



# VFW Auxiliary

## Auxiliary President

**Cindy Watters**



This year is in full swing and in reflecting on recent months, much has transpired. Our joint installation was a success, though we learn and adapt as we go. For instance, we have already discussed the need for additional seating in the future. We won't talk about the ER visit that evening.

The month of August was a full calendar. The Auxiliary had an official visit from Brenda Bryant, our National President. Please check out the article in this publication from Cathy Sullivan, Department Historian. The Council meeting was very informative and interactive. The Homecoming was enjoyable with good food and talented musical performers. Although we didn't have ice cream served that evening, I did manage to find a nice establishment in the area during the weekend. I may or may not have an addiction to ice cream.

Regrettably, since June, we have had to close 9 auxiliaries. Most closures were due to an inability to fill the officer positions and in one case because the VFW and the auxiliary could not find common ground. Unfortunately, I've noticed similar issues in several other posts where the members cannot get along. This often occurs when new officers are installed who may not fully understand the auxiliary's role. There are also issues where the Auxiliary members cannot get along with each other. I tell Members that they don't have to be best friends, just respect the person, the office, and the organization and get along during all VFW and Auxiliary functions.

There are a lot of auxiliaries throughout the state that work together like a needle and thread. I have much respect for those Posts and wish I could bottle it up and share it because these are the Post and Auxiliaries which are out there doing things in the community together for a common cause and are being recognized for their leadership. We need more of this!

While the Auxiliary is a guest of the VFW, the Auxiliary is also its own entity with its own bylaws and programs. Often the auxiliary's desire to assist and contribute may be perceived as overstepping or overtaking the VFW. Most Auxiliary members are deeply passionate about supporting veterans, which sometimes leads to a perception of them being overly involved. I understand that some auxiliaries have historically taken on tasks for the Post, whether because the post wasn't able to or upon request, and now the post wishes to re-assume these responsibilities. This is perfectly acceptable, provided it is communicated clearly and professionally.

The Auxiliary's primary objective is to fulfill its programs, donate and volunteer our time to our Veteran's Homes and Hospitals, engage with the community, educate our youth about patriotism, and mostly, to better the lives of veterans and their families. The purpose of the Auxiliary is not to hold fundraisers to help monetarily with everyday post expenditures. However, the Auxiliary is always up to working with the VFW members doing an event to help them make it successful.

National Commander-in-Chief Al Lippardt and National Auxiliary President, Brenda Bryant are trying to strengthen the gap between the VFW and its Auxiliary, and I hope that Maurice and I can do our part to make Illinois strong and cohesive with separation where it is needed, with our leadership.

Please remember those who don't have family or are not able to be with them during this seasonal time and do whatever is in your heart for them, maybe it's a handmade gift, a meal, or just a conversation! Most people enjoy your presence over any present.

I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Enjoy the holidays with loved ones and friends!

## Auxiliary Membership

**Kathy Rowold & Mary Lee**



Members—How do you recruit them? How do you keep them active and involved?

These are all questions not only the Commanders, Auxiliary Presidents and Membership Chairmen should be asking and thinking about, but ALL members. Instead of growing, every year our memberships decline. Membership needs to keep increasing to keep the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary not only growing but existing!

We are grateful for the work we are doing this year—and especially grateful to those Auxiliaries that are over 100 percent! To show our appreciation for your recruiting efforts, the Auxiliary offers recruiter awards to not only Auxiliary

members, but also to VFW members. Wouldn't it be great for ALL Auxiliaries and Posts to be 100 percent plus!

To keep up with technology, the Auxiliary now has a QR code. The scanned QR code takes you to the [vfwauxiliary.org](http://vfwauxiliary.org) website where information is available about the VFW Auxiliary, what we do, fact sheet, membership application, where to find an Auxiliary near you, and learn more about all our programs. Please copy and share!



With the holidays approaching comes recruiting opportunities. Does your town host a holiday lights or holiday event?

Pair up with your town to get your contact information out there. Offer a Christmas or holiday "special" that if you join during December, your dues are on the Post/Auxiliary for the first year! And of course—YOU can give the gift of membership to those who qualify so they can give back to their families who have given us so much! Membership in the Post and Auxiliary is the gift that keeps giving!

The end of the calendar year is near but our year doesn't end until June 30.

If you are reading this article, I challenge you to recruit one new Auxiliary member and one new VFW member—are you up for the challenge to keep our organizations growing? We are here to help you make it happen!

Thank you for supporting THE greatest organizations for our Veterans and families!

Happy Holidays!

Visit the VFW Illinois Auxiliary website at:

[www.vfwauxil.org](http://www.vfwauxil.org)



The Department of Illinois  
Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary



PRESENT THE

2024-2025 DEPARTMENT JOINT PROJECT



**BACKPACKS**  
*for*  
**HOMELESS VETERANS**



**TWO WAYS TO PARTICIPATE**

ALL VFW Posts and Auxiliaries are encouraged to participate in one of the following ways:

### CREATE A BACKPACK

Some Suggested items:  
Backpack, Personal care items,  
Underwear, Socks, T-shirts,  
Non-perishable food (w/ pull-tab lids)

FULL BACKPACKS WILL BE  
COLLECTED AT THE FEBRUARY  
COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION  
MEETING IN SPRINGFIELD

### MAKE A DONATION

Earmark donations:  
"Backpacks for the Homeless"  
AUXILIARY MEMBERS send to:  
Department Treasurer  
Linda Lorenz

VFW MEMBERS pay online at:  
[vfwil.org](http://vfwil.org) or send check to  
Department Headquarters

## Illinois VFW News Deadline

The deadline for the next issue  
of the Illinois VFW News

March 2025 - Feb. 10, 2025

Email items to: Barb Wilson - [barb.wilson2@outlook.com](mailto:barb.wilson2@outlook.com)

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

# National Auxiliary President Brenda Bryant Visits Illinois

On Aug. 15-16, the Department of Illinois had the pleasure of hosting VFW Auxiliary National President Brenda Bryant.

Unfortunately, she was unable to stay for our Auxiliary Council of Administration meeting and the Homecoming festivities, but we did pack in a lot in the brief time she was with us.

Our August Council meeting was held in Fairview Heights, which allowed for several sight-seeing adventures nearby. Upon arriving in St. Louis on Thursday, and a quick stop at the hotel, NP Brenda was escorted to the Collinsville VFW Post 5691 for a “meet and greet” with both VFW and Auxiliary members.

She spoke to us about her special project Operation Bottom Cover, which will provide diapers for the babies of our military and veterans, and the importance of working with the VFW.

On Aug. 16, our Illinois delegation, which included both VFW and Auxiliary members, met outside the gates of Scott Air Force Base, located a short distance away near Belleville. In addition to our VFW Auxiliary National President Brenda Bryant, we were also joined by Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tim Peters, who was representing the Commander-in-Chief at the VFW Council meeting.

Illinois VFW State Commander Maurice Bridges, who retired from the 126th Air Refueling Wing in the Illinois Air National Guard, was able to arrange a tour of a KC-135 Stratotanker.

We were escorted onto the base, into the hangar and were given full access, inside and out, of the KC-135, which made for some great photo ops. After the tour and a quick lunch stop, we made our way around to some “historical landmarks”.

Our first stop was to the Brooks Catsup Bottle Water Tower in Collinsville, which is trademarked as the “World’s Largest Catsup Bottle”, and could theoretically hold 640,000 bottles of catsup. Next, we stopped at the Route 66 Shield



National Auxiliary President Brenda Bryant made her official visit to Illinois in August. While in Illinois, Bryant joined members of the Illinois VFW and Auxiliary, along with Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tim Peters, on a visit to the Illinois Air National Guard’s 126th Air Refueling Wing, based at Scott Air Force Base, and a tour of the KC-135 Stratotanker, flown by the 126 ARW. Bryant, above left, is pictured at the controls of the KC-135 with Illinois Auxiliary President Cindy Watters.

Monument in Collinsville for another great photo op.

National President Brenda enjoyed an early dinner with Department President Cindy Watters and the Illinois Auxiliary Line Officers. Afterwards they stopped by the Scott VFW Post 4183 in Belleville, the post home of State Commander Bridges. A meet and greet was held in his honor in anticipation of the Homecoming festivities to follow Saturday night. With a very early flight scheduled, NP Brenda said her goodbyes and retired for the night.

Illinois, as always, was honored to have our National President visit us and especially at a time of the year when we are not buried under 6 inches of snow.

As VFW Auxiliary National President Brenda Bryant makes her way across the country, making Official Visits to each Department, you can view photos from her trips on social media using the hashtag #BrendaLofound or via the interactive map on the VFW Auxiliary national website.



National President Brenda Bryant and National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tim Peters joined members of the Illinois VFW and Auxiliary to take a tour of the KC-135 Stratotanker, flown by the Illinois Air National Guard’s 126th Air Refueling Wing, based at Scott Air Force Base.



Department Auxiliary President Cindy Watters and National Auxiliary President Brenda Bryant visited various landmarks in the metro-east area, including the Brooks Catsup Bottle Water Tower in Collinsville, which is trademarked as the “World’s Largest Catsup Bottle”.



Members of the Illinois VFW and Auxiliary gather outside of Scott Air Force Base before taking a tour of the KC-135 Stratotanker flown by the Illinois Air National Guard’s 126th Air Refueling Wing, based at Scott. Joining Illinois was National President Brenda Bryant, making her official visit to Illinois, and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Tim Peters.



National President Brenda Bryant was joined by members of the Illinois VFW Auxiliary at the Route 66 sign.