

# VETERANS

# CONNECTIONS

News from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ Volume 2, Issue 6 ★ August 2022



## ★ Message from IDVA Director Terry Prince

It's August, which means it's state fair season! Please join me at Veterans and Gold Star Families Day at the Springfield State Fair on August 14th [Illinois State Fair](#) and/or DuQuoin State Fair on August 28th [DuQuoin - Illinois](#). If you haven't been before, these day-long programs feature a Gold Star Family ceremony, main program, JROTC competition, lunch, veterans' expo and parade – not to mention, an entire state fair of rides, music, and food! Admission is free for veterans – simply bring your identification with you.

This is IDVA's sixth edition of *Veterans Connections*. The intent of this newsletter is to provide Illinois veterans and IDVA partners relevant information on veterans' concerns, interests, and events while also offering a snapshot into happenings at IDVA. My hope is that we are hitting the mark in delivering the news you are interested in and need. We will continue to research pertinent information and keep our eyes out for resources that can help veterans in their daily lives. As always, please share your ideas with us at [IDVA.MEDIA@illinois.gov](mailto:IDVA.MEDIA@illinois.gov).

Sincerely,  
**Terry Prince**  
IDVA Director

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.**

# Veterans Crisis Line Gets A New Number

## 24/7, confidential crisis support for **Veterans and their loved ones**



If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, reach caring, trained responders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When you call the Veterans Crisis Line, here is what you can expect:

- A qualified responder will answer your call, ready to listen and help.
- The responder will ask a few questions, such as whether you or the Veteran you're concerned about may be in immediate danger or at risk for suicide.
- The conversation is free and confidential, and you decide how much information to share.
- Support doesn't end with your conversation. Our responders can connect you with the resources you need.

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

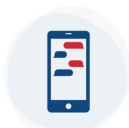
## You're not alone— the **Veterans Crisis Line** is here for you.



Dial 988 then Press 1



Chat online at  
[VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)



Text 838255



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Scan the QR code to download  
**Veterans Crisis Line** resources.



07/2022



## How to save the Veterans Crisis Line number in your phone

You never know when a crisis may happen. There are simple steps you can take to be prepared. Find instructions below to save the new Veterans Crisis Line number—**Dial 988 then Press 1**—as a contact in your iOS or Android phone.

### iOS

- 1 Navigate to the Phone app.
- 2 Tap the “Contacts” button at the bottom, and then tap the “+” button in the top-right corner to add a new contact.
- 3 Name the contact **Veterans Crisis Line**.
- 4 Tap the “add phone” button.
- 5 Type **988** on the keypad, then tap “+\*#” in the lower left corner of the keypad.
- 6 Tap the “pause” button on the keypad and then type **1**.
- 7 Tap the “Done” button in the top-right corner to save the contact.
- 8 When you use this contact, your phone will automatically route you to the Veterans Crisis Line.

### ANDROID

- 1 Navigate to the Contacts app.
- 2 Use the “+” to add a contact.
- 3 Name the contact **Veterans Crisis Line**.
- 4 Type **988** in the phone number input.
- 5 Add a pause and then type **1**. Adding a pause may appear differently on different phones. Options include:
  - Typing in a comma
  - Clicking on a pause button directly on the phone number input (this may be displayed as “two-second pause”)
  - Opening a menu by clicking three vertical dots to find the pause button
- 6 Click “Save” to save your contact.
- 7 When you use this contact, your phone will automatically route you to the Veterans Crisis Line.

*Note: Manufacturer settings can cause slight variations in your phone's contacts app. The above instructions should work for most cell phones. If further assistance is needed, contact your phone manufacturer's customer support.*

07/2022





# Monthly Highlights

## Purple Heart Day



On Sunday, August 7th, Purple Heart recipients from across the state gathered for the annual National Purple Heart Day sponsored by the Military Order of the Purple Heart at the Chatham VFW Post 4763. Pictured from left to right: Dan Wellman, IDAV Veteran and Training Services Administrator, Gwen Diehl, IDVA Veteran Home Coordinator, Kim Fuiten, IDVA Acting Central Region Supervisor, Crystal Womack, IDVA Senior Program Policy Advisor, and Hal Fritz, Medal of Honor Recipient and Speaker.

## Medal of Honor Highway



The American Legion commemorated the adoption of Senate Joint Resolution 28 designating 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," with a cross-state motorcycle brigade. The July 24th ride consisted of three stops with the American Legion transporting the Medal of Honor Flag across Illinois. At the final stop, IDVA Assistant Director Anthony Vaughn spoke about the importance of this resolution and the nationwide effort to recognize and commemorate Medal of Honor recipients. The flag was then passed on to the Indiana Commander of the American Legion to continue its coast-to-coast journey.



## Agent Orange Awareness Day

Agent Orange Awareness Day recognizes the first day herbicide Agent Orange was scattered across the battlefields of Vietnam, August 10, 1961. Over the course of ten years, Agent Orange was disbursed by planes, trucks, boats, and people to clear foliage from battlegrounds to eliminate the enemy's ability to hide under protective cover. The 20 million gallons of Agent Orange resulted in the loss of 300,000 United States troops and 400,000 Vietnamese troops and civilians. The impact on survivors has been catastrophic including the following conditions:

- AL amyloidosis
- Leukemia
- Hodgkin's and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Diabetes Mellitus, Type II
- Parkinson's Disease
- Respiratory Cancer (e.g., bronchus cancer, larynx cancer, lung cancer, trachea cancer)
- Prostate Cancer
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma
- Multiple Myeloma
- Bladder Cancer
- Hypothyroidism

Agent Orange, named for the orange stripe on its 55-gallon drum, contains the chemical dioxin which has been linked to many cancers, type 2 diabetes, nerve disorders, and heart disease. In 1979, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs began studying the impact of Agent Orange on survivors. In 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act which declared that diseases tied to chemical exposure would be presumed to be related to military service and would therefore make the veteran eligible for benefits. The Blue Water Navy Veterans Act of 2019 expanded criteria for Agent Orange exposure to include those stationed on ships off the coast during Vietnam.

For a complete list of conditions and more information on [Agent Orange VA disability compensation, visit.](#)

If you would like to speak with an IDVA VSO about obtaining these benefits, you can find your closest VSO on the [IDVA website.](#)



# PASS THE HONORING OUR PACT ACT

✓ **PASSED**

### The Honoring our PACT Act of 2022

On August 2, the United States Senate passed Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (The Honoring our PACT Act of 2022).

The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps provide generations of veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

VA Secretary McDonough released the following statement:

**"Veterans who were exposed to toxic fumes while fighting for our country are American heroes, and they deserve world-class care and benefits for their selfless service. The bipartisan PACT Act will help**

**VA deliver for those Veterans—and their survivors—by empowering us to presumptively provide care and benefits to Vets suffering from more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions.**

**"To those Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors: you can apply for PACT Act benefits by filing a claim at VA, and you can learn more about the PACT ACT at [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) or by calling us at 1-800-MyVA411. We'll be communicating with you every step of the way to make sure that you and your loved ones get the benefits you've earned.**

**"Once the President signs this bill into law, we at VA will implement it quickly and effectively, delivering the care these Veterans need and the benefits they deserve."**

## IDVA Welcomes Three New VSOs and Support Staff!

**Mark Robinson** comes to IDVA from the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) where he began his employment with the state in 2017. Mark will serve the Peoria community. Mark retired as a Lieutenant Commander after 20 years with the Navy. He was assigned to locations far and wide - Japan, Greece, Singapore, Kuwait and more - with assignments just as varied - engineering, administration, security, maintenance and others. While he has lived all over the world, he has always called Peoria his home. Mark found his work with IDES interesting and challenging, especially after March 2020, and is excited for his new position as a Veteran Service Officer at the Peoria County Office.

**Tina Griffiths** comes to IDVA with extensive experience working with veterans in a Veteran Resource Office at a community college where she streamlined processes to better serve veterans and their families using military education benefits on campus. She was a VA School Certifying Official and Academic Advisor. She is currently enrolled in the Workforce Education Development graduate program at Southern Illinois University. Tina served eleven years in the Illinois National Guard as Signals Corps and a Retention NCO. She served from 2005-2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Tina is passionate about assisting fellow veterans and looks forward to serving as a VSO with IDVA. She enjoys family time and recently took up kayaking. Tina will be working at the Benton Office.

**Douglas Figge** joined IDVA as a VSO assigned to the Edwardsville office after serving as a caseworker for the Illinois Department of Human Services. Douglas served eight years in the United States Marine Corps Reserve with 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines (later redesignated 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marines) as a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Specialist. He was deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) from 2009-2010. Douglas has a five-year-old daughter, and a seven-month-old son. He enjoys simple mechanics, leatherwork, and motorcycling.

The Claims Management Center's (CMC) new office associate **Nyeema Davis** joined IDVA in June. Prior to joining IDVA, she was a OSF Healthcare Patient Representative. She has a 12-year-old daughter and enjoys spending time with family, sports, and traveling.

### New VSO Office

IDVA is pleased to open this new office coming soon to Chicago:

Cook (South)  
New Beginnings  
8140 S Racine Ave,  
Chicago, IL 60620

# Field Services

## VSOs Strengthen Knowledge to Help Homeless Veterans

On August 3, 2022, the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital's Health Care for Homeless Veterans' (HCHV) Program team provided training to our Veteran Service Officers regarding the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program eligibility and referral process, and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Both programs are designed to help Veterans and their families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness to regain stability.

### HUD-VASH

HUD-VASH is a collaborative program which pairs HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance with VA case management and supportive services for homeless Veterans. These services are designed to help homeless Veterans and their families find and sustain permanent housing and access the health care, mental health treatment, substance use counseling, and other supports necessary to help them in their recovery process and with their ability to maintain housing in the community.

### SSVF

The primary aim of the supportive services of the SSVF Program is to help Veteran families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.

Supportive Services include:

- Outreach services
- Case management services
- Assistance in obtaining VA benefits
- Assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefits available in the grantee's area or community
- Temporary financial assistance

IDVA thanks the Hines HCHV team for their time and dedication to serving the veteran community and taking the time to enhance the knowledge of our VSOs. Our VSOs are ready and available to assist the veteran community!



## Women Veterans

### Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) establishment

79 years ago on August 5th, the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) organization was established where just over 1,000 women completed the demanding training, officially becoming 'WASPs'. WASPs flew at 126 bases across the United States for various purposes, including training missions. Thirty-eight WASPs died during their service, 11 in training and 27 during missions. After 16 months of service, Congress rejected a WASP militarization bill in June 1944 with the program officially ending in December 1944. It wasn't until the 1970s that women were invited to attend pilot training in the Air Force with reports of this being "the first-time women could fly for the US military," leaving WASPs out of history. However, in 1977 President Carter signed Public Law 95-202 granting former WASPs veteran status with limited benefits. We salute the women who became a part of history in being the first

women pilots to serve our US military! To learn more about the history of the Women Airforce Service Pilots, [click here](#).





# Partner Highlight

## Disabled American Veterans



This summer, Director Prince addressed the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) 99th State Department conference in Springfield to thank them for a myriad of ways in which they have supported veterans and their families since their inception in 1920. While

the needs of veterans have evolved over time, there is one constant, they need our appreciation and support. DAV has shown that time and time again. In 2021 alone, 1,200 DAV chapters across the country served 1 million plus veterans. They provided 163,000 rides for veterans to medical appointments and processed 151,052 claims helping veterans receive \$25 billion in earned benefits.

As one of the leading non-profits in the veterans' space, it also connects veterans to employment opportunities through job fairs. They support veterans in local communities through volunteering and offer scholarships to young volunteers who have given their time. DAV also advocates for veterans' issues in the legislature. They have given veterans a voice on issues including health care, survivor benefits, mental health, suicide prevention, toxic exposure, and women veteran concerns. DAV also educates the public about the sacrifices and needs of veterans so that communities are more aware of the veteran community around them. Its mission, "empowering veterans to lead high quality lives with respect and dignity," is practiced through all these actions.

In addressing the conference, Director Prince said, "Many veterans return home different than they left – often left to finding their way as a version of themselves they may not completely recognize from the outside and who are forever changed on the inside. DAV has been "keeping the promise" to America's Veterans--offering a safe place for disabled veterans to turn when they are looking for direction. They lean on you when the waters are murky because you understand their unique needs. We admire your status as the "premiere veterans advocacy organization" in Washington DC, especially as you keep the service and sacrifice of our veterans front and center in the minds of our elected officials. We could all do well to copy your efforts across Illinois and our country. It is exactly this type of ACTION that gives new meaning to the phrase, "thank you for your service." As a 31-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, that's what I want to see. All the talk in the world doesn't measure up to actual results... and that is what the DAV delivers...RESULTS."

IDVA is grateful to Commander Alexander and all members of DAV for their partnership in supporting Veterans Day at the State Fair which brings together and celebrates veterans from around the state. DAV has also offered strategic counsel as members of the Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council.



## Administrator Highlight: Tanya Smith, Administrator of the Manteno Home



Tanya Smith, Administrator of the Manteno Home, joined IDVA in 2012 and has served in several roles at the home including director of nursing and adjutant. She leads a staff of 310 who care for up to 294 veterans at the home.

"I love the connection with the veterans that live here, and I am inspired by their service and the commitment that our community has to them and the Manteno Veterans' Home," Tanya shared in talking about her work.

Tanya has dedicated 23 years to hospital settings in emergency services as a staff nurse, manager, and director. She is a member of the Illinois Nursing Home Administrator Association and the Illinois Pioneer Coalition. She is also an adjunct clinical professor for clinical nursing at her alma mater.

Tanya earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in Nursing from Olivet Nazarene University, accomplishments she is proud to share as an example to her daughters. While Tanya is not a baker, she enjoys collecting vintage cake plates from flea markets.

## Veterans' Home at Manteno Thanks Sharon Beegle

The Veterans' Home at Manteno thanks Sharon Beegle for 26 years as Manteno's Social Worker. Sharon shared this with the staff and residents in her final days, "The joy from my job has come from providing a service to all the military men and women who have lived at IVHM. You are the reason I come to work every day with a smile. You are the brave men and women who have given me the real meaning of what freedom represents. You who fought and served our country to keep our true freedom will be forever remembered. It is a great honor to have been your Social Worker for the past 26 years. I hold the highest respect for each and every one of you."

Tanya Smith, Administrator of the Home, thanked Sharon for meaningful contribution to caring for the home's residents, "Sharon has enhanced the lives of the veterans at the Manteno Veterans' home through her creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication," said Tanya

Huston, "She was a friend to all, and we are grateful for her service."

In retirement, Sharon hopes to continue writing and volunteering for an Honor Flight. Thank you for your service, Sharon.



left to right: Social Services co-workers- Carolyn Domont, Anne Riney, Sharon Beegle( retiree) and Greg Brenneisen.



## Veterans' Home at Quincy Welcomes Human Resources Specialist



Amanda Marlow recently joined the IVHQ team as Human Resources Specialist. Amanda brings 15 years of experience in human resources, office management, and health care administration. Previously, she was the Employee Benefits Specialist at Quincy Medical Group and

served 10 years as a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator at Golden Good Shepherd Home. She received her bachelor's degree in Community Health and master's degree in Education and Interdisciplinary Stud-

ies from Western Illinois University and is a Certified Professional through the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM-CP). Amanda strives to make an impact in the lives of our Veterans by helping our employees to reach their highest potential.

Amanda is originally from Plymouth, IL and now resides in Camp Point with her twin daughters, Paige and Hayleigh, her son, Case, and their three cats – Fluff, Berniece and Ozzie. She loves nothing more than spending time with her family and friends and enjoys reading, hiking, cooking and traveling.

## Coffee at the Commissary: Veterans' Home at Manteno

Manteno Home residents enjoy Coffee at the Commissary every Wednesday and Thursday where they share fellowship over breakfast served by the home's amazing volunteers!





## How Does the Illinois Legislative Process Work?

For this month's legislative update, IDVA's Legislative Liaison Sara Augustinas is providing a high-level overview of the legislative process in Illinois.

The Illinois General Assembly runs on a two-year cycle. The current General Assembly, the 102nd, began in January 2021 and will run through the beginning of January 2023.

Over the course of two years, the General Assembly is "in session" at various times each year. These times include the spring legislative session, special sessions, and the fall veto session.

During session, a bill, hoping to become a law, must move through the legislative process.

Sara leads this effort for the agency. Sara meets with her colleagues at IDVA to discuss current law pertaining to their divisions. Changes that need to be made are then identified, and Sara and IDVA colleagues make sure to connect with any parties that the legislation would affect. Sara then sends draft language over to the legislative reference bureau (LRB), where the lawyers that draft bills at the Capitol can refine it. Sara then follows all IDVA's legislative initiatives from start to finish, and monitors legislation filed by others that could impact IDVA.

This process consists of the following steps: bill drafting, bill filing, first reading, substantive committee, second reading, third reading, second chamber, duplication of the process, and approval of the Governor.

**Bill Drafting:** Anyone can have an idea for a bill! However, the constituent, organization or agency advocating for the bill must have it drafted into legislative language by the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB). Additionally, a senator or representative must agree to sponsor the bill so that it can move on to the next stage.

**Bill Filing:** The senator or representative sponsoring the bill files it with their respective chamber (House or Senate).

**First Reading:** After being filed, the bill must be read aloud on the floor of the chamber it was filed in. The bill number, title, and sponsor's name are read aloud for the record. There is no debate.

From there, the bill is sent to the "Rules" committee (House) or the "Assignments" committee (Senate). These committees organize and review all the bills that are filed. The main topic of each bill is identified. The bill is then assigned to a substantive committee (e.g., Veterans' Affairs, Higher Education, Health Care), or it is held in Rules or Assignments.

**Substantive Committee:** If a bill makes it to a committee, it is then reviewed by the Chair of the committee and staff. Each week in committee, bills are "heard" or "held." If a bill is "heard" the committee discusses the bill and takes a vote on it. If a majority of the members (senators or representatives) agree to pass the bill, it moves on to Second Reading.

**Second Reading:** The bill is read aloud again. Floor amendments can be filed for the bill.

**Third Reading:** The bill is read aloud a third time. This is typically when the bill is debated. The sponsor's staffer stands by, ready to assist with questions, and the sponsor answers questions and argues their point, if necessary. Then, the bill is voted on. It either passes or fails.

**Second Chamber/Duplication of the Process:** Once the bill passes out of the first chamber, it is received by the second chamber. The bill must go through the exact same process in the second chamber.

**Approval of the Governor:** After the bill passes out of the second chamber, it makes its way to the Governor's desk. The Governor then vetoes or approves the bill. If the latter, the bill then becomes a law (subject to its effective date). This is a very high-level overview.

A bill can become paused at any point in the process. The process outlined above assumes that the bill keeps moving forward. It does not go into detail on how amendments, rules, concurrence, or vetoes alter the process. There are a variety of technical aspects of the legislative process that can speed up or slow down the progress of a bill, and sometimes, bills go backwards in the process.

For more information on these technical aspects, please [click here](#).

# Forgotten Warrior Memorial

Channahon State Park features a one-of-a-kind memorial which honors the memory of veterans who lost their battles to post-traumatic stress disorder. The Forgotten Warrior Memorial opened in May 2019 and was funded completely through private donations.

Michael Tellerino, the founder of K9's for Veterans, organized the effort to fundraise for the construction of the memorial. Today, the memorial still depends on private support to maintain the Memorial and surrounding grounds.

The memorial contains four granite pillars, one for the Army, Air Force, Marines, and Navy. Each pillar is emblazed with the seal of a military branch and contains quotes for generals and presidents. The names of veterans who ended their lives after struggling with PTSD are also etched into the pillars.

According to statistics from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 22 veterans die by suicide each day. The Forgotten Warriors Memorial seeks to honor the patriots who continued to fight wars after returning home and memorializes those who lost their battles.

Too often, veterans suffering from injuries that are not physically apparent, have gone forgotten and have lost their lives. This tribute seeks to keep the memory of these brave men and women alive, provide solace for their families, and raise public awareness.

Director Prince has spoken at two memorial ceremonies honoring those who have lost their battle with PTSD. He expressed deep gratitude to K9s for Veterans for creating this sacred space, set in a beautiful state park, for those to visit and reflect. The Wounded Warriors Memorial is located on the Northeast side of Channahon State Park and is open to the public.



# Veterans Connections Wordsearch

## Aviation

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AIRBORNE BRAVERY COMBAT FLY MISSION PARACHUTE PILOT  
SKY WASP



Illinois Department of  
**Veterans' Affairs**

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