



MOAA REPORTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

STEVEN COLE — SBCOLE@SBCGLOBAL.NET



As we push into the new calendar year, I would like to exalt all of you to find ways to increase our membership. We need new members, fresh from active duty, veterans and spouses that have gone into employment in the area that do not know about MOAA, and anyone you come in contact with that served and supported.

Let's talk about how we have the opportunity to "engage" these folks.

As I noted in a recent article, ["What does new member engagement mean to you?"](#),

"Engagement" has become a bit of a buzzword for companies, non-profits and membership organizations alike. But it also seems that the term "engagement" means different things to different folks. For-profit marketers and social media managers often use the term "engagement" when referring to how an individual is engaging online – in terms of website visits, page views, email opens, social media mentions, "likes" or "follows." But while building a robust online community is increasingly important, that is only part of the engagement equation for membership organizations.

For associations, clubs and other membership organizations, members are their reason for being, so getting and keeping members truly engaged in the organization is critical for survival. In his article, [Building a Strong Nonprofit Part 7: Engagement Pyramid and Cycle](#)

Michael J. Brennan offers a simple equation for looking at engagement:

Engagement = Relationship + Action

I would like to remind you, *it's all engagement...every person you come in contact with every day, every voicemail, email or other message...is engagement. Every online search that turns up a former associate or unit reunion or casual conversation at Starbucks, the gym or the Park Cities Club...is engagement. Every forum where the issues that concern you and US military are discussed (even if they are not your branch) is engagement. Please go forth, every day, and be that evangelist for the MOAA Greater Dallas Chapter and MOAA National. You are the best emissary we have.*

Note: President's article continues on page 3.

MOAA-GDC receives 2016 Five-Star Level of Excellence Award



April 24, 2018 Luncheon Meeting Speaker Colonel John Antal, US Army (Retired)

Col. John Antal spent 17 days this past December at the DMZ zone talking to the leaders in that area. He knows the DMZ zone intimately having commanded 850 soldiers and a tank battalion on the DMZ zone and says that the DMZ is always on the verge of war. It is the most militarized area in the world.



Joint Secure Area

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

17 March 2018

Meetings are held from 9 am to 11 am at the Point Building, C.C. Young Retirement Community, 4847 West Lather Drive, Dallas, TX 75214All

Chapter members are welcome to attend any Executive Committee meeting.

PERSONAL AFFAIRS BY BEN COLE



Greetings, Fellow Retirees,

I think we need to revisit a number of benefits that each of us possesses, particularly before and during that time of need which sooner or later comes to all. Of course, I am referring to that time when we pass on and leave a lot of work for our survivors. As you know, on pages 62, 63 and 64 of our chapter's 2017 Membership Directory, there are a lot of data that are useful to us before, during and after that time of need. But, as we are now in preparation of the 2018 Directory, we want to provide additional information and guidance for our members at this time. The new directory will probably come out in late spring.

Meanwhile we strongly encourage you to acquire some publications that MOAA Headquarters will provide to you AT NO CHARGE. Believe me, you will be glad you asked for them. I will tell you later how to get them.

Here is a list of the ones you should have:

PERSONAL AFFAIRS GUIDE, A Personal Inventory for Peace of Mind, Published 2014.

Covers: Personal Data Security, Record Keeping, Financial Information, Insurance, Wills and other information.

HELP YOUR SURVIVORS-NOW, A Guide to Planning Ahead, Published 2015.

Covers: Potential Financial Benefits, Continuing Entitlements and Personal Affairs.

SURVIVOR'S PLANNING GUIDE, A Handbook for One of Life's Toughest Assignments, Published 2015.

Covers: All those arrangements and duties that must be met.

TURNING THE CORNER, Surviving the Loss of a Loved One, Published 2016.

Covers: What is Grief?, Types of Loss, The Stages of Grieving, A Helping Hand and Signs of Healing.

YOUR GUIDE TO MILITARY BURIALS, Finding Peace of Mind as you choose your final resting place, Published 2015.

COVERS: General Information, Eligibility for Interment, Arlington National Cemetery, State Cemeteries, Overseas Cemeteries, Burial at Sea, Death Abroad, Anatomical Gifts and National, Post, and State Veterans' Cemeteries.

SURVIVOR'S CHECKLIST, First and Later Steps for Moving On.

COVERS: Who to Contact Immediately, Who to Contact Later.

You must contact MOAA, provide your MOAA Number and request these publications by:

Email to beninfo@moaa.org

Visit MOAA Web Base at www.moaa.org/benefitsinfo

Call the MOAA Member Service Center at (800) 234-MOAA (6622)

Mail to: MOAA Transition Center

Benefits and Financial Education

201 N. Washington St.



PRESIDENT'S ARTICLE CONTINUED BY STEVEN COLE

Veterans Center of North Texas needs volunteers to man the phones and desks. This is a great way to help other of the brother and sisterhood, while learning about benefits and support available to yourself.

Remember: The month of March is the US Military's Month of the Military Caregiver. All Americans should recognize and honor military caregivers' sacrifices and successes.

March 3 is the US Navy Reserve Birthday March 5 is the US Navy Seabee Birthday

(A reminder, March 12, Daylight Savings Time begins)

March 13 is the Military Working Dog K9 Veterans Day

(March 17 is St. Patrick's Day, I believe the blessing and toast goes something like the: "May the luck of the Irish enfold you. May the blessings of Saint Patrick behold you. May you have warm words on a cold evening, a full moon on a dark night, and the road downhill all the way to your door." ... "May your blessings outnumber the Shamrocks that grow, and may trouble avoid you wherever you go." Please be safe.)

March 29, we celebrate Vietnam Veterans Day.



Almost 500 Commissary Brand Products Now on Shelves

This article by Amy Bushatz originally appeared on Military.com, the premier resource for the military and veteran community.

Introduction of the commissary's new brands continues to chug along, with 467 different items currently on shelves stateside, officials said.

Eventually the agency plans to have upwards of 4,000 different in-house brand options on shelves. The products are sold under the Home Base, Freedom's Choice and Top Care. (Do those names make you feel patriotic?)

In the next several months officials plan to introduce a slew of new products, including more cheese options, dressings, honey, a variety of condiments, pie fillings, baking goods, tea and creamers.

Items hit stateside stores first, with OCONUS stores getting the items about six weeks later, Defense Commissary Agency. Because I live to help you out, I've tested many of the commissary's different products, from trash bags to cheese. And I'll tell you what: they are pretty much the same as any other products, but typically cheaper. I support things being cheaper, so that makes me happy.

And that's actually the whole point of all of this. The generic products (or what they really want me to call "store brand") are being produced and stocked under a system that allows the commissary to break from what had been the rule of only selling items at cost plus that nice 5 percent surcharge, and price them above what they are paying for them.

The goal is for the commissary system to make some cash to cover its own costs, instead of requiring an over \$1 billion subsidy



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER BY BEN COLE



Here is a prayer that perhaps we leave unsaid all too often:

Lord, thank you for my loyal friends who love me and support me in spite of myself. They stay close to me in times of need. Thank you for the common interests we share. Keep us from being exclusive and make us open to new friendships and acquaintances with whom we can share our thoughts and concerns.

PROGRAMS BY BEVERLY THOMPSON

April 24, 2018 Luncheon Meeting Speaker Colonel John Antal, US Army (Retired)



The topic of Col John Antal's speech will be "Leadership and Liberty, Ideas that will Raise your Leadership". Col. ANTAL is the author of 13 books. He takes qualifying ROTC graduating seniors from college each year to Vicksburg and Normandy where the cadets learn Leadership from the reenactments of the battles fought there.

He was awarded the Congressional Veteran Commendation award by Senator Sam Johnson this past October.

Plan on attending our April luncheon to hear this Very Dynamic speaker and to honor our ROTC Cadets with your presence at our luncheon.



**Col. Antal at Incheon
where MacArthur
invaded North Korea**

Something that concerns us all is the North and South Korean conflict especially since the false alarm that missiles were headed towards Hawaii recently.

Col. John Antal spent 17 days this past December at the DMZ zone talking to the leaders in that area. He knows the DMZ zone intimately having commanded 850 soldiers and a tank battalion on the DMZ zone and says that the DMZ is always on the verge of war. It is the most militarized area in the world. The Olympics gave the North Koreans more time to build their defenses and were using their Olympic athletes to try and subvert the hockey team and ski teams.

We will learn what is likely to come out of "The 6 month Time Frame" following the Olympics. Col. Antal has served his country for 30 years retiring in 2003. His last assignment was as Operations officer for the 62,000 soldier III Armed Corps at Fort Hood Texas.

He has held key positions in the U.S. Army and was special assistant to the Joint Chief's of Staff. He's a West Point graduate, Army Command and General Staff College. He schools ROTC groups and takes these groups to Normandy and to Vicksburg, Miss. for reenactment of battle scenes. He holds a Master of Military Arts and Sciences.

In retirement he is VP for Knowledge Operations for Gearbox Software in Plano, TX. and Founding editor of Armchair General - a military magazine.

Col Antal is a Patriot, Soldier and a Lifelong Learner and we are very lucky to have him speak at our April luncheon." More information on Col. Antal is available at his website: www.american-leadership.com



Joint Security Area

**The Park City Club 5956 Sherry Lane, 17th Floor Dallas, Texas 75225
Social 11:00 AM — Buffet Opens 11:15 AM Meeting 12:00 Noon**

Please send your reservations early to ensure we can make an accurate and timely reservation count.

Reserve online at www.moaagreaterdallas.org/onlinersvp.html

MOAA-GDC accepts PayPal for paying for your dinner at our website which allows you to pay by debit or credit card.

No account is needed to use PayPal.

You may also mail the reservation coupon and a check to MOAA-GDC Programs, PO Box 515495, Dallas, TX 75251. Question, email Steven Cole, sbcole@sbcglobal.net (972) 333-4895

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY MARCH 2018 BY JIM BROWN**VA secretary says he's in charge and moving past his travel expense controversy**

(From USA TODAY and other news sources)

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin said recently that he has had a “difficult time” dealing with a VA inspector general's investigation that concluded he improperly accepted airfare for his wife and Wimbledon tickets from a British businesswoman during a European trip last year.

The inspector general's report released Feb. 14 concluded Shulkin spent nearly half of the 10-day trip to Denmark and London sightseeing, and he wrongly used a VA aide on official time to plan the leisure activities. His then-chief of staff doctored an email to ethics officials to secure approval improperly for his wife to join him on the trip at taxpayer expense. He has since reimbursed the government for the cost of the unauthorized activities and the chief-of-staff has resigned.

White House officials have held a series of high-level meetings with VA officials and veterans groups in an effort to stabilize the department. Chief of Staff John Kelly said that Shulkin's job is safe and that he would be given the authority he needs to run the department. Kelly met with a several veterans groups to respond to concerns about Shulkin's handling of the controversies and the ensuing internal strife at the VA. Veterans' organizations have generally supported his leadership.

American Legion National Commander Denise Rohan said “While we were disappointed to learn of the recent issue with the secretary's travel, we believe that the current controversy surrounding the secretary is part of a larger effort to remove him and install others who would take steps to privatize the services provided to our nation's heroes by the Department of Veterans Affairs. We have been encouraged by the great progress Secretary Shulkin has made and believe that he remains the best person to lead this important federal public institution on the behalf of the American people.”

The leaders of AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America and VFW have echoed their support for Shulkin. The support isn't universal among the veterans' organizations, however. Several have remains silent through the turmoil of the last few days. Paul Rieckhoff, CEO of IAVA, said that “Our veterans deserve a VA that works, and it's clearly not working well enough right now.” Shulkin insists that this problem is now in the past. “I think things are clear,” he told reporters. “I'm the secretary. I set the agenda....I think as I look back upon it, there are lots of lessons that I could learn from this. And putting the agency in a position where we've had this distraction is something that I take accountability for. And I want to learn from that and move forward, so we can get back on the agenda that we all have to do, and that is to fix VA health care and fix VA services.”

During his tenure, Shulkin has overseen the creation of a 24-hour White House hotline for veteran complaints and an Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection at the VA, both Trump campaign pledges. He instituted same-day appointments for veterans with urgent medical and mental health care needs at VA medical facilities across the country. He made strides on transparency, posting wait times at each facility and quality measures, such as mortality and infection rates, compared with private sector facilities. He oversaw the creation of a health care tracking office designed to detect problems at VA hospitals before they become crises.

Shulkin said his top priorities are modernizing VA records and buildings, decreasing veteran suicides, cutting the backlog of benefit applications and appeals and getting legislation through Congress that would provide veterans more opportunities to get VA-funded care in the private sector when the VA can't meet their needs. Top of Form

Reforming VA's health care system (and giving veterans easier access to private-sector care) was a core promise of Trump's presidential campaign, and was one of the primary jobs given to Shulkin when he was nominated to take over as the new VA secretary.

Troops and military retirees can go for free tax help

Military Times reports that active-duty members, retirees and their dependents are eligible for free, in-person tax preparation services at 139 military Volunteer Income Tax Assistance locations around the world. VITA tax preparers save their clients an average of \$250 compared to what they'd pay for a private-sector tax-prep service, said Army Lt. Col. David Dulaney, the executive director of the Armed Forces Tax Council. They are also well-trained by the Internal Revenue Service and the military to address the often-complicated tax situations military members face.

VITA tax preparers must go through a rigorous certification process to earn tax-preparation certification from the IRS. They also have the support of the military legal assistance office and can access the legal assistance chain of command with tax-law questions, reaching back to the Armed Forces Tax Council. There's also a quality-assurance check that usually gets three sets of eyes on each return — preparer peer review, noncommissioned officer in charge of the center, attorney in charge of the center — before it's filed with the IRS.

Note: Legislative article continues on page 6.

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY MARCH 2018 CONTINUED BY JIM BROWN

If you or someone else prepared your taxes without the assistance of the VITA center, you can take your return to the tax center for review. It's not uncommon for them to find mistakes. If the taxes haven't yet been filed, the tax center can reproduce the return with their system, and make corrections, for free. If the return has been filed, VITA staffers can help file an amended tax return, Dulaney said: Amended returns can be filed for up to three previous tax years, so you can dig back to 2014.

In addition, service members and their families have access to a variety of free tax preparation assistance at Military OneSource (militaryonesource.mil), including free online tax preparation software, and tax consultants who can answer questions. Military OneSource also lists the military VITA locations, and their contact information.

Rick Perry seeks to help modernize veterans' healthcare

John Siciliano recently reported in the Washington Examiner that Energy Secretary Rick has a passion for veterans that he wants to use to change the face of U.S. healthcare. Perry wants to use the agency's world-class data-crunching capabilities to solve problems among American veterans, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide, and eventually leverage that information to benefit everyone. The focus is on veterans, but the implications of the effort are global.

About 40 percent of Energy Department employees are veterans. "If that's not the highest percentage in federal government, it's certainly one of highest," Perry said. "Once you understand what this agency is about, once you understand who it's populated by, then this whole issue of why DOE is involved in veterans' health becomes a lot easier to understand." The programs the Energy Department is working on started during the Obama administration, including the Million Veteran Program, or MVP, which looks to use the data from volunteers to map health problems among veterans. That effort will be expanded upon by another program called ACTIV, Advanced Computational and Translational Initiative for Veterans, which is part of the agency's "exascale" computing initiative. Exascale refers to a type of supercomputer that is 50 times faster than current computers, and the Trump administration asked Congress to increase funding for it in its fiscal 2019 budget request.

The MVP Champion and ACTIV programs will use the data to produce a blueprint of the health challenges facing veterans, and then apply that to the rest of the population. The effort is likened to mapping the human genome, when scientists were able to use advanced computing aided by the national labs to develop the first map of human DNA. Part of Perry's push has to do with his plans to reorganize the agency and make it work in cooperation with other parts of government, including the departments of Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services, and Defense, all agencies that are supporting the data effort.



MOAA's advocacy team is gearing up to protect your health care and retirement benefits, military pay, force levels, wounded warriors, and caregivers.

After an unpredictable 2017, the coming year likely will hold even more surprises on Capitol Hill. Midterm elections are coming in November, and the turnover in Congress could be significant. With partisanship on the rise, the political transition likely will pose interesting challenges.

Our uniformed servicemembers and their families have now endured 16 years of war. Overshadowing the challenges is the constant competition for fewer dollars, as budget caps dominate discussions at every level.

These growing budget pressures prompt efforts to erode service-earned benefits through reduced pay raises, significant changes to housing allowances, and increased health care fees. While MOAA has successfully deflected some of those challenges, we must remain vigilant. Of paramount concern is the proven impact these reductions have on retention and readiness. We're resolved to ensure any reduction to career incentives - essential to the all-volunteer force - is approached with great care.

<http://www.moaa.org/2018Goals>



April 24, 2018 Luncheon

Reservation for the February 27, 2018 Tuesday Luncheon Meeting

The Park City Club 5956 Sherry Lane, 17th Floor Dallas, Texas 75225 Phone: (214) 373-0756
Social 11:00 AM — Buffet Opens 11:15 AM Meeting 12:00 Noon

_____ Person's at \$25.00 each Check enclosed \$ _____
 payable to "MOAA - Greater Dallas Chapter"

Mail Reservation to:
 MOAA-GDC Programs, PO Box 515495, Dallas, TX 75251

Please print name's below exactly as you wish you name badge's to read:

 (Spouse/Guest)

Need a ride? _____ If yes, your ZIP code _____ Give a ride? _____ If yes, your ZIP code _____

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Annual dues are \$20.00 for members and \$10.00 for auxiliary members.

TECH CORNER— 8 TIPS FOR DETECTING FAKE ONLINE REVIEWS

Online reviews are a good example of the positive and the negative of the internet. They can be a great way to help decide which products and services to buy. They can help others make these decisions. And they can be fount of lies.

Because the internet makes it easy to fake who you are, many user reviews are faked. Still, 78 percent of people believe online reviews are reliable, according to a recent survey by ReportLinker.



Some individuals and companies hire themselves out to write fake reviews, positive and negative. Though large sites such as Amazon, Yelp, and Angie's List do a good job of weeding out the most blatant of these planted reviews and of making more prominent the reviews that can be trusted, fake reviews do make it through, particularly at smaller sites. Here are steps you can take to diminish the chances of being taken in by them:

- Discount reviews that are gushingly positive. Be wary also of stellar reviews that include only a minor negative. These could be legit, or they could be planted by a clever paid reviewer. Likewise, discount reviews that are scathingly negative.
- Lean toward products or services that have received a lot of reviews, and be more careful if you find only one or two reviews.
- Ignore reviews that describe the reviewer in too much detail. This could be a tip-off that a public relations firm is trying to target the demographic group represented by the reviewer's self-description.
- Discount reviews that are merely a list of features. The best reviews, whether written by an ordinary user or a professional, indicate the benefits you can derive from using the product or service. Consider those core features you'll actually use rather than fancy features you probably won't.
- Pay more attention to reviews that compare the product or service to similar ones. The best reviews put a product or service into context rather than just talking about it as if in a vacuum. Comparative reviews also indicate the reviewer likely has more experience with the area and can be more relied on.
- Don't be swayed by reviews that include a lot of impressive-sounding jargon. This might indicate the reviewer is just trying to impress others, though depending on the product or service, some jargon might be necessary for a full evaluation.
- Look for commonalities. If a number of reviewers offer the same opinion about a quality of a particular product or service, this gives the opinion more validity.
- Ignore reviews that sound too much like other reviews of the same product or service. This could be the same person who wrote them.

SAGE SURVIVOR BY NANCY RUTHFORD SODEMAN

Homeless veterans, both male and female, remain a big problem in today's society. This disgrace affects all of us. Yet people want to step forward to help, but they don't know how. The project can be big or small. To begin, funds are most important. We may ask Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, the Veterans Administration to suggest needs of these veterans besides simply donating funds. Be careful about making donations because scammers have swarmed to charities. Some charities that best help the homeless are Veterans First, Veterans in Need and Housing Our Homeless. I am sure there are many more good nonprofits. To avoid scammers who prey upon those who want to help, here are a few hints from ARRP's Fraud Watch Network: Get the registration number of the nonprofit, the web address, and ask how much of a donation really goes to those in need. Online, search first the name of the charity and the word "complaint" to find out about any dishonesty. Look up the charity on Charity Navigator at charitynavigator.org.

Individuals can aid the homeless. For example, I read in a recent Woman's Day Magazine about an 11year old boy who in icy Michigan wanted to help the homeless by providing blankets. His goal was 200 blankets last year. Over the year he collected 906 blankets. And more individuals, as well as organization, are reaching out to help.

Some aids to the homeless are rooms in which to sleep, to seek counseling, kitchens in which to cook food, vocational training, clothing, and assistance in seeking veterans' benefits. All of this is achieved with the help of many stalwart volunteers.

To give another example of a success story for helping the homeless is a large facility in a town near Buffalo, New York. A charity bought a dilapidated Catholic high school building. It is being refurbished. Half the building houses a common kitchen and dining room, a fitness center, and counseling for women veterans. The other half is run by a group of nuns who take care of children of the women veterans lodged there while their mothers seek work, etc. We can help if we want. We certainly need to. Too many homeless are still roaming the streets.