2026
Mayport Navy League April Newsletter

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

Calendar of Events

April 1 - Passover Begins

April 2 - MNL BOD meeting at Ocean Breeze Conference Ctr 6:30pm. All Mayport Navy Leaguers invited!

April 5- Easter

April 9 - Food Parmacy at Fleet Reserve Assoc at 390 Mayport Road 10am-noon

April 13 - MMDTG at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church parking lot. 3-5pm

April 15 - Tax Day

April 20 - MNL 9th Annual Mike McGrath Memorial Golf Classic begins at 7:30am

April 22 - Earth Day

April 23 - Food Farmacy at Fleet Reserve Assoc at 390 Mayport Rd 10am-noon

April 24 - MNL Social TBD

April 28 - Sailor of the Quarters 1 & 2 Awards Luncheon at Ocean Breeze Conference Ctr , 11:30 am

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

USS Billings Deploys after 4 years

On March 27th, the USS Billings (LCS 15) deployed on its first long deployment since 2022.

The USS Billings is assigned to the U.S. 4th Fleet supporting the U.S. Southern Command's joint and combined military operations by employing maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships to enhance regional security and promote peace, stability and prosperity in the Caribbean, Central and South American region. USS Billings' current deployment assignment has not been published.

USS Billings is assigned to Littoral Combat Ship Squadron (LCSRON) 2 and homeported in Mayport, Florida. A LCS is built to be a fast, agile, mission focused warship designed to operate in near-shore environments to counter 21st-century threats. The USS Billings is a Freedom class monohull vessel designed for operations in coastal waters. Their modular mission packages allow rapid reconfiguration for mine-countermeasures, surface warfare, or anti-submarine missions with speeds exceeding 40 knots.

Family members and friends arrived early to say farewell to the Billings' crew. MWR, Fleet & Family Services, Mayport Navy League members, and ombudsmen who tearfully remained pier side with supporting services and encouragement.

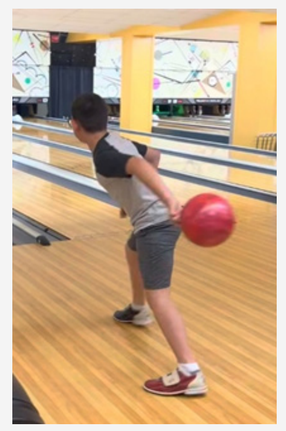
Best wishes for a successful deployment with following seas to USS Billings and its crew.

The Mayport Navy League values membership volunteerism and support

SEA CADETS CORNER

Sea Cadets March Drill

On Saturday, March 7th, the Mayport Sea Cadets participated in an Annual Inspection conducted by USN Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) Regional Director Chief Billy Price, USN (Ret). The inspection included a detailed review of the unit record keeping, drill schedule, and activities as well as a financial audit. Cadets were required to prepare and wear their dress white uniform according to USNSCC standards as well as memorize Sea Cadet general knowledge such as the 11 General Orders and the Sea Cadet Oath. Our division received an overall score of 90%. Areas of improvement for this year include recruitment of new cadets and improving military bearing.



Once inspection was completed, the unit celebrated at the base Pinz & Spinz for some well-deserved team building, bowling, and chow.

Unit activities took a brief hiatus due to Spring Break and cadets returned on 28 MAR. We will cover that drill next month, along with April's activities.

Sea Cadet Oath: *I promise to serve faithfully, honor our flag, abide by Naval Sea Cadet Corps Regulations, and carry out the orders of the officers appointed over me, and so conduct myself as to be a credit to myself, my unit, the Naval Sea Cadet Corps, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and my country.*

Story and Photos from Ron Harnek

MILITARY MONDAYS-DINNERS TO GO(MMDTG) and FOOD FARMACY (FF)

On March 9th with volunteer support from Naval Station Mayport, Mayport Navy League, and MOAA Fleet Landing to set up two distribution sites, one for food and the other for diapers.

Everyone was assigned tasks: Barbara Ives flagged people into the event from Assisi Lane, Tee Trumbull checked IDs, Tim Jenkins directed traffic, Carol Smith and Cindy Tomlin recorded the number of meals needed and placed a tag on the windshield of each vehicle, Chet Davis let the food team know how many adult and kids meals to deliver, and the food team consisted of George Huchting, Mike Marchetti, Andy Granuzzo, Mary Ellen Granuzzo, and Jeff Servello from St John's. Erin Sardiello and Cindy Tronsrue handled the diaper and baby wipes station, and Pat Kluever took pictures and helped where needed.

As usual, the carline began early and served 250 family members in less than 90 minutes. With the car flow noticeably lessening, the group packed up. Tee Trumbull and Erin Sardiello took the remaining 50 meals to the Base Security building to share with their watch team.

Story and Photos by Pat Kluever

Many thanks to those who helped with this event, especially St John the Baptist Catholic Church staff and our volunteers. A special THANK YOU to all the donors for their support and to the Cypress Village residents who donated baby wipes.

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

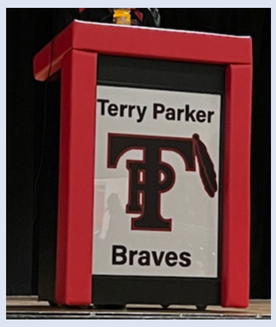
Terry Parker High School 2026 NJROTC Award Ceremony

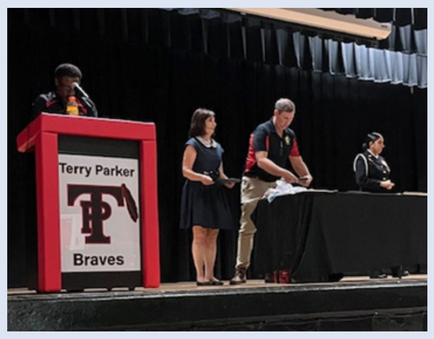
On Thursday, March 26th, Terry Parker High School Navy Junior ROTC had their annual Awards Ceremony. The ceremony opened at 6pm with AGC (AW/SW), Dwayne Tinney followed by CDR (ret) Mike Lee.

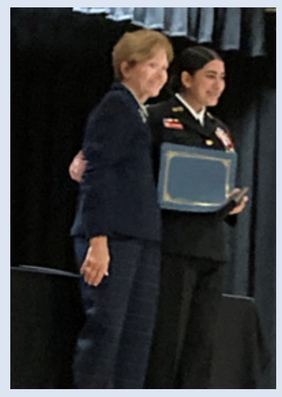
The program included two sections: community leader presentations and cadet unit recognitions. The Mayport Navy League (MNL) participated in the community recognition portion along with almost twenty other organizations. The cadet unit recognition section was led by CDR Lee and Cadet Commander Yusur Almkhafree, the most senior cadet in the unit and our MNL awardee.

Due to recent events, the Navy issued a directive to temporarily suspend wearing the uniform for the cadets and instructors. Everyone one wore their black/red TPHS shirts except for the graduating seniors shown in full uniform.

Mayport Navy League was represented by RADM (ret) George Huchting and CAPT (ret) Barbara Ives. Captain (retired) Barbara Ives presented the Theodore Roosevelt Youth Medal and a $500 scholarship check to Cadet Commander Yusur Almkhafree and then shared a few remarks to the cadet unit.







History of MNL Mike McGrath Annual Golf Tournament

Story written by George Huchting

Commander (CDR) J. Mike McGrath USN was born in rural Vermont and enlisted in the USN in 1954 as a Fireman Recruit, promoted to Chief Boiler Tender at which time he received his commission as an Engineering Limited Duty Officer (LDO).

As an Engineering LDO, he was assigned to engineering billets in various cruisers and destroyers where he earned his qualifications as an Officer of the Deck - underway, Combat Information Center Evaluator, and Command Duty Officer. Screened and promoted, he was selected for Command at Sea and commanded the fleet tug USS Atakapa (ATF149). CDR McGrath's last active duty was as Commanding Officer of the Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) in Mayport, and he was awarded the Legion of Merit for his service.

Upon retiring from active duty in the Navy, CDR McGrath and his wife, Gloria, joined the Mayport Navy League (MNL) and were active in the Mayport Council - serving in various offices and as the President of the MNL Council. CDR McGrath continued to serve then selected for the National Navy League Florida Area and Region Presidents with a follow-on position as on the National Navy League Board and later elected as National President of the Navy League. For his service to the Navy League, CDR McGrath was awarded the Navy Meritorious Public Service Medal as the Navy League National President.

In memory of both Gloria and Mike McGrath, Navy League members throughout the organization established the "Gloria and Mike McGrath Scholarship with the Navy League Foundation."

CDR Mike McGrath loved golf and considered his score card his "handicap!" In recognition and support of his favorite support and dedication to the Navy League and its work, the MNL leadership named the Golf Classic in CDR Mike McGrath's honor.

April 20th Golf Tournament Details:

- **Check-in / Registration Time: 7:30am**
- **Opening Ceremony: 9:00am** Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence, Admin/Rules of Play
- **Shotgun Scramble: immediately following the ceremony**
- **Scorecard Turn-in/ Silent Auction/ Social Hour: 1:30pm**
- **Lunch & Awards: 2:00pm**

Mayport Navy League Mike McGrath Memorial Golf Classic

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

Navy League Mayport Council hosts the 9th Annual Mike McGrath Memorial Golf Classic on Monday, April 20th

Dear MNL Members,

Please consider being a part of the MNL ONLY annual fundraiser at the Windy Harbor Golf Club at Naval Station Mayport. The day promises to be a fantastic day of golf, camaraderie, and competition.

Even if you cannot play, you can participate by volunteering your time or sponsoring or donating to this special event. Your support of this event will allow MNL to continue its many activities that support the Mayport Navy Station and, importantly, our military members and their families.

Below is a list of MNL activities:

Trident Ministry These programs are sponsored by military friendly organizations, companies, and clubs. MNL attends monthly meetings and provides support and time.

Annual Golf Tournament This is MNL's largest and only fundraiser which helps support the year-long activities.

Military Monday- Dinners-to-Go: Prepared dinners are distributed on the Monday before the 15th of the month just before the military payday when funds are limited.

Funeral Support: Collaborates and manages the uniform cleaning for funeral honor guards.

Sailor of the Quarter (SOQ) and Sailor of the Year (SOY): Hosts with partners support the SOQ and SOY recognition luncheons.

Mayport Sea Cadet Corps: Directly supports the Mayport Sea Cadet (ages 10- 18 years old) program.

Annual Sword Presentations: Presented to the Outstanding Midshipman assigned to the Jacksonville University NROTC.

Theodore Roosevelt Youth Medal Presentation: Supports Terry Parker (TP) High School NJROTC and the Mayport Sea Cadets with the Theodore Roosevelt Youth Medal and a $500 scholarship presented to both the TP NJROTC and our Mayport Sea Cadets.

Food Farmacy: Collaborates with JMAVD to provide sailors and their families with food twice a month.

Ship Greeting: Provides small American flags to everyone greeting Naval Station Mayport ships returning from deployment.

Socials: No-host monthly membership social at various locations throughout the area.

MNL Officer and Director board meetings: Held on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30pm at the Ocean Breeze Conference Center

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Attached are golf tournament sponsor and donation opportunities.

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