

2021 CONFERENCE RECAP

The San Antonio heat fueled the enthusiasm of NCOA members who gathered at the Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel on July 20-23 for the 56th Annual NCOA Conference and Vanguard Awards Banquet.

The Resolutions Committee, chaired by CMSgt (Ret) Bonnie Cooper, met on Tuesday afternoon to help set the Association's legislative course for the coming year. NCOA's new legislative team, Daniel Elkins and Levi Sadr, facilitated the meeting. The Committee will be reviewing the Association's resolutions for relevance and continued need.



The Opening Icebreaker – Texas Bar-B-Que – was a themed event. Delegates donned their most comfortable Texas attire and mixed and mingled. Intense games of cornhole, a lot of mixing and mingling, and plenty of Texas-style Bar-B-Que fare – the perfect recipe for a night to remember!



Accomplishing the business of the Association continued on Wednesday with the Opening Ceremony. NCOA President Paul Kingsbury welcomed the delegates as did Texas Senator Donna Campbell. NCOA's legislative team - Levi Sadr, Legislative Director, and Daniel



Elkins, Director of Government Affairs – briefed the delegates on the Association's legislative activities. The Texas Vet Center was on hand to brief the delegates and remind them the VA's mobile Vet Center was in the parking lot.

As always, we were grateful to the Senior Enlisted Leadership Panel participants who took time from their busy schedules to attend the conference and update our delegates on what was happening in their respective services - SEAC Ramón Colón-López, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; representing the Sergeant Major of the Army was CSM Michael A. Crosby, Command Sergeant Major U.S. Army Futures Command; Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Troy E. Black, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russell L. Smith; representing the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force was CMSgt Erik C. Thompson, Command Chief Master Sergeant, Headquarters Air Education and Training



Command; representing the Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Space Force was CMSgt Amber B. Mitchell, Senior Enlisted Leader to the Chief Human Capital Officer, Headquarters U.S. Space Force; and, representing the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard was Command Master Chief Lucas M. Pullen, Command Master Chief of Pacific Area. Moderating the Panel was CMSgt Juliet C. Gudgel, U.S. Air Force (Ret).



The prestigious C.A. “Mack” McKinney Award was presented to Mr. Joseph Terry, NCOA’s Executive Director. Small and Large Regional Chapters of the Year were recognized. New Rats and Loretas were recognized – Michael Bogmenko, Victoria Bogmenko,

Tom Keyton, Sidney Korvun, Heather Llewellyn, Robert Llewellyn, Tracy McAlister, and Anita Sowle. NCOA’s Military Vanguard recipients were presented life memberships in the Association and Auxiliary President Ronda Smith presented the Auxiliary Top



Supporter Award to Terry M. Haines, NCOA Chairman of the Board in recognition of his continued support of the International Auxiliary. Throughout the remainder of the day, delegates heard presentations from our affinity partner USAA, Tuesday’s Children, and the Defense Health Agency, and learned what various chapters were doing in their respective areas. Thank you to the individuals and chapters that made donations during the Parade of Checks.



On Thursday, delegates convened for the NCOA Annual Business Meeting where the Association’s Strategic Communications Plan was presented and members were elected to the Board of Directors. Elected to serve terms on the NCOA Board of Directors were MCPO Terry Haines, USNR (Ret), of Central Point, OR; FLTCM Paul Kingsbury, USN (Ret) of Carrolton, VA; SMSgt Gerald Morey, USAF, of Papillion, NE; SGM James Mallette, USA (Ret) of Penrose, CO; and, SFC Robert Llewellyn, USA, of Hope Mills, NC.

Meanwhile, members of the International Auxiliary attended the Auxiliary’s Annual Business Meeting where Veronica Mace of New Port Richey, FL, Ronda Smith of Tucson, AZ, Scott Rodowick of Elverta, CA, and Patricia Weaver of Colorado Springs, CO, were elected to serve on the Auxiliary Board of Directors.

The Auxiliary’s outstanding performers were recognized – the Betsy Ross Top Recruiter Award for 2019 was presented to the



Gateway Auxiliary and the Betsy Ross Top Recruiter Award for 2020 was presented to the Spirit of Sacramento Auxiliary. Tammy Sullivan received the Auxiliary President's Award.



The Knights of the Square Table held their annual assembly to accomplish the business of the Knights of the Square Table – new Knights were dubbed, existing Knights were elevated, fallen Knights were honored, the course for the upcoming year was set and Sir Paul DeSander of Saginaw, MI, assumed the mantle as Grand Knight.

The stars shined brightly on Thursday evening during the Vanguard Awards Banquet where CMSgt (Ret) Jim Sullivan served as the Master of Ceremonies for the evening. Hats off to Jim for a job extremely well done!



NCOA's superstar chapters were recognized. The Rogue Chapter from Medford, OR, was recognized as the 2020 Outstanding Large Chapter of the Year and the Frontier Chapter from Cheyenne, WY, was named the 2020 Outstanding Small Chapter of the Year. The Gateway Auxiliary from New Port Richey, FL, received the 2020 Auxiliary Chapter of the Year Award.



The guest speaker for the evening was SEAC Ramón Colón-López, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Then the focus turned to the reason for the evening - honoring this year's heroic Military Vanguard Award recipients.

The amazing stories of SSG (P) Joshua D. Moehring, U.S. Army, Sgt John E. James, U.S. Marine Corps, MM1 (SW/EXW) Christopher K. Miletich, U.S. Navy, MSgt Patrick L. Briggs, U.S. Air Force, and BM1 Wallace C. Qual, U.S. Coast Guard, had delegates glued to their seats with tears in their eyes. The Vanguard stories will appear elsewhere on the NCOA website.



Friday morning was the Breakfast with the Board – nothing like a hot breakfast to start the day off right as delegates prepared to depart amid promises to keep in touch and choruses of “see you next year.”

We were honored to have a number of “formers” join us for the conference – SMA Kenneth O. Preston (13th Sergeant Major of the Army), SMMC Ronald Green (18th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps), SMMC Gene Overstreet (NCOA Past President and 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps), CMSAF James A. Roy (16th Chief Master

Sergeant of the Air Force), MCPOCG Eric “Rick” Trent (7th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard), and CSM Denise Jelinski-Hall (3rd Senior Enlisted Advisor of the National Guard Bureau). Thank you all for making the conference extra-special for our delegates.

We would be remiss if we didn’t thank our generous affinity partners and sponsors whose support helped make this year’s conference a resounding success. A huge THANKS to our Vanguard Sponsors - USAA, NCOA JROTC Program, NCOA Rogue Chapter, Aligned Mortgage, and GEICO Military. Special thanks to AMAC, Aligned Mortgage, Army Air Force Exchange Service, Bellevue University, Blue Cross/Blue Shield FEP Dental and Vision Programs, Columbia Southern University, Dixie Flag and Banner Company, DOC Development, Excelsior College, HEB, Jordan Ford, Korea Defense Veterans Association, Navy Federal Credit Union, NCOA International Auxiliary, NCOA Knights of the Square Table, NCOA Magnum Force Chapter/Ray Moreno, NCOA Mountain Post Chapter, NCOA Mountain Post Auxiliary Chapter, NCOA Oregon State Advisory Council, NCOA Rocky Mountain Knights Council, NCOA Trails End Auxiliary, PCI, Quilts & Crafts, Randolph Brooks Federal Credit Union, Santikos Entertainment, Southern New Hampshire University, Starbucks Coffee, The Wash Tub, United Healthcare, U.S. Veterans Magazine, University of Phoenix, Veterans United, Walmart, Werner, Wiley, and Xpert Media Management.

