



**NEXT SAVC MEETING – Tuesday, January 21, 2025 – 8:30 a.m.**

**Vets Recover – 1200 Spring Hill Ave – Mobile, AL**

On the web – <http://www.savc.info> - Facebook – [South Alabama Veterans](#)

## Presidents Corner



Fellow Veterans! It is with great honor and humility that I accept the role of president for the South Alabama Veterans Council (SAVC)...following the footsteps of Lieutenant Colonel Lou Lartigue will be a challenge, and I am going to rely heavily on your support and expertise as we continue to serve the veterans in our communities in 2025! With a brand-new year ahead of us, we will have numerous exciting opportunities to advocate for those who have served and continue to serve the armed forces of our great nation. I hope you are able to join us for our next meeting scheduled for 21 January 2025 in the Veterans Recovery conference room. We have much to discuss as we lay the groundwork for our upcoming activities.

This will also give us an opportunity to show our appreciation for all that Lou has accomplished in his many years of service to our organization. I have let him know that he cannot leave us and have announced that he is President Emeritus for life! Lou has been a great friend and mentor to me for many years, and it is very humbling to be asked to take the helm in the months ahead. As most of you know, the SAVC was the first of its kind in the State of Alabama...other groups have looked to our organization as a model to emulate in their efforts to support local veterans in their community. Lou Lartigue is the reason why!

Cheryl and I want to wish each of you a very Happy New Year, and I look forward to getting to know each of you better in the months ahead. You can also expect me to call on you to take a leadership role as we tackle the several events we sponsor each year...together, we can continue to

provide the outstanding service to our veterans that the SAVC is known for doing! See you soon!

*Robert "Frank" Barrow  
 LTC (US Army Retired)  
 President, South Alabama Veterans Council*



  
 HAPPY NEW YEAR

It's put on the new man;  
 Read Ephesians 4:24

"And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

As we start the new year off right, there are some things we need to consider. First of all, we need to make sure that we are ready to let go of last year. As we put on the new man and the new year, we must remove the old man and his old ways. His old ideas, attitude, behavior, and anything connected to the old man must go. The Bible says don't put new wine in old bottles because they will burst. But put on the new man who is created after God in righteousness and true holiness. So, let us check, recheck, and check again that we have on the new man.

In Jesus' Name Amen!

Pastor Lloyd Michael Austin,  
 Chaplain SAVC

**LOOKING FORWARD:**

SAVC TRANSITION MEETING - JANUARY 21, 2025

8:30 a.m. 1200 Spring Hill Avenue

LTC Frank Barrow is stepping up to take on the position of President of the South Alabama Veterans Council. Lou Lartigue will pass the gavel to Col Barrow at the January 21 meeting. Barrow will share his ideas and goals for SAVC in the coming months and years.

2025 is a year that encourages us to reflect, find closure, and work towards making a positive impact in our lives and the lives of those around us, especially our veterans and active military.

**The Year In Review**

We mourned the death of a Legend: "Major General Cooper, commemorated on a mural in downtown Mobile, was a difference-maker and a man of many firsts. He was the first African American officer to lead an infantry unit (Vietnam War), and he was the first African American Marine Corps officer to achieve the rank of General. His illustrious career as a soldier, commander, state legislator, national military leader, international diplomat, and local businessman changed lives and paved the way for many. He will be sorely missed."

**Guest Speakers for the year 2024:**

Vital Caring, Shelley Robinson; Judge Richard Foreman; Judge Mike Windom; Nick Matranga; Shaun Shenk, GCVHC-Biloxi; Eric Reynolds, Mens Health Care; Amer Legion, Jim Jeffries; LTC Frank Barrow, USA, MCPSS-JROTC; Jim Ellis, Find a Grave/Cemeteries; Dr. Jorey L. Krawczyn, research analyst on suicides with Blue-Wall Institute; Phillip Quigley, Sage Health; The Exchange Club of Mobile, DAR PRES Annesia Colburn Miller; RDML Endel Lee, USN Chaplain (Ret), Memorial Day Flag Relay Route 2025.

SAVC honored Elbert Wingfield on his retirement and thanked him for providing a meeting place at Saucy Q BBQ for the past 15 years.

Julius Powell, Flags of Glory founder also retired from Mobile Memorial Gardens.

**The Newsletter started a new section in March, "VETERANS SPOTLIGHT," where a different veteran is honored each month, in 2024 the following were spotlighted:**

Tom Schwarz, Veteran USA; Tom Claxton, Veteran USMC; Elbert Wingfield, Veteran USMC; Pete Riehm, USN (Ret); LTC Frank Barrow, USA (Ret); Jerry Cherne, USMC (Ret); Jim Jeffries, Veteran USA; Tim Monahan, USCG (Ret); Bill Bergman, Veteran USA; MajGen Janet Cobb, US Army (Ret)

**SAVC hosted several events in 2024:**

May 18 – Armed Forces Day / BMP Pavilion  
 May 27 - Flag Raising Ceremony BMP  
 May 27 - Memorial Day Ceremony Va St. Ceremony  
 June - VFW Post 49 - Closing Ceremony  
 Sept 20 - POW/MIA Candlelight Ceremony  
 Nov 10 - Flags of Glory  
 Nov 11 - Veterans Day Flag Raising Ceremony  
 BMP, Veterans Day Parade and Luncheon

**SAVC received donations from various organizations and provided grants to:**

QOV-Joyce Reed, Service Dogs Alabama, Vets Treatment Court, 92nd Div. Buffalo Soldiers, JROTC – STEM, ALDVA – Conference, Flag Relay - Police Escort, American Legion Retreat, Helping to Overcome, Warrior Legacy Ranch, Vets Recover, CVMA 28-6 Dakota Barker, Team River Runner, Dixie Rear Detachment, Love Me Always, DAV - USCG Hurricane Relief.

**We accomplished a lot.** We conducted 11 monthly meetings, emailed newsletters to over 650 members, and participated in Veterans Seminars and meetings. I have only touched on a small portion of what SAVC has done to support our Veterans.

Unfortunately, we witnessed the removal from office of one of America's Honored Veterans, ADML Kent Davis, who served as Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.

We look forward to 2025 planning and participating in all the Veterans Annual Events and bringing our Veterans information and news to help improve their day-to-day life.

**DATES TO REMEMBER IN JANUARY**

**January 1, 2024 - New Year's Day**

**January 15, 2024 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

A day set aside to celebrate the life and achievements of Martin Luther King Jr., an influential American civil rights leader.



## South Alabama Veterans Council VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



LTC (Ret) Chevelle Thomas  
JROTC SECTION PRESIDENT

Chevelle Thomas is an experienced military professional and educator with over 28 years of leadership in the U.S. Army and education. She currently serves as the Director of Army Instruction, JROTC at Murphy High School in Mobile, Alabama, where she oversees the Army and Navy JROTC programs. Under her leadership, the program has earned Honor Unit with Distinction for five consecutive years.

A dedicated advocate for education and youth development, Chevelle has mentored hundreds of students, helping them secure ROTC and academic scholarships while fostering leadership, discipline, and civic responsibility. Her military career includes key roles in strategic communications, media relations, and crisis management, notably as the Director of Communications and Public Affairs at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where she led media initiatives that achieved a 23-year high Nielsen rating for the Army-Navy game.

Chevelle holds a Master of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University, is a certified Army JROTC Instructor, and has completed extensive professional development in leadership and public affairs. She has received numerous honors, including the Golden Apple Teacher Award and the Ancient Order of Saint Gabriel Medal, recognizing her outstanding contributions to education and service.

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas served 23 years of Army service, 17 of which were in public affairs, earning The Ancient Order of Saint Gabriel. She is also a former JROTC cadet who graduated from Blount High School here in Mobile County.

But she's not the first in her family to serve. Her grandfather, Conrad Nichols, served in World War II, And her father, Palmer Nichols, served in the Vietnam War.

And Thomas has taken that proud tradition further, going wherever the Army decided she needed to be, including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, where she earned the bronze star. But she is proud of one assignment in particular—promoting the Army and all it has to offer—as a public affairs specialist. She was stationed at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.



Chevelle Thomas, LTC (US Army Ret) with JROTC  
Veterans Day Luncheon





## NOT JUST FOR OUR VETERANS WHO LOVES TO RIDE



Dixie Abate State Director Matthew Schroeder turns in his gavel. Thank you for your dedication



Kristi Cook, Matthew Schroeder



### What is ABATE?

ABATE is non-partisan and welcomes all riders. We give those interested in motorcycling an opportunity to unite and become part of a dynamic organization. No other group of people with a common interest bonds and cares like the community of riders. Dixie ABATE feels that all of us, from lifestyle riders to off-road fans, are brothers and sisters with a common interest — riding free!

Dixie ABATE of Alabama is a state motorcyclists rights organization (SMRO) dedicated to preserving individual freedom while promoting safety. We fully support rider training, including safety and educational programs, as well as motorcycle awareness education for all automobile drivers.

We are an active and dynamic organization, run by real people who are always ready to hear what you have to say.

Dixie ABATE's primary focus is on Awareness (teaching motorists to be aware of motorcycles that share the road with them) and Education (teaching motorists HOW to share the road with motorcycles safely and stressing to riders how important it is to keep working on their skill set). We also work with our Alabama State Senators and House Representatives on issues that face us in Montgomery. We concentrate first on eliminating rider fatalities and secondly on opposing laws that restrict our freedoms, which are generally imposed by interests who have no idea what riding a motorcycle is all about.

We all work when we have to, and ride when we can, and we can always use your help and participation. Let us know if you have any questions. Join us as we work toward uniting Alabama's riders so that we can help educate everyone who drives Alabama's roads and also keep an eye on Alabama's laws as they pertain to motorcycles and motorcycling. We are gaining membership every week.

Join **Dixie Abate** Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DixieABATE>

Don't forget this link - it's the easiest way to find your Alabama legislators. The time to speak with your representative is before the session starts in early February. Once their session starts, they are crazy busy and won't have time for you.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EoVsQCYgW/>



**ABATE of Florida INC./Gulf Coast Chapter and  
Dixie Abate of Alabama**

Alabama & Florida ABATE Chapters Join forces to discuss issues regarding increased motorcycle accidents and how to bring more awareness to riders and non-riders.

**Saturday, January 4, 1200 noon  
American Legion Post 340  
Ashland Ave, Pensacola, FL**



**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

Rather your an independent rider or apart of a motorcycle club or organization, all are welcome.

Let's come together to make a plan of action for better motorcycle awareness & responsibility.

To many people are dying!! 12 fatalities in the last 3 months. From the entire Panhandle. We need to help each other. Sportbikes, cruisers....we are all on 2 wheels. In attendance we will have representation from legislators, law enforcement, attorneys, insurance agencies & safety officials.



We would like to formally invite you to our CCSB Meeting scheduled for Friday, January 10, 2025, at 1pm, to be held at the Mobile Vet Center. At this upcoming meeting, I want to include everyone in the planning of Veteran-centric events for the New Year. Additionally, I will be introducing you to our new Office Manager, Mr. Heath Rose. Mr. Rose comes to us from Phoenix, AZ to be closer to his family. He is a US Army Airborne Veteran, a Jumpmaster, and a Signals Systems Support Specialist. He has a Master of Science Degree in Mathematics and Statistics from the University of West Florida. Heath has voiced a desire and commitment to serve Veterans in honor of his brother and best friend, who is a US Marine Corps OIF Combat Veteran. We are excited and happy to have Heath join our Team!

As always at this meeting, please feel free to bring any issue or topic to discuss as it pertains to addressing the needs of Veterans in our community.

We will continue to invite new people to our CCSB meetings and some who've not attended for quite some time, and I invite all of you to get acquainted. We will continue to provide coffee and light refreshments.

**Please confirm by responding to this email, whether you plan to attend the meeting.**

[Theresa.Blevins@va.gov](mailto:Theresa.Blevins@va.gov)

**The overall purpose of the Mobile Vet Center Community Client Stakeholders Board:**

The Mobile Vet Center CCSB is an opportunity to strengthen partnerships within the greater Mobile/Baldwin area.

- The Mobile Vet Center CCSB will identify and assess the strengths/successes of the Mobile Vet Center in meeting the needs of Veterans/Active-Duty Service Members/Family.
- The Mobile Vet Center CCSB will identify unmet or under-met needs for any group of Veterans who may be at risk or in need of services, within the community.
- The Mobile Vet Center CCSB will review the quality and effectiveness of community partnerships and will foster communication between stakeholders.

***Theresa L. Blevins***

Vet Center Director  
Mobile Vet Center  
3221 Springhill Ave., Bldg. 2, Ste. C  
Mobile, AL 36607



## Warrior Legacy Ranch

Nearly 50 veterans and their families came out for the **68 Ventures Bowl**. Thanks to everyone who came out! A special thank you to Nathan Cox and **68 Ventures** for their generosity and hospitality.

GREATNONPROFITS

TOP-RATED NONPROFIT



**Warrior Legacy Ranch**

TOP-RATED  
Congratulations

Your organization has achieved Top-Rated status for 2024 from your community on GreatNonprofits. You are among the distinguished few to receive this community endorsement. Keep up the great work!

**BIKIN BY DAY**  
RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH A  
BIKE DAY @ ED'S SEAFOOD SHED!

ED'S SEAFOOD SHED

01.11.2025 1-5PM

Raffle  
Door Prizes  
Happy Hour Specials

PROCEEDS GO TO WARRIOR LEGACY RANCH!

Topgolf Mobile

February 7th 2025  
9:00AM Start  
5 Persons Top Contender  
\$375 Per Team

Fore 22 & Warrior Legacy Ranch  
Golf Tournament





Free, 24/7, confidential support is a click away. The Veterans Crisis Line can help even if you're not enrolled in VA benefits or health care.

## HONOR GUARD RECOGNITION PROGRAM



The Alabama Honor Guard Recognition Program recognizes Alabama residents who perform military honors across the state. Applicants must have completed at least 25 honor guard/color guard-related ceremonies, such as:

- Folding/Presenting the Flag
- Playing of Taps
- Rifle Detail
- Flag-bearing Color Guard
- Pallbearers

Applicants must be nominated for the award by their parent organization. For more information, contact the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs headquarters at (334) 242-5077.

### Links

[Application](#) Download the application for the Honor Guard Recognition Program.



### "JOIN FORCES" (A Good Start)

A problem that cannot wait,  
Or put off to another date.  
The White House & Capitol Hill together,  
Must get serious – make economy better.

An opportunity justly deserved,  
Find jobs for those who served.  
The VA, Companies & business groups,  
Join forces – train, prepare, hire the Troops.

A home, a job, and proper care,  
Will replace the "Thousand Yard Stare".  
With respect, purpose, and appreciation,  
And the debt repaid by a grateful nation.

*Joe McCormack*  
Joe McCormack-Author/Veteran



The ADVA has 62 offices statewide that provide Veterans with free services, including hands-on assistance in submitting applications for VA compensation and pension claims and assisting with all other state and federal veterans benefits and services.

Find office locations and hours here: <https://va.alabama.gov/serviceofficer/>

