



The Community Outreach Grant allowed MOAA's Luke (Ariz.) Chapter to help veterans and families procure food for Thanksgiving. (Courtesy of the Luke Chapter)

The Luke (Ariz.) Chapter is working to ensure financially stressed active duty military families and veterans have support and assistance.

Before the holiday season, the chapter collects and donates food and commissary gift cards to active duty families at nearby Luke AFB. It also provides small cash grants of \$500 to \$1,000 to veterans and active duty servicemembers and their families facing a hardship due to medical or other financial emergencies such as deaths, divorces, car troubles, and lodging needs.

This effort is one of many high-impact local programs the MOAA Foundation helps to fund through its Community Outreach Grant program. The Luke Chapter is one of 22 MOAA affiliates that received a portion of the \$79,400 in grants awarded this year. This was the chapter's second consecutive grant.

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"Each of the needy veterans were vetted by veterans' assistance agencies and then interviewed by a board of chapter members, says Lt. Col. Dennis DeFrain, USA (Ret), chapter first vice president.

"The needy veterans — who in some cases had sold all their furniture just to pay bills — were extremely appreciative of the assistance. It was a heart-rending experience to interview these outstanding veterans who were experiencing hard times."

To date, the MOAA Foundation has awarded 47 grants totaling more than \$175,000. To be eligible to receive a grant, councils or chapters must meet basic administration requirements and be actively involved in the delivery of community services in one of nine critical areas of need: housing, food assistance, employment, health (including behavioral health), family support, community reintegration, financial assistance, legal assistance, and transportation.

"The truly destitute need help just to cope with life and make it through a personal crisis," says Col. Mike Kramer, USAFR (Ret), immediate past president of the Luke Chapter. "But [the food and grants do] make a difference for the families facing a crunch, and they know that we care about them. The MOAA Foundation — through the grant program — shines a light on real people with real needs, who genuinely appreciate the assistance."