ATTENTION:
SAVC MEETING
Tuesday, November 17, 2026
8:00 Breakfast Host
HUMANA
Chad Jones, LaKeisha Chestnut
Denton Drake
American Legion Post 88
2663 Halls Mill Rd., Mobile, AL





South Alabama
Veterans Council
An organization for all people, to serve all veterans.

A coalition of Veterans, Friends, and Organizations working together to further the cause of Veterans in the South Alabama area

email: support@info.com
Website: SAVC.info

PRESIDENT
LTC Robert Frank Barrow USA (Ret)
251-423-0437

VICE PRESIDENT
COL Phillip Quigley, USA (Ret)
251-709-4942

SECRETARY/NEWSLETTER
Fran Barber-Bruyn
251-605-1290

TREASURER
Tom Schwarz, USN Veteran
251-649-8459

VICE PRESIDENT OPERATIONS
Robert Davidson, USA (Ret)
985-264-3471

VICE PRESIDENT LOGISTICS
Beverly Moritz
251-605-2621

MEMBER AT LARGE
COL Louis Lartigue, Jr. USA (Ret)
251-422-6686

CHAPLAIN
Lloyd Michael Austin, USA Veteran
251-391-8176

LIAISON OFFICER / MC
CDR Pete Riehm, USN (Retired)
251-442-4349

Spiritus Emeritus SAVC
Capt Hal Pierce
Bill Atkeison
Sy Lichtenfeld

President Spiritus Emeritus
LTC Lou Lartigue, Sr

Emeritus
COL Patrick Downing

SAVC Meetings - 8:00 a.m.
3rd Tuesday monthly, Jan – Nov
Denton Drake American Legion Post 88
2663 Halls Mill Rd., Mobile, AL
Breakfast $5.00





Mobile Bay Area Veterans Commission
P.O. Box 2187 | Mobile, AL 36652
vetsdaycommission@gmail.com

PRESIDENT
Col Steve Carey, USAF (Ret)
251-406-9799

PRESIDENTS CORNER



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

Fellow Veterans!
I hope everyone had a Happy Halloween with children and grandchildren. In November, we celebrate Thanksgiving, and we have much to be thankful for in this great nation of ours. It is also a time of year when we honor our veterans. We have a lot happening to honor all those who served and to recognize our Mobile Bay Area Patriot and Veteran of the Year, Admiral Kent Davis and our very own Tom Schwarz. We start with the Patriot Dinner the evening beforehand and then begin on Veterans Day with our annual Flag Raising Ceremony at Battleship Park at 0700, followed by the parade in downtown Mobile at 1000 and the luncheon at 1200 noon at Fort Whiting! Later that afternoon is the Parade of Flags at Battleship Park in the Aircraft Pavilion. I hope all of you celebrate this great day where we honor our nation's heroes. Of course, the Marine Corps celebrates its birthday this month as well…Semper Fidelis to all of our Marine Corps brothers and sisters!

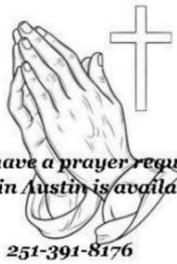
This month we will hear from Sergeant First Class (Ret) Case Callister who helped establish the Vet 5 Foundation. The Vet5 Foundation was founded by four Army veterans whose bond was forged through multiple deployments to Iraq. Years of shared service created a deep understanding that the transition home does not end when the mission does, and that connection, accountability, and purpose remain essential long after the uniform comes off. I hope we have a great turnout at our 17 November meeting…I have known this outstanding soldier for many years, and I know you will hear an inspiring speech!

See you soon…stay safe and God Bless!



Veterans attending the Exchange Club of Mobile,
Field of Valor Ceremony (Photo by Annesia Miller)





Greetings!

PRESENT ARMS
We salute thee!
Read Hebrews 11:34

"Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness was made strong, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight."

On this Veterans Day we Salute our Men and Women (OUR VETERANS) who have Sacrificed for the freedom of our country.

So, many of them go unnoticed. Many of them are homeless and don't receive the proper medical attention that they deserve. Let's continue to make it our business to help our Veterans in need. We honor the ones who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Freedom is not free; it must be bought and paid for with blood, sweat, and tears.

"All gave some, but some gave All!" We know that Jesus sacrificed his life for us so that we may be free. For whom the SON has made free is free indeed. Today we thank God for our Veterans.

In Jesus ' Name, Amen!
In JESUS' Name, Amen!

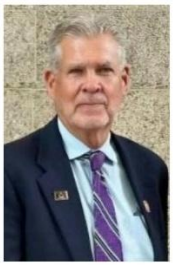
Pastor Lloyd Michael Austin

Chaplain, SAVC

SAVC Executive Board



LTC Robert F Barrow, USA (Ret)
President



COL Phillip Quigley, USA (Ret)
Vice President



Fran Barber-Bruyn
Secretary



Tom Schwarz
USN Veteran
Treasurer



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USA (Ret)
Vice President Operations



Beverly Moritz
VP Logistics



COL Louis Lartigue, Jr
USA (Ret)
Member at Large



Neil Bruyn
USAF Veteran
Equip. Coordinator

SAVC BEGINNINGS

Founded by a group of Veterans in 1998. The first meeting was held at the Denton-Drake American Legion Post 88. SAVC was designed to serve as a clearinghouse of information for various Veterans' groups across Mobile, Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Monroe, and Washington counties.

The SAVC is a coalition of Veterans Organizations, supporters, and friends, working together to advance the cause of Veterans and their families throughout the South Alabama region. SAVC is an apolitical organization that functions as a think tank or incubator, generating ideas on how Veterans Support Organizations (VSOs) and the community can recognize the contributions of Veterans and their families.

Anyone interested in supporting the SAVC mission is encouraged to join the Council. SAVC has grown and matured into a respected group of Veterans and friends who confidently advocate with our local, state, and federal government representatives. SAVC is an apolitical organization; the council does not endorse candidates, but it encourages a well-informed public to vote. SAVC serves as a think tank or incubator, generating ideas on how Veterans Support Organizations (VSOs) and the community can acknowledge the contributions of Veterans and their families.

NOVEMBER GUEST SPEAKER
Casey Callister

United States Army Sergeant First Class Casey Callister's life has been a testament to resilience, purpose, and unwavering determination. Born in Frankfurt, Germany, and raised in Anchorage, Alaska, Callister's early years were marked by adventure, exploration, and strong family bonds. His childhood, shaped by his father's military service, combined global travel with Alaskan wilderness, fostering a love of the outdoors and a deep appreciation for family togetherness.

Inspired by his father's example and deeply moved by the events of September 11, 2001, Callister felt a profound calling to serve his country. The tragic images of that day, witnessed as a high school freshman, solidified his resolve to join the Army. Enlisting shortly after graduation, Callister embarked on a career of service that took him around the world and into the heart of conflict zones, where his dedication and medical expertise saved countless lives.

Throughout his 20 years of service in the United States Army, Callister served with distinction. His work at a forward medical aid station in Ramadi, Iraq, became his proudest achievement. Transitioning to Army Recruiting Command, Callister brought his leadership skills to the forefront, inspiring and training future soldiers; however, an unforeseen accident altered the course of his journey. A devastating collision left Callister paralyzed from the waist down, forcing him to confront the greatest challenge of his life. With his family's unwavering support, he faced his new reality with extraordinary courage. Together, they adapted, drawing strength from their bond and a renewed focus on the values that had always defined their lives.

Despite the physical limitations from his injury, Callister has continued to live a life of purpose and adventure. From hand-cycling with his kids to maintaining their small family farm, he has found new ways to pursue his passions and share them with his family. His determination to participate in adaptive skiing and other outdoor activities reflects his refusal to let challenges define him.

Looking ahead, Callister finds joy in everyday moments and in fostering a nurturing environment where his family can thrive. Tunnel to Towers' support has provided his family with stability, peace of mind, and the ability to plan for a brighter future. Callister's gratitude for these blessings fuels his belief that life offers more to be thankful for than to resent, even in the face of adversity.

Callister's story powerfully reminds us of the importance of perseverance, gratitude, and showing up every day for the people who matter most. Through his journey, he continues to inspire those around him, showing that while life's challenges may be daunting, they can be met with determination, love, and a relentless spirit.



VETERANS SPOTLIGHT

Xavier proudly served 8½ years in the U.S. Navy as a Gunner's Mate Second Class, including support for Operation Inherent Resolve. As a Navy recruiter, he mentored future Sailors beginning their service.

A first-generation college graduate, Xavier earned a BS in Business Analytics from American Public University while on active duty, balancing military service with education and career preparation.

After leaving the Navy, Xavier joined Aylstock, Witkin, Kreis & Overholtz as a legal assistant, handling complex anti-terrorism cases for veteran plaintiffs and their families. The work let him continue serving the military community and deepened his interest in law as a tool for advocacy.

Today, Xavier leads the firm's Veteran Advocacy Division, helping veterans and families navigate VA disability claims and appeals. His military service gives him firsthand insight into military culture and the challenges veterans face transitioning to civilian life and seeking earned benefits.

Xavier aims to become a plaintiff-side attorney, extending his lifelong commitment to advocating for veterans, service members, and their families.

PRESS RELEASE:

No Vets Left Behind Named Finalist for $25,000 Homes for Heroes Foundation Community Impact Award

Public voting open Nov. 2-13 to help support veterans in need

MOBILE, AL – No Vets Left Behind has been selected as one of three finalists for the 2026 Homes for Heroes Foundation Community Impact Award, with the public voting to determine which nonprofit receives a $25,000 grant.

Founded in memory of Lt. Col. Mark Stratton, No Vets Left Behind raises funds for local organizations that assist veterans facing homelessness, substance abuse, and recovery challenges. Through community support, the organization helps veterans access critical resources and build a path toward stability and success.

The nomination recognizes the organization's ongoing commitment to ensuring no veteran is forgotten. If awarded, the $25,000 grant would expand efforts to support local veterans and the programs that serve them.

Community members can vote once per day from **November 2 through November 13, 2026**, at:

https://go.homesforheroes.com/impactaward/

Josh Comingore of the Comingore-Parks Team Collection at HomeSmart Coastal Partners nominated No Vets Left Behind.

"HomeSmart and Josh's team are dedicated to helping local heroes achieve homeownership through the Homes for Heroes program," said HomeSmart Managing Broker William Forrest. "No Vets Left Behind is our preferred charity because its mission aligns with our commitment to serving our community's heroes. We are grateful that the Homes for Heroes Foundation selected No Vets Left Behind as a national finalist."

About No Vets Left Behind

No Vets Left Behind was founded in memory of Lt. Col. Mark Stratton to support veterans facing homelessness, substance abuse, and recovery challenges. Through fundraising and community partnerships, the organization helps local programs provide hope, stability, and a brighter future for veterans in need.

Media Contacts

Josh Comingore
Associate Broker, HomeSmart Coastal Partners
Comingore-Parks Team Collection
727-412-0504
Josh@ComingoreParks.com

William Forrest
Managing Broker, HomeSmart Coastal Partners
251-222-9119
Broker@HSCP.us

Frankie Little
Founder, No Vets Left Behind
251-490-6137
frankie@roostersdowntown.com



[Small Business Grant Program
Hiring Our Heroes]

VETERANS & MILITARY SPOUSES

SMALL BUSINESS GRANT PROGRAM

Hiring Our Heroes' Small Business Grant Program will award five small businesses owned by veterans and/or military spouses with a one-time $10,000 or $25,000 grant to grow and support their businesses.

SMALL BUSINESS AWARD

Grant Eligibility

Award program applications must be submitted by December 15, 2026. See complete rules for full eligibility details.

- Applicants must be a legal resident of and currently reside in the contiguous 48 states, Alaska and/or Hawaii.
- Eligible small businesses must be a for-profit business owned by a veteran or military spouse (at least 51% or more ownership) with 3 to 20 employees including the owner(s), all full or part-time employees, and independent (1099) contractors.
- Eligible small businesses must have less than $5 million in annual revenue and must be located in an economically vulnerable community or otherwise demonstrate financial need brought on by hardship beyond the owner's control.

Celebrating One Year of VIBE: Strengthening Community Support for Veterans

On September 25, 2026, SAAHEC celebrated the first anniversary of the Veterans in Better Environments (VIBE) Group, a collaborative initiative between the Alabama Career Center and SAAHEC's SSG Fox Program. VIBE connects veterans with community partners and essential resources, including emergency housing, utility assistance, VA benefits navigation, employment opportunities, and mental health support. Through collaboration among service providers and community organizations, the group helps veterans navigate challenges, access assistance, and improve their overall well-being. The anniversary celebration featured personal testimonials from SSG Fox program participants, who shared their experiences and the impact of the support they received. Their stories underscored the importance of timely assistance, meaningful connections, and strong community partnerships in helping veterans overcome barriers and feel supported. In recognition of their dedication and continued collaboration, SAAHEC presented Certificates of Appreciation to Keith Battle, Workforce Specialist for Veteran Services; Robert Stratton, Workforce Outreach Specialist for Veteran Services; and community partners Rising Phoenix, Rivers Educational Service INC, and Vets Recover. Their contributions strengthen support networks, address veteran isolation, and promote mental health and well-being. As VIBE enters its second year, SAAHEC remains committed to building partnerships and expanding connections that help veterans access vital resources and feel valued, supported, and empowered.



Vet5 Foundation

VET5 AFTER DARK – NEON CLAY SHOOT

Get ready to light up the night!

Vet5 Foundation is bringing a new twist to traditional clay shooting with Vet5 After Dark, a glow-in-the-dark clay shooting experience featuring neon targets, blacklights, music, friendly competition, and camaraderie.

This event is designed to bring veterans, first responders, active-duty service members, and Gold Star families together for an unforgettable evening focused on connection, teamwork, and community. Our goal is simple: create an exciting environment where those who have served can build friendships, reconnect, and enjoy a night away from everyday stress.

Location: Grand Bay – Exact location to be announced to selected participants

Date & Time: November 14, 2026, at 4:30 PM

Event Updates: **www.vet5.org**

Facebook: Vet5 Foundation – Search "Vet5 Foundation" on Facebook

Contact: casey@vet5.org

Honoring Sacrifice. Preserving Dignity





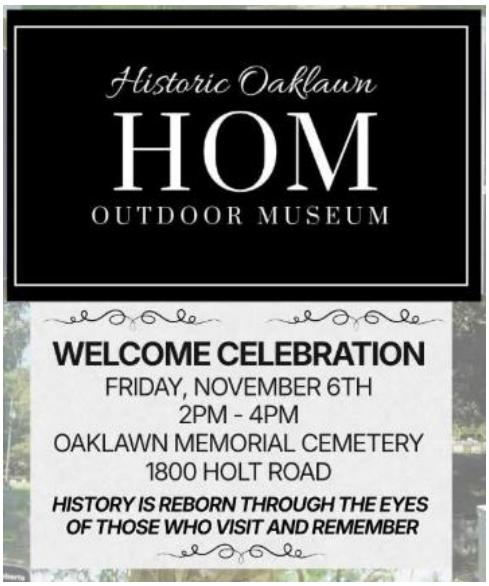
Military Order Purple Heart Honorary Service Award was presented to **Col. Pat Downing** for military and community service. National Sr Vice Dr. Andrew Del Gaudio



Mobile Bay Area Patriot of the Year, Admiral Kent Davis, wife Lisa, and Veteran of the Year Tom Schwarz, with wife Dale were honored at the University of South Alabama military appreciation football game on Saturday, October 31, 2026.



OCTOBER GRANTS - Larry Andrews, Operation We Remember; Ana Wright, supporting Oakland Memorial Cemetery; Mechelle Davis, Infinite Opportunities; Stacy Herring – Chili Cook-off.



SAVC
MINUTES OCTOBER 20, 2026

Opening

- Chaplain Austin gave the opening prayer.
- Col. Lou Lartigue Jr. led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Col. Frank Barrow welcomed guests, including Mayor Don Nelson of Creola, Judge Hardesty, and License Commissioner Nick Matranga.
- Paul Worthy (ESGR) requested volunteers to assist Guard and Reserve members during deployments.

Grant Presentations

- Larry Andrews, Operation We Remember, received a $300 grant for the November 7 USS Alabama event honoring veterans lost to suicide.
- Infinite Opportunities shared plans for its December 19 holiday outreach providing food and winter essentials to veterans and seniors.
- Ana Wright received a $500 grant supporting Oakland Memorial Cemetery and its transition to an outdoor museum.

Financial Report

- Treasurer Tom reported a balance of **$19,300**.
- Veteran Service Organizations were encouraged to apply for grants through the SAVC website.

Featured Presentation

Alex Karagas, Alabama Veterans Resource Center (AVRC)

- Presented AVRC's mission of connecting veterans with resources across Alabama.
- Introduced the **Unite Us** referral and case-management platform for nonprofits.
- Highlighted a veteran small-business grant program offering **$10,000-$25,000** awards.

Action Item: Forward veteran small-business grant information to Fran for distribution to Mobile-area veteran organizations.

Vet Center Update

Stacie Herring, Mobile Vet Center

- Reviewed mental health services available to combat veterans.
- Announced:
  - Chili Cook-Off on November 6.
  - Veterans Homeless Stand Down in partnership with the VA.

Community Announcements

- Mayor Don Nelson and Marcie Brown announced the Freedom Mobile Unit's visit to Creola, featuring military history exhibits from the Revolutionary War to present day.
- The Military Order of the Purple Heart Honorary Service Award was presented to **Col. Pat Downing** for military and community service.

Additional Reports

- Veterans Day events and activities were announced by local American Legion, VFW, and veteran organizations.
- Spanish Fort State Veterans Cemetery reported **5,208 interments** and ongoing expansion projects.
- Battleship Memorial Park announced new exhibits and restoration projects.
- Vets4Vets announced a November 14 glow-in-the-dark clay shoot.
- Operation Iron Ruck will conduct its annual suicide awareness ruck march November 26-29.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded following organizational reports and community announcements.
Secretary – Fran Barber