2026

Mayport Navy League September Newsletter

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

Calendar of Events

September 3 - MNL BOD meeting at 6:30pm at the Ocean Breeze Conference Ctr. All Welcome!

September 7 - Labor Day

September 10 - Food Farmacy at Fleet Reserve Assoc at 390 Mayport Road 9am-11am

September 11 - Patriot 9/11 Remembrance; Rosh Hashanah begins

September 14 - Military Monday-Dinners-to-Go resumes at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church at 3pm

September 16 - VUP-19 Drone Tour 11am-3pm...meet at 11am at Bogeys for lunch then tour afterwards. RSVP needed.

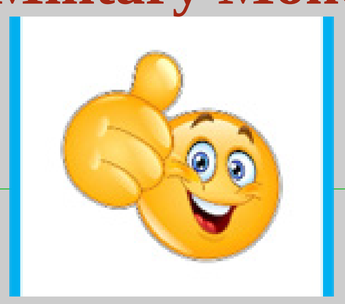
September 17 - Constitution Day

September 18 - National POW/MIA Recognition Day

September 22 - Autumnal Equinox (first day of Fall)

September 24 - Food Farmacy at Fleet Reserve Assoc at 390 Mayport Road 9am - 11am

Military Monday: Dinners-to-Go resumes on September 14th at 3pm at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church on Mayport Rd.



POC Tim Jenkins

See you soon! radmjenkins@yahoo.com

Welcome Home USS Thomas Hudner

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) returned to Naval Station Mayport on August 9th, concluding an almost nine-month deployment in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Red Sea in support of the U.S. 4th, 5th and 6th Fleet areas of operations.

The destroyer left on Dec. 1 for the U.S. 4th Fleet. Then in February, five days before the U.S. and Israel launched an offensive against Iran, the USS Thomas Hudner was in the Mediterranean. On April 6, USS Thomas Hudner was operating in the Red Sea, where it remained until mid-July when the destroyer began its journey home to Mayport.

"Over the past almost nine months, this crew has demonstrated exceptional resilience and tactical proficiency across three different fleets," said Cmdr. David Cook, commanding officer, USS Thomas Hudner. "Their dedication is unmatched, and we are absolutely thrilled to be back in Mayport to reunite with the families and loved ones whose unwavering support made our success possible."

USS Thomas Hudner is a multi-mission guided-missile destroyer capable of air warfare (AW), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), naval surface fire support (NSFS), and surface warfare (SUW). The ship carries approximately 300 Sailors.

The ship proudly bears the name of Medal of Honor recipient Captain Thomas J. Hudner, Jr., who received the nation's top military honor for his heroic and selfless actions while attempting to save the life of his wingman, Ensign Jesse L. Brown.

The Mayport Navy League values membership volunteerism and support

SEA CADETS CORNER

Sea Cadets September Update

Over the summer, the Unit leadership has focused on recruiting with hope of growing the Unit by 3-5 cadets. On August 15th, the Mayport Sea Cadets hosted their Open House and Back to Drill event at the unit house on NS Mayport. In addition to nine returning cadets and families, five interested cadets attended with their parents. The day included an information session for new and returning parents, sea stories from cadets who attended summer training, and hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch (chow)!

Importantly, ATAN Anthony Dimura has agreed to be the Unit's Executive Officer (XO) this year. Dimura was a Sea Cadet at the Freedom Battalion in Orlando prior to joining the US Navy, and he is now stationed at NS Mayport. He served as a Midshipman for us last year and is now stepping into the XO role with increased responsibilities. Dimura will work with the Unit's Commanding Officer on planning and executing drills throughout the year, as well as providing direction to and mentoring the Unit's Petty Officers. Dimura's experience as a Sea Cadet, and his status as an Active-Duty Navy serviceman make him a valuable resource to the Mayport Sea Cadet Division. The unit leadership is grateful for his continued commitment to the program.

The next drill is scheduled for August 29th, and it will include a cadet promotion and a "Fleeting Up" from League Cadet to Sea Cadet. These updates will be provided in the October Newsletter. Thank you for your ongoing support of the Mayport Sea Cadets!

Story by Ron Harnek

MILITARY MONDAYS-DINNERS TO GO (MMDTG)

and FOOD FARMACY (FF)

Mayport Navy League's (MNL) Military Monday–Dinners to Go (MMDTG) food program resumes on Monday, September 14th from 3-4pm at the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church on Mayport Road. For the 14th, MNL funds for 300 meals will be available to include a choice of a Chick-a-Filet sandwich or nuggets, chips, and a bottled water.

MMDTG was created to support our Mayport area Active Duty Sea service members and their families by providing hot and nutritious prepared meals before the 15th of the month payday, when food funds are limited. This program helps lessen food insecurities, reduces the financial challenges of food costs, assists military families with deployed Active-Duty spouses, increases morale for our local military families, and helps build community support.

MMDTG is an organized drive-through distribution circuit. Participating military families remain in their vehicles and follow the designated traffic route to the pickup area. Volunteers greet each family, confirm participation by checking for an Active Duty ID, and then distribute hot meals to the family members. This convenient format provides a safe, efficient, and welcoming way for families to receive a ready-to-serve meal while keeping traffic moving smoothly.

MMDTG is one of two MNL food programs. Food Farmacy (FF) is the other food program that offers fresh food twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at the Mayport Fleet Reserve Bldg. The MNL supports the FF by distributing $25 commissary gift cards to supplement the food line groceries with funds for food preparation and ethnic foods or spices.

MNL food program is supported by proceeds from our golf tournament, community partners and sponsors, and generous donors. Its food program volunteers provide the manpower, enthusiasm, and good-heartedness that sustains our programs.

Article by Barbara Ives

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

VUP 19 Drone Tour on September 16th from 11am – 3pm

Mark your calendars…September 16th for lunch and drone tour at Naval Station Mayport. The day will begin at Bogey's Golf Club restaurant at 11 am followed by a guided tour of the Unmanned Patrol Squadron (VUP) 19.
There is availability for 10-15 interested MNL members and their friends. To make a reservation, contact Bob Whitkop at bwhitkop@gmail.com.

Fred Berley

What does being a Mayport Navy League member mean to you?

Being a Mayport Navy League member allows me to pursue my passion for serving while staying connected to our local military community. I especially value the friendships and camaraderie among members and our shared commitment to supporting service members, veterans, and their families.

Short Biography:

Fred Berley is a native of Jacksonville. He graduated from Bishop Kenny High School in 1974. He attended Tulane University and graduated from Florida State University in the spring of 1980. He also holds a Master of Science degree in Administration from Central Michigan University. In November of that year, he joined the U.S. Navy and was commissioned as an Ensign in May of 1981. He made a career as a Surface Warfare Officer and spent 21 years in various assignments with his last active-duty assignment as the Naval Station Mayport Executive Officer (XO).

He remained in Jacksonville after his retirement. Then began work as the General Manager of HMS Global Maritime for the St. Johns River Ferry Service for 10 1/2 years. Fred, presently, works for the City of Jacksonville, as a supporting accredited Veterans Service Officer, and as the Jacksonville Military Affairs and Veterans Department Operations Manager. His job involves planning and executing City sponsored events including Jacksonville's annual Homeless Veteran Standdown, annual Memorial Day Remembrance Ceremony, Purple Heart Ceremony, Veterans Day Parade and Navy / Army Football Game Watch Party.

Fred, sadly lost his first wife, Sherri, to breast cancer in 2017. He married his lovely, wife, Jean in 2019. They have 9 grandchildren among them, all of whom live in Jacksonville and surrounding area. He will retire from the City in June of 2027, and plans travel with Jean to Europe and places within the United States neither of them has visited.

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

Navy Ball sponsorship support needed

Greetings Fellow American Patriots,

This year, on 24 October 2026, Jacksonville area sailors celebrate 251 years of global U.S. Navy power, and 250 years of American freedom.

During the year these men and women crewed ships, submarines and planes from our area to protect shipping from drones in the Red Sea, topple a dictator and free the Venezuelan people, cut-off drug shipments to our borders, contain a murderous regime in Iran, and maintain a nuclear deterrent against global war. And our Jacksonville sailors remain on watch around the globe, and in harm's way even today.

Mayport Navy League asks for your financial assistance to honor our sailors' service this year in support of their celebratory October event at Naval Station Mayport. Support by your organization will be visible to sailors on your table, along the red-carpet entry, and in the event program; and I know each honoree will be grateful for your support. In recognition of your support, you will receive a "Navy Memories" Gift Set, and other valuable items based on the level of your donation.

Your donation is requested by the U.S. Navy League, Mayport Florida Council, a 501-C-3 charitable non-profit supporting Naval Station Mayport. Please make your donation check payable to "Mayport NLUS", with Memo: "NB251" and mail the check to "Mayport Florida Council, P.O. Box 33194, Atlantic Beach, FL 32233".

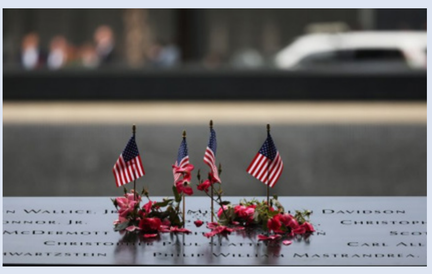
As part of your "Navy Memories" Gift Set you will receive a Thank You letter noting that your charitable donation is tax deductible. If you have questions or desire alternate methods of payment, contact patkluever@gmail.com or (540) 775-4955

DONATION RECOGNITIONS

- **$500 Donation:**
  - "Navy Memories" Gift Set delivered post event
- **$1,000 Donation:**
  - "Navy Memories" Gift Set delivered post event, and
  - Donor's Name Placard on a Table
- **$2,500 Donation (*):**
  - "Navy Memories" Gift Set delivered post event, and
  - Donor's Name Placard on a Table, and
  - Thank You Placard on Red Carpet Entry Lane, and
  - One Seat at a Head Table, and
  - An advertising photo op with key team members
- **$5,000 Donation (*):**
  - "Navy Memories" Gift Set delivered post event, and
  - Donor's Name Placard on a Table, and
  - Thank You Placard on Red Carpet Entry Lane, and
  - Up to two (2) Seats at a Head Table, and
  - An advertising photo op with key team members
- **$7,500 Donation (*):**
  - "Navy Memories" Gift Set delivered post event, and
  - Donor's Name Placard on a Table, and
  - Thank You Placard on Red Carpet Entry Lane, and
  - Up to three (3) Seats at a Head Table, and
  - Opportunity to welcome attendees during opening ceremony, and
  - An advertising photo op with key team members

Patriot 9/11 Remembrance

The Patriot Day 9/11 Remembrance is a time to honor the nearly 3,000 lives lost on September 11, 2001, and to remember the courage of the first responders, service members, and ordinary citizens who acted with extraordinary bravery. It reminds us that freedom is precious and that our nation is strongest when we stand together.



For communities of Veterans, Military, Firefighters, and First Responders, the remembrance has special meaning. It honors those who answered the call to serve following the attacks, including the many service members and families who endured deployments, sacrifice, injury, and loss. Patriot Day encourages us to remember the fallen, support those who protect our country, and renew our commitment to unity, service, and hope.

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