



Honorary Commanders Association

Cobb County, Georgia

Since its inception in 1832, Cobb County, Georgia and its citizens have served and have supported those who served in the military. Our young men and women have heeded the call over those years, leaving behind a solemn but grateful network of family and friends. Facilities on Cobb County soil have housed, educated, trained, and provided arms and equipment to all service branches and employed countless numbers of the local population. Cobb County has for years provided an operational “home” for our nation’s Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, as well as a community for those soldiers, sailors, and airmen to belong during their time here.

That “community” was formalized in March of 1983 with the formation of a new, hybrid military support program. Providing information on the best examples of active military/civic leader organizations from prior bases, the new Commander of the 94th Tactical Airlift Wing at Dobbins Air Force Base, Brigadier General William W. (Bill) Basnett, with the aid of then Dobbins Public Affairs Officer, Major Robert (Bob) Dubiel, was instrumental in initiating discussions with the leadership of the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce. Chamber President Chet Austin, Vice President of Community Development Jack Wilson, Military Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Allen, Executive Vice President Phil Sanders, Manager of Community Development JD Dennis, and local businessman Walter Kelly Jr. were influential figures in the resulting formation of the Honorary Commanders Association (HCA). At inception, HCA was a joint effort of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Dobbins Air Force Base, and Naval Air Station Atlanta.

The initial installation luncheon held March 8, 1983, at Dobbins Air Force Base’s Officers Club, announced the appointment of 18 civilian Honorary Commanders along with the new organization’s objectives and initiatives, which included continuing community recognition of a “Military Person of the Quarter” at monthly Chamber breakfasts and an annual Military/Civilian Dinner-Dance.

Although there have been major shifts with the missions of the total force structure of the national defense authority since 1983, the HCA has continued to promote interaction between military personnel stationed locally and our community. Annually, following an intensive nomination and application process, approximately 25 civilian business and civic leaders of Cobb County are chosen to participate in the HCA program. Each civilian is paired with a military counterpart selected by the supporting local military commands to become that year’s class. Through the course of the next 12 months, the group experiences in-depth tours of the local military installations as well as sponsored visits to out-of-town bases. As the civilians receive an education in military affairs and the resulting economic impact to the community, they are also positioned to provide aid and support to the men and women, both current and veteran, who protect and serve our country through all branches of our Armed Forces, and to promote community confidence in our local military.

The HCA program similarly provides armed forces personnel assigned to the area an insight into a variety of local benefits as they are hosted at various functions along with being introduced to community and business

opportunities. HCA military counterparts are welcomed into homes and offices as well as being invited and encouraged to attend and participate in community events. The opportunities offered by the HCA program also offer those involved service men and women an enlightening view of other military branches.

The closely affiliated Honorary Commanders Alumni Association (HCAA) exists for both the civilian and military personnel who have experienced the program. Along with providing an overall volunteer support network for HCA and the local military commands, this association allows the relationships established to continue for years to come. HCAA sponsors charitable events, meals, and attendance for military functions and families. It conducts luncheon programs, presentations, socials, and special military-focused trips for HCAA members.

Over their existence, HCA and HCAA have been led by a number of volunteers who have dedicated countless hours of their time and effort toward the objectives presented above. Those leaders include: the program's Past Chairs:

1983	Jon Allen
1984	George Beggs
1985-1986	Walter Kelly Jr.
1987-1988	Howard DuBois
1989-1993	Jon Anderson
1994-1995	Mary Lou Stephens
1996-1997	Dena Rodrigues
1998-2001	Mike Worley
2002-2003	Dan O'Brien
2004-2005	Brent Brown
2006-2007	Mary Williamson
2008-2009	James Hudgins
2010-2011	Pam Younker
2012-2013	Travis Ellis
2013-2014	Glynda Thor
2014-2015	Joe Gaskin
2015-2016	Cassy Ferrell
2016-2017	Lee Davis
2017-2018	Leslie Hammond
2017-2018	Alumni Chairs Jodi Martin and Wayne McGary
2018-2019	Greg Teague
2019	Alumni Chairs Beth Johnston and Bob Finlayson
2019-2021	Christine Reliford
2020-2022	Chris Rideout
2020-2022	Alumni Chairs Joe Gaskin and Kari Parramore
2022	Terri Buntun Guthrie

The HCA commitment to active and veteran military service members remains a constant objective as we affirm:

The mission of the Honorary Commanders Association is to educate business and community leaders about the total force structure of the national defense authority while supporting the men and women who protect and serve our country through all branches of our Armed Forces.

Presently, the Honorary Commander Association is a cooperative effort of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce, Dobbins Air Reserve Base (ARB), General Lucius D. Clay National Guard Center, Navy and Marine Corps, and Coast Guard.

For additional information, you may visit www.cobbchamber.org, and follow links to Chamber Information, Leadership Programs, and Honorary Commanders/Honorary Commanders Alumni Association.

