



Never stop serving!



Banner & client Eric

Join us at [www.starspan.org](http://www.starspan.org)

**Welcome** to the **Star Spangled Banner Chapter** of the **Military Officers Association of America**. We are 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.

## May 2024 Newsletter

**Contents:** June 2024 Dinner Meeting, April Meeting Recap, JROTC & ROTC news, Legislative News, Our Community Salutes (OCS) Recognition Ceremony, Paws4vets event info, Future Events.

***Dinner Meeting—Pappas Restaurant, Cockeysville***  
***Wednesday, June 5th, 2024, at 6:00 pm***



### ***“Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Update”***

**Robert (Bob) L. Finn**

**Senior Advisor**

**Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs**

Robert (Bob) Finn began his service to our state and nation in 1967 when he volunteered and joined the Army to be a paratrooper. After one year of training to include the 90-day Non-Commissioned Officers School and Ranger School where he graduated as a Staff Sergeant before attending Airborne School, he was sent to Vietnam

where he was assigned as a squad leader in the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade. After completing his one-year tour in Vietnam, he was assigned as a Ranger Mountaineering Instructor. He left active duty in 1970.

In 1972, having a desire to continue serving his country that would last another 31 years, he joined a company of the 20<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group in the Maryland Army National Guard. He earned his Special Forces qualification and was promoted to Sergeant First Class. Upon graduation from the Maryland Officer Candidate School, he served in leadership positions as an infantry rifle platoon leader, company commander and as a Special Forces "A" Team executive officer and a commander before returning to Active Duty with the National Guard.

In 1984, he was asked to become an Active-Duty Reserve Officer to command a cadre of instructors to train leaders of units from Maryland and Virginia for the newly reactivated 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Light). He continued to serve on an active-duty status in the Maryland Army National Guard for 19 years retiring in 2003 as a Colonel and Infantry Brigade Commander. During his military service, Bob earned over 20 awards and decorations including a Combat Infantry Badge, Airborne, Ranger and Special Forces qualification, Legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars and several Army Commendation Medals.

Bob's civilian career began in 1970 where he worked as a land surveyor and obtained his Property Line License. In 1980, he joined the Maryland State Police and served four years as a Resident Trooper at the Westminster Barrack before being asked to return to Active Duty as a Maryland National Guardsman in 1984.

In 2003, upon retiring from military service after 35 years of service, Secretary Hutchins selected Bob to join the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs. Working under Secretary Hutchins and Secretary Owings, he established the Department's Outreach and Advocacy Program. He was instrumental in creating the newsletter, updating our web site, and expanding the outreach program to increase Maryland veterans' awareness of the Department's programs. In 2005, he joined the Maryland State Police and worked in the Office of Strategic Plans to create their strategic plan and worked on a number of process improvement teams. He left state service in 2007 and worked as a program manager and vice president of a private security firm with responsibility of providing armed security officers for 10 Navy installations across five states in the southeast region.

In 2014, Bob again re-joined the Maryland State Police as their Property Officer until assuming his current position with the Department. Bob served as Deputy Secretary to the MDVA until January 2024. He now serves as a Senior Advisor to the Secretary and is assisting with the establishment of a second state veterans home in Carroll County.

**DINNER RESERVATIONS: PAPPAS RESTAURANT & SPORTS BAR.**

550 Cranbrook Road, Cockeysville, MD 21030. (410) 666-0030

**\$50.00 per person**, including **three courses**, coffee, tea, non-alcoholic beverages, gratuities, and tax. **Cash bar available** for cocktails, wine, and beer.

**Please make your reservation today.** Our final count is due **1 June**.

**SOCIAL TIME: 6:00 PM. DINNER: 6:30 PM. DRESS: Business Suit or Business Casual**

**MENU SELECTIONS (at seating)**

Entrée Selections (Select 1 entrée.)

**Pappas' Famous Crab Cake**, eight ounces.

**Orange Roughy**, filet broiled in lemon butter sauce.

**New York Strip Steak**, eight ounces, Angus steak.

**Chicken Marsala**, chicken breast with sauteed mushrooms in Marsala wine sauce.

All entrees are served with garden salad, baked potato, a fresh vegetable, and dessert.

**All members must register online for the meeting at [www.starspan.org/Calendar/UpcomingEvents](http://www.starspan.org/Calendar/UpcomingEvents) even if you plan to pay by cash or check.**

**Reservation Form: FOR MAIL IN ONLY**

You MUST mail the reservation form below by **20 May**. We need a firm count by **1 June**. MAIL CHECKS TO TREASURER RITA M. KUREK at address below.

**For more information: Phone George Stakias, President. 443 707-6947; or email [georgestakias@yahoo.com](mailto:georgestakias@yahoo.com). Please call if you have doubts about your mailed reservation arriving by 1 JUNE.**

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RESERVATION FORM (mail in)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Guests \_\_\_\_\_

DINNER RESERVATION at \$50.00 per person..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

DUES FOR 2024 \$30.00..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation** for Army Officer's Guides (gift to ROTC Cadets) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation** to paws4vets (our annual fundraising cause) ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

Mail check to: Treasurer, Rita M. Kurek, 1231 Engleberth Rd,

Essex MD 21221, ph: (410) 294-4913

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# *Recap-Dinner Meeting*

## *Wednesday, 10 April 2024*



### “Public Safety and Homeland Security”

**BG Adam Flasch, USA (ret)  
Deputy Chief of Staff for Public  
Safety and Homeland Security**

BG (Ret) Adam Flasch discussed the dynamic interagency collaboration for the protection of the citizens of the State of Maryland including his agency, state & local government, the local and state police, cybersecurity council, Emergency Management and the National Guard. He leads the development of policies, priorities, and strategies for public safety and assists state agencies and local government in the implementation of core homeland security initiatives through executive order, policy and the state/federal grants process. Adam serves as a liaison with the United States Department of Homeland Security and serves on multiple advisory councils including the National Governor’s Association Homeland Security Advisory Council and Cybersecurity Policy Advisors Council, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Homeland Security Executive Council, the Governor’s Emergency Management Advisory Council (GEMAC), Maryland Cybersecurity Coordinating Council, and the Maryland Cybersecurity Council. He commented on the swift interaction of several agencies handling the recent collapse of the Key Bridge with high praise.



President George Stakias presents the FSK bust to speaker BG (Ret) Adam Flasch



(Left) Members Jim Shelley, Derald Jendersee, Bill Gray, Susan Wolfe, David & Rob Paolucci (Right) Member John Backer, guests Augie Micelli & Louis Walters Jr., Member Gary Palmer (rear)



(Left) Members Tom Lowe & Mike DeHaemer



(Right) Members Gary Palmer & Mary Agnes Evans & guest



BG (Ret) Adam Flasch enthusiastically addresses the group



Gary Palmer, MD Council President asks safety question during Q & A.



Member Ernest Schultz & spouse



Member Vickie Maas & spouse Clay

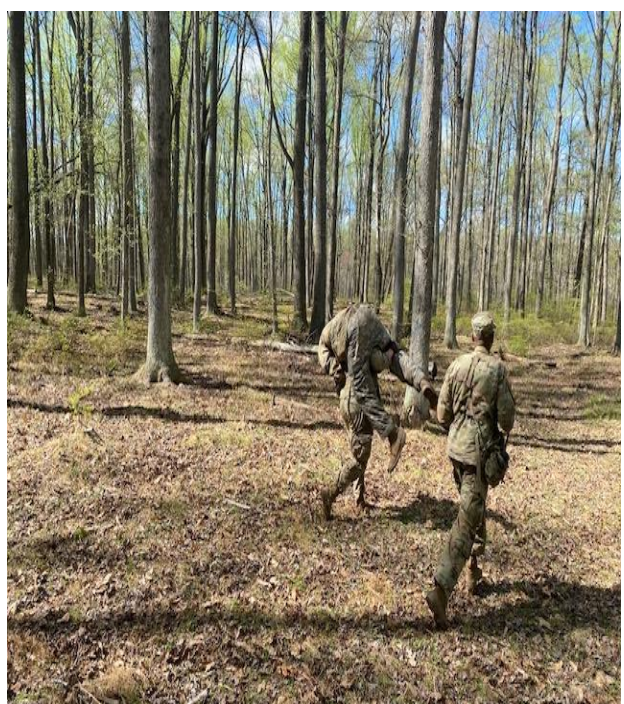
1<sup>st</sup> VP Frank Hilsher proposed that we institute a Raffle drawing at each dinner meeting to raise funds for the Chapter to support Officer's Guides, etc. Tickets would be 6 for \$5.00, 50% of proceeds to the Chapter and two 25% winners. We will start this raffle at our June dinner meeting! ***Bring your cash!***

## **ROTC News:**

### **ROTC Chair Col Frank Hilsher, USA (Ret)**

The Joint FTX (Field training Exercise) among the 3 main Universities was held at the MDARNG Training Area in Harford County on 11 April 2024. Loyola, Towson, Johns Hopkins, Morgan & McDaniel Universities participated in real army experience and team building exercises.





Please see the website for more photos from the FTX under Chapter Programs/ "ROTC and JROTC"



Frank Hilsher attended the Military Ball at Loyola University on 24 April 2024 where he presented the MOAA ROTC Leadership Award to Cadet Reilly Lockwood. He also presented a special gift to retiring LTC Tim Mitroka, who was attending his last military ball at Loyola University as PMS. As is his yearly tradition, Frank also presented copies of the US Constitution to the soon to-be-commissioned Cadets.



Jewelry Case-Waiting to decorate the New 2LTs in May 2024



Frank presents the MOAA ROTC Leadership Award



Gift to retiring LTC Tim Mitroka



Frank presents the US Constitution to the Cadets

## Legislative News:

### Legislative Chair LTC Bill Gray, USAR (Ret)

The 2024 Maryland General Assembly session has ended. Our website has been updated and the Legislation list for the 2024 Session has been organized into three categories:

- Legislation that passed both houses and signed by the Governor by May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Legislation passed by both houses and not signed by the Governor before May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Legislation that did not pass this session, with a notation of the bills favored by MOAA and the Maryland Military Coalition,

We should continue to reach out to our House and Senate State Representatives to encourage the elimination of any age differences in the amount of any tax exemptions as well as eventually phasing out the taxation of Uniform Services retirement income. Elections are this year, and these actions should be on the list of priorities for the 2025 Legislative Session.



OUR  
COMMUNITY  
SALUTES®

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THE FIRST TO SAY THANK YOU

President George Stakias recently shared information about a new joint venture between MOAA and [Our Community Salutes](#) (OCS) with the SSBC Board Members. OCS hosts recognition ceremonies for high school enlistees and their families around the

country. These ceremonies are dedicated to recognizing a high school student's decision to enlist in the armed services after graduation versus pursuing other opportunities available to them, such as work, college, or trade careers. These ceremonies honor that decision and showcase a community of support for these enlistees and their families. MOAA has been invited to be a part of this welcoming community.

The Star Spangled Banner Chapter (and other local Chapters) were invited to participate in the OCS Enlistee Recognition Ceremony in Baltimore on 6 May 2024 at Martin's West. Engagement ranged from simple attendance to hosting a table for MOAA visibility. There was no fee associated with this effort.

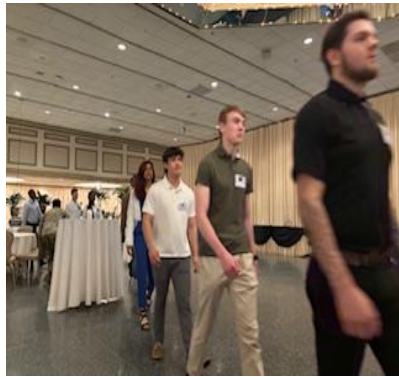
Col (Ret) Rita Kurek (SSBC) and Major (Ret) Cathy Hampton (Susquehanna Chapter) were able to attend and represent our local MOAA Chapters.

Featured speakers included:

- Major General Larry R. Broadwell, Deputy Director for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Operations on the Joint Staff
- Major General Janeen L. Birckhead, the 31st Adjutant General of the Maryland National Guard
- Command Sergeant Major Michele Jones (USA, Ret.)
- Abby Spencer Moffatt, Chief Executive Officer, Diana Davis Spencer Foundation
- Master of Ceremonies: Mary Bubala, Emmy Award-winning evening co-anchor for Baltimore's FOX 45

Dr. Kenneth Hartman, Founder and President of OCS, a national non-profit organization, who hosts over 60 or more of these ceremonies in the Spring of every year himself, was also present to salute, encourage and thank the enlistees and their families for their choice to serve their nation.

The evening was an outstanding send-off for these new recruits entering all branches of the service. The Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (BMI) JROTC Color Guard posted the colors, and the US Marine Band provided the ceremonial music. Over 60 new enlistees were individually recognized and presented with a copy of the US Constitution and information on the new OCS Connect resource for support in military life. Several Services provided Challenge Coins as well. See pictures from the event below.



Senior High School New Enlistees file into the room at the start of the ceremony



BMI JROTC Color Guard



Dr. Ken Hartman, OCS  
Founder & President



Fox 45 Anchor Mary Bubala  
Master of Ceremonies



MG Janeen Birkhead &  
Col (Ret) Dr. Rita Kurek



Col (Ret) Dr. Rita Kurek, Dr. Hartman  
& Maj (Ret) Cathy Hampton



Maj (Ret) Hampton, Mary  
Bubala & Col (Ret) Kurek



Command Sgt Major (Ret) Jones was the hit of the evening with her heartfelt advice



MG Birkhead amongst the many National Guard enlistees after the ceremony

## ***JROTC News: Col Rita Kurek***

CAPT (Ret) John Backer, USN attended the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (BPI) JROTC Award Ceremony on 9 May 2024 and presented the JROTC MOAA Award to Cadet Ayden Paulay. John, a 1947 graduate of BPI and a Naval Academy Grad said his remarks were resoundingly received. He encouraged all cadets to “stay in touch with each other” and those connections will be for life. Ayden has his sights on the Naval academy and would like to be a Navy Pilot.



L to R: TSG Paul Smith, Ayden’s dad, Cadet Ayden Paulay, CAPT (Ret) John Backer, Col Cristiano Marchiori

**paws4vets Event News:**

**Chairperson Col Rita M. Kurek, ANG (Ret)**

***Tickets are now on sale*** for our Annual paws4vets fundraising event, Saturday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 4-8pm. Tickets are \$60 each or \$550 for a table of 10. This event is open to the public-***we all have family and friends-*** we're hoping that all our SSBC Chapter members will be able to sell at least one table!

This major event for the paws4vets foundation will be a fantastic ***Bull, Shrimp & Oyster Roast*** at the ***Columbus Gardens Hall*** in Nottingham MD, off Belair & Klosterman Aves. on ***Sat, October 26th, 2024,*** from 4-8pm. Music will be provided by the duo band "Double Play". Several service dogs and clients will be present.

There will be auctions, raffles and wheels of chance at the event, and we will be selling Grand Raffle tickets prior to and at the event. ***You will be sent these to sell in the mail if you have not received them already at a dinner meeting.***

***This event is open to the public-we encourage you to invite family & friends that are willing to help us support this great cause.*** We are committed to 250 people with the venue, but this hall has a capacity of 375 so SELL THOSE TABLES!!!! ***See the attached flyer for ticket orders which you may also copy and forward to interested family & friends.***

**HOW CAN YOU HELP NOW:** We will need prizes for the auctions: themed baskets; tickets to venues like museums, theatres, botanical gardens, sporting events; certificates for golf T-Times; jewelry; electronics; artwork; power tools, plants, alcohol and gift cards to restaurants, stores etc.

If you would like to provide the items for a "themed basket", I can assemble it for you. If you have contacts at golf clubs, liquor stores or retail stores, etc. that would donate items, the letter for corporate donations is on the website under Chapter

Programs/paws4vets event (2<sup>nd</sup> PDF).

Most of us have “rewards” credit cards and you can use your rewards to get gift cards to Amazon, restaurants and retail stores using your rewards and donate them to the cause! Just an idea! *Start soliciting these things now and let me know what you have obtained so we can start building the auction prize list. A corporate donor letter that can be downloaded to take to potential businesses is available on our website under Chapter Program/paws4vets fundraiser.*

As always you are encouraged to make a monetary donation to the paws4vets foundation (a tax deductible 401c3 organization) through our website, [www.starspan.org](http://www.starspan.org), Advocacies/paws4vets/donations or adding a donation whenever you register for a meeting or event.

**My contact information:** Col (R) Rita M. Kurek, [rmkurek@aol.com](mailto:rmkurek@aol.com), cell # (410) 294-4913. Please feel free to contact me with prize suggestions/donations, volunteering, or ticket information.

**Future Chapter Events for 2024:**

<b>5 June 2024 6pm</b>	<b>Dinner Meeting</b> Speaker: Robert (Bob) Finn, Senior Advisor, MDVA Venue: Pappas Restaurant & Sports Bar, Cockeysville, MD 21030 POC: George Stakias (410)707-6947
<b>11 September 2024 6pm</b>	<b>Dinner Meeting</b> Speaker: TBD Venue-TBD POC: George Stakias (410) 707-6947
<b>26 October 2024 4-8pm</b>	<b>paws4vets Fundraiser-Bull, Shrimp &amp; Oyster Roast</b> Venue: Columbus Gardens Hall, Nottingham MD Music by: Double Play POC: Rita Kurek (410) 294-4913 Tickets: \$60 pp or \$550 for Table of 10
<b>20 November 2024 6pm</b>	<b>Annual Dinner Meeting/ 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration</b> Speaker: TBD Venue: TBD POC: George Stakias (420) 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 commitments 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. *You may access your MOAA's Legislative TAKE ACTION CENTER at [www.moaa.org/takeaction](http://www.moaa.org/takeaction).*



\*\*\* Newsletter Online: [www.starspan.org](http://www.starspan.org) Newsletter Editor and  
Distribution: COL Rita M. Kurek, USAF (Ret) [C: 410 294-4913](tel:4102944913) [H: 410 574-5330](tel:4105745330) [rmkurek@aol.com](mailto:rmkurek@aol.com)

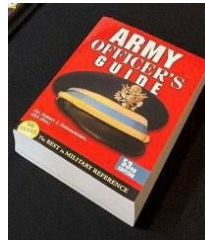
**LAST CHANCE-Overdue Members-please pay your dues promptly if you wish to continue to receive this correspondence!!!!**

Our chapter's \$30 Dues are payable by April 1 or within three months of the new year.

You can pay online (and register as a new member) at [www.starspan.org](http://www.starspan.org) or Mail your \$30 check to: Treasurer Rita M. Kurek, 1231 Engleberth Rd, Essex, MD 21221 [rmkurek@aol.com](mailto:rmkurek@aol.com) (410) 294-4913

**New Members Always Welcome!!!**  
*Welcome new members Colonels Robert Paolucci, USA (Ret)  
and David Paolucci, USARNG !!!!*





Dues pay for the Army Officer Guides we present to newly commissioned 2nd LTs each year at our three supported ROTCs.



Star Spangled Banner Chapter  
Military Officers Association of America



“Never Stop Serving”

*Presents our*

***Annual paws4vets Fundraiser***

**Bull, Shrimp & Oyster Roast**

**Saturday, October 26th, 2024**

**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 \$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

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