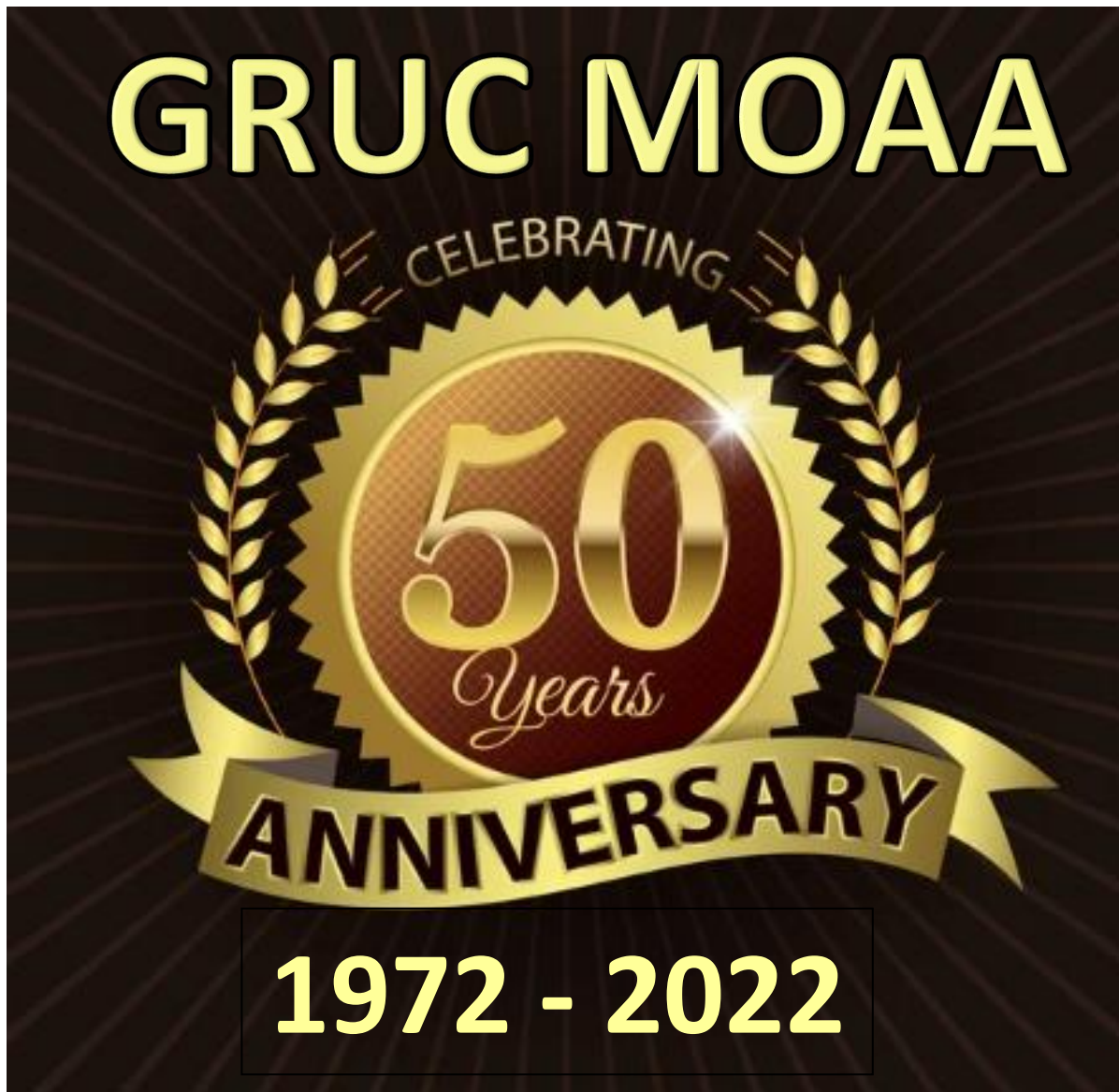


GREATER ROME UTICA CHAPTER

GRUC MOAA

2022 FALL NEWSLETTER



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
P.O. BOX 36 ROME, NY 13442-0036
www.GRUCMOAA.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT



GRUC MOAA decorated with 3 prestigious MOAA Awards:

- 5-Star Level of Excellence Chapter Award **AGAIN !!!**
- 5-Star Communications Award for **our Newsletter**
- 4-Star Communications Award for **our Website**

GRUC MOAA – Veterans serving Mohawk Valley for 50 years!!!

At the 50th Anniversary Celebration on August 17th, it was our pleasure to host CWO4 Lelia P. Jackson, USMC, Membership Committee, Member Services Committee, MOAA Board of Directors and Senior Strategist in the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration, Marianne Buttenschon New York 119th Assembly District Member, Ernest Bebernitz, MAJ, USA, New York Council of Chapters President, and Christopher Costigan, CDR USN, New York Council of Chapters Eastern Region Vice President.



Photo 1: (L to R) GRUC MOAA President Greg Bertolini, MOAA Guest Speaker Lelia Jackson, Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, and GRUC MOAA member Brian Burke

Assemblywoman Buttenschon presented the **State of New York Legislative Resolution** Senate No: 2340 and Assembly No: 1036 recognizing GRUC's dedication and community service. I had the pleasure of presenting the **Congressional Proclamation** written by New York 22 Representative Claudia Tenney to the chapter and the MOAA Leadership Award to Past President Joe Maurer, LTC, USA.



GRUC Member receives MOAA Outstanding Leadership Award



Photo 2: GRUC MOAA member Jim Tille

The New York State Council of Chapters celebrated their 50th Anniversary at the Annual Convention in Thousand Islands, NY. Did you know seven of the eight chapters in the council have been chartered for fifty or more years?!

During the meeting, **GRUC and CoC Past President Jim Tille, Maj, USA** was presented the MOAA Outstanding Leadership Award by CoC President Bebernitz.

Two new GRUC JROTC scholarships:

1. The Donald J. "Gunner" Beyer, CWO4, USN (Ret) Scholarship was presented for the first time this past year at Notre Dame HS.
2. The Angelina Bertolini Memorial Scholarship will be presented at Proctor HS in 2023.



Best Wishes to all for continued good health,

Greg Bertolini
GRUC MOAA President



Cut here
Return to GRUC MOAA

Win a Dinner for Two at Chesterfield's Tavolo!!!

Fill out the below ticket and mail it to GRUC MOAA, PO Box 36, Rome, NY 13442-0036 to be entered in the drawing for a **\$50 gift certificate – "Dinner for two at Chesterfield's Tavolo"**.

| GRUC MOAA RAFFLE TICKET | |
|--|-------|
| Name: | _____ |
| Phone #: | _____ |
| <i>Drawing to be held at GRUC MOAA meeting in Jan</i> | |

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Upcoming events..... | 5 |
| Call to Officership..... | 6 |
| In the News..... | 7 |
| Treasurer’s Report..... | 13 |
| Update your Membership..... | 13 |
| Health Care Information..... | 15 |
| Veteran Information | 18 |

Dial 988 then press 1

Veterans CRISIS HOTLINE

**CHAT at veteranscrisisline.net/chat
TEXT at 838255**

The Greater Rome Utica (GRUC) Chapter has provided Officer's Club quality social events since receiving our charter in 1972. Our mission is to work for the benefit of all uniformed service members, their families, and their survivors. We believe the best way to achieve our mission is to advocate at the local, state, and federal levels for a strong national defense while providing needed support for the community where we live.

GRUC supports the National Legislative Agenda formulated by MOAA. GRUC routinely invites members of Congress, House of Representatives, NY State Senate, NY State Assembly, and local elected officials to attend sponsored events to speak to our membership on issues of national, state, and local concern. GRUC also supports the NY State Council of Chapters in advocating on behalf of our veterans and the issues affecting them.

GRUC MOAA Officers and Board of Directors

OFFICERS

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| President | CPT Gregory Bertolini, USA |
| Vice President | CW4 William Hamelin, USA |
| Secretary | CDR Robert Piper, USN |
| Treasurer | LTC Joseph Maurer, USA |

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|--|---|
| Past President: LTC Joseph Maurer, USA | MAJ Edwin Herr, USAF |
| Chaplain: MAJ James Martinez, USAF | CPT John 'Jack' Hosp, USMC |
| COL William R. Gray, Jr., USAF | 1LT Steve Peek, USAF |
| LTC Lawrence Calabrese, USAR | Spouse Liaison: Cheryl 'Sherri' Skogland, AUX |
| CDR Stephen Mercurio, USN | |

MARK YOUR CALENDARS !



November 1



**FALL BACK
November 6**



December 17

GRUC MEETINGS/DINNERS

| OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER - MARCH | APRIL | MAY |
|----------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 5 | 5 | | 5 | 3 |
| Lake Delta Inn | TBD | AT EASE | Vescio's Franklin Hotel | Aqua Vino |
| 1700-2045 | 1300-1700 | NO MEETINGS | 1700-2045 | 1700-2045 |



**ANNUAL VETERAN'S
DAY DINNER!**



November 6



December 7



**SPRING AHEAD
March 12**



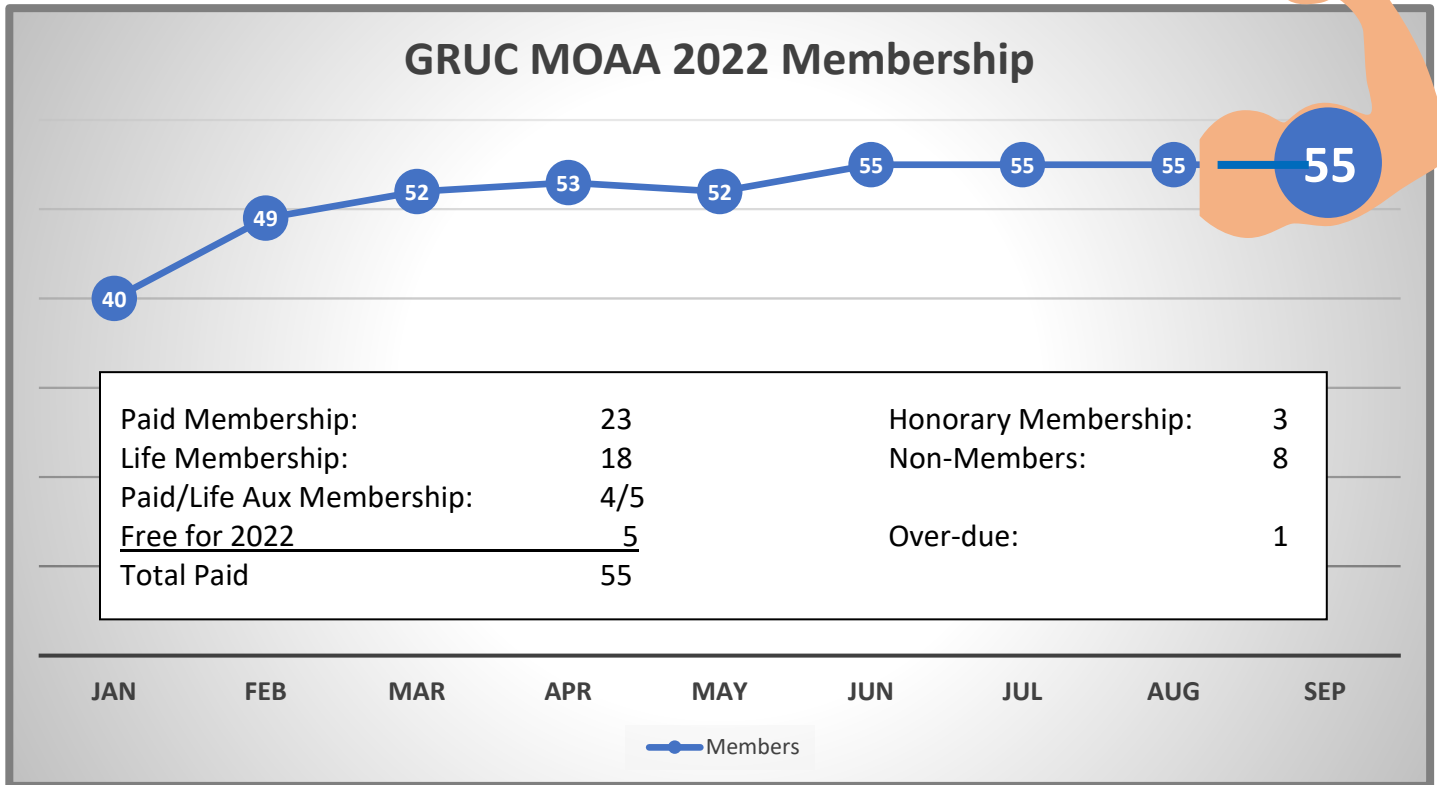
At the November 11th Annual Veterans Day's Dinner, GRUC MOAA will conduct the Election of Chapter Officers. This process is critical to keeping our local chapter vibrant and injecting new ideas into the organization for molding GRUC MOAA into the next generation.

Please consider running for one of the below officer positions in GRUC MOAA. We welcome new blood at the helm and ask you to **send in your interest by checking one or more of the boxes below and mailing this page back to Greg Bertolini by October 20th.** The term length for these positions is one year.

- President** shall be to serve as Chapter executive officer; preside at meetings of the Chapter and Board of Directors; appoint special committees; communicate to chapter members or the Board of Directors information or proposals that would help achieve the purposes of the Chapter; be the point of contact for the New York State Council of Chapters and MOAA correspondence.
- Vice President** shall serve as the chairperson of the Legislative Committee, monitoring local, state, and national legislative developments; recommend to the Board of Directors new or revised policies; establish and maintain good working relationships with local, state and national legislators who represent chapter members; oversee membership and recruiting.
- Secretary** shall prepare the bi-annual chapter newsletter.
- Treasurer** shall collect members annual dues; maintain a record of all sums received and expended by the chapter, make disbursements that are authorized by the Board of Directors; deposit all sums received in a financial institution authorized by the Board of Directors, prepare and give a financial report at Board and membership meetings; recommend to the Board, prior to the annual meeting, a budget for the next calendar year.

Please mail this page to Greg Bertolini at GRUC MOAA, PO Box 36, Rome, NY 13442-0036.

IN THE NEWS



Jason Ruiz, CPT., USMC (Former)
Glen Van Knowe



Penny Gray on August 16, 2022

One of our longtime members, Jim Tille, Maj. USAF, (RET) was finally able to attend and enjoy the great HONOR FLIGHT #16 to view many of the veterans' monuments in Washington D.C. GRUC was honored to have sponsored Jim for this flight and we continue to support the Syracuse Honor Flight organization.



11th GRUC Wreaths Across America

GRUC's 11th WAA will be held Saturday, December 17th.

We are off and running with our fund raising, and it looks like we should meet our minimum goal of sponsoring 1400 wreaths or \$21,000.

A good reaction came from our new Certificate of Appreciation presented to our corporate sponsors this past year. We also expect a good reaction to our new giving levels of Gold, Silver, and Bronze.

We have assurances from the 224th EAD and Rome Free Academy Color Guards to provide colors at the St. John's and St. Mary's cemeteries, respectively.

Efforts are underway to enhance attendance – efforts are being made to get school choirs to appear at more cemeteries.



Photo 3: Rome firemen placing a wreath at Chief Reilly's grave at St. Peter's Cemetery in 2021

We welcome suggestions from Chapter members

1. Do you know any business that we can ask for support?

2. Do you have an idea on how to improve our operation in any area?

Don't be shy – there's no work on your part – all you have to do is make a suggestion.

Also, we ask all members to step up and buy some wreaths and attend one of our 6 cemetery ceremonies.

**Thank you,
Joe Maurer**



NEW Services available at the Rome VA Clinic!!!

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|  | Audiology (315-425-2437) | Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday |
| | Ears, Nose, and Throat (ENT) | 1 st Friday of the Month |
|  | Cardiology | Tuesdays |
|  | Podiatry | Monday – Friday |
|  | Womens’ Health Gynecology | 3 rd Thursday of the month |
|  | Massage Therapy | Wednesday & Thursday |
|  | Acupuncture | Mondays and Tuesdays |
|  | Ultrasound | Tuesdays and Thursdays |
|  | Ortho and spine | 4 th Monday of the month |
|  | Chiropractor | Mondays and Fridays |
|  | Optometry | Monday – Friday |

GET
 your
FLU SHOT



Drive up, look for your VA postcard,
 or get it when you go for a scheduled
 appointment



COVID Shots/Boosters

If you need to get a COVID vaccination or booster, please call 315-425-4488 to schedule an appointment OR send a Secure Message through Myhealthvet

Rome VA Clinic UPDATES

Flu Shots:

Rome:

- Oct 15, 22 & Nov 5 8:00 AM - Noon. No appointment needed, however, the clinic only serves vets using Rome CBOC as their primary care.

Syracuse:

- Sep 27, 28, 29 & Oct 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM No appointment needed.

Visit Procedures:

The Rome VA clinic is still operating on a “limited” access methodology to prevent overcrowding; entry into the clinic continues to be modified as follows:

- When a veteran has an appointment, they are not allowed to enter the facility until 15 minutes prior to that appointment.
- Masks must be worn at all times.
 - Cloth masks are not acceptable. Masks are available when you enter if you do not have one.
- There may be a few quick screening questions that are asked to complete the process.
- No one is allowed to accompany a veteran to their appointment unless it is medically required to provide assistance to that veteran during their visit.

Some medical appointments are still being done “virtually” and are well received by most veterans. “In person” appointments with your primary care team are increasing and heading back into the normal range.

Renovations coming: Major renovations and improvements to the VA clinic are taking place. Completion is scheduled for some time in 2023.

- An elevator shortcut corridor is coming
- The 2nd floor area is undergoing major renovations so additional space can be utilized to increase care for veterans
- New heating, ventilation, and air conditioning units will be installed
- The Myhealthvet office has been temporarily moved to room 1232 (office just to the right side of our office 1233)

ROME HIGHWAY DEDICATED to Korean War Veterans

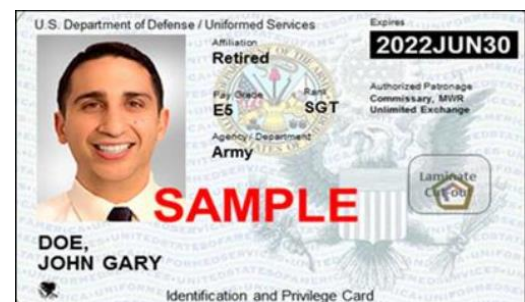
Part of Route 365 in Rome has been named the Oneida County Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway to honor those who fought in the 1950-53 conflict.

New York State Senator Joseph Griffo, R-Rome, and Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-Marcy, sponsored the legislation that led to the dedication. Governor Kathy Hochul recently signed the legislation into law.



NEW ID CARDS – first change in 30 years

DoD plans to phase out and cancel the existing ID cards in 2026.



The Next Generation Uniformed Services ID (Nex Gen USID) card is a replacement for the previous version of United States military IDs for retired servicemembers, dependents, spouses, and others who need an official ID to access installations, services, and vehicles controlled by the Department of Defense.

The Next Generation USID card will incorporate an updated design and security features to deter counterfeiting and fraud, and will be printed on a plastic cardstock.

GRUC Bill Hamelin says “If you currently have a Military Retiree/Dependent ID card that “DOES NOT EXPIRE” and states “INDEFINITE”, you will still need to apply for a new ID card replacement within 4 years (the end of 2026). The new card type will be replacing the current cards we now have. They will be similar to the current active-duty CAC cards. These cards will still be INDEFINITE but have better security. No hurry, we have 4 years, but if not done by then, the old cards will not be accepted.”

Nearly 14,000 Pharmacies leaving TRICARE – October 24th

Impacted beneficiaries will receive a letter from Express Scripts with a list of alternative in-network pharmacies. Walgreens and CVS remain in-network, as do many grocery store pharmacies and smaller chains.

After October 24, 2022, beneficiaries who continue to fill prescriptions at departing community pharmacies will pay the full retail price for the medication.

To transfer a prescription, beneficiaries can:

- Take their prescription bottles to another participating pharmacy in the network. The pharmacist there will contact the previous pharmacy and transfer the prescription.
- Call the new pharmacy and ask the pharmacist to obtain the prescription information from the old pharmacy.
- Ask their doctor to send the prescription information to the new pharmacy.
- Visit the Express Scripts website to switch eligible medications to home delivery.

SBP-DIC Offset Gone!

Congress made changes to the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) to phase out the offset for surviving spouses who are also receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA).

Jan 1, 2023 – SBP-DIC offset will be fully eliminated. SBP payments will no longer be offset (reduced) by DIC. Spouses will receive full SBP (issued by DFAS) and full DIC (from the VA).

There is no action you need to take as a retiree for the changes to apply to your surviving spouse. However, check your RAS to ensure your SBP beneficiary is up to date (especially important if you have a former spouse).

<https://www.dfas.mil/sbpdicnews>

TREASURER'S REPORT – JOE MAUER

Balances as of September 15, 2022

\$4,570.98 (Checking) + \$4,289.69 (Savings) = \$8,860.67 (Total Cash On Hand)

UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Bill Hamelin will be sending out periodic reminders for those still overdue for 2021/2022.

A membership form is enclosed at the end of this newsletter. Please complete the 2023 membership form and return it with payment (address at the top of the membership form). You can also join/renew online and use a credit card for payment by visiting the GRUC web page below:

https://grucmoaa.org/html/join_gruc.html

If you aren't a National MOAA member, it's highly recommended that you become a member. A "free" membership is available! **If you are a national MOAA member, please provide your national membership number to Bill Hamelin.** Please go to the MOAA website at:

https://ebiz.moaa.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Default.aspx?TabId=153&utm_source=h&utm_medium=header&utm_campaign=Join

Any questions regarding GRUC membership, please contact Bill for assistance at 315-725-3362.

GRUC-MOAA DUES STATEMENT

Please renew your 2023 membership by November 1, 2022 by sending your check, payable to **GRUCMOAA, to GRUCMOAA Treasurer, P.O. Box 36, Rome, New York 13442-0036**

***Indicates required information**

***Name:** _____ ***Rank:** _____

***Address:** _____

Occupation: _____ Service Branch: _____

***Primary Phone:** _____ **Alternate Phone:** _____

Spouse First Name: _____

Spouse Last Name (if different): _____

***Your Email:** _____

***National MOAA Member Number:** _____

Dues Enclosed:** ____ Life Member ***MUST provide Birth Date: _____

____ \$20.00 Regular Membership

____ \$10.00 Active Duty/Guard/Reserve Membership

____ \$10.00 Auxiliary Membership

Widow/Widower of a member or qualifying individual

____ \$5.00 Auxiliary Non-Attendee Membership

(Non-Attendee Status is for our homebound, nursing home members, or members living more than 50 miles away).

***2023 Dues Enclosed:** \$ _____ **<or> Life Membership Dues:** \$ _____

Prior Year Dues Enclosed: \$ _____

***Total Dues Enclosed:** \$ _____

***Check Number:** _____

GRUCMOAA CHAPTER LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEE STRUCTURE:

| Age (in 2022) | Membership Fee |
|---------------|----------------|
| 50 and under: | \$300 |
| 51 to 55: | \$282 |
| 56 to 60: | \$265 |
| 61 to 65: | \$242 |
| 66 to 70: | \$213 |
| 71 to 75: | \$184 |
| 76 to 80: | \$153 |
| 81 to 85: | \$118 |
| 86 and over: | FREE! |

HEALTH CARE INFORMATION – BILL HAMELIN

GRUC volunteers work in a daily capacity at the Rome, NY, Donald J. Mitchell, VA clinic. Chapter members who perform this mission five days a week are: CDR Stephen Mercurio, USN (RET), CW4 William J. Hamelin Jr, USA, (RET), and LTC Joseph Maurer, USA, (RET). GRUC volunteers receive specialized training with these programs to assist veterans with enrollment and usage of these programs. Each year they must complete the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Information Security, and Myhealthvet training through the VA Talent Management System (TMS). In addition, our volunteers have provided in-depth training classes to the Rome VA clinic staff on Myhealthvet and Ebenefits so they can fully understand what these programs can provide for the veterans but also how the staff/providers can use this system to be more effective and efficient.

Audiology and Podiatry support is now available at the clinic twice a week, an appointment is required. Please call 315-425-2437 (Audiology) to set up an appointment. To order additional batteries and other accessories, please call 1-303-273-6200 and select option 2.

Women's Veteran Health Clinic: The Rome VA clinic has established a robust and excellent woman veteran clinic that is now in full operation. It is conducted by PA Debora Cardinal. Female veterans can request assignment for treatment through this clinic or they can remain with their current primary care provider. Any questions regarding the clinic or registering to utilize it can be made at 315-334-7100 extn: 57318.

VA Red Coat Ambassador program: The VA Red Coat Ambassador program is a special volunteer program instituted at the Syracuse VA Medical Center and its associated Primary Care clinics. This program allows volunteers to assist veterans with specialized computer programs, such as Myhealthvet and Ebenefits and act as an informal ombudsman, assisting veterans by providing answers to a myriad of questions and ensuring the veteran contacts the proper resource for any assistance they might need. Any issues faced by the veteran that cannot be resolved by the Red Coat Ambassador, can then be escalated to the immediate attention of the Clinic Nurse Manager for resolution. This methodology has greatly reduced the frustration and delay sometimes encountered by veterans navigating through the VA.

MyHealthyVet: Myhealthvet allows veterans the ability to access, interact, view, or even save, their medical information, which includes lab test results, prescription ordering and tracking, medical imaging, communicating with their primary care team (and other clinics) and making in-person and video connect appointments. It also accepts veteran input on a variety of health-related items like weight, blood pressure, medical treatment from outside the VA

and OTC medications. **NOTE: Myhealthvet is now requiring a 2nd level authentication process to access your Myhealthvet (MHV) account. This will be done through an email or text verification. Access your MHV account to set this process in motion.**

Effective September 30, 2021, all veterans who had an Advanced Myhealthvet (now known as Basic/Matched) account (MHV) will have to upgrade to a Premium account. All Advanced accounts have been eliminated by the VA. If you had an Advanced account and desire to upgrade, please give Bill, Steve, or Joe a call at 315-334-7118 for assistance on how to best accomplish this.

Ebenefits: Ebenefits is a program that is undergoing a phase out/transition. Currently it allows veterans to access their disability information, make an application for benefits, track compensation exam results, apply for VA loan certificate, track compensation payments, appeals, and many others. VA is trying to simplify access for veterans to various veterans' information and Ebenefits and is transitioning over to: **VA.GOV**

Optical services through the VA: Do You Wear Glasses? Need a new set of frames & lenses....do you get your glasses from the VA? They provide them for you at (normally) no cost. There is an extra charge for tinted glasses. If you are enrolled in the VA you are eligible through the VA.

- Fort Drum Optometry Clinic will also provide one free pair of glasses each year. You can walk into the clinic and present your eyeglass prescription (must be within the last year). The Optometry Clinic is located at 10501 Euphrates River Valley Rd., Fort Drum, NY. You will have to pick them up at Ft. Drum, no delivery.
- The Navy also has a program where they will provide you with one free pair of glasses each year. It does not matter what Military Service a person served in either. The Customer Service Line is available: 757-887-7600, option 1. Here's the link to the Navy Optical site for that process:

<https://www.med.navy.mil/Naval-Medical-Logistics-Command/Naval-Ophthalmic-Support-and-Training-Activity/Ordering/how-to-order-retiree/>

Hearing services through the VA: Fort Drum Medical will provide hearing aids to retirees and spouse at COST. Link to Ft. Drum:

<http://www.drum.amedd.army.mil/ContactUs/SitePages/Contact%20Us.aspx>

Veteran use of urgent care facilities approved: As part of the VA MISSION ACT of 2018, Veterans who have received medical care from the VA, or VA sponsored community providers, anytime during the last 24 months are now eligible to utilize URGENT CARE. If you are in Priority Group 1~5, the first 3 visits in a year are free, and after that there is a \$30 co-pay for each visit. Priority Groups 6~8 will incur co-payments of \$30 for each visit. WELL NOW

Locations are available throughout NY state (and US). If the veteran encounters problems, call 866-620-2071 for assistance.

Local URGENT CARE facilities are:

- Utica:
 - Primary Urgent Care, 1904 Genesee St., 315-804-6800
 - Well Now Urgent Care facility located at 230 N. Genesee St., 315-271-2394.
- Rome:
 - Well Now Urgent Care facility at 103 West Dominick St., Suite 10
- Other locations : <https://vaurgentcarelocator.triwest.com/Locator/Care>

Visit a partnering (Community Care Network) location – Veterans can now visit a participating retail pharmacy or urgent care network and verify eligibility using this VA facility locator:

<http://www.va.gov/find-locations>

or by calling 1-877-881-7618. Included are most CVS, Walmart, Costco, Wegmans, Safeway and Kroger pharmacies. Present your government issued ID care (driver's license or VA ID card) and request that your vaccination documentation be forwarded to your VA provider.

VETERANS INFORMATION

FILE a VA Claim: If you need to file a VA compensation claim, and live in Oneida County, please contact the Oneida County Veterans Service Office located within the Rome VA clinic. Representatives Joseph Perrone, and Dan Gowey are available to assist veterans through this complex process. If you have any questions regarding a medical condition that was incurred through military service, primary or secondary injuries, and wondering if filing a claim would be proper, please call or stop by their office and they will be happy to assist. Please inform your spouses, that if you, as the veteran, die from a service-connected injury, they may be entitled to Dependent Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments. They can also call or stop by for a quick determination if they qualify for these monthly payments.

Contact Information is: 315-798-5830, or jperrone@ocgov.net

LEGAL ASSISTANCE: Military retirees, don't forget you can obtain, at no cost to you, wills, healthcare proxy/living wills, and Power of Attorneys from the Ft. Drum Legal office, located at Clark Hall, 10720 Mt. Belvedere Blvd., Ft. Drum, NY 13602. The number to make an appointment is: 315-772-5261.

DOD TRAVEL INFORMATION: Space A travel is back to pre-pandemic levels effective 4/26/22, although some COVID restrictions may still apply.

The Department of Defense has established an official DOD sponsored/sanctioned web page that retirees can access for reduced prices with air flights, hotels, etc. The American Forces Travel page is located at this address:

<https://www.americanforcetravel.com/>

After you select your hotel, flight, etc., and before it lets you proceed further, it will ask for some information to verify your eligibility (through ID.ME). Once your eligibility has been approved it will allow you to proceed. DOD has a contract through Priceline to provide discounts for military personnel and retirees.

GRUC-MOAA Merchandise

Polo Shirts: High quality short sleeved shirts provided by A&P Master Images on Water St. Utica, NY. MasterYourImage.com. Made to order in quantities as low as 1 shirt.

Three options:

- 1) Shirt with embroidered GRUCMOAA Logo. Logo on left breast.
- 2) Shirt with embroidered GRUCMOAA Logo on left, Member Name, Rank, Branch, and Status on right.
- 3) Shirt with embroidered GRUCMOAA Logo on left, embroidered American Flag on left sleeve, Member Name, Rank, Branch, and Status on right.



Sample Option 3) Costs less than \$35.00:

2.5" x 5" Vinyl Decals (apply to outside of surface): \$3.00 each

2.5" x 5" Static Cling Decals (apply to inside of surface): \$3.00 each

2" x 3.5" Business Card sized magnet: \$1.00 each

- Sample for decals, static cling, and magnet:



Challenge Coins: \$8.00 each



- Sample Front and Back of the coin: