

S.C. Military Veterans Hall of Fame hosts induction dinner

Nearly 400 guests attend ceremony inducting a Medal of Honor recipient, a fighter pilot-POW, and 12 other heroic military leaders from the Palmetto State

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, June 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Amidst much pomp, ceremony, and more than 380 well-heeled guests and VIPs, the South Carolina Military Veterans Hall of Fame (SCMVHOF) held its inaugural dinner and induction ceremony at Fort Jackson's 1917 Club, Saturday evening, June 6. The Hall inducted 14 living military veterans into its ranks and 27 posthumous inductees, not including several inductee veterans of the American Revolution (officially the Class of 1776).

Established in 2025 with the Class of 2025, the idea of a military veterans hall of fame for the Palmetto State was conceived well over a decade ago during discussions with the S.C. Military Support Foundation, but the elite organization did not become a reality until last year when Jay Alverson – a former U.S. Marine, retired U.S. Air Force (master sergeant) intelligence analyst, and former chair of the University of South Carolina (USC) Veterans Alumni Council – assumed the reigns as executive director.



USMC Maj. Gen. Jim Livingston, Medal of Honor recipient, and USAF Col. Bill Austin, ex-POW, are both inductees in the S.C. Military Veterans Hall of Fame. Photo courtesy of Ken Scar, Clemson University.



The South Carolina Military Veterans Hall of Fame is a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Under Alverson's leadership and that of the SCMVHOF's board of directors, the organization quickly achieved non-profit status and acquired sponsors such as Coca-Cola Consolidated, USC, Clemson University, and Pearce Bespoke-Charlotte among many other organizations and individuals.

Among Saturday evening's inductees were retired USMC Maj. Gen. Jim Livingston, Medal of Honor recipient, and retired USAF Col. Bill Austin, an F-4 pilot who was shot down over Vietnam and spent more than five years in an enemy POW camp. Others included Col. Bill Connor, U.S. Army Infantry, and Col. Steve Vitali, U.S. Marine Corps;

both having commanded combat forces in Afghanistan (Vitali also in Iraq); also USMC General [four stars] Thomas Waldhauser, U.S. Navy Captain Ken Sullivan, Lt. Col. Christopher Yanity, Command Sgt. Maj. Joe Johnson, Sgt. Maj. James Moore, Dr. Brooks Herring, Craig Ostergard, Ronnie McClean, Charles Schulze, and Dan Hennigan.

Maj. Gen. Livingston – considered "the founding Hall of Fame inductee" because of his directional leadership for years toward the establishment of a SCMVHOF – is unique in that he is both a member of the Class of 2025 and a member of the Medal of Honor Class introduced in 2026. All Medal of Honor recipients from S.C. are automatically inducted into the SCMVHOF. Inductees also include historically significant military leaders like Brig. Gen. Francis Marion, Brig. Gen. Thomas Sumter, Brig. Gen. Andrew Pickens, Maj. Gen. William Moultrie, Maj. Gen. Johann Baron DeKalb, Captain Thomas Woodward, and all four of S.C.'s signers of the Declaration of Independence – Arthur Middleton, Thomas Lynch Jr., Thomas Heyward Jr., and Edward Rutledge – each of whom served under arms in the American Revolution.

A letter from S.C. Lt. Governor Pamela Evette congratulating all inductees, but particularly her close friend Maj. Gen. Livingston, was read and presented by Col. W. Thomas Smith Jr. (Class of 2025), a retired S.C. Military Dept. officer and former USMC Infantry leader who also delivered the Hall's official prayer (which he composed last year) to the gathered attendees prior to dinner.

A plaque recognizing all American ex-POWs and MIAs was presented to the Hall for inclusion in the Hall of Fame's permanent physical site at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center in downtown Columbia, as was a framed concurrent resolution honoring and recognizing the SCMVHOF by the S.C. General Assembly: The Resolution introduced and adopted by both the S.C.



The South Carolina Military Veterans Hall of Fame inductee logo.

House of Representatives and the S.C. Senate early this year.

Additionally, representatives with Quilts of Valor and the Military Women's Memorial Foundation from Arlington, Virginia, were on-hand: The latter to recognize women military veterans in attendance. Several women veterans are also inductees in the SCMVHOF, three from the Class of 2025 and several among the posthumous inductees.

The evening's colors were presented by the Richland County Sheriff's Department (RCSD) Honor Guard. Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott, who has led RCSD since 1997 and was named National Sheriff of the Year in 2021 by the National Sheriff's Association, is a 2025 inductee.

Alverson, himself a 2025 inductee, and other members of the board including retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Will Grimsley presided over the dinner and ceremonies, while Marine Recon leader and Class of 2025 inductee Jared Evans served as emcee.

Inductees from the previous year's class – Brig. Gen. Hap Carr, Col. Kevin Shwedo, Col. Neil Pugliese. Lt. Col. Caroline Fermin, Maj. Lisa Yanity, Capt. Brandy Rogers, Command Sgt. Maj. Lamont Christian, and Sgt. 1st Class Tim Frisby – were also in attendance. Unable to attend were Col. Keith June and Lt. Col. James E. Smith Jr. who was traveling overseas.

The dinner also featured a silent auction with guests bidding on everything from a football signed by Gamecock head football coach Shane Beamer, a basketball signed by Gamecock women's head basketball coach Dawn Staley, a USMC K-Bar knife (with free engraving from Northeast Trophies in Columbia) and a 50th anniversary rugby gameball from the U.S. National Team and donated by 2025 Inductee Kevin Shwedo, who also holds the distinction of being the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army Emeritus and the cabinet-level executive director of the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles.

Nominations for the Class of 2027 and beyond, as it was for the Classes of 2025, 2026, and 1776 must meet exacting standards and screening for induction as stipulated in the Hall of Fame's bylaws. Not all nominees will be inducted. But all nominated military veterans who meet the criteria will be considered for possible induction. To nominate, please visit – <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/south-carolina-military-veterans-hall-of-fames-nomination-form>.

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