

## MARINE CORPS LEAGUE PROVIDES COMMUNITY FOR GREENSBORO VETERANS



Left to right, Retired Brig. General Fred E. Sisley, and Maj Gens H. Lloyd Wilkerson, Thomas L. Wilkerson, and John J. McCarthy, Jr are members of the local Marine Corps League Detachment.

GREENSBORO — “Hundreds of Marines will be returning home soon — they will need help acclimating to civilian life,” so went the clarion call in 1944 to form a Greensboro detachment of the Marine Corps League.

The detachment was renamed later in memory of a Para-Marine and former student of Greensboro Senior High School (now Grimsley) who fell on Guadalcanal in 1942. Along with hundreds of other memorial services, the Adrian L. Kirkman Marine Corps League Honor Guard performed final military rites for Kirkman when his remains were returned to the States in 1949.

When many of the Marine Corps Leaguers and all Marine Reservists were called back into active duty to serve in Korea, the local detachment was deactivated.

Bill Moss, a local businessman and Korean War era veteran, led efforts in 1974 to reorganize a Marine Corps League Detachment in Greensboro. With more than 200 members, it became one of the largest along the East Coast and has spun off many other detachments.

In 2009, Moss envisioned a Triad-wide veterans memorial. Ground was broken in Triad Park for the Carolina Field of Honor in 2013. It was dedicated on Memorial Day in 2014. While veterans from all services served on Moss’ board of directors, most were members of the Marine Corps League.

The National Convention of the League was held in Greensboro in 2010 — it was the League’s best attended event of its 97-year history.

The primary purpose of this military/veteran nonprofit organization is to preserve the traditions and promote the interests of the Marine Corps. Even so, the group reaches out to veterans and families of all services.

A strong emphasis locally has been on the Servant Center, where beds have been placed. Additionally, HVAC and drainage issues have been underwritten by the League.

More recently, the League has been involved with Tiny Homes of Greensboro, Partners Ending Homelessness and Horsepower Therapeutic Riding Center. On the immediate horizon will be support for the Marine Corps Reserve's annual Toys for Tots Program.

Not that the Marine Corps needs a few good 8 year olds, but the League sponsors the Young Marines Program, a mental, moral, and physical development paradigm for youths, age 8 through high school. Efforts by Eagle and Gold Scouts are also recognized by the League.

Current commander of the Greensboro Detachment of the Marine Corps League is Lt. Col. Jim Hayes, USMC (Retired). Among Hayes' active duty assignments was executive officer of "The President's Own" Marine Band. When the Band performed at UNCG in 2016, Hayes was called out for special recognition.

George Orfanedes leads the Community Services Squad, which seeks out needs of veterans and their families. He is the first to point out that community services do not happen unless funds have been raised.

For 13 years, the annual golf tournament has been an important source of funds. In October 2020, more than 100 patriotic golfers provided \$30,000 in community service funds. Recipients include Hope for the Warriors, Gunny Claus, and Veterans Stand-down.

Within the League, one name stands out among fundraisers — Sharon Reddick, who has served as both junior and senior vice-commandant. She has worked well for the League and community needs in Greater Greensboro.

Who might you meet at Marine Corps League meetings — which, because of the coronavirus pandemic, have been held at a shelter next to the Carolina Field of Honor? You are likely to meet veterans from all eras, World War II through Afghanistan. You may even meet a retired Marine Corps general — we are fortunate to have four former flag officers in our detachment.

One thing for certain, you are sure to hear sea stories that are embellished by the month. Everyone you meet will be proud to claim, "**Once a Marine, always a Marine.**"

The Marine Corps League welcomes active duty Marines and honorably discharged Marines and FMF Corpsmen who no longer wear the uniform. Meetings are typically held on the second Monday of each month.

Tuesday, Nov. 10, marked the 245th birthday of the Marine Corps, and today we celebrate Veterans Day and all who have served.

Visit [www.mcl260.info](http://www.mcl260.info) for more information.

Harry Thetford (USMC) Special to the Greensboro News & Record, November 11, 2020