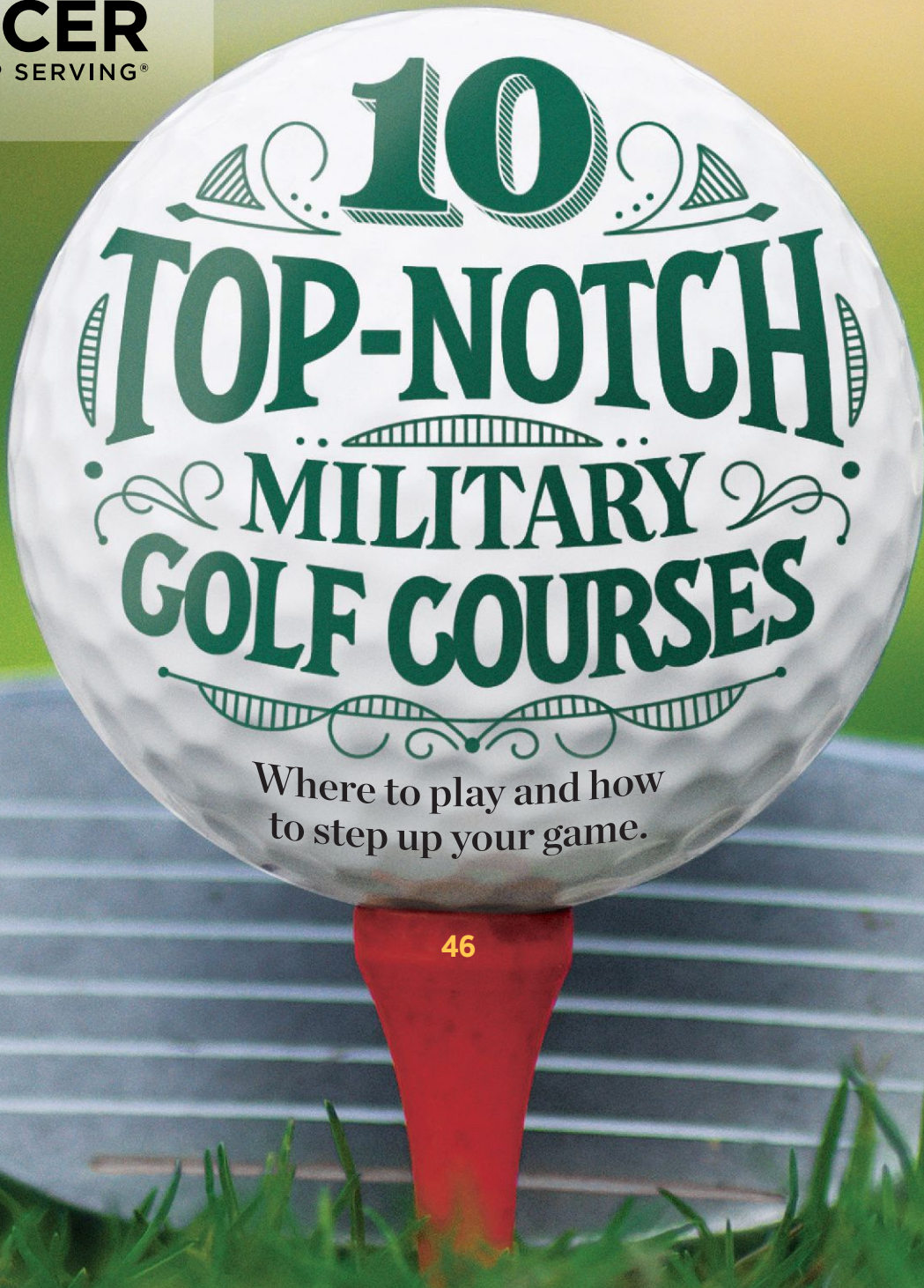




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Chapters
2021:
Stronger
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CHAPTERS 2021: STRONGER TOGETHER

Keys to Recruiting

'All the volunteers are doing so much to inform the members — about advocacy at the state and local level, community-service projects. It's really endless.'

Lt. Col. Juliet Chelkowski, USMC (Ret)



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Here's how chapters show belonging matters 'now more than ever.'

By Blair Drake, contributing editor

Soon after Lt. Col. Juliet Chelkowski, USMC (Ret), retired from the Marine Corps in June 2019, she became a member of MOAA's Alamo (Texas) Chapter. Admittedly, she wasn't involved beyond receiving emails from the chapter. That was until she read "The Changemakers" article in *Military Officer* in December 2020, which highlighted the work of chapter President Lt. Col. Kathryn "Kitty" Meyers USAF (Ret).

"I read that article and saw she was the chapter president and headed [the chapter's] transition services program, and I said, 'I really need to meet her.'"

Visiting the chapter's website, she learned the chapter needed an editor. Chelkowski, who served as a public affairs officer and now works in corporate communications, said that leadership opportunity, coupled with the positive impression from the article about Meyers and the chapter's website, led her to want to get more involved in the Alamo Chapter.

"I reached out and talked to Kitty, and she provided some really great guidance," she said. "I was sold. The first meeting I had with [the chap-

WHAT'S INSIDE:

• Keys to Recruiting Success • Faces of Chapters • MOAA Welcomes Two New Virtual Affiliates • Wins | Retirees, Surviving Spouses • Giving Back in a Time of Need • Chapters In Action • Council and Chapter Affa On the Road Again • 4 Resources to Support Your Affiliate • Honoring Outstanding Leaders • How to Reque a National MOAA Visit • Getting Involved in Grassroots Advocacy • Chapter Leadership: A Chance to Serve

Success

ter] over Zoom, I was incredibly impressed. All the volunteers are doing so much to inform the members — about advocacy at the state and local level, community-service projects. It's really endless."

This spring, Chelkowski became newsletter editor for the chapter, and she hasn't looked back, something for which Col. Felix Santiago, USA (Ret), chapter vice president of membership, is grateful.

"Bringing in new members [like Juliet] helps keep the organization vibrant," he said.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

MOAA chapters across the U.S. spend countless hours and resources working to recruit new members. For many, it's a challenge.

But affiliates like the Alamo, Charleston (S.C.), Virginia Peninsula, and New Hampshire chapters have had success during an especially difficult year.

"The pandemic made recruiting very challenging," said Santiago. "We were headed in a unique direction and had to recalibrate how we approached folks."

Prior to the pandemic, Santiago and other members of the chapter would share information about MOAA and chapter membership with servicemembers and their families at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as well as at in-person transition presentations.

"We had to get very creative and productive as to how we approached the programs we were offering," Santiago said. "One thing we did was focus on the segmentation of the population. You really have to understand who your members are ... and what is a benefit to them."

So the Alamo Chapter focused on a component of chapter membership that benefits all members — and one that also impressed Chelkowski.



DID YOU KNOW?

Of MOAA's 350,000 members, about 40,000 of them belong to chapters.

A NOTE FROM CAPT. ERIN STONE, JAGC, USN (RET)

*Senior director,
Council and Chapter Affairs*



I am honored to lead the small but mighty team at national MOAA whose mission is to support the more than 400 MOAA affiliates (councils, chapters, and satellites) that are the face of MOAA across the country. Our team is pleased to bring you this annual feature highlighting the important work of our affiliates. I know many of our chapter leaders and members will enjoy seeing themselves and others they know on the pages that follow, and I hope they learn something they can use in their organizations.

This feature is also meant to inform MOAA members who are not yet members of a local or virtual chapter, as well as honor those who have been active in MOAA in their communities for decades.

Through impactful community service, our chapters fuel MOAA's membership growth by making people aware of MOAA even though they might be far from our headquarters in Alexandria, Va.

The chapters also directly contribute to our advocacy mission by forming and nurturing relationships with their elected officials and educating them as to the needs of uniformed servicemembers and their families and survivors in their state.

Our chapter members are often our most active, engaged, and passionate members. They join chapters for all kinds of reasons — to find the camaraderie they have missed since they left active duty, a desire to give back to the local military and veteran community, and a passion for changing the law.

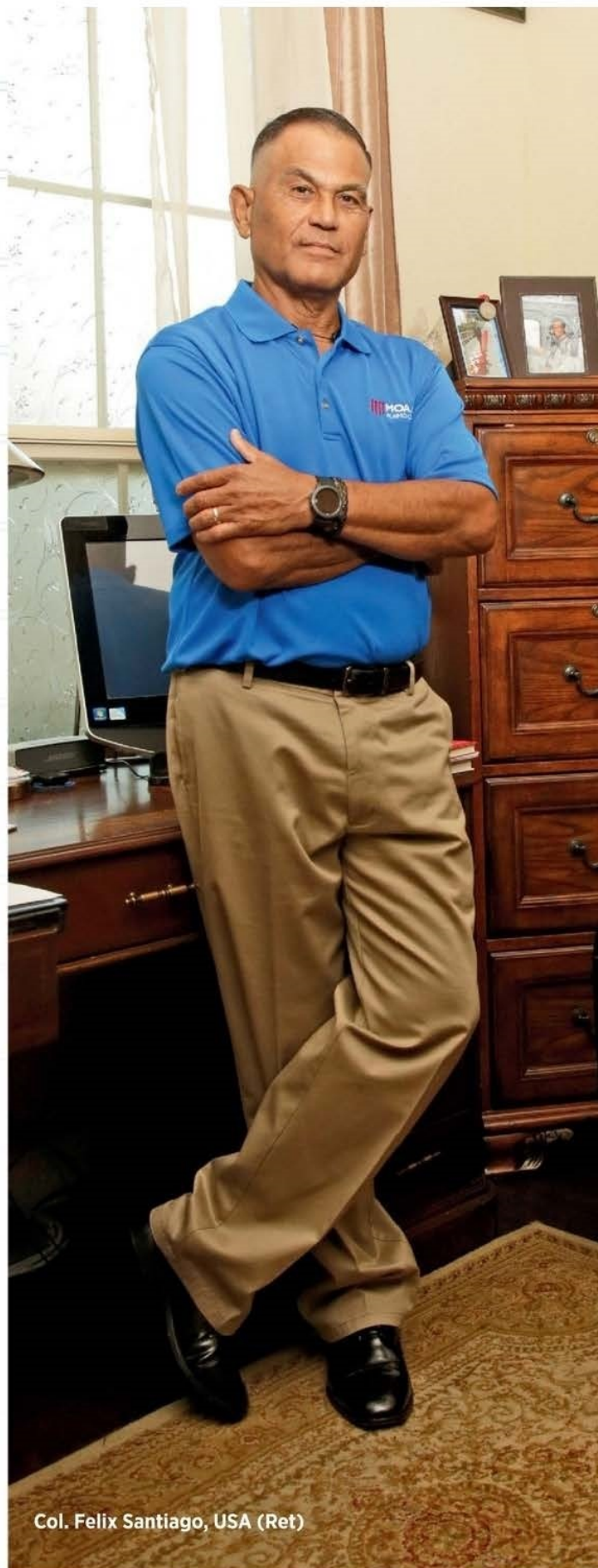
If you are in the group of 310,000 MOAA members who don't belong to a chapter, we need you! Come for the fellowship and for the satisfaction of knowing you've helped others through community service or through legislative advocacy.

The best part of my job is visiting our chapters, and I am thrilled to be back to doing that in person. I hope to meet you the next time I'm in your area.

CHAPTERS 2021: STRONGER TOGETHER

'The type of information we put out is national, state, and local useful information. ... Belonging to the chapter is beneficial now more than ever.'

Col. Felix Santiago, USA (Ret)



Col. Felix Santiago, USA (Ret)

"MOAA is a platform of meaningful information, so our program reflects that," Santiago said. "The type of information we put out is national, state, and local useful information. When we went into the summer [2020], we were able to bring in speakers via Zoom that could speak about the challenges of the pandemic. Belonging to the chapter is beneficial now more than ever."

Likewise, the Charleston Chapter has found success in focusing on the benefits of chapter membership and tailoring those benefits to their members and potential members.

"We try to get interesting speakers [for our meetings], balanced between people who are speaking about retirees and speakers focused on regional interest topics," said Col. Beverl Brockman, USA (Ret), chapter second vice president for membership.

Additionally, the chapter gives back to the local community in numerous ways, including providing scholarships and awards to local ROTC and Junior ROTC cadets, donating annually to Toys for Tots, and being a source of information and support to those who are facing hardships.

"It goes beyond just the camaraderie," said Brockman. "Ultimately, you have to understand your audience and try to be accommodating to everyone."

Cmdr. Michael McLean, USN (Ret), membership chair of the New Hampshire Chapter,



**Col. Beverly
Brockman,
USA (Ret)**

'We try to get interesting speakers [for our meetings], balanced between people who are speaking about retirees and speakers focused on regional-interest topics.'

*Col. Beverly
Brockman,
USA (Ret)*



**Cmdr.
Michael
McLean,
USN (Ret)**

'For some, it's camaraderie and being able to associate with people who have similar backgrounds. For others, it's our advocacy efforts and getting to have a voice.'

*Cmdr.
Michael
McLean,
USN (Ret)*

FACES OF CHAPTERS



**LT. COL. JOE
ANDERSON,
USA (RET)**

*President,
Charlotte-
Metrolina (N.C.
Chapter*

Joined chapter: 2015

Why did you join? I joined the chapter because I wanted to continue my connection with the military community, a connection that I have enjoyed since my day in college ROTC, then 26 years in uniform. It is a connection that I have thoroughly enjoyed.

Why is chapter membership important to you? It gives me an opportunity to network with fellow officers, stay informed about proposed legislative changes, and make my voice heard in protecting important benefits, and give back to the community.

What council or chapter project or initiative are you most proud of? We provide MOAA leadership awards and higher-education scholarship opportunities for cadets in the 39 high school Junior ROTC units in our area. In 2020, the chapter awarded five \$2,000 higher education scholarships to deserving cadets that scored the highest in both academic and school/community involvement evaluations, and three \$2,000 scholarships in 2021.

'[Chapter membership] is a connection that I have thoroughly enjoyed.'

CHAPTERS 2021: STRONGER TOGETHER

'Retention now has been a new strong point in our efforts. We came up with the Partnership Program to reach out to our members during the pandemic.'

Col. Paul Miyamasu, USA (Ret)

agrees.

"The benefits of being in our chapter vary depending on whom you're speaking to," he said. "For some, it's camaraderie and being able to associate with people who have similar backgrounds. For others, it's our advocacy efforts and getting to have a voice."

That's why the New Hampshire Chapter dedicates time to both. In addition to social gatherings, such as luncheons with guest speakers and an annual clambake, the chapter is involved in state politics and advocacy, including being a member organization of the State Veterans Advisory Committee.

Chelkowski said learning about MOAA's impact on Capitol Hill and the grassroots advocacy efforts of chapters was eye-opening.

"It really changed my perspective about the contributions of MOAA," Chelkowski said. "It made me want to con-

tribute, more so than just being a member."

FINDING SUCCESS

Like other chapters, the Virginia Peninsula Chapter shifted its approach to recruiting after the cancellation of an annual event at a nearby retirement community that typically provided the chapter access to an audience of potential new members.

"Retention now has been a new strong point in our efforts," said Col. Paul Miyamasu, USA (Ret), chapter membership chair. "We came up with the Partnership Program to reach out to our members during the pandemic."

The chapter's executive board members each contacted chapter members by phone to check in on them and keep them in the loop about the chapter.

"It's been successful," said Miyamasu.

This personal engagement is something Santiago also believes is a key to membership

success.

"Any organization that wants to retain members or motivate new members to join has to reach out to their population," he said. "If you're dormant, what is the meaning of being a member?"

Success also comes from encouraging members to become more active in their chapter, whether it's leading an event or taking on a leadership position.

In some cases, this might mean training someone so they can gain the confidence and skills needed for the job. In others, it might simply require an ask.

For Capt. Bud Schneeweis, USCG (Ret), it was the latter.

"Our longstanding chapter President Brig. Gen. Ernie Brockman asked me to serve on the chapter board," said Schneeweis, who is now vice president of programs.

He added: "There are many ways to contribute and many volunteers to help share the responsibility. After all, military members and spouses have always served. This is just a continuation of that ethos."

Chelkowski also encourages others to get involved in their chapters.

"If you aren't involved and contributing, who else is going to do it?" she said. "We need talented people. We need people who are committed to ensuring the local chapters stay strong. We need the local chapters to support the bigger mission of MOAA." ■■■

