re going to receive BAH, but they’re not going to receive enough BAH to help themselves,” she said.

BAH is also a double-edged sword because while officially an entitlement and not considered taxable income, it counts as gross income when calculating eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is more widely known as food stamps.

Parents like Angela also face costs for child care and transportation to and from daycare that strain finances. Angela also lives almost half an hour from her base – a location she chose for its better schools -- but the cost of the commute eats into her paycheck.

“I am physically paycheck to paycheck to support myself, my child and the [Navy's mission](#),” she said.

A single grocery trip can run Angela about \$180, but she’s learned to make the food last up to three weeks for her and her daughter. “That way she's completely nourished, and I'm not taking anything from her mouth,” she said.

However, it means her own nutrition suffers.

“I literally just eat chicken thighs and white rice,” she said. “If I'm trying to splurge, I will get yellow rice and a rotisserie chicken, and I will mix them together and I will have a large pot that will last me the entire week.”

Nobody to Trust

The issue of military hunger has [recently become more visible](#) and openly [discussed](#), especially in Washington, D.C.

“It feels like there's more honesty and acceptance of the problem,” Hall said.

Both the House and Senate versions of Congress’ annual defense policy bill have [provisions for a new “basic needs allowance”](#). It would be an additional stipend paid to service members with families near the federal poverty level. First lady Jill Biden has [advocated for passage of that measure](#), as well as other legislation aimed at curbing hunger in the ranks.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [announced Wednesday that he ordered](#) his department to come up with a new strategy within three months to help hungry service members and their dependents. The secretary’s plan also calls for an unspecified, yet temporary increase in BAH for areas that have had more than a 10% increase in rental costs.

Angela isn’t holding out hope, however. “I’ll believe it when I see it,” she said in reaction to the announcement. Her experience feels like a failure of the military to live up to its commitment to take care of its people.

The sentiment, she said, comes from treatment by toxic and unsupportive leaders. Her mentions of hardship or needing help came with threats of separation. Her status as a single mother who is struggling does not earn her any consideration with her superiors.

“You're a sailor first -- your child was not assigned to you in a seabag. ... Those are the things that get said to us on repeat,” Angela said.

As a result, announcements like Austin’s efforts can fall on deaf ears.

“There's a complete disconnect between what Big Navy says, what a CO might say and then what the actual chain of command says,” Angela said. “If you don’t have a chain of command that you can trust, I guarantee no matter what, these sailors will suffer in silence.”

Outside groups agree. Abby Leibman, the leader of [MAZON](#), said that while they “appreciate the Department of Defense’s long-overdue acknowledgment of the problem, directing military families to food banks is not a solution — it is an abdication of the government’s responsibility to care for our service members.”

One of the “immediate” solutions [Austin’s plan offers](#) is to “connect service members to additional resources and support programs addressed to alleviate food insecurity.”

Priscilla Rodriguez said that the service’s “top priority is taking care of our personnel,” when asked for a reaction to the story and noted that “food insecurity is a humanitarian issue and readiness challenge that we do not take lightly.”

“While we work with the DoD to find long-term solutions, we encourage Sailors and their families who are experiencing food insecurity and other financial challenges to seek assistance,” Rodriguez said in a statement.

“We also expect leaders to be aware of these challenges and support our Sailors and families in accessing the resources they need,” she added.

A drumbeat for change in policy circles may be rising around the issue of military hunger, but for the women who spoke to Military.com, the damage has been done, and Angela is through seeking help from the Navy.

“I have actually decided that I will not be relisting,” Angela said. “I can’t do it.”

She said she has a year of service left. Afterward, she hopes to go to Florida or Texas where she has family and relatives that can help support her and her daughter.

“Out here, where I have nothing ... it's just fighting for air,” she said.



COMMUNITY NEWS

NMCP IMMUNIZATION STATUS/AVAILABILITY

November 30, 2021

Information below verified by calling **NMCP IMMUNIZATION CLINIC** at 757-953-2207 by talking to clinic staff. Recording on phone still says no flu vaccine available!

Senior Flu Shot available by walk in

COVID Vaccine booster dose available by walk in but appointment preferred. Only Pfizer vaccine is available but can be used for booster dose whether you received the Pfizer vaccine or Moderna for 1st 2 doses.

Walk in hours:

Monday – Friday : 0800 – 1530

Saturday : 0800 – 1130

Information below copied from NMCP website at <https://portsmouth.tricare.mil/COVID-19>

“As a reminder, appointments are highly suggested for **first, second, third, and booster** doses.” NOTE: You can also call 757-953-6620 to schedule 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or booster dose.

“Booster dose appointment should be booked 6 months after 2nd dose.

Please ensure utilization of the DHA Appointment Portal (DAP) to schedule.

<https://informatics-stage.health.mil/COVAX>

REMINDER: Both the flu vaccine and COVID vaccines are available at participating TRICARE retail network pharmacies and a TRICARE-authorized provider – *if you go to your doctor for the vaccine, you’ll need to pay your co-payment or cost-share for office visit. There is NO CHARGE for either vaccine at military clinics or retail pharmacies!* If you need the **senior flu vaccine (for those over 60 years of age)**, it would be helpful to check with whichever facility you plan on visiting to see if it is in stock.

Information verified by calling **HAMPTON VA MEDICAL CENTER** AT 722-9961

Flu vaccine available in main lobby Monday-Friday 0900-1400

COVID Moderna booster available at Bldg. 114 Monday-Friday 0800- 1600

Vaccines available for all enrolled veterans!

REMINDER PER TRICARE OPEN SEASON

TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select and Federal Employees Dental & Vision Insurance Plan (FEDVIP) all have open season 8 November – 13 December 2021. During open season with FEDVIP, you can enroll in a FEDVIP

plan, make changes, or cancel a current FEDVIP policy. You will automatically be re-enrolled in a 2022 plan if no action is taken. For FEDVIP eligibility or general questions go to the website: www.opm.gov/fedvip.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

The Story of General Patton's Weather Prayer

In early December 1944, the headquarters of the Third Army was in an old French military barracks in Nancy in the region of Lorraine, France when General Patton was given orders to move to rescue the troops at Baston trapped in the Battle of the Bulge. At eleven o'clock on the morning of December 8, Patton telephoned the head chaplain, Monsignor James H. O'Neill with a request for a weather prayer stating: "This is General Patton; do you have a good prayer for weather? We must do something about those rains if we are to win the war." One account of what happened after Patton's telephone call to O'Neill is related by Colonel Paul Harkins, Patton's deputy chief of staff is the conversation went something like this:

General Patton: "Chaplain, I want you to publish a prayer for good weather. I'm tired of these soldiers having to fight mud and floods as well as Germans. See if we can't get God to work on our side."

Chaplain O'Neill: "Sir, it's going to take a pretty thick rug for that kind of praying."

General Patton: "I don't care if it takes a flying carpet. I want the praying done."

Chaplain O'Neill: "Yes, sir. May I say, General, that it usually isn't a customary thing among men of my profession to pray for clear weather to kill fellow men."

General Patton: "Chaplain, are you trying to teach me theology or are you the Chaplain of the Third Army? I want a prayer."

Chaplain O'Neill: "Yes, sir."

Chaplain O'Neill could not find a prayer in his books, so he composed an original prayer which was typed on a three-by-five-inch card and printed on a small-sized card including a Christmas greeting from General Patton which was distributed to the troops on the twenty-second of December. It was quoted as his weather prayer and the text read during the famous General Patton movie.

"Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations."

CAPT Bob Brewer, USN (Ret)

THAT'S A WRAP FOR DECEMBER 2021!