



# Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ May 2016

## ★ From the Director



Have you heard of the Illinois Warrior Assistance Program? IWAP was created by the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs to help veterans who are having difficulty with the emotional, medical or legal challenges of transitioning back to civilian life.

Right now, IWAP has re-launched its "530 by 5/30" campaign. We want to help 530 veterans by Memorial Day, which this year falls on May 30. Qualifying Illinois veterans and their caregivers can call 1-866-554-IWAP (4927) 24 hours a day for confidential assistance from a healthcare professional.

IWAP is a confidential resource provided by the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.

*Through IWAP, eligible veterans can access:*



- Counseling services;
- Neuropsychological testing for mild traumatic brain injury;
- Post-traumatic stress self-assessment;
- Legal and financial consultation;
- Online financial and legal tools; and
- Help for those who may be facing emotional challenges such as anxiety, stress, depression, coping with daily emotions, addiction and substance abuse. Please help us spread the word to our heroes who may be having a difficult time. Illinois veterans and caregivers can also connect with IWAP at [www.IllinoisWarrior.com](http://www.IllinoisWarrior.com)

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.

## ★ New Employees

We have added five new members to our team and three of our employees have accepted new positions in our Agency. All have hit the ground running allowing us to keep our services to our heroes moving without interruption!

**Curtis Davis** is the Central Division Field Supervisor. Curtis has worked for the IDVA since December of 2005. Until March of this year, Curtis was one of our fine Veterans Service Officers. Prior to joining IDVA, he had retired from the U.S. Navy as an Operations Specialist Chief. Curtis lives in Barry, Illinois.

**Lisa Tisdale** is the Labor Relations Administrator for IDVA. Lisa has worked for IDVA since November, 2009. Since starting here, Lisa has been our Central Division Field Supervisor, Human Resource Representative, Legislative Liaison, and Administrative Assistant 1. Prior to that Lisa was working for IDPH and Illinois Power. She served in U.S. Navy as an Interior Communications Electrician. Lisa lives in Greenview, Illinois.

**Anthony Vaughn** is the Field Services Manager. Anthony started with the IDVA in December, 2015 as the Metro Division Supervisor/Training Coordinator. Anthony served in the US Marine Corps as Administrative/Personnel Chief from August, 1981 – December, 2005. Anthony and his wife have one child. A Rugby enthusiast, but admits he watches more than plays. And he is a self-proclaimed 'long suffering Cleveland Browns fan'.

**Rusti Cummings** is our Chief Internal Auditor. Rusti started her career as an external auditor, but like internal audit better. She says it allows her to be a part of the management team helping meet the agency's mission. She is an active volunteer of the Institute of Internal Auditors Springfield Chapter serving as an Officer/Board member for over 23 years. Sharing ideas with her peers has been a great way for her to learn new things and grow. She has been a Sunday school teacher for 13 years. She and her husband, Bill, love to travel (preferably, historical/ nature sites but always up for another Disney trip). They have two adult children and a 3 year old granddaughter and they are anxiously waiting to meet their new grandson in the next few weeks.

**Matt Roberts** began as General Counsel in February after ten years of military and federal government attorney experience. In Federal civilian service, he served as an Investigator with the US Department of Labor, and as an Attorney Advisor for the Social Security Administration specializing in employee and labor relations matters (2014). Following his commissioning in the US Army through the Syracuse University Reserve Officer Training Corps, First Lt. Roberts began active duty service as an Army Judge Advocate with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in Fort Campbell, KY (2007). While at the 101st, he achieved the rank of Captain, served as a military prosecutor and magistrate, and held positions in Administrative Law and Operational Law. Roberts' served two tours in Afghanistan, first as Legal Advisor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Regional-Command East headquarters (2008-2009), and subsequently as Trial Counsel for Task Force Bastogne in Jalalabad, AF (2010-2011). Matt holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Rochester (2003) and a Juris Doctorate from the Syracuse University College of Law (2006).

**Renysa Brown** joined the IDVA team in March of 2016 as Chief of Staff. Renysa is currently a Lieutenant Colonel serving in the Illinois Army National Guard. She is a Combat Veteran having served in Desert Shield/ Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Crescent Relief/Hurricane Katrina. With over 26 years of military service she has worked in a number of civilian capacities to include District Director for Illinois Congressional District 12, Illinois Army National Guard, and Army ROTC at Washington University in St. Louis. She resides in Belleville with her family.



**Wishing all of our Nurses a Happy Nurses Appreciation Week!**  
We truly do appreciate you and the hard work you do every day. Thanks to you, our residents are happily receiving the highest quality nursing care in Illinois!  
**Thank you!**

## ★ New Employees

**Dave MacDonna** joined the IDVA team one week after Renysha as our Public Information Officer. Dave has a lengthy career in the Advertising/Marketing/PR world. He graduated SIU-C “when the Dead Sea was only considered sick” and has lead advertising campaigns for business, corporate, political, non-profit and government accounts. He has won several ‘Addy’ awards and served as Chair of the Board of Governors for the American Advertising Federation. He has also owned a travel agency and started a weekly newspaper in the western suburbs of Philadelphia. He is the proud father of triplets (2 sons & 1 daughter) and a step dad of twin daughters. Dave is also very happy Grandpa with 4 grandsons. An avid Cardinal fan, he resides with his wife in Springfield.

**Scott Norton** joined us as our new CIO and IT Manager. Scott has 26 years of experience and he comes directly from CMS/BCCS where he served for one year as the Chief of Enterprise Infrastructure in charge of State of Illinois data centers. Prior to that, Scott was the CIO for

the Illinois Department on Aging. His career started at the Illinois State Board of Education in 1992. In 2000, he filled the role of Division Supervisor of Web Application Development responsible for the creation and development of over 100 web-based applications. In 2004, he was named Division Administrator for Technology Support which covered infrastructure, end user support and the agency helpdesk and call center. In 2012, he filled the role of IT Director in charge of the ISBE IT.

Scott and his wife of 26 years, Stacey, have one son (Jacob 17) and they live in Rochester, IL. He and his family are very involved with their church and serving others. He has traveled to Haiti five times over the past few years to help the Haitians build a PK-13 school for their sister church in Grande Savane This school has the first functional bathroom in the community with eight flushable commodes. Scott is planning to begin building a second-floor on the current school in the near future.



*Memorial Day*

**JOIN US!**

**As we remember our heroes this Memorial Day**

Please join Director Erica Jeffries and the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs team.

**11:00 am**  
**Wreath Laying Ceremony**  
*at the Eternal Flame on Daley Plaza (Dearborn and Washington Streets)*

**Noon**  
**March in the City of Chicago Memorial Day Parade**  
*Parade starts at State Street from Lake Street to Van Buren Street.*

If you have an interest – please reply to this email: [Emanuel.johnson@illinois.gov](mailto:Emanuel.johnson@illinois.gov)

**Thank you for your support of those who gave so much**

## ★ Did You Know...



Did you know that the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs maintains and operates a home for homeless veterans? The Prince Home at Manteno is a program for homeless and disabled veterans co-located with the Veterans' Home in Manteno, Illinois. The Prince Home is a residential program for homeless and disabled Veterans. The facility is wheelchair assessable, and provides residential housing for eligible male and female Veterans. Our Staff is proficient in addressing a multitude of challenges including but not limited to, homelessness, PTSD, sobriety, self-esteem, and hopelessness. The Prince Home is located in rural Manteno, Illinois, just 40 miles south of Chicago. It shares grounds with the Illinois Veterans' Home at Manteno. For more information call (815) 468-6581.

## ★ Conferences

We are excited to see our friends at the upcoming Annual conferences in June for the American Legion, VFW, DAV, Marine Corps League and AMVETS. The assistance you offer our Veterans is incredible! We cannot say Thank you enough for the assistance you offer all year long. We will see you next month!

- ★ **Marine Corps League** – Urbana June 10
- ★ **AMVETS** – Springfield June 11
- ★ **VFW** – Springfield June 17
- ★ **DAVS** – Springfield June 24
- ★ **American Legion** – Springfield July 15

## ★ Hiring Events

We list Veteran hiring events on our website – [www.illinois.gov/veterans](http://www.illinois.gov/veterans) on our Events Page. Check the page as we are adding to this page daily. If you know of a Veteran hiring event, please send it to us and we will post it for our veterans to consider.

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs operates four Illinois Veterans' Homes. The homes are fully staffed with caring and dedicated professionals who provide quality long-term skilled care and services to resident members. Volunteers from veteran service organizations and the local community provide many additional supporting services and activities to the veterans. The homes are located in LaSalle, Manteno, Quincy and Anna, Illinois. Go to our website [www.illinois.gov/veterans](http://www.illinois.gov/veterans) for more information.

## ★ IDVA Calendar

- May 6-12** National Nurses Week
- May 13** VietNow Conference – Crystal Lake
- May 10** She Served - Springfield
- May 17** **Armed Forces Day**
- May 28** Wreath Laying – Daley Plaza-Chicago
- May 28** Memorial Day Parade - Chicago
- May 30** Memorial Day - State Offices Closed
- June 10** Marine Corps League Conference – Urbana
- June 11** AMVETS Conference - Springfield
- June 14** **Flag Day** and **Army Birthday**



State of Illinois  
Department of Veterans' Affairs



Illinois Department of  
**Veterans' Affairs**