

Continuing Traditions

*Four years together by the Bay, where Severn joins the tide,
Then by the Service called away, we're scattered far and wide;
Where two or three shall meet, shall old tales be retold.
From low to highest in the Fleet, we'll pledge the Blue and Gold.*



Naval Academy alumni bring game day camaraderie to Shorebreak Pizza

Story by Katie Begley
Photos by Katie Begley and Rick Spencer

The words of the Naval Academy alma mater resounded in my head as I sat across the table from two long-time friends. They teased each other, shared memories that the other had forgotten, and smiled at inside jokes. More

like brothers than classmates, these two friends had shared in memories spanning 30 year plus Naval careers. The shared history between them was almost palpable in the room. But as a fellow USNA graduate, I didn't feel like an outsider.

This is the bond of the Blue and Gold.



The United States Naval Academy Alumni Association is full of stories like these. In the words of Hampton Roads Chapter President and Class of 1971 alumnus Dick Enderly, the members “bleed Blue and Gold” and work hard to make the Chapter a successful outlet for alumni to gather in camaraderie.

The USNA Alumni Association was founded in 1886 and as one of the oldest and largest Chapters, the Hampton Roads Chapter has a history of providing opportunities for Naval Academy graduates of all years to meet, network, and stay tuned in to what is happening on The Yard at USNA. Of the 101 Chapters, the Hampton Roads is the second largest with over 900 current members.

The focus leading up to the holidays each year and one of the Chapter’s most heavily attended events is the Army/Navy rivalry football game watch party. In Hampton Roads, each Navy football game watch party hosts 50-150 loyal fans but the crowd at the Army/Navy game is particularly memorable. This year’s watch party drew over 400 Navy fans to Shorebreak Pizza to cheer on the Navy Midshipmen.

“The game brings all classes together, all age groups,” says Enderly. During his time in the Chapter, including his 6 years as President, Enderly saw the watch party grow.

What began as a small gathering at Breezy Point Officer’s Club on Naval Station Norfolk expanded to the club on-base at Naval Air Station Oceana. When the date of the game changed and conflicted with a previously scheduled wedding, die-hard Navy fans and Chapter event coordinators tried in vain to have the wedding change their plans.

The group moved the watch party to Just George’s in Virginia Beach. As attendance grew, Shorebreak Pizza offered to reserve space for the group, a partnership which has proved beneficial for both. For the last 3 years, every Chapter football watch party has been held at Shorebreak, with the entire restaurant full of Navy fans decked out in head to toe Blue and Gold for the Army/Navy game.

In preparation for the Army/Navy rivalry game each year, Class of 1995 alumna Christy (Goode) Gowan pulls out her Army/Navy pins from her time at the Naval Academy. She says that her children get a kick out of seeing memorabilia from her days as a Mid. As a Board member in the Hampton Roads Alumni Chapter, Cowan enjoys the variety of events that the organization provides for local alumni, their families, and upcoming Midshipmen.

“It’s really neat to see these young people who are headed to the Academy,” she said of the annual Plebe Recognition Dinner which invites high school seniors

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who plan to attend the Naval Academy in the fall to a special recognition dinner. Alumni gather to welcome the next “link in the chain” into the USNA fold, along with their friends and family, at a sit-down hosted dinner. Guests speakers, often senior Admirals in the Navy, provide insight and encouragement to the next generation of leaders.

Cowan initially became involved in USNA alumni events while stationed as a Navy Meteorological Officer in London. After making a home in Hampton Roads, she wanted to become more involved in the local Chapter. “The Alumni Association is representative of grads,” she said. She joined the Board to have a say in the direction of the Chapter and has worked alongside other members to put more family-friendly events and events for newer graduates on the calendar.

Many Chapter events focus on giving back to the local community. The Navy is strongly represented in Hampton Roads, with many career service members choosing to retire and make the area their permanent home. The September Golf Tournament benefits Habitat for Humanity in Hampton Roads. The Alumni Mentoring Program pairs experienced military and community leaders with newer USNA graduates looking for mentors to guide them in their careers and lives. Monthly networking breakfasts allow job seekers to meet and network with other graduates looking for quality talent to join their workplaces.

Interested in learning more about the Hampton Roads Alumni Association? Chapter Webmaster and Class of 2014 alumnus K.J. Pittner updates the organization’s website, usnahamptonroads.com, and Facebook page, USNA Hampton Roads. He joined the Chapter for the camaraderie he heard about at the Shorebreak events and joined the Board as Webmaster to keep up with his IT skills, which he uses as an Information Professional Naval Officer.

“It’s nice to go someplace where you have so much in common—common stories,” he said of the Shorebreak watch parties. As a more recent graduate, the Hampton Roads Chapter has been Pittner’s first experience with an alumni network.

With graduates stationed all around the world, it is easy to see the network of the U.S. Naval Academy grow. In Hampton Roads, there is no better place to feel the bond of the Navy Blue and Gold than at Shorebreak Pizza at the annual Army/Navy football watch party. No matter the outcome of the game, loyal Navy fans and alumni gather to share stories, get to know new alumni, and cheer on the Navy midshipmen until the last second on the clock.

