



# COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

5-Star Excellence Chapter



MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA  
P.O. BOX 1872 VANCOUVER, WA 98668

ESTABLISHED 1970

website: [www.moaacolumbiariver.org](http://www.moaacolumbiariver.org)

November 2021

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### President:

Rod Williams  
503-317-2273

### 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President: & Membership:

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President: & Programs

### Secretary:

Jim Morse  
360-433-5605

### Treasurer: (acting)

Rod Williams  
Immediate Past

### President,

Evelyn Brady  
360-721-0865

### CRMF president:

Dave Casteel  
360-834-2448

### Army Rep:

Jon Frederick  
360-576-9078

### Marine Rep:

Terry Babin  
360-608-7789

### Navy Rep:

Rich Wersinger  
360-901-1915

### Air Force Rep:

Paul Crosby  
360-666-8871

### Public Health Rep:

Chris Rubadue  
425-269-1902

### Surviving Spouse

### Liaison:

Terry Whisenant  
360-576-7736

### Legislative Affairs:

Buck Marr  
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### Membership Services:

Terry Babin  
360-608-7789

### Public Affairs:

John Donnelly  
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### Scholarship:

Paul Crosby  
360-666-8871

### Chaplain:

### Roster Manager:

The unofficial theme of this newsletter seems to be optimism. Personally, I am optimistic we are seeing positive data and trends which will allow our chapter to hold in person meetings again in 2022. Yes, I know I said that about 2021. Hang in there, we will get through this.

Based on these optimistic trends, [The Historic Trust](#) and the [Community Military Appreciation Committee \(CMAC\)](#) celebrated and commemorated the service and sacrifice local veterans and their

families have made at a Veterans Day ceremony at 11 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 11. The ceremony took place at the Artillery Barracks building at 600 Hathaway Road in the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. I was pleased to hear several speakers focus on the role of spouses and families of veterans. Military service is a family commitment.

Our chapter was once again asked to support the ceremony with one team greeting and directing pedestrian traffic and another team serving refreshments for those who attended. The rain held off during the ceremony and the crowd was larger than expected.

Thanks go to volunteers who joined me: **Buck Marr, John Donnelly, Frank Hill, and Dan Sockle.** Among ceremonies in other parts of our community, I learned CRC member,

**Dick Ionata,** organized a small ceremony for veterans at the Touchmark at Fairway Village.

With support for veterans in mind,

**Buck Marr**

has also taken an optimistic view in his update in this newsletter on the national legislative front. Advocacy in Action (AIA) remains at the core of our charter. Thanks to all of you who

have acted on the requests from national MOAA to submit emails or call our legislative representatives. If you are not already receiving the MOAA Newsletter email, I encourage you to go to the MOAA site at [Military Officers Association of America | Email Preference Center \(highroadsolution.com\)](#) and subscribe. The MOAA web site, [MOAA - MOAA Home Page](#), is chock full of excellent information and links to podcasts on a variety of topics.

**Rod Williams**  
President



Hooray!



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### Donation presentations to CCVAC & Transplant Lodge

On 20 September 2021 **Dave Casteel** presented a \$500 gift card to **Michelle Swanson** at the VA Transplant Lodge (Bldg 18) and a \$500 check to **Judy Russel** (Exec Dir) and **Ron Abby** (President) CCVAC.

**Michelle** told me they have 21 out of 30 rooms filled and with COVID restricting common area kitchen use and patient mobility, the money is needed to buy food for transplant patients and their care givers and would be a great help but they would go through it quickly.

**Judy** at CCVAC told me they gave out 215 sack breakfast/lunches in the last month, 500 individuals requested county fund money, had 200 VSO visits, and had 1,100 inquiries for assistance. She said that for veterans who are lucky enough to still have an apartment, CCVAC added to Sunshine Division boxes of food to make them more complete and longer lasting.

In addition, I gave them a several packages of new unused socks and large package of safety razors for homeless veterans.

Both organizations were very appreciative of our support.



### Ask Your Lawmaker to Support the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act

The Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act (H.R. 2214) would allow survivors to keep the full amount of the retirement check issued for the final month in which the member was alive without the shock of losing a large chunk of funds from DFAS recoupment. The survivor will instead, gradually repay the amount over the next 12 months and have an opportunity to request debt forgiveness through the Department of Defense.

To learn more & take action to your lawmaker you can use this MOAA website:

[Support the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act](#)



## Chapter Volunteers Needed by Rod Williams

Presently we have **one opening** on the board:

### Vice President.

All our members have leadership experience and could capably fill any vacant roles.

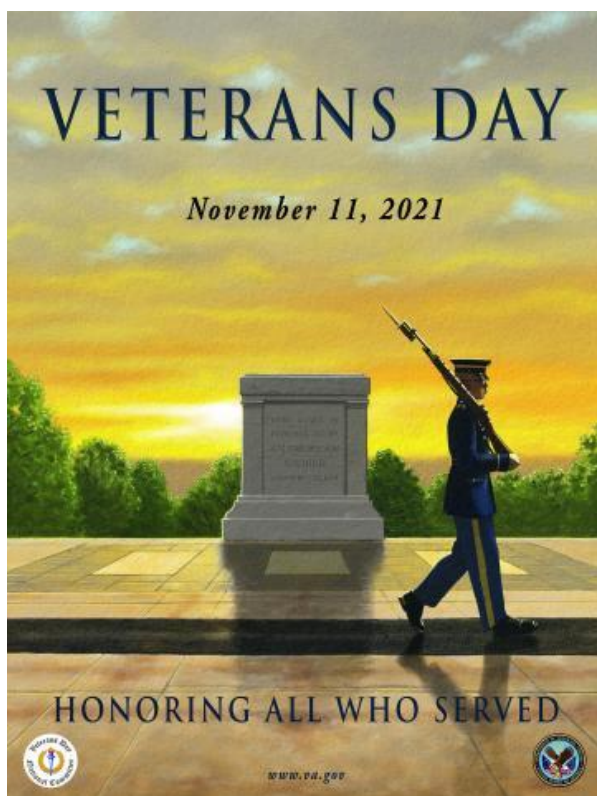
Many of our spouses also bring skills and experience which make them excellent candidates. We encourage you to volunteer, too.

The frequently repeated idiom “it takes a village” is especially true about our chapter. It takes many hands to carry the load and not be a heavy burden on any one person.

- **Vice President** – can be tailored to fit any willing and able applicants to help us with programs, membership, recruiting, and advocacy activities.

If you think you can help, contact me, **Rod Williams** (503) 317-2273 or [rodwill50@hotmail.com](mailto:rodwill50@hotmail.com)

**We need you!**



## Chapter ~ Membership Eligibility

Chapter membership is open to active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former commissioned officers and warrant officers of the following uniformed services: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Surviving spouses of deceased officers are also eligible to join.

## Columbia River Chapter ~ Affiliate

Our chapter is an affiliate of the more than 350,000 member national MOAA which is the nation's largest and most influential association of military officers. MOAA and the chapter are nonprofit, politically nonpartisan organizations. Our chapter is an IRC 501(c)19 war veterans organization.

## Newsletter Editor

Our Chapter Secretary, **Jim Morse**, coordinates calendar inputs and newsletter distribution. You can contact him at 360-433-5605 or email him at [jlmorse77@gmail.com](mailto:jlmorse77@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: **Rich Wersinger**. You can contact him at 360-901-1915 or e-mail him at [rich@simplyexplainit.com](mailto:rich@simplyexplainit.com).

## Newsletter Distribution

We continue to distribute our newsletter by e-mail. If you are receiving this via postal service and would prefer e-mail please notify **Jim Morse**, our Chapter Secretary at 503-360-433-5605 or [jlmorse77@gmail.com](mailto:jlmorse77@gmail.com).





## **CRMF November 2021 Update**

*by Frank Hill*

**Dave** is busy with family medical matters and wasn't able to write a newsletter article, so he asked me to report results of the Post-Covid Scholarship (PCS) appeal. He also asked me to let you know that he will be sending gift acknowledgement thank you letters (for your tax records), and that public acknowledgements and memorials will be in an upcoming newsletter.

You may recall this appeal was initiated in great part to substitute for the Scholarship Fund appeal usually made as part of the cancelled September BBQ event.

You have more than stepped forward. To date we've received donations totaling \$5,712 from 31 members. Of that total, \$5,012 was directed to the Scholarship fund by donors, and \$700 was directed to the Support the Troops fund. Though we will not be asking for more donations around the annual Christmas event, we welcome your donations year-round.

We were especially pleased to see that four donors elected to make their donation by way of a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from their IRA RMDs. By doing so they avoided paying federal income tax on the amount of the QCD. A WIN-WIN for both those members and the CRMF. If you are interested and want more info on QCDs contact your personal tax advisor, or either Dave or I will be glad to informally discuss them with you.

Also please remember that most individual taxpayers who take the standard deduction can subtract up to \$300 in charitable cash contributions from the Adjusted Gross Income on their federal tax return again this year (Married couples filing MFJ can subtract up to \$600). No special forms are required – just enter the amount on line 12b of your Form 1040.

Last, thank you again for your generous support of CRMF, the Funds we administer, and the organizations we support with our contributions. We are making real impacts in our community and in particular with the veterans and their families who live in our community. Every dollar donated goes to those programs.

Feel free to contact **Dave Casteel** ([shilohcamas@comcast.net](mailto:shilohcamas@comcast.net)) or [CRMFpresident@comcast.net](mailto:CRMFpresident@comcast.net) or phone (360-834-2448) or me (**Frank Hill**) by email ([hillhouse2@comcast.net](mailto:hillhouse2@comcast.net)) or phone (360-241-8252) if you have any questions or need any additional information.

The Columbia River MOAA Foundation (CRMF) is an IRC 501(c)3 public charity to which donations are tax deductible. Our Federal tax ID# is 47-4776049.

## **Scholarship Corner 2021**

*by Paul Crosby*

It is November and I have the pleasure of announcing the four Chapter scholarship recipients for school year 2021 – 2022.

Here are the recipients of all four scholarships for this school year:

<b>Clark College Scholarships</b>		
Dillon Kelly	Physical Education	Colonel James Chriss
Christopher Bishop	Welding	Colonel Daniel Doty
Kelly Sauter	Digital Media Arts	Captain Robert Fenning
<b>WSU-Vancouver Scholarship</b>		
Justin Olmsted	Biology	Colonel Paul and Ivadell Crosby

It doesn't look like you or I will meet the scholarship recipients before the chapter's holiday social now planned for December 5th. You will be able to hear from the four recipients via Zoom

One final note. The chapter has updated the Clark College Foundation Endowment and the scholarship criteria now matches those in the WSU Foundation Gift Use Agreement

Hope to see you via Zoom at the holiday social on December 5th..



## MOAA Chapter Travel Forum Update

By Dan Sockle and Terry Babin

The following is a summary of key discussions from the Columbia River Chapter's third and fourth *Travel Forums* held the evenings of July 22<sup>nd</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup> as Zoom meetings.

**Special Note:** Apologies to all who had trouble joining the Zoom meeting on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Due to an unexpected problem in launching the meeting, we were 15 minutes late in getting started. Thank you to those who “hung in there” until we could get the electrons flowing.

Both sessions continued the discussion about planning trips and traveling during the pandemic. In general, the protocols, mandates, rules, and restrictions affecting travel vary and change frequently. Constant vigilance is required to keep current about vaccination documentation and testing requirements. For international travel, the Department of State's COVID site is a valuable “by country” information resource. To access that site, go to <https://travel.state.gov> and click on the International Travel tab. Airline and cruise line websites likewise are sources for current information.

Some updated reminders from prior Forum sessions:

- Do your research for travel and destinations early before booking to determine testing requirements and timelines.
- Check frequently for updates—the rules and restrictions often change without advance notice.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get appointments for pre-travel COVID tests and time to receive the results before check-in/arrival
- Some overseas hotels and resorts can help arrange tests for the return trip to the U.S.A.—costs vary—but expect to pay \$100, \$200, or more.
- Make sure you have a copy of all test results and other required COVID documentation on your cell phone as well as carrying printouts.

Items of interest and discussion during the July session:

- Airline, hotel, and rental car rates are increasing—with rapid and much higher price increases in some locations. Examples were given where prices encountered were double or more than the pre-pandemic rates. Not only have rates increased, but service and amenities have often decreased. Do not be surprised if you are paying more for less.
- Some travel agents, and our own members experiences, provided the following updates:
  - Reservations for popular airline routes and car rentals are booked out as far as 9 months in advance. Book even earlier if traveling with pets or need special accommodations.
  - Many popular tours and cruises for 2022 are already fully booked, and there is high demand for 2023 bookings. Because some carriers and tours (e.g., cruise lines) are only booking a percentage of their available spaces, more reservations might open in the future if there is international agreement on pandemic restrictions/requirements and documentation, and the risks of contracting COVID and its variants decrease.
  - Many of the “at home” COVID tests meet the requirements for travel, but the PCR test is still often required to enter another country—need to do the research for an individual itinerary.
  - Check the fine print on your travel insurance to make sure you have COVID coverage.



**Travel Forum Update continued**

Items of interest and discussion during the September session:

- The September Forum had a “subject matter expert” as a guest. Audrey Markham, International Travel Agent for AAA, furnished the following information and advice:
  - Cruises are happening. Most cancellations that occur are due to ship repositioning.
  - Travel restrictions in Europe are increasing. Being fully vaccinated is required. PCR tests are usually required for entry, and airlines and cruise lines will not allow you to board/travel without proof of meeting all requirements and restrictions of the destination country.
  - Order, before traveling, “at home” test kits for the return to the U.S. Some cruise lines are offering to sell the COVID test kits for pre-boarding by using their website and cruise line app.
- Part of the session was spent specifically on travel in Italy with one participant just having returned from there and two others getting ready to travel. Information was shared about the process to obtain Italy’s green COVID cards—required for Italians to enter most businesses, restaurants, etc. Could take several weeks to go through the process to obtain the Italian card. Travelers normally can show proof of vaccination in lieu of the card. If you want further information, contact Terry Babin at [tbear06@comcast.net](mailto:tbear06@comcast.net).
- Purchasing refundable tickets and travel/tour packages are strongly recommended. While most major airlines, cruise lines, and tour companies are flexible and try to help their customers, the smaller companies and regional carriers often will not give a credit voucher, permit re-booking, or charge hefty fees for changes. Of U.S. carriers, Delta was mentioned as the most cooperative with some complaints about American, United, and Alaska. Lufthansa was mentioned by a couple of participants as being inflexible and difficult.
- During the discussion about an upcoming Royal Caribbean Western Mediterranean cruise, the member booked on that cruise noted that to depart the ship during port calls, the passenger(s) must be booked as part of a shore excursion for that port.
  - For those of us who like to do our own thing while in port, this is an expensive and restrictive “liberty card.”
  - One member, booked on a Caribbean Celebrity cruise this December, decided to check this out further, and discovered the same requirement for all six of the Celebrity ship’s port stops.
  - The cruise lines currently are failing to give adequate visibility to this restriction on their websites or by sending notices to their “booked” passengers.
- Travel to multiple country destinations in one trip is becoming an overly complex planning nightmare—particularly if circumstance require booking date changes or cancellations. A likely future trend is limiting travel destinations to one or two countries and spending more time at each locale.
- Icelandair’s policy on allowing up to 7 day’s stay in Iceland and having the time included as continuous travel was discussed. Taking advantage of this “perk” was recommended by a Forum participant who has done so, but cautioned that Iceland is expensive to visit.
- The participation by a subject matter expert in the September Forum was an immense success. A recommendation was made that we invite another subject matter expert—sans any sales pitches—to participate in the next Forum. A further recommendation was made to invite a travel agent with notable experience in planning tours and river cruises. If you have any recommendations on specific subject matter experts who can give us travel insights in these challenging times, contact Terry Babin.

Next Travel Forum is scheduled for 7:30 PM on Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup>.



## Legislative Contacts

### MOAA Legislative Action Center

<http://www.moaa.org/Legislative/>

**MOAA Capitol toll free hotline** at 1-866-272-6622

### White House

Comments: 202-456-1111 Switchboard: 202-456-1414  
FAX: 202-456-2461 E-mail: [comments@whitehouse.gov](mailto:comments@whitehouse.gov)

### Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler Washington's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District

<http://herrerabeutler.house.gov/>

Washington, DC Office: U.S. House of Representatives 1107 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-3536 Fax: (202) 225-3478	Vancouver, WA Office: O.O. Howard House 750 Anderson Street, Suite B Vancouver, WA 98661 Phone: (360) 695-6292 Fax: (360) 695-6197
Contact Congresswoman Herrera Beutler via email: <a href="https://herrerabeutler.house.gov/contact/">https://herrerabeutler.house.gov/contact/</a>	

The U.S. Government's Portal: <http://www.usa.gov/>  
U.S. Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/>  
U.S. House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>



### U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell <http://cantwell.senate.gov/>

WASHINGTON, DC 511 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3441 202-228-0514 - FAX 202-224-8273 - TDD	SW WASHINGTON The Marshall House 1313 Officers Row Vancouver, WA 98661 360-696-7838 360-696-7844 - FAX	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 915 Second Avenue Suite 3206 Seattle, WA 98174. 206-220-6400 206-220-6404 - FAX
Contact Senator Cantwell via email: <a href="https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form">https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/contact/email/form</a>		

### U.S. Senator Patty Murray <http://murray.senate.gov/>

WASHINGTON, DC 154 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 Phone: (202) 224-2621 Fax: (202) 224-0238	SW WASHINGTON The Marshall House 1323 Officer's Row Vancouver, Washington 98661 Phone: (360) 696-7797 Fax: (360) 696-7798	SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 2988 Jackson Federal Building 915 Second Avenue Seattle, WA 98174 Phone: (206) 553-5545 Toll Free: (866) 481-9186 Fax: (206) 553-0891
Contact Senator Murray via email: <a href="https://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme">https://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme</a>		

## Vancouver Area Washington State Legislative Districts and Representatives

Legislator	District 49	District 17	District 18	District 14	District 20
Senator	Annette Cleveland 786-7696	Lynda Wilson 786-7632	Ann Rivers 786-7634	Curtis King 786-7626	Peter Abbarno 786-7638
Representative, Position 1	Sharon Wylie 786-7924	Vicki Kraft 786-7994	Brandon Vick 786-7850	Chris Corry 786-7810	Richard DeBolt 786-7896
Representative, Position 2	Monica Stonier 786-7872	Paul Harris 786-7976	Larry Hoff 786-7812	Gina Mosbrucker 786-7856	Ed Orcutt 786-7990

Note: All phone numbers are 360 area code, except where otherwise noted. Toll free **1-800-562-6000**  
More info at [www.leg.wa.gov/legislature](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature)



**Federal Legislative Update:**  
*by Buck Marr*

**The Little Engine that Could?** Written in 1930 and used to teach children the value of optimism and hard work.

I share this folktale with you because we all need optimism in watching the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress at work. The MOAA Nation needs to have optimism combined with ongoing hard work advocating to assure ourselves we will succeed at getting a viable National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as well as several other vital pieces of legislation. The annual National Defense Authorization Act is must pass legislation which has taken a way-back seat to Administration priorities and congressional “debate.” It’s considered **must-pass** because it authorizes pay increases for troops as well as hazard pay. Late passage of the NDAA by itself is no surprise given the Congress and White House haven’t passed on time funding for the government since FY97. What is noteworthy this year is that normally the bill is passed on a bipartisan basis. Not so this year, the bill is a political football in the discourse between left and right. The impact of a late NDAA is huge; the impact of it being kicked into 2022 on a continuing resolution would be unthinkable.

On May 28, the President submitted a \$715B proposal with SecDef asserting it was completely adequate. After a summer of successes and failures and a 14-hour review of 780 amendments, the House passed their \$740B NDAA version the first part of Sept. MOAA and its partners from The Military Coalition were tirelessly vigilant as they watched amendments come and go. The Senate Armed Service Committee [finalized](#) its version of the bill in July by a vote of 23-3 also adding \$25B. The full Senate has yet to begin debate. NDAA talking points:

**The Major Richard Star Act** was introduced as an amendment in both Houses. It would support 48,000 injured combatants with concurrent receipt of medical retired pay and VA disability. MOAA believes the Star Act can lead to concurrent receipt

for Chapter 61 retirees and those with a 40% VA rating and below.

**Arlington National Cemetery** eligibility has been controversial with most authorities disagreeing with the Army’s proposals. Both Houses have introduced amendments to modify the proposals significantly. The Senate version will likely win the day as it requires a new joint report from DoD and the VA and directs DoD to not change eligibility until after the report is submitted.

**DoD’s Planned Medical Billet Cuts** are addressed in the House version of the NDAA. It would halt DoD’s plan to cut medical billets for a year. It requires a GAO analysis of the planned cuts to include the impact on health care networks. MOAA expects the Senate to offer an amendment as well.

**Basic Needs Allowance Provisions** are included in both versions of the NDAA and hopefully authorize a new allowance for families that fall below a local poverty line. MOAA Advocacy in Action (AIA) work brought this the forefront. Unfortunately, another AIA initiative, **TRICARE Young Adult Parity** will not make either NDAA versions.

Additionally, the AIA initiative **Exposure to Toxic Substances** will not make the NDAA. Beyond the VA’s August announcement to cover asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis, there has been no significant advancement in this initiative while the VA continues to study the issue.

[Continued on page 9]





## **Federal Legislative Update continued**

Let's switch gears and take a look at another hot button issue. **COLA**. The cost-of-living adjustment of 5.9% is the largest in a very long time. And with that grows the opportunity and threat that Congress will take a portion of your earned benefit to pay for other non-military related programs.

There are numerous historical examples of Federal proposals to reduce a full COLA allowance as authorized by law. You all remember seven years ago when Congress attacked retiree benefits. MOAA joined forces with other veteran advocates to oppose and defeat "COLA minus 1%."



The NDAA does propose a 2.7% pay raise for active duty. But, don't let our legislators forget the parity with the civilian sector still lags because pay raises 2014-2017 were less than authorized creating the imbalance.

These are some of the hot button NDAA issues. There are a ton remaining. So at the time of this article, with about three weeks of legislative work left in the congressional calendar, our elected lawmakers still don't know when a NDAA vote will occur. And, of course, there needs to be time to negotiate a compromise in a conference committee. **"The little engine that could"** brings hope and optimism that a vote occurs with the details worked out in a meaningful way.

**Buck Marr**  
**Federal Legislative Affairs**



## Columbia River Chapter Membership 2021 Calendar Events

Date	Program	Speaker
November 18	<p>Traditional Thanksgiving</p> <p>We have scheduled a Zoom meeting, since our in-person social has been canceled due to COVID.</p> 	<p>From Rod, our Chapter President:</p> <p>While I am hopeful, we can return to in-person meetings in 2022 we are still scheduling our November and December 2021 meeting via ZOOM. In your email you should have receive an invite to our November 18th meeting that will begin at 1100 hours.</p> <p>Our guest speaker will be Retired Navy Commander <b>Jerry Jackson</b>, the Washington State Council of Chapters VP for Legislative Affairs. He will provide an overview of the October MOAA national convention and some information on state legislative activity as well.</p> <p>We will follow that with some discussion on our chapter advocacy in action role and what members can do to get more information and be involved. Looking forward to a robust conversation.</p>
December 5 3 to 6 pm	<p>We will schedule a Zoom meeting, since Annual In-Person Christmas Scholarship Dinner has been canceled due to COVID.</p>	<p>We will hold a ZOOM meeting.</p> <p>We look forward to meeting our four scholarship recipients</p> 

CRC Newsletter Schedule  
First week of month

November

December



Happy 246<sup>th</sup> Birthday USN  
13 October 2021!



Happy 246<sup>th</sup> Birthday USMC  
10 November 2021!