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National Home Day

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Health Fair

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VFW Auxiliary

LaFore Lock Post 755, Chatham-Auburn Post 4763 partner to honor all impacted by 9/11

Members of VFW Posts 4763 and 755, in Chatham and Springfield respectively, combined forces for the 21st anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to honor all lives lost during the attacks, as well as fellow service members killed defending the nation from such terrorism.

On Saturday, Sept. 10, members of Posts 4763 in Chatham and 755 in Springfield, about 11 miles from each other, orchestrated the “Patriots’ Day Ruck,” a joint effort with another veterans’ service organization, Team Red, White and Blue.

The 11-mile route from one Post to the other welcomed 20 participants, an effort to promote the wellbeing and mental health of veterans, but most importantly to remind past and present generations of all the sacrifices that paved such a walk.

“This is a way to support all

See RUCK

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Members of Chatham-Auburn Post 4763, Chatham and LaFore Lock Post 755, Springfield, take a break during the Patriots’ Day Ruck, Sept. 10. The Patriots’ Day Ruck was put together as an effort to honor all lives lost during the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as well as fellow service members killed defending the nation during such terrorism.

Gold Star Mission rides to remember Illinois’ fallen

For 17 years Polish and Illinois National Guard Soldiers fought together in Iraq and then Afghanistan. In September, they rode more than 500 miles together honoring warriors killed in post 9/11 conflicts.

The grueling 5-day, bicycle ride through Illinois, called the Gold Star 500, began six years ago when a group of active and retired Illinois National Guard members formed an organization called Gold Star Mission. The goal was to “Always Remember, Never Forget” the approximately 300 Illinois service



State Commander Bobby Edwards with the Polish delegation who participated in the Gold Star 500, a 500-mile bicycle ride to honor Illinois’ fallen service members. Edwards met the riders and volunteers at the kickoff event for the ride at Camp Lincoln, in Springfield.

See GOLD STAR

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE... TICKETS AND RETURN ENVELOPE

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

2023 Illinois Convention Raffle

Grand Prize \$10,000

Second Prize \$3,000 • Third \$2,000 • Fourth to Tenth \$500



2023 Illinois Purple Heart Raffle
Proceeds go towards veterans assistance programs in Illinois

Grand Prize \$2,000



Mt. Prospect Post 1337 presents National Award to Gurnee Police Officer

At the Sept. 26, Gurnee Village Board Meeting, Commander Les Durov, Mount Prospect Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1337, and VFW Department of Illinois Commander Bobby Edwards, presented the VFW National Law Enforcement Award to Gurnee Police Sgt. Jason Kalinowski.

The award recognizes Kalinowski as the Police Officer of the Year in a competition involving all VFW posts worldwide.

The program was developed and sponsored by the national organization of the VFW to honor and recognize first responders. Attending the presentation were several Village officials, including Mayor Tom Hood, the Village Trustees, Police Chief Brian Smith, and many officers of the Gurnee Police Department. Also in attendance was Kalinowski's wife, Danielle.

Joining Durov were several officers and members of Post 1337.

Kalinowski began his career as policeman in 2006 when he joined the Kenilworth Police Department after

graduating from the Police Training Institute in Champaign.

In 2008 he moved to the Village of Gurnee where he has served for almost 14 years. During his tenure Kalinowski has served the Village in many police positions including as the New Hire Liaison, the Field Training Officer Coordinator, and the Field Sobriety Test Trainer. He is also the current President of the Fraternal Order of Police Social Lodge.

Kalinowski and Danielle reside in Antioch with their son and daughter.

In accepting the award Kalinowski expressed his thanks and appreciation to the VFW and Post 1337 for honoring him with the award. He told the audience that he was extremely proud to serve the citizens of Gurnee and to wear the badge and uniform of the Gurnee Police Department.

VFW Post 1337 is honored to have nominated Kalinowski for the award. He is a dedicated police officer who helps make the Village of Gurnee be a better place to work and live by keeping its residents and employees safe.



State Commander Bobby Edwards and Post 1337 Commander Les Durov presents the national Law Enforcement Officer of the Year citation to Gurnee, Illinois, Police Sgt. Jason Kalinowski during the village's board meeting in September. Kalinowski began his career as policeman in 2006 after graduating from the Police Training Institute in Champaign. In 2008 he moved to the Village of Gurnee where he has served for almost 14 years.

Smith receives Federal Employed Women's 2022 Military Meritorious Service Award

Col. Sarah Smith of Edwardsville, the State Judge Advocate of the Illinois Army National Guard, and a life member of Kahokian Memorial Post 5691 in Collinsville, has been selected as one of four nationwide recipients of the 2022 Federally Employed Women (FEW) Military Meritorious Award.

"I am unbelievably honored to be selected for such a prestigious military award," Smith said. "Balancing my civilian career and my military obligations along with raising a family does not go without its challenges. While there are times when I feel stretched beyond capacity, when I go to drill and serve with the amazing Soldiers in the Illinois Army National Guard, and I am able to mentor and train strong young women who I hope to one day pass the torch to, all of the struggles pale in comparison to those experiences."

As the State Judge Advocate of the Illinois Army National Guard, Smith is the highest-ranking legal officer and advises general officers and other senior level commanders on all military legal matters. In her civilian capacity, she is a Circuit Judge in the Third Judicial Circuit, Madison County, Illinois.

The FEW recognizes select military women with its annual Military Meritorious Service Award. Award recipients have distinguished themselves with significant contributions to their service and their nation by promoting the tenets of civil/human rights, equal opportunity and public service; contributing to the equal opportunity for selection, promotion or retention of women and minorities in senior grade level positions; and assisting in overcoming and eliminating barriers that hinder equal opportunity for all members of the armed forces.

"Colonel Smith is an out-

standing officer who has played an important role in addressing difficult issues within the military and the Illinois National Guard. The Federally Employed Women recognized the same outstanding leadership in her as we've seen for many years," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Colonel Smith is a dedicated officer that goes above and beyond. She is an excellent role model for women in the military and has a heart for serving her community the same way she has served her country for the past 28 years."

Smith mobilized for the first time in 2005 in support of Hurricane Katrina. Her overseas experience includes service as the Chief of Operational and Administrative Law for the 35th Infantry Division in Kosovo and as Deputy Staff Judge Advocate for the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom where she was awarded the Bronze Star. Because of her vast military legal experience, Smith has spoken at numerous key senior level engagements to include the Warsaw Ministry of Defense Legal Symposium, Warsaw Poland in 2011 and 2016, and at the United Nations Peace Symposium, New York, New York in 2011.

FEW honored Smith for her work during her deployment to Afghanistan, where she was selected to mentor the only female general officer in the Afghan



Col. Sarah Smith

National Army and work directly with the Afghan Minister of Education and the Minister of Women's Affairs.

She was also recognized for speaking at the United Nations symposium on two different occasions regarding her experience with women's issues in Afghanistan. In addition, Smith presided over the civil law division and Madison County's Veterans Treatment Court and co-established the Domestic Violence Accountability Court and the Child Support Accountability Court.

Smith worked with the Governor's Office and legislators on the language of the proposed changes to Senate Bill 257, legislation to strengthen the state's response to military sexual violence.

The proposed change to state law was identified by the Governor's Office and Smith presented the changes to the working group within the Illinois National Guard.

www.vfwil.org



State Commander Bobby Edwards presents the VFW Century Award to Arlington Post 981 Commander Matt Voss in recognition of the post's 100th anniversary. Post 981 in Arlington Heights was chartered Oct. 5, 1922.

Arlington Post 981 celebrates 100 years of community service

Arlington Post 981 celebrated its 100th anniversary on Oct. 8, with a gala held at Concorde Banquets in Kildeer. The Post was chartered on Oct. 5, 1922, in the village of Arlington (name changed to Arlington Heights in the 1930's).

More than 100 members and guests came out that night. The room looked beautiful. Name cards and table assignments were distributed as attendees arrived. Each table had a placard with information about the year 1922. Each seat had a copy of the 100th Anniversary Centennial Book containing the history of the Post as was reconstructed by Jr. Vice-Commander Mike Kolbuk.

Distinguished guests included State Commander Bobby Edwards, State Sr. Vice-Commander Brett Nila, National VFW Council Member Philip Maughan, District 4 Commander (and Post member) Steve MacInnes, District 4 Officers Dutch DeGroot and Tom Davidson, former Wheeling AMVETS Commander Tony Altieri and former Post Commander Mike McInerney.

Waitpersons circulated with appetizers and the bar was opened for the evening. Music was played in the background by the evening's entertainment, the 8-piece Sandi Haynes Orchestra.

At 6:55 PM the Master of Ceremonies asked everyone to be seated. Post Color Guard members posted the colors and led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

After appropriate comments and thanks to the Celebration Committee from the MC, State Commander Edwards presented Post 981 Commander Matt Voss with the VFW Century Award. Next the Mayor of Arlington Heights, Tom Hayes, read the commemorative proclamation issued on October 3 2022 at the Arlington Heights Board Meeting. The Post then honored the two World War II veterans present for the celebration – Frank Fabianski and Clarence Placek. Finally, Chaplain Don Luken prayed the invocation.

After dinner the orchestra played a variety of songs from the 40's to the 70's for two hours, getting guests to participate in dancing and merriment.



First 142 days! Where are we? How do we proceed?

I hope by the time you read this article, you have enjoyed the beautiful summer weather, even being hot at times, with family and friends. Overall, these first six months has been challenging for our organization, getting back into the swing of doing business on a daily and regular basis.

Let me tell you about some of the great things we are doing in Illinois. This year, we have organized our state program reporting and dashboard around the four pillars of the VFW: Community Service, Veterans Assistance, Youth Activities, and Legislative Advocacy, along with a fifth pillar for Illinois specific requirements. So, let's look at what is happening in those areas.

Community Service – We can all talk about community activities, Americanism, safety, and public service recognition. But, let's talk about other activities. Having served in the National Guard, I know the contributions that Guard and Reserve have made in military operations. The State Adjutant-Quartermaster and I set up a meeting with the Adjutant General of Illinois. When we met with Maj. Gen. Neely, we discussed the VFW programs and how the Guard

and VFW working together was a win-win situation. Not only did we get a commitment from him that the Guard and VFW could work together but we got invited to a deployment ceremony for a Guard unit.

In addition, we left his office with a signed VFW application and his check for a life membership. Part of the reason we got the invite to sit with the Adjutant General is I appointed a Yellow Ribbon Chairman for this year and that is one of the programs we spoke with him about working with the Guard to support families of deployed service members.

We also teamed up with Gold Star Mission which conducts a 500-plus mile bike ride in five days to raise money for scholarships in memory of service members from Illinois who were killed in action.

I met with the riders and Gold Star families the night before the bike ride to eat dinner. VFW Posts opened their doors along the route for the riders to eat and sleep with VFW members greeting the riders at the many stops along the route.

Veterans Assistance – We have used our Homeless Veterans donations to support Stand Downs in various locations throughout the state as well as provide assistance to homeless

veterans. After our Silver March at State Convention, we sent a check to VFW National Home for over \$40,000. On Sept. 24, we had our annual Illinois Day at the VFW National Home and the Silver March amounted to over \$61,000 more collected to support the National Home. All of this and many of our Posts and Districts sent money direct to the National Home outside the two silver marches. We have six VA hospitals and five state operated Veterans Homes that our Posts and Districts support through dollars and time.

Youth Activities – We are currently supporting our Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, Scouting, and ROTC/JROTC awards programs. There will be cash prizes to each of our 17 Voice of Democracy District Winners and this year we are expanding the cash prizes to the top four finishers in Patriot's Pen. Our awards banquet includes a weekend of activities in Springfield for the finalists and their families.

We'll take the students on a tour of Lincoln sites, conduct a wreath laying at Lincoln's Tomb and the weekend culminates with us announcing the State Winner for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen. In addition to the normal ROTC/JROTC certificates and awards, the Illinois VFW is one of many sponsors of a ROTC/JROTC drill competition that is held annually at the Illinois State Fair.

Legislative Advocacy – We have a very active team of members that tracks and supports legislation that is good for veterans. This past year we had great success in Illinois with 10 out of

our 13 bills being passed. We supported an amendment to amend the disabled veterans Homestead exemption to include surviving spouses. This was passed. We supported a Joint Resolution naming US Highway 20 "Medal of Honor Highway". This was passed. We supported HB 5184. This bill solidified the purpose of the Veterans Assistance Commission that every County in Illinois should have and mandated that a portion of the tax dollars collected by the County MUST go to the VAC to support their veteran's assistance programs. This is now Public Law.

We are working hard to ensure that every Post and District has delegates and alternates on their County VAC so we don't risk any kind of argument to reverse this law. We are still fighting to get land from Ft Sheridan returned to the VA for expansion of the Ft Sheridan National Cemetery. We are working to get services expanded at VA CBOCs.

Finally, we are fighting to upgrade or replace aging facilities at the state-operated Veterans Homes. We are also supporting expanding services and amenities to those veterans living in the Veteran's Homes.

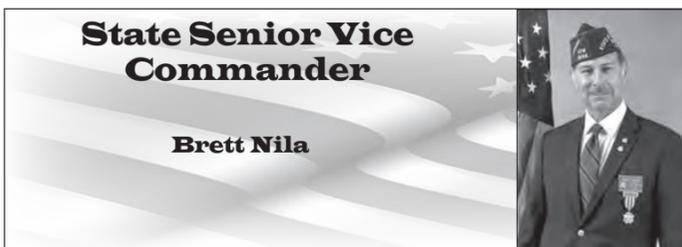
Let's review some especially important statistics of our department. At the beginning of 2014-2015 year the Department had 63,175 members. This figure consisted of life, new, reinstates, and continuous members. At the beginning of the 2021-2022 year the department started with 41,279 members. As of June 30, close of the 2021-2022 membership accounting

year our numbers were 39,790 with an additional 3,306 deceased life members equating to a final number of 36,484. Over the last seven years our membership numbers have dropped by 26,691. Doing the math, this equates to an average of 3,813 members a year. Our average age throughout the department is 69 years old. This number is a combination of members dying or continuous annual members not reinstating their membership. Our goal is 102 percent or 37,214. If this trend should continue, it would dramatically impact our post, district and department ability to serve our veterans, their families, and our communities.

Let's continue to achieve this by reaching out to veterans who are eligible to join and to call those annual continuous members that have relocated to you ZIP code. We must revitalize our Post, District and Department. Your department is already providing unpaid/expired reports, by ZIP code, a list of members who currently belong to the department members-at-large in the area where your post is located. This is an additional listing that is in conjunction with the post unpaid and continuous members listing, which are available to post leaders. I am pleased to announce that we are currently at 32,066 or 87.89 percent as of Oct 27. Our goal is to be at 92 percent, 33,566 by Dec. 31.

I hope your Holiday Season will be filled with happiness and joy! May God bless you and your families.

God bless America!



As some of you may have noticed, several county Veterans Assistance Commissions (VACs) have been receiving increasing attention in the last few months. For the most part, this stems from new laws that were passed earlier this year, which now provide consistent funding for the VACs thus enabling them to better budget and plan services and assistance to Veterans and their families. In some instances, county officials are taking issue with the funding increase that was signed by the Governor last Spring.

To provide some background, the County VACs were created decades ago as part of the Illinois Military Veterans Assistance Act; some have been around longer than the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Counties establish a VAC at the request of two or more Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) within the county.

They are designed to serve Veterans and their families who

reside in the County with help in accessing their veterans' benefits as well as financial assistance in times of need, at no cost to the Veteran. To better ensure VACs are meeting veterans' needs, the statute requires that VACs be comprised of one member of each of the chartered VSOs within the county; that member is the post's "delegate" to the VAC. (And if a Post is situated near a county border, it can provide a delegate to each county in which at least 25 percent of the Post members reside.)

With a better-established funding stream set to begin flowing on January 1, 2023, it's even more crucial now that our Posts provide their delegate to their local VAC to ensure that funds earmarked for Veterans assistance are used wisely.

Officials in numerous counties were caught off-guard by the increased funding that was passed into law by state legislators last Spring and are upset because it took a portion of county

tax revenue out of their control. They would like to challenge the new law by arguing that the VACs and the veterans that comprise them are not capable of managing such budgets and cannot be trusted to responsibly administer the funds.

From a department standpoint, Commander Edwards encourages Posts to support their local VAC by providing their delegate, who can then update the Post regularly on how their VAC is serving Veterans. That encouragement from Department will continue next year as well. By participating in the local VAC, Posts can ensure that the tax revenue that's budgeted is used to provide the best services possible to local Veterans

and their families. Plus, the Post will be tapped into another local Veterans' network, which will provide it access to more information, more events, and more Veterans. Community involvement like this is one more way that we can make a difference for Veterans; it's one more way that we can demonstrate to prospective members that we're a relevant organization.

There are currently 46 Counties with VACs in Illinois; a directory of them is posted on our Department website (vfwil.org) in the "Members Only" section. More information, including the text of the amended Illinois "Military Veterans Assistance Act," is also on the Department website, under "Resources."

Illinois VFW News Deadline

The deadline for the upcoming issues of the Illinois VFW News

March 2023 - Feb. 1, 2023
May 2023 - April 15, 2023

Email items to: Barb Wilson - bwilson@vfwil.org

or mail items to:
Barb Wilson, Editor • 802 N. 3rd St. • Riverton, IL 62561

Items not received by the deadline may be held for the next issue

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NEWS COPY & PHOTOS:
Send to Illinois VFW News, 3300 Constitution Dr., Springfield, Illinois 62711 or email to bwilson@vfwil.org.
Deadline is the 1st of the month before above listed publishing months.

NEWSPAPER COMMITTEE:
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Bobby Edwards; Joe Bartley;
Editor: Barbara Wilson
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State Junior Vice Commander

Maurice Bridges



Happy Holidays. Wow! It has been six months since the State Convention in Springfield where I was nominated, elected and sworn in as Junior Vice Commander for the State of Illinois.

It has been an honor serving veterans and their families. Since then, I have attended the August Council of Administration meeting held in Springfield, attended Illinois Day at the Nation Home in Eaton Rapids Michigan in September, attended Junior Vice Commander Training in Kansas City in October, and attended several District meetings.

In August, the Department held its first Council of Administration of this fiscal year. The training provided was very detailed and was a total success in my opinion.

Our reporting platform has changed from the X Sheet to the Dashboard. When the Dashboard was first put on line, our members had problems logging on to the webpage and accessing program reporting. That has since been fixed. The new Dashboard display colors are red and green. The color red lets you know the requirement for that program has not been completed. If the color is green, the requirement for that program has been submitted and is complete. There are some program reports that only can be turned green by the Department.

Before the training class at the Council of Administration, the Dashboard had a lot of red. Since the training, the Dashboard is starting to show a lot of green.

If you are having any issues with Dashboard reporting, once you sign into the Web page, there is a tab titled "Instructions for Program Reporting". Select that tab and if you still cannot find the answer you're looking for, then please contact the Department at (217) 529-6688.

On Sept. 24, the Illinois VFW and its Auxiliary visited the VFW National Home. If you

did not know, Illinois takes care of two homes at the National Home. On the day of our visit, Illinois Day, we donated more \$78,000 to the National Home.

The VFW National Home assists military service members, veterans and their families with children who faces different challenges, such as reintegration after military discharge, post-traumatic stress, homeless, rehabilitation from battlefield injuries and unemployment. If you know any military service member or veteran with children who may need a new start in life, please have them contact the VFW National Home at (800) 313-4200.

As you know, this is the season for giving. Unfortunately, it is also the season when folks get depressed and lonely. We must be on the lookout for changes in behavior from our family and friends.

One evening at a post, I was having a conversation with an IDOT worker. I was sitting on a stool and the IDOT worker was standing in front of me when a female walked between us. She told the IDOT worker he was very rude for not moving out of the way for her. When she approached us, she did not say "excuse me" but just walked between us. The IDOT worker look at me and I looked at him, both of us surprised wondering what was that all about. A few minutes later she returned and immediately apologized and started crying. She then informed us that earlier that day she lost a very close friend. That goes to show you that people may do things that are out of character. Although the IDOT worker and I didn't know her, I'm sure her friends or family would have known that was not her normal behavior.

Suicide is a major, yet preventable health problem in the U.S. Sadly, veterans comprise nearly a quarter of suicide deaths in the U.S. Comrades, we must be vigilant and be on the lookout

for changes in behavior with our family and friends. Please keep this number for the Veterans Crisis Line handy - 988 option 1 or (800) 273-8255 option 1. Give it out to those who you think may need to talk with someone.

In October, I had the opportunity to attend training in Kansas City Mo. This training was for all department Junior Vice Commanders. The purpose of this training is to prepare and train Junior Vice Commanders so they will be ready to be State Commanders when it is their time. The training consisted of duties and responsibilities of a State Commander, Quartermaster training, Operational Issues, National Legislative Service, National Veterans Service, Membership, State Issues and much more.

If you are not aware, the National VFW has a Dashboard as well. It is called the All-American Eligible Dashboard. The All-American Eligible Dashboard is where you can determine if your District or Post has completed the Community Service, Veteran Military Service, Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pin and Teacher Award at the national level.

The All-American Eligible Dashboard can be accessed by logging on to VFW.org and under the Membership Quick Links, select the "Programs Dashboard Tool or Training." However only certain officers in the post and district can update the national dashboard.

Other things that you as a member can complete at VFW.org is renew your membership, become a life (or legacy life) member, request a duplicate card and for all the technical nerds, you can even download to your phone your membership card.

In addition, you can download the digital version of the 2023 Bylaws, Manual of Procedures and Ritual. The download link can be found under:

My VFW
Member/Post Resources
Bylaws Training, Forms, & Templates

2023 Podium Bylaws, Manual of Procedures and Ritual and then select the blue download link button at the end of the paragraph.

Trust me, you can find many

training videos from how to conduct a VFW Post meeting to how to take a vote.

Let's talk about membership. Our state commander has a goal for all post and Districts to be at 92 percent by Dec. 31.

District Commanders, please encourage your Post Commanders to call and or visit your unpaid/expiring members. If possible, let's convert these unpaid/expiring members to life members. The Department can generate list to find unpaid/relocated members for any Post. Membership is what keeps

Adamczyk inducted into Illinois Guard's OCS Hall of Fame

An Illinois Army National Guard lieutenant colonel who graduated from the Illinois Army National Guard Officer Candidate School was inducted into the Illinois National Guard's OCS Hall of Fame Class of 2022, Aug. 21, at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Springfield, Illinois.

Lt. Col. Andrew Adamczyk, of Springfield, a life member of Northenders VFW Post 10302 in Springfield, was recognized as an inductee during the ILARNG's Officer Candidate School graduation and commissioning ceremony. He was presented with a bust of Abraham Lincoln during the induction ceremony.

"Lieutenant Colonel Adamczyk is deserving of the title Hall of Fame inductee," said Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, of Naperville, Illinois, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. "His achievements are woven into the fabric of the Illinois National Guard history."

To be considered for induction into the Hall of Fame, each Soldier must be a graduate of the Illinois Army National Guard's 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) OCS program, attain the rank of lieutenant colonel while serving on active duty and/or active National Guard or Reserve status, be recognized and recommended by the ILARNG OCS Hall of Fame Board, and confirmed by the Commander of the 129th

this organization strong. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is the largest and oldest war veterans service organization. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is the organization that successfully lobbied Congress that awarded veterans at a minimum, GI Bill, Forever GI Bill, Blue Water Navy, PACT Act and many more significant legislative actions.

In closing, Happy New Year and I look forward to attending the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Banquet during the February Council of Administration weekend in Springfield.



Lt. Col. Andrew Adamczyk

RTI for outstanding service.

Adamczyk enlisted as a Heavy Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic in May 1995. His previous assignments have included Intelligence Officer for Multinational Division Central South, Iraq; 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) Officer Candidate School instructor and tactical officer; 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade intelligence officer; Strategy, Policy and Plans and International/Inter-governmental Affairs Officer; and branch chief operational planning, Joint Force Headquarters. He deployed to Iraq in 2004.

Adamczyk, who has served for 27 years, was the Battalion Commander for 2nd Battalion, 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) and is the full-time deputy director of Strategy, Plans and Policy in the Military Intelligence Branch. He was commissioned in 2002.



Olney Post 4226 recently voted to donate \$500 to the local high school cheerleaders. Not only does the Veterans of Foreign Wars support veterans, but also their families and communities.



St. Juvin Post 1336 members John Hollmeyer and Chaplin Bill Bomba visited with Mike Parcell, a Navy veteran who served on Nuclear Subs from 1970 to 1977 and his wife Kathy at the Heritage Manor Skilled Care facility in Dwight. Pictured Kathy and Mike Parcell admire his Navy throw.

Gold Star sister shares story of brother's service, family's sacrifice

By Rob Bland

Imagine you are back in grade school, during the time before social media, emails, and cell phones.

Your sibling has been off fighting in the war, and you have not heard much from them. You try to focus on your studies, but the world is at war.

Suddenly you are called down to the principal's office. You try to think of what you could have done wrong. You are a good student and did nothing to get into trouble. When you get there, you are given a sealed note. The principle tells you to take this straight home, don't stop anywhere, don't talk to anyone, don't open it, and give it to your parents.

Running home as fast as you can, your mind is racing. You have no idea what it is, but you know it must be important and possibly bad news. Upon arriving home your mother opens the note and your family learns that your sibling has died in the war. Your world will never be the same. This is how families were notified at that time, unlike today's notification system.

This is Ann Castro's story, a Post 1461 Auxiliary Life Member.

She was just a young girl in 4th grade. World War II had been raging for six years. Her brother, Jesus Castro, fought and gave his life in service of the United States. She was not notified by a person in uniform but by a letter read aloud by her parents.

Ann's brother Jesus died on Feb. 25th, 1945. He was in Company G, 335th Infantry Regiment, 84th Infantry Division. He fell during the Rhineland Campaign.

On Sept. 23, 2022, Ann wanted to honor the Gold Star Mission riders, a group that honors Gold Star families.

She set up a table with her brother's story and medals and handed out poppies to all the riders, supporters, and fellow Gold Star family members who attended the event.

When the riders were in and ready to have a small meal provided by VFW Post 1461, retired Lt. Col. Eric Murray invited Gold Star Family members to eat first, as a small token of appreciation



Post 1461 Auxiliary member Ann Castro, a Gold Star sister, shows the display of her brother, Jesus Castro, a Soldier who was serving with Company G, 335th Infantry Regiment, 84th Infantry Division, when he was killed in action Feb. 25, 1945 during the Rhineland Campaign in World War II.

for their sacrifice.

After the meal, retired Command Sgt. Maj. Diane Rogers called Ann forward and read Ann's story to the group. For each Gold Star family member,

the dates and names are different, but the life changing event felt the same pain as they related to her experience. Ann received an outpouring of love from the group by way of a standing

ovation.

The Gold Star Mission was truly living up to their motto, "Always Remember! Never Forget!" We must continue to support them in their mission.

Gold Star

Continued from Page 1

members, including 34 Illinois National Guard members, killed overseas since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The 500-mile bicycle ride was the organization's first and remains its main event to honor fallen service members and recognize their families.

The ride started on Sept. 20 at the Illinois National Guard headquarters on Camp Lincoln in Springfield. About 520 miles later, it ended at the Great Lakes Community Center next to Naval Station Great Lakes in North Chicago on Sept. 24.

Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the

Adjutant General of Illinois and the Commander of the Illinois National Guard said that organizations like Gold Star Mission work hard to keep the memories of fallen warriors alive. "They focus on how they lived, not just how they died," he said.

The event also introduced U.S. military Gold Star Families to their Polish kindred. "We have established lifelong friendships and have met an entirely new military family," said Vonda Rodgers of Bloomington, the mother of Army Ranger Sgt. Joshua Rodgers, who was killed in action in Afghanistan on April 27, 2017. Rodgers said that the Gold Star Families have gotten to know the Polish Gold Star Families over the past week and "We are committed to growing together."

Lidia Kordasz, whose husband Polish Army Lt. Col. Grzegorz Kordasz was killed in 2016, learned of the Gold Star 500 and Gold Star Mission through Illinois Army National Guard veterans who had deployed with her husband to Afghanistan in 2012 as part of the Bilateral Embedded Support Team (BEST) A9. Their son, 14-year-old Michal Kordasz, rode the 500 miles to honor his father and other Polish and American fallen Soldiers. Lidia Kordasz said that the bonds of friendship between Gold Star Families transcend international borders.

While the language barriers made communication difficult at times, the Gold Star Families were able to connect at a deeper level, Rodgers said. "Hugs, laughs, smiles, tears – these need no language."

Illinois Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. David Schreffler of the 183rd Wing rode in honor of Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. Joshua Harris, who was killed in Afghanistan on



Gold Star Mother and Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator Jean Harris talks to Illinois Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. David Schreffler as the Gold Star 500 as the riders arrive at the Great Lakes Community Center, part of the Naval Station Great Lakes near North Chicago, Illinois, on Sept. 24. Schreffler rides in honor of Harris' son, Illinois Army National Guard Sgt. Joshua Harris, who was killed in action in Afghanistan on Sept. 18, 2008. Schreffler is also a member of the Sgt. Joshua Harris VFW Post 2868 in Brookfield, Illinois.

Sept. 17, 2008. He is also a member of the Joshua Harris Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2868 in Brookfield, near where Sgt. Harris grew up. He was greeted at the end of the Gold Star 500 with a hug from Harris' step-mother and Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator Jean Harris.

"It's special to me – honoring Josh and the friendships I've made with his family," Schreffler said. He recalled something Jean's late husband and Joshua's father, Bill Harris, said to him a few years back. "Bill said 'You can be bitter, or you can be better.' This is me getting better."

Illinois Army National Guard Lt. Col. David Helfrich, the co-founder and past president of Gold Star Mission, said the organization has been successful because there is a need for it.

He said it was an honor to have the Polish participate this year. "We shared battlespace with the Polish and now we are sharing how we help keep the memories of our fallen alive." In addition to sponsoring events to recognize fallen service members, Gold Star Mission also presents scholarships in the names of those Illinois service members.

Rodgers said, no matter what nation they are from, Gold Star Families share a concern for the well being of service members and veterans. Gold Star Family members will get approached by veterans who feel guilty that they came home from war when their loved ones did not.

"We do not want you to feel guilty," Rodgers said. "What we do want is for you to love your people. Love them harder than you loved them before."



Belleville Post 1739 participated in and sponsored a hole in a golf tournament put on by Christ Church of Fairview Heights, at Cardinal Creek Golf Course at Scott AFB, Illinois. Post Commander Larry Newell is pictured with the sponsorship sign.

Coffey retires from Illinois Guard after 31 years of service

Sgt. Maj. Jason S. Coffey with the Illinois National Guard's 244th Digital Liaison Detachment, retired Oct. 15 after 31 years of service during a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard's Northwest Armory in Chicago.

Coffey, a member of Clifford E. Johnson Post 9759, Loves Park, enlisted in the active Army in 1992 and completed Infantry training at Fort Benning, Georgia, in October 1992. Coffey most recently served as the Chief Operations noncommissioned officer for the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment, 65th Troop Brigade, ILARNG.

His military assignments included 1st Brigade 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg North Carolina; 66th Brigade, 35th Infantry Division Illinois Army National Guard; 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Illinois Army National Guard; and the 244th Digital Liaison Detachment 65th Brigade, Illinois Army National Guard.

Over his career Coffey served in a variety of leadership positions including Fire Team Leader, Squad Leader, Platoon Sergeant, Scout Platoon Sergeant, First Sergeant, and Chief Operations NCO.

Coffey said learning from his own mistakes has been one of the biggest lessons he has learned during his long career.

"Being able to recognize your own mistakes and learn from them is one of the most important lessons," said Coffey. "Make mistakes, recognize them and move on. I hope that some of my leadership traits will carry on and Soldiers have learned from success or learned from the mistakes."

During the retirement ceremony, Col. Max Casteleyn, the 244th commander, said Coffey's experience will be missed.

"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments but what is woven in the hearts of others," said Casteleyn. "For 31 years, you

have trained, cared, and lead with empathy. For 31 years, you have sacrificed time with family and you have been a part of the nation's one-percent willing to wear the uniform and live by the Soldier's creed. Now it's your turn to sit back and relax."

Coffey said the comradery with his fellow Soldiers kept him in uniform for 31 years.

"I hope that some of my leadership traits will carry on and Soldiers learned from it," said Coffey. "I hope the same drive and care will carry on. It's still a huge need to ensure our country's security and way of life. I hope the soldiers look at it the way I did and that they continue to take care of each other."

After retirement, Coffey said he looks forward to spending more time with his wife, Kristine, and his son, Collin.



Sgt. Maj. Jason S. Coffey, is presented a certificate of retirement by Col. Max Casteleyn, commander, 244th DLD, during a retirement ceremony Oct. 15 at the Northwest Armory in Chicago.



On August 31, 2022, the Floyd J. Tilton VFW Post 3878, Rochelle, Board of Directors presented Past Commander William L. "Bill" Bumgarner with the VFW Commander's Award for his many years of dedicated service to the organization. He served as post commander from 1995 to 1997 and from 2015 to 2022. He also served as Commander of District 6 from 2002 to 2003. He continues to serve as a Trustee at the Post and District levels.



St. Juvin participates in Military Appreciation Night

St. Juvin Post 1336 Junior Vice Commander Jim Richards (left) participates in the coin toss as honorary captain of the Coal City Coalers football team at the team's Military Appreciation Night game, Sept. 9. The Wilmington High School Wildcats hosted the Coal City Coalers. Coal City's St. Juvin Post 1336 VFW was in attendance to honor all the veterans at the game. Richard is an Air Force Vietnam veteran, who served from 1966 to 1970 including a tour in Thailand as a B-52 Crew Chief. While the Wildcats scored a win, it didn't dampen Jim's spirits because he got to see his grandson, Cason Headley, play for the Coalers.

Ruck

Continued from Page 1

of our veterans," said Anthony Bellin, commander, District 10. "We lose 22 veterans a day [to suicide]. I do not know how many first responders from 9/11 have [since] joined the 22, but this is a way to remember their sacrifices, what we lost that day, and all the people we have lost for the 20 years we were at war in Iraq and Afghanistan."

The rucking trek, a common exercise among troops that requires marching at a steady pace with at least 45 pounds in a rucksack, started at Post 755 in Springfield and headed south toward Chatham.

At the halfway point, about five miles down, a route of bike trails led the participants straight to Post 4763 in Chatham, where a lunch was provided by The Fallen Outdoors, a veteran-based non-profit started in Minnesota that provides outdoor opportunities for veterans.

Among those participating in

the rucking event was Alfredo Rocha, a service officer at Post 4763, whose back carried more than the weight of the rucksack.

"There's a lot of baggage that comes from 9/11," Rocha said. "This was my generation's Kennedy assassination. I know exactly where I was. 9/11 represents, to me, the beginning of my war phase, and that is when you start losing people you know."

Like Rocha, many veterans of the Global War on Terror began their descend into combat and its aftermath on that fateful day in 2001. Though many have returned from war-torn regions in Iraq and Afghanistan, their fight continues within.

For Post 755 Commander Josh Seed, that is why it is important to conduct events like the "Patriots' Day Ruck" to showcase what VFW can do for veterans and their families.

"This is a place where you



The Fallen Outdoors, a veteran-based non-profit which provides outdoor opportunities for veterans serves lunch at Chatham-Auburn Memorial Post 4763 after the Patriots' Day Ruck march.

can come, get support and feel like you are part of a team [again]," Seed said. "The VFW is for everyone — friends, fami-

ly, and veterans. You do not have to be a member of the VFW to be part of the greater good, but that is what we are here for. We are

showing we have not forgotten 9/11, and we do not want others to forget."

Bloomingtondale VFW donates food items to Joliet-area Veterans

By Matthew Moeller
Hines VA Hospital

Veterans help Veterans. That's what Joseph Palmer believes.

"It's what we do," he explained. "If a Veteran needs help, who better to help them than a fellow Veteran?"

Palmer is the Veterans Affairs Officer of VFW Post 7539, in Bloomingtondale, Illinois. Every month, his organization donates approximately \$400 worth of items to Joliet VA Clinic's micro food pantry for Veterans and their families in need of assistance.

The donations are aided by Trinity Lutheran Church in Roselle, Illinois, who match the post's monthly gift.

"It's sad that we have Veterans with this need, but it's great that we have this service and people willing to help," said Tamorah Riney, licensed practical nurse and the clinic's food pantry organizer.

According to Riney, the clinic sends a list of requested items to Palmer. The items are purchased online and shipped to the clinic for Veterans and their families.

VFW Post 7539 also regularly collects food items and donates them to the clinic in addition to its monthly orders.

"This month, I can't keep the pantry stocked. There has been such a need," said Riney. "Mr. Palmer is coming with additional food, and it will really help."

Will County residents seeking food bank assistance grew 23 percent overall since July 2021. The Joliet clinic's micro food pantry began earlier this year to help Veterans and their families suffering food insecurity, according to Elizabeth Thrun, coordinator of Hines VA's food assistance network.

According to Palmer, his organization projects it can continue monthly food deliveries for the

next several years.

"We're very fortunate enough to have donors who have been very supportive and allow us to continue to donate food," said Palmer. "As long as they need food items, we'll continue with it."

The micro food pantry is located inside the clinic's main lobby, at 1201 Eagle Street, Joliet. Community members are welcome to donate non-perishable food staples and household items. Donations are also accepted at Hines VA's other outpatient clinics in Aurora, Hoffman Estates, La Salle, Kankakee, and Oak Lawn.

The micro food pantry is in addition to other food, employment, and housing assistance programs provided through the Joliet VA Clinic and Hines VA. Veterans can learn about available resources by calling 708-202-4961.



Veterans from Bloomingtondale Post 7539 drop off items for veterans in need at the micro-food pantry operated at the Joliet VA Clinic.

VFW, Auxiliary Celebrate Illinois Day at National Home

Posts, Districts donate monies to help offset cost of maintaining Michigan facility



State Commander Bobby Edwards and Department Auxiliary President Marvie Wisniewski lay a wreath at the National Home Cemetery.



State Commander Bobby Edwards addresses attendees at Illinois Day.



District 14 Quartermaster Cathy Stubbs and All-State Program chairman Steve Ellers tour the National Home for Children during Illinois Day.



Auxiliary President Marvie Wisniewski addresses attendees at Illinois Day.



National Home Chairs Mike McGrath and Sarah Higginbotham with Chief of Staff Ryan Higginbotham.



Past District 3 Commander Tony Marusak presents a check to National Home Chairman Mike McGrath during Illinois Day at the National Home Sept. 24.



National Home Poppy Child Aurora addresses attendees at Illinois Day Sept. 24.



National Home Chairman Mike McGrath leads a memorial service at the National Home Cemetery.

History of the VFW Membership Badge

Societies, Orders, or Fraternal Organizations; be they civic, hereditary, commemorative, or in the case of the VFW; veteran and patriotic; have been a part of America since its founding. These societies, in order to build an esprit de corps and to identify to which society they belonged, designed distinctive badges and insignia to be worn at meetings and on occasions of ceremony. Following in the footsteps of societies such as the Society of the Cincinnati (founded in 1783, open to Revolutionary War Officers and their male lineal descendants), the Grand Army of the Republic (founded in 1866, Union Civil War Veterans) and the Army and Navy Union of the United States (founded in 1886, open to all serving or honorably discharged Veterans); the Veterans who served in the Spanish American War (1898-1899), continued the tradition and designed their own distinctive insignia for their respective organizations to represent their service in the Spanish American War. It would not be until 1905 that the War Department would issue General Order #5, which created Campaign medals and not until 1908 were they finally issued. GO #5 and the creation of these Campaign medals was a direct result of the practice of wearing membership badges.

Two of these societies, the American Veterans of Foreign Service and the Society Army of the Philippines, would later merge and form the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The American Veterans of Foreign Service chose a quince foil (a shape with five leaves or arms) with the insignia of each Army Corps that served in the Spanish American War on each arm, American Flag in the center, with Marine Corps and Navy insignia to the left and right of the flag and the legend "American Veterans of Foreign Service" surrounding the flag. The Pennsylvania branch of the AVFS that formed later chose a similar design.

The Society Army of the Philippines chose the Cross of Malta with rays of sun radiating between the arms of the cross and an "8" (for the Eighth Army Corps that served in the Philippines) superimposed upon it, as its badge. When the American Veterans of Foreign Service and the Society Army of the Philippines merged in 1913 and formed the Vet-



Badges of the Ohio Branch



Badges of the Pennsylvania Branch

erans of Foreign Wars, the SAP's badge was chosen as the basis for the membership badge of the new organization.

In the early years of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Comrades would wear the official uniform as outlined in the Bylaws and upon it wear the membership badge. You may have seen older photos of Veterans with a line of medals adorning their chest and just assumed that they were military awards, in most cases they were not. In the picture of George S Geiss, from 1919, you can see an example of this. Badges of hereditary, lineage, fraternal, veterans,



Salesman's card depicting a gold and enameled variant of the SAP badge.



SAP member and honorary member badges

and other patriotic organizations are usually worn in order of the founding date of the respective organizations and after any Federal, State or Foreign awards. He is wearing (from L to R)

1. Army of the Philippines Badge (not the Society badge)
2. Veterans of Foreign Wars
3. Past Camp Commander badge of the Sons of Veterans with rank strap of Sr Vice Commander in Chief (in 1926 name was changed to, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War)
4. Military Order of the Serpent (subordinate society to the United Spanish War Veterans similar to the Military Order of the Cootie)
5. United Spanish War Veterans
6. An Encampment badge of the Veterans of Foreign Wars

Also, note that the cap device worn at the time is similar to the current emblem in use by the VFW Auxiliary.

When the American Veterans of Foreign Service and the Society Army of the Philippines amalgamated on the 20th of August 1913, it was not a very smooth transition. Several posts of the SAP refused to merge and maintained their independence as the original organization, most notably were two posts, one in Boston and the other in Chicago. The Boston Post refused to merge and declared itself the original Society Army of the Philippines and remained the National Headquarters of the SAP until that organization disappeared



The cap device worn at the time is similar to the current emblem in use by the VFW Auxiliary.

sometime in the 1950's. The Luzon Post in Chicago eventually merged 13 years later in 1926.

Because the posts that refused to merge in 1913 felt they were the true Society Army of the Philippines, the members continued to wear the badge of the SAP. From August 20th 1913 until August 1st 1914 the fledgling organization was known as the Army of the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico, during this time no badge was produced but artwork of the badge was used in the organizations' official publications. The newly formed VFW adopted the badge of the SAP with a few minor changes. This became a point of contention with the SAP and several letters were exchanged and lawyers consulted regarding who had the rights to the Cross of Malta. In a letter to The

Bailey, Banks and Biddle Co. (the manufacturer of the membership badges) dated November 26, 1914, then Adjutant General Robert G Woodside stated, "This organization does not fear any suit which the insurgent A. of P. may see fit to institute and will stand back of you in the matter of this badge." In this same letter he also approved the designs of the first membership badges of the VFW. Eventually the VFW won the argument, and the following badges were produced for wear. These were produced from 1915 until the early 1920's.

Sometime after these first seven were produced and before 1919 another badge was introduced, with the VFW version of the Great Seal of the US superimposed in place of the Corps insignias. Several versions of this badge



Not produced



First Corps.



Second Corps.

were produced over the years, and one could write a book on the variants, but here I will just briefly talk about some of them.

- From 1924 to 1930 the badge had "VFW K.C. Kansas" on the reverse lower arm of the cross. National Headquarters moved from New York to Kansas City, KS in 1924 and in 1930 they moved across the state line to Kansas City, MO. After the move, "VFW K.C. Kansas" was replaced with "VFW NATL HDQTRS".

- The badges were offered in regulation bronze, but could also be purchased in gold plate, 10k or 14k gold

- Badges could also be purchased with an enamel inlay, the earliest were enameled in white and khaki while the later were in red, white, and blue.

• Miniature Badges were also produced, there were two distinct styles and both were offered in regulation bronze or gold filled.

The last badge to have a unit insignia instead of the VFW Seal superimposed on the Cross of Malta was the Rock of the Marne Post, comprised of men from the 38th Division. This post boasted a membership of 3,000 comrades, one fifth of the VFW's 15,000 total membership in 1919.

Identifying Officers of the organization with miniature rank straps was copied from the Grand Army of the Republic, although the colors chosen to identify past and present officers at each level were unique to the VFW. By the mid 1930's this system was replaced with enameled bars of the same size with Officers Titles on fields of

blue. This remained the standard until the VFW store quit selling them in 2020.

As the years passed by, the tradition of wearing a membership badge sort of faded away. They were still carried in the VFW Store, but due to low demand and rising costs in production, the supplier was changed to an overseas company. This move resulted in loss of quality and the badge looked more like a keychain from a gumball machine than something worthy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Starting in 2021 the latest variant of the badge was designed in and is being made in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by Erffmeyer & Son Co.



Mini ribbons.



Fifth Corps



Past County Council Commander



38th Infantry



Seventh Corps



U.S. Marine Corps



Past Post Commander



Post Quartermaster



Eighth Corps - (Past Post Commander)



US Navy (Post Trustee circa 1915-1919)



Past Commander in Chief



Past Department Senior Vice Commander



Past Quartermaster



Legislative officer



District Commander



Past County Commander.



Past Department Commander



Aide-de-Camp



Post Junior Vice Commander. Made overseas.



Post Trustee. Made overseas.



Made by ESCO (2021)

Post 998 Participates in Stephenson County Health Fair

By Rob Bland

On Oct. 27, 2022, Post 998 of Freeport participated in the Stephenson County Health Fair. The Stephenson County Health Department reached out to the Freeport VFW to participate in the Health Fair, to discuss the latest issues with Veteran health, and to discuss the ways that Veterans can look for help in the local community.

DuWayne Pople "Pope", Post 998 Service Officer, and Rob Bland, District 6 Community Service and Blood Donor Chairman, set up a table at the event.

Packets were provided for the PACT Act, where to get more information if needed and general questions were answered. They took this opportunity to provide an update of Mad Cow disease (variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease or vCJD) and blood donation. The FDA no longer defers blood donors who were in Europe and the United Kingdom in the 1980's.

In addition to the information on the PACT Act and Mad Cow updates, there was information on VFW Membership. They discussed membership for those in attendance and asked if participants knew any Veterans that might be eligible to join the VFW.

The Post also took this opportunity to set up appointments for the Honor Our Veterans Blood Drive that will kick off the yearlong Centennial celebration of Post 998. The blood drive is in conjunction with Veterans Day and the Rock River Valley Blood Center.

This year Freeport along with four other posts in District 6 are holding blood drives the Monday through Thursday the week of Veterans Day. Four posts in the District are also adopting four of the Rock River Valley Blood Center fixed sites. This entails setting up displays for blood donors to look at and take membership information while they donate that week.



DuWayne Pople, Post 998, and Rob Bland, District 6 Blood Donor Chairman, man the table at the Stephenson County Health Fair.

Morgan County Post Senior Vice Commander retires from military after 28-year career in Illinois Army National Guard

Twenty-eight years after she found her place in the Illinois Army National Guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Mary Dixon, of Chapin, Illinois, will retire Sept. 30.

Dixon, who enlisted in 1994 as a petroleum supply specialist assigned to the 258th Quartermaster Company in Beardstown initially joined for the education benefits, but once she arrived at basic training, decided she wanted to go on active duty.

"I enlisted for the education benefits the National Guard offered," Dixon said. "Once I got to basic training, I knew this is what I needed to do. I was ready to go active duty."

However, Dixon's career path kept her closer to home as she instead applied for a federal technician job at Camp Lincoln.

"While I was on annual training at Camp Darby, Italy, I talked about my plans with then-Sergeant First Class Peggy Bates," Dixon said. "She talked to me about federal technician jobs and helped me apply for my first couple of positions."

Dixon began her first federal technician job as a shipping clerk in Supply and Services at Camp Lincoln in late 1995.

"I am very fortunate. The career path I took led me here," she said.

Dixon, the Commandant of the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), will retire from the Illinois Army National Guard, but will remain in her federal technician job as the chief of administrative services within the G-6 directorate, with oversight of the Department of the Army photo lab, the print shop, the state mail services, and as the Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act officer.

Dixon has deployed once in her career – with the Bilateral Embedded Staff Team (BEST) A-7 to Ghanzi Province, Afghanistan in 2011 as the senior logistics noncommissioned

officer.

"The deployment helped reinforce the ideas of selfless service," Dixon said. "I had the training I needed to do the job and the deployment allowed me to prove that to myself."

Dixon said she volunteered for the deployment.

"I realized with the units I served in, if I don't volunteer, a deployment isn't going to just happen for me," she said.

Dixon called the deployment successful, and the team stays in touch with each other.

"One of two things happen with a deployment, either you want nothing to do with anyone you deployed with, or you want to remain part of each other's lives," she said. "Our 18-person team is the latter, we like having reunions and being part of each other's lives."

Dixon said she made lifelong friendships with others on the deployment, particularly Sgt. Maj. (retired) Sharon Hultquist. The two were the only women Soldiers on the team. However, that didn't hamper her ability to get the job done.

"She was an excellent battle buddy," Dixon said. "I could bounce ideas off her. We crossed paths after the deployment, and she has remained a great friend and a great influence on my career."

Dixon's husband, Matt, and two children, Rebecca, age 24 and Benjamin, age 15, have been supportive of her career.

"I have an amazingly supportive family," she said. "I know I can't give them the time back I missed, but I can use the rest of this time to reinforce the bonds we have made. I appreciate everything they did, there is no way I could have done what I did without their support."

Dixon thinks her military service has had a lasting positive impact on her children.

"I think because of my military service, my children have



Illinois Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Mary Dixon, of Chapin, Illinois, speaks to those in attendance during a retirement ceremony Sept. 18 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois. Dixon retired from the Illinois Army National Guard after a 28-year career.

an appreciation for hard work and the necessity to finish the job," she said. "They know if you make a commitment, you need to follow through until the end."

Dixon's time in uniform may be winding down, but the extra time she will have won't be wasted.

"I'll have more time with my family," she said. "I've missed a lot of family things."

Dixon has purchased a vacant building in Chapin and has dubbed it her 10-year project. She plans to renovate the building and open it as an event venue.

Dixon is also actively involved in the Morgan County VFW Post 1379 in Jacksonville and said she will have time to be more involved.

"The VFW saved me after the deployment," Dixon said. "I reached out to them after I came back wanting to transfer my membership to the local post. At

my first meeting, the then-adjutant wheeled his walker over to me and asked if I was coming back to the next meeting. I said yes, and he handed me this notebook and said, good you're the adjutant now."

Dixon said the members there, all Vietnam veterans and older, welcomed her into the post.

"A few years later I was asked to be the post commander because they said we needed younger members and fresh ideas," she said. "More recently I served as the quartermaster, which is the organization's finance officer, and I am currently the Senior Vice Commander."

Serving in the VFW and its auxiliary is a family event, Dixon said.

"Matt also served in the Illinois National Guard, but never deployed, and has taken on the role of standing up the post's new auxiliary, and is serving as the president," she said.

Dixon isn't the only member of her family who has served in the military.

"I had a brother who served active duty in the Army and a brother and sister who served in the Navy," she said laughing. "I'm the only one who served in the National Guard."

Dixon has served alongside several Guardsmen over the years, but has served with three, in particular, for extended periods of time. Through these assignments, friendships were born.

Staff Sgt. Samantha Singer, of Toulon, first met Dixon in 2008 when they went to annual training in Oklahoma and describes her as a phenomenal leader.

"She puts the care and welfare of Soldiers first and foremost," she said. "She knows the rules and regulations like the

See DIXON
Continued on Page 12

Decatur Soldier promoted to Colonel

Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Randy Edwards, of Decatur, Illinois, a member of Moultrie County Post 6410 in Sullivan, was promoted to colonel in a ceremony Aug. 18 at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln.

"In the military, we see Soldiers who are destined to do great things in the organization," said Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, of Naperville, Illinois, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. "Randy you have always stood out in front and you are destined to do great things. He stepped into a big role as the Director of Plans, Training, and Operations, but has made the position his own. Congratulations on this great achievement, but you are only at the tip, we have a lot planned for you."

Boyd also thanked Edwards' family for their support throughout his career.

"Thank you for supporting Randy over the years," he said. "Without the support of our families, we can't continue to serve our communities, our state, and our country."

Edwards, who enlisted in the ILARNG as a petroleum supply specialist in 1993, serves as the Director of Plans, Training, and Operations for the Illinois Army National Guard.

He attained the rank of Staff Sergeant before receiving a direct commission in the ILARNG as a Quartermaster Corps officer in 2002. In 2009, he changed his primary branch to engineer and in 2011 he was awarded the logistics branch.

"I am honored to be selected as the Director of Plans, Training, and Operations and humbled by this promotion," Edwards told family and friends. "I had planned on retiring as a major, but my wife told me to bring things down a notch and good things will happen."

Edwards said he capitalized



Newly promoted Illinois Army National Guard Col. Randy Edwards, of Decatur, Illinois, Director of Plans, Training, and Operations, thanks family, friends, and colleagues for their support throughout his nearly three-decade career, at a promotion ceremony Aug. 18 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

on his strengths and worked on his weaknesses.

"Things fell into place," he said.

Edwards thanked his family, wife Heather, children Gable and Cora, his parents and his parents-in-laws, for their support over the years.

"Heather, thank you for believing in me," he said. "Cora and Gable, I am proud of both of you for all you have accomplished and all you are yet to accomplish."

Edwards also thanked his mentors, including retired Maj. Gen. Michael Zerbonia.

"Thank you for always pushing, encouraging and believing in me," he said. "To my G-3 team, each of you are rockstars and I am blessed to have an extraordinary team."

Edwards, a full-time Active Guard and Reserve Soldier, has served in a variety of positions throughout Illinois, including quartermaster company platoon leader and executive officer, En-

gineer Battalion Plans Officer, Assistant Operations Officer, Collective Training Branch Chief, Force Integration and Readiness Officer, Future Plans and Readiness Division Chief, Mobilization Readiness Officer, and Deputy Director of Plans, Training, and Operations.

He served as commander of the 766th Brigade Engineer Battalion, based in Decatur, and commander of Company A, 634th Brigade Support Battalion, based in Mattoon, Illinois. As commander of Company A, Edwards deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and to Louisiana in support of Hurricane Katrina.

"I learned so much in each of my command positions," Edwards said. "It was tough, but I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Edwards is a graduate of Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, with a Bachelor of Science degree and is enrolled in the U.S. Army War College Distance Education Program.



From left, Waukegan Post 1293 and Auxiliary members Julius Martin, Jesse Woodley, Jr., Robert Elliott, Betty Christmas, Chris Giese, Andrew Watson, Diane Kennedy, Angelo White, Peggy Gray, Brian Kerr, Calvin Farmer, Jr., and Bill Norwood. The Post and its Auxiliary held a fundraiser to assist Kentucky flood victims.

Waukegan Post 1293 fundraiser benefits Kentucky flood victims

Waukegan Post 1293 and its Auxiliary recently held a fund raiser for the flood victims in Kentucky.

Post and Auxiliary members delivered the donated items plus a monetary donation to Kentucky State Quartermaster Calvin Shaak.



VFW Post 1293 Quartermaster Jesse Woodley, Jr. drove six hours each way to deliver donations and a check to Kentucky Quartermaster Calvin Shaak. The donations will be used to assist Kentucky flood victims.

Continue sending your items for inclusion in the Illinois VFW News:

Email items to: Barb Wilson - bwilson@vfwil.org

or mail items to:
Barb Wilson, Editor • 802 N. 3rd St. • Riverton, IL 62561

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications) - PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 1 of 4)

**State
Legislative Committee**

Michael Peck, Chairman

Jayson Hoffman • Dutch DeGroot • Jay Davis
Assistant Chairmen

A lot is going on in Illinois at the County and State level. First, state legislators, including lame duck legislators, began the second week of November.

I urge our members to watch for two things – the attempt to change the funding in the Military Veterans Assistance Act as Illinois State County Officials Association has publicly opposed the .02 military rate in the act.

Second, a possible addition in the definition of Veteran Service Organization. I personally would urge that the definition used in the Illinois Joining Forces Act be adopted. The Attorney General’s Office has offered a definition and additional oversight by the AG. If we the VFW at the post level do our due diligence the additional oversight is not necessary. It is up to us.

On Oct. 31, the Lake County Forest Preserve District legislative committee held a meeting. I am confident they will move to have the state general assembly approve the transfer of 4.7 acres to the Fort Sheridan National Cemetery. The initial agreement had the Army transfer 290 acres from Fort Sheridan to the Forest Preserve. The district was to maintain the cemetery and golf course. The cemetery was later transferred from the Army to the Department of Veterans Affairs. As a VA cemetery it quickly filled up and the additional acres per the VA will extend its life for 50 years. Who would have thought that we would have to argue with our county officials to expand a VA cemetery. I am also confident we will have approval from the state. However, I need every post to get a commitment from their State Senator and

Representative to support the transfer. The Forest Preserve is not a home rule district, and the transfer requires state approval.

Congratulations to the Sangamon County VAC on their resolution to create a super CBOC in Springfield similar to Peoria. The resolution has been sent to U.S. Sen. Duckworth as a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs committee to create a bill and approval by the committee. Again, every post should urge their legislators to support the CBOC for Springfield. Will advise when we get a Bill number.

The Illinois Veterans Advisory Council meets Dec. 14. A new Chair and Vice Chair will be elected. It’s been my honor to Chair the committee the past two years. It’s been difficult, one in person meeting. COVID outbreak at LaSalle, new Director and he is a good one, a good working relationship with Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee members and then passage of our amendment for surviving spouses at 3 a.m.

We did good, we passed 10 of our 13 priority bills. The remaining three are in rules committee.

At the National Convention,

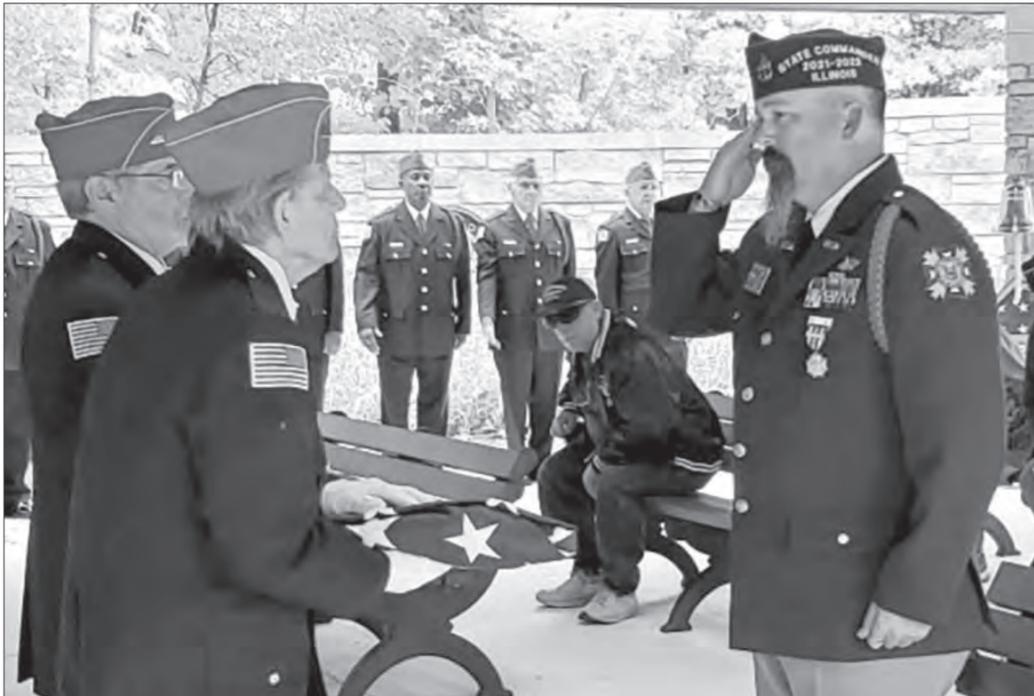
we passed our resolutions. I am very proud of our resolution to give veteran status to Guard and Reserve retirees. These are good patriots who served 20 years but were never mobilized and thus no DD 214. My concern is getting them admitted to a State Veterans Home, but without DD214 showing active duty the VA will not pay the state the per diem. Just last year, we created the DD Form 214-1 to

show all service, but this does not change their status. We also passed legislation to cover state active duty that exceeds 14 days by USERRA.

If you have concerns about legislation, please talk to your legislators. As veterans you are their subject matter expert, very few legislators and staff members have military service. I thank you for allowing me to serve.



Belleville VFW Post 1739 has manned a hydration station in support of the Belleville Marathon for the past five years. This year, a half-marathon was added to the festivities Sept. 24. Pictured is Post Commander Larry Newell manning the hydration station waiting for the runners to come by.



Past State Commander Bobby Welch participated in the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery unaccompanied burials program in October, accepting the burial flag on behalf of the 31 veterans of the U.S. Army, six veterans of the U.S. Marine Corps, 15 veterans of the U.S. Navy and 10 veterans of the U.S. Air Force. The 62 unaccompanied burials represented service in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf and 17 veterans with peace time service.



VFW Post 10302 Commander Larry Carter along with Auxiliary member Marilyn Miller worked a membership drive and Buddy Poppy Drive at the Farm and Home, North Dirksen Pkwy in Springfield during the store’s Grand Opening in September.

Dixon

Continued from Page 10

back of her hand, which ensures good training.”

“I worked for her for a while at the RTI and then our careers as both Soldiers and federal technicians took different paths, but we reconnected when she served as the command sergeant major of the 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion (MMB) in Chicago,” said Singer, who, as a federal technician, is a budget analyst for the Construction Facility Management Office at the Galesburg Armory.

Dixon’s service alongside Lt. Col. Matthew White of Arlington Heights, executive officer of the 108th Sustainment Brigade, began when Dixon was selected as the 108th MMB’s command sergeant major and White served as the executive officer, later becoming battalion commander. Together with Dixon, the two served as the 108th MMB’s command team from 2016-2019.

White said he would characterize Dixon as the epitome of Army values, a person of courage regardless of the consequences and someone who advocates diversity and inclusion.

“She excels in all she does,” White said. “She has a clear vision of where she wants the organization to go. Her innovation in creating the Best Warrior Competition in the battalion as well as creating leader books for the battalion’s junior noncommissioned officers impressed me. In fact, the leader books were identified as a best practice and shared throughout the brigade.

White said Dixon has a passion of advocating for Soldiers.

“Command Sergeant Major Dixon truly cares for those

she serves with and those in her charge,” White said. “Her number one priority was junior leader development and helping junior Soldiers in advancing both their military career and civilian career.”

“She is one of the best non-commissioned officers with whom I’ve served,” he said.

The current senior enlisted leader of the 108th Sustainment Brigade, Command Sgt. Maj. Kehinde Salami, agrees with White.

“She is my go-to person when I have an issue and she has never guided me wrong,” he said. “I know I could always go to her even if it was to bounce ideas off her and I never questioned her judgment.”

Salami met Dixon in 2008 when he transferred from the U.S. Army Reserves into the 108th MMB.

Salami was assigned to the force health protection section with Dixon when he came into the Illinois Army National Guard. He had an issue with promotion paperwork to sergeant first class.

Salami said Dixon was able to straighten out the paperwork which allowed him to get promoted.

“She is a wonderful leader who cares about Soldiers and those around her,” he said. “She is an excellent leader and very organized.”

Salami said the Illinois National Guard is losing a great Soldier with Dixon’s retirement.

“We are losing a wonderful leader,” Salami said. “I know she’ll still be working as a civilian employee, but the Illinois National Guard is going to miss her as a Soldier.”



The POW-MIA balloon launched from VFW Post 2055, Centralia, on Aug. 20.

POW-MIA Balloon Visits Centralia

The POW-MIA Balloon reminded balloon fest visitors of the service members who have not returned from our nation's wars.

Centralia American Legion Post 446 and Veteran of Foreign Wars Post 2055 teamed up to become VIP sponsors for the annual Centralia Balloon Fest on Aug. 19-21.

The two veteran organizations sponsored Freedom Flight, Inc. to make the Prisoner of War - Missing In Action (POW-MIA) balloon available for the event.

The POW-MIA balloon was piloted by Wynn Gustafson from St. Cloud, Minnesota. Kaskaskia College Women's Softball Team volunteers provided both ground crew and flight crew. During the event, the POW-MIA balloon made three successful flights. The first flight launched from Centralia's Foundation Park on Friday evening with the pilot and two passengers. The flight tracked northwest out of the park and passed over Central City, Hilcrest Cemetery, and landed in Junction City for a crew transfer. The balloon continued north of Junction City landing at sunset just south of Sandoval, Ill. The second flight launched from Centralia VFW Post 2055

early on Saturday morning with American Legion District 24 Senior Vice Commander Don Mattmiller. The flight tracked northeast passing over the eastern portion of Centralia, Foundation Park, Raccoon Lake, and landing near Odin Road north of Green Street Road. The final flight launched Sunday morning for a short flight to the former Meadow Woods Golf Course.

Breakfast was provided by Irwin Macz Funeral home on Saturday morning for all pilots and crew. The Centralia Chamber of Commerce provided breakfast on Sunday morning following the flights. The event concluded on Sunday with award ceremony and sponsor recognition. All passengers were awarded certificates acknowledging the accomplishment flying in the POW-MIA balloon.

During the Balloon Fest weekend, numerous people approached the POW-MIA balloon crew to let us know this is their favorite balloon. This event brought awareness to the community of the POW-MIAs still missing:

World War II	72,000+
Korea	7,600+
Vietnam	1,500+
Cold War	100+
Global War on Terror	5



Centralia Post 2055's Officer of the Day assists in launching the POW-MIA balloon.

Flag Day Monument being erected in Batavia

In the Fall of 2023 in the heart of Batavia, a national caliber monument dedicated to the American Flag will be unveiled.

After a 7-year fundraising effort and a year of building, the Fox Valley Patriotic Organization will host a very special gala event to unveil and dedicate the Flag Day Monument. The monument will attract thousands of visitors each year and be used for ongoing patriotic events and educational purposes.

The monument tells the story of the American flag and its significance in the communal life of our country from its inception during the American Revolution to the present day. It celebrates the American Flag and tells the story of our nation's history. The American Flag celebrates the arrival of new states, is lowered to honor our dead and marks significant events in time.

The design of this monument captures these stories and events in a way that is beautiful and provides educational programming about the history and iconic events of the American Flag.

In the end, a visitor will walk away with an appreciation for our flag, our nation, and the sacrifice that was made by so many for the freedoms we enjoy today.

The history of our flag is



An artist rendition of the Flag Day monument.

as fascinating as that of the American Republic itself. It has survived battles, inspired songs, and evolved in response to the growth of the country it represents.

Many opportunities exist to be a part of this exciting project. Commemorative engraved

bricks can be ordered that will surround the monument, naming opportunities are still available for significant components, sponsorships can be purchased for our Gala Event.

To learn more and/or donate visit our website: www.flagday-monument.com

Carterville Soldier promoted to Sergeant Major

More than 17 years after pinning on sergeant stripes, Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Fritz Coffey, of Carterville, was promoted to sergeant major in a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard Armory in Marion Oct. 9.

"Today is truly a special day," said Sgt. Maj. James Beckman, of Moline, operations sergeant major, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery, based in Milan, Illinois. "Promotion to sergeant major or command sergeant major is an achievement very few attain in their careers. Sgt. Maj. Coffey is an outstanding Soldier and an excellent leader, but most importantly he is a good person. It was my privilege to promote him to sergeant some 17 years ago in Iraq and to participate today as he is promoted to sergeant major."

Coffey, a member of Baker Ladd Post 1567, Herrin, enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in 2000. Over the course of his more than 22 years of service, the Illinois National Guard underwent force structure changes leading Coffey to reclassify into different military occupational specialties.

He has held several military occupational specialties and served in different units including maintenance, signal corps, field artillery, military police, infantry, chemical corps and a logistics company that supports and engineer battalion.

Coffey is the Illinois Army National Guard's communication directorate (G-6) senior enlisted leader. As the G-6 sergeant major, Coffey develops joint, interagency and interorgani-



Sgt. Maj. James Beckman, of Moline, operations sergeant major, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, secures new rank on newly promoted Sgt. Maj. Fritz Coffey's uniform during the promotion ceremony Oct. 9 at the Illinois Army National Guard Armory in Marion.

zational training for the state's Command and Control systems, structures and Soldiers; guides the careers of senior leaders of the signal and cyber defense corps and acts as a liaison between certain units and sections in the state and Training and Doctrine Command and Forces Command.

As a traditional Soldier, Coffey serves as a military federal technician at the Marion Armory.

He most recently served as the first sergeant of Forward Support Company, 123rd Engineer Battalion in Murphysboro.

Beckman acknowledge Coffey's family, friends and fellow Soldiers for their roles in his career.

"Thank you for all you have done to make him the person he is today," Beckman said. "Sergeant Major Coffey, I know

you will succeed as you always have."

Coffey told family and friends they are some of the reasons he has reached this milestone in his career.

"The only reason I'm here today is because of the people who are in my life," Coffey said. "There are those who you look up to and strive to be like. They are the reason I'm here today."

Coffey also thanked his wife Kim and their children for their support throughout his military service.

"You have been there with me every step of the way," he said. "She has never asked me to stop being a Soldier. I know it's frustrating sometimes when I'm gone, especially with three children. I appreciate what you do which allows me to do what I love to do. I can't ask for anything more."

Polish President presents award to Illinois Guard Commander

Neely receives Order of Merit for contributions to continued cooperation through State Partnership Program

Polish President Andrzej Duda awarded Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois, Commander of the Illinois National Guard, and a member of LaFore Lock Post 755, Springfield, with the "Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland" during a Polish Armed Forces Day celebration in Warsaw, Poland, on Aug. 15.

The medal, commonly called the "Order of Merit," is bestowed by the Polish President to distinguished foreigners for their contributions to international cooperation or cooperation between Poland and other countries within different fields. The medal has five classes with "Commander's Cross with Star" being the second-highest class.

"I am humbled to receive the Order of Merit and to have President Duda present it himself. This great honor really belongs to the 13,000 members of the Illinois National Guard and the work our Soldiers, Airmen and civilian employees have devoted to our partnership with Poland. Ours is the gold standard of State Partnership Programs," Neely said. "Our partnership with Poland has become even more important to the security

of both nations after Russia's unprovoked and unjust invasion of Ukraine and the resulting humanitarian crises on Poland's border with its neighbor."

Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the Illinois National Guard's State Partnership Program with Poland. The partnership conducts military-to-military engagements and facilitates broader inter-agency engagements.

Over the past few years, the Illinois National Guard has been heavily engaged with the Polish Territorial Defense Force (TDF). Established in 2017, the TDF is geographically based within Poland's different regions. In many ways, it resembles the National Guard in the United States.

These engagements have increased in frequency and intensity after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Poland, which borders both Ukraine and the Russian Kaliningrad region. Poland's 332-mile border with Ukraine has been vital in supporting the invaded nation. This year the Illinois National Guard and the Polish TDF have conducted medical, Javelin anti-tank weapon, and sniper training together.

The partnership between the Illinois National Guard started

shortly after Poland emerged from behind the "iron curtain" of the Russian-led Soviet Union.

The partnership helped Poland prepare for membership in NATO, with the European nation becoming a NATO member in March 1999. Poland has become a staunch U.S. ally and Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers fought side-by-side with Polish Soldiers in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The partnership has also forged long-standing ties between Illinois and Poland. When Polish Secretary of State Jacek Siewiera visited Illinois earlier this month, it was his second visit to the state in the past two years. The first was in April 2020 when then Polish military Capt. (Dr.) Siewiera led a medical team to Illinois to assist with the state's COVID-19 response.

The Polish Secretary of State's most recent visit, facilitated and coordinated by the Illinois National Guard's State Partnership Program, is forging ties between Poland's 200,000-plus Fire Service and the State of Illinois and City of Chicago.

"These friendships were forged by strong cultural ties and years of working together to address mutual security con-



Polish President Andrzej Duda awarded Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard, with the "Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland" during a Polish Armed Forces Day celebration in Warsaw, Poland, on Aug. 15. (Photo courtesy of the Polish Territorial Defense Force.)

cerns. They have helped Illinois, Poland, the United States, and really the entire free world," Neely said. "Our partnership

with the Polish has made communities on both sides of the Atlantic safer and more secure across many different spheres."

Judd-a-Thon raises \$39K for National Home

On a late summer day in September Judd Kendall Post 3873 in Naperville, held its 9th annual Judd-a-Thon.

The event supports the VFW National Home for Children. Past Post Commander and Race Director Pablo Araya could not have ordered a more perfect day.

Vets who once did serious physical fitness, their families, and friends participated in this fund-raising event, a spoof of a real race. The race, however, had all the trappings of a real race with warm up brayed out by retired Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Dave Szablewchi, also a retired Naperville Fireman, a medical

tent, and a water station.

More than 200 participated in the .01k (109 yards) which took no more than 5 minutes to complete - for the slowest. There were runners, rollers (in wheelchairs), and 100-year-old World War II veteran Don O'Reilly with his walker.

A record \$39,203 was raised for the National Home's mission which provides children and families of active-duty military, war veterans, and descendants of the VFW and its Auxiliary, opportunities for growth and development in a nurturing community. It is the only VFW home for children in the country.

Since its beginning in 1925 with only a single old frame farmhouse on a donated farm, the VFW National Home has grown to a beautiful campus of 42 single and duplex homes, playgrounds, park areas, a community center, gymnasium, a child care facility, guest lodge, chapel and administrative offices.

The festive energy flowed from the children who won the race, the Chorus of DuPage who sang several songs including the National Anthem and the Military Service Medley, and a flyover by a Lima Lima pilot. It was all fun and for a great cause.

At right, retired Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Dave Szablewchi, also a retired Naperville Fireman, leads the participants of the Judd-a-Thon in warmup exercises before the grueling .01K race. Photos by Jim Hoch.



Left, runners, rollers (in wheelchairs), and 100-year-old World War II veteran Don O'Reilly with his walker were among the participants in the annual Judd-a-Thon .01K race. Also participating was the Chorus of DuPage who sang several songs including the National Anthem and the Military Service Medley, and a flyover by a Lima Lima pilot.



This year's Carbon Hill Homecoming beer garden crew from left Earl "Shorty" Phillips, Trustee Don Tira, Jr. Vice-Commander Jim Richards, Mike Lareau, Quartermaster/Adjutant Keith Roseland and Chaplin Bill Bomba.

Carbon Hill Homecoming Parade starts with traditional volley firing

Members of St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars Coal City IL kicked off the 72nd Carbon Hill Homecoming parade on Sunday June 26th with the traditional volley and the lead unit presenting the U.S. flag. St. Juvin members have been doing this as far back as most can remember.

Post members manned the

Beer Garden on Saturday June 25th as part of their community service commitment and have been doing so for the past few years.

The homecoming, a family friendly event, was well attended with the parade route lined with hundreds standing for the passing of the flag.



St. Juvin Post 1336 members prepare to be the lead unit in the 72nd Carbon Hill Homecoming parade.



VFW Auxiliary

Auxiliary President

Marvie Wisniewski



Can you believe we are half-way through the 2022-2023 Auxiliary year?

Time is flying by and many of my weekends, since taking office in June, have been spent on the road traveling all over Illinois.

My travels have given me numerous opportunities to meet many of the state's VFW and Auxiliary members while making official visits and attending District functions.

It has been my pleasure to attend membership kick-off events, a chili cook-off, and even a District Commander and President's reception as well as the Department Commander's Homecoming and the Midstate Luncheon.

It never ceases to amaze me how dedicated the Illinois VFW and Auxiliary members are when it comes to promoting

our organization and helping our Veterans, military, their families, and our communities. I am so proud to be a member of this great organization.

Recently, I was honored to attend and represent the Department of Illinois at two very important events: the National VFW Auxiliary's Celebrating America's Freedom Event (C.A.F.E) and Illinois Day at the VFW National Home for Children.

The C.A.F.E. was held at the Flight 93 Memorial which is about ninety miles outside of Pittsburgh in Stoystown, Pennsylvania. The land is sacred and the ceremony brought tears to so many. It was a windy day but, as the names of the passengers were read aloud, the wind picked up a little more, almost as if those brave heroes were with us as we remembered their



Department President Marvie Wisniewski, along with Chaplain Diana Ahrens and Guard Terry Adams, march into the C.A.F.E. program in Pennsylvania.

sacrifices. No words can ever describe the feeling of the area and the Flight 93 Memorial. WE can NEVER forget.

Illinois Day at National Home was a wonderful time to catch up with old friends and make new ones. It was great

to tour the grounds, see how our donations are used and how much they are appreciated. Both were humbling experiences and very much enjoyed.

I am looking forward to

continuing work with the VFW and am excited to see what is to come during the rest of my year as Department President.

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season!



The Department of Illinois VFW and Auxiliary visit the National Home for Children during Illinois Day Sept. 24.



Past National President Sandi Kriebel visits with Paul and Jean Marrietta during Department President Marvie Wisniewski's homecoming.



Department President Marvie Wisniewski with the District Presidents who made the trek to the National Home for Children during Illinois Day Sept. 24.



Department President Marvie Wisniewski visits with Maureen Lueman during Wisniewski's homecoming celebration.

Post 1461 Celebrates, Recognizes Twin Korean War Veterans

The Belvidere, Illinois, community was invited to celebrate the 90th birthday of Keith and Kenneth Bodey at VFW Post 1461.

The twin brothers both served in Korea and are life members of Post 1461 who will celebrate 65 years of membership later this year.

The post had a short ceremony to surprise the Bodey brothers with some well-deserved awards.

The Bodey brothers were awarded a certificate from State Commander Bobby Edwards for Meritorious and Distinguished Service, a Certificate of Recognition from Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland the National Commander and were presented the Ambassador For Peace Medal from the Republic of Korea.

The Peace Medal certificate citation reads: "Ambassador For Peace" Official Proclamation for Kenneth and Keith Bodey.

It is a great honor and pleasure to express the everlasting gratitude of the Republic of Korea and our people for the service you and your countrymen have performed in restoring and preserving our freedom and democracy.

We cherish in our hearts the memory of your boundless sac-

rifices in helping us reestablish our Free Nation.

In grateful recognition of your dedicated contributions, it is our privilege to proclaim you as "AMBASSADOR FOR PEACE" with every good wish of the people of the Republic of Korea. Let each of us reaffirm our mutual respect and friendship that they may endure for generations to come.

Signed the Minister Patriots and Veterans Affairs Republic of Korea."

The Bodey brothers were born Oct. 24, 1932. Kenneth was born five minutes before Keith. They were raised in Belvidere and became known as the Bodey Brats. They grew up in a time before telephones. They had cold running water in the house and an outhouse that had two seats.

Kenneth enlisted in the Army on Feb. 11, 1952 at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. He deployed to Korea on July 27, 1953 and returned on Nov. 24, 1954. In Korea, Kenneth was part of the 520th Signal Base Depot. His service in the Army ended on Dec. 15, 1954 at Fort Sheridan. He received the Korean Service Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, and the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit



Past Department Commander Rick Frank presents certificates of recognition to Keith and Kenneth Brodey in honor of their 90th birthdays.

Citation.

Keith enlisted in the Army Air Corps on Aug. 24, 1951, in Chicago. After his training, he deployed to Okinawa with the 370th Bomber Squadron. It is when he deployed that he left the training of Army Air Corps and transferred to the Air Force. Keith left the service on Aug. 23, 1955. He received the Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

To be eligible for the Amb-



Post 1461 Commander Greg Kelm presents the Korean Ambassador Peace Medal to Keith and Kenneth Brodey in honor of their 90th birthdays.

sador for Peace Medal, you must have served in country during the Korean War from June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953. You are also eligible if you participated in United Nation peacekeeping operations until the end of 1955. This medal maybe awarded to family members posthumously.

To receive the medal, you must have a copy of your DD214 and fill out a form from the Korean Consulate General.

The South Korean Consulate General in Chicago can be

reached by email at chicago@mofa.go.kr. They will email you the form. You can also call them at (312) 822-9485.

The turnout for the event was great. Each of Keith's 20 great-grandchildren were in attendance. Kenneth made the trip from Florida to attend the event. Both were surprised by the large turnout of family and friends.

The Bodey family is already thinking of the 100th birthday celebration, only a short 10 years away.



State Commander Bobby Edwards attends the Mason City, Illinois, POW-MIA Remembrance ceremony.

Mason City honors POW-MIAs

Mason City Fall Festival Committee hosted the 2nd Annual Mason County POW/MIA Remembrance Event in their activities.

The display honored 14 of over 125 fallen Mason County heroes. There were 14 crystal vases on the display consisting of a POW/MIA flag, a Poppy flower, and the name of 1 of the 14 honored - 3 POWs who died while interred in a POW camp and 11 whose names appear on the Tablets of the Missing on American Cemeteries in Europe, the Philippines and Hawaii and the words "You Are Not Forgotten".

The ceremony was presented by veterans representing Havana VFW Post 6408, Havana American Legion Post 138, Manito American Legion Post 561 and Mason City Post 496.

All these Posts came together

www.vfwil.org

to honor these 14 heroes with a remembrance ceremony.

The ceremony was put together and ran by VFW Post Service officer Candy Gann, the POW/MIA prayer was read by Lawrence Gingle (Post 138), the names of the 14 were read by VFW Post 6408 Commander Chris Rilea and Taps was played by Havana American Legion Post 138 Commander Dan Gunter.

VFW State Commander Bobby Edwards also attended and took part in the ceremony with these Mason County veterans.

The display was created by Paul, Candy and Camryn Gann. The information about the fallen was gathered by Candy Gann and Cindy Jackson Soria as part of their Mason County Fallen Heroes project. The black display was made by Dan Sherren. The POW/MIA designs on the display are the work of Jason Falsetti.

Post 3873 remembers 9/11 victims



Judd Kendall Post 3873 honors victim of Sept. 11 terror attacks

Judd Kendall Post 3873 members participated in the Sept. 11 ceremony in Naperville honoring Capt. Don Shanower who was killed in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon. The program, normally conducted outside of Naperville City Hall at the Shanower Memorial, was moved inside due to weather conditions. In attendance was Don O'Reilly, a 100-year-old member of both the VFW and American Legion, and American Legion State Commander Wayne Fischer, who is also a member of the VFW and the American Legion.

