



VETERANS CONNECTIONS

News from the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs ★ Volume 5, Issue 3 ★ March 2025



★ Message from IDVA Director Terry Prince

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker officially proclaimed March as Women Veterans Recognition Month. IDVA, in partnership with the USDVA Women's Health Department, will celebrate 25 Women Veteran Leaders at an upcoming ceremony. With so many nominations, the selection committee had their work cut out for them. They received a pool of impressive nominations for women veterans who demonstrate their commitment, innovation, and leadership in their communities. The women veterans selected for 2025 are being honored on March 31st at Malcolm X College in Chicago.

Over 50,000 women veterans reside in Illinois, and IDVA's Women Veterans Program supports them by sharing resources, participating in events, and building a community. Across the nation, two million women veterans are working, raising families, and caring for loved ones among their many responsibilities. They are the fastest-growing population of veterans and by 2043 will represent 20 percent of the total veteran population.

Now, more than ever, we must continue to honor, remember, and serve women veterans. They sacrificed, served courageously, and left behind family and friends. Many returned from service suffering physical and silent wounds of war. Most importantly, we must keep telling their stories. Last week, I attended the 20th Anniversary event for National Women Veterans United, a strong organization of women veterans who advocate for critical issues, provide programming, and build community. I was privileged to be in a room with so many women veterans who have given to our nation. IDVA is grateful for their service and sacrifice and remains committed to honoring and supporting women veterans.

Thank you for staying connected to the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sincerely,

Terry Prince, U.S. Navy Veteran and IDVA Director

★ The 25 in 2025 Honorees ★

Tamela Anderson, *U.S. Air Force*
Ashtin Bader, *U.S. Navy*
Rosemary E. Connolly, *U.S. Air Force*
Amanda Depew, *U.S. Air Force*
Dr. Renee Dickerson, *U.S. Air Force*
Laura Doss, *U.S. Army*
U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, *U.S. Army*
Evamarie Duff, *U.S. Army*
Vernessa Henderson, *U.S. Army*

Jill Henry, *U.S. Army*
Milana Herman, *U.S. Army*
Alejandra Hernandez, *U.S. Marine Corps*
Nekohl Johnson, *U.S. Army*
Yvette Jones-Swanson, *U.S. Army*
IL State Representative
Stephanie Kifowit, *U.S. Marine Corps*
Lisa Mannion, *U.S. Army*
Denisse Montoya, *U.S. Air Force*

Tyra Oliver, *U.S. Army*
Treasure Owens, *U.S. Army*
Elisabeth Pennix, *U.S. Navy*
Elizabeth D. Soto, *U.S. Army*
Cassandra Taylor, *U.S. Army*
Ashley Tuburan, *U.S. Navy*
Angela Walker, *U.S. Navy*
Kimberly Yantis, *U.S. Navy*



Veterans Affairs is Hiring Veterans

The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs offers meaningful opportunities and benefits for veterans seeking employment. IDVA's trained Veteran Service Officers assist their fellow veterans in obtaining their earned benefits and services. This work transforms the lives of veterans and their families. IDVA's five Veterans' Homes in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy are hiring VNACs, nurses, dietary staff, physical therapists, volunteer coordinators, and staff to care for veterans when they need us the most. The Central Office houses fiscal, legal, human resources, legislative, communications, and administrative staff that keep IDVA effective and efficient. Veterans' unique experiences and skills from their military service contribute to the services IDVA provides veterans across the state. We invite veterans to learn more about opportunities and the hiring process.

The State of Illinois hiring process is based on a point system. If you are a veteran interested in working for IDVA or other state agencies, you may be eligible for additional points in the hiring process. Contact the State of Illinois Veterans Outreach Program at (800) 634-8138 or email: veteransoutreachbyemail@illinois.gov.

Additionally, veterans are required to provide a certified DD214/NGB-22 form. IDVA can access this document. Contact:

- email: IDVA.FILES@illinois.gov
- IDVA website for instructions: <https://veterans.illinois.gov/services-benefits/militaryrecords.html>
- Call: 217-782-4652

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) also assists veterans in finding family-sustaining and meaningful employment. Veterans can search a database of nearly 87,000 jobs at: <https://illinoisjoblink.illinois.gov/>. Veterans wanting employment assistance can also send an email to: DES.MyVetRep@illinois.gov.

Veterans interested specifically in IDVA's open positions, learn more here:

<https://veterans.illinois.gov/about-us/idvajobs.html>

IDVA encourages veterans to explore the wide variety of opportunities and join our team in serving those who served. IDVA also offers virtual hiring fairs on Illinois' hiring process and tips for interviewing. See the complete schedule below.



IDVA Recruiter and HR Specialist Canice Rudd recruits at the Red, White, and You Veteran Hiring/Resource Fair, Sheet Metal Workers' Local Union 73 in Hillside, IL. The first hour was dedicated to veterans only.

★ Serve those who served ★			
Join IDVA for a series of virtual job fairs to learn more about becoming part of Team IDVA			
Date	Time	HFS Virtual	Event Registration
4/3/2025	1:00-1:45 P.M.	How to Read a Job Bulletin	
4/5/2025	9:00-9:45 A.M.	Creating a Profile	
4/7/2025	10:00-10:45 A.M.	Creating a Profile	
4/10/2025	3:00-3:45 P.M.	How to Read a Job Bulletin	
4/15/2025	6:30- 7:15 P.M.	Interview Tips and Tricks	
4/16/2025	1:30-2:15 P.M.	Interview Tips and Tricks	
4/22/2025	9:00-9:45 A.M.	IDVA Extraordinary Employees	
4/25/2025	1:00-1:45 P.M.	Creating a Profile	
4/26/2025	9:00-9:45 A.M.	Interview Tips and Tricks	
4/28/2025	2:00-2:45 P.M.	IDVA Extraordinary Employees	
4/29/2025	9:00-9:45 A.M.	How to Certify Your Veterans Points	

IDVA ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Throughout the spring legislative session, IDVA's Legislative Director has been monitoring its legislative initiatives and advocating on behalf of Illinois veterans. Please read on to learn more about IDVA's legislative activities.

Tuesday March 4, 2025: House Veterans Affairs Subject Matter Hearing

IDVA, veterans' service organizations and Congressional legislative offices participated in a hearing focused on services available to Illinois veterans and their families. IDVA's Chief of Staff, Senior Homes Administrator, Operations and Program Manager, and the Central Region VSO Supervisor testified for the agency.

Tuesday March 11, 2025: House Veterans Affairs Hearing

This was a standard hearing (bill discussion) for the House Veterans Affairs Committee. All three of IDVA's legislative initiatives were called and passed out of committee.

[HB 2547](#), [HB 2572](#), and [HB 2777](#) are currently awaiting votes on the House floor. Please click on the links to learn more about each bill.

Thursday March 20, 2025: House Health and Human Services Appropriations Budget Hearing

This was IDVA's first budget hearing for spring 2025. IDVA's Director, Chief of Staff, and Chief Fiscal Officer testified for the agency. IDVA requested \$234.5 million for FY26, a \$3 million reduction from FY25. This reduction will not impact veterans' services, but speaks directly to the agency's efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and the application of federal per diem to offset operating costs.

Funding Source	FY2025 Budget	FY2026 Budget	Change	
			\$	%
GRF	\$169.4	\$160.5	(\$8.9)	(5.3%)
Non-GRF State Funds	\$65.5	\$71.3	\$5.8	8.9%
Federal	\$2.6	\$2.7	\$0.1	3.8%
Total	\$237.5	\$234.5	(\$3.0)	(1.3%)

**In millions, numbers are rounded, parentheses indicate a negative change.*

The agency will participate in its Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee on Thursday April 9, 2025, at 5:00 P.M. The room number for this hearing will be posted on [the committee's page](#) by April 3rd, and the link to watch the hearing on April 9th can be [found here](#).

Field Services

Director Prince and Northern Region Supervisor Melissa Beckford visited Rosecrance, a behavioral health organization in Rockford, Illinois. It provides services focused on mental health, addiction treatment, and recovery support. For veterans, Rosecrance provides specialized programs designed to address the unique challenges that service members face including PTSD, trauma, and substance use disorders. The transition from military service is incredibly stressful as veterans seek employment, medical care, and housing. These programs include individual, group, and family therapy, medication-assisted treatment, and therapeutic recreation to improve veterans' mental health and well-being through comprehensive treatment and support. The goal is to assist veterans in a smooth transition to civilian life.

IDVA is committed to learning about services available to veterans so that Veteran Service Officers can direct veterans seeking support to extraordinary programs like Rosecrance. To learn more about Rosecrance, visit: [Rosecrance: Comprehensive Behavioral Health & Addiction Services](#)



Left to right: Craig Stallings, VP of Operations Rosecrance, Melissa Beckford, IDVA Northern Region Supervisor, Terry Prince, IDVA Director, Carlene Cardosi, President of Rosecrance, Daniel Baggio, Director of Military & Veteran Advocacy of Rosecrance



Veteran Service Officer Michele Richards and Claims Management Center Office Associate Nyeema Davis participate in the Spring Veterans' Resource Fair at the Bridgeview Community Center. The event was sponsored by the Township of Lyons, the Village of Bridgeview, and IDVA.



Lt. Col Michael Barton, IL Army National Guard, and IDVA Director Terry Prince present Governor JB Pritzker's proclamation declaring February 28th, 2025, Desert Storm Cease Fire Day.

Operation Desert Storm Cease Fire 34th Anniversary

Operation Desert Storm began in 1991 after Iraq President Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion and occupation of Kuwait and refused commands by the United Nations Security Council to withdraw. A coalition of 750,000 forces from countries including Britain, France, Germany, Saudia Arabia, the Soviet Union, and the United States fought for 42 days until President George H.W. Bush declared a cease-fire on February 28th.

"It is important that we recognize and remember the sacrifices of the military men and women who fought for the freedom of those unfairly occupied," said IDVA Director Terry Prince. "The Operation Desert Storm cease-fire was a historic day for the world."

K9 for Veterans Service Award

IDVA Director Prince was awarded K9 for Veterans Service Award for his on behalf of Illinois veterans. Left to right: K9s for Veterans Director Ken Avery, Director Terry Prince, and K9s for Veterans CEO Mike Tellerino. IDVA and K9s for Veterans have a strong partnership especially dedicated to eliminating veteran suicide. K9s for Veterans created the Forgotten Warrior Memorial in Channahon State Park which honors those who have lost the battle against PTSD to suicide. For more information on K9 for Veterans, visit: [K9S FOR VETERANS - About K9s for Veterans](#). To learn more about service dogs, [click here](#).



Long-Term Care Administrators Week



**LONG-TERM
CARE
ADMINISTRATORS
WEEK**



IDVA's five Veterans' Homes in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy are led by experienced, dedicated, and compassionate administrators who have made long-term care their vocation. It is evident in the teams that they nurture and lead, the environments they create, and most importantly, the happiness of veterans in our care. This is a personal note of thanks for Long-Term Administrator's Week.

Amy Keistler, administrator for the Anna Home, leads a small and strong team, that never deviates from keeping its veterans and their families close and creating a tight-knit community.

T'Kira Siler-Wilkerson, Chicago Home Administrator, opened the home in 2022. She was in the trenches ensuring every detail was secured to accredit the home and welcome its first residents in 2022. T'Kira has nurtured a warm community where the veterans are well-cared for and engaged.

Dena Robbins, administrator for the LaSalle Home, grew into her role beginning as a VNAC. She leads by understanding exactly what it means to be on the floor. She is known for jumping in when help is needed. The LaSalle Home is under construction, and she is watching closely to give the residents a new and fresh space.

Tanya Smith, administrator for the Manteno Home, has led the team for many years. It's a unique space with several buildings and she has created a home environment where veterans across the buildings are engaged. She recently led a transition to a new meal service that is on-site with superior quality.

Chuck Newton, the Quincy administrator, jumped into a major construction project where residents were recently welcomed to the Home's new domiciliary. This, along with a long-term care residence, are part of a \$300M project and Illinois and federal investment in the home. The new long-term care building will open soon..Chuck leads the state's largest and oldest home.

IDVA's Senior Home Administrator, Angela Simmons, combines her institutional knowledge with her deep love for veterans, to lead the five Home Administrators. She is available to them any time of the day to sort through issues and make critical decisions. The daughter of an Army veteran, she is deeply committed to serving veterans with respect and dignity.

Veterans and their families are in good hands with this leadership. Each of the state's homes is unique and united in the care they deliver. Thank you to Amy, T'Kira, Dena, Tanya, and Chuck, and their teams for delivering on our promise to serve veterans as they have served us.

Lead the Team as the Veterans' Home at Chicago Administrator

★ Serve those who served ★



IDVA is hiring an experienced Administrator to lead a team of medical professionals and staff to deliver compassionate and patient-centered care to Illinois' heroes. 200-private room, state-of-the-art Home.

If you are passionate about patient care and eager for an opportunity to grow this beautiful home, this is the perfect job for you.

Join us in serving our veterans as they have served this nation.

To learn more, visit: [IDVA Jobs](#)



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**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
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Long-Term Care Administrators Week



*Veteran's Home at Anna Administrator
Amy Keistler.*



*Former Veterans' Home at Chicago
Administrator T'Kira Siler-Wilkerson, who
recently left IDVA after successfully preparing
the home for its 2022 opening.*



*Veterans' Home at LaSalle Administrator
Dena Robbins.*



*Veterans' Home at Manteno Administrator
Tanya Smith.*



*Veterans' Home at Quincy Administrator
Chuck Newton and Executive Secretary
Carla Trautvetter.*



*Senior Home Administrator
Angela Simmons.*



Healthcare Human Resources Day



HEALTHCARE HR PROFESSIONALS -WEEK-

IDVA's five residential homes in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy are continuously hiring, and the Human Resources teams aggressively recruit for positions including nurses, VNACs, dietitians, social workers, volunteer coordinators, engineers, and more. This requires being in the community, understanding the recruiting process, and ensuring we attract and retain the best in the industry. They are integral to the success of IDVA.



*Veterans' Home at Anna:
Tammy Wieseman HR Specialist*



*Veterans' Home at Anna:
Alex Forister, HR Associate*



*Veterans' Home at LaSalle: left to right: Michele Hansen,
HR Representative, Diane Spiegel, HR Specialist,
Courtney Suarez, HR Representative.*



*Veterans' Home at Quincy: Sierra Burcham, HR Assistant,
Danell Tullock, HR Assistant, Kasaundra Morelock, HR Associate/
Interim HR Specialist.*



*Veterans' Home at Manteno: Left to right: HR Associate
Elizabeth Bartke, HR Specialist Rhonda Boudreau, and HR Associate
Miki Doris. Not pictured: HR Representative Danel Peters, and
HR Representative Adrienne MacQueen.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ National Registered Dietitian Day



Dietitians in IDVA's residential homes are instrumental in the health and well-being of veterans in our care. They develop nutritious menus, keeping in mind that meals are a time for social gatherings and fellowship. They create inviting and festive menus for special occasions and holidays. A baseball game watch is the perfect time for a hot dog bar and popcorn. Thank you for sharing your passion for food and your dedication to ensuring our veterans are offered nutritious and delicious meals.



Veterans' Home at Manteno Dietary Team: Jamie Myers, Sierra Spreitzer, Justin Schroeder, Monty Owens, Joe Jackson, RJ Lamore, Cody Marcukaitis, Debbie Meents, Candy Lafond, Elliot Daniels, Renada Paul, Darius Bell, Johnathon Guimond, Will Vail, Angel Lawerance, Bobbi Martz, Maggie Dominquez, Erica Smiley, Lorraine Brooks, Stephine Hvalos, Carlene Toler, Sabrina Sykes, Josh Brown, Laura Alaniz, Bernie Moore, Laura Ryan, Candise Phelan, Tia Hancock



Veterans' Home at Quincy: Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN) and Licensed Dietitian Nutritionists Brenna Zanger, Janet Llewellyn, and Shelly Watson.



Veterans' Home at LaSalle: Left to right: Christina Jesiolowski, John Feehan, Casey Ponder, Jennifer Cocking, Katalin Glynn, Sarah Nanouski, Yancy Green, Michelle Starkey, Nathan Endicott, Judith Callahan, Shantel Soldati, Shanice Wilson, Lori Ruppert, Steven Bradley.



Do you have a Compliment, Recommendation, Question, or Complaint?

Illinois Veterans Accountability Unit (VAU)

Let us Know!

If you are an Illinois veteran or other Illinois resident who seeks services from the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA); a resident of any Illinois Veterans' Home, a family member of a resident, a visitor of any Illinois Veterans' Home; a vendor and/or contractor of the IDVA; or staff of the IDVA, we want to hear from you.

This office welcomes feedback about the services being provided to the veterans of Illinois.
If you received exceptional service or have concerns involving any member of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, please let us know.

Email us at

IDVA.accountability@illinois.gov

or Call our Toll-Free Helpline

1-855-660-7011

More information about the VAU can be found on the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs website

<https://veterans.illinois.gov/>

The VAU maintains the confidentiality of investigations, complainants, and witnesses to the maximum extent allowable, but must disclose complaints to the Office of the Executive Inspector General (OEIG).

You can obtain more information about the OEIG or file a complaint with the OEIG directly through its website at **<https://oeig.illinois.gov/>**.

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to “Stand Up and Be Counted!” by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you’re helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

We thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to you.



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