

## 2022 CONFERENCE RECAP

The San Antonio heat fueled the enthusiasm of NCOA members who gathered at the Hilton San Antonio Airport Hotel on July 19-22 for the 57<sup>th</sup> 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 Director of Government Affairs, Levi Sadr, facilitated the meeting. The Committee will be reviewing the Association's resolutions for relevance and continued need.

The Opening Fiesta was a themed event complete with fiesta-themed décor and the stirring music of Mariachi Azul, a highly-acclaimed mariachi band. New, uninitiated Rats competed in a fiesta-themed scavenger hunt with Jason



Chase and Jerry Bilbrey being named Top Rats. Delegates donned their most comfortable party attire, mixed and mingled, competed in a variety of Auxiliary-hosted games, took advantage of the photo opportunity, and enjoyed plenty of Fiesta-style 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 MG Juan Ayala, USMC (ret), San Antonio's Director of Military and Veterans Affairs. Levi Sadr, NCOA's Director of Government Affairs briefed the delegates on the Association's legislative activities.



As always, we are 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 – representing the Sergeant Major of the Army

was CSM Todd W. Sims, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Forces Command; representing the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps was SgtMaj Carlos Ruiz, Marine Forces Reserve/Marine Forces South;

representing the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy was FLTCM Del Terrell, Fleet Master Chief MPT&E/My NavyHR; representing the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force was CMSgt Erik Thompson, Command Master Chief, Air Education and Training



Command; Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force CMSgt Roger Towberman; and, representing the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard was Master Chief Charlie Salls, Deputy Master Chief Petty Officer of the U.S. Coast Guard. Moderating the Panel was Mr. Scott McElroy.

A new event on this year's agenda was the Awards Luncheon. The prestigious C.A. "Mack" McKinney Award was presented to USAA, accepting the award was Mr. Richard Smith. Small and Large Regional Chapters of the Year were recognized. NCOA's Military Vanguard recipients were presented life memberships in the Association and, the Trailblazers Chapter donated NCOA ballcaps for each of the Vanguard recipients. Chairman of the Board Terry



Haines presented the NCOA Chairman's Award to Vicky Hensley. NCOA's Executive Director Joe Terry presented Awards of Excellence to a number of individuals who have been instrumental in supporting the Association – Tammy Sullivan, Terry Haines, Jim Sullivan, Peggy Clark, Michael Grabow and Glenn Medeiros. The Awards Luncheon wrapped up with the traditional Parade of Checks. Thank you to the individuals and chapters that made donations to support the Association's benevolent programs and membership development program.

Following the Awards Luncheon, delegates received an update on happenings around the Association. A highlight of the conference was the participation of Ms. Kristen Christy, Resilience Expert/TEDx Speaker. Ms. Christy has been honored as a 2021 Force for Change Award finalist, 2020 Remarkable Woman finalist, the 2019 Top 30 Women Military Influencer and the 2018 Air Force Spouse of the Year. Her message to the delegates, based on her life experiences, was heart-warming, and many tears were shed. She left the delegates with an inspiring message – Live More, Fear Less.



Wrapping up a full day, delegates convened for the NCOA Annual Business Meeting where MSgt Robert Barnett, USAF (Ret), of Huntsville, AL, and MSG Marty Wazbinski, USAR (Ret), of Midland, MI, were elected to serve on the NCOA Board of Directors.

Meanwhile, members of the International Auxiliary attended the Auxiliary’s Annual Business Meeting where Ashley Gardner of Colorado Springs, CO, Karen Haltiner of Oregon City, OR, and Suzan Ytzen of Colorado Springs, CO, were elected to serve on the Auxiliary Board of Directors. The Auxiliary’s outstanding performers were recognized – the Betty Ross Top Recruiter Award for 2021 was presented to the Gateway Auxiliary, Patricia “Pat” Weaver received the Auxiliary Top Supporter Award, and the Auxiliary’s President’s Award was presented to Veronica “Ronnie” Mace.



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The Knights of the Square Table accomplish the business of the new Knights were dubbed, existing Knights were honored, the course Sir Paul Siverson of Jacksonville, Knight.



held their annual assembly to Knights of the Square Table – Knights were elevated, fallen for the upcoming year was set. NC, assumed the mantle as Grand

Thursday kicked-off with *The NCO*



*Fighting in Space and Cyber Panel* with NCOA President Paul Kingsbury moderating. Participating were CSM Sheryl D. Lyon, USCYBERCOM and NSA/CSS Senior Enlisted Leader, and MGySgt Scott H. Stalker, Command Senior Enlisted Leader of the United States Space Command. NCOA sponsors also provided a variety of professional development briefings – USAA; Former SEAC CSM John W. Troxell



with Veterans Lending Group; United HealthCare; CSM Michael L. Gragg, the Command Sergeant Major of the Defense Health Agency; Mr. John Boersler, Chief Veterans Experience Officer with the Department of Veterans Affairs; and James Rodriguez, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor VETS.

The stars shined brightly on Thursday evening during the Vanguard Awards Banquet where CMSgt (Ret) Jim Sullivan, chairman of the Central Valley Chapter 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 2021 Outstanding Large Chapter of the Year and the Gateway Chapter from New Port Richey, FL, was named the 2021 Outstanding Small Chapter of the Year. The Spirit of Sacramento Auxiliary from Sacramento, CA, received the 2021 Auxiliary Chapter of the Year Award.

The guest speaker for the evening was CSM Todd W. Sims, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Forces Command. Then the focus turned to the reason for the evening - honoring this year's heroic Military Vanguard Award recipients.



The amazing stories of CSM Jacob L. Smith, U.S. Army, GySgt Cody S. Mongosa, U.S.

Marine Corps, IT1 (SW/AW/EXW) Justin S. Osborne, U.S. Navy, MSgt Franz S. Workman IV, U.S. Air Force, and SN Thomas J. Borden, U.S. Coast Guard, had delegates glued to their seats with tears in their eyes. The Vanguard stories appear elsewhere on the NCOA website. The Vanguard recipients also received a coin plaque from the American Freedom Foundation.



Friday morning was the Breakfast with the Board – nothing like a hearty, 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 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 Conference Partner USAA and our Platinum Sponsor Veterans Lending Group, and to our Vanguard Sponsors - USAA, United HealthCare, Veterans Lending Group, BlueCross BlueShield FEP Dental and Vision Programs, and the NCOA JROTC Program.

Special thanks to AETNA, Aligned Mortgage, Army Air Force Exchange Service, Bellevue University, BeneFeds, Columbia Southern University, Defense Health Agency, DeVry University, Excelsior College, First Command, GEHA, Indiana Wesleyan University, Humana, Humana Military, HEB, Jordan Ford, Ray Moreno, NCOA Five Star Chapter, NCOA Gateway Chapter, NCOA International Auxiliary, NCOA Knights of the Square Table, NCOA Korea Chapter, NCOA Mountain Post Chapter, NCOA Mountain Post Auxiliary Chapter, NCOA Oregon State Advisory Council (in memory of Jack Lawrie and Barbara Dukes), NCOA Rogue Chapter, NCOA Trails End Auxiliary, Operation Gratitude, Purdue University Global, St. Mary's University School of Law, Tuesday's Children, Quilts & Crafts, U.S. Veterans Magazine, USAMM.com (Armed Forces Superstore), University of Phoenix, Walden University, Waldorf University, Walmart, Wiley University Services, and Xpert Media Management.