



OPINION

Tuesday, Aug. 02, 2011

MOAA's Retired officers group active for community

Eighty retired military officers in the Grand Strand Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America are very much on active duty in community public service, helping veterans organizations, raising money for scholarships for high school seniors in Junior ROTC and working to make a success of Military Appreciation Days.

Roger P. Pilcher of Myrtle Beach, a retired Marine Corps officer, is president of the Grand Strand Chapter, which has had a resurgence since celebrating the chapter's 50th anniversary last autumn. Now, Pilcher and his chapter members are preparing for a state conference of MOAA Oct. 9-11 at the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort, expected to draw 300 from the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida. "It's a huge project," Pilcher says. It's the first MOAA conference in Myrtle Beach and only the second such gathering in the state. Speakers include MOAA's national president, retired Navy Vice Adm. Norbert R. Ryan Jr.

Scents for Soldiers and Honor Flight are among the veterans-related organizations supported by MOAA. Scents for Soldiers brings wounded veterans to the area for a vacation, most recently in May. MOAA members help greet World War II veterans who are taken to Washington to see the WWII Memorial. MOAA members were lined up with other greeters at Myrtle Beach International Airport, Pilcher recalls, ready to welcome the returning Honor Flight, when other passengers passed into the terminal. "A guy on his cell phone says, 'You won't believe how they greet you at Myrtle Beach!'" The chapter works with the Marine Corps League in the annual Toys for Tots drive and the Veterans Welcome Home and Resource Center in Little River.

The Grand Strand Chapter is one of more than 425 MOAA chapters. Members may be on active duty, retired, National Guard, or former commissioned and warrant officers of the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps and Navy as well as Coast Guard, Public Health Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Pilcher says over 500 national MOAA members in the Myrtle Beach area, so the chapter has the potential for involving many more members. The chapter is affiliated with the South Carolina Council which has a dozen chapters and more than 4,000 members.

Pilcher has been active in the chapter for seven years. He served 28 years in the Marine Corps, starting as an enlisted man and "came up through the ranks" to be a warrant officer and then a commissioned officer. He retired in 1980 as a lieutenant colonel. MOAA dates to 1929 and was the Retired Officers Association for 50 years, then The Retired Officers Association before becoming Military Officers Association of America in 2003.

Its outreach extended to Afghanistan when a Marine wrote his parents in Myrtle Beach that Marines in his unit constantly had wet feet because their socks were going to pieces. The chapter, the Marine Corps League, Harley-Davidson Corp. and area dealers sent 2,000 pairs of socks to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment

More info on MOAA

Grand Strand Chapter, Military Officers Association of America is online at:www.grandstrandmoaa.com

The national MOAA website is www.moaa.org

The S.C. Council of Chapters site is www.moaasc.org

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