



Illinois Veteran News

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

★ From the Director



As we approach the fall here in Illinois, it's a good time to look back at our accomplishments over the 2016 Fiscal Year which ended on June 30, 2016. Your Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs has been busy and effective, providing high-quality services and support to a wide-ranging veteran's community of over 720,000 veterans, plus thousands of their family members, state-wide:

- Our trained and certified Veteran Service Officers (VSO) - have supported over (89,000) Illinois veterans, assisting with over (80,200 applications, services and documents) for state and federal benefits, and have attained nearly (\$72 million) in federal dollars - compensation and pension - for qualified Illinois veterans.
- IDVA 4 Veteran Homes have served over 1,500 elderly or infirm veterans in with professional, compassionate and high-quality care.
- In the 2016 Fiscal year, the IDVA's SAA department reported the State of Illinois has averaged 17,500 to 19,000 students and trainees using GI Bill benefits on a monthly basis. During federal fiscal year 2016, GI Bill benefits paid to beneficiaries and approved education/training programs was \$284,040,150. The Illinois SAA currently has over 1200 facilities approved for programs of education and training. During FY16, the state of Illinois had 355 active apprenticeship and OJT programs (veteran enrolled) in the nation – the most in the nation.
- The IDVA IT Department implemented electronic health records (EHR) at the four Veterans' Homes using a cloud-based SaaS application: Point-Click-Care. And they protected over 1.5 Million CYBERVET application veteran and dependent's records through full-database encryption.
- IDVA has been a pilot agency for the State of Illinois new ERP program. We have developed conversion platforms from AIS, SAMS and other data programs to the SAP program. Fiscal staff has worked closely with Deloitte (contractor), CMS and other pilot agencies to develop, test and implement the SAP program. We are set to go live 10/1.

So, in the coming months these efforts and others will be our focus areas, as I feel we can get the best return for time and energy invested. Our goals for veterans? To continue our mission to empower veterans and their families to thrive.

In closing, we are already starting the 2017 Fiscal year on a strong base. We have opened a new VSO office in Deerfield, working with other State agencies to finish the construction of our new Veteran's Home in Northern Chicago and working hard every day to improve our services to you, our Illinois Hero.

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.

★ State and University Employees Combined Appeal (SECA)

The State and University Employees Combined Appeal (SECA) that provides all employees the opportunity to donate to the charitable causes of their choice to enhance the quality of life for all runs from September 7 – November 2, 2016.

Established in 1983, SECA is a workplace giving campaign that allows State Employees to donate to nearly 2,000 charities at local, state, national, and international levels. State employees have contributed more than \$76 million to help improve our environment.

100% of your contribution is sent directly to your designated charity(ies). The 12 “Charitable Federations” collectively represent nearly 2,000 charities from which to choose from when making your donation. Participation in the State and University Employees Combined Appeal is important and any gift is greatly appreciated and helps make a difference. Support of the SECA campaign demonstrates a willingness to help a single need or many needs within the community.

Thank you for your gift and understanding the impact and significance of a personal commitment through SECA.

For more information go to -

<https://www.illinois.gov/seca/Pages/default.aspx>



★ Serving Those Who Served

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs along with our partnering agencies have a State-Wide program set in motion to help our veteran organizations whose members served our country, so that we could live and enjoy the Freedom we enjoy today. Friday, November 11th – Veterans Day, will be one of the largest state wide volunteer day of the year!

Here is how you can help! We need projects for our volunteers!

1. Go to <http://www.illinois.gov/veterans/pages/serving-those-who-served.aspx>
2. Click on the logo (make the logo the link)
3. Register your organization.
4. Click on Opportunities
5. Select “Create an Opportunity”
6. Complete the Form.
7. When completing the form select “Illinois Veterans Day of Service”



under 'is this opportunity associated with a day of service or disaster event?' Click “create,” and your project will be displayed for volunteers to choose to help your organization.

The Volunteers will sign up through this website. The projects should be a program that can be finished in one day.

★ Life After Deployment Illinois Warrior Assistance Program



If you are like many Illinois service men and women, you probably started making plans for your life back home soon after you were deployed. Looking forward to your future is an important coping mechanism, especially in challenging situations.

But here's one thing you probably didn't plan for: everything you've experienced during your tour has come home with you, too.

In the war zone you worked with precision, under punishing conditions. But now, at home, a dripping faucet or misplaced car keys raises your tension level. Your patience is tested when your toddler drops her sandwich on the floor. This isn't how you used to react to minor inconveniences. This isn't you.

Regain your normal life

Do you want life to get back to normal, but you're not sure what normal is anymore? The Illinois Warrior Assistance Program is here to help 24/7. Call **866-554-IWAP (4927)** now to get the help that you so richly deserve.

IWAP is a **confidential resource** provided by the State of Illinois. It is not connected to the U.S. Armed Forces or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

★ Patriot's Day – 9/11



Never Forget

*A time to remember those who died,
those who served, and those who carry on.*

The IDVA acknowledged and remembered the terrible events that occurred on our soil 15 years ago.

Patriot Day falls on 11th September (also commonly known as 'Nine-Eleven') and is remembered globally as the anniversary of the catastrophic terrorist attacks on the USA of 11th September 2001.

Embedded in the memories of everyone who lived through it, this was the day four jet planes were hijacked

and crashed into the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, causing the deaths of 2,977 people. The fourth plane (United Airlines Flight 93) was directed at Washington DC, but its passengers bravely attempted to take back control and it crashed into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

In the wake of the World Trade Center collisions, many brave men and women from the emergency services risked their lives to try to help rescue victims of the attacks, and of them 411 lost their own lives attempting to fight fires and rescue people.

Patriot Day is recognized by US law as the official day of remembrance for these tragic events, and has been observed every year since. Each year on this day, American flags are flown at half-staff to honor and commemorate those lives lost. The US President asks fellow Americans to observe a moment of silence at 8.46am (Eastern Daylight Time), the time of the first plane collision into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

While the events took place within the USA, the shock and grief experienced in response to the attacks was shared across the globe, and for this reason Patriot Day will be observed not only in America, but all over the world.

★ LaSalle Veterans Home

Two 60 inch flat screen televisions were provided as a donation from Walmart and the Disabled American Veterans Chapter #86 and State Senator Sue Rezin to the Illinois Veterans' Home in LaSalle August 17. "This is just a small token of our appreciation for the sacrifice our brave men and women made for our country," Said Senator Sue Rezin

"This donation means more than just two televisions going into the Illinois Veterans Home," Rhode Bronk, Commander of the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter #86 said. "It shows that we as a community are committed to honoring our veterans in any way. It's simple gestures like this that oftentimes have the most powerful impact."

The televisions, provided by Walmart, were used during the 2016 Memorial Day Remembrance Wall, which was on display inside the capitol in Springfield May 26 through July 4.



From left to right: State Sen. Sue Rezin; Sherri Whitmer, Illinois Veterans' Home Executive Director; Larry Graham, Chaplain; Rhode Bronk, Commander of the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter #86; Wendell Johnson, Vice Commander of the Disabled American Veterans of America, Chapter #86. From left to right: State Sen. Sue Rezin; Sherri Whitmer, Illinois Veterans' Home Executive Director; Larry Graham, Chaplain; Rhode Bronk, Commander of the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter #86; Wendell Johnson, Vice Commander of the Disabled American Veterans of America, Chapter #86.

★ Lake County Office Open

The IDVA opened a new Veteran Service Office (VSO) in Deerfield, Illinois. The address is 1755 Lake Cook Road, Deerfield, IL 60015. This new office will have more VSOs at this location which will offer more consistent service, reduce wait times, and provide more opportunities for outreach services. This office will serve all veterans in Northern Cook County, Lake County and McHenry County. The office will be open from 8 am – 4 pm Monday – Friday. The Veteran Service Officers working in this new office are: Walter Wilson - 847-948-6981; Patrick Cornett - 847-948-6982; Ted Bieber - 847-948-6983 and Frank Delatorre - 847-948-6983. The Fax Number is 847-948-6990.

Labor relations

Lisa Tisdale, Labor Relations Administrator for IDVA reported that there are many questions regarding the contract negotiations. Many people have many questions and we want to answer all of the questions. The State of Illinois has created a FAQ page that can be found at this link –<https://www.illinois.gov/sites/TeamIllinois/LaborRelations/Pages/Labor-Relations.aspx> If you have more questions, you can reach Lisa at 217/782-6911-office or by email at lisa.tisdale@illinois.gov.

★ Gold Star Mother's & Family's Day

As a part of our ongoing commitment to honor our fallen service members, the IDVA joins the Nation on **Sunday, Sept. 25**, in remembering the strength and sacrifice of our Gold Star Mothers and Families. Since 1936, Congress has recognized mothers who lost a son or daughter in the defense of our great Nation by setting aside the last Sunday in September as a reminder that the price of protecting our Nation's freedoms and liberties is high. Gold Star Mother's & Family's Day gives us an opportunity to remember and honor fallen service members, and acknowledge the enormous burden their mothers continue to carry as they mourn the loss of their child. Despite their loss, these special women are dedicated to giving back to the military community. They carry forward their child's legacies of patriotism, bravery and courage. These mothers are the bedrocks of support and comfort to fellow survivors, setting examples of inspiration and resilience with those who share their unique bond. Gold Star Mothers, as well as all Family members who are grieving a military loss, will always be cherished members of the Army Family. We will maintain our steadfast commitment to support these Family

★ New employees

Eric Murphy is our new Legislative Liaison starting on September 1. Eric transitioned to IDVA from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency as Legislative Liaison. Prior to that, he worked for the Illinois State Senate on the legislative staff. He graduated from Western Illinois University in 2008 with a Journalism degree and minor in Political Science. Enlisted in the US Army in 2000 after high school and was a 31-U (now 25-Q) Multi-Channel Transmission Systems Operator-Maintainer (network communications). He was stationed with the 13th Signal Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division and deployed to Iraq in 2004 for OIF2. Eric was injured by an IED while driving the lead vehicle during a convoy operations and awarded the Purple Heart and two Army Commendation Medals for his deployment. Eric was honorably discharged in 2005.

Ryan Zavala is the Assistant to Renysa Brown, Chief of Staff. He came from the Department of Public Health, Division of Vital Records, as an Office Associate. Ryan served in the United States Navy for almost 5 years as an IT. He was medically separated as an E-5. During that time he served as the first crew on the Pre-Com U.S.S. New Orleans (LPD-18) for two years, which he helped to setup and create the communications systems before commissioning. He looks forward to getting to know everyone and start his journey here at Veterans' Affairs.

Troy Culbertson was announced as the new Administrator for the Illinois Veterans' Home in Quincy. "We are very fortunate to have found someone of Troy's experience and capability to lead our staff at our Quincy Home," said Director Erica Jeffries. "Our number one priority is the care for our residents and our staff. Troy will be a great leader and caretaker of our Illinois Heroes."

Mr. Culbertson has 26 years of experience with long term care and is a certified preceptor for training new Nursing Home Administrators. He has extensive experience working with veterans throughout his career, including designing veteran specific living units for enhanced camaraderie and creating numerous veteran-specific recognition ceremonies for veterans in the homes he has led over the years. In 2006, Mr. Culbertson was awarded the Missouri Health Care Association 'Administrator of the Year'. Earlier in his career, Mr. Culbertson served as a Regional Director of Operations providing operational support for ten facilities in

Missouri and Iowa and twelve facilities in Missouri and Western Tennessee.

Donna Murray started with IL. Dept. of Veterans Affairs on September 1, 2016 as the Business Administrator at the Illinois Veterans Home in Anna. She comes to us with over 17 years of senior leadership experience in administration and accounting functions, including budget projections, budget monitoring, inventory management, financial statements and grant preparation. Mrs. Murray has a Masters Degree in Social Work and Bachelors Degree in Psychology. She is also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Donna began her career with the State of Illinois at Choate Mental Health and Developmental Center where she served as Training Coordinator, Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance Administrator, Quality Manager and finally Hospital Administrator. Donna, her husband Scott, who is with IL. Dept. of Corrections and family live in Southern Illinois where she is very involved in coaching her youngest daughter's softball team; while her oldest daughter is actively serving in the military.

Kelly Harsted is the Executive Secretary at the Illinois Veterans Home in LaSalle. Kelly was born, raised and still resides in a small farm community where she attended school, finishing at Robert Morris College. Kelly spent 25 years working in a law office, however, her passion has always been to work in an environment where she could make a difference in people's lives. She is looking forward to her time at LaSalle Veteran's Home. Kelly has been married to her husband, Jim for 26 years and they have 2 sons, Chris and Nick. Kelly says, "My Father and Grandfather and several uncles are veterans of various wars and I grew up hearing about my Father's years on the Kitty Hawk in the US Navy."

Robert Iverson has been named the Metro Division Field Supervisor. Robert is an Iraq War Veteran, who served in the Illinois Army and Air National Guard prior to retiring in 2012 with 22 years of service; which included 8 years of active duty. He joined the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs on December 1, 2005 as a Veterans Service Officer and was assigned to the new office location Cook 11, Des Plaines, IL. Robert's other assignments with the IDVA include: Cook 3 (National Guard Armory at North and Kedzie, Chicago, IL), Cook 5 (Jesse Brown, VA Medical Center), Lake County (Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North

★ IDVA Calendar

- 9/25 Gold Star Mother's Day Luncheon - Springfield
- 9/26 Gold Star Families - Capitol Rotunda - Springfield
- 9/27 Veterans Program-State Library - Springfield
- 9/29 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans 50th Anniversary Commemoration - Brookfield Zoo-Chicago
- 10/10 Columbus Day - State & VSO Offices Closed
- 12/07 Pearl Harbor 75th Anniversary

★ New employee (continued)

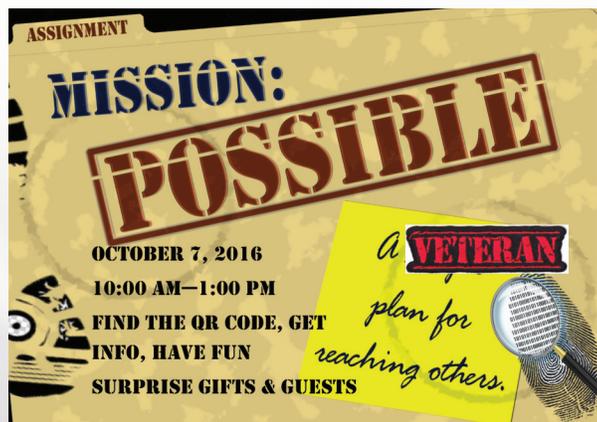
Chicago, IL), the Appeals Office (VA Regional Office, Chicago, IL) and Cook 7 (VA Vet Center, Forest Park, IL). Prior to joining the IDVA, He worked as an Assistant Team Leader, Lincoln's Challenge Academy, and Rantoul, IL. Robert has been married for 18 years, has three daughters, 4 grandchildren and possess a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Management from Concordia University.

★ Veteran's Home Medical Providers Loan Repayment Act



During our Veteran's Day program at the Illinois State Fair, Governor Rauner signed HB 5938. This new law amends the Veterans' Home Nurses' Loan Repayment Act and Renames the Act and the program as the Veterans' Home Medical Providers' Loan Repayment Act (and Program). The law expands the scope of the program to include eligible physicians, nurse practitioners, and nurses, rather than limiting it to nurses to assist our employee with repayment of their medical school loans. For more information contact your local human resource office for details. All opportunities for employment with the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs can be found at <https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/IDVAEmployment/Pages/default.aspx>

★ Mission Possible!



Are you a Veteran in search of resources? If only you knew where to begin... This ALL VETERAN (Active Duty, Active Guard Reserve, Drilling Reservist, National Guard - all branches) resource scavenger hunt just may offer you a fun and practical solution!

Using today's technology this land navigation will be like no other military related event you've ever participated in. YOU will be clues to help you find and scan the QR code. Take a picture with a face and name you should know. Post and share on you social media for bonus points. Crack the code at the end for the final rally point where lunch is on us. Come and have fun!! Surprise guests and gifts for your successful completion of this ALL VETERAN resource event!!

When:

Friday, October 7, 2016 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Where:

TBD - 8 S. Michigan Ave #4th floor, Chicago, IL 60603

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mission-possible-an-all-veteran-scavenger-hunt-tickets-27447862295>



State of Illinois
Department of Veterans' Affairs



Illinois Department of
Veterans' Affairs