

# Commodore Battalion Newsletter

Spring 2023 Issue



## Battalion Commander

MIDN 1/C Hunter Johnson

This semester, it has been my pleasure to watch the Vanderbilt NROTC program grow mentally, morally, and physically. However, the accomplishments have not stopped there. This past semester, the Battalion performed impressively during the ROTC Olympics this year to take home the win against Army! Our midshipmen met for many weeks preceding the competition to train the team sports that largely afforded us the victory. And, after a week of neck and neck competition, everyone pulled together around the tiebreaking cornhole board to push our midshipmen to victory!

This same enthusiasm has also shown in other areas. On their own volition, members of the Battalion have logged over 150 hours of volunteer work and participated in extensive leadership growth opportunities, such as the Notre Dame Leadership Weekend or the Roundtable discussion with General Nakasone of the NSA for Vanderbilt's Summit on Modern Conflict and Emerging Threats. This semester, I have been genuinely impressed with everyone's inner drive to succeed in making the Battalion, and the greater Nashville community a better place.

For this reason, commissioning at the end of this academic year is bittersweet for me. On the one hand, I am beyond excited to get to the fleet after four years of preparation and hard work, but I also look around me and realize that I must leave a truly talented and driven team. Our PTI has put together rigorous workouts with 16 midshipmen scoring an "Outstanding" on the PRT or a 270+ on the PFT. The OPS team has worked to put together great leadership labs with a focus on drill, professional expertise, and applicable professional military knowledge. Finally, our, 4/C training OICs have successfully integrated our 23 4/Cs into the Battalion, teaching them what it means to be a midshipman. I say this to highlight the top-notch team that puts in the work to make this Battalion run. I will miss them, but I am proud to say that I have had the honor to work alongside them. As always, Anchor Down, Go Navy, Beat Army!



## Operations Officer

MIDN 2/C Mykayla Couchenour

The Operations Department led the way in making this another great semester of full battalion activities. Our excellent PT, Community Service, Leadership Labs, and Recruiting efforts contributed to growth of our midshipmen in leadership, fitness, service, and morale. Our Leadership Labs catered to specific requests from midshipmen, covering a wide range of topics from current events to mental health to financial responsibility, as well as hearing from members of the different unrestricted line communities. One highlight was taking the whole battalion to see an F-35 static display! We also conducted several Lunch-and-Learn opportunities, in which midshipmen could ask specific questions to our guests and hear sea stories and leadership insights in a more personal setting. On March 31, we had our first Marine Corps Mess Night since spring of 2020, which was a fun night of celebrating Marine Corps heritage and building esprit de corps with fellow midshipmen and Marines from the area. Our PTs were always challenging, and thanks to our dedication to physical fitness, we dominated the ROTC Olympics this spring! Our Community Service once again made a significant impact in the Nashville area with several hundred combined hours from our midshipmen. This semester has been full of activities, and I could not have asked for a better OPS Department. I am so thankful for each member of the team, and I am excited to pass the baton to MIDN Mercer, who I know will do an amazing job this Fall. Semper Fidelis!



## Moral, Wellness, and Recreation

MIDN 3/C Gavin Stevens

A pivotal aspect of the development of midshipmen is involvement in morale, wellness, and recreation. The Battalion has increased camaraderie by hosting a variety of opportunities. Such events include but are not limited to, a Nashville Soccer Club game and Battalion Paintball. These engaging events fostered midshipmen's communication and leadership skills. Additionally, the Battalion hosted its first Senior Send-Off event this year. Our commissioning 1/C had the opportunity to share stories and advice in an informal setting for our underclassmen. This is a tradition that we intend to continue. Through MWR efforts, VUNROTC has proven that we value the interpersonal relationships and overall well-being of our midshipmen.



## Alpha Company Commander

MIDN 2/C Martina Raco

The leadership, enthusiasm, and motivation demonstrated in Alpha company in spring 2023 was extraordinary. My goal for this semester was to drive everyone to go above and beyond, and I saw that from every midshipman in Alpha. I watched the platoon commanders break the norms and do more than what their jobs asked them to do, which lead them to grow into mentors and role models.

The leadership and eagerness that came from Alpha led us to an Honor Company win, demonstrated in the total of 1,927 miles ran, 65 hours of community service and over 80 hours of tutoring. It was an honor to be able to Alpha Company alongside with my Chief and Platoon Commanders and could not be happier with how the semester turned out!

## Bravo Company Commander

MIDN 2/C Ford Chandler

Spring 2023 was a year of tremendous success and incredible leadership for Bravo Company. Our midshipmen ran over 1400 miles and completed 90 service hours, showcasing their unwavering dedication to excellence in all aspects of their training. I am proud to give a special shoutout to our platoon commanders, MIDN Lauren Hunecke, MIDN Cat Cleary, and MIDN Zach Gapusan, who demonstrated exceptional professionalism and went above and beyond in mentoring their fellow midshipmen. In addition, I must highlight the outstanding performance of MIDN Jackson Germond, who excelled in his new role as Company Chief.

Bravo Company looked sharp at our Spring parade, and our battalion won the ROTC Olympics, a testament to the hard work and dedication of all our midshipmen. It was a true honor to serve as Bravo Company commander and to work alongside such a remarkable group of future leaders. I am confident that the skills, discipline, and commitment that they have demonstrated will serve them well in their future military careers. Bravo Zulu to all the midshipmen of Bravo Company for a job well done!



## COMSERVE

MIDN 2/C Chandler Alexander

Community service this semester was a blast and a blessing as midshipmen of the battalion took on a variety of service opportunities such as Nashville Rescue Mission, Nashville Wine Auction, and more! The midshipmen involvement within Nashville offers a unique way for the battalion to give back to the community, while also representing the unit, and the Navy as a whole. This semester, we gave back by preparing and serving food to the homeless, helping to organize events for cancer fundraising, and volunteering at track meets among other things. In a display of commitment to the community, Vanderbilt midshipmen accumulated well over 150 hours of community service this semester.

## Physical Training

MIDN 2/C William Brady

Physical Training this semester was excellent. In January, APTI, MIDN 2/C Camp, and myself set our goals for PT this semester. We decided our workouts should prioritize cardiovascular endurance and development of muscle groups targeted by the Marine Corps Physical Fitness Test and the Navy Physical Readiness Test. We worked to make a meaningful and compact schedule of seven Battalion PTs and six Fitness Enhancement Plan PTs in between our intake and official fitness tests. Our two favorite Battalion PTs were the buddy aid relays workout and the modified Murph. I have to include a special thanks to our yoga instructor certified Ensign Brown for leading us in a yoga cooldown after our micro Murph, which was definitely a favorite among the MIDN.

The culminating PT event this semester was ROTC Olympics. Navy ROTC reigned victorious, beating both Army and Air Force. Navy put up stellar performances in every event, winning basketball, soccer, and track. Army won weightlifting, volleyball, and frisbee which left everything up to a nail-biting tiebreaker game of cornhole. MIDN 2/C Stevens and MIDN 2/C Oetinger destroyed Army on the cornhole board leading Navy to victory.

Outside of our mandatory PT events, MIDN went above and beyond participating in the Nashville Marathon and the Rome Marathon! Congratulations to MIDN 2/C Hunecke and MIDN 3/C Brinkerhoff for their outstanding performance in the Music City Half-Marathon and Marathon respectively. MIDN Hunecke placed 2nd in her age group with a time of 1:28:50. MIDN Brinkerhoff placed 8th in his age group with a time of 3:06:15. I am proud to have led such an impressive Battalion this semester in PT, and their excellent fitness made APTI and I's job easy.



## Bulldog

MIDN 1/C Myron Salvador

I Along with SSgt Bradshaw wanted to focus on academics for fall 2022 and physical fitness during spring 2023. Academics consisted of learning how to write and receive an operations order and weekly exercises around campus, as well as land navigation classes. The Physical fitness program was centered around body weight style workouts as well as running. The Second Class Midshipmen were in charge of executing the plans for Bulldog. This includes giving counts, gear prep, and executing the workouts. This Spring Bulldog Platoon for the first time in 3 years conducted a joint field training exercise with the University of Missouri where all the midshipmen applied what they had learned throughout both semesters of Bulldog. Overall, the purpose of Bulldog is to prepare the Second-Class Midshipmen for the rigors of Officer Candidate school which is a requirement for all Marine Option Midshipmen. All the events executed in bulldog are events that the Second Class will encounter when they attend officer candidate school.



## Change of Command

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, VUNROTC held its annual spring Change of Command, Pass and Review, and Award Ceremony. This was the first drill event overseen by our new AMOI Gunnery Sergeant Sean Durkee, and with the help of our Drill OIC MIDN 2/C Marcos Baez, they put on the ceremony with an ever-growing battalion. With such a growing battalion, MIDN 1/C Mykayla Couchenour has quite the challenge ahead of her, with the newly added Charlie Company, as she relieves MIDN 1/C Johnson as Battalion Commander and prepares for the fall semester.

Battalion Commander: MIDN 1/C Couchenour

Battalion Executive Officer: MIDN 1/C Kalb

Battalion Sergeant Major: MIDN 1/C Brady

Battalion Operations Officer: MIDN 2/C Mercer

Battalion Adjutant: MIDN 1/C Pierce

Battalion Supply Officer: MIDN 1/C Kasprazak

Alpha Company Commander: MIDN 1/C Gieser

Alpha Company Chief Petty Officer: MIDN 2/C  
Hawley

Bravo Company Commander: MIDN 1/C Lopez

Bravo Company Chief Petty Officer: MIDN 2/C Farley

Charlie Company Commander: MIDN 2/C Hunecke

Charlie Company Chief Petty Officer: MIDN 2/C  
White



## Awards Ceremony

After the Change of Command Ceremony, midshipmen were granted awards from various organizations including but not limited to the American Legion and the Marine Corps League. The recipients of these awards earned them throughout their years of diligence, aptitude, and leadership. They truly deserve every honor bestowed upon them. Congratulations to the recipients!



# Commissioning

On 12 May 2023, eight Ensigns and one Second Lieutenant became the newest commissioned officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. During the ceremony, the new officers and their families heard from Provost C. Cybele Raver, Chancellor Daniel Diermeier, and Major General William B. Hickman, U.S. Army (ret.). The Class of 2023 has accomplished so much in four short years, and we are so excited to see what each one of them brings out to the Fleet! More information on this year's class of commissioning officers can be found below:



## VUNROTC Class of 2023

### USN

Ensign Sarah Kaitlyn Brown, Mary Ester, FL - Nurse Corps  
Ensign Blake Austin Christiansen, Hazel Green, AL - Surface Warfare (Nuclear)  
Ensign Andrew Jonathan Fish, Morristown, TN - Submarine Warfare  
Ensign Jackson Baker Harrington, Manhattan Beach, CA - Submarine Warfare  
Ensign Hunter Thomas Johnson, Houston, TX - Submarine Warfare  
Ensign Alexander Wilson Jones, Warner Robins, GA - Aviation  
Ensign Shine Shanyun Peng, Oakton, VA - Surface Warfare  
Ensign Jack Timothy Warner, San Anselmo, CA - Surface Warfare

### USMC

Second Lieutenant Myron Falcam Salvador, Bowling Green, KY - USMC Ground