# 2025

# Mayport Navy League December Newsletter

**President – Bob Whitkop (904) 900-8934 http://www.mayportnlus.org**

## Calendar of Events

**December 4 - MNL BOD meeting at Ocean Breeze Conference Ctr 6:00pm**

**December 6 - FCC Annual Dinner Commemoration of the Attack on Pearl Harbor in Egret Hall at Cypress Village Retirement Community, 4600 Middleton Park Circle East 5:30pm cocktails; Dinner at 6:15pm, see the website for more info**

**December 7 - Pearl Harbor Remembrance**

**December 8 - MMDTG at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church 3-5pm**

**December 11 - Food Farmacy at Fleet Reserve Assoc at 390 Mayport Rd 10am-noon**

**December 14 - Hanukkah**

**December 18 - Food Farmacy at Fleet Reserve Assoc at 390 Mayport Rd 1 - 3pm**

**December 21 - Winter Solstice**

**December 25 - Christmas**

**December 26 - Kwanzaa**

**December 31 - New Years' Eve**

## USS St. Louis returns after short Deployment

The USS St. Louis (LCS 19) returned to Naval Station Mayport, FL, on November 10, 2025, after completing a 2-month surge deployment in the Gulf of America for the U.S. Northern Command.

The mission supported U.S. Northern Command's efforts to reinforce the southern border and defend the homeland through maritime interdiction operations with the U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment.

On a windy and cold day, a large crowd of ship families and friends welcomed the USS St. Louis back to homeport. Additionally, many sailors from adjacently moored ships joined in the welcome home.

In partnership, the U.S. Navy League Mayport Council and MOAA's Historic Mayport chapter had set up a table with snacks and refreshments for the return celebration. A special thanks to the welcoming team of Brian Kennedy, Andy Granuzzo, Mary Kluever and Pat Kluever for supporting the USS St. Louis crew and its families.

Photos by Pat Kluever

**SAVE THE DATE**

**MNL 2026 9th Mike McGrath Memorial Golf Tournament on 20 April 2026**

**Looking for corporate sponsor contacts- see John Strohofer at cjstrohofer@gmail.com**

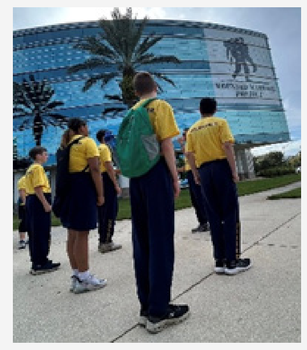
**The Mayport Navy League values membership volunteerism and support**

# SEA CADETS CORNER

# Sea Cadets November Drill

The Mayport Sea Cadets had a busy few days earlier this month. On 08 NOV, the Unit supported the Wounded Warrior Carry Forward 5K in Jacksonville.

Despite another early muster (0530) and chilly temperatures, 9 cadets and 6 adult volunteers helped to set up and distribute water to thousands of participants in the annual 5K event. The cadets had an opportunity to witness first-hand the love and support this community has for its wounded and fallen heroes.



Many participants ran in memory of, or for individuals who cannot. Some pushed wounded veterans in wheelchairs, helped them walk the course, and in a few cases, carried them across the finish line as the crowd cheered. It was a great experience for our cadets, and everyone involved. The event raised nearly $300K for Wounded Veterans.

Just a few days later, and several degrees colder, the cadets marched in the Kingsland GA Veterans Day parade. Temperatures in the mid-30s didn't deter our enthusiasm, or the crowd's spirit.

This was the second year in a row that Mayport chose to march in the Kingsland parade, and residents from around the area came out in honor of veterans and were happy the Mayport Division was there to help celebrate.

Next up for the Unit is our annual Award & Promotion Ceremony and Dinner in early December, followed by a break for the Holidays.

Happy Thanksgiving, the Mayport Sea Cadets are very grateful for your continued support.

*Summary and photos by Ron Harnek*

SEA CADETS

# USNA Signing Events

**On November 12th, St. Joseph's Academy in St. Augustine hosted a United States Naval Academy (USNA) Signing event where a recruited senior signed to play baseball at USNA.**

**The ceremony opened with the National Anthem and a prayer…George Huchting, attended and noted, "Looks like a fine young man from a great school."**

**At a different location but same event, high school senior Keegan Cornett, attended a USNA signing to play USNA soccer, the grandson of a special Shipmate and honorable man.**

**The Navy is the WINNER.**

**Story and photo by George Huchting**

**Are you interested in becoming a MNL Board Member? If so, contact Bob Whitkop for more information.**

# MILITARY MONDAYS-DINNERS TO GO

## and the government shutdown

## MMDTG

Chet Davis, Cindy Tomlin, Ann Bell, Melinda & Olivia-Chick-Fil-A, Barbara Ives

The Mayport Navy League Council (MNL) Military Monday- Dinner to Go is a monthly program that was launched in January 2025 to support our military and their families. This program has become highly popular.

On October 1st, after the 1st of the month military pay distribution, the government shutdown where only "essential" military operations continued and other military personnel furloughed, all creating uncertainty for families and food insecurities.

Brian Kennedy, Mike Marchetti, Barbara Ives, George Huchting, Ann Bell, Cindy Tomlin

The regularly scheduled MMDTG monthly event, funded by a MOAA grant, was October 6th, where 200 meals were distributed in less than 20 minutes. In support of our military and their families, MNL hosted another event on October 13th, the first paycheck period since the shutdown, and then another food event on October 20th. Each event ran out of food in less than 30 minutes with the carline growing at each food distribution. During this period, an incentive began to support military families through diaper and baby wipes distribution on MMDTG days. Many donations were received to include the Ponte Vedra Club Aqua Exercise Ladies, the South Jax Beach Community Coffee Group, Mayport Fleet Landing residents, and Beaches Chapel Bell Choir. Donations exceeded over 10,000 diapers and wipes and to date the donations continue even after the shutdown has ended. The average cost of one diaper box is $50.

MNL operates on a limited budget that depends on the annual golf tournament proceeds, but the food program operates soley on grants. Along with diaper donations, cash donations came in to support additional MMDTG efforts.

UNK, Barbara Ives, Elaine Kenney, Erin Sardiello

On November 3rd, 2nd military paycheck period since the shutdown, MNL decided to increase the number of meals from 200 to 300 due to local cash donations. The word spread and the carline began at 2pm, all waiting for the 3pm start time. The carline extended into the road, so the start time began at 2:40pm. The food was gone in 40 minutes and diapers were distributed.

Tee Trumbull, Carol Smith

Food insecurities existed before the government shutdown. With the shutdown, they heightened the anxieties and financial gap concerns amongst military families. The "bridge-the-gap" role of the MNL "Dinners to Go" became even more critical in the shutdown environment. With pay uncertainty, rising food prices, increased cost-of-living, military families faced tighter budgets and short-term food insecurity.

Why does this matter to our MNL members and community…MMDTG and Food Farmacy (FF) addresses a real need: many junior enlisted families (for example a married E-4 with 4 years' service and two children) monthly pay may be around $3,371, while cost-of-living for a family of four in Jacksonville is estimated at more than $6,005/month.

- The surge in food costs and the gap between military compensation and local cost of living means that even families with steady incomes can face lean weeks. "Food is essential… ask any Sailor before payday"
- As of January 2025, the program was serving about 188 dinners per period with just over 800 military members and families served annually — more than double the previous "No-Dough" dinners that MNL had run in partnership with the USO
- The "bridge-the-gap" role of the MNL "Dinners to Go" became even more critical in the shutdown environment.

Photos by George Huchtings

On November 12th the government shutdown ended, but with high food prices and increased cost-of-living, our Mayport military families continue to face tighter budgets and food insecurities. Increasing the importance of the MNL food programs.

Written by: Barbara Ives

**Are you interested in becoming a MNL Board Member? If so, contact Bob Whitkop for more information.**

# NS Mayport MWR Libby Swim Retires

Mayport Navy League President Bob Whitkop presents the Roll of Honor Certificate to Libby Swim

**Libby Swim retired from Naval Station Mayport on November 14th after nearly four decades of distinguished service in Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR) hospitality. Since 1986, she has been a cornerstone of Mayport's quality-of-life programs, most recently serving as Director of Hospitality for the Ocean Breeze Catering & Conference Center and Chief Petty Officers Club, where she oversaw dining, catering, and special events for Sailors, families, and retirees. Widely respected for her leadership, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to customer service, Libby played a vital role in creating a welcoming environment that supported the Fleet, the Fighter, and their Families. In recognition of her impact, she was named MWR Hospitality's Civilian of the Year for FY25 and was frequently honored as part of Mayport's award-winning MWR team.**

NS Mayport Commanding Officer, Captain Mike Trumbull presents a certificate of recognition and achievement to Libby Swim.

MNL members attending the ceremony and reception were: George Huchting, Brian Kennedy, Margaret Kennedy, Barbara Ives, and Bob Whitkop

---

## HO! HO! HO! Merry Christmas

### an early Christmas gift from Santa...

## The New Sea Cadet Building Sign

707A Everglades Court North

*Sea Cadets' Chief Petty Officer Harnek with Mayport Navy League Board Member Jim Young installing the new sign on 707A Everglades Court North on Naval Station Mayport. Looks Terrific...Well Done!*

*...And a Merry CHristmas to ALL...*

Photos by George Huchting

**The Mayport Navy League values membership volunteerism and support**

# Mayport Sea Cadets Support Wreaths Across America

**The Mayport Sea Cadets will again participate in placing Wreaths Across America (WAA) at the Jacksonville National Cemetery on Saturday, December 13th.**

**By contributing to WAA, you are supporting Mayport Sea Cadets. Each $17 sponsorship supports WAA's yearlong program by placing a live, balsam Veteran's wreath on the headstone of an American hero as we endeavor to honor all Veterans laid to rest as part of National Wreaths Across America Day.**

**Please consider participating in this special program. Your sponsorship honors those who served and supports the Mayport Sea Cadet training programs.**

**"We are so grateful to the good people of this great nation for participating in our mission to Remember, Honor, Teach." said Karen Worcester, Executive Director of Wreaths Across America.**

**To sponsor a wreath and support the Sea Cadets, click on the link below.**

**http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/FL0943P**

**The Mayport Navy League values membership volunteerism and support**