



ECAC

ECAC Newsletter

ecacmoaa.com

MARCH 2026



Presentation: Gogue Center Ambassadors

Ashley Pope (photo at left) holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from Samford University and an MFA in Arts Leadership from Virginia Tech. In June 2024, she began her role as Campus and Community Programs Coordinator at the Gogue Performing Arts Center. In this position, she develops and oversees a variety of programs and engagements designed to connect students at Auburn University as well as the broader Auburn community with the performing arts. She also serves as the staff advisor for the Gogue Center Ambassadors, mentoring student leaders and helping foster meaningful engagement with the arts across campus. Ashley was honored to be nominated by the University Programming Council for the 2025 Student Organization Supporter of the Year Award, demonstrating her commitment to Auburn University and campus engagement.



Beyond her work at the Gogue Center, Ashley is actively involved in the local community. She serves as an Auburn Chamber Diplomat, supporting initiatives that promote local business and civic engagement. She recently received the **Auburn Chamber's 2025 Auburn Young Professionals (AYP) Serve Award** and was invited to serve on the AYP Committee. She is also involved in the young adult and worship ministries at First Baptist Church of Opelika where she enjoys serving alongside others in her faith community.

Nathan Watkins (photo at right) is a junior at Auburn University majoring in Biomedical Sciences on the pre-med track with plans to pursue a career in medicine. He is a founding member of the Gogue Center Ambassadors, serves as Vice President of Recruitment for Rural Health Connect, and is an active member of COSAM Leaders. Through these roles, he is committed to leadership, community engagement, and promoting access to healthcare.



Order from the menu below,
and each person/couple pays their own bill.

Salad:

Clubhouse Caesar \$8

House \$8/\$12

Add Chicken \$8, Add Shrimp \$11,

Add Steak \$12, Add Salmon \$13

Dinner:

All Served with Mashed Potatoes and Grilled Asparagus

8 ox Filet Mignon \$39

Grilled Chicken Breast \$25

Cabana Burger \$15

Fresh Catch Special \$38

Next Dinner Meeting
March 19, 2026
1800 —Thursday— 6 PM
1650 Yarbrough Farms Blvd.
Auburn, AL 36830

Take Shug Jordan Pkwy to North Donahue Dr. and go north. After 1/2 mile turn left onto Yarbrough Farms Blvd., and the AU Club is on the right.

Please RSVP at 334-826-1107
or by email to
bohler1107@charter.net by
Tuesday, March 17th by 9PM.

Board Meeting for March was cancelled.

As of February 28, 2026, the chapter has:	2026 Dues
65 Regular Members	\$50 Per regular member.
11 Surviving Spouse Members	\$25 Per Widow/ ROTC student
2 Associate Members	\$5 Per Past Widow/Associate
78 Total Chapter Members	

April Board of Directors meeting will be Monday, April 6th, at 1145 at Chappy's. Any member wishing to attend should contact a Board member for an invitation.



Treasurer Report by Gordon Bugg

\$3,007.87 2-28-26 Bank Balance

Outstanding checks for \$770 and \$150 for catering and venue rental for ROTC Banquet.

On 12 March 2026 an audit of the financial records for ECAC-MOAA took place in accordance with the Chapter By-laws. The review was conducted by V.P. Chris Richie, Treasurer Gordon Bugg, and witness Michele Richie.

The records audited included the full year of 2025 and YTD 2026 (Feb 2026)

- Checkbook
- Verifying expenses and deposits were proper, authorized and recorded
- Receipts for all expenses and deposits are present and identified in the appropriate section of the financial binder for that year.
- All expenses, payments and deposits are authorized, complete and properly identified.

Document in board member binders.

Memorial Day Breakfast



The 2026 Auburn Mayor's Memorial Day Breakfast will be held on Monday, May 25, 2026, at 8 a.m. at [The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center](#). The event honors local veterans, and nominations for the Distinguished Veteran and Heroes Remembered awards are due by Jan. 12, 2026, at 5 p.m.. Tickets are typically sold at Auburn City Hall. The annual breakfast is part of the city's Memorial Day commemorations, which usually include a wreath-laying ceremony, often following the breakfast.

Building the Future Through the Past, Brick by Brick...

Reserve your place in Auburn's history today by being part of the City's Veterans Memorial Park Brick Program. For a \$100 tax-free, tax-deductible contribution per brick, you can help continue honoring the men and women who have served preserving America's freedom.

The park, located at the corner of Ross Street and Glenn Avenue, is the site of the City's Annual Memorial Day celebration. The featured element of the memorial is a 15-foot high obelisk, positioned centrally in the park.

Each brick you order will be engraved to your specifications. The brick will include the name, rank, branch of service, and the dates of the years served by the Veteran. Bricks may be personalized up to four lines per brick, with up to 14 characters per line. In addition, two lines are permitted for Veterans with longer names.



To order your bricks, please fill out the form below and return it along with a \$100 check made payable to the Veterans Memorial Fund. You may send checks to Auburn City Hall, 144 Tichenor Avenue, Suite 2, Auburn, AL 36830. Please retain a copy for your records. If you do not wish to purchase a brick, contributions to the Veterans Memorial Fund are also welcomed. For more information, please contact the Economic Development Department at (334) 501-7270.

Once your brick has been placed at the monument, you may view it by using our new interactive site at www.auburnalabama.org/veterans and click on the brick archive tab located on the left side of the page.

***Return signed form with check by June 30 to ensure brick placement by Veterans Day. ***



8"x 8" brick paver

Name of person ordering brick: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____



Information to appear on brick:
Please leave one space between first and last names.

						N	A	M	E						
						N	A	M	E						
	R	A	N	K					B	R	A	N	C	H	
Y	R	S							S	E	R	V	I	C	E

Sign here to complete order and verify accuracy _____

Notification of the brick placement will be mailed to the name and address included with the order form.

Minutes for Feb. 19th chapter meeting

Location: Auburn University Club

- **6:30 PM** – President **Mike Horsfield** called the meeting to order and led the **Pledge of Allegiance**.
- **6:35 PM** – Vice President **Chris Ritchie** introduced guest speaker **Phillip Chandler**, Office of Continuing & Professional Education, Auburn University. Title: “An Air Force Journey (1980–2022)”
 - ✦ Work with **Air Force / NASA rockets and missiles**
 - ✦ Service at the **Pentagon**
 - ✦ Experience at **Air University**
 - ✦ Transition to his current role at **Auburn University**
- Presentation concluded at **7:05 PM**
- **7:05–7:50 PM** – Dinner served.
- **President:** Opened officer business discussion.
- **Vice President:** No new business.
- **Secretary:**
 - ✦ City of Auburn **Memorial Bricks**
 - ✦ City of Auburn **Memorial Day Breakfast**
 - ✦ **Wall of Heroes** at Auburn University
- **Legislative Affairs:** Update provided on the **Richard Star Act**, which would allow concurrent retirement pay for veterans medically separated with below 50% disability ratings.
- **Treasurer:**
 - ✦ Annual dues are due and could be paid at the meeting.
 - ✦ Announced wreaths would be donated.
- **Chapter Affairs:** No new news.
- **Membership:** New member **Eric Stroberg (wife-Sally)** aren't here today **Please invite Wendell McLain** to joined .
- **Banquet Director :**
 - ✦ Next meeting to be held at Auburn University in March.
 - ✦ Received intent to participate from regular JROTC and ROTC programs. Banquet cost: **\$30 per plate**.
 - ◇ Efforts underway to obtain **MOAA medals**.
 - ◇ Request made by **Judy Bohler**, supported by the President, for volunteers to present medals at local high schools.
 - ◇ Motion made and approved for a **Sophomore recipient** for the **Central High School JROTC program**.
- **8:05 PM** – Meeting adjourn



Secretary
Mary Riley

New Member



Eric Stroberg joined in February and hopes to attend a future meeting with his wife Sally. Eric is a retired Colonel in the Air Force.



Above: Guest speaker, Phillip Chansler, gave a presentation on his journey in the Air Force with NASA rockets and missiles on Feb. 19, 2026 at the general meeting at the AU Club.

Surviving Spouse Corner: The Value of Connection

By: Pat Green March 3, 2026

How do you stay in touch with others? Maybe you prefer social media, like Facebook or LinkedIn. Perhaps email is your preference. Many connect through text messages. For some, like me, a phone call is top choice.

The need for a personal connection still exists. Nothing can brighten your day like a call from an old friend. Sharing a memory or exchanging a laugh with someone lifts the spirits. Personal communication builds strong families and good friends and creates successful institutions and cohesive organizations.

Within MOAA chapters, personal interaction among members provides opportunities to build friendships, exchange ideas, and share experiences.

I recently returned from my annual MOAA council leadership training/convention. You feel the connection of shared experiences and our shared purpose at such events, but you feel more: It's the hugs exchanged, the appreciation of each member and their contributions, and the connection to the MOAA leaders and staff who attend. It was an experience that energizes and renews your commitment.

Your council and chapter create a cohesive network for the work of MOAA. They also provide a setting for friendships to flourish.

This shared affinity should be practiced in your chapter. The chaplain and the surviving spouse liaison serve as personal outreach to each member. Their role is very important.

A chapter member who lives alone and has no local family needs a chapter friend or neighbor to exchange a greeting with each day. It could be as simple as texting "Good morning" and the recipient sending a thumbs-up response. The greeter and recipient should share contact information for their next of kin in the event that the greeting is not returned.

I know of one chapter that has created such a program, called Buddy Check. This might be a good idea to discuss at your next meeting.

A chapter should also have a list of emergency contacts for its members in case a member becomes ill at a meeting. I personally have experienced two situations where that information would have been helpful.

Make caring for and connecting with each other part of your mission to never stop serving.

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ECAC-MOAA's 2026 Meeting Dates

<i>Apr 16th</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>6PM</i>	<i>Non-Profit Building</i>
May 21th	Thursday	6PM	Auburn Univ Club
June	No Meeting		
July	No Meeting		
<i>Aug 15th</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>4PM</i>	<i>Grove Hill Club</i>

Medicare Advantage

The Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period (MA OEP) from January 1–March 31, 2026, for MA members to make one switch to another MA plan or Original Medicare, with coverage starting the following month.



"In March - winter is holding back and spring is pulling forward. Something holds and something pulls inside of us too." *Jean Hersey*



FYI: Distaff Club

If you are somewhat new to ECAC-MOAA, you may not be aware that there is a local organization called Distaff Club for military spouses. They restaurant hop on the second Wednesday of the month in the Auburn/Opelika area. Traditionally, the February meeting includes a bring a spouse/friend/Valentine to lunch and the December meeting has an ornament exchange. They enjoy getting together to socialize and getting to know one another. Dues are only \$5.00 a year and collected at the restaurant in the summer. If interested, please contact Judy Bohler, President, (334) 826-1107 or Cathy Golden, Treasurer, (334) 246-7142. Come join us!

The Auburn Planesmen R/C Flying Club, <https://auburnplanesmen.org/> is located on a private full-scale (700 feet long by 100 feet wide) grass runway, flying radio-controlled electric, glow, gas, and turbine-powered aircraft. There is a solar-powered battery charging station for 12V and 120V battery chargers. You can expect 5-7 of the flying club members out every weekend, most likely on Sunday afternoons. Check out the website for more information.



Council and Chapter Leaders:

From National MOAA

Good morning — I'm writing to update you on a VA interim final rule released earlier this week and then promptly rescinded by VA leadership. I ask that you share this with your members through your communications channels. MOAA's official statement in this matter follows.

A new VA rule designed to “clarify existing policy” regarding veteran disability ratings met sharp criticism from veterans and advocates in the hours after its release, leading VA Secretary Doug Collins to announce the department will be “halting enforcement” of the rule immediately.

“MOAA joins others in thanking and applauding Secretary Collins’ decision to halt the implementation of the interim final rule,” MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Brian T. Kelly, USAF (Ret), said after the VA announcement. “We appreciate the secretary’s continued focus on veterans’ concerns and on ensuring veterans receive all benefits they have earned as quickly and conveniently as possible. Veterans should never have to consider whether seeking treatment or taking medications could lead to a reduction in their benefits.”

Veterans’ advocates stated the rule could allow the VA to lower disability ratings (and compensation) for veterans whose conditions are controlled or improved by medication. Such a rule could lead to unintended consequences and may not account for a medication’s side effects or other ways a veteran’s daily life may be impeded by their ailments.

Many also took issue with the VA’s rulemaking process, which did not include the customary notice-and-comment process or meaningful engagement with veterans service organizations and other stakeholders. Although comments were not solicited before the rule was considered final, there reportedly were nearly 9,000 comments on the Federal Register website within 48 hours of the rule’s posting.

“Transparency, clarity, and trust are bedrocks for veterans and are non-negotiable elements in supporting the continuance of the all-volunteer force,” Kelly said.

In a social media post announcing the reversal, Collins said the intent of the rule was “to clarify existing policy and protect Veterans’ benefits in the wake of an ongoing court action.” But many interpreted the rule as something that could result in adverse consequences.

The VA “does not agree with the way this rule has been characterized,” Collins continued, but noted that “the department always takes Veterans’ concerns seriously.”

MOAA looks forward to continuing work alongside the VA to ensure the delivery and maintenance of service-earned benefits, Kelly said.

MOAA will continue to monitor this issue and, as we learn and understand more, will communicate any associated MOAA actions in this matter through our member communications channels.

Thanks again for your leadership and support, V/R

CAPT Frank J. Michael, USN (Ret)
Senior Director, Affiliated Councils & Chapters
Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
201 N Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2539
800.234.6622
moaa.org

Photo from 2025 when CAPT Frank Michael visited the chapter and gave a presentation on the MOAA chapters around the USA and the legislative issues MOAA was addressing.



9th Annual Veterans Golf Classic



The Veterans Classic Golf Tournament gives our student veterans the opportunity to make meaningful connections with the community as they pursue their education at Auburn University. After returning from service, veterans face many challenges. Through the support of the Veterans Resource Center at Auburn University, we want to make the transition as easy as possible. Through your participation, you are directly contributing to the well-being of AU student veterans and their families.

The Veterans Classic Golf Tournament is an 18-hole scramble with a 3-person team, the fourth team member will be a Auburn University student veteran. A team captain will be named to serve as the student veteran host. All net proceeds from the tournament will benefit the Veterans Resource Center Gift Fund and sponsorships are tax deductible as to the extent allowed by law. *Sponsorships do not include a team. Must pay separately to play.*

EVENT SCHEDULE MONDAY, MARCH 30TH, 2026

10:00 a.m. - Arrival
11:00 a.m. - Registration
12:00 p.m. - Lunch and Program
12:45 p.m. - Putting Contest
1:00 p.m. - Shotgun Start
5:30 p.m. - Awards

Auburn University Club
1650 Yarbrough Farms Blvd.
Auburn, AL 36830

Team entries, sponsorships, and event support may be secured at:

<https://aub.ie/vetclassic>



If you have any questions please contact:

Kim Evans | evanski@auburn.edu | (334) 750-3732
Curtis Pippin | czp0036@auburn.edu | (205) 617-9422

Learn more about the Veterans Resource Center at veterans.auburn.edu.





*Tournament is nonrefundable. In case of cancellation or weather, net proceeds will go to the AU Veterans Resource Center Gift Fund. Prizes, gifts, and green fees will be given at the lunch program at 12:00 PM. Sponsorships are tax deductible as to the extent allowed by law. Please name a Team Captain to serve as the student veteran host.

Registration | Auburn University Club
Monday, March 30th, 2026

TIME

10AM Arrival
11AM – 12PM: Registration
12PM: Lunch and Program
12:45PM: Putting Contest
1PM shotgun start | awards after play

FORMAT

Scramble consisting of three person teams (paired with a student veteran to make 4-person team)

PRICE

\$200 per person
\$600 per team
\$100 Tee sponsor
\$650 Team + Tee Bundle

CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

"Auburn University Foundation"
MEMO LINE: Veterans Golf Classic
or *pay online* at aub.ie/vetclassic
Mail checks to:
Auburn University - Student Affairs
ATTN: Peyton Alsobrook
255 Heisman Dr.
Student Center 3248
Auburn University, AL 36849

FOR QUESTIONS OR TO SPONSOR:

Contact:
Kim Evans
334.750.3732, evanski@auburn.edu
Curtis Pippin
205.617.9422, czp0036@auburn.edu

SEND MAIL IN ENTRIES (if preferred) TO:

Curtis Pippin
Auburn Veterans Resource Center
020 Foy Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849

TEAM ENTRY: \$600

Team Captain Name: _____ Cell: _____

Handicap: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Cell: _____

Handicap: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Cell: _____

Handicap: _____ Email: _____

SINGLE ENTRY (Will be placed on a team) : \$200

Name: _____ Cell: _____

Handicap: _____ Email: _____

TEE SPONSOR: \$100 (\$50 if ALSO purchasing team entry)

Naming/message on sign:

(Example: In honor of or In memory of...)

Who Can Join MOAA Chapter?

Membership in the East-Central Alabama Chapter is open to any National MOAA member who is on active duty, reserve, retired, or a former commissioned officer or warrant officer in any component of the Seven Uniformed Services of the United States (U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Space Force, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Public Health Service, or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). The Surviving Spouse of these individuals are also eligible to join and participate as regular members. Additionally, we offer Associate memberships to 4th year ROTC cadets at Auburn University and Tuskegee University as well as to the living spouse of a regular Chapter member.

ECAC Mission Statement

The East-Central Alabama Chapter is an affiliate of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and was chartered in 1970. It serves the cities of Auburn and Opelika, Alabama, as well as the surrounding areas of Lee, Chambers, Russell, Tallapoosa, and Macon counties in Alabama. The mission of the East-Central Alabama Chapter is to benefit the members of the uniformed services, their families and survivors, and to advocate for a strong national defense, while providing needed support to the community and its members.

Join ECAC Online!

<https://ecacmoaa.com/join-ecac>

Executive Officers, Board of Directors, Chair Positions for Oct 2025-Oct 2027.

President: Mike Horsefield
 Vice President: Chris Richie
 Secretary: Mary Riley
 Treasurer: Gordon Bugg
 Director Chapter Affairs: Ron Carson
 Director Communication: open
 Director Banquet: Judy Bohler
 Director Legislative: Ron Barto

Chair Positions

Surviving Spouses Liaison:	Kathy Barto	Monthly Meeting:	Judy Bohler
Tops:	Mike Horsefield	Guest Speakers:	Chris Richie
Membership:	Judy Bohler	By-Laws:	Mary Riley
Personal Affairs:	Ron Carson	State Council:	Ron Barto
Newsletter Editor:	Judy Bohler	Legislative Updates:	Ron Barto
Web Site:	Kathy Holtz	MOAA News:	Ron Barto
Digital Communications:	Kathy Holtz	Chaplain:	open
News Release:	Ron Carson		
ROTC Awards:	open		



**Find
ECAC-MOAA
on Facebook
and Linked In**



If you are interested in joining our *Facebook* group, you can use the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/300482473982236/>

If you are interested in joining our *LinkedIn* group, you can use the following link:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12227504/>



Some of the articles on these pages are gathered online from various MOAA websites and newsletters. They are attributable to their reporters and personnel. Contact the club secretary with any questions.

**ECAC-MOAA
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