



AUSA Sunshine Chapter Newsletter – Spring 2022 (Apr - Jun)

Things are busy, moving along again. Your chapter needs you to know and to be involved. Here are some recent and some upcoming events you can join in on in the future as they come around again!

Chapter President's Message

Greetings to the members of the AUSA Sunshine Chapter, friends, and sponsors.

It is always difficult to come to the end of a chapter in one's life and reflect. However, as my term as President of the Sunshine Chapter closes out on 30 June, that is exactly where I find myself.

One of my take-aways from the past two years is that the Chapter is all about "YOU"; you the members, supporters, and sponsors of the Sunshine Chapter. Without each and every one of you there would be no Sunshine Chapter. Success has little to do with me or the Executive Committee, but everything to do with the collective "YOU". I thank all of you for allowing me to serve and represent the Sunshine Chapter. It has been a wild two years.

Some reflection:

As the new executive committee formed on 1 July 2020, our biggest concern and risk was COVID. Remember those days, all of us were still in some form of lockdown, not in our offices and all working from home. We had no idea what the near future held for us individually as families or in our workspace. For most of us, it was the worst life event we had ever been through. The 245th Army Birthday Ball was virtual, and our sponsorship pool dried up almost completely.

Would the chapter survive? In fact, the collective “WE” did survive, and the chapter was part of the survival.

Back on our feet, back to work and back to the business of having the Sunshine Chapter serve our Central Florida Army Family.

We came back strong in 2021. Our Corporate sponsorships started to pick up again, and the 246th Army Birthday Ball was a hybrid live/virtual event. Perfect rebound for this Modeling and Simulation community. The UCF Tech Grove saved the day by opening their doors to host the Ball. So, we say many thanks to Carol Ann Logue and her fantastic team led by Kevin Mikalsen.

In coordination and support with the Central Florida Chapter of QuadA, we distributed meals to our Army family for the holidays.

The Chapter, led by Scott Ariotti, accomplished complete revitalization of the Scholarship program to better serve the entire Army family. Scott Ariotti and Traci Jones were superstars bringing the new Scholarship program to life.

The Chapter coordinated with the Orlando Army Recruiting Company and provided support to new soldiers as they transitioned from civilian life into the Army.

2021 was our reset year for sure, after COVID turned our world upside down.

For 2022, the Chapter continues to make a difference in our total support of the Central Florida Army community. Planning got underway to bring back a full, live 247th Army Birthday Ball after not having one for two years. It is amazing how much must be relearned.

February brought the initial reset Army Social, held in connection with PEO STRI’s and ACC-Orlando’s PALT. This after-work social gathering will be held every other month and will allow interaction between Government leadership and modeling, simulation, and training industry leaders.

We awarded our first two scholarships under the revamped program in April to Cadet Cameron Giegler from UCF’s Army ROTC (Nancy J. Blue Memorial Scholarship) and to Dominic Vizzarri, a senior from Oviedo High School.

June was no doubt our highlight month as the 247th Army Birthday Ball was held on June 18th back at the Rosen Centre Hotel here in Orlando. With over 400 attending and the theme of “One Army...One Family” the entire program was focused on our entire Army family, active, guard, reserve, civilians, retired, veterans and their families. Moving testimony was given by Jovanna and Jim Nelson representing Gold Star mother and family; Lisa Taylor, APEO PEO STRI, representing Army Civilians; SSG Brandon Smith from the STTC, representing our soldiers; and finally, SGM (Ret) Rob Fortenberry representing Army veterans. There wasn't a dry eye in the house after these great Americans shared their journeys with us. Tears were again shared as Jenna Tuck detailed the intricate design of this year's centerpiece, which captured the depth and intimacy of what the Army family really means.

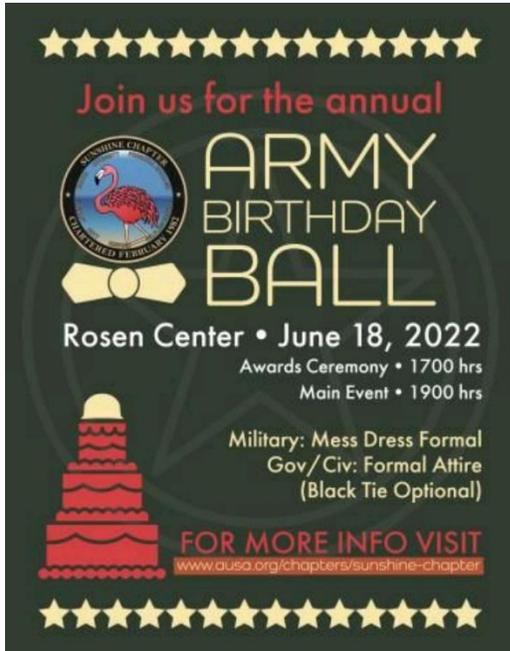
There are so many folks to thank for this year's Army Birthday Ball, but those out front who made it happen were Trish Buhl, Jenna Tuck, Teresa Moon, Debbie Berry, Regan Buhl, Dolly Glass, and Mary Trier. Their dedication and countless hours of preparation and laser focus is why the ball was a tremendous success. I am forever in debt to each of them.

So...my two years are now coming to an end on June 30, 2022. From a very rocky start, through the challenges of COVID, re-engaging with our sponsors, and then being able to witness and be a part of one of the best Army Birthday Balls this chapter has ever held, I am humbled, yet very proud, of what this team of volunteers has accomplished. The Executive Committee of the Sunshine Chapter is perhaps the most dedicated group of professionals I have had the privilege to serve with. They are the ones who should be patted on the back and thanked for all they have accomplished. The heart and soul of the Sunshine Chapter in all honesty is all of “YOU”, the “YOU” is the entire Central Florida Army family, ONE ARMY, ONE FAMILY. I salute each and every one of you.

Michael J. Motko
President, Sunshine Chapter AUSA

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The 247th Army Birthday Ball – One Army, One Family



This year’s Army Birthday Ball went off splendidly. It was not an easy thing to pull off, but the Planning Committee sure made it look easy. We want to thank Trish Buhl, Teresa Moon, and Jenna Tuck who planned and executed it, with the advice and assistance of Debbie Berry and Reagan Buhl. The Orlando Recruiting Company Color Guard provided the pomp and ceremony to accompany the honors to our Nation’s Flag, those honors so beautifully sung by Mrs. Trish Buhl. I also must tell you, as the

anonymous author of this blurb, that it was the best meal I have had at one of these such events in over 15 years of attending them here. What a treat and a surprise!



As always, the Sunshine Chapter loves to recognize superiority in the Service of Soldiers and their families. The awardees this year included AVT Simulation for the *David G. Halloran Award*, and Pete and Carol Marion



**Sunshine Chapter AUSA
Army Birthday Ball**
Rosen Center - June 18, 2022



for the *Earle L. Denton Award*.



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During the *MG Francisco Espallat Recognition Reception*, we also recognized the Cyber Trident Team for the ACC-Orlando Team of the Year and John McCabe as the ACC-Orlando

Employee of the Year, SSG Wesley M. Swanson and SSG Imane T. Benyard as the Top Recruiting NCOs, COL Michael McCarthy as the Synthetic Training Environment CFT Soldier of the Year, STRI Agile Acquisition Response and Government Furnished Property Reconciliation as the PER STRI Team of the Year for 2022 and

2021 respectively, and E. Lee Harrison and Skyler White as PEO STRI Employees of the Year for 2022 and 2021 respectively. The Chapter also inducted three new

members to the *Royal Order of the Flamingo* for services rendered to the Chapter, LTC (USAF, ret) Michael J. Motko, Ms. Carol Anne Logue, and Ms. Kathy

Hewitt.

Through the past years as our country has weathered a pandemic, there has been a feeling of isolation for many. Because of this, we have



discovered new ways to connect and feel connected. This experience led the Ball planning committee to choose the theme – One Army, One Family – as a reminder that we are all united through the bond of the United States Army: from the new recruit to the cadet, to the countless Soldiers serving across the world, to the families, to Army civilians and contractors, to all those who have served, in any capacity for any length of time; all working together in support of the Army mission as One Army Family. We are one in our experience of life with the Army. As part of that experience, we celebrate the achievements of our Army through our recognition of selfless service, commitment, and connectedness. We celebrate YOU! Our Army Family here in Central Florida and all we bring to the Army Family across the world.

Our Guest speakers for the evening were LTCs (ret) Jovanna and Jim Nelson, Gold Star mother of SPC Brenden N. Salazar representing Army Families, Lisa Taylor, APEO-STRI representing Army Civilians, SSG Brandon Smith, Senior Enlisted Advisor for PEO STRI representing all serving Soldiers, and SGM (ret) Robert Fortenberry representing all Veterans.

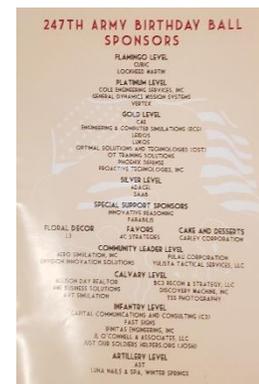


**Sunshine Chapter AUSA
Army Birthday Ball**

Rosen Center - June 18, 2022



Sponsors for the Birthday Ball came back this year and they were many. We are still working toward them being Legion again!! We thanked those Sponsors in our program handout and on social media, even the ones at the CAValry-level, but it is hard to ever say just how much they mean to the operation and success of the Ball. It is an immense help with the



financial and logistical burdens. Thank you again, at all levels.

Rest assured, the planning for the 248th Army Birthday Ball is already apace. Put the marker on your calendar for Saturday, 24 June, 2023, and we will be right back at the Rosen Centre. We will see you, and many of your friends there.





A Moving Tribute from the Artist

At this year's 247th Army Birthday Ball, each table was adorned with a silhouette, a tradition at the Orlando area Ball. This year's silhouette was designed by Jenna Tuck. Here is Jenna's description of her inspiration that led to the final design.



Each of the silhouettes tells a story, and not just a fictional story, but a true story. and that is because each of these silhouettes were created based on actual photos of members of the army family.

The figure you see in the bottom left is taken from this photo, this is a gold-star mother, captured of her visiting her sons grave on Memorial Day.

The figure shown in the center at the bottom is taken from this image of an active-duty mother who had just returned from a field rotation to her young child.

The figure on the right is of a gold-star wife, and mother of 7, whose husband lost his life serving in Afghanistan with the Army National Guard. This photo was taken of her in prayer over her husband's casket shortly after it was removed from the plane transporting his body home.

The soldier in the middle, this silhouette was created by combining the images of multiple soldiers seen in this photo - and that was to represent any soldier.

Saluting the flag, you will notice that the flag was placed in the background, and this was done to symbolize that the army family - that this Army Family proudly stands between the flag, and anyone that would do her harm.

And the AUSA symbols - shown only as a star on the centerpieces were purposely understated, to symbolize that tonight isn't about AUSA - it's about you, and the Army family.

Finally, the centerpiece, with its circular design and a single soldier as a primary focal point, was created this way to subtly emulate the POW MIA flag. That was done to remind us that, not just tonight but, in the design of this years' centerpiece - they are not forgotten.

As we remember our Ball theme – One Army, One Family –, while he was recently discussing the Army's enormous current recruiting challenges, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville cited two important numbers. 1) Only 23% of Americans are even qualified to join the Army for various reasons, and 2) 83% of those entering the Army “come from a military family.” YOU quite seriously ARE the Army!

Scholarships

As a reminder, Scholarship applications will be due in March of next year. SFC (Ret) Ken Johnson will be leading our Scholarship Program in the 2023 Operational year. He will be in touch. Keep on the look-out!

Army Strong!!!



Sunshine Chapter AUSA Army Birthday Ball

Rosen Center - June 18, 2022



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