



VETERANS CONNECTIONS

News from the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs ★ Volume 5, Issue 8 ★ August 2025

★ Message from IDVA Director Terry Prince



August is the state fair season, during which IDVA provided two full days of programs, resources, entertainment, and lunch at the Springfield and DuQuoin State Fairs. Hundreds of veterans joined us to honor their service and to celebrate the 250th birthdays of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, which began their service before the United States was a nation. Gold Star families and their families were honored with the traditional Yellow Rose Ceremony. IDVA prepares for Veterans Day at the State

Fairs throughout the year as an opportunity to demonstrate our respect, admiration, and gratitude to Illinois veterans.

In September, I request all hands on deck to raise awareness for Veteran Suicide Prevention. Since the start of the Global War on Terror, more than 30,000 active-duty personnel and veterans of post-9/11 conflicts have died by suicide. Compared to 7,000 U.S. service members who have died in combat. What we do know is that suicide is preventable.

IDVA is part of the Governor's Challenge, which is a crusade to end veteran suicide. We have been raising awareness through media campaigns, outreach, and training for suicide prevention. The Governor's Challenge is simple:

- Reach out to the veterans in your life and pay close attention to them. Are they acting like themselves? Are they saying subtle statements that might be cause for concern? If you are a veteran, take those calls and visits. If a crisis presents itself, connect to help.
- Spread the word. Suicide is a difficult topic. Don't be afraid to talk about suicide and its prevention. Try hard not to brush it under the rug.
- Safety by all means: Secure firearms and medications.

The crisis hotline: **Dial 988, then press 1** or **text at 838255** to connect with a caring, qualified responder.

To learn more about the Governor's Challenge, [click here](#).

To learn more about Veteran Suicide Prevention and VA services, [click here](#).

Thank you for staying connected to IDVA.

Sincerely,

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



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ At the State Fairs with Illinois Veterans



United States Navy Veteran Robert Dale Sinclair, who served in the Korean War, honors his branch during the playing of Anchors Aweigh. His daughter Cindy Sinclair proudly looks on.



Director Prince visits with Gold Star Family members Tom & Connie Bickers, and Michael, Tonia and Ellie Sullivan at the Gold Star Family Brunch, which included a program and the Yellow Rose Ceremony honoring their heroes.



IDVA Director Prince presents a letter from Governor JB Pritzker to IDVA's 2024 Employee of the Year, Pamela Shipp, Registered Nurse at the Veterans' Home at Manteno, for her exceptional service to Illinois veterans.



IDVA Director Terry Prince, Executive Director of Marion VA Healthcare Systems Zachary Sage, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Tara Worley (keynote speaker), DuQuoin Mayor Josh Downs, and Department of Agriculture Director Jerry Costello present Governor Pritzker's Proclamation declaring August 24th as Veterans Day at the DuQuoin State Fair.



Senior Home Administrator Angela Simmons and Senior Program Manager and Gold Star Liaison Crystal Womack welcome a record number of veterans enjoying lunch provided by T Street Pub. With volunteer wait service by the Laborer's International Union of North America (LIUNA), who graciously assisted veterans at their tables and handed out water bottles.



Veterans' Home at Anna residents Wilbur Bastings and Dale Yates (U.S. Army veterans) with Activities Therapist Alinda Heron and IDVA Director Terry Prince.



IDVA Veteran Service Officer Chad Roach from (Carlinville (Macoupin Co), Field Services Manager Mark Patterson, Chief of Staff Jassen Strokosch, and Southern Region Supervisor Jeffrey Lewis meet with veterans and share valuable information and resources.



Homebound State ID Program



ALEXI GIANNOULIAS
SECRETARY of STATE

The Homebound State ID program offered by the Illinois Secretary of State allows older adults, bedridden individuals, and people with disabilities who are unable to leave their homes to obtain a state ID card from a [Secretary of State facility](#). The card may be used for identification purposes in the same way as a standard driver's license is used for identification.

Once an applicant submits the required documents and information via the Secretary of State's web form below, the Secretary of State will determine eligibility and provide the identification. For assistance in determining if you or your loved one qualifies for this service, call 312-814-3121 or visit: [Homebound State ID Card Contact Form](#).



IDVA is Hiring: Serving Those Who Served

IDVA offers a wide range of positions with an emphasis on upward mobility possibilities for those looking to build a career in serving veterans. Positions include:

Veteran Service Officers who assist veterans with obtaining their earned benefits and services.

Medical professionals, social workers, dietitians, physical therapists, engineers, and support staff at IDVA's five Veterans' Homes in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy. Working in a Veterans' Home is an opportunity to join a team that shares a mission of building a strong and close community to care for veterans.

Central Office staff who support the Homes and the VSOs, including Administration, Communications, Equal Opportunity, Fiscal, Labor, Legislation, and Programs.

IDVA strives to create a work environment that is supportive and that develops individuals based on their skills and professional goals. IT offers competitive salaries, excellent benefits, professional development opportunities, retirement plans, and outstanding work-life balance.

If you are interested in meaningful work serving Illinois' heroes, learn more at one of IDVA's virtual job Fairs and to learn more about available positions, visit the [IDVA website](#) and click on "IDVA Jobs" for current job postings or [Careers at State of Illinois](#).

★ Serve those who served ★

Join IDVA for a series of virtual job fairs to learn more about becoming part of Team IDVA

Date	Time	Event Registration
9/2/2025	2:00-2:45 P.M.	IDVA Extraordinary Employees..... 
9/4/2025	1:00-1:45 P.M.	How to Read a Job Bulletin..... 
9/5/2025	10:00-10:45 A.M.	Interview Tips and Tricks..... 
9/8/2025	5:30-6:15 P.M.	Creating a Profile..... 
9/10/2025	9:30-10:15 A.M.	How to Certify Your Veterans Points..... 
9/12/2025	10:00-10:45 A.M.	IDVA Extraordinary Employees..... 
9/15/2025	12:00-12:45 P.M.	Interview Tips and Tricks..... 
9/17/2025	2:00-2:45 P.M.	How to Certify Your Veterans Points..... 
9/22/2025	9:30-10:15 A.M.	Creating a Profile..... 
9/25/2025	5:30-6:15 P.M.	How to Read a Job Bulletin..... 

IDVA ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ New Team Members



Acting Director of Nursing Tracy Alexander, Assistant Director of Nursing Holly Perrine, and EHR/MDS Nursing Supervisor Amanda Tournear conduct orientation for 20 new team members while Administrator Chuck Newton observes.

The Quincy Home Welcomes New Team Members!

The Veterans' Home at Quincy has been growing its team to serve more veterans in its new long-term care building scheduled to open this fall. In August, they welcomed 28 new staff, including two Registered Nurses, 25 Veterans Nursing Assistant Certified (VNACs), and one Stationary Engineer. IDVA is aggressively recruiting, hiring, and training medical professionals and staff to ensure that it is offering care to veterans across Illinois seeking residential services in its five Homes.

The Quincy Human Resources Team, including Tim Kane, Danell Tullock, Sierra Burcham, Steve Stewart, and Jennifer Klauser, is dedicated to recruiting the highest level of talent to care for veterans. Their diligence is evident in this new group of hires, who offer their skills and eagerness to serve those who served.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Field Services

The Field Services leadership team oversees a team of over 50 Veteran Service Officers across Illinois. The team meets quarterly to discuss its goals, progress, staff achievements, and how it can support one another with its collective experiences. These meetings review training and office enhancements, and strategize how to guide its efforts to maximize its impact on veteran advocacy. The meetings unite the team and help it charter the course for the quarter.

As part of its continued effort to meet, support, and grow its relationships with the community that serves its clients, the team was graciously hosted and provided a tour of the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) by its Director Scott Levins. The National Archives and Records Administration provides the records needed to validate service and obtain eligibility that may otherwise go unsupported. They store, secure, and restore records in their care.

"It is incredible to see the efforts and specialization they possess to support a mission dedicated to the validation, awareness, and preservation of the records of uniform and non-uniform staff who have served our country," said the Field Services Manager. "A big thank you to the Southern Region Supervisor. Jeff Lewis, for coordinating this experience."



Quarterly Supervisors Meeting:
National Personnel Records Center (NPRC),
St. Louis, MO. Left to Right: Administrative
Assistant Dan Brown, Metro Region
Supervisor Robert Iverson, Central Region
Supervisor Kimberly Yantis, Director of NPRC
Scott Levins, Field Services Manager Mark
Patterson, Northern Region Supervisor
Melissa Beckford, and Southern Region
Supervisor Jeffrey Lewis. Back row, Field
Training Coordinator Ken Bonner.

Field Services



Veteran Service Office Frank Delatorre (Kane County/Elgin) represents at the 416 Engineering Command Army Reserve Family Fund Fair Day in Hampshire, IL.



Veteran Service Officer Jonathan Huffmann (Marion County) and Southern Region Supervisor Jeffrey Lewis represent IDVA at the Veterans Resource Fair at the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds, hosted by the Marion VA Medical Center and St. Louis VA Regional Office.



Margo Watson, Women Veterans Coordinator/Senior Project Manager, and Shynae Murphy, Veteran Service Officer, represented IDVA at the 11th Annual National Gathering of American Indian Veterans: Stories Told and Untold, at the Trickster Cultural Center in Schaumburg, Illinois.

The event was a collaboration between the National Gathering of American Indian Veterans and the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS). The event was emceed by John Teller Jr., Menominee/Oneida and United States Marine Corps Veteran. Vietnam Veterans were honored, marking the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the Vietnam War.



VSO Michele Hansen Hoback (Bloomington) and VSO Mark Robinson (Peoria) participated in the Illinois Joining Forces Central Illinois Regional Summit and Military & Veterans Night Out in Peoria. The day included a panel discussion highlighting collaboration and how service provider networks work together to support service members, veterans, and their families, and a resource fair.



Veteran Service Officers Anthony Hernandez (Will County – Lockport) and GERAL Enriquez (Kankakee County) attend the Senior Health Resource Fair at the Aratoga Elementary School in Morris.

Field Services



Veteran Service Officer Michele Richards (Chicago) participates in the Veteran Resource Fair at the University of Illinois Chicago's Flames Military Appreciation Soccer Match season against Air Force. The Flame won 3-1.



Brandon Jagers, an IDVA VSO at the Veterans' Home at Chicago, represents at the National Louis University Military and Veteran Resource Day.



Veteran Service Officers Matthew Taylor (Rockford) and Tina Paggi (Freeport) at the Boone County Fair.



Veteran Service Officer Michele Hansen-Hoback (Chicago) attended a Senior Expo Event at the Pontiac Parks and Rec Center.

Women Veterans



**MILITARY
WOMEN'S
MEMORIAL**

IDVA has joined the Military Women's Memorial in its Strive for 500 Campaign to enroll 500 women veterans from each state in its National Digital Registry. The Military Women's Memorial is a one-of-a-kind tribute to America's Servicewomen, past and present, and a world-class collection of military women's stories. It documents the commitment, contributions, and experiences of Servicewomen.

Three million women have served in the U.S. Military, and the memorial seeks to honor as many women as possible.

IDVA's Women Veterans Program is committed to surpassing its goal of registering 500 Illinois women veterans and Servicemembers. The campaign is going strong, and we are asking for your help in keeping the momentum going and being a part of making history. Women veterans and Servicemembers, please consider registering and preserving your story at www.womensmemorial.org. Please encourage a woman veteran or servicemember in your life to share and document her story for generations to come.

Please view this special message inviting women veterans and Servicemembers to [join the campaign](#).

For additional information, please contact IDVA Women Veterans Coordinator Margo Watson, margo.watson@illinois.gov

Women Veterans

25 Women Veteran Leaders in 2025

The 25 Women Veteran Leaders in 2025 honors women veterans for their extraordinary leadership, contributions, and commitment to the women veteran community. They have contributed to the women veterans' community as advocates, innovators, and elected officials. Congratulations to the 25 Women Veteran Leaders of 2025. Please meet four extraordinary women veterans who were honored at a luncheon in March.



Tyra Oliver
U.S. Army Veteran

Tyra Oliver, U.S. Army veteran, served over 4,000 Service Members in supporting behavioral health needs, including walkabouts to check on military members, capability briefs with Commanders, and support that enhanced the fighting force. As the Commander, she promoted Soldiers and, despite many challenges, led a successful mission.

Tyra has been a Clinical Social Worker for more than 28 years, and a United States Army Reserves Major for 13 years. She has worked at UIC Women's Clinic and Inpatient Mother-Baby unit, providing effective therapy services, addressing complex cases, including trauma and crisis intervention.

Tyra is a Reconnection Workshop Facilitator for the American Red Cross, Services to the Armed Forces (SAF), offering support to military members both in garrison and deployed to ensure Service Members are able to continue their jobs in the face of behavioral health concerns.



Laura Doss
U.S. Army Veteran

Laura Doss, a thirteen-year veteran of the United States Army, served in the US Army Reserve, the Ohio Army National Guard, the United States Army, and the Illinois Army National Guard until her discharge on July 16, 2003. Laura held three Military Occupational Specialties (MOS): Cargo Specialist, Aircraft Structural, and Military Policeman. At her last unit of assignment, she

was a Sergeant (Promotable), serving as a Military Police Team Leader and Assistant Squad Leader with the 233rd Military Police Company. She was stationed in Germany for three years, served on training missions in Panama and Nicaragua, and at stateside locations. She was activated and remained stateside twice during her time in service for Desert Storm and Operation Noble Eagle. Laura's awards include the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal (with oak leaf cluster), the Good Conduct Medal, Primary Leadership Development Course ribbon, and the German Armed Forces Badge for Weapons Proficiency (Bronze Level)

Currently employed by Illinois College, Laura is the 1st Vice Commander AMVETS Post 100 in Jacksonville, State Commander for the AMVETS Department of Illinois, plays tuba in Jacksonville's Community Band, and serves on the Morgan County Combined Veterans Color Guard.

Laura graduated from MacMurray College in 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in History, minors in Political Science and Liberal Arts, and an Associate of Science in Criminal Justice. A native of Ohio, Laura currently resides in Jacksonville with her husband of nearly 32 years, Matt. They have four children.



Rose E. Connolly
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Rose E. Connolly, a 23-year U.S. Air Force veteran, where she served primarily as an administrator with four years as an instructor. She has been deeply involved in veterans' organizations, holding leadership and lifetime memberships in groups such as the Air Force Sergeants Association, American Legion, VFW, AmVets, and Catholic War Veterans, where she

also serves as a historian and webmaster. Her contributions to veterans' causes have earned her numerous accolades, including Illinois Veteran of the Month (March 2011) and the 2022 DAR Outstanding Service for Veterans Award.

An active volunteer, Rose participates in Camp Butler Wreaths Across America, serves as Chaplain for the Interveterans Council of Sangamon County, and is a Veterans Assistance Commission board member. She is passionate about history, working as an interpreter for state historic sites, and giving presentations on military history, including the WWI Hello Girls and Civil War reenactments.

Beyond her advocacy and historical work, Rose is a dedicated therapy dog handler, training her dogs, Amber and Sophie, through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. She also actively supports the Land of Lincoln Honor Flight and is currently learning American Sign Language to expand her outreach.

Her two sons, Sean and Alan, both U.S. Marine Corps veterans, continue the family tradition of service by working at Veterans Centers.



Dr. Renee Dickerson
U.S. Air Force Veteran

Dr. Renee Dickerson, a seven-year U.S. Air Force veteran, is the founder and CEO of Her Service Matters, LLC., and Victory Place, NFP. She has also worked in various mental health and social service programs, including the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs, the Department of Child and Family Services, and the Government of Guam. She specializes in community and

military trauma, the relationship between diagnosis and treatment, integration of womanist theory and psychodynamic knowledge, and the application of psychodynamic understanding to the problems of diverse clinical populations, trauma disorders, and dissociative symptoms.

Renee is alumni of the Institute for Clinical Social Work, a member of the NCNW, NAACP, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, the Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis, Division 39 (Society for Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Psychology), and the American Association for Psychoanalysis in Social Work, and the International Association for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology. Renee believes that we all can exceed our history of trauma and limitations. And that we all can live a happy, healthy, and more productive lifestyle. In her words, "working to grow into our better selves is a true possibility."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Veterans' Homes

U.S. Air Force Veteran Arnold Duran with his wife of 60 years, Therese.

Love and devotion were on full display as Arnold and Therese Duran celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on August 21 at the Veterans' Home at Manteno.

Arnold, a proud veteran and resident of the home, wanted to ensure the day was extra special for his bride, Therese. With the support of staff, he dressed in a crisp blue shirt, tie, and fedora, and arranged flowers, a chocolate anniversary cake, and sparkling juice to surprise her.

As Therese arrived, she was greeted by a festive display of balloons, decorated tables, and a loving kiss from her husband of six decades. The couple enjoyed cake together, toasted with sparkling juice, and reminisced as they looked through their original wedding photographs from 1956.

Staff and fellow residents joined in the celebration, creating a joyful atmosphere that honored the Durans' remarkable milestone of love and commitment.

"This was such a special day for both of them," said Home Administrator Tanya Smith,

"Arnold was determined to celebrate with Therese in a meaningful way, and we were honored to help bring his vision to life."

The couple's 60 years of marriage stand as a beautiful testament to enduring love, partnership, and resilience.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ IDVA Executive Leadership Meeting

IDVA's leadership team includes the administrators of the five Veterans' Homes, Region Supervisors of Veteran Service Officers across the state, and members of the Central Office, including Auditor, Communications, DEI, Fiscal, Labor, Legal, Legislative, Operations, Policy, Programs, and Technology. Quarterly, the team meets to strategize, brainstorm, and build relationships. This quarter, they met at the Veterans' Home at Chicago, where they shared a game of spirited jeopardy with the veterans. Team one conquered, but not without a fight.



Left to right: Senior Home Administrator Angela Simmons, Assistant Director Anthony Vaughn, Metro Region Supervisor Anthony Vaughn, and Field Service Manager Mark Patterson.

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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.



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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