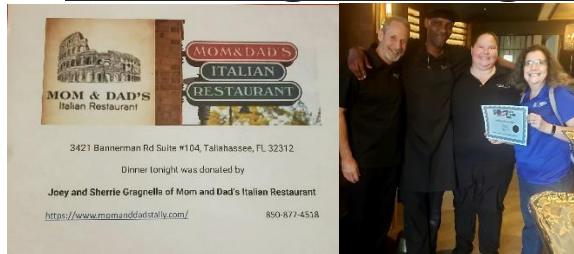




October 2023

Mission: Becoming Visible

## October gathering-Election Results and more



Thanks to Mom and Dad's Restaurant

3421 Bannerman Rd. Joey and Sherrie Gragnella for the food donation. Debra Mann presents the staff at Mom and Dad's with a Certificate of Appreciation. Cindy Laskowski provided the delicious chocolate cake and gluten free cheesecake.



Debra Mann, Sandi Smith-Anderson and Shirley Combass celebrate Oct birthdays



Group shot



Executive Board: Karen Bauer, Armed Forces Liaison, Gwen Jamerson, Membership Chair, Audrey Alexander, President, Paula Hubert, Vice President, Shirley Combass, Treasurer, Muriel Kweyama, Civilian Liaison, Sandi Smith-Anderson, Secretary



### **Officers**

Audrey Alexander, President  
Paula Hubert, Vice-President  
Shirley Combass, Treasurer  
Sandi Smith-Anderson  
Ready to Kick-Off the year!

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After introduction of new people and celebration of October birthdays, Pia Woodley and the Nomination/Election/Bylaws committee proceed with the elections. Unopposed candidates were voted in. The Vice-President position was voted on and Paula Hubert won. Audrey thanked outgoing Vice-President, Debra Mann, and Secretary, Karen Bauer for their participation and support to the organization the past two years. She went on to update members regarding room rental fee increase at the American Legion Hall-\$75.00 per

night. She reviewed with Special Events committee members the evaluation of the Hallo Dance Fundraiser. There was limited turn out. The Special Events committee will reevaluate when they meet. The Cardboard Boat race was a success, with WVU placing third. Participation in this event supported the American Legion Saul-Bridges Post #13 in their fundraiser. Audrey advised that from now on anyone wanting to create an item with the WVU logo must get approval from the board. We want to protect our brand.



Audrey Alexander  
President



This is Audrey's third year as President and her goal is to continue to facilitate the evolution and growth of Women Veterans Unite.

Retired Maj. Audrey Alexander is a native of Georgia. She enlisted in the Florida National Guard in January 1989 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in December 1992, having completed her requirements from the Florida A&M University (FAMU) Army ROTC program and receiving a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from FAMU. Her assignments included 1035th Medical Detachment, Tallahassee, Florida; 708th Maintenance Company, Quincy, Florida; State

Headquarter, St. Augustine, Florida; 257th Transportation Battalion, Gainesville, Florida; and 387th TTOE, Tampa, Florida. Alexander was deployed with the 743rd Maintenance Company, Fort Lauderdale, Florida to Iraq from February 2003 to 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. During her tour, she served as a community outreach coordinator and received the Bronze Star for her implementation and execution of Operation Pencil, and Adopt-A-School project. Audrey retired from the Florida National Guard after serving 24 years of service.

Alexander is currently employed with the FAMU Department of Campus Safety and Security and has been a sworn police officer in the department for 25 years. In addition to her bachelor's degree, Alexander also earned a master's degree in public administration,

and a master's degree in adult education from FAMU.

She is a member of several professional and civic organizations, including the FAMU Army ROTC Alumni, Military Officers Association of America, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Alpha Upsilon Zeta, Gamma Sigma Sigma National Service S #6 Order of Eastern Star, Prince Hall Affiliated.

On her off-time Audrey likes water activities and time with friends and family.



**Paula Hubert, Vice-President**



Paula served 22 years in the US Navy performing in various positions: auxiliary repair tender while on USS Jason stationed in Hawaii; Personnel support and administrative duties as well as training with SEAL Team 5.

She retired from the service in August 2003 and returned to Tallahassee with husband Dave. She was working at the Pulmonary and Sleep Unite at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital until her recent retirement of October 19, 2023.

When asked what her favorite duty station was: USS Jason-and why not? Hawaii, star-gazing on gun mounts, Indian Ocean, meeting her husband, Dave and like practically no other woman in the Navy back in bygone days—serving on a ship.

As Vice-President she wants to get the word out that women veterans exist and matter. She believes we can accomplish this through community service and outreach, website, newsletters, word of mouth and other means. Let's support each other through our monthly meetings, various programs such as PTSD, suicide prevention, disability, and other programs as needed.

Now that she's retired, she plans on spending time with family and some of her relaxing passions like fishing and photography.



**Gwen Jamerson, Membership Chair**



Gwendolyn Jamerson is a native Floridian. She joined the Army in 1987 serving as an Administration Sergeant until her discharge in 1997. Some of her tours of duty included: Germany, Ft. Myers, Virginia, Pentagon, Korea and Alexandria, Va. Gwen attended Lively College for record keeping and TCC for nursing. She was working at the Bureau of Admissions and Release until 2022, but now works as a personal care aide. She lives with her daughter, Kimberly. When not making hand made cards for WVU members or gathering items for the WVU

welcome packets, you can find Gwen watching tennis, reading FBI novels, crocheting, and spending time with her daughter and family.

### **Karen Bauer Armed Forces Liaison**



Karen shifted gears from Secretary to Armed Forces Liaison. Her goal is to continue to be out in the community educating the public about women veterans.

Karen joined the student nurse program in 1971 and in 1972 was commissioned into the Army Nurse Corps. She spent her time in service at Ft. Polk, LA. After her military time, she worked for 50 years as a RN in a variety of settings. The last 30 in home care. She moved to Tallahassee, FL from New York in 2017 to

assist her elderly, widowed mother. Karen is a widow, has no children and besides time with WVU she volunteers at Elder Care Services of Big Bend in their garden. She's an avid cyclist, reader and loves to write.



### **Muriel Kweyama Civilian Liaison**



Though Muriel's father prevented her from joining the military, she comes from a military strong family. She's a "Gold Star" sister because her younger brother, Lance Corporal Clemon Alexander, died in the bomb blast in Beirut, Lebanon, on October 23, 1983. On Monday, October 23, 2023 her

brother was remembered in a ceremony in Monticello. (See below) She joined the American Legion Auxiliary in 2010 and gained an acute awareness of the unmet needs of female veterans. She began keeping a record of female veterans she'd meet and would send cards with lottery tickets on the major holidays. Seeking ways to help women come together and socialize to share their common experiences she began hosting, "Female Veterans Reunions;" the first one held on November 19, 2019. The second reunion was held on Nov. 19, 2020. From these gatherings the group of women veterans grew and began meeting on a regular basis. In April 2021 the group voted on the name, "Women Veterans Unite," and in September 2021 the Articles of Incorporation formalized the organization. Muriel is excited to be an "honorary woman veteran," and remains

committed to watching her brainchild blossom. In her role as President of the 2<sup>nd</sup> district American Legion Auxiliary, she continues to recruit new members and educate the public that women are veterans too.



Public Information Officer Kimberly Homer attends the Memorial Service for Clemon Alexander (below)



### Shirley Combass Treasurer



Shirley holds a B.A. in Business Administration and holds a Green Belt in Six Sigma. She is a certified instructor/trainer and facilitator. Shirley is a talented, high energy, results driven professional with over 28 years of military and 32 years state government experience progressively responsible management experience, which includes a repertoire of skills in leadership, process and performance management, strategic planning, emergency management and safety, human resources, and quality management. She also has experience as an examiner for the

Florida Sterling Council. Additional experience includes meeting management and facilitation, team building strategies, training and development, and process reengineering. Shirley holds her Florida Certified Contract Management and Project Management Professional (PMP) Certifications. She retired from the Army as a First Sergeant (1SG). She has traveled all over the United States except for Alaska which she will be cruising in May 2024. Shirley currently works for the Florida Department of Financial Services in the Florida PALM project as the Project Management Office Lead. Shirley enjoys being with her family, celebrating birthdays and holidays. She also enjoys hiking, biking, fishing, reading, gardening, and getting to know other cultures and customs.



Shirley in uniform

**Sandi Smith  
Anderson  
Secretary**



Sandi M. Smith Anderson was born and raised in Tallahassee, Florida. She is the

proud mother of her handsome and charming son, Darryl “D Jai” Bohler II who attends Tallahassee Community College. She is a remarkable individual known for her contributions to any activity she is engaged in. She is also a veteran having served in the U.S. Army during the Persian Gulf War. In addition, she comes from a family of Army veterans of World War II and the Vietnam War respectfully. Her hobbies include traveling abroad, yoga, meditation, gardening and collecting Black Santa’s. Sandi is a member of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Tallahassee. From an early age, Sandi displayed a deep love for the natural world. Growing up in the midst of lush canopy oaks on the north east side of Tallahassee, her passion for nature was nurtured. This passion, led her to a service commitment to the United States Army while she attended Florida A&M University (FAMU) as

an undergraduate student. Sandi’s journey truly began when she joined the FAMU Army ROTC Battalion as a freshman in college in 1984. In 1989, Sandi was off to the U.S. Army as a 2nd LT for Officer Basic Training in Ft. Lee, VA. After completing training, she was assigned to the 24th Infantry Division in Ft. Stewart, Georgia and while her tenure at Ft. Stewart, she was deployed to the Persian Gulf. She served eight months in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. She served in the Inactive Reserve for 10+ years and was promoted to Captain, U.S. Army. After her successful active-duty military career, she departed the service in the summer of 1993. With more than 19 years of human resources experience in higher education, military experience, and the private sector. In 2022, Sandi founded her own LLC organization, “The Sankofa Literacy Arts Center”, which is a unique educational institution aimed at

promoting literacy and creativity among children and adults. Stay tuned for more news about her organization. Sandi holds a Masters in Applied Social Science specializing in personnel management and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. Sandi has a diverse employment history having worked in both private and public sectors; The Quaker Oats Company – Gatorade Division, Florida Board of Regents, Boise Cascade/Schenck Company, Florida State University and most recently Florida A&M University (FAMU). Today, Sandi M. Smith Anderson remains a prominent figure in the fields of human resources and community outreach.



**Women  
Veterans Unite**  
\$WVUnite

Membership \$25.00

due October 1

Cash, check or cash  
app (see above)

Unite is a 501c3 non-profit. The mission is to provide a safe place for women veterans to connect and get resources they need.

## Getting Connected

VA Health Eligibility-  
Ronald Arinah

[Arinah@va.gov](mailto:Arinah@va.gov)

850-513-7650

VA Patient Rep-  
Terrance White

850-513-7640 or

[terrance.white1@va.gov](mailto:terrance.white1@va.gov)

## Tallahassee

### Veterans Legal

**Collaborative-FREE  
legal** information and

help with disability or  
homeless issues meets

every Thursday from 3  
pm to 5 pm at the

American Legion Hall  
Lake Ella Drive. Walk

in encouraged.

### DAV Debra Mann

850-272-6170

Disability Claims

Disabled Veterans

Outreach Program

### Brooklyn Enders

443-621-0579

Job information and  
retraining



## Big Bend 211

<https://211bigbend.org/>

Just as you would call 9-1-1 for emergencies, you can call 211 for **human service information and assistance**. They have people available **24 hours a day** to listen and provide **emotional support, crisis counseling, suicide prevention, and information & referrals**. You do not have to be in crisis to call, there is no eligibility criteria, and our services are free. They help you navigate through the maze of community services in a nonjudgmental manner. Because life is 24/7, so are

## Massage from VA

### Zeel network

<https://www.zeel.com/va/>

To qualify: A consult for community care **massage** is from the primary care provider who needs to document 2 active therapies completed in the past 18 months or 1 active therapy and 3 Whole Health visits in the last 18 mos.

What are the active therapies at NF/SG VA:

Art Therapy, Battlefield acupuncture, cognitive behavior therapy for insomnia, exercise in the community, intervention pain clinic, meditation, Tele Move or nutritional referral, pain school, primary care pain clinic, PT/OT (not just one visit for equipment) Pool therapy, recreational therapy, smoking cessation, Tai Chi, Whole health coaching, yoga.

The focus of this program is for the veteran to take a

proactive approach to augmenting the medical care with interventions that complement their care.

## WVU Holiday Reunion/Party

**Thursday, December 21, 2023 at the Holiday Inn on Apalachee Parkway**



Lou Ogburn donated 9 winter coats and vests that she wanted to give to women veterans. There are two raincoats, winter jackets and overcoats. Karen Bauer will bring the coats to the November 16, 2023 gathering for distribution. If you know of anyone who can benefit, call Karen at 914-772-5915.

## Cardboard Boat Race 2023



Celia Suluki and Stormie Doyle co-captains for the **Cardboard Boat Race**



Women Veterans Unite competed in the second annual Cardboard Boat Race at Maclay Park.

The event was a fundraiser for the American Legion Sauls-Bridges Post 13. The WVU boat designed by Celia Suluki and Stormie Doyle was paddled by Paula Hubert and Karen Bauer in the first heat. The second heat WVU joined forces with Fish and Wildlife Commission. Nick Korade paddled with Karen Bauer. The weather was picture perfect and everyone had fun. Not only did the boat float but Women Veterans Unite took 3rd place! Thanks

to all who came by to cheer.



WVU to partner with Junior Woman's Club of Midtown to **gather non-perishable food items for Vet Village**. Bring donations to monthly gathering

**November 16, 2023**

Examples of donations:

Dried foods/snacks  
Applesauce Packaged Nuts  
Canned vegetables Pasta  
Ramen noodles Cereal  
Microwave meals Jerky  
Peanut Butter Power Bars  
Oatmeal Pop Tarts Pudding  
Trail Mix Soup Rice Jarred  
Pasta Sauce Canned beans  
Canned tuna or chicken

## October 20-22, 2023 Cabin Camping Retreat

At Ease Campground and Marina, Bainbridge, GA, provided the setting for the first Fall Nature Retreat for Women Veterans Unite Oct. 20-22, 2023. Patti and Don Fabian have created the perfect cabin camping experience including sunset cruises, fishing trips, kayaking, massages (donated by Vivian Davis and the Albany Therapeutic Massage team) and nightly fire pits. The women attendees found beauty and bonding in their fellowship. Thank you to Patti and Don for an amazing weekend!!





## Community Outreach



### FIND HELP FOR YOURSELF & OTHERS

If you or someone you know is struggling upon returning home and needs immediate, professional help—call the Suicide and Crisis Hotline and press 1 for veteran support or visit the website to talk with a VA responder.

**Call 988 and press 1**  
**[VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net)**

If you want to be a partner in the suicide solution the American Legion initiative, **“Be the One,”** needs help reaching out to at risk veterans. Contact

Rodney Keener  
251-635-7663  
[rbkeener22@gmail.com](mailto:rbkeener22@gmail.com)

## Marine Ball



*The Commanding Officer, Florida A&M Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit*

*And*

*The Commandant, Arthur R. Meyer Marine Corps League Detachment*

*requests the pleasure of your company at the*

*24th Birthday Celebration of the*

*United States Marine Corps and United States Navy*

*on Friday evening, the 13th of November, at five thirty*

*in the Dunlap Champions Club, Duak, Campbell Stadium*

*on the campus of The Florida State University*

*RSVP and Ticket purchase by 19 October 2023*

*P.O.C. Gordan Lightfoot (850) 322-4934*

*datnight@emborgmail.com*

*Military: Blue Dress "A" / Full Dress Blue*

*MCLE: Formal Dress*

*Civilian: Formal*

The cost of tickets for our MCL members and their guests will be \$40.00 per person. You will have a choice of three entrees: 1) A prime rib dinner; 2) A chicken dinner or 3) A stuffed squash dinner. This is fairly short notice but we will need to collect ticket money by October 19, 2023. The tickets will need to be paid for by this date as we need a hard head count and there will be NO pay at the door for this event. Capacity is limited to 250 persons.



**Host: Lynette Halter**

**1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month**

**November 2, 2023**

1515 NORTH Paul  
Russell Rd. #61 Near  
Apalachee Parkway  
(behind Goodwill)

Games based on  
strategy, luck,  
planning and  
cooperation

7 pm to 9 pm

Hostess provides wine  
and tea

Guests bring snacks

850-405-0246  
for more information

## Veterans Day Parade

**Friday, November 10, 2023**

The American Legion Post #13 on Lake Ella Drive hosts a breakfast that starts at 6:30 am. If you attend the breakfast and plan to ride on the float, you stay at the Legion as the float will be parked outside.

If you plan to walk, we meet at the corner of Monroe and Tennessee in the Capital City Bank Corporate offices parking lot and walk up to the staging area.

You may not be able to attend meetings or other WVU events but we hope you will come to participate in the parade and let Tallahassee know that women have served!

If you want to help decorate the float, meet at the **American Legion on Lake Ella Drive 1 pm to 3 pm on Thursday, November 9, 2023. Please watch your email for confirmation of location. Construction on Lake Ella Drive may interfere with location of float decorating.**

## Parade pictures



2022



**Saturday, November 11, 2023  
Mission BBQ**

**Save the dates-More info to follow**

Wreath Across America at the Tallahassee National Cemetery

**Sat. Dec. 16, 2023**

