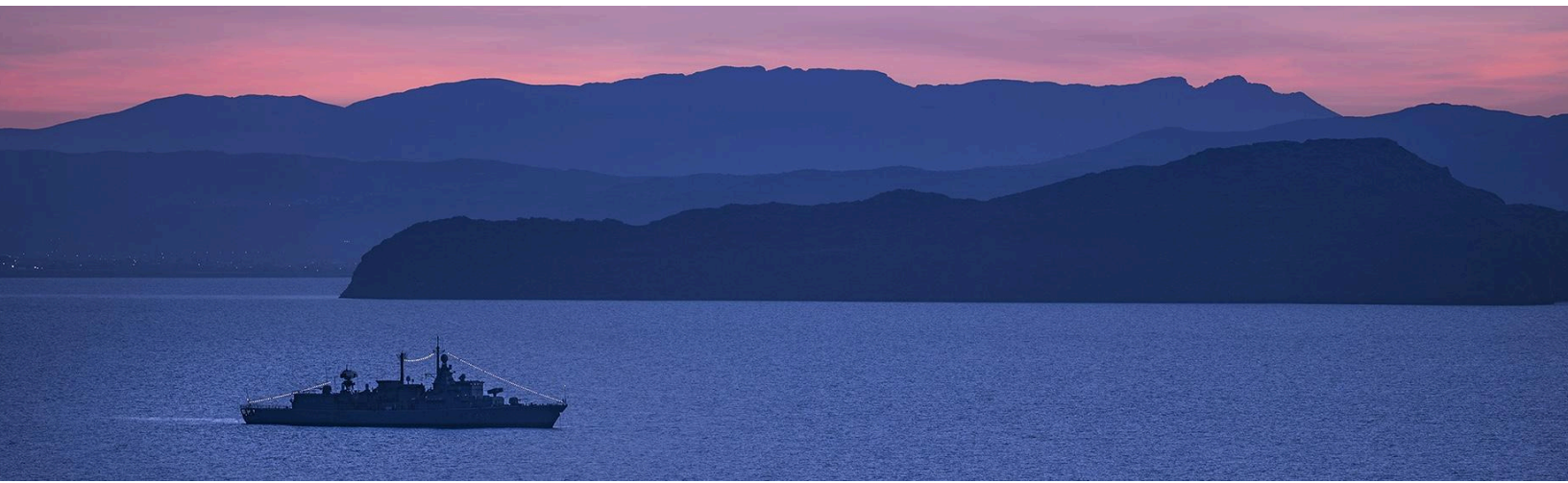


*The Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council*  
**FROM THE QUARTERDECK**

Quarterly Newsletter – August 2024



## **From the Bridge: A Message from the President**

Many fresh ideas and ambitious projects have taken place during the last three months. Atlanta Council members are constantly on the move, as we have made trips to Capitol Hill, recognized outstanding youth members, and implemented new strategies to increase awareness of our mission. I'm proud of this tireless dedication and nonstop action toward our growth.

Our Council is thriving, thanks to the help of civilians, military, and retired military. We have welcomed Master Chief Joel "Rod" Rodriguez to our board. Full of energy and great ideas, he told me, "We are a civilian organization." So true.



We have created the Council's first fundraising challenge coin (as you'll see a few pages down), and we've ensured the Council plays an important role in honoring former and current members at ceremonies and celebrations this summer.

Membership recruitment remains a top priority, and strategies include reaching out to parents and family members of the enlisted and plans to join forces with area military non-profit organizations. Your membership fees and donations help to make all this possible. I encourage you and thank you for your support.

— **Will Seippel, President, Director**

# News & Events

## 31st Annual Youth Awards Banquet

The Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council's 31st Annual Youth Awards Banquet, held May 2, 2024, honored the top outstanding unit cadets from seven Sea Cadet units and 45 JROTC units in the metro-Atlanta area. Top awards included The Wells-Pratt Award for Excellence (outstanding N/MC-JROTC Cadet), The Schwendler Award (outstanding Sea Cadet), and The Jason E. Lawson Trophy (top Sea Cadet Unit). Each top cadet received \$1,500. The evening featured [keynote speaker RADM Edward "Sonny" Masso](#), USN (Ret) Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel. See more photos from the event [here](#).



## U.S. Intends to Upgrade U.S. Forces Japan to Joint Forces Headquarters

Through a phased approach, the U.S. plans to convert U.S. Forces Japan into a joint force headquarters amid talks to increase bilateral presence in Japan's Southwest Islands.

[Read More >](#)

## U.S. Navy Successfully Conducts Live-Fire Demonstration at RIMPAC

The Navy launched Poniard rockets from a CUSV in a display of its enhanced maritime capabilities.

[Read More >](#)

## New Department of Defense Strategy Calls for Exercises, Enhancements in Arctic

The Defense Department today released its 2024 Arctic Strategy, acknowledging how environmental changes are affecting the Arctic region and detailing the implications for U.S. security.

[Read More >](#)

## Other News:

## Navy Aviator Scores First Air-to-Air Victory By U.S. Female Fighter Pilot

[Read More >](#)

---

## Navy League Awards & Recognition



Congratulations to South Atlantic Coast Region President Chuck McCleskey on receiving the prestigious Certificate of Appreciation from Navy League Chief Executive Officer Mike Stevens (MCPON 13) and National President Chris “Towney” Townsend. The award was presented at the 2024 National Convention of [The Navy League of the United States](#) in June.



Cadet Brayden Tumlin, a member of [East Hall High School Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps](#) in Gainesville, Georgia, received the Theodore Roosevelt Youth Award on May 10, 2024, from Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council director CAPT Harley T. Jones, USN (Ret.). The Senior Naval Science Instructor is LT Nathan Bourdeau, USCG (Ret), and the Naval Science Instructor is 1st Sgt. David Leach, USMC (Ret).

***Check out the [Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council's Facebook page](#) for more photos, daily news, and reports.***

---

## Atlanta Council Receives National Recognition

Every year, the Navy League of the United States recognizes achievements through Council Performance Awards.

In 2023, the Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council was recognized as [Meritorious in Council Performance](#). Additionally, the Atlanta Council was awarded a coveted [Silver Mackie Award](#) for its outstanding social media presence on its [official Facebook page](#).

## Navy League Mourns Passing of Former National President McNeill

### *Georgia Icon Was 81*

The Navy League of the United States is deeply saddened to announce the passing of its beloved past national president Sheila McNeill at the age of 81.

As the 42nd national president (2003–2005), Sheila held several key roles during her 58 years with the Navy League, including national vice president for legislative affairs, national director of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, member of the National Maritime Policy Committee, and member of the Camden-Kings Bay Council. She was also the first and only female national president in the organization's 121-year history.



Sheila's contributions to the sea services and her community earned her numerous prestigious awards, including the Secretary of the Navy's Distinguished, Superior, and Meritorious Public Service medals, the United States Coast Guard's Distinguished and Meritorious Public Service medals, and the U.S. Armed Forces Spirit of Hope Award. She was also the first female recipient of the Spanish Navy League's highest honor, the Golden Anchor Award.

Even outside of the Navy League, Sheila always put her nation's needs before her own. She served as a Georgia state senator representing District 3 from January 2021 to January 2023, serving on multiple committees. Before running for office, she served as the vice chairman of the executive committee for the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, visiting 45 U.S. military installations worldwide.

## “Let Freedom Ring” Independence Day Parade

As part of its July 4th festivities, the City of Marietta held its annual “Let Freedom Ring” Independence Day Parade on July 4, 2024, in which our Atlanta Metropolitan Council participated. The event featured more than 2,000 participants, about 100 units, and a street-lined crowd estimated at about 30,000 spectators. The parade began at Roswell Street Baptist Church and marched to Marietta Square, then down Cherokee Street, ending at North Marietta Parkway.



Pictured above riding in Council President Will Seippel’s Jeep convertible are (left to right) Council President Will Seippel, Council VP Legislative Affairs Captain (Retired) Don Giles, Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Atlanta sailor Boatswain's Mate Second Class Isaiah Sanders, NTAG Atlanta sailor Aviation Boatswain’s Mate Second Class Djuan Rice, and Council Member Shari Seippel driving. *Image courtesy of the Marietta Daily Journal, Anthony Stalcup MDJ Contributor.*

Additional participants from NTAG Atlanta were walking behind the council vehicle, including (left to right) NTAG Atlanta participants Navy Counselor Chief Petty Officer Peter Theodoracopoulos and Hospital Corpsman Chief Petty Officer Michael Wilson, joined by new Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council Board Member AZCM (Retired) Joel “Rod” Rodriguez. Ensign Maxwell Williams and Ensign Fletcher Graves also participated.





Top: Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council members and guests from NTAG Atlanta enjoying the Marietta Independence Day Parade on July 4, 2024. Above left: NTAG Atlanta sailor Aviation Boatswain's Mate Second Class Djuan Rice. Above right: The Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council participated in the Marietta Independence Day Parade using this Jeep convertible.

---

## Project Mail Call Set for Sept. 14

Our next Project Mail Call event is at 10 a.m. on September 14 at 3661 Sope Creek Farm SE, Marietta, GA, 30067.

Participants will pack care boxes for those stationed aboard U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, destroyers, and battleships, for members of the United States Naval Construction Battalions, and for Navy Seals positioned in undisclosed locations.

Volunteers are advised to contact Denny Holmes, Director and Vice President of Membership, VP, prior to September 14 at [denny.holmes2426@gmail.com](mailto:denny.holmes2426@gmail.com). They are also advised to park on the same side of the street as the house (the north side).

In March, an ambitious group of volunteers packed sixteen care boxes—weighing 228 pounds—for deployed U.S. military sea service members stationed worldwide.

## Save the Date: 249th Anniversary of U.S. Navy



*Continental ship Alfred (1775–78). Painting in oils by W. Nowland Van Powell, depicting Lieutenant John Paul Jones raising the Grand Union flag as Alfred was placed in commission at Philadelphia on December 3, 1775. Commanded by Captain Dudley Saltonstall, Alfred was flagship of Commodore Esek Hopkins's Continental Navy flotilla during the remainder of 1775 and the first four months of 1776.*

On October 26, 2024, the Atlanta Council will host a special event celebrating the 249th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Navy. The birthday event will include a dinner, area Navy command briefings, and fellowship. Event details are pending, and an announcement will be sent to members as well as posted on the Council's [Events Page](#) in the near future.

[The United States Navy's origins](#) can be traced back to the Continental Navy, which was established in Philadelphia on October 13, 1775, at the beginning of the American Revolution. The Continental Navy was instrumental in the states' victory over the British Empire, but it was disbanded after the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

---

## Legislative Affairs News



(from left to right) Axel Spens, Will Seippel, U.S. Representative Barry Loudermilk (Georgia’s 11th District), and Don Giles. Image courtesy of [Congressman Barry Loudermilk’s Facebook page](#).

This was a very busy and fruitful quarter for our Legislative Committee. Our council representatives participated in the national Navy League Legislative Affairs “Fly-in” to Washington D.C. on May 15, 2024. Appointments were scheduled with all sixteen Georgia Members of Congress.

Three of our Council members—Will Seippel, Axel Spens, and Don Giles—traveled to Washington at their own expense on May 14. Our Council LA representatives attended an orientation for all Navy League attendees conducted by our national staff at Navy League Headquarters Building on the evening of May 14. Early on May 15, participants boarded a bus and traveled to Capitol Hill. Our Georgia Briefing Teams completed presentations to all sixteen members of our Georgia delegation to the 118th Congress.

Our elected Congressional Representatives heard our grassroots voices regarding our Navy League support for legislation, particularly the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that will facilitate authorization of the Sea Services’ highest priority requirements. We will monitor to see how our Representatives and our Senators vote regarding provisions of the 2025 NDAA.

If you have an interest in participating as a member of our Council Legislative Affairs Committee, contact me with the information below. I will brief you on details on how you can get involved to make a difference in supporting our Sea Services.

— **Don Giles, VP for Legislative Affairs** - 770-509-3772, dongiles01@comcast.net



---

## Chaplain's Corner

When was the last time you looked in a mirror and said, “Who am I?”? Interesting question to ask oneself, but more interesting is the answer. Have you thought about the actions that have taken place in your life to bring you to this stage? Were you honorable in all your dealings with others? Have you regrets?

Questions often give us the best answers, usually leading to another question.

Let's start today by being a better person in how we treat others. Our world is in turmoil without us adding to it.

Pray for all our military serving around the world that they may return safely home to their families.

God Bless the USA!

— **Rev. Jim Klynman, Director, Chaplain, VP, Education** - j.klynman@att.net

## First Council Challenge Coin

The Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council has produced its first challenge coin for our organization. Proudly made in America by Wendell's Mint, just 100 coins were produced and are \$25 each. Proceeds stay local to benefit the Atlanta Council.

The coin's obverse features the NLUS seal, and the reverse features “AMC NAVY LEAGUE” arched around central gold silhouette depictions of the USS *Jimmy Carter* (SSN-23) and USS *Georgia* (SSGN-729). The edge reads “MADE in USA WENDELL'S MINT” and “W.S. 2024” to designate the initials of Council President Will Seippel, the year, and signify the coin is among the first 100 made.



Challenge coins have been an American military tradition for a century, meant to instill unit pride, improve esprit de corps, and reward hard work and excellence. They are steeped in tradition, which is fully explored in this fascinating article from the U.S. Department of Defense: [“The Challenge Coin Tradition: Do You Know How It Started?”](#)

# Board Update

## **Joel “Rod” Rodriguez, CMDCM (SW/AW), Joins Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council Board**



A native of Woodland, Calif., Master Chief Rodriguez enlisted in the Navy in January 1993. Upon completion of Basic Training and Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AZ) “A” school in Meridian, Miss., he reported as an AZAR to the Gunfighters of Fighter Squadron (VF) 124 at Naval Air Station Miramar in San Diego, Calif. He completed his shore tour while assigned to the Grim Reapers of Fighter Squadron (VF) 101 Detachment Miramar and became Enlisted Aviation Warfare-qualified before reporting to the USS *Boxer* (LHD-4) for sea duty.

During his first sea tour, Rodriguez was qualified as Production Control Supervisor, earned his Enlisted Surface Warfare Designation, and was meritoriously advanced to First Class Petty Officer. He then transferred to Fleet Aviation Specialized Operational Training Group Pacific (FASOTRAGRUPAC) in San Diego, Calif., where he was assigned as a maintenance program instructor, qualified as a Master Training Specialist, and was advanced to Chief Petty Officer in 2002.

His follow on tour was onboard USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68), San Diego, Calif., where he served as the IM-1 LCPO, Production Control Supervisor, and Maintenance Master Chief for AIMD in the absence of the billet during two Western Pacific deployments and a surge deployment. His follow on tour for shore duty was at Commander, Helicopter Anti-Submarine Wing, U.S. Pacific (COMHSCWINGPAC), San Diego, Calif., where he was assigned as the training and evaluation team LCPO preparing commands for the incorporation to the H-60S aircraft. He then reported to Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CNAP) for sea duty and was advanced to Master Chief Petty Officer.

Master Chief Rodriguez was selected to the Command Senior Chief Program in 2012, was the Senior Enlisted Leader for CNAP Staff, served as the Command Master Chief onboard the USS *Higgins* (DDG-76) and at his major command tour at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest (FRCSW) in San Diego Calif. His most recent CMC tour was from May 2020 to April 2022 at Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers Patuxent River, Md. He reported aboard USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) in April 2022, from which he retired in February 2024.

Master Chief Rodriguez is a graduate of the Senior Enlisted Academy, the CMC/COB course, the MCPON Senior Enlisted Leadership Seminar, and the Naval Postgraduate School Senior Leader Seminar. He earned his associate's degree from Vincennes University. His personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (five awards), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (three awards), and various service and campaign awards.

# Where Are They Now?

## Lieutenant Junior Grade Zachary Lee

Zachary Lee joined the United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps in 2011 with the Pathfinder Excursion Squadron in Newnan, Georgia. The following year, he attended Recruit Training at RTFL Belle Glade. It was after this experience that he truly began to take the program seriously by putting in as much as possible, and getting out as much as he could.

Over the next few years, Lee attended various trainings across the country, including: Master-at-Arms training onboard Naval Subbase Kings Bay; Mixed Martial Arts in Charlotte, North Carolina; Petty Officer Leadership Academy in Newport, Rhode Island; Recruit Training Staff in Pensacola, Florida; Winter Survival in Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Field Operations in Latimer, Tennessee; and finally finishing by staffing the International Sea Cadet Exchange Program in Newport, Rhode Island.



Experiencing all of this, while advancing to the cadet rank of Chief Petty Officer taught Lee many incredible lessons about life and people. In 2015, c/CPO Lee won the William T. Schwendler Award for Excellence and was named the Most Outstanding Metropolitan Atlanta USNSCC Sea Cadet.

Following his time in the USNSCC, Lee received the Naval ROTC 4-Year Scholarship to Auburn University. During this time, he trained for four weeks



following freshman year: two weeks at Naval Station Norfolk shadowing the Surface Warfare and Aviation Communities, one week at Naval Subbase Kings Bay learning about the Submarine Community, and one week onboard Camp Lejeune for Marine Corps appreciation. The following summer was spent onboard the *Ohio*-class submarine *USS Alaska* for two weeks. Lee finished his career at Auburn with a bachelor of science in Industrial and Systems Engineering, a minor in Naval Science, and



(continued)

a commission in the United States Navy. He then reported to Naval Air Station Pensacola for Naval Introductory Flight Evaluation.

Then came flight school training. N.I.F.E consisted of three weeks of ground school followed by ten introductory flights in a Cessna 172. Next came Primary Flight Training at NAS Whiting Field, where he trained to fly the T-6B Texan II for thirty-two weeks.

Upon the completion of Primary, Lee selected Rotary and began Advanced Flight Training in the TH-57 *Sea Ranger*. Following thirty weeks of training, he received his Wings of Gold on August 25, 2023.



“Currently, I am a Lieutenant Junior Grade attached to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron Four-Zero (HSM-40) in Mayport, Florida, training to fly the MH-60R Seahawk as a Fleet Replacement Pilot,” said Lee.

“I love this platform because it allows you to serve with a full crew including a co-pilot, a crew chief, sonar operators, and rescue swimmers (the finest sailors in the Navy). Our main mission is anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, and we are the most capable maritime helicopters in the world.

“I live with my wonderful and beautiful fiancée Rachel, our dog, and our cats. Upon the completion of this training pipeline, I will be assigned to one of the fleet squadrons based here in Jacksonville, Florida.

“The exposure, support, experiences, and lessons I was able to learn during my time in the USNSCC undoubtedly led me directly to where I am today. The program provided more for me than I could ever be able to pay back. I am thankful to every person I met along the way that helped me to achieve my dreams of being a Naval Aviator,” Lee added.

---

**Navy League National Mission Statement Quote:**

“We are civilians who recognize the United States is and always has been a “maritime nation” and we know the vital importance of our Sea Services to our national security. We welcome all patriots who want to keep our Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and U.S. Merchant Marine as a key part of America’s strength! Our mission is simple, but essential: Serving the Sea Services, their families, and promoting youth programs that help to ensure the next generation of leaders.”



**Atlanta Metropolitan Navy League Council • [AtlantaNavyLeague.org](http://AtlantaNavyLeague.org) • [contact@atlantanavyleague.org](mailto:contact@atlantanavyleague.org)**