


# Bugle

Winter 2023

**Carl Brashear**

*A Man of Honor*

A publication of  
The Honorable Order of  
 **Kentucky  
Colonels**<sup>®</sup>



## In this issue...

### Welcoming New Colonels 3

Meet Colonel Finster, from Ashland, Kentucky.

### A Meaningful and Significant Response 4

As many of us do, Wade Connor believes being a Kentucky Colonel should mean something. And he's making it happen.

### Emergency Grants 6

Since December 2021, Kentuckians have been hit by natural disasters, and Colonels have come to their aid. HOKC has a rich history of responding to natural disasters.

### ON THE COVER: A Man of Honor: Carl Brashear 10

Not only was he the first African American Master Diver for the Navy, he was the first amputee Master Diver.

### Colonel History: Annie Poage 14

It's possible that Margaret Annie Poage was the first female to be commissioned a Kentucky Colonel.



The Ralston Building  
943 South First Street  
Louisville, Kentucky 40203  
502-266-6114  
KyColonels.org

## From the Commanding General

### The Spirit of Kentucky

In July 2022, the worst flood in Appalachian history took the lives of nearly 100 Kentuckians, mothers and fathers, young children, and elderly with dementia, all unable to escape the quickly rising waters as homes and businesses were wiped off the map. But the spirit of Kentucky survived as volunteers from around the Commonwealth showed up with boats to provide impromptu rescues removing victims from submerged homes, to provide shelter and sustenance, and to provide hope. These volunteers and those who provided financial support for their efforts embody the spirit of Appalachia and of the Commonwealth.

The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels was proud to represent you, helping our fellow Kentuckians during their darkest hour, by designating \$1,000,000 for rescue and rebuilding efforts in eastern Kentucky, including a \$25,000 donation to the Team Kentucky Fund for Eastern Kentucky. Your donations are a testament to your generosity; our theme, Because a Colonel Gave, has never been more evident.

During 2022, Kentuckians demonstrated the power of perseverance and resilience, traits personified by Kentucky Colonel and United States Navy Master Diver Carl Brashear. The story of his journey is shared in this issue of *Bugle*.

General Lynn Ashton, who chairs the HOKC Grants Committee, details emergency grants we can provide to nonprofit organizations across the commonwealth when unusual and urgent needs arise.

We also introduce you to Colonel Wade Conner and his investments in the mission of HOKC and chronicle the life of Annie Poage, one of the first female Kentucky Colonels.

And we have a question for you: What topics would you like to read more about in future issues of *Bugle*? We'd love to hear from you. Please email [bugle@KyColonels.org](mailto:bugle@KyColonels.org) or reach out to Leslie Watkins at [lmwatkins@KyColonels.org](mailto:lmwatkins@KyColonels.org) or 502-753-0778 with your comments or suggestions.

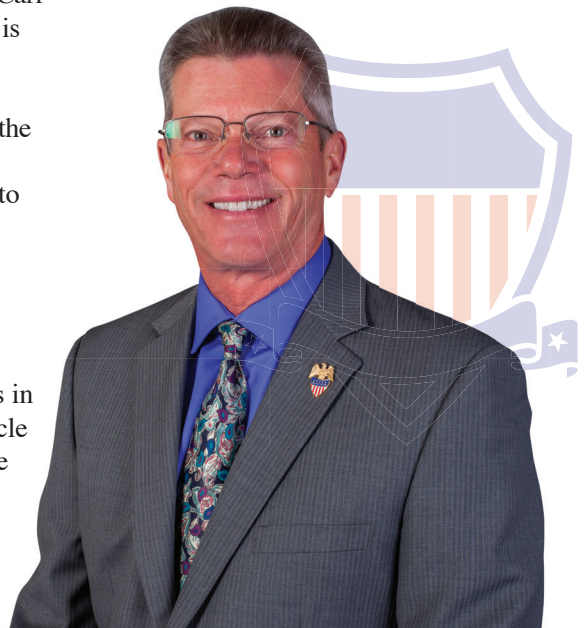
As we enter a new year, we salute the transformative power and lasting impact your support of HOKC has in the Commonwealth and encourage you to consider other ways to invest in our mission, perhaps through an estate gift or a qualified charitable distribution from an IRA.

There is a kindness in the Commonwealth that demonstrates why Kentucky topped the list as the kindest state in a 2021 academic study by Kindness.org. Your kindness and your spirit of charity toward your fellow Kentuckians embody the heart of the Kentucky Colonels. Thank you.

Cordially,

*Gary W Boschert*

Gary Boschert  
Commanding General  
HOKC 





# Welcome, Colonel Finster.

*Recently commissioned Colonel from Ashland, Kentucky*

*by Colonel Heather Campbell, Director of Colonel Relations*

The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels is represented in 50 states and 59 countries. Meet one of our most recently commissioned Colonels:

## **Shane Finster — Ashland, KY Commissioned January 3, 2022**

Colonel Shane Finster grew up with his parents instilling in him the value of serving others. He volunteered at church, washed cars to raise money for his 4-H Club, rang the Salvation Army bell on cold days during the holidays, and visited local senior centers when the band and choir played for the residents.

After graduating from high school, Finster attended Fairmont State University, earning a bachelor's degree in psychology, and then Marshall University, where he received a master's degree in clinical psychology. He soon took a communication job in a corporate retail operation, providing corporate training, and obtained his MBA from Marshall University.

Today, Finster puts his passion for serving others to work while a Community Marketing Manager for Armstrong. In his position, he works with traditional, event, and digital marketing while helping the nonprofit community with their marketing needs. Finster blends his career with his passion for serving others.

When the pandemic hit, Finster stepped up to serve on local nonprofit boards, including



United Way of the River Cities, Huntington Museum of Art, Lawrence Economic Development Corporation, The Ohio River Revival, and the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, where he serves as board president. He also chairs “Avenge Hunger,” his employer’s food drive, redistributing food and cash donations to local food pantries.

In 2022, Finster received a large envelope in the mail containing his Kentucky Colonel commission certificate and is honored to be among the company of other Colonels around the world making an impact. Finster quotes Anne Frank saying, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” Seeing his commission certificate, he says “there are still things to do; the job isn’t done when you put the certificate on the wall.” 🇺🇸

# Advisory Council Forming

*Objective is to better understand and engage younger Colonels.*

*by Colonel Sherry Crose,  
Executive Director*

The Honorable Order is entering 2023 with plans for a new initiative, an advisory council of Kentucky Colonels between the ages of 25 and 45.

To begin the formation, HOKC has engaged Megan Lincavage, of Sutherland & Associates, to conduct one-on-one interviews with Colonels who have contributed to the Good Works program as well as board members and members of the HOKC headquarters staff to determine what Colonels believe an advisory council should do, what HOKC does that is important to new or younger Colonels, what the advisory council could do to bring additional value to the Honorable Order, and what activities HOKC could offer to better engage Colonels age 25 to 45. HOKC does not have any predetermined expectations for the council and looks forward to hearing and understanding the next generation of Colonels. HOKC will continue to evolve and grow as Colonels evolve. 🇺🇸





# A meaningful and significant response

*As many of us do,  
Wade Connor believes  
being a Kentucky Colonel  
should mean something.  
And he's making it happen.*

*by Colonel Leslie Watkins,  
Director of Major Gifts*

Colonel Wade Conner of Indianapolis, Indiana, believes that being commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel by the Governor of the Commonwealth should mean something. He feels that the primary purpose behind the tradition of creating Kentucky Colonels is not only to honor individuals for good works and service to the state and community but also to encourage them to become more involved in the charitable aspects of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels and other worthy charities. And he has certainly lived up to his beliefs.

Founder and chief executive officer of Trinity Metals, an Indianapolis-based wholesaler and processor of nonferrous metals, Conner says that the Commonwealth of Kentucky is close to his heart. After the tornados struck western Kentucky in December of 2021, Conner said, "A tragedy such as this calls for a meaningful and significant response." Kentucky has always been an important part of the Trinity Metals success story, and Conner was raised with the

belief that he should give back to the communities in which he earns his living. Thus, in April 2022, Conner and the Trinity Metals Foundation made a \$100,000 gift to the disaster relief efforts, earmarked for Habitat for Humanity, announcing the gift at a Kentucky Colonels Day of Service in Madisonville, Kentucky, at which Colonels worked on a Habitat home. This gift was applied to the \$2 million challenge for emergency relief and rebuilding efforts in western Kentucky issued by Colonel Shannon Ralston and her family.

Adopted at six months of age, Conner says his adoption changed the course of his life forever. His father was a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy; his mother was a teacher; and the family was, as Conner described, "wonderfully conservative, liberal, generous and dysfunctional all at the same time." He channeled the experiences of his youth (both good and bad) into a productive way of thinking in his late teens. To Conner, being adopted by definition meant that he was a refugee, and like all refugees, he was looking for a home. In

speaking of the Conner family, he said that not only did he find that home, but he also received so much more.

According to Conner, "someone with my life experience is wired differently; the spirit of adoption has touched my heart. I am grateful and feel obliged to give back," summing it up by quoting Luke 12:48: "To whom much is given, much will be required." Conner said he wants to create an example, reputation, and legacy for his family that is worthy of the gifts he has been given.

Conner paid most of his way through university by himself and graduated from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University in 1992 with a degree in Accounting. After passing the Certified Public Accountant exam at graduation, he spent several years overseas working for Deloitte & Touche in accounting and corporate finance. Later, he went into the recycling industry as a financial controller and obtained a Master's degree in Business Administration at the State University of New





York, taking classes on nights and weekends. Conner is a U.S. patent holder (US Patent #11,001,908) for his work on reducing the environmental impact of recycling.

Conner and his wife, Monika, have three children, Christian (17), Catherine (15), and Annie (6). They enjoy spending time at their log cabin in southern Indiana, hunting, hiking, camping, golfing, and grilling.

Commissioned a Kentucky Colonel in 2021 in recognition of the work of his company during the Covid crisis, Conner almost immediately reached out to HOKC and connected with Executive Director Colonel Sherry Crose. He then sponsored a Kentucky Colonel dinner at the Repeal Restaurant in Louisville for several new Kentucky Colonels he had nominated. A visit to Headquarters the next morning to deliver a donation and take a tour helped him to form a positive impression of HOKC's charitable works that stayed with him and encouraged him to invest more in the mission of the organization.

Since that time, Conner has remained involved, giving regularly and talking frequently with staff about the needs of the organization. Conner also submits several Kentucky Colonel nominations each year for people who reflect the characteristics of a Kentucky Colonel, a generous giving heart, a well-rounded positive character, the willingness always to do the right thing, and a personality that seeks the best outcome to difficult situations.

Portraying these characteristics, Conner teamed up with Colonel Travis Barnes, co-owner of Hotel Tango Distillery, to provide three barrels of bourbon that the Kentucky Colonels sold, with proceeds from the 648 bottles being directed to organizations assisting victims of the December tornados. This partnership was the first of its kind in HOKC history and was repeated when Conner offered another barrel to support efforts in eastern Kentucky. Between these two partnerships and the gift earmarked for Habitat for Humanity, approximately \$120,000 was added to the funds in support of eastern and western Kentucky.

Conner also encouraged other Kentucky Colonels to give to the disaster relief efforts and teamed up with Colonel Christopher Galifi, whom he had nominated, to provide additional flood disaster relief through a \$30,000 donation. Colonel Galifi's company, the Giampaolo Group, recently invested in two manufacturing facilities (Matalco in Franklin and Shelbyville, Kentucky), and Trinity Metals has a long history with many manufacturers and recycling companies across the state. Torchbearers International, a Christian ministry that seeks to transform lives through biblical teaching and training, also benefited from Conner's generosity. They received a \$50,000 donation used to provide support for the medical needs of Ukrainian refugees who have fled their home country due to the Russian attacks.

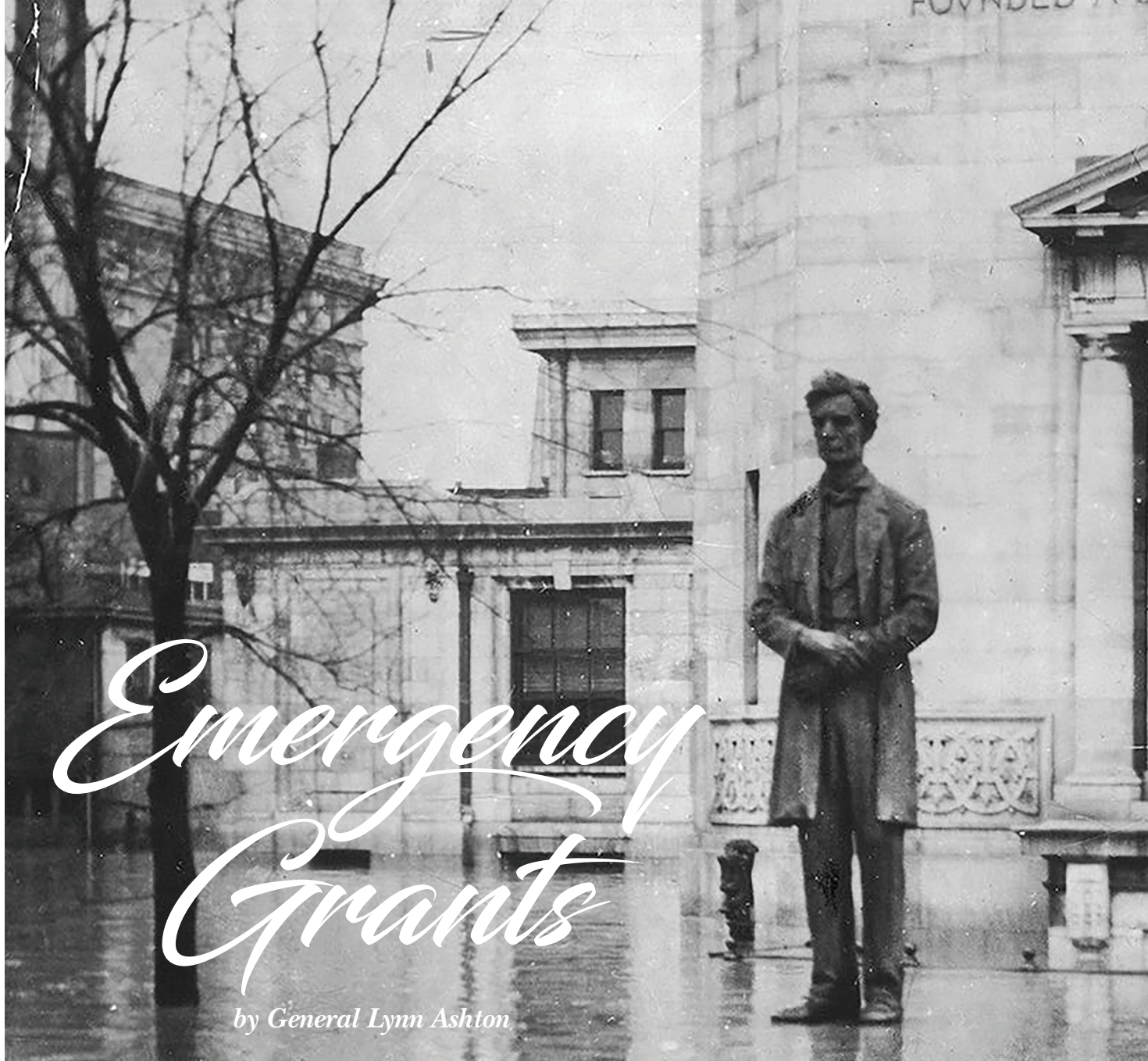
Conner believes that the purpose of naming Kentucky Colonels is to encourage individuals to, in his words, step outside of themselves and do something good, not just when an obvious need arises, like the disasters in eastern and western Kentucky, but every day. 🇺🇸



*Colonel Wade Conner (center) has been a loyal and generous contributor to the Honorable Order since his commission. Here, along with Colonel Michael Dannenmaier (also of Trinity Metals), he's presenting a check for \$100,000 toward western Kentucky tornado relief to Colonel Sherry Crose, Executive Director of the Honorable Order.*







# Emergency Grants

by General Lynn Ashton

As members, you are aware of the Good Works Program and the grants that we provide each year; however, you may not be aware that, each year, we also provide emergency grants that fall outside of our normal granting time period. Often it becomes incumbent upon a nonprofit to shift from normal everyday activities to recovery due to unexpected emergencies. These emergency grants assist nonprofits in continuing to move forward and overcome their difficult times.

Looking through board minutes dating back to the 1950s, we find

that extraordinary grants have evolved with the refinement of the grant program. You have read in previous *Bugles* that we believe the very first grant was provided after the 1937 flood, which devastated the areas of Kentucky bordering the Ohio River.

Colonels from around the country contributed, and a special celebrity fundraiser was hosted by Colonel Bob Hope. One example of the massive devastation was that sixty percent of the city of Louisville was underwater with the crest at 85.4 feet. The damage was

estimated at \$250 million, which equates to \$3.3 billion in today's dollars. A total of 190 people lost their lives.

For many years, there was no mention of grants being given outside of the normal cycle. In 1979, the Lexington Deaf Oral School was denied an emergency grant with the minutes noting, "we cannot consider grants requests around the clock." The Kentucky Colonels did start to give a few grants outside of the normal cycle in the early 1980s; those grants, listed as "extraordinary" were often for items





© Courier Journal – USA TODAY NETWORK

*This statue of Lincoln is at the main branch of the Louisville Free Public Library, 301 York Street, eight blocks south of the Ohio River.*

that were not funded through the normal grant process. For example, in 1983, \$12,000 was provided to Goodwill for three months of salary, and, in 1985, Walden Theater was given \$1,500 for office furniture.

In 1988, the third deadliest bus crash in the United States happened in Carroll County, Kentucky. An Elizabethtown church youth group was in a school bus traveling home from an outing at Kings Island amusement park outside of Cincinnati when a drunk driver hit the bus. Twenty-seven people were killed and 40 survived, many of whom spent months recovering from burns and

other physical wounds. This bus crash was so significant in history that it forever altered how school buses were manufactured. The Kentucky Colonels provided \$10,000 to assist the burn victims.

It wasn't until 2003 that the board formalized and adopted the terminology "Extraordinary Grants," and set aside \$50,000 on an annual basis for grants that fall outside the normal cycle. Also in the early 2000s, emergency grants were awarded to organizations assisting with disasters outside the Commonwealth. For example, in 2005, \$25,000 was awarded to the Kentucky Baptist Convention for Hurricane Katrina Relief.

The Convention provided more than 5,000 volunteers, served more than 1,300,000 meals, and assisted in coordination of 1,400 jobs for victims of the storm. In that same year, the Cabbage Patch Settlement House, located in Louisville, was awarded \$6,675 to repair a severe emergency water line problem.

As the years progressed, the emergency grant program became more refined. In 2012, the board increased the amount dedicated to extraordinary grants to \$75,000 annually, and the term "extraordinary" morphed into "emergency."







While addressing the emergency needs of Kentucky nonprofits throughout the years, the Kentucky Colonels have been sensitive to the major disasters that have happened across the country. These donations outside of Kentucky have been granted to areas where there has been a natural disaster and Colonels from around the country

have contacted us asking us if we were going to donate. In each case, the staff has contacted an active Colonel from the impacted area asking that they vet a non-profit to make sure the dollars would be used wisely. The Colonels then provided a grant and sent out an email to all Colonels asking if they would like to donate specifically to the cause.

In 2013, \$30,000 was provided to the Salvation Army for Oklahoma Tornado Relief, and, after an e-mail was sent to Colonels about this donation, an additional \$50,000 was contributed. Colonel Shun Fujiki, of Saitama, Japan, contacted Japanese Colonels and raised over \$57,000. In 2016, when Louisiana was hit with flooding, Colonel Bobbie Whiddon, of New Orleans,





Louisiana, led us to St. Bernard Parish, and the Colonels provided \$10,000. Additionally, Colonels from around the country donated a matching \$10,000. The St. Bernard Parish non-profit is now called SBP and works with communities facing natural disasters across the country. SBP was an instrumental disaster recovery organization that stepped in to western Kentucky after the

December 2021 tornados in western Kentucky and the July 2022 flooding in eastern Kentucky.

Category 4 Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in 2017, causing \$125 billion in damage and tying for the costliest tropical cyclone on record. Colonel John Craparo, of Georgetown, Texas, was contacted, and, through his assistance, we connected with the Houston Food Bank. The Colonels gave \$10,000, and you generously gave an additional \$76,000!

We all know that 2020 was a game-changer in many respects. We provided \$1 million to the Team Kentucky Fund and approved \$409,440 in emergency grants to nonprofits for food, personal protection equipment, cleaning supplies, and virtual technology upgrades.

In 2021, the board increased the amount dedicated to emergency grants to \$150,000. There is never a year goes by that our nonprofit partners don't encounter emergencies, such as a furnace that goes out in winter or the loss of A/C in the summer, the food pantry that loses its freezer, the shelter that has its water heater go bad or pipes burst in the winter, or the roof that springs a leak. One emergency grant HOKC provided was to the Garrard County Food Bank after a fire caused the total destruction of their building right before Thanksgiving. The Colonels provided the Thanksgiving meal and other nonperishable food items that were lost in the fire.

Today we have guidelines and processes in place that fast-track requests but basically follow the same procedures as those processed through our normal grant cycle. A nonprofit needing an emergency grant can reach out to our Grants Administrator, Eric Patterson, to discuss the organization's need. If

eligible, the non-profit will receive access to complete the application form. Once the form is completed, it is reviewed by the Grants Administrator, the Executive Director, and the Grants Committee Chair. A member of the Grants Committee then vets the application. The member will present their findings and recommendations to a special meeting of the Grants Committee. Any grant request greater than \$15,000 must go to the full board for approval. We try to make this process move as quickly as possible, with most being completed in just a couple of days.

The natural disasters that struck Kentucky in 2021 and 2022 were devastating for the Commonwealth. After the tornados, through a \$1,000,000 donation and a \$1,000,000 challenge grant provided by Colonel Shannon Ralston, of Texas, plus an additional \$1,000,000 provided by the Honorable Order, and donations from Colonels around the world, \$3,148,113.48 was available for non-profits.

In July eastern Kentucky experienced historic flooding. Breathitt, Letcher, and Knox counties had entire communities destroyed. The Honorable Order immediately committed \$1,000,000, as we did for western Kentucky, and you provided an additional \$279,804.55 in funding.

Today, since natural disasters are becoming much more commonplace, the Grants committee is developing a policy for handling these emergencies in the future.

“Because a Colonel Gave,” we have been able not only to help nonprofits achieve their missions and visions on an annual basis, but we have also been able to help them through devastating times that could derail them and help to make them whole...we thank you! 🇺🇸

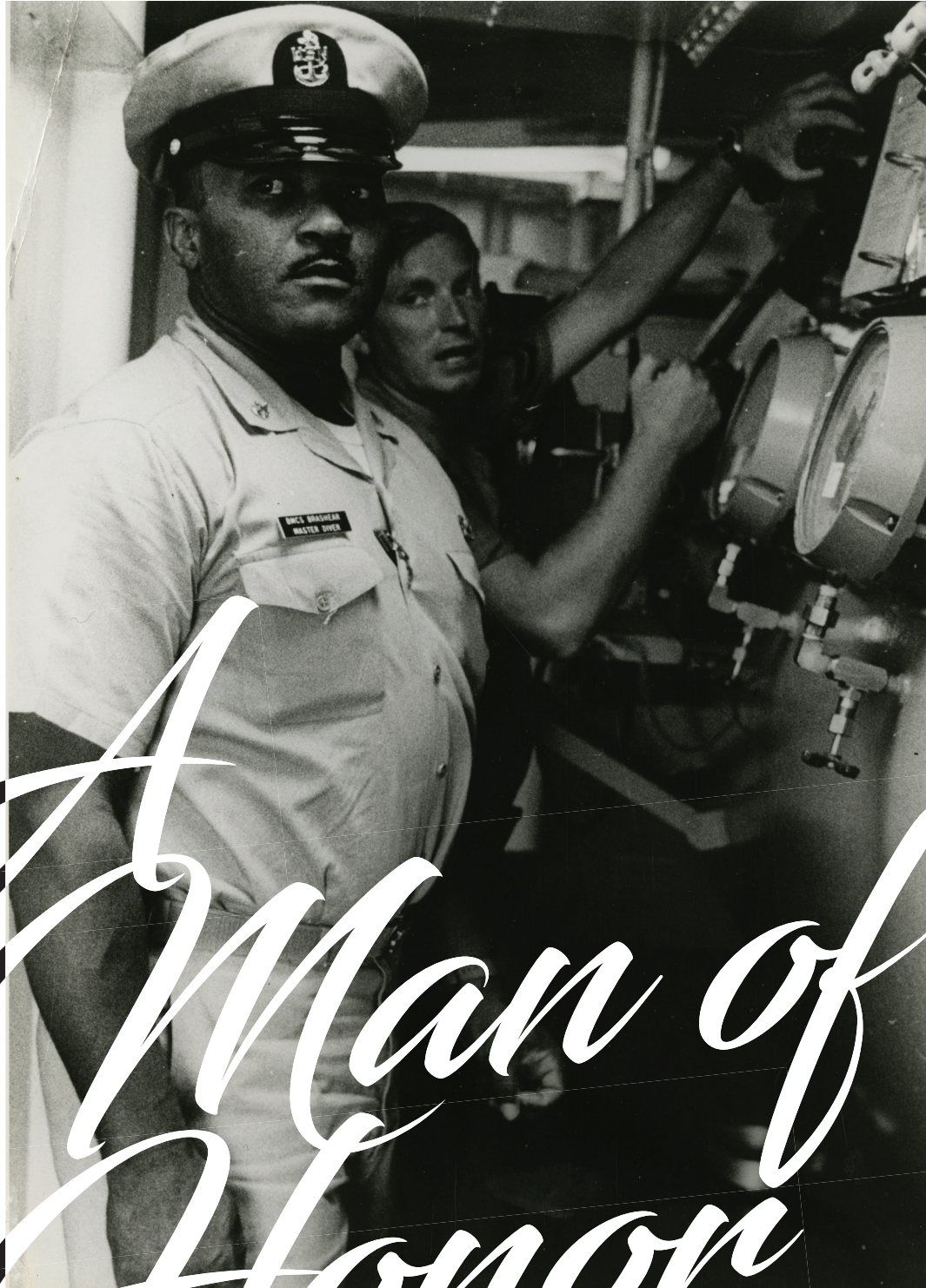




**B**orn into a sharecropping family in 1931, Carl Maxie Brashear rose from being a young African American teenager in segregated America to become the first African American master diver and first amputee diver in the U.S. Navy. Almost 17 years after his death, Brashear is a household name following the popular success of “Men of Honor,” a 2000 Hollywood movie based on his life.

Brashear was born on January 19, 1931, in Tonieville, Kentucky, a small community in LaRue county. His father worked as a sharecropper, and Brashear worked on the farm with his father, milking cows and chopping wood, until he was seventeen years old. His family was a close one, and, although they were poor, they had plenty of food grown on the farm. Brashear, whose mother had only a ninth-grade and his father only a third-grade education, attended a segregated, one-room school through eighth grade.

The school for African American students was located three miles away in Sonora, and Brashear woke before dawn each day to complete his chores before walking to school. At home, his mother supplemented his class work with extra math and reading assignments. Brashear was a good student but did not think he needed an education and did not enroll in high school. In 1948, at age 17, Brashear tried to enlist in the Army, but he failed the Army entrance exam




# A Man of Honor

**Not only was he the first African American Master Diver for the Navy, he was the first amputee Master Diver.**

*by Colonel Leslie Watkins,  
Director of Major Gifts*







after becoming rattled by treatment from the test's proctors. Passing a Navy recruiting office on the way home, he stopped in and spoke with a recruiter who spoke glowingly of the Navy and was kind to him, so Brashear joined the Navy.

Between the 1890s and the 1950s, the Navy alternated between barring African American sailors from service and segregating them in positions as messmen, stewards, and cooks. President Harry S. Truman's July 1948 executive order officially integrating the U.S. Armed Forces came two months too late for Brashear, who began service in May of 1948.

Brashear served for one year as a steward during a two-year assignment at Experimental Squadron One in Key West, Florida. While there, Brashear impressed his supervisor, who arranged for him to transfer ratings to boatswain's mate, a role in which he worked as a "beachmaster" launching and recovering seaplanes from the beach.

While at Squadron VX-1, Brashear experienced a life-changing moment: he saw a Navy diver at work for the first time and was captivated. In June of 1950, as a third-class boatswain's mate, he began his first sea tour. Although he invested significant time in improving his skills as a boatswain's mate, he wanted to become a diver. But his request to attend dive school was denied.

His next assignment, sea duty on the USS Tripoli, strengthened his interest in diving when an aircraft slid off the ship's jettison ramp, and a diver was brought in to salvage it. Watching the recovery, Brashear declared, "this is the best thing since sliced bread; I've got to be a deep-sea diver!"

Brashear continued his dive school petitions, undeterred by the rejections. As he waited, he made second class, fought on USS Tripoli's boxing team, took correspondence courses to continue his education, and earned the nickname "Mr. Navy."

In 1954, more than three years after Carl Brashear's first request, the Navy granted him permission to attend Salvage Diving School in Bayonne, New Jersey, to train as a salvage diver. The 16-week course was fraught with racism and harassment for Brashear as the only African American trainee, who was ready to quit until an African American sailor on the dive school staff dissuaded him, telling him to show them he was a better man than they were.

In spite of the intimidation and his limited education, Brashear worked hard and performed well in both the diving and academic portions of the school, and the other students finally began to accept him.

Qualifying as a salvage diver opened new opportunities. Brashear joined a salvage ship crew, where he had projects such as raising an enormous gas barge or changing propellers underwater. Brashear expanded his diving qualifications by training as a SCUBA diver at Naval Air Station Quonset Point, and, in 1957, he was personally chosen to operate the crash boat that escorted Dwight Eisenhower's presidential yacht. Impressed by Brashear, the captain of the yacht offered to arrange a commission for him, but with his goal to become the first black master diver in the Navy, Brashear turned him down.

In 1960, Carl Brashear passed the high school equivalency test, the G.E.D., and started training to become a first-class diver — essential steps toward becoming a master diver. However, he failed the extremely difficult first-class course at Deep Sea Diving School, and the instructors demoted him from salvage diver to non-diver. Devastated but not deterred, Brashear secured orders to the Fleet Training Center at Pearl Harbor and enrolled in second-class diving school. The choice required swallowing his pride; a second-class qualification was better than being a non-diver but ranked lower than a salvage diver.

He returned to the fleet in 1961 as a second-class diver with a six-month assignment to Joint Task Force Eight on Johnston Island and Christmas Island to support atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. The Navy awarded him the Joint Service Medal for his work captaining small boats that transported supplies and equipment. On a subsequent tour, Brashear, as the only enlisted sailor on his ship to qualify as officer of the deck, was encouraged to reattempt first-class diving school, which he did in October of 1963. His years of preparation — earning his G.E.D., studying math in his off time, practicing mixed gas formulas with his ship's master diver — paid off.



Image courtesy of <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/>.





Image courtesy of  
<https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/>.

On track to finish first in his class, he was asked by his instructors to help another student who was failing. Brashear agreed and helped the classmate pass, sacrificing his first place in the effort.

Post-dive school, Carl Brashear spent a year aboard a fleet tug before transferring to a salvage ship, which helped him earn master diver qualifications. In February 1966, the Navy sent Brashear's salvage ship to Palomares, Spain, to search for a hydrogen bomb that had fallen into the Mediterranean Sea after two U.S. Air Force aircraft collided the month before. The United States urgently needed to recover it before another nation could. As Brashear directed the transfer of a crate to hold the bomb once found, the supply boat parted its mooring line. As he rushed to get his sailors to safety, a steel pipe broke loose and flew across the deck just as Brashear pushed a sailor out of the way, striking Brashear and critically injuring his left leg. By the time Brashear arrived at the emergency room at Torrejon

Air Force Base, he had no pulse or heartbeat. He was eventually transferred to the Portsmouth Naval Hospital in Virginia. Although alive, he had suffered severe compound fractures to both bones in his lower left leg. When doctors told him his injury would take three years to heal, and he would walk with a brace, Brashear asked them to amputate. When his leg became badly infected, they agreed to amputation. The Navy later awarded Brashear the Navy and Marine Corps Medals for his heroism.

During recovery, Brashear researched amputees and prosthetics. In early December, he received his first prosthetic leg, painted to match Caucasian skin, a reminder of the inequality afforded to African Americans. Brashear immediately gave up his crutches and began adapting to his prosthetic limb. True to his resilient nature, Carl Brashear was determined to dive again and convinced the Navy to return him to Portsmouth Naval Hospital to be near the Norfolk diving school, where the Chief Warrant Officer reluctantly agreed

to let Brashear use the school's diving facilities. Brashear dove in different diving systems — an MK V deep-sea rig, a shallow water diving suit, and SCUBA gear — while a photographer took photos as proof of his competence. The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery agreed to grant Brashear a trial period; he would be evaluated for one year at the Norfolk diving school to determine whether he could safely return to diving. The school's new Chief Warrant Officer did not go easy on Brashear. Brashear also led daily calisthenics for the other students, who didn't realize he was an amputee and envied his stamina. At the end of the probationary year, he was restored to full duty as a Navy diver — the first time in Navy history for an amputee.

Eagerly resuming diving in 1968, Brashear's first assignment post-recovery was to Naval Air Station Norfolk as the senior enlisted diver and division officer. He also controlled the Navy's Demonstration Flight Squadron, the Blue Angels, from the water during the commissioning of the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy.



Brashear qualified as a saturation diver in 1970 after completing training at the Navy Experimental Diving Unit and secured the opportunity he had worked 22 years to reach, permission to take the master diver evaluation course.

In early May 1970, Carl Brashear began his evaluation for master diver. For five weeks, a board of master divers and diving officers ran him through a host of classroom exams, diving drills, and simulated accidents. The requirements for master diver are extremely difficult for good reason — mistakes can cost lives. A qualified master diver must be able to supervise and direct all types of diving, including treating any diving accidents and be an expert in diving equipment and systems, diving techniques, diving physics, and diving medicine. Evaluation boards purposely disrupt master diver candidates to test their focus and calm in an emergency. Brashear remembered, “One time, they came at me from all angles. I just told them, ‘Go away. I’ve got to do something to my diver.’ I didn’t even respond to what they were saying; I had to watch my diver.”

The commanding officer later praised Brashear for a faultless evaluation and announced he had qualified; Brashear had become the first African American master diver in the U.S. Navy.

During the next nine years, Brashear lived his dream of being a master diver on assignment to a salvage ship. Ashore, he put his diving expertise to work at the Naval Safety Center Norfolk analyzing diving accidents, a job which sent him all over the world investigating incidents and making recommendations to prevent recurrences.

By the late 1970s, media outlets learned of Brashear’s tragedy-to-triumph story and published features about him. Brashear starred in an episode of the TV documentary series “Comeback.”

On April 1, 1979, after a 31-year career, Master Chief Brashear retired from the Navy and was offered a contract executing a \$6 million diver study for the Royal Saudi Navy. Brashear also took college courses in environmental science, which led to a 10-year tenure as a specialist in

environmental protection and energy conservation at Naval Communication Area Master Station Atlantic.

At age 62, Brashear retired from his civilian career and became a household name with the 2000 movie “Men of Honor,” which traced his journey from his efforts to attend dive school through his hard-fought return to diving following his amputation. Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. starred as Carl Brashear and actor Robert DeNiro played a composite of several instructors Brashear knew during his career.

Master Diver Carl Brashear died on July 25, 2006. Tributes poured in to honor a man who had achieved so much and inspired so many. Chief of Naval Operations Michael Mullen remembered him as “the very best of men.... [he] made us all better.” Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. called him an inspiration and “the strongest man I ever met.” Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Joe Campa Jr. reflected that “the character of our Navy changed the day Carl Brashear decided nothing was going to stop him from pursuing his dreams.” For many, Brashear had come to represent the power of perseverance and resilience. 🇺🇸



*Image from the collection of the U.S. Naval Undersea Museum, Keyport, WA. [www.navalunderseamuseum.org](http://www.navalunderseamuseum.org)*







# *Colonel History: The First Female Colonel*

**It's possible that  
Margaret Annie Poage  
was the first female to be  
commissioned a  
Kentucky Colonel.**

*by Colonel Leslie Watkins,  
Director of Major Gifts*

**W**hile the earliest Kentucky Colonels were men, women have played important roles in the history of the Colonels. Marion Frances Williams, a high school sophomore from Paducah, was commissioned a Kentucky Colonel by Governor Sampson in 1928. In the early 1930s, Governor Laffoon asked Colonel Anna Bell Ward Olson to organize the Kentucky Colonels, and she went to work raising money for the 1937 Great Flood recovery. Colonel Anna Friedman later took over those duties raising funds to set up recreation rooms for soldiers in training at Fort Knox. Colonels began

gathering annually at Colonel Anna's Anchorage home to drink a toast to the men and women in the service, thus beginning the annual Kentucky Colonels Derby Eve banquet.

Possibly the first female commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel, Margaret Annie Poage, was born on February 23, 1862, and was one of Ashland, Kentucky's most prominent and highly respected citizens. Poage's family was closely interwoven with the founding of Ashland (originally known as Poage's Settlement) as an industrial city. Her mother was in Ashland in 1854 when surveyors first came to lay out the

territory in town lots, and her father built the first commercial building. Poage's ancestors played significant roles in United States history; Poage's great-grandfather, Colonel George Poage, was a Revolutionary War hero (allowing her to establish membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)), and her great-uncle, Joseph Hewes, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Poage was educated in the public schools of Ashland and at Professor Soper's School of Oratory at the Athenaeum in Chicago, where she was the valedictorian of her class.





Although her education prepared her to teach, she spent her career as a journalist.

Beginning her work for newspapers in 1898 with the old Ashland Daily News, Poage gained experience in every department of a newspaper office. She served in the editorial department of the *Ashland News* and later *The Independent*, a regional newspaper, where she also served as a reporter, society editor, and advertising manager.

Poage served as a correspondent for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, the *Cincinnati Post*, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and *Times*, and the *Louisville Herald-Post*. She also wrote many articles for magazines and, for one year, was advertising manager for Boggs and Buhle department store in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, and had her first ads published in the June 1906 issue of *Fashions* magazine.

In 1913 Colonel Poage spoke before the Kentucky Press Association. Her humorous speech, “Mountain Prints,” proved to be a big hit with editors. The address was frequently quoted in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States, and she was frequently referred to as the “Mark Twain” of the press world. At a time when journalism was

considered a man’s world, Poage earned respect and made her mark, being regarded as one of Kentucky’s leading journalists during her forty-year career. She remained active in journalism until a debilitating injury in 1921. She was an invalid until her death but continued to work for her community and state and remained keenly interested in current events.

Although there were few honors in journalism that Poage had not been given, the title of Kentucky Colonel afforded her the most pleasure. Governor James D. Black commissioned her as a Kentucky Colonel in 1919 in recognition of her service to her community, state, and nation before and during World War I, making her possibly the first woman commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel. During the war, she was the Food Conservation chairman in Boyd county and a member of the National Council of Defense.

In 1898, Colonel Poage was one of a dozen women who, desiring a better hospital for Ashland, organized the International Order of King’s Daughters and Sons of the “What-So-Ever Circle” and established a

three-room emergency hospital on the second floor of Poage, Elliott & Poage Drug store. Today, King’s Daughters Hospital in Ashland is evidence of her hard work.

Poage played a large role in the campaign to bring suffrage to women. Kentucky was at the forefront of the movement for women’s suffrage, not just in the South but in the nation. Women who were heads of households and taxpayers won the right to vote on tax and education issues in rural areas of Kentucky in 1838, ten years before the Seneca Falls Convention, making Kentucky the first place anywhere in the country where women could participate in the electoral process since New Jersey had revoked women’s access to the ballot in 1807.

Recently, members of the Poage chapter of the DAR stumbled upon a gravesite with DAR insignia with Poage’s name on it while working in a cemetery, but there was no headstone. The chapter applied for and received a grant from HOKC to erect a headstone in the spring of 2022. 🇺🇸







## *Because a Colonel Gave...*

...from Ashland to Paducah, 3.9 million Kentuckians benefit from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels' Good Works Program. Children, veterans, people with disabilities, the hungry, and the homeless all find help through the services of 314 nonprofits receiving grants from us this year. And we committed over \$4.5 million to tornado and flood relief across the state.

A commission as a Kentucky Colonel is the highest civilian honor a Kentucky governor can bestow. And many Colonels consider annual or monthly contributions to the Honorable Order to be a continuation of the altruistic activity that earned them that commission.

If you are a Kentucky Colonel, please consider a contribution to the Good Works Program. Call us, or visit [KyColonels.org](http://KyColonels.org), today.

2022  
\$3.1 Million  
314 Grants



The Honorable Order of  
**Kentucky  
Colonels**®

Since 1951  
\$60 Million  
8,155 Grants