

## Kosovo, Iraq veteran elected to lead Illinois VFW

Brett Nila was elected as state commander to lead the Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars for the 2023-2024 year during the organization's 104th State Convention June 10 in Springfield, Illinois.

Nila, who retired from military service as a colonel in 2009 after 30 years of service in the U.S. Army, Illinois Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserves, earned his eligibility to the Veterans of Foreign Wars through his service in the Kosovo Campaign from January to August, 2000 and Operation Iraqi Freedom from June 2007 - April 2008, as the Commander of the 640th Sustainment Brigade.,

Nila joined the Ross Bishop Post 5696 in Lisle in 2008, serving as Post Commander in 2011, attaining All-American status in 2017. Nila served as the District 19 Commander in 2020-2021, attaining All-American status.

Nila, and his wife Pamela, a former U.S. Army Staff Sergeant, reside in Downers Grove.

Other state officers elected during the convention were:

State Senior Vice Commander - Maurice Bridges-Post 4183-14  
 State Junior Vice Commander - Eugene Blackwell - Post 311-16  
 State Quartermaster - Joe Bartley - Post 10302-10

State Judge Advocate - Jayson Hoffman - Post 4763-10

State Surgeon - Ryan Higginbotham - Post 4226-13

State Chaplain - Gary Holmes - Post 2955-6

In addition, the following members have been appointed to serve in the respective offices by Nila.

State Adjutant - Joe Bartley, Post 10302 -10

Chief of Staff - Robert Bailey, Post 7452-19

Inspector - Clarke Christian, Post 9545-18

Illinois VFW News Editor - Barbara Wilson, Post 3455-15

Sergeant-at-Arms - Raymond Bachewicz, Post 2298-5

Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms Roy Johnson, Post 5220-3, Jack Lamont, Post 3851-13; Officer of the Day - Jeff Britt, Post 6865-14

Advisor to State Commander - Phil Maughan, Post 3873-19

Emblem & Supply Chairman - Duane Hisel, Post 4763-10

Marketing/Public Relations Chairman - Barbara Wilson, Post 3455-15

Membership Chairman - John McGlynn, Post 5975-17

All-State Program Chairman - Evamarie Duff, Post 2868-4

Student Veterans Liaison -



Newly elected Illinois VFW State Commander Brett Nila recites the oath of office during the installation of officers at the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention in Springfield, June 10. The newly installed commander is a veteran of both the Kosovo Campaign and Operation Iraqi Freedom. (See Additional State Convention Photos on Pages 2, 7 and 8)

Georges Sanon, Post 311-16  
 Blood Donor Chairman - Rob Bland, Post 1461-4

Community Activities Chairman - Steve Eller, Post 7710-14

Homeless Veterans Chairman - Paul Bezazian, Post 8322-3

Legislative Chairman - Dutch Degroot, Post 1337-4

National Home Chairman - Kyna Simpson, Post 311-16

Veterans & Military Support Programs Chairman - Bobby Welch, Post 450-16

Photographer - Dutch DeGroot, Post 1337-4

Buddy Poppy Chairman - Stephanie Kirksey, Post 6504-14

POW/MIA Chairman - Clarence Caraker, Post 3455-15

Safety Chairman - Les Durov, Post 1337-4

Voice of Democracy Chairman - Dave Darte, Post 3912-12

VAC Liaison - Doug Jameson, Post 1739-14

Youth Activities Chairman - John Davin, Post 5917-18

Scouting Chairman - Ron Milton, Post 4183-14

Yellow Ribbon Chairman - Josh Seed, 755-10

Historian - Bobby Welch, Post 450-16

Deputy Inspectors - District 3 - Christopher Garza, Post 8821-3; District 4 - Thomas Davidson, Post 3579-4; District 5 - Raymond Rigsby, Post 7448-5; District 6 - Charles Ingle, Post 2955-6; District 7 - Jimmie Waters, Post 454-7; District 9 - Christopher Rush,

4668-9; District 10 - Friedrich Carroll, Post 4763-10; District 11 - Fred Whobrey, Post 99-11; District 12 - Dustin Dixon, Post 7678-12; District 13 - Chester Fisher, Post 4226-13; District 14

- Elmer Sparwasser, Post 6504-14; District 15 - John Metzger, Post 2671-15; District 16 - Ermon Davis, Post 311-16; District 17 - Jon Beck, Post 10009-17; District 19 - Steven Bennier, Post 6791-19



Edwards honored as Triple Crown Commander

Bobby Edwards, of Springfield, Illinois, who served as the Illinois State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars during the 2022-2023 term, was honored as not only an All-American Department Commander during the National Convention Aug. 24 in Phoenix, Arizona, but as a Triple Crown All-American Commander. In earning the Triple Crown award, Edwards was recognized for exceeding the requirements in his role as the Post Commander of Northenders Post 10302 and as the Commander of District 10, both during the 2019-2020 term as well as Department Commander of Illinois during the 2022-2023 term.

See National Convention photos on Pages 6, 9 and 10.

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**Honoring Vietnam Vets**

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**Circle of Excellence VFW Auxiliary**

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# Delegates celebrate achievements during 104th Convention



Past National VFW Auxiliary President Dixie Hild, of Nebraska, delivers a message to the VFW and Auxiliary delegates at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention June 9 in Springfield, Illinois.



Past VFW Commander-in-Chief John Stroud, of Nevada, delivers a message to the VFW and Auxiliary delegates at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention June 9 in Springfield, Illinois.



State Commander Bobby Edwards and Auxiliary President Marvie Wisniewski receive commemorative license plates from Declan Binninge, Chief Deputy Director, Illinois Secretary of State's office.



State Commander Bobby Edwards and Americanism Chairman Sean Conner honor Jill Strohm as the Kindergarten – 5th Grade teacher of the year at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention June 9. Also honored were Angie Menard, 6th-8th grade teacher, and Javier Martinez, 9th-12th grade teacher of the year.



The Illinois VFW Auxiliary President Marvie Wisniewski (center), Past National VFW Auxiliary President Dixie Hild (second from left), and Chief of Staff Paula DeDoncker, made a visit to the Illinois VFW Convention June 10, thanking the VFW members for their hard work during the 2022-2023 membership year. Also pictured are State Commander Bobby Edwards (right) and Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud.



State Adjutant-Quartermaster Joe Bartley presents a gift from the 2022-2023 State Council of Administration State Commander Bobby Edwards, commemorating Edwards' year as commander.



State Legislative Chairman Michael Peck and State Commander Bobby Edwards presents Illinois State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit with the House Legislator of the Year Award at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention June 9. State Sen. Craig Wilcox was presented the Senate Legislator of the Year.



Scouting Chairman Ron Milton and State Commander Bobby Edwards honor the Scout of the Year state winner Katherine Lowrie during the 104th Illinois VFW Convention June 9. Also honored was Zach Walker.



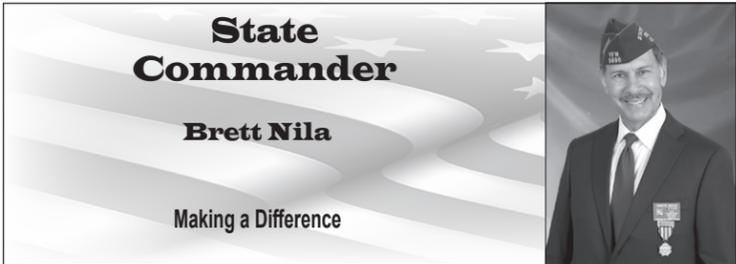
State Commander Bobby Edwards presents Michael Crepps with the POW-MIA award honoring Steger Honor 11 Post 8283 as having the best POW-MIA commemoration program in the state.



Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud presents Randolph County Post 2698, Sparta, the Best of the Best award for the National Adopt-a-Unit program. Post 2698 adopted the Illinois Army National Guard's 661st Engineer Support Company, based in Sparta.



Past Commander-in-Chief John Stroud and State Commander Bobby Edwards presents Assistant Chief Joseph Bolletta with the National Firefighter of the Year award at the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention June 9. Bolletta was sponsored by Chatham-Auburn Memorial Post 4763.



I want to thank our members for electing me to serve and to represent you as the Department of Illinois Commander for the 2023-2024 year. I look forward to building on our successes of recent years and to helping our Districts and Posts carry out the VFW mission.

I also look forward to working with Auxiliary President Lynn Smith, to help more of our Districts and Posts in seeing that a good working relationship with their Auxiliary will enhance their efforts and results.

With the start of every new VFW yearly cycle, there are always a few changes. Four things that change annually within the Department are the membership goals, the Department motto, the Commander's Special Project and the Commander's Leadership Manual.

This year's membership goal is 102 percent for every District

and for every Post. A principle of success for any organization is that it must grow in order to survive. Businesses need a revenue stream to fuel growth; volunteer organizations like ours, need a stream of new members to fuel growth. And simply maintaining is not growing; that's just a holding pattern as the passage of time takes its toll. So growth is not just desirable, it's essential.

102 percent may sound like a lot, but it's only a few people per Post, depending upon Post size. If you're reading this now and can bring in one new member to your Post, you'll have made a major contribution.

Illinois is among the top 12 states that have the most veterans, with well over 550,000 residing here. More than 400,000 are categorized as wartime Veterans (more than 190,000 Vietnam veterans and more than

200,000 Gulf War veterans).

With our current Illinois VFW strength of only 36,000, it's clear that there are a great many Illinois veterans that are eligible for the VFW, but are not currently members.

We need to find them, and "invite them to the party." Invite them to find out more about the benefits they earned. Invite them to learn how to access their benefits and entitlements. Invite them to join us in fighting for more benefits for those comrades in desperate need. Invite them to help us in protecting the earned entitlements that some would take away for the sake of pet projects or other constituencies. We need them, as much as they need us.

This year's Department motto is: "Making a Difference." Fifty years ago, the draft ended and the "all volunteer force" was born. In surveys conducted by the major polling organizations over the years, the most frequent answer that veterans provided as to why they volunteered for the armed forces, was that they wanted to "make a difference."

Those who attended our state convention even heard guest speaker, VFW National Amba-

sador SEAC (Ret.) John Wayne Troxell noted that the reason he enlisted in 1984, was "to make a difference." In order to attract new members and grow, we need to be able to explain how the VFW "makes a difference" and is therefore the right place for someone who wants to do just that.

We often get so caught up in conducting our events, planning our next events and (hopefully) reporting completed events, that we don't take enough time to consider all that we've accomplished. I encourage all Districts and Posts to review and document what they've accomplished over the past year, and thereby remind members of the many ways that they have made a difference. This will help some to remember why they're in the VFW and provide many with talking points for discussions with prospective members.

The Commander's Special Project this year is designed to benefit the 5 Illinois Veterans Homes located throughout the state. My father, a World War II Navy Veteran and member of my Post, spent his last 3 years in an Illinois Veterans Home; my family was delighted with

the care he received there and the maintenance of the facility. My intent is to draw attention to this benefit for Illinois veterans and their families. Funds raised throughout the year will be directed toward outdoor enhancements and will be allocated equally among the five locations. Districts and Posts are welcome to work directly with a home of their choosing if they wish, to best determine a project and/or use for their donation. Representatives from each of the homes will attend next year's State Convention to be presented with the funds raised for their respective homes.

The Commander's Leadership Manual is updated every year with current information on all the VFW Programs. As I travel the state, I'm amazed at how many members are unaware of this valuable resource.

Offering information on requirements, helpful tips, submission forms, award criteria (to include All-State and All-American criteria), program deadlines and Department event dates, it's an essential tool. It can be found on the Department of Illinois VFW website. Click-on "resources" at the top of the page and "2023-2024 Commander's Leadership Manual" will be the first item listed on the dropdown menu; it can be viewed online, printed, or downloaded to your device.

Please share these changes with others. I look forward to seeing and talking with as many of you as possible over the course of the coming year.



Congratulations to all District Commanders and Post Commanders who earned the title All-American Commander. I must also recognize our 2022-2023 Department Commander Bobby Edwards on not just an All-American Commander but a triple crown All-American Commander. Just in case you were not aware, a triple crown All-American Commander is a Commander who earned Post, District and Department All-American Commander honors.

In addition, Congratulations to all District Commanders and Post Commanders who earned the title as an All-State Commander. It was wonderful to see all Comrades at the past State Convention. I saw Comrades that I haven't seen since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. I am truly ecstatic that we started to do training once again at the State Convention. Not everything was perfect however we will improve every year. One of the positive comments I heard about was the Memorial Service and the Patriotic Rally. I'm truly looking forward to State Convention next year. If you have any suggestions or comments for the next State Convention, please e-mail to [vfw@vfwil.org](mailto:vfw@vfwil.org) or to [mbridges@vfwil.org](mailto:mbridges@vfwil.org).

I had the opportunity to attend the VFW National Convention which was held in Phoenix Arizona from 22 to 27 July. As

always, it was a very educational experience. You have the opportunity to meet Comrades from all over the States, Europe and the Pacific area.

I would like to share a couple of items with you. As you know, the Bylaws, Manual of Procedures and Rituals are subject to change every year. This year there were not any changes that had an effect at the Post level. The only change that affected the District is the Chaplain is now an appointed position. These are just a few changes that were made at the National Convention this year. Be sure to order or download a copy of the Bylaws, Manual of Procedures and Rituals Podium Edition for the year 2023-2024 when it becomes available. The 2023-2024 version is not published yet but may be available around the September time frame. You can purchase the Bylaws, Manual of Procedures and Rituals from the VFW.org store or download an electronic edition from VFW.org for free.

If you have an opportunity to attend a National Convention, I strongly believe it would be a great experience for you. The National Convention will be held in Louisville Kentucky in 2024. Hope you can attend.

The motto of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is "No one does more for Veterans." That means each and every member like you and I make up the Veterans of

Our newly elected Commander-in-Chief, Duane Sarmiento said it best at this year's National Convention. "You don't need a title to lead. You just need to care. People would rather follow a leader with a heart than a leader with a title." Comrades, we need to be ready when we lobby Congress and the Administration on veterans' issues. The process we use to lobby Congress is the VFW Action Alert. You may recall, this was the process we used last year to lobby for the PACT Act which was finally passed. The process we use to contact our state legislators is the Witness Slip. You'll see at times our legislative team asking you to assist by filling out a witness slip. Recently there has been grumbling about the effect Property Tax exemptions for Disabled Veterans have on some Illinois Counties. At present, there is no immediate concern as to decreasing any veterans benefits however, if that were to happen, we as members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars need to be ready to submit a VFW Action Alert and/or a Witness Slip when called upon. Please ensure your contact information is up to date. Any request for a VFW Action Alert and/or a Witness Slip will be requested by e-mail. You can update your contact information at VFW Headquarters, State Headquarters, your Post or you can even contact me at [mbridges@vfw.org](mailto:mbridges@vfw.org). Remember, "No one does

more for Veterans" than the Veterans of Foreign Wars

Comrades, this is the beginning of a new year, therefore let's get started on our Dashboard donations as well as Americanism, Safety, Community Service and all other annual programs. Schools will soon be back in session, therefore let us also get the word out to the schools and teachers concerning our VFW Patriot Pen and Voice of Democracy (VOD) program. This year's theme for Patriot Pen is "How Are You Inspired by America" and the VOD is "What Are the Greatest Attributes of Our Democracy".

Remember, the PACT Act and your VA Benefits. These are some of the illnesses that are now presumptive.

- Asthma that was diagnosed after service.
- Chronic bronchitis.
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis.
- Chronic sinusitis.
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis.
- Emphysema.
- Granulomatous disease.

You've earned your benefits so use them. Contact a State VFW Service Officer today!

In closing, I look forward to working for you and one thing I promise you is this: If I don't know the answer, I will find out the answer for you. VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES, WE GOT YOU.

**Illinois VFW News Deadline**  
**The deadline for the December 2023 issue of the Illinois VFW News is Oct. 15, 2023.**  
**The deadline for the March 2024 issue is Feb. 1, 2024.**  
**Email items to: Barb Wilson - [bwilson@vfwil.org](mailto:bwilson@vfwil.org)**

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## State Junior Vice Commander

Eugene Blackwell



Greetings fellow comrades. It is a pleasure to serve as your Department Junior Vice Commander. Thank you for this honor. Special thanks to District 16 and Post 311 for encouraging me to run for this esteemed position.

I earned VFW eligibility by

serving on active duty in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan from Dec 2008 to Sep 2009. I became a Life member of Post 311 upon returning in 2009 and later became a Gold Legacy Life member. One highlight while serving as Post

## State Surgeon

Ryan Higginbotham



### Self-Care for Veterans

First off let's talk about what self-care is. While many people may view self-care as a form of selfish indulgence, the act of caring for oneself is an important part of a person's overall well-being. Too many times this goes unnoticed and is low on a person's level of importance.

Self-care has been a trendy term in recent years, but many do not fully understand what it means. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), self-care is "the ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider."

The WHO also mentions that self-care is a broad term and there are many aspects of a person's life that come into play, including:

- Hygiene (general and personal)
- Nutrition
- Lifestyle factors such as exercise level and leisure activities
- Environmental factors such as a person's living conditions or social habits.
- Socioeconomic factors such as a person's income level or cultural beliefs
- Self-medication and following treatment plans for current illnesses.

Depression, anxiety, and PTSD are extremely common for veterans. A 2018 study by the VA found that nearly 25 percent of reported post-9/11 veterans deal with mental health issues ranging from depression to PTSD. We believe that this number is greater than 25 percent due to the veterans that are not enrolled in the VA system. A 2020 study stated that of the post-9/11 veterans that are enrolled in the VA, 57 percent received a provisional psychiatric diagnosis.

It is important we highlight the value of self-care to reduce these conditions and make them easier to live with. Each of us has the power to impact our well-being through our own choices and by investing in ourselves.

Usual treatments for mental health conditions these days are medications and therapy. While these treatments can be beneficial to veterans, there are other options. Self-care practices can

give you the power to feel better through your own energies.

Self-care is essential to our well-being. It is about developing the skills and support to improve mental health as well as physical health. Veterans who make self-care a priority can better cope with stress, overcome challenges, and achieve goals.

The VA in recent years has launched the "Whole Health Program" to help veterans improve their health and well-being. Whole Health is the VA's approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. This means your health team will get to know you as a person, before working with you to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs, and goals. Go to <https://www.va.gov/wholehealth/> for more information.

1. Let's talk about exercise: Exercise is an excellent self-care activity because it has multiple benefits not only for physical but mental health. Exercise has been shown to boost brain activity, improve moods and relieve symptoms of these conditions. Additionally, exercise can help to enhance the quality of sleep and increase energy levels.

There are many ways to get exercise. It may be helpful to think of exercise simply as moving your body or being active rather than something that is painful and unpleasant. Some people prefer to go to the gym, while others enjoy outdoor activities like hiking or biking. Remember that playing in the yard with your kids or grandkids also counts. No matter what you choose to do, the important thing is to find an activity that you enjoy. Two sayings to remember, "the best exercise is the one that you'll do" and "any amount of exercise is better than none".

2. How about eating and our habits when it comes to food:

Depression and anxiety can often lead to unhealthy eating habits. They feed off one another and this can be a brutal cycle, as poor nutrition can worsen the symptoms of depression and PTSD.

Not only eating a healthy diet but also having a regular diet is very important to your overall health. Eating late at night and too close to bedtime is something you

Commander was two All American awards from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. I've been honored to serve for seven years within our Department as District 16 Jr. Vice Commander, Sr. Vice Commander, and Commander and Department Surgeon.

The VFW membership goal for 2023-2024 is 102% and each Post has a chance to receive \$500. Our National Commander-in-Chief, Duane Sarmiento, has indicated that, in the month of August, the Post in each membership division increasing membership the most (including new, reinstated, and renewing members) will receive

should try to avoid.

There are many different options when it comes to healthy eating. Everyone has their own perspective on it, but a few things to remember is to cut down on sugar and sugary drinks and eat more fruits and vegetables to help support brain health, mood, energy, and immunity.

No matter what approach you take, some key nutrients can help to improve symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD. These include omega-3 fatty acids, probiotics, antioxidants, and magnesium.

Let's also talk about vitamin D which is often called the "feel good" vitamin. A study found that 67 percent of veterans that suffer from PTSD also suffer from a vitamin D deficiency. You can combat this deficiency by taking a supplement or natural ways of eating foods that are high in vitamin D such as salmon, cheese, eggs, as well as many others. Of course, my favorite way for the body to get vitamin D is exposure to the sun. It is however advised to only seek this method before 1000 and after 1500 to limit the effects of sunburn.

3. Yoga: Yoga reduces stress levels, which is vital for managing depression, anxiety, and PTSD. It can also help improve sleep quality. A good night's sleep is the easiest self-care tool and is essential for managing stress and anxiety levels and improving overall mood.

Yoga can also help increase energy levels. This is important for both managing symptoms of depression and reducing fatigue from anxious thoughts or nightmares associated with PTSD.

Yoga can be very intimidating for some veterans. A stigma about yoga is that it's only for flexible people or that it's steered toward younger people. But the reality is that yoga is a form of movement, self-care, and stress management that can benefit everyone, no matter your level of flexibility or age. Don't let assumptions or misunderstandings about yoga keep you from at least giving it a try. There are several Posts not only in this Department but around the world that have introduced yoga to its membership and are thriving with it. Go to [veteransyogaproject.org](http://veteransyogaproject.org) for more information about the effects of yoga and veterans.

4. Spend time in nature:

Nature is one of the best ways to calm anxiety and improve depression. Research has shown that exposure to green space has a tremendous impact on the brain and our mood. Nature can help to reduce stress hormones, increase feelings of happiness and calm-

a \$500 cash award and a framed citation for display. So, by increasing comrades in August, your post will receive \$500 cash if you add more than any other post in your membership division. Do we have any takers?

During the National Convention, I was among comrades to witness history. For the first time in VFW history, we have a female National Junior Vice Commander - Comrade Carol Whitmore. If progression goes according to normal succession and if nothing happens, Comrade Whitmore will be VFW's first female National Commander-in-Chief from 2025

ness, lower blood pressure, and improve your attention span.

A few ideas to help you get outside include:

- Take advantage of any parks or green spaces near you. Take a long walk or run in a park, or even just enjoy sitting in nature. Just a few minutes surrounded by trees and plants can work wonders.
- Try to get outside as much as possible during your everyday routine. If you work in an office or factory type setting, go outside during your breaks.
- A quick morning walk is a great way to start your day off right.
- Plan a trip to a state or national park. Many of these offer free or reduced entry for veterans.
- Join a veteran expedition group or start one at your Post.

to 2026. During the same year, I plan to serve as Department Commander. It will be an honor for me to serve with her.

As we move ahead, I look forward to visiting VFW Posts around the state to see how each district and Post operates. We all serve our communities in different ways and ensure our core values are met. Each one of us has served in the military within our respective services and we continue to serve while being a member of the VFW. I look forward to witnessing the various ways we execute our core values at every level.

Thank you all for your service.

This can also be a great way to get veterans in your community involved with the VFW.

For people struggling with anxiety, depression, or PTSD, nature can offer a much-needed break from the challenges of daily life so get outside today!

With all this information the summary is...self-care is important to a veteran's day to day life. It is something that doesn't need to go unnoticed or is something that can wait. You need to figure out what works for you. There is no magic equation, you need to find out what works for you and capitalize on it. With all the resources we have it is important not only to ourselves but to our family and friends to utilize the tools in our cache and take care of ourselves.



Michelle Hoffman after donating for the first time at the Belvidere VFW.

## Humana Partners with District 6

By Rob Bland

In May District 6 held six blood drive at five VFW Posts; Post 342 Rockford, Post 1461 Belvidere, Post 2955 Roscoe, Post 3878 Rochelle, and Post 8739.

District 6 partnered with Humana and the Rock River Valley Blood Center to hold the second annual Remember Our Heroes blood drive.

This year using the VFW Foundation Grant and Humana matching it the grant District 6 was able have t-shirts for those who came out to donate blood.

Michelle Hoffman, a Career Representative with Humana, had a table at each of the blood drives to inform participants about the Humana Honor Plans.

"Unfortunately, many veterans who have Medicare parts A and B, but also use the VA

for health care, do not realize that they can add a Medicare Advantage plan," Hoffman said. "These plans typically have no additional premium, Do Not interfere with their VA benefits, and bring many additional benefits. Such as dental, vision, part B give back (as much as \$125 a month) and many other benefits. My goal, as a local Humana agent, and family member, and friend to many veterans and currently serving service men and women, is to educate. It is important to explore your opportunities. I don't like seeing anyone leave healthy living benefits on the table."

District 6 in partnering with Humana was not only able to save lives in the local community but was able to educate Comrades and their family members on the Humana Honor Plans.

# Oakland ceremony honors Clough, 150 area Vietnam Veterans

Planning began in March 2022 for a Vietnam Veteran monument for the small communities of Oakland, Hindsboro, Isabel, and Borton 150 Vietnam Veterans.

Oakland VFW Post 3637 wanted to honor local Vietnam Veterans. Donnie Joe Clough, who was killed in action in 1969, and three women were among those honored May 27 in the Oakland square.

The three-piece black polished granite monument weighs two tons and sits on a four-foot-deep concrete foundation. The monument was purchased from Adams Monuments in Charleston, Illinois with monetary donations. Of the 150 local Vietnam Veterans honored, 62 served in Vietnam and 88 served during the Vietnam Era.

The Oakland square was full of veterans, their family members, and community members. There were around 550 people in attendance on a beautiful Saturday morning.

A large US flag on the Oakland Fire Department ladder truck set the background. Flags outlined the square. A large sign in the square read, "All Gave Some, Some Gave All."

Store windows and front were decorated and red, white, blue flowers filled planters around the square.

Illinois Representative Chris Miller, Congresswoman Mary Miller, State Senator Chapin Rose, Oakland VFW Commander Bill Perry, State VFW Commander Bobby Edwards, District Commander Sean Conner, Oakland Mayor Jack Turner, and Hindsboro Mayor Kent Douglas were in attendance.

The Oakland Post Quarter-



**Donnie Joe Clough, of Hindsboro, Illinois, was KIA in 1969.**

master Ryan Stark was the Master of Ceremony for the dedication and honoring the veterans. The Newman American Legion served as the color guard.

Bag piper Paul Hinson played special musical selections "After the Battle" and "Amazing Grace." Craig Taylor sang "God Bless the USA".

Opening prayer was given by Brad Reinke of the Oakland Christian Church.

Closing prayer was given by Justin Goff-Army Veteran - Afghanistan.

A memorial service for PFC Donnie Joe Clough of Hindsboro was given by Matt McGregor, Oakland Oak Grove minister and US Air Force veteran. Clough was killed in Quang Nam Province on Sept. 9, 1969, while on night patrol. A friend and comrade, Paul Trenn of Michigan attended the ceremony. Trenn who was with him that night, spoke how his friend was killed and of a special bond he and Clough had with two other Marines.

State Representative, Chris

Miller presented A House resolution for Donnie J. Clough and a replica of Illinois State Route 133 sign designating the highway through Hindsboro as "PFC Donnie J Clough Memorial Highway." These were presented to family member John Clough.

Two uniformed National Guard members stood guard of the black draped chair in honor of Donnie Clough. Those two were Clayton Pardi and Dalton Conner. They presented the family with the Vietnam Veteran War pin and the Department of Defense award on behalf of Donnie Clough.

Congresswoman Mary Miller read the 150 names as the Vietnam Veteran pins were presented to the veterans or their representatives.

Young men Honor guards escorted the veterans to their assigned seating and presented the pins to veterans or their representative as their names were read. The Honor Guard consisted of: Krayten Willison, William and Samuel Goff, Clayton and Braden Pardi, Wyatt and Dalton Conner, Justin Robertson, and Gavyn Lizama,

Samuel Goff presented 14 surviving spouses with the Surviving Spouse pins.

The 21-gun salute was performed by the Newman American Legion and taps played by Larrie Taylor.

After the dedication many community members thanked the veterans for their service to our country. It was refreshing to see veterans smiling and visiting with other veterans.

Many were still wiping tears from their eyes, while their hearts were happy and grateful.



**Chris Miller presents a replica of the PFC Donnie J. Clough highway sign to nephew John Clough.**



**Jim Taber receives his award from Honor Guard Gavyn Lizama.**



**State Commander and Vietnam Veteran Bobby Edwards was on hand for the ceremony.**



**A replica of the Illinois State Route 133 sign designating the highway through Hindsboro as "PFC Donnie J Clough Memorial Highway."**



## VFW Honors Martinez, Welch with national awards at Convention in Phoenix

The Veterans of Foreign Wars honored an Illinois Teacher and the VFW's State Historian with separate awards during the national convention in Phoenix in July.

At left, Javier Martinez, 9th-12th grade teacher, was presented an award by Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland as the national recipient of the Smart/Mahar Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year for grades 9-12.

Welch, pictured at right, is presented the Distinguished Historical Award by Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland, in recognition of Welch's tremendous commitment and dedication to honoring, educating, and preserving America's military history and ensuring our fallen servicemembers are never forgotten.



# McHenry VFW Hosts Vietnam Traveling Memorials

On an overcast July 13, police sirens sounded, and motorcycles rumbled as a convoy escorted the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall on to the grounds of the Fox River Post 4600 Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Upon its arrival, members of Post 4600, as well as volunteers from Team Rubicon, Veterans Path to Hope, Rolling Thunder, The American Legion, the Polish Legion of American Veterans, and others assembled the 300-foot memorial on the outfield of the neighboring baseball field. As panels of the wall were pulled from the trailer, some volunteers called out names of family or friends

whose names were among those memorialized. When that panel was ready to be placed, the family or friend was taking part in placing it, often taking a moment to memorialize that individual.

What came as a surprise to many was that along with the Vietnam Memorial Wall, a second wall was placed listing the names of those lost during Operation Desert Storm, those lost during the 9/11 attack, and those lost in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On Saturday, July 15, veterans and community members gathered for a memorial service, where Post 4600 Commander Ben Keefe remarked on the im-

portance of the memorial.

“After this weekend, many will not look at this baseball field as a place to play ball,” Keefe said. “They will look at this space and consider it to be hallowed ground where this memorial wall stood strong and steadfast for our community to admire and pay homage to our fallen service men and women.”

At the conclusion of the four days of display, the wall was packed up and moved on to its next location in Meridian, Mississippi. In August the wall will return to Illinois being set up in Peru and Rock Falls. For more information about the traveling wall visit [travelingwall.us](http://travelingwall.us).



As volunteers unpacked the Vietnam Memorial Wall panels, the local servicemembers killed in action are recognized.



Amid a convoy of motorcycles, the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall is escorted onto the grounds of Fox River Post 4600 in McHenry.



Friends and family gathered at the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall to honor local servicemembers or those they served with who were killed in action during the Vietnam War.

## Post honors Commander who served 17 years

By Rob Bland

In 2006 Greg Kelm was elected to be the Commander of John Hugo Kaiser VFW Post 1461.

He worked diligently for seventeen years to turn the Post into a positive force in the Community. Kelm's term culminated with being an All-American Post two years in a row. Kelm was the driving force in the County to establish the Boone County Veterans Assistance Commission. Under his command the Post's Memorial Garden was established and grew to be a jewel in the local community.

On July 10, Kelm was presented a Certificate of Special Recognition from Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland presented by Past State Commander Rick Frank. State Commander Brett Nila also presented a Certificate of Appreciation and awarded Kelm with the Veteran of the Month award for June 2023. The Post also presented him with a gavel with his years of service engraved.

Noreen Kelm, Greg's wife, was also recognized by the Post for her unwavering support of her husband while in command with flowers and a gift certificate to their favorite restaurant.

Kelm has mentored the next generation of VFW leadership.

He passed command of the Post to the Post 1461's first Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran, Bernadette Bland. Kelm has mentored two Iraqi Freedom Veterans who have received appointment in Department and one was elected to District leadership.



State Commander Brett Nila reading certificate to Past Commander Greg Kelm.



Past Commander Greg Kelm passes the gavel to Commander Bernadette Bland.



### Supporting Veterans exiting homelessness

Bloomingdale Post 7539 member Ed Aubin picks up some of the supplies for the “Love Our Vets” program from the Bloomingdale village hall. Bloomingdale Post 7539 is collecting new household items to support Veterans who are exiting homelessness. Donations will be taken to Jesse Brown VA in Chicago for disbursement to homeless veterans in need.

**Did You Know?** During 2022, the Department of Veterans Affairs permanently housed 40,401 homeless Veterans, providing them with the safe, stable homes that they deserve. This exceeded the department's goal to house 38,000 Veterans in 2022 by 6.3%.

# Illinois VFW Honors All-State Posts at 104th State Convention



Kahokian Memorial Post 5691 in Collinsville was honored as the post with the largest increase in legacy life memberships with an increase of seven members.



District 3 Commander Chris Garza accepts All-State honors for Pfc Ted Stempien Post 8821.



Schaumburg Post 2202, District 4, was honored as an All-State Post at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention in June.



Arnold-Heath Memorial Post 5151, District 4, was honored as an All-State Post at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention in June.



Col. Thomas G. Lawler Post 342, District 6, was honored as an All-State Post at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention in June.



Hancock County Post 5117, District 8, was honored as an All-State Post at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention in June.



Menard County Post 6871 Commander Stanley Porter accepts the Post's All-State honors at the 104th Illinois VFW Convention in June.



Northenders Post 10302 Commander Larry Carter accepts the All-State honors at the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention in June.



Stage Depot Post 976 Commander Anthony Avers accepts All-State honors at the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention in June.



John L. Meyer Post 1104 Commander Daniel Tate accepts the Post's All-State Honors at the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention in June.



Russell E. Dunham Memorial Post 1308 Commander Wayne Able and Quartermaster Chad Sibley accept the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



Kahokian Memorial Post 5691 Commander Alonzo Skipper accept the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



Sgt. Charles A. Fricke Post 805 Commander Karen Ridge accepts the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



Scott Post 4183 Commander Ron Milton accepts the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



Goldsmith-Terry Post 3523 Commander Richard Schulte accepts the post's All-State honors during the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention in June.



District 14 Senior Vice Commander Clyde Rowold accepts Red Bud Post 6632's All-State Honors at the 104th Illinois VFW State Convention in June.

## All-State Team awards

Congratulations to the following for achieving All-State status for the 2022-2023 year.

### District Commanders

District 4, Steve MacInnes, Commander  
 District 12, Dustin Dixon, Commander  
 District 14, Rod Thompson, Commander  
 District 15, Chris Maynor, Commander

### Commanders and Quartermasters

- |                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 8821 - Jonathan Cooper   | Felix Grzelinski |
| <b>District 4</b>        |                  |
| 981 - Matthew Voss       | Roger Santagato  |
| 1337 - Les Durov         | Charles Ohrn     |
| 2202 - Dean Moran        | Joseph Wein      |
| 5151 - William Lunsford  | Steven Wilson    |
| <b>District 5</b>        |                  |
| 4600 - Ben Keefe         | Peter Kim        |
| <b>District 6</b>        |                  |
| 342 - Gary Holmes        | Cameron Linder   |
| 2955 - Ruben Hernandez   | Maurice Buffo    |
| <b>District 8</b>        |                  |
| 2257 - Rick Shea         | William Tomlin   |
| <b>District 9</b>        |                  |
| 5506 - Daniel Jackson    | John Finnegan    |
| <b>District 10</b>       |                  |
| 755 - Josh Seed          | Don VanEtten     |
| 4763 - Kim Fuiten        | Bob Migalich     |
| 6871 - Stanley Porter    | Charles Fagan    |
| 10302 - Larry Carter     | Joe Bartley      |
| <b>District 11</b>       |                  |
| 4495 - Micah Hankla      | Stacey Hankla    |
| 5346 - Seth Floyd        | Gordon Lawrence  |
| 6190 - Dion Lathrom      | Lowell Spieker   |
| <b>District 12</b>       |                  |
| 976 - Anthony Avers      | Tim O'Donnell    |
| 1104 - Daniel Tate       | Justin Talmadge  |
| 1241 - Bradley Lemke     | Wayne Bruhn      |
| 1308 - Wayne Able        | Chad Sibley      |
| 3912 - Larry Heisman     | Larry Thompson   |
| 5691 - Alonzo Skipper    | Robert Grayson   |
| 6628 - Randy Thacker     | Jeremy Hudson    |
| 7678 - Ronald Knapp      | Curtis Berrey    |
| <b>District 13</b>       |                  |
| 2055 - Mark Ivy          | Robert Shehorn   |
| <b>District 14</b>       |                  |
| 805 - Karen Ridge        | James Stover     |
| 3523 - Richard Schulte   | Gale Gehrs       |
| 4183 - Seth Miller       | Ron Milton       |
| 5596 - Arthur Stine      | Steven Elliott   |
| 6632 - Clarence Nail     | Larry Ehlers     |
| 7710 Amiee Louer-Wagoner | Cathy Stubbs     |
| <b>District 15</b>       |                  |
| 2671 - Michael Cross     | John Metzger     |
| 7190 - Ralph Randolph    | Tamala Ryan      |
| 9763 - Kyle Zimmerman    | Robert Owen      |
| <b>District 16</b>       |                  |
| 311 - Aretha Spurlock    | Arnold Taylor    |
| 2791 - Fred Cagle        | Robert Baisa     |
| 4241 - Donald Snedden    | John Perales     |
| <b>District 17</b>       |                  |
| 5975 John McGlynn Sr.    | Kevin Twing      |
| <b>District 18</b>       |                  |
| 9545 Tim Terrell         | Frank Novak      |
| <b>District 19</b>       |                  |
| 3873 Leo Jaime           | Phil Maughan     |

See additional All-State photos on Page 8

# VFW, Auxiliary Honors Deceased Members during Convention



Isaac Reike, grandson of Past State Commander Russ Reike, Sr., and wife, Nancy Reike, performs the National Anthem during the Joint Memorial Service at the 104th State Convention.



The Auxiliary Color Team presents the altar cloth during the Illinois VFW and Auxiliary Joint Memorial Service at the State Convention at Springfield, Illinois in June.



Chatham-Auburn Memorial Post 4763 color guard prepares to post the colors during the memorial service.



State Commander Bobby Edwards and State Auxiliary President Marvie Wisniewski light candles during the Joint Memorial Service June 8 at Springfield, Illinois.



District 15 Junior Vice Commander Clarence Caraker and District 15 Auxiliary President and Army Veteran Patricia Caraker render a salute honoring the District 15 members who passed away since the 2022 State Convention.



District 14 Commander Rod Thompson plays Taps during the memorial service.

## State Convention All-State Post, District Awards

Continued from Page 7



New Athens Post 7710 Commander Amiee Louer-Wagoner accepts the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



Harry H. Kinman Post 2671 Quartermaster John Metzger accepts the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



Judd Kendall Post 3873 was honored as an All-State post at the 104th State Convention in June.



Dow Stepp Memorial Post 5975 Commander John McGlynn accepts the post's All-State Honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



District 14 Commander Rod Thompson accepts All-State honors.



Fox River Post 4600 Commander Ben Keefe accepts the post's All-State honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



District 4 Commander Steve MacInnes accepts the District's All-State honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



District 12 Commander Dustin Dixon accepts the District's All-State honors at the 104th State Convention in June.



District 15 Commander Chris Maynor accepts All-State honors.

# VFW Honors All-American Commanders at National Convention



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates District 12 Commander Dustin Dixon.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates District 15 Commander Chris Maynor.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates LaFore Lock Post 755 Commander Josh Seed.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates Kahokian Memorial Post 5691 Commander Alonzo Skipper.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates Dow Stepp Memorial Post 5975 Commander John McGlynn.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates Earl W. Homer Memorial Post 7678 Commander Ronald Knapp.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates Crystal Lake Memorial Post 12014 Commander Mathius Carter.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates Piatt County Post 5346 Commander Seth Floyd.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates New Athens Post 7710 Commander Amiee Louer-Wagoner.



Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland congratulates John L. Meyer Post 1104 Commander Daniel Tate.



2022-2023 State Commander Bobby Edwards and 2023-2024 State Commander Brett Nila present Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland with a image of the Illinois Vietnam Veterans memorial in honor of Borland's visit to Illinois during the Vietnam Vigil to honor Michael Ferguson.

2023 All-American Departments			
Department Commander			
Bobby J. Edwards			

2023 All-American Districts Top 25			
Rank	Division	District	Commander
1	3	12	Dustin H. Dixon
13	3	6	Ruben Hernandez
10	4	10	Larry E. Carter
13	5	15	Christopher D. Maynor

2023 All-American Districts 26 and above			
27	3	14	Rodney M. Thompson
41	4	4	Stephen Macinnes
44	4	17	Sean D. Conner

2023 All-American Posts Top 25			
Rank	Division	Post#	Commander
16	3	1308	Tandy W. Able
47	3	4183	Seth A. Miller
49	3	805	Karen R. Ridge
11	4	755	Joshua Seed
32	4	2055	Mark A. Ivy
3	5	5691	Alonzo J. Skipper
46	5	5975	John W. Mc Glynn Sr.
10	7	1241	Bradley M. Lemke
13	7	2671	Michael J. Cross
16	7	1337	Les W. Durov
36	7	7190	Ralph M. Randolph
3	8	7678	Ronald L. Knapp
13	8	2245	Michael J. Magnetta
36	9	7710	Euphamiea A. Louer-Wagoner
1	10	1104	Daniel L. Tate
3	10	12014	Mathius L. Carter
11	10	5346	Seth E. Floyd

2023 All-American Posts 51 and above			
58	3	10302	Lawrence R. Carter
77	3	3873	Leonardo M. Jaime
72	4	2955	Ruben Hernandez
102	4	1461	Gregory W. Kelm
51	6	981	Matthew L. Voss
61	6	976	Anthony R. Avers
70	8	6632	Clarence J. Nail
51	9	5506	Daniel J. Jackson
52	11	9763	Kyle E. Zimmerman

# Illinois delegates join in Patriotic Rally at National Convention



2022-2023 Illinois State Commander Bobby Edwards and Marilyn Miller wave flags during the National Convention Patriotic Rally.



State Commander Brett Nila and Auxiliary President Lynn Smith pass the reviewing stand during the National Convention Patriotic Rally.



State Junior Vice Commander Eugene Blackwell and his wife, Mattie, during the Patriotic Rally at the National Convention.



Past Auxiliary President and National Auxiliary Hospital Ambassador Mary Spindler walks with the national ambassadors during the Patriotic Rally.



Community Service Chairman Steve Eller hitches a ride aboard the Dino-express during the Patriotic Rally at National Convention in Phoenix.



The Illinois VFW Auxiliary color team carries the flags during the Patriotic Rally at the VFW National Convention in Phoenix.



Illinois VFW delegates Amiee Louer-Wagoner, Nancy O'Connell and Kyna Simpson during the VFW National Convention Patriotic Rally.



District 14 VFW delegates Commander Clyde Rowold and Past Commander Rod Thompson wave flags during the VFW National Convention's Patriotic Rally.



Illinois VFW Auxiliary delegates Department Guard Michael Maruszak and District 14 Auxiliary President Kathy Rowold join in the patriotic celebration during the VFW National Convention in Phoenix.

**EXPOSED TO TOXINS?  
YOUR COMPENSATION AWAITS.**

Find out if you're eligible for VA compensation and benefits.

[PACTActInfo.org](http://PACTActInfo.org)



St. Juvin scholarship recipients (from left) Anabelle Ehman and Carley Morris receive their award certificates from Post Commander James (Hoppy) Phillips.

### St. Juvin Post presents scholarships

Coal City High School students were presented with scholarships totaling \$90,971 awarded to 36 students during awards night in May.

Among the recipients were this year's St. Juvin Post 1336 VFW finalists; Carley Morris who will be pursuing a career as a child occupational therapist specializing in speech and hearing and Anabelle Ehman will be studying criminal psychology.

Applicants for the St. Juvin scholarships must be Coal City High School graduates who intend to enter the medical professions or be first responders and submit letters of recommendation, a summary of their extracurricular activities and an essay. The applications are independently scored in a blind

review by the Post Scholarship Committee. The finalists receive their \$1,000 grants after presenting their first semester transcript meeting the required GPA.

Honorably separated veterans that have graduated from Coal City High School may also apply for these grants and can receive training or post-secondary education in any career where the course of study is approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Normally St. Juvin presents one scholarship each year but thanks to the generosity of the community, and the help of our raffle partners Babe's Tap, Don's Beer Store and Mustachios the Post raised enough money to fund two awards both last and this year.



Moira Curry, a teacher at Dakota Elementary School was honored by VFW Post 998, Freeport, with a Teacher of the Year award. Curry has been a special education teacher for 34 years. She has been an outstanding teacher and a true believer in good citizenship teaching all her kids about the flag and country and helping others in distress and those less fortunate.

## Post 981 presents scholarships to Arlington Heights students

Arlington Post 981 awarded the annual Wally Luettschwager Memorial Scholarship Grants to Eva Mason and Julia Olson at the June 7 monthly Post meeting. Additionally, a scholarship donated by the daughter of former Post member Bob Henderson was awarded to Morgan Lamb. Eva and Morgan each received \$3,000 while Julia received \$1,500.

Eva Mason graduated in 2023 from Buffalo Grove High School and will be attending Purdue University where she hopes to major in Bio-Medical Engineering. Both grandfathers

served during the Korean War, one Army and one Navy, and one was a member of Post 981 before he passed away.

Julia graduated from Rolling Meadows High School and is planning to attend the University of Illinois Urbana to major in Music Performance and Marketing. Her grandfather served during the Korean War and her aunt is a Navy veteran.

Morgan Lamb graduated from Glenbard East High School in 2006. She is attending Harper Community College majoring in Business Management. Morgan has started a non-profit organi-



Lisa Entrikin, CEO of Rock River Valley Blood Center, explains the significance of Chuck Ingle's contribution to the Roscoe VFW blood drives. Pictured with Entrikin are Chuck Ingle, Bob Coulter, Rick Popp, and Rob Bland.

### Post Blood Chair Receives Award for years of service

By Rob Bland

Before the District 6 meeting on July 16, 2023, the assembled Post and District leadership were honored to watch one of their own receive an award. Chuck Ingle, from Roscoe Post 2955, was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from Lisa Entrikin, the CEO of the

Rock River Valley Blood Center, for collecting 961 units of blood saving up to 2,883 lives in the local community since 2016.

Not only had Chuck focused on blood collection at his Post but he was also the District 6 Blood Chair for many years. He supported blood drives at the Posts by showing up to planning

meetings, mentoring the Post Blood Chairs and coming out and donating.

Comrade Ingle also received a t-shirt from his Donor Recruiter Rick Popp. Rick told the story of when he first met Chuck and the eventual vampire joke came out. Chuck told him that he does not see himself as a vampire but a blood hound.



VFW Post 311 Commander Aretha Spurlock, Dr. Rupert Evans, 16th District Senior Vice Commander, Post 311 Scholarship Chairperson Sharee Pearce, and Scholarship Committee Members Tamara LeMay present scholarships to Arthur Levi McFadden III and Myia Williams.

### Post 311 presents \$1,000 scholarships to two college-bound students

Benjamin O. Davis VFW Post 311 announced and held its annual scholarship awards competition from April 1, 2023 through June 1, 2023.

After reviewing applications, on Monday, July 10, 2023 two local area high school graduating students that are descendants of veterans were interviewed and awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

VFW Post 311 Commander Aretha Spurlock, Dr. Rupert Evans, 16th District Senior Vice-Commander, Post 311 Scholarship Chairperson Sharee Pearce, Scholarship Committee Members Tamara LeMay and Arnold Taylor were present to present the awards and take pictures.

Awards were presented to Arthur Levi McFadden III, graduate of Crete-Monee High School and Myia Williams, graduate of Thornwood High School. Arthur will be attending the University of Illinois-Urbana and Myia will be attending Xavier University of Louisiana in the Fall of 2023.



Arlington Post 981 awarded the annual Wally Luettschwager Memorial Scholarship Grants to Eva Mason and Julia Olson at the June 7 monthly Post meeting. Additionally, a scholarship donated by the daughter of former Post member Bob Henderson was awarded to Morgan Lamb.

zation that gives free haircuts to veterans and the homeless community. She has been active in supporting veteran causes for years. Her father and grandfather served in the military.

Wally Luettschwager was a life-long resident of Arlington Heights, Illinois who served honorably in the US Army in combat during the Korean War. He came home and was an active member of Post 981 for over 60 years in many capacities including Commander. Bob Henderson was also a Korean War veteran, receiving the Purple Heart for wounds.

# St. Juvin Post 1336 kicks off 73rd Carbon Hill Homecoming

As lucky kids policed up the fired cartridge cases after members of St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars, Coal City, Illinois, kicked off the 73rd Carbon Hill Homecoming parade June 25 with the traditional volley and the lead unit presenting the U.S. and VFW flag and scholarship finalists - Anabell Ehrman and Carley Morris.

St. Juvin members have been doing the volley and being the lead unit as far back as most can remember.

Post members Ron Berta, Adjutant/Quartermaster Keith Roseland. Mike Lareau, Jr. Vice-Commander Jim Richards, and Earl "Shorty" Fatlan manned the Beer Garden June 24 as part of their community

service commitment and have been doing so for the past few years.

St. Juvin Post members staffed their Veteran's Information tent at the entrance to the Homecoming grounds.

The Carbon Hill Homecoming, a long running family friendly event, features carnival rides and concessions, Bingo games, food prepared by local residents serving their famous turkey poor boy sandwich, Beer Garden, local team softball games and concludes with professional fireworks at dusk on the last night of the event.

This year's celebration was well attended with the parade route lined with hundreds standing for the passing of the flag.



St. Juvin Post members prepare to mount up on the lead unit for the Carbon Hill Homecoming Parade Earl (Shorty) Fatlan, Jr. Vice Commander Jim Richards, Scholarship finalists Anabell Ehrman and Carley Morris, Life Member Jack Micetich and founder of the Post Scholarship Program, Life Member Mike Lareau and Commander James "Hoppy" Phillips.



Col. Tim Newman (right) of Fisher, Illinois, received the Legion of Merit during the 108th Sustainment Brigade's Change of Command Ceremony on July 16 at the brigade's headquarters in Chicago.

## Newman receives Legion of Merit

Illinois Army National Guard Col. Tim Newman of Fisher, Illinois, was awarded the Legion of Merit during the 108th Sustainment Brigade Change of Command held on Sunday, July 16, at the brigade's headquarters next to Humboldt Park in Chicago.

The Legion of Merit is among the U. S. military's most prestigious awards, ranking just below the Silver Star, and ahead of the Distinguished Flying Cross. Newman, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, works in his civilian life as the Assistant Dean of Library for Facilities at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.

During the ceremony, Newman, a life member of VFW Post 367 in Joliet, relinquished command of the 108th Sustainment Brigade to Lt. Col. Beth Roxworthy of Springfield, Illinois. Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General

- Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, presided over the ceremony and the presentation of the Legion of Merit.

As the brigade commander, Newman oversaw the deployments of multiple subordinate units as well as the 108th Sustainment Brigade's vital role in the Illinois National Guard's historic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He also deployed a subordinate unit, the 198th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, to help secure the U.S. Capitol following the Jan. 6, 2021 violence.

Roxworthy, an Iraq veteran, most recently deployed to Africa, where she served as the executive officer to the Commanding General of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa. As a civilian, she serves as the Legislative Liaison for the Illinois Department of Military Affairs.



Members of Post 981 Color Guard alongside the Blue Star highway marker on Kirchoff Road in Rolling Meadows, Illinois.

## Arlington Post 981 Supports Rolling Meadows Blue Star Memorial

On Wednesday May 24 Rolling Meadows unveiled a Blue Star Marker on Kirchoff Road, the town's main thoroughfare. Funded by donations from Post 981 and Post 1337 along with others, it sits alongside the highway near the town's veteran's monument.

Blue Star Memorials began in 1945 and are sponsored by community garden clubs. They are a tribute to America's Armed Forces. This marker is the 151st erected in Illinois.

The ceremonies started with the posting of the colors by Post 981 Color Guard and the singing

of the Star Spangled Banner. Various dignitaries including the Mayor of Rolling Meadows Lara Sanoica and the President of the Rolling Meadows Garden Club Carol Orhn spoke before the unveiling. The ceremony closed with Taps and the retiring of the colors.



## Arlington Post 981 Sponsors Cub and Boy Scouts

Arlington Post 981 has agreed to sponsor Cub Scout Pack 132 and Boy Scout Troop 401. New flags with the Post's name were presented to the pack and troop at the May Post meeting. In the future the Boy Scout equipment trailer will be repainted to reflect the Post's sponsorship.

Both scout groups were previously sponsored by Kingswood United Methodist Church in Buffalo Grove until the national Methodist Church decided to end all Scout sponsorships in 2022. The scouts contacted Post 981 and when Service Officer Stewart Abbink, himself an Eagle Scout, volunteered to be the Post liaison, the Post agreed to step in. Because Post 981 does not have a physical building of its own and the Methodist Church still allows Scout organizations to meet in church facilities, the Scouts will remain meeting at the church and will store their equipment trailer there.

### Illinois VFW News Deadline

The deadline for the December 2023 issue of the Illinois VFW News is Oct. 15, 2023.

The deadline for the March 2024 issue is Feb. 1, 2024.

The deadline for the May 2024 issue is April 1, 2024.

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



Some of the community volunteers who helped St. Juvin Post place flags on graves of veterans at Braceville-Gardner Cemetery.

## St. Juvin Post 1336 honors the fallen

On Saturday May 27th was a busy day for St. Juvin Post members conducting their Memorial Day Buddy Poppy event and Life Member Mike Lareau organizing the placement of over 500 flags on the final resting place of veterans at the Braceville-Gardner Cemetery.

Mike was assisted by the Coal City High School Honor Society, Boy Scouts and members of the community. Many of the flags were part of the VFW/Valley Forge Flag Company and Whitmore Ace Hardware Million Flag partnership.

2023 marks the 5th year St. Juvin Post has participated in

honoring the veterans interred in the cemetery which is also the final resting place of John Herron Jr. St. Juvin's first Commander and a Spanish-American War vet who served in the Philippines in C Company 1st Wyoming Infantry.

St. Juvin Post Life Member Warren Benson represented the Post at the Flags for the Fallen event at the Sarasota National Cemetery, Sarasota FL where he is part of the Post's "Venice Detachment". The Flags for the Fallen volunteers placed more than 600,000 flags at 11 National Cemeteries in 3 states.



St. Juvin Post Life Member Warren Benson a member of the "Venice Detachment" at Sarasota National Cemetery Sarasota, Florida.



St. Juvin Post 1336 honor guard prepares to fire the ceremonial volley.

## St. Juvin observes Memorial Day

Memorial Day May 29th the Coal City community gathered at the Community Veteran's Memorial at the Coal City Intermediate School for the St. Juvin Post 1336 VFW observance of veteran's sacrifices.

The program featured Life Member Jack Micetich reading the names of those who, as Abraham Lincoln noted, "gave the last full measure of devotion" the placement of the memorial wreath by Post Commander James "Hoppy" Phillips, a volley by the Post Honor Guard, the playing of Taps by Pete Bianchetta and the reading of this year's veteran's named added to the Wall of Honor Mathew Davis and Colin Schwier.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies Post members' assister by Scouts from Troop 444 and 466 raised the national colors and the service branch flags to full staff.



St. Juvin Post Life Member and Air Force Vet Mike Lareau (right) and grandson Life Scout Ethan Bach prepare to raise the Air Force service flag to full staff.



Members of the Judd Kendall Post 3873 and its Auxiliary in Naperville participate in the annual Naperville Memorial Day parade.



## Springfield Soldier promoted to Colonel in Illinois National Guard

Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Andrew Adamczyk, of Springfield, Illinois, was promoted to the rank of colonel in a ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum April 28.

"I am honored and humbled to be standing here today in front of my leadership, mentors, comrades, family and friends," Adamczyk said. "Thank you for the trust and confidence in me to fulfill this important role in the organization."

Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard said Adamczyk exhibits the qualities every leader must have in order to be successful.

"Great leaders are decisive, able to communicate effectively, lead by example, are willing to put in the work, care about the people you are responsible for, and care about the organization they represent," Boyd said. "These qualities describe Andrew because he understands what it takes to be a great leader."

Boyd said promoting someone to colonel is a great day.

"Any day you get to pin on the colonel rank is a great day, because not too many people make it to that level," he said. "It is truly an honor to promote someone to colonel because that means you have qualified offi-

cers ready to take that next step."

Boyd thanked Adamczyk's family for their support throughout his career.

"Thank you for supporting Andrew all these years," Boyd said. "Without your support of our families, we couldn't do what we love to do and that's serve our country and this organization."

Adamczyk, the Director of Plans, Operations, and Readiness of the Joint Staff, Illinois National Guard, advises and assists the Adjutant General of Illinois with joint and combined multinational training and exercises, plans, and policy recommendations.

"The ability to serve my country, our great state and our community and serve with all of you has been a joy and privilege," Adamczyk said. "There are three groups of people who influence me to continue to accomplish more. They are my fellow members of the Illinois National Guard, the non-profit organizations I'm involved in such as the National Guard Association of Illinois, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Capital Car Club, and the Gold Star Mission. I'm proud to serve alongside you each day."

Adamczyk said the third group of people is his family.

"Thank you to my mom and my siblings. Because of you I had the best childhood, and my



Chief Petty Officer (ret.) Tim Scanlon and U.S. Air Force veteran Rayner Hutchinson pin colonel rank on newly promoted Illinois Army National Guard Col. Andrew Adamczyk, of Springfield, during a promotion ceremony April 28 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. Adamczyk is a life member of Northenders VFW Post 10302 in Springfield.

in-laws, which make it easier to be away from home and serve," he said. "Lastly, I want to thank my wife, Rachael. Thank you for your support and thank you for being my best half."

Adamczyk enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1995 and joined the Illinois Army National Guard in 2000.

He served with Company A, 133rd Signal Battalion, based in Crestwood, Illinois, and Compa-

ny C, 341st Military Intelligence Company, based in Chicago, Illinois, before earning his commission as a second lieutenant through the Illinois National Guard Officer Candidate School in 2003. He has served in a variety of positions throughout the Illinois National Guard and has deployed on multiple overseas missions.

Adamczyk is a Garrison Commander with a U.S. Army

unit in Poland supporting the European Defense Initiative and Operation Atlantic Resolve.

"Following this assignment, I still have more to offer the Illinois National Guard, my country and my community," Adamczyk said. "I want to bring what I learn in Europe back to Illinois to continue to develop the Illinois National Guard into a force well prepared for the future."

## Easton Soldier Retires from National Guard after 25-year career

Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Golden, of Easton, Illinois, the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) senior enlisted advisor and Commandant of the Regional Training Institute, retired from the Illinois Army National Guard after 25 years of service in a ceremony on April 23 at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

"Two things come to mind when I think about Command Sergeant Major Golden," said Lt. Col. Wyatt Bickett, of Smithton, Illinois, deputy commander of the 129th Regiment (RTI). "Those two things are protecting Soldiers and growing leaders. It's not just about telling Soldiers what to do and then have them do it. It's about growing them to replace him someday."

Bickett thanked Golden's wife, Rachel, son Zachary, and daughter Olivia for their support throughout his career.

"It's not just the service member who serves, but also the family, including the extended family," Bickett said. "It says a lot about what he does outside of the uniform with so many of you here today."

Bickett said Golden has a long legacy and history in the



Illinois Army National Guard Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Golden, Commandant of the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), receives the Certificate of Retirement presented by Lt. Col. Wyatt Bickett, deputy Commander, 129th Regiment, during a retirement ceremony at the Illinois Military Academy, Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois, April 23. Golden retired after more than 25 years of service in the Illinois Army National Guard. In his civilian career, Golden is the training coordinator for the Springfield Police Department. (U.S. Army photo by Barbara Wilson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office)

military police.

"Command Sergeant Major Golden has had an influence not only in the Illinois National Guard but also overseas on mul-

multiple mobilizations and overseas combat tours," Bickett said. "He was integral to the success of the 33rd Military Police Battalion during the civil disturbance state

active duty mission by working with both state and federal organizations."

Bickett told Golden it has been a pleasure working with

him at the RTI.

"We're sad to see you go but proud of the job you have done," Bickett said.

Golden said the Illinois Army National Guard has been a great career and thanked his family for their support.

"Rachel, thank you for your support throughout my career," he said. "I am looking forward to spending more time with my family."

Golden enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard Jan. 30, 1998 as a military police officer. He served in the 233rd Military Police (MP) Company, based in Springfield, holding every position from private through operations sergeant. Golden also served as the first sergeant of the 333rd MP Company, based at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, the RTI's Quality Assurance noncommissioned officer, the 33rd MP Battalion operations sergeant and the 33rd MP Battalion command sergeant major. He has served as the 129th RTI Commandant since Sept. 2.

Golden, a traditional Soldier, is the training coordinator for the Springfield Police Department.

Golden is a life member of Havana Post 6408 in Havana, Illinois.

# VFW Auxiliary

## Auxiliary President

Lynn Smith



## Auxiliary Membership

Rhonda Borkgren & Paula DeDoncker



Congratulations to the newly elected VFW and Auxiliary Officers for the 2023-2024 year.

I am looking forward to working with Department Commander Brett Nila and his staff as well as meeting and working with each of you.

To all members, you are part of this team and by working together and putting our problems and personal conflicts aside, we can achieve great things. Remember, VFW business is VFW business and Auxiliary business is Auxiliary business.

Thank you to the Department of Illinois Auxiliary for having confidence in me to represent you. I am so honored to be a part of this great organization. By combining Commander Nila's theme "Making a Difference" along with my theme "Be A Warrior" and National President Carla Martinez' theme "Banding

Together for our Veterans", we will have a successful year.

My theme this year is "BE A WARRIOR" I chose this theme for two reasons; first I believe that a warrior will fight for what is right. It's about fighting for something bigger than ourselves, showing compassion, leading by example, and not focusing on what we can get from others, but what we can do for them. The second reason is my father's dedication to the VFW and his Native American heritage. It is my hope that every Auxiliary in the Department of Illinois will "Be A Warrior".

One of our main objectives is membership. Without membership we would not exist. So, let's start working on retaining our members and bringing in new ones. Along with my Line Officers, I'm looking forward to a productive year.

Teamwork is what makes it happen!

CONGRATULATIONS to Danielle Krull for getting 1st place in Membership. We are all so proud of the wonderful job you have done with membership the past two years.

Thank you to everyone who got awards at the National Convention. It takes a team! I have always believed that. When one person does something, they can do a little, but when we all work together, we can do amazing things.

The membership chairman can beg, push, ask, plead, mo-

tivate, and tell you ways to do it. BUT, without the treasurer getting the dues notices mailed out, the member does not know to pay their dues. Without the members paying their dues, once again it won't happen.

Without our members who ask friends and family to join this great organization, we can't grow. Do you see what I mean? Without all of us being a TEAM, we can't get to 100 percent membership. I hope team Illinois both the Auxiliary and the Posts get together and get this membership year off to a great start.

While at National Convention I was told by an Auxiliary President that VFW members can't sign an application to sign up Auxiliary members. That is not true. Auxiliary members can and do give applications for qualified members in the VFW. They can sign their name as recruiter. The VFW can give applications and sign as the recruiter on applications for the Auxiliary. We are a team and we should always work to help each other.

Team Illinois Auxiliary has until August 15th to hit our first goal of 85 percent for a chance in the drawing for spinning the wheel for big bucks.

Don't forget - to qualify, you must have one new or paid annual member, this year.

Good Luck to everyone on our way to 100 percent in Membership!



State Commander Bobby Edwards is welcomed to the Illinois VFW Auxiliary Convention in Springfield in June.



Lynn Smith is installed as the 2023-2024 Illinois VFW Auxiliary President at the end of the Illinois VFW Auxiliary state convention in June. Smith, and the officers of the Auxiliary, was installed by Past Department President Janet Long.



Department President Marvie Wisniewski pictured with National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape during the Circle of Excellence ceremony at the National Convention in Phoenix.



Bremen Post 2791 in Tinley Park presents a \$5,000 check to Auxiliary National Home Chairman Sarah Higginbotham, Illinois VFW National Home Chairman Michael McGrath, Auxiliary President Marvie Wisniewski and State Commander Bobby Edwards. The check was presented at the Illinois VFW and Auxiliary Convention in Springfield in June.

# Sites of the VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona



Illinois VFW Auxiliaries and members brought home several awards from the VFW Auxiliary National Convention held in Phoenix, Arizona in July.



Department President Lynn Smith, Junior Vice President Diane Aherns and Department Conductress Terry Adams line up for the Parade of Presidents at the National Convention.



The "Incredible" Big Ten Conference Membership Coach Michael Maruszak and Department President Lynn Smith at the National VFW Auxiliary Convention in Phoenix.



Despite the distance from Illinois to Arizona, several Illinois VFW Auxiliary members trekked to the Grand Canyon State for the annual VFW and Auxiliary Conventions in Phoenix in July. Delegates turned up the heat bringing home several awards and honors for both Auxiliaries and Posts.



Some of the Illinois VFW Auxiliary delegates gather before stepping off at the National VFW and Auxiliary Convention's Patriotic Rally.