VETERANS
CONNECTIONS
News from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ Volume 2, Issue 4 ★ June 2022

★ Message from IDVA Director Terry Prince

While many of you are taking well-deserved vacations this summer, team IDVA is as busy as ever, gearing up for the State Fair, Gold Star Family Weekend, and many other community events across Illinois. Our Veteran Service Officers, program managers, and legislative teams are attending veteran events throughout the state to inform veterans of how we can help them in obtaining their earned benefits and services. These events and programs are opportunities for veterans and IDVA to get to know one another. We can do our jobs better when we hear real-life stories of the challenges veterans in our state face. Each story is unique. Each obstacle is an opportunity for us to problem solve. When we are together, veterans learn more about IDVA and all the resources we have to offer. To put a name and face to the agency is priceless because we are building a community where veterans know that we've got their back. They know that IDVA will be there not just for the victories, but the most challenging times as well. Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter, I hope you enjoy seeing all of the things IDVA staff did around Memorial Day. We are honored to serve as a part of this community and let's stay connected with each other. As always, please reach out to IDVA.MEDIA@illinois.gov or call 217-782-6441 with questions, ideas, and concerns. Remember, we are here for YOU!

Sincerely,
Terry Prince, IDVA Director

★ Memorial Day Weekend Events

Over Memorial Day weekend, Director Prince and several IDVA staff attended Memorial Day ceremonies--each unique in its setting and all united in its message to honor and remember those who lost their lives in service to our nation.

First up: Saturday morning at 0700, Director Prince joined people from around the world taking on the **Murph Challenge**. It's a workout that pays homage to the life and service of U.S. Navy SEAL LT. Michael Murphy, who earned the Medal of Honor sacrificing himself to save his teammates lives while serving in

Afghanistan during Operation Red Wings in 2005. The professionals performed the following: a one-mile run – 100 pull-ups- 200 push-ups- 300 air squats followed by another one-mile run – all in a 20-pound weighted vest! Full disclosure, amateurs do a modified version – but Director Prince got through it! Another way the community shows its respect and raises money for veteran causes.

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.

Memorial Day Weekend Events *(continued)*

Later that day, he went downtown to the **City of Chicago's Memorial Day Wreath Laying Ceremony and Parade** set in downtown at Daley Plaza where he ran into Brenda Osuch, the Interim Director of Illinois Joining Forces (IJF), a huge partner of IDVA! Thousands of people attended this year's event including elected officials, military leaders, and local dignitaries.

Sunday morning, he joined the IDVA Public Information Officer, (Maureen Hartigan) on the south side of Chicago, the site of the beautiful **Fallen Soldier Corner**. There you will find the Our Lady of Guadalupe's Vietnam Memorial dedicated to 12 young Latino men from this community who lost their lives in the Vietnam War. The American Legion Post 1238 and Chicago Southeast Side Vietnam Veterans of America were among the many people joining this solemn ceremony. For 52 years, this community, including family and friends, have gathered to remember.

The storied of the fallen, their families, and the Our Lady Of Guadalupe community, was told on WTTW TV. [You can view it here.]

Memorial Day at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery – the first ceremony held in two years. Director Prince walked the sacred grounds, reading the names of men and women and reflecting on their sacrifice. The program included music interludes, speeches by "President" Abraham Lincoln and "First Lady" Mary Todd, essays written by students, raising of the flag, wreath laying, and an impressive fly over that marveled the sizeable crowd. A beautiful day to honor those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

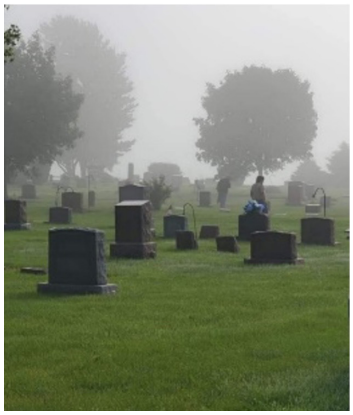
Finally, his last, but most important stop of the day was to our very own **Veteran's Home at Manteno** where he joined the Home Administrator (Tanya Huston-Smith), veterans, staff and volunteers attending a ceremony that included an abundance of live patriotic music to accompany a solemn program of remembrance. Afterwards we shared stories, fellowship, apple pie and ice cream.

Memorial Day Weekend Events *(continued)*

Governor J.B. Pritzker attended an event hosted by the **VFW's Prospect Post, Post 1337**. The event was held in Lions Park in Mount Prospect, and the keynote speaker was Medal of Honor recipient, Allen J. Lynch. The event honored and remembered those who died in military service and included speeches, a rifle salute, wreath and flower laying, and music. With a few hundred attendees, it was an important event for the community to mark Memorial Day and show gratitude for fallen servicemembers and their families.

Kourtney Hopkins, IDVA's Women Veterans Coordinator, joined the Kankakee County Veterans Council and local veteran organizations at the **Kankakee Memorial Gardens** and the Kankakee Courthouse where she had the honor of presenting the Memorial Day message.

IDVA Senior Program Policy Advisor Crystal Womack joined the **Williamsville Veterans Group**, **Boy Scout Troop 330** (Sherman, IL), and **Members of the Village of Williamsville** to place American flags on the grave sites of veterans at the Walnut Hill & Wolf Creek cemeteries.



IDVA's Chief of Staff Melissa Black attended the **Camp Butler Annual Memorial Day Ceremony**.

Illinois Veterans' Home at LaSalle Annual Memorial Day Ceremony

LaSalle Darla Bopes, Office Assistant, Susan Scully, Director of Volunteer Services, and Don Brenner, resident

Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy Memorial Day Ceremony

Mr. Roger Schwengel with Mrs. Sharon Ervin who laid the wreath in memory of her late husband, Charles, and all deceased veterans.

Director Prince joined the **Veterans Memorial Foundation and Oak Ridge Cemetery Foundation** to dedicate a memorial marker for Andrew Elliott, a veteran whose personal effort secured Springfield as the county seat in 1821.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month

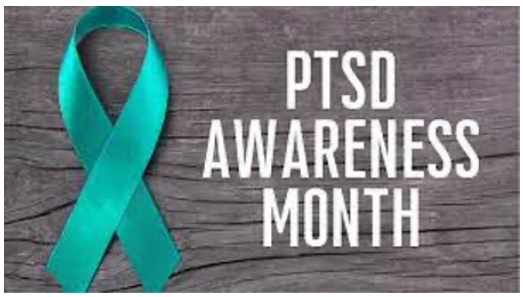
June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month. PTSD is a mental health condition that can develop after experiencing a traumatic event. Please know that you are not alone, and help is available. As many as 500,000 U.S. service members who served in conflicts over the past 13 years have been diagnosed with PTSD. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes that there are effective treatments for PTSD and have a plethora of resources available at https://www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp. If you are not enrolled in VA Health Care, consider locating a Veteran Service Officer near you to discuss eligibility at https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/ServiceOffices.aspx or locate a Vet Center near you to discuss their eligibility requirements (different from VA health care) at https://www.vetcenter.va.gov/.

If you feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else: Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) anytime to talk to a crisis counselor. Press "1" if you are a Veteran. The call is confidential (private) and free.
Chat online with a crisis counselor anytime at http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/.

You can also call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

Resources

https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/
https://roadhomeprogram.org/
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/awareness/index.asp
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/ptsdcoach_app.asp

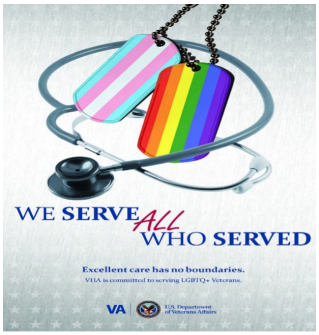


Meet Betty Bradshaw

Betty Bradshaw moved to the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy in August 2017 from her hometown of Griggsville, Illinois. While a resident, she has immersed herself in all that Quincy has to offer. She feeds the birds outside of her window, plays bingo and card games, attends water therapy classes, keeps social active with her friends and family, and attends special events at the home. She was looking forward to celebrating her 95th birthday in April of this year. However, just one month shy her of her birthday, she began to have leg and back pain so severe that she struggled to get out of bed, wasn't able to walk very far and ultimately, with a decrease in mobility, her social activities began to decrease. She often used a cane and a walker for long distances but now felt the need to use it more frequently. Many thanks to her nurse, Mary Day, and Nurse Practitioner, Heidi Ludwig, they offered several options to help Betty get back on her feet. With pain management, regular exercise, and an order for physical therapy, Betty is now pain free and walking again without a cane or walker. She is back to doing the activities she loves and has added exercise classes five days a week, joined a walking club, and continues to participate in her favorite social activities. Her physical therapy team enjoyed working with Betty because of her enthusiasm to do the best, always having a smile on her face, and loving life at the age of 95! She shared that she loves living at the Veterans' Home at Quincy and that it is the best!

Monthly Highlights

Pride Month



The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs joins the nation in celebrating Pride Month. There are an estimated one million lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender veterans in the United States. IDVA recognizes that LGBTQ+ veterans are a historically underserved population and face disparities in health care. We, at IDVA, are committed to ensuring that ALL veterans have equitable access to their earned benefits and stand ready to support them in navigating those services. Throughout the month of June, we will be sharing stories and highlighting resources available to the LGBTQ+ community. Please feel free to share local resources and events in your communities with our PIO, Maureen Hartigan, maureen.hartigan@illinois.gov.

Flag Day

On June 14th, we honored our national flag on Flag Day. The holiday commemorates the date in 1777 when the United States approved the design for its first national flag.

The idea to set aside a day to honor the national flag came from several sources. Bernard J. Cigrand, a Wisconsin schoolteacher, in 1885 urged his students to observe June 14 as "Flag Birthday." He later wrote an essay published in a Chicago newspaper that urged Americans to proclaim this date as the day to celebrate the flag. In 1888 William T. Kerr of Pennsylvania founded the American Flag Day Association of Western Pennsylvania, an organization to which he dedicated his life. A lesser-known claim is that of George Morris of Connecticut, who is said to have organized the first formal celebration of the day in Hartford in 1861.

In 1916 Pres. Woodrow Wilson proclaimed June 14 as the official date for Flag Day, and in 1949 the U.S. Congress permanently established the date as National Flag Day. Each year the U.S. president delivers an address that proclaims the week of June 14 as National Flag Week, and all Americans are encouraged to fly U.S. flags during that week.

D-Day

June 6, 2022 marked the 78th anniversary of D-Day, the largest amphibious invasion in military history. According to the D-Day Center, the invasion, officially called "Operation Overlord," combined the forces of 156,115 U.S., British and Canadian troops, 6,939 ships and landing vessels, and 2,395 aircraft and 867 gliders that delivered airborne troops.

5 facts you might not know about D-Day

- They had the perfect forecast that may have won the war.
- The landing craft boats were originally designed for use in Louisiana swamps.
- The son of a U.S. President stormed the beaches of Normandy.
- Eisenhower and Churchill both feared defeat.
- 9,387 Americans are buried at Omaha Beach.

Juneteenth

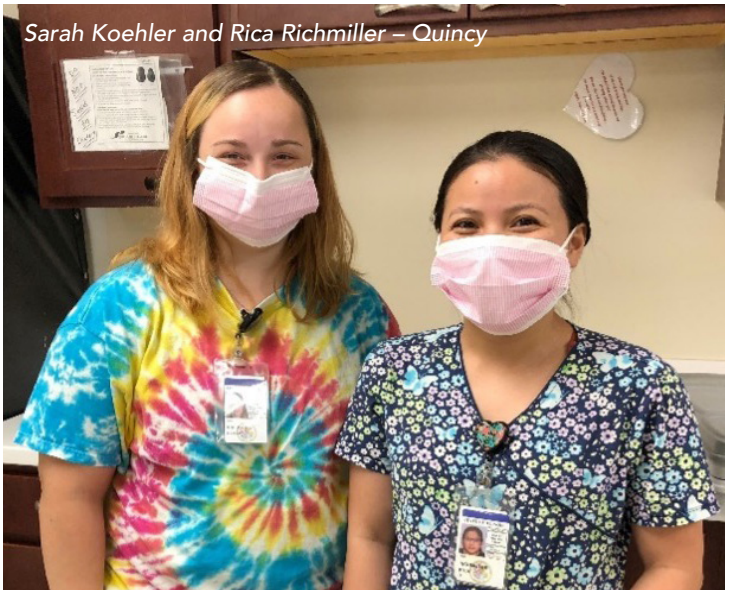
On June 19th, the country will mark the anniversary of the day that that African Americans living in Texas first learned of the Emancipation Proclamation, more than two years after it was initially issued. It was not until Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865, that the state's residents finally learned that slavery had been abolished. Juneteenth was originally celebrated in Texas, on June 19, 1866. The former slaves immediately began to celebrate with prayer, feasting, song, and dance. On June 16, 2021, Governor JB Pritzker signed HB 3992 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield recognizing Juneteenth as National Freedom Day in Illinois, closing all public offices and schools.

Certified Nursing Assistants Week

During June 16-22 we celebrated Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs). We recognized each one of them for their incredible hard work and genuine care they bring to our veterans' homes. CNAs work tirelessly around the clock and are some of the most compassionate, hardworking individuals in the industry.

The beginning of the CNA profession coincided with World War I. At that time, almost 8,000 nurses initially deployed to serve under the Red Cross Program. Serving alongside U.S. Army nurses, they worked in triage in major areas to treat wounded soldiers as well as fill positions of acute care in reserve, field, base and civilian hospitals. These nurses proved themselves to be tireless advocates for the well-being of American soldiers, simultaneously proving themselves praiseworthy for their bravery and strength.

Six decades after World War I, CNAs would again find the call for action to be unavoidable. After President Ronald Regan signed the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1987, or an act to improve nursing homes, the CNA job market boomed.


Sarah Koehler and Rica Richmiller – Quincy

Gabe Tinto and Gary Gross – Manteno

Jackie DeDeaux, Jauna Byrd and Daylin Goehl -Quincy

Angela Sartore – Manteno

Legislation for Veterans

The Illinois General Assembly was in session from January to early April of this year. While a truncated session (session typically runs through the end of May), almost forty bills affecting veterans, servicemembers, or their families moved through the legislative process.

Several key pieces of legislation were signed into law, and others await Governor JB Pritzker's signature. Veterans in Illinois that are 100% disabled, permanent and total, no longer need to reapply annually for property tax exemption. An Illinois National Guard initiative now expands protections for survivors of sexual violence in the military. Legislation offering clarification on eligibility for scholarship programs for veterans' dependents passed unanimously.

These changes will have a significant impact on the veteran and servicemember communities. Some of these initiatives were put forth by veterans who now serve as members of the General Assembly, some by local veterans' service organizations, and some by IDVA.

IDVA filed four initiatives this legislative session. All made it through the legislative process, and have been signed into law or adopted.

HB 4682, sponsored by Representative Swanson and Senator Wilcox, will amend the Illinois Lottery Law, specifically the section on Veterans' Cash scratch-off tickets. This legislation was an initiative of both the Illinois Veterans Advisory Council (IVAC) and IDVA. Under this section, the funds from Veterans' Cash scratch-off tickets can be deposited into the Illinois Veterans Assistance Fund. IDVA is then allowed to issue these funds in the form of Veterans' Cash grants. Under current law, eligibility for a grant requires an organization to meet one of six specific purposes. HB 4682 updates this. First, it strikes "PTSD" and changes it to "behavioral health." This change will allow IDVA to make grants to organizations that address veterans' "behavioral health" instead of being limited to PTSD alone. Second, it adds new language, creating a seventh category for "veterans' emergency financial assistance" so that IDVA can make grants for that as well. This bill passed both chambers and awaits the Governor's signature.

SB 3762 is an IDVA initiative that originated from IDVA's Veterans Education and Training Section. HB 3762 clearly identifies and aligns eligibility for the Children of Deceased Veterans Act (a secondary education program) and the MIA-POW Scholarship (a post-secondary education program). It also clarifies a 15-year consecutive year residency eligibility requirement by providing that certain veterans do not have to wait an additional 15 years after separation from active duty, instead allowing them to begin meeting the requirement when they establish residency in Illinois while serving at their last duty station in Illinois.

SJR 28, sponsored by Representative Moeller and President Harmon, designates the entire portion of U.S. Highway 20 in Illinois, beginning at the Illinois/Iowa border and ending at the Illinois/Indiana border, as the "Illinois Medal of Honor Highway" to honor current and future Medal of Honor recipients from Illinois. SJR 28 was adopted by both houses.

**Part of U.S. Highway 20 in Illinois already has a designation for Ulysses S. Grant. IDOT confirmed that multiple designations are allowed, and that U.S. Highway 20 will have both.*

HJR 64 is an IDVA initiative in conjunction with the sponsor. It declares June 12, 2022 "Women's Veterans Day" in Illinois. June 12th is the anniversary of the day the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was signed into law by President Harry S. Truman in 1948. With this act, women were permitted to serve as permanent members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. "Women's Veterans Day" honors women veterans and recognizes their service and dedication to our country.

This session, IDVA's initiatives focused on recognizing veterans and eligibility for the agency's grants and scholarships. Next year, IDVA will file additional legislation focused on making Illinois a place where veterans and their families thrive.

News from the VA

Illinois Receives Nearly $200 Million in Federal Funding for Enhancements to the Veterans' Home at Quincy

Illinois is the recipient of a final grant of $194,762,750 from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for enhancements to the Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy. The allocation will be used for campus reconstruction and replacement of the current veterans' home with a 210-bed skilled care facility. Additionally, 80 independent living domiciliary rooms will be created. This upgrade will modernize the campus and provide a cost effective, state-of-the-art facility with single occupancy rooms and a more intimate setting for Illinois' veterans needing skilled nursing care.

"This grant allows Illinois to continue leading the nation in caring for its veterans," said IDVA Director Terry Prince. "Our veterans' homes offer high-quality care delivered by skilled and compassionate medical professionals and staff. Enhancing our campuses and infrastructure allow us continue to provide the nursing care our veterans deserve for this generation and generations to come."

This grant represents a federal-state partnership between the federal VA, the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Capital Development Board. The federal VA covers 65% of the total cost of the $299,635,000 project while the state of Illinois is responsible for the 35% balance.

Built in 1886, Quincy is the oldest Illinois veterans' home and sits on 210 acres along the Mississippi River. Its 37 buildings were built between 1886 and 2002, many in need of major repair and upgrades. The Quincy construction project considered the long-term vision of the Veterans' Home's core purpose and functions, while preserving and improving the overall character of the campus environment.

The Quincy construction project represents the Pritzker Administration's continued investment in Illinois' veterans, including the recent opening of the $121 million veterans' home in Chicago with the capacity to care for up to 200 veterans.

Field Services

Notes from Mark Patterson, Field Services Manager

The Veterans Service Officers Training conference was a great time and very successful. The collaboration with our Veterans Assistance Commission partners contributed greatly to the training and instruction of the conference. I appreciate their willingness and talents. We look forward to the continued relationship in future training.

Our post-conference survey had many positive comments, and a good theme was the variety federal, state and topic subject matter. There were also great suggestions to improve on future training. The information is already affecting the planning in our training program.

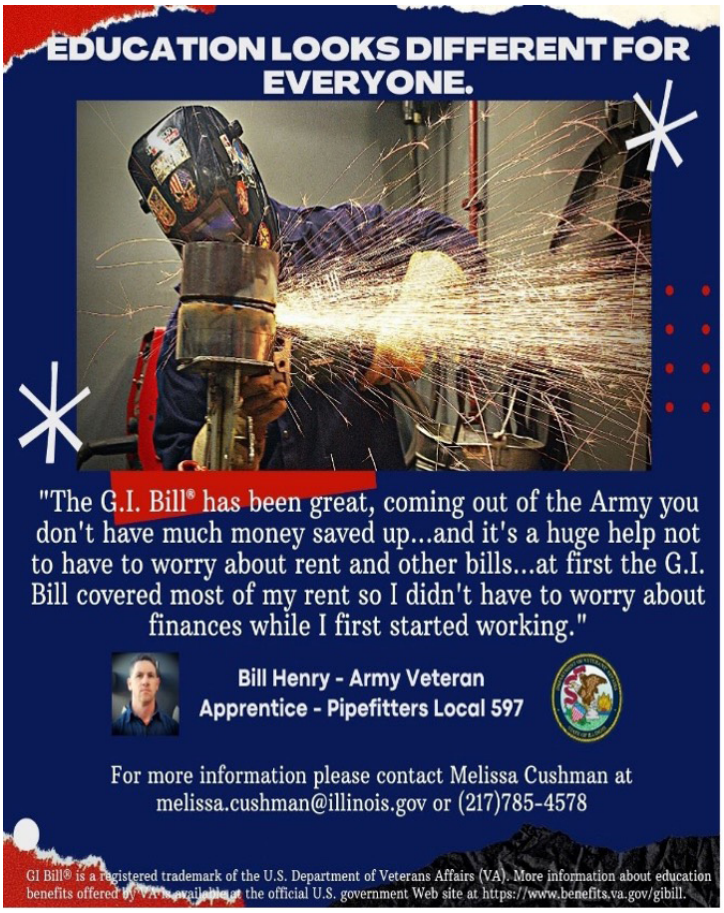
Staff Happenings

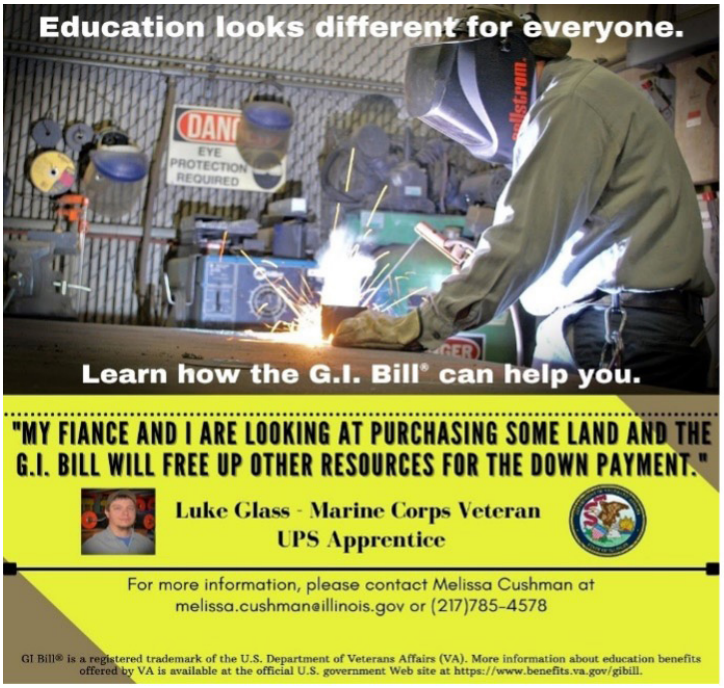
We will also be welcoming some Veterans Service Officers and administrative support staff to our ranks. VSO Doug Figge Jr. joined us in Madison County (Edwardsville) on June 1st. VSO Tina Griffiths, Franklin County (Benton) and VSO Mark Robinson, Peoria County (Peoria) start on June 16th. Also on June 16th, Office Associate Nyeema Davis starts in the Claims Management Center in VA Regional Office. We look forward to the new staff in our mission.

Robert (Bob) Ferrera, our Southern Region supervisor retires on June 30th. Bob will be moving to Arizona and plans to fish and ride his Harley. He has been with IDVA since 2014, starting out as a Veterans Service Officer in the Franklin County office in Benton. He is retiring out of Williamson County Service Office, located in the Marion, IL, State Regional Office Building. Jeff Lewis will be temporarily assigned as the Southern Region supervisor. Thank you Bob and Jeff.

Education

As a veteran, there are education programs available which you and your family may use for a wide variety of approved education and training programs including apprenticeship and on-the-job training, college degree and certificate programs, flight training, and correspondence courses. Each program provides different benefits to different groups of individuals and offers a specified number of "months" of benefits. Learn more about the G.I. Bill from real-life stories of how the G.I. Bill worked for these veterans.





Click above images to see related video.

Partner Highlight

The Road Home Program

"No one left behind includes every veteran and service member impacted by the invisible wounds of war"

The Road Home Program, part of the National Center of Excellence for Veterans at Rush, mission is to compassionately care for veterans, service members and their families by providing individualized care and navigation of services to help heal the invisible wounds of war. It is dedicated to the mental health and wellness of veterans, service members, members of the National Guard, reservists, and families at no cost and regardless of discharge status. Serving veterans and services members, as well as their family and friends, it provides outpatient programing and support. As one of four academic medical centers chosen by the Wounded Warrior Project, it is committed to discovering new paths to healing and long-term wellness for future generations of veterans and service members. Road Home also trains healthcare professionals in military culture and service-related trauma and collaborates with community organizations through partnerships with veteran-focused service groups. To learn more about The Road Home Program, please visit https://roadhomeprogram.org/ or call (312) 942-8387 (VETS). The program is located at Rush Hospital, 1645 West Jackson Boulevard Rush on Chicago's west side.

Women Veterans

Women's Veterans Recognition Day

On June 11th, women gathered throughout the state in honor of the first Women Veterans Day (June 12th) which recognizes the distinguished service of women in the Active Duty, Guard and Reserve Forces. June 12th marks the anniversary of the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, which allowed women to serve as permanent, regular members of the Armed Forces. The Women Veterans Stand Down program hosted by National Louis University and University of Chicago covered important topics tailored to women veterans. The hybrid event was a day of learning, sharing, and community building. For more information on IDVA's women veterans program, please see our website: https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/programs/women/Pages/default.aspx or contact Kourtney Hopkins at womenveterans@illinois.gov.

Please enjoy this history of The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.

Women have been serving the United States Armed Forces dating back to the Revolutionary War despite the many restraints that prohibited women from serving. During World War I and World War II women were

permitted to serve in limited capacities, and it wasn't until 1948 that women served as permanent members of the United States Armed Forces. On June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 which legally allowed women to serve in all four branches of the U.S military. The passing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was a historic milestone for women and paved the way for the continuous integration of women in the U.S. military. From being legally permitted to serve but limited to accounting for two percent of the total number of enlistees per branch and certain positions, women are now free to serve in combat positions and currently account for 16 percent of the total U.S. military force. On June 12, 2022, and every year after, we take an extra pause to recognize Women Veteran's Recognition Day to honor the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 that paved the way for the two million women veterans living in the United States today and the thousands more who are currently serving.

Veterans' Home at Quincy's New Adjutant

Note from Troy Culbertson, Administrator of the Illinois Veterans' Home at Quincy

Meet Rick Gengenbacher, the new Adjutant at the Illinois Veterans' Home in Quincy. Rick has been part of the Illinois Veterans' Home for over 32 years. Serving in a key role as the public information officer, he has coordinated several significant public events for the Quincy community including veteran celebrations and memorials. He has also been our liaison with media outlets. Rick recalls one of his greatest moments was coordinating one of the most impactful tour/informational event to legislators from across the state that helped ensure the continued livelihood of the Illinois Veterans' home in Quincy for years to come. Not only does Rick bring a great deal of knowledge of IVHQ history, but also pleasant interpersonal skills, a customer service focus, and has a heart for veterans.

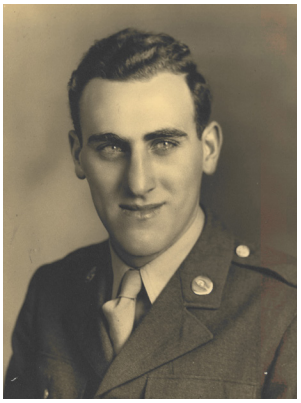
Rick enjoys spending his time with both the residents in our care and the staff involved in that care. He serves in our local community leadership as a Township Treasurer, enjoys bike riding with his wife, and spending quality time with his four adult daughters and grandchildren. Mr. Gengenbacher brings a level of enrichment to the community and this veteran organization that beautifully illustrates our mission vision values to those we serve.

Home Administrator Highlight

T'Kira Siler-Wilkerson joined IDVA as the home administrator for the Chicago Veterans' home in July 2020 where she has led all efforts to open the doors of the home to veterans. She has breathed life into the building by recruiting, hiring, and training a staff dedicated to caring for veterans with compassion. She zeroed in on details of interactive artwork, green spaces, and comfortable living areas that have made this space a place for its residents to enjoy their surroundings and feel cared for with dignity. Additionally, T'Kira has overseen the important details of safety, compliance, and accreditation. Managing these very different elements of a home requires not just institutional knowledge and best practices, but also an understanding of the standards of an IDVA skilled nursing home. It is just that – it is the veteran's home. Her team has brought their skills, passion, and commitment to care to create this special space. Currently, 19 veterans call Chicago, "home."

T'Kira came to IDVA with 20 years of experience in long term and home health care, and in the mental health care. Prior to joining us, she was with Aishling Companion Health Care, Addus Home Care, Atrium Health Care Center, Momence Meadows Nursing and Rehabilitation, and Lexington Health Network, where she held leadership roles. She is a graduate of Western Illinois University. She and her husband, Demond, a U.S. Navy veteran, live in Park Forest and have two boys.

Purple Heart Recipient Rocco LaBattaglia



When centenarian Rocco (Rocky) La Battaglia, World War II veteran, was asked if he would enlist in the United States Army again, he said, "If I had the chance, I would do it for my country." Rocky, resident of Veterans' Home at LaSalle, passed away on June 10, 2022, 13 dys after his 100th birthday. He was born and raised in Peru, Illinois with his three sisters Rosie, Mary, and Della. He graduated from LaSalle-Peru High School and began working at Westclox Clock Company for 30 cents an hour. He enlisted in the Army at the age of 18 at Jefferson Barracks in St, Louis on March 3, 1943 and was sent to Camp Campbell, Kentucky for basic training. He was trained as a tank driver, achieved sharpshooter level, and specialized in Armor.

He continued to Fort Fisher, North Carolina, Fort Ord in California, and Fort Lawton Washington where he was deployed overseas in October 1944. He was assigned to the Pacific Campaign of the War as part of the Leyte Philippine Islands 7th wave invasions where he was led by a commanding officer with, "guts." Rocky suffered severe injury resulting from gunshot wounds through his hand and thigh. Upon his return to the States, he was hospitalized in California for over a year. Rocky was a Corporal when he left military service.

Rocky's earned several recognitions for his service including a Purple Heart, Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon with one Bronze Battle Star, Bronze Arrowhead, and a Good Conduct Badge. Following his military service, Rocky worked for General Motors followed by Englewood Electrical Supply. He married Francis Mary Koltzaski in 1950 and have one son Michael. Rocky enjoyed fishing, hunting, basketball, gardening, and traveling around the country on Green River Bus Tours. He enjoyed evenings at the Peru Eagles Club with his wife where they enjoyed dinner and dancing, especially to Swing music.

When Rocky turned 100, the Veterans' Home at LaSalle celebrated this milestone with cake and balloons. Most importantly, his son, his only living relative, joined the festivities.

Fishing for Freedom - Quincy

40 residents of the Veterans' Home at Quincy participated in the seventh annual Fishing for Freedom event held on June 4th. Fishing for Freedom -Quincy is a no-entry fee bass, catfish, and crappie tournament that pairs active military and veterans with boaters, fishermen, fishing guides, and local outdoorsmen for a fund day of fishing on local fisheries. Volunteers joined the veterans for a weekend long event featuring fishing tournaments, lunch and awards ceremony, and a Heroes Banquet.

"For the residents, this is a dream come true for a lot of them, to get off the unit and do something different," Sara Colgrove, the Home's director of volunteer services and activities. "It means a lot to have Fishing for Freedom and their volunteers come out here and remember these veterans, too." Fishing for Freedom volunteers joined the residents for a day of fishing

Veterans Connections Wordsearch

National PTSD Awareness Month

R	N	P	O	E	E	T	S	R	A	Y	E	E	H	W
R	A	S	E	H	J	E	S	A	V	T	A	N	M	T
A	S	T	R	U	E	E	R	O	A	D	H	O	M	E
A	R	R	N	P	T	E	T	R	T	U	M	P	P	L
Y	T	E	N	T	T	W	O	T	R	R	J	U	N	E
R	N	E	O	R	S	R	C	E	E	U	T	H	S	U
O	O	H	T	L	A	E	H	L	A	T	N	E	M	H
U	E	A	E	A	E	L	T	N	T	T	N	H	E	E
U	L	U	A	O	T	V	T	E	M	H	L	L	T	E
C	U	S	E	N	E	A	Y	R	E	V	O	C	E	R
L	W	T	E	A	A	S	S	E	N	E	R	A	W	A
A	V	L	A	P	E	L	T	E	T	R	R	T	A	H
R	T	S	R	R	H	O	P	E	S	A	E	Y	R	T
E	E	E	A	N	E	N	W	H	M	S	E	E	D	E
E	N	T	T	U	R	T	R	O	P	P	U	S	H	A

Road Home
June

Treatment
Support

Awareness
Mental Health

Hope
Recovery

Illinois Department of
Veterans' Affairs

★ Follow us

Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois • 22-1292 • 06/22 • WEB