



Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation

May 2025 Foundation Update

May Marked by Art, Flowers and a Farewell

The month of May was filled with joy in so many ways! The annual Spring Art Show at Vinson Hall is quite an event, and at the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation we were pleased to provide additional easels to allow more of our residents' beautiful artwork to be displayed. In celebration of Vinson Hall's unique military heritage, we connected with the Memorial Day Flowers Foundation to receive their gift of beautiful bouquets in gratitude for our residents' service to our country. Another one of the Foundation's community partnerships – with the Potomac School in McLean – brought us together with a Potomac senior on a project to help preserve Vinson Hall's unique history. At the same time, May was marked by a touch of sadness as we bid farewell to Kayla Saska, our much-loved wounded warrior in the Foundation's Warrior Transition program on campus. We will miss you, Kayla! Last but not least, this month we published the spring issue of the *Campus News & Views* literary magazine, which is chock full of our residents' amazing stories. Read all about these May highlights and other Foundation news in the articles below!

Foundation Bids Goodbye to Our Wounded Warrior and Friend

The Foundation hosted a bittersweet event on May 12 to bid farewell to Kayla Saska, a beloved participant in NMCGRF's Warrior Transition program, which provides a Vinson Hall apartment to sailors who are recovering from injuries or illness. More than 50 residents and staff showed up at the Penthouse Lounge to wish Kayla well as she prepares to transition out of the military and leave Vinson Hall after a year and a half.





Kayla's story is well known to most of her friends at Vinson Hall. At age 18, she thought she had her life all planned out when she joined the Navy and became a radar technician in 2017. "I loved my job! I was ready to do the full 20 years in the Navy," she said. But while serving on board a destroyer, she had two unfortunate accidents. When she and another sailor were carrying a 100-lb box of supply parts down a steep ladder, he lost his grip and the box hit Kayla, knocking her down and injuring her knees and head. A month later, a second shipboard fall re-injured her knees and back.

In early 2024, Kayla moved in to Vinson Hall, after seven surgeries at Walter Reed in two years. She was in a wheelchair with knee braces, but that didn't keep her down. After getting involved in adaptive athletics, Kayla competed in the Warrior Games and Invictus Games – chalking up gold medal wins for Wheelchair Basketball, Rugby, Shotput and Discus. She was also named the Navy's 2024 Wounded Warrior of the Year.



With her ready smile and buoyant nature, Kayla, now 27, instantly won the hearts of Vinson Hall residents. Family is incredibly important to the Arizona native, and family is what she has found at Vinson Hall. "I love it here – it's like I have a hundred grandparents!" And because of their encouragement and guidance, Kayla's post-Navy plans now include college. She was recently accepted to the University of Missouri and will attend next year on a full

athletic scholarship.

At her farewell party, Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement Michelle Crone made opening remarks and presented Kayla with NMCGRF-branded swag – a gift to help her settle in to college life. Kayla took the mic to thank the Foundation and the residents for their gift of community and friendship. Sherm Eagan, Vinson Hall Residents' Association President and friend, thanked Kayla for her friendship on behalf of all residents.



After remarks and a group photo, residents took turns saying goodbye to Kayla, shaking hands and giving hugs. Vinson Hall's other Wounded Warrior, Kwadwo Asare, also attended with his two children. Thank you, Kayla, for adding so much to our lives at Vinson Hall. We will miss you, and we wish you all the best!

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Art Show Gets Assistance From Foundation Fund



It's no secret that there are amazing artists at Vinson Hall! Every May, their artwork is on display at a two-day Art Show, and this year we at the Foundation were pleased to play a small part in the success of this wonderful event.

At the request of the resident Visual Arts Committee, the Foundation purchased 24 tabletop frames through the Innovation & Enhancement Fund that were used at the Art Show on May 17 and 18. And what a show it was, featuring 300 pieces by over 40 artists. A steady stream of visitors, both on-campus and off-campus art lovers, made their way to the Ballroom to enjoy the artwork, chat with friends, and gather for

cheese, crackers and wine.



The additional tabletop frames added to the show's success, according to Emmy Simmons, an artist and member of the Visual Arts Committee. "In past shows, lack of an adequate number of tabletop easels and frames limited the quality of presentations," she said. The Foundation's funding to expand

the art display this year "added to the look of the show and the pleasure that our Vinson Hall community takes in viewing the artwork."

Maureen Kammerer, an artist and one of the organizers of the event, expressed a similar view. "I was really impressed with the quality and variety of the work being produced by Vinson Hall artists. And it's not just the people who are making the art – it's all of us who get to experience the joy of seeing beauty." At NMCGRF, we are delighted to have helped!



NMCGRF Brings Flowers To Campus for Memorial Day

In honor of Memorial Day, our friends from Memorial Day Flowers Foundation stopped by on May 25 to deliver a plethora of gorgeous flowers to Vinson Hall residents in gratitude for their service to our nation. Every year, the Memorial Day Flowers Foundation – an organization that works with private, public and corporate sponsors to donate flowers in honor of veterans and civil servants nationwide – brings hundreds of thousands of flowers to the graves at Arlington National Cemetery, while setting

aside buckets of flowers to bring to VHRC residents.

This is the fifth time our campus has received this Memorial Day floral gift from this organization, a partnership that the Foundation established during the centennial celebration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in 2021. The flowers, which come from growers in Colorado, Ecuador and California, were distributed to the common areas of Arleigh Burke Pavilion and The Sylvestery, and to the Vinson Hall Front Desk area, where residents were invited to come pick them up. Many thanks to Memorial Day Flowers Foundation for this lovely gift to our community!



Partnership with Local Student Helps Create Archive for Vinson Hall

One of our favorite roles in the Foundation is to be able to help Vinson Hall build partnerships with the local community. So we were thrilled when Harper Kelly, a senior at the Potomac School in McLean, asked if she could volunteer her time on campus during May to do her Potomac senior project.



After meeting Harper and discussing her interests, we came up with the perfect project. History is a special interest of hers, and this fall she will attend Vanderbilt University as a history major. Meanwhile, the Office of Philanthropy & Engagement is the keeper of all of Vinson Hall's historic documents, which go back to the early 1960s. It has long been our goal to set up a historic archive for our community, by organizing and digitally scanning newsletters, newspaper clips, photos and documents, all of which have

been sitting mostly forgotten in boxes in a closet. This project was right up Harper's alley.

Thanks to Harper's help every weekday in May, all 56 years of Vinson Hall's original newsletters have now been digitally scanned and organized. This is a terrific start on building this historic archive for Vinson Hall. Thank you, Harper, and best of luck at Vanderbilt!

Spring Issue of Literary Magazine is Out!

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
Campus News & Views
Spring 2025



As the weather warmed up this spring, we got busy! We celebrated Earth Day with students from The Potomac School and Chesterbrook Elementary School. We enjoyed gatherings in the Penthouse Sylvester Lounge, like birthday teas, parties and happy hours and we supported the Alzheimer's Association with our annual on-campus walk, one in a series of fundraising events.

Don't miss our latest issue of *Campus News & Views*, Vinson Hall's literary magazine! Our residents have done it again, sharing a wonderful collection of their stories, remembrances and poems. One resident tells a poignant coming-of-age story of serving in North Korea, another shares his harrowing experience dodging a caribou stampede on an Alaskan island, and poets touch on subjects from walking to aging. Memories of a first kiss at age 13, an engineer's post-college job designing missile guidance systems, a young couple who scores their one-and-only first class

flight by knowing an obscure country's capital – these stories and more are all here.

We are mesmerized by our residents' tales, and invite you to enjoy them too. It is truly our pleasure in the Office of Philanthropy & Engagement to edit and publish this magazine! Please click [here](#) to read the Spring 2025 issue of *Campus News & Views*.

NMCGRF's Annual Gala – Tickets Go on Sale July 28!

NMCGRF's Annual Gala is coming up fast – **Saturday, September 27, 2025!**

We are keeping this year's theme a secret for a few more weeks, but we can tell you that tickets will go on sale on July 28. Last



year, we sold out in just one week, so mark your calendars and watch for your invitation and more details to come soon!

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