

# NAVY LEAGUE NEWS

F O R T L A U D E R D A L E C O U N C I L

February 2026



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Navy League Members and Friends,

Our **Seven Seas Gala: Anchored in Amalfi** was truly a night to remember. Thank you to everyone who came out to support the event and to those who helped bring it all together. A special thank you to **Lynn Drucker** and all of our dedicated **board members** for

their hard work behind the scenes. Your commitment to the mission of the Navy League continues to make all the difference.

We were honored to have **Rear Admiral Brendan C. McPherson, USCG**, as our Guest of Honor. As Director of Operations (J3) for U.S. Southern Command, his words offered insight into the challenges and responsibilities our military faces in this critical region. It was an honor for me to present him with our Navy League coin and also share my personal **Marine Corps** coin a small gesture that represents the deep respect we hold for those who serve.

I also want to recognize the incredible performances by our **Sea Cadets and League Cadets** during the Gala. The Sea Cadets impressed everyone with their **Rifle Drill** a sharp, disciplined display that reminded us of all of the values of precision, practice, and pride.

And the **League Cadets (5th–8th grade)** delivered a moving and respectful presentation of The **Veterans Table**, also known as the **Missing Man Table** or **Fallen Comrade Table**. For those unfamiliar, this solemn display honors those service members who are missing, held prisoner, or who never made it home. Every element of that table down to the smallest detail carries deep meaning. The League Cadets' poise and understanding during the ceremony was beyond their years. They did an **amazing job**, and we're all incredibly proud of them.

**Looking Ahead: February Dinner Meeting Wednesday, February 18, 2026 Lauderdale Yacht Club Guest Speaker: Vice Admiral William Burke, USN (Ret.)**

Vice Admiral Burke brings a distinguished record of service and leadership from his time in the U.S. Navy. We look forward to hearing his insights on our Navy's

priorities and challenges in today's world. These dinners are a great opportunity to stay engaged and strengthen our Navy League community.

Hope to see you there.

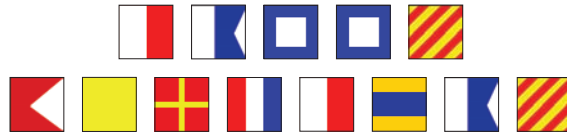
Abiud "Abi" Montes  
President  
Fort Lauderdale Council  
Navy League of the United States



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## NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES FORT LAUDERDALE COUNCIL FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



Bill Bohler	2/2
Janice Sanborn	2/9
Bill Schmidlin	2/21
Gordon James	2/24

## MEMBERSHIP

Beginning January 1, 2026, Premium Council Membership will be \$400 per person. This fee includes eight dinner meetings (each typically \$55 per person, offering a \$40 discount overall) as well as the \$50 annual dues, resulting in total savings of \$90 per year.

To join and maintain membership in a Navy League council, an individual must be a member in good standing with the Navy League of the United States. It is incumbent upon the member to maintain current national membership.

From page 2-10 of the Navy League of the United States Operations Manual revised November 6, 2021:

“II.D.6. A council may establish local dues or membership fees as it may deem to be appropriate but such dues or fees must be in addition to, not in lieu of, the national dues.”

Join the Navy League:

[FtlNavyLeague.org/JoinUs](https://ftlnavyleague.org/JoinUs)

<https://ftlnavyleague.org/joinus>



## GUEST SPEAKER AT OUR FEBRUARY 18TH DINNER MEETING VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM BURKE, USN (RET)



Vice Adm. (ret) Burke, a native of Hornell, N.Y., graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering. In 1985, he completed a Master of Business Administration at Marymount University. In 1999, he earned a Master of Science degree in National Security Strategy at the National War College in Washington, D.C. He is a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar 21 Program in International Politics.

His submarine assignments include USS Lafayette (SSBN 616), USS Key West (SSN 722), USS Omaha (SSN 692), USS Cavalla (SSN 684), and command of USS Toledo (SSN 769). He commanded Submarine Squadron Two from July 2001 to July 2003.

His Washington D.C. shore assignments include a tour in Chief of Naval Operations' Attack Submarine Division; assistant deputy for House Liaison in the Navy Office of Legislative Affairs; Chief of Training, Doctrine, and Assessment; Assistant Deputy Director for Combating Terrorism (JCS J34); and head of Warfighting Assessments Branch (N812) followed by a tour as the Executive Assistant to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Promoted to rear admiral in Sept. 2005, his flag assignments include Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific/Commander, Task Force 73/Commander Navy Region Singapore; Director, Assessment Division (N81/N00X) and the Director, Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR/N00X).

In April 2010, he was promoted to vice admiral and reported for duty as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics (N4). His final assignment was as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Warfare Systems (N9).

Burke wears the Distinguished Service Medal (two awards), Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (three awards), Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards). While onboard Cavalla, he received the Admiral Chick Clarey Award for the 1992 Outstanding Navy Officer Afloat from the Honolulu Council of the Navy League.





The Navy League of the United States  
Fort Lauderdale Council  
Invites you to join us for

## Navy League Day at the Races Saturday, March 7, 2026, 12:00 noon



Please RSVP  
by  
Wednesday  
March 4th



Ten Palms Restaurant  
**GULFSTREAM  
PARK**

901 S. Federal Highway,  
Hallandale Beach, FL 33009



*RSVP*

*Enjoy a day at the beautiful Gulfstream Park racetrack with your friends!*

**Racing Package \$60 per person includes:**

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- Air-conditioned trackside reserved seating for the afternoon
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- Daily race day program for each attendee
- One (1) \$2.00 betting voucher per person

**RSVP & Pay Online:** [FtLNavyLeague.org/Gulfstream](https://FtLNavyLeague.org/Gulfstream)



Please detach and return with your check made payable to:  
**NLUS Fort Lauderdale Council**

Lynn Atkinson, 845 S. Southlake Drive, Hollywood, FL 33019  
954-325-9102 [lynn@druckermail.com](mailto:lynn@druckermail.com)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ # attending \_\_\_\_\_ \$60 per person



# A GOLDEN GIRL: ME AND THE USS JASON DUNHAM

## By Kathryn Ross

*The author attended the ship's christening in 2009 and the commissioning in 2010 at Port Everglades Florida*

January 17, 2026

This weekend, some of the 300-member crew and some officers from the USS Jason Dunham will be spending the weekend in Allegany County. It was explained to me that while this may be the first Cpl. Jason Dunham Weekend it is not the last. It was initiated by the Navy and is part of protocol for the ship's crew to visit its namesake's hometown and family. It may happen in the future depending on what the Navy is doing.

Some of the most meaningful moments in my life came from my coverage of the Jason Dunham tragedy. I'm not talking about awards or accolades; I'm talking about personally meaningful moments.

As a result of my courtesy towards Dan and Deb Dunham during one of the most terrible times in their lives, the loss of their son Jason, I experienced some of the most meaningful moments of my career and life.

I was in the crowd that sunny day in Maine, Aug. 1, 2009, at the Bath Iron Works when Deb Dunham pounded a champagne bottle on the massive hull, christening the USS Jason Dunham and launching it into the blue Atlantic Ocean. The sky was full of colorful confetti, and a band played loud music. The dock side audience was full of the bright, white, uniforms of the crew.

The USS Jason Dunham was the first United States Ship to be named for a noncommissioned officer. It joined the ranks of the USS John McCain and The Sullivans and many more.

I couldn't help noticing the irony of its DDG 109 designation. As a child of the 60's, that number on the side of a boat has a significant meaning to me.

The trip to Bath, Maine was special to me because Maine is one of my all-time favorite places. If I didn't live here, I would live there.

The respect I showed the Dunham's had led to an invitation to the Medal of Honor ceremony held in the East Room of the White House on January. 11, 2007. The room may have been callously destroyed, but my memories of that ceremony amid the pomp and historical beauty of the room is intact in my memory and always will be.



On November 13, 2010 the USS Jason Dunham was commissioned at Port Everglades in Florida between Fort Lauderdale and Miami. I was literally aboard via an invitation from the officers and crew.

I had flown into Jacksonville on the 11th. and because of my late arrival, I spent the night wandering the airport. The next morning, I was picked up at the airport by a Navy escort and delivered to the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville where the USS Jason Dunham was moored. I climbed on board with others who had been invited to the ceremony. We spent the rest of the day

## A GOLDEN GIRL: ME AND THE USS JASON DUNHAM

By Kathryn Ross  
continued

touring the ship while sailing the 260 nautical miles to Port Everglades near Miami. I still bear the scars on my left shin from banging it on the deck as we climbed through the shafts that led us from deck to deck.

That night, Commander M. Scott Sciretta played with us demonstrating the maneuverability of the guided missile destroyer and knocking our sea legs out from under us with quick turns and splashing those of us on the aft deck with the warm water of the Atlantic when he suddenly backed up.

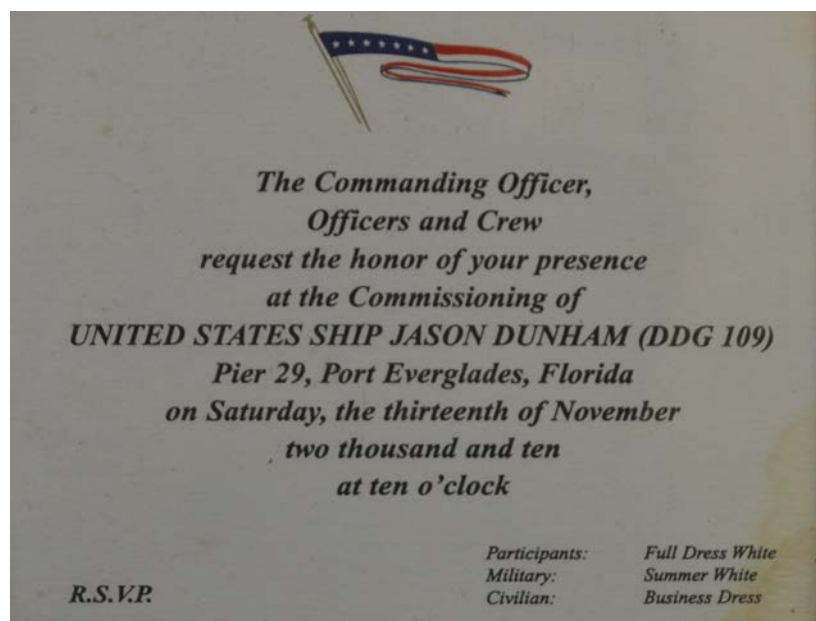
Later I slept in the crew's quarters in an iron cubicle four inches off the deck and not tall enough to lift my book high enough from my face to read. It was a physical reminder as to why young people fight our country's battles.

Early the next morning I watched from the deck as a rising sun lit a bright pathway across the ocean while the Atlantic rose and fell around us. My father, a Navy veteran from World War II, had told me about sailing the Atlantic. I left his dog tag on the warship as a kind of coming full circle.

The next day, the docked ship was festooned with red, white and blue bunting from stem to stern and from towers to decks. In their sunlit, white uniforms the crew lined the decks, and gangways draped in banners. It was a thundering, breath taking, heart beating scene full of drama and patriotism and a moment in time I will never forget.

It was all because I respected the privacy of grieving parents, the way I was brought up to.

*Kathryn Ross is a lifelong Wellsville resident, reporter, columnist, photographer, and community activist. You can reach her anytime, [kathr\\_2002@yahoo.com](mailto:kathr_2002@yahoo.com)*







# *Anchored in Amalfi* *The Seven Seas Gala*



*Arrival of the Official Party*

Arriving guests enjoyed Peach Bellini signature cocktails and delicious Italian/Mediterranean themed hors d'oeuvres. Guests then entered the ballroom, decorated with blue and yellow linens and beautiful floral arrangements. Council Vice President Aaron Bresnahan orchestrated the arrival of the Official Party with two columns of saluting Sea Cadets flanking the military guests as they entered the ballroom. Guests included many active-duty military members from the Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps as well as Navy League members, Naval Academy parents, Sea Cadet Parents, Sea Cadet Staff, and Sea Cadets.



*Council President Abi Montes*



*Gala Chairperson Lynn Atkinson*



*Cadets Perform Missing Man Ceremony*





# *Anchored in Amalfi* *The Seven Seas Gala*



*Lynn Atkinson, ADM & Mrs. McPherson, Abi Montes*



*ADM McPherson with CPO Fuentes*

The Fort Lauderdale Division Sea Cadets presented the colors, and Oscar Romano delivered an inspiring invocation. Sea Cadets also presented the POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremony. Admiral McPherson reviewed the Sea Cadets Rifle Drill Team performance, which was excellent. Guests enjoyed a delicious Italian-themed dinner and danced to DJ Mike's tunes. Admiral McPherson gave an inspiring speech about joint forces operations in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility.

The fabulous auction featured a variety of luxury prize baskets! Many thanks to our Sponsors and our Gala Committee for all the hard work they put into making it such a wonderful evening!



*Sea Cadet Drill Team Performance*



*LT Rosa Ryan, Sea Cadet CO*



**Gala Photos**



*Sea Cadet & Staff with ADM McPherson*





# United States Naval Sea Cadets Corps

FORT LAUDERDALE DIVISION & TRAINING SHIP RADFORD

Sponsored by the Fort Lauderdale Council of the Nay League of the United States

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 21101, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33335-1101

Headquarters: 300 S.W. 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315



**LT Rosa Ryan, USNSCC**

**Commanding Officer**

## A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

### U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Fort Lauderdale Division

This has been an active month for our Cadets. During the month of January, the Cadets completed the Wilderness Survival Bivouac over Martin Luther King Weekend at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park. Cadets got up at the crack of dawn every morning to do physical training. They learned about survival skills, including building a shelter, purifying water, land

navigation, wilderness first aid, and nautical knot tying. The amazing chow was provided by Sam and Maria Hernandez with great support from our Sea Cadet Staff. On Saturday night, the Cadets roasted s'mores around the campfire and performed a flag retirement ceremony. The Sea Cadet Staff and Petty Officers did an amazing job to make the weekend



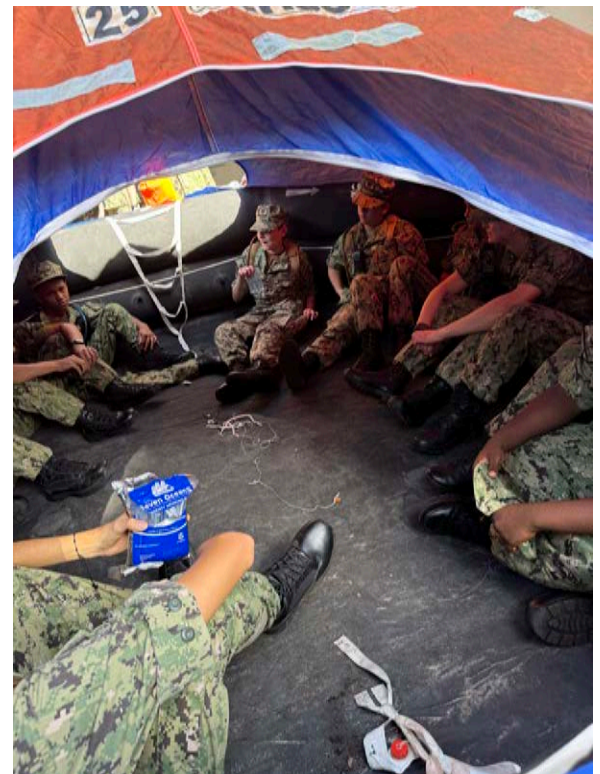


## A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

### U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Fort Lauderdale Division continued

fun and educational! All the Cadets went home exhausted and exhilarated!

The Fort Lauderdale Division Cadets were showcased at the Seven Seas Gala on January 24th. They served as side boys for the arrival of the Official Party, presented the colors, put on an excellent rifle drill team performance, and recited the POW Commemoration Ceremony. The Cadets did an excellent job!







## Support Sea Cadet Funding in 2026 Defense Appropriations!

1827 actions taken

173 needed to reach next goal

### The Issue

The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps is a federally supported youth program that provides hands-on training to approximately 8,000 participants each year. The program develops skills in shipbuilding, cybersecurity, aviation, skilled trades, and maritime operations. Nearly half of graduating cadets enter military service.

Congress authorized \$4.3 million in supplemental funding for the Sea Cadets in the FY 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), but these funds were not appropriated due to the passage of a full-year continuing resolution. In December 2025, Congress again authorized \$4.3 million for the program in the conferenced version of the FY 2026 NDAA. However, members of the House and Senate must still approve this funding in the conference report for the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, which has not yet been released.

The House-passed defense appropriations bill fully funds the Sea Cadets under the Recruiting and Advertising section of the Navy's Operations and Maintenance Budget. The Senate's draft does not include this provision. Until negotiators agree to include Sea Cadet funding in the final appropriations bill, the program's funding remains uncertain.

### The Solution

If enacted with the relevant provision, the FY 2026 Defense Appropriations Bill would make available the \$4.3 million authorized in the FY 2026 NDAA for the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. The appropriations process determines whether authorized funds can be spent. As of December 2025, a conference report for the appropriations bill has not yet been released. Ensuring that the conferenced bill includes Sea Cadet funding will secure the program's financing for next year, provided the House and Senate pass the negotiated bill.

### Why You Should Take Action

If appropriated funding is not provided in FY 2026, the Sea Cadet program may face reduced training opportunities and higher costs for participants. The program relies on federal funding to maintain robust training and keep participation affordable for families. Its mission is to support national security workforce development and provide career pathways in defense and maritime industries. The Sea Cadets have historically received funding in appropriations legislation, and continued support is essential to sustain this critical program.

### Act Now!

[Sign up with Facebook](#)

or

To register to participate in the Navy League Quorum Action Center and our Voice to Congress campaigns, please enter your information below.

Fields with an asterisk (\*) are required.

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Last Name \*

Address \*

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Council

By registering with the Quorum Action Center, you agree to receive the Legislative Affairs Weekly Roundup email. You may unsubscribe from the Weekly Roundup at any time by following the links provided in each email.

[Sign Up](#)<https://navyleague.quorum.us/campaign/seacadets/>

## **GUEST SPEAKER AT OUR MARCH 18TH DINNER MEETING**

### **STAFF SERGEANT ELIEZER OLEA, USMC**

### **MARKSMAN TRAINING INSTRUCTOR**



## **Staff Sergeant Olea**

### **SNCOIC RIFLE TEAM, MFR MTU**

(Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge, Rifle Team, Marine Forces Reserve Marksmanship Training Unit)

Eliezer Olea graduated from Recruit Training in August, 2007. Following graduation, he was assigned to TOW Platoon DET 1 Headquarters and Service Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Tank Bn, 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division. In 2008, he completed the Anti-Tank Missile-man Course at School of Infantry East. In 2009, he was assigned to Scout Platoon Headquarters and Service Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn, 24<sup>th</sup> Marines. Lance Corporal Olea deployed to Al-Asad, Iraq in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM from 2009-2010.

In 2013, Corporal Olea completed Civil Military Operations Course and was assigned to 4<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Group. In 2014, he completed Combat Marksmanship Coaches Course and deployed in to Dominican Republic in support of Multinational Exercise Trade Winds. In 2015, he completed Combat Marksmanship Trainer Course and deployed to Dominica in support of Operation Continuing Promise. Sergeant Olea joined Marines Forces Reserve Marksmanship Training Unit as a member of the Rifle Team and Certified instructor.

In 2015, Sergeant Olea transitioned to the Individual Ready Reserve, in order to attend Basic Law Enforcement Academy. Sergeant Olea returned to 4<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Group in 2016.

In 2017, Sergeant Olea transitioned to the Individual Ready Reserve. In 2018 Staff Sergeant Olea completed Instructor Development Course.

In 2025, Staff Sergeant Olea joined the Individual Mobilization Augmentee Detachment of Weapons Training Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico.

His personal decorations include Bronze Division Rifle Competition Badges, and Silver National Rifle Competition Badges.

Staff Sergeant Olea his wife Bianca and their two sons Elias and Noah, reside in Pembroke Pines, Florida.



*SSgt Olea with Sea Cadets*





# **Navy League of the United States Fort Lauderdale Council**

## **Social Calendar 2026**

### **Wednesday, February 18, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

Guest Speaker: Vice Admiral William Burke, USN (Ret), Former Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Warfare Systems (N9).

### **Saturday, March 7, 2026, Day at the Races, Gulfstream Park, Hallandale Beach**

### **Wednesday, March 18, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

Guest Speaker: SSgt Eliezer Olea, USMC, Marksmanship Training Instructor

### **Wednesday, April 15, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

Guest Speaker: Ken Denison, Former VP Broward Marine

### **Wednesday, May 20, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

Guest Speaker: LT Matias A. Sueldo, USNR (Ret)

### **Tuesday, September 22, 2026, Sea Cadet Night, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

### **Wednesday, October 21, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

Guest Speaker: TBD

### **Wednesday, November 18, 2026, Dinner Meeting, Lauderdale Yacht Club**

Guest Speaker: TBD

### **Tuesday, December 15, 2026, Holiday Celebration Dinner/Toys for Tots Drive**

Guest Speaker: TBD

### **Dinner Meetings and Events Web Page:**



## COMMUNITY AFFILIATES



Hard Work Gets Results

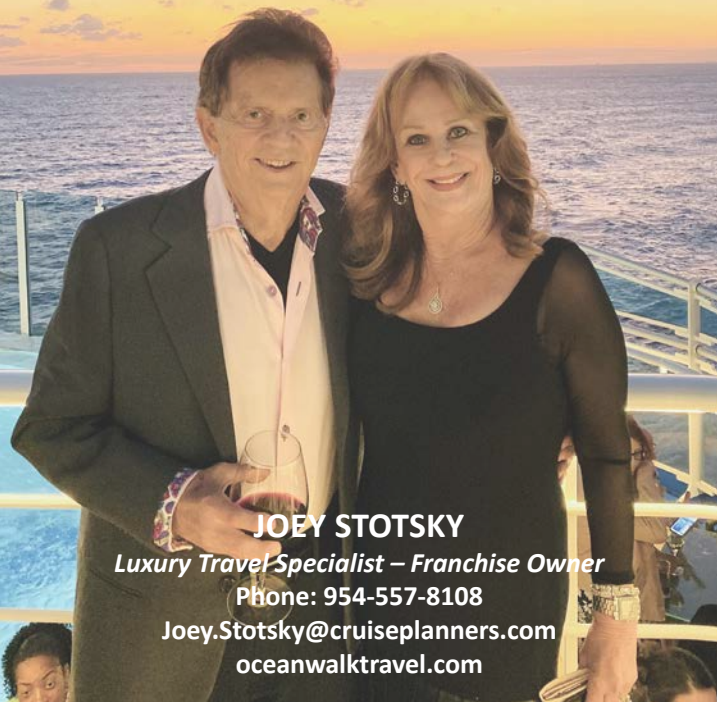
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Navy League, Fort Lauderdale Council  
and the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps,  
Fort Lauderdale Division.*



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affiliate with the Navy League.

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**EDITORIAL STAFF**

Lynn Atkinson, Editor  
Jim Black  
Elaine Hogg  
Elaine Nasta  
Oscar Romano

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026 3:30 PM EDT**  
**Join Zoom Meeting:**  
**Meeting ID: 899 9626 3102**  
**Passcode: GoNavy**

**FORT LAUDERDALE COUNCIL  
2026 OFFICERS**

President – Abiud Montes  
1st Vice President – Barbara Kelleher  
2nd Vice President – Aaron Bresnahan  
3rd Vice President – Peter Apol  
Treasurer – Diana Molina  
Secretary – Elaine Nasta

**FORT LAUDERDALE COUNCIL  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Peter Apol  
Lynn Atkinson  
Jim Black  
Pat Du Mont  
Elaine Hogg  
Alan Stotsky

**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**Wednesday, February 18th, 2026**

6-7 PM Cocktails • 7-9 PM Dinner Buffet

**LAUDERDALE YACHT CLUB**

1725 SE 12<sup>th</sup> Street

Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33316

**Guest Speaker**

**VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM BURKE, USN (RET)**

Guests \$55 per person

RSVP Required! Limited Seating!

No later than noon, Friday prior to the meeting.

Call 954-522-8995 or Online at [www.ftlnavyleague.org/events](http://www.ftlnavyleague.org/events)

*visit us on the web at [www.ftlnavyleague.org](http://www.ftlnavyleague.org)*

