

A portrait of Abraham Lincoln, showing his face and upper torso. He has a full, dark beard and mustache, and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark bow tie. The background is a light, neutral color.

The Insider

American Legion Department of Illinois News
FEBRUARY 2023

89th Annual
Lincoln Pilgrimage
in Springfield, IL

Lomac Payton



Hello Legion Family!

The start to the new year has been busy here at Department! During the Membership Caravan, we traveled not only in Illinois, but in other states as well, representing our Department. Our last Post Level Training was held in Harrisburg, Illinois on December 16-17, 2022 and was very well attended. Jim has always done a great job teaching about the American Legion and its programs. He also advocates for what they should mean to all of us, especially to young Veterans as we sign them up for membership in The American Legion. Our Department Senior Vice Commander Delmar Buske is doing a fine job with membership as well. Let's rally with him and shoot for 100% membership for 2023!

Due to inclement weather, the Department Christmas party was rescheduled for January 6 when we returned. The Department staff is truly a family and it is always nice to spend quality time with one another. Speaking of family, we just wrapped up the 2023 Legion Family Membership Caravan. Starting at Abingdon Post 381, we visited 19 posts throughout Illinois in 9 days. We collected a total of 1,790 cards between Legion, Auxiliary and Sons. It was a great success!

Take care and be safe this winter. Stay warm! Remember that the motto for this year is "Stronger Together." If we stand and work together, we can achieve any goal we set for ourselves and our Legion organization. We are here to serve our Veterans in any way we can. Why? Because "All Veterans are Special!" May GOD bless you all and let us keep each other in our prayers.

Your Department Commander,
Lomac A. Payton

Delmar Buske



To Our American Legion Family—

The time is really flying. It seems like only yesterday I was elected to the position of Senior Vice Commander at Department Convention. I continue to work and learn more each day.

I had the privilege of presenting a plaque to The Illinois State Police Director Brandan Kelly thanking him for all the help and support the I.S.P. has given to the The American Legion Youth Police School all these years (photo on page 5). Director Kelly is A Navy Veteran and member of State Police Post 1922.

Thank you all who came out to the stops when the Membership Caravan was in your area. We had really good turnouts throughout the state. We traveled to Galena, Chicago, Metropolis and many points in between. It was a good time to hear from both our Department speakers and National speakers. Everyone enjoyed the wisdom and wit that was shared by all. Weather was good, except for a couple of days of rain. This was a good time to enjoy being with the Legion Family.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at Lincoln Pilgrimage and Patriotic Conference.

Spring is just around the corner.

Senior Vice Commander,
Delmar Buske

Janet Bacon



Hello Legion Family,

The 2023 Membership Caravan is in the books and it was a success. We had 250 cards turned in, we got to meet many Legion Family members, and caught up with a lot of old friends. The food was great and so was the weather, except for the pouring rain. Luckily that only lasted a short time. Everyone that spoke did a fantastic job and gave those that attended something to think about and take back to their Units, Squadrons and Posts and discuss.

Patriotic Conference is coming up on March 17th starting at 9am at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel/Double Tree in Springfield, IL. We will be having four guest speakers. After lunch, our National President Vicki Koutz will speak. It will be a memorable day for all that attend.

Our Spring Board Meeting will take place March 17th after Patriotic Conference is over. This is where we will see who won the Membership Challenge that was made at our Fall Board Meeting. Who will be donating to whose special projects? We will just have to wait and see.

February 14th is Valentine's Day. Please remember to reach out and do something for our female veterans that are in nursing homes or hospitalized.

In closing I would like to share a quote that was stated by Past Department President. It holds a lot of meaning and is so very true. "Never regret a day in your life: good days give **happiness**, bad days give **experience**, worst days give **lessons**, and the best days give **memories**."

For God and Country

Janet Bacon, Department President

Kevin O'Connell



Greetings from the Detachment of Illinois,

The 2023 Membership Caravan is over and I have enjoyed visiting and speaking to American Legion Family members from all over the State. The Membership Caravan was successful gaining almost 1800 cards. We enjoyed and were privileged in having Sons of the American Legion National Commander Chris Carlton on the Caravan for a few days. Also, we had National Vice Commander Ken Hylton from the American Legion the entire time. Both were fantastic speakers with meaningful messages.

The next few months will be busy starting with the 89th annual Lincoln Pilgrimage in Springfield. This is always a great event. Then on to the conference in Washington D.C.. I will be placing a wreath at the World War Two Memorial in front of the Illinois Pillar. Next stop will be the Patriotic Conference in Springfield where we will settle the membership bets with the American Legion Family. Should be a great time.

The Sons of the American Legion will have our D.E.C. on April 1st beginning at 11:30am at Post 615 located at 17423 67th Ct. Tinley Park. Later that night beginning at 6:00pm, will be my Homecoming at the same location.

The program for the Homecoming will be from 6pm to 7pm is cocktail hour with entertainment from the Chicago Police Emerald Society Bags and Pipe Band. Dinner will be served at 7pm till 8pm. At 8pm the program will begin. Following the program there will be music and dancing till 11:30pm. This being April Fools Day, it should add to the program I'm sure. Please see the flier for details and send in your reservations early so we can have an accurate head count for seating and food. If you're planning on staying at the Holiday Inn Hotel, we have a block of rooms the hold only till February 15th so

(Continued on page 3)

(SAL Commander, Continued from page 3)

make those reservations early. For those coming in early on Friday March 31st, The Marrs-Meyer Post 991 in Worth Illinois will have a Fish Fry, and live entertainment for our guests. If enough interest is generated they have a shuttle bus available.

My special program this year has been supporting programs that prevent Veteran Suicides. Please remember the new hot line number is 988-1, that will get someone in crisis help. Keep doing Buddy checks, and if the know someone who is struggling or in need of help.....Be The One.....

For God and Country,

Kevin O'Connell

FEBRUARY



FEBRUARY 11-12: LINCOLN PILGRIMAGE

FEBRUARY 14: **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY**

FEBRUARY 20: **PRESIDENT'S DAY**
DEPT OFFICE CLOSED

FEBRUARY 24-25: DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL
CONTEST IN SPRINGFIELD

FEBRUARY 25: SR. VICE PLANNING SESSION

FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 1: **WASHINGTON
CONFERENCE**

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Top 10 District & Division Rankings As of 01/31/2021

District	Commander
----------	-----------

13	Gibbs
22	Swaim
3	Fitch
21	Baumann
18	Morris
23	Nollman
14	Page
8	Petersen
9	Fiorentino
19	Smith

Division	Commander
----------	-----------

5	Maden
4	Garrett
2	Kraut
3	Seward Jr.
1	Thompson III

The American Legion Springfield Post 32

Home of & Originator of the

National American Legion Pilgrimage

to the Tomb of Abraham Lincoln

Saturday, February 11, 2023

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM: American Legion Family Leadership Reception at The Headquarters Hotel.

Keynote Speaker: The Sons of The American Legion National Commander **Christopher Carlton**

4:30 PM – 1:00 AM: FREE shuttle service to Post 32.

4:00 PM – 9:00 PM: Dinner at Post 32

5:00 PM – 1:00 AM: Open House at Post 32

Sunday, February 12, 2023

8:00 AM: American Legion Family Breakfast featuring Keynote Address by The American Legion Auxiliary National President, **Vickie Koutz** Pilgrimage Headquarters Hotel

10:00 AM: Pilgrimage to the Tomb

10:30 AM: Placing of Wreaths and Tomb Ceremony, Mr. Lincoln's Tomb, Oak Ridge Cemetery

12:30 PM: Lincoln Commemoration Luncheon featuring Keynote Address by The American Legion National Commander, **Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola** Pilgrimage Headquarters Hotel

Breakfast tickets are \$30.00 each, and luncheon tickets are \$35.00 each. Checks should be made out to **Springfield Post #32, The American Legion**. Tickets, reservations and further information please write to:

American Legion Lincoln Day Pilgrimage
ATTN: Barb Lush, Ticket Chairman
1120 Sangamon Avenue
Springfield, Illinois
62702-1853.

We sincerely hope that you will be able to help us honor our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln, on his birthday in his "Hometown." Make sure to visit the beautiful **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library** while you're there!

If you have any questions about the Post 32 Open House, The American Legion Family Breakfast, or The Lincoln Commemoration Luncheon, please contact Pilgrimage General Chair, Bob Wesley by Phone: 217-899-6826 or Email: bobwesley37@yahoo.com

WHAT'S H



Department Sr. Vice Commander Delmar Buske presenting plaque for 100th anniversary to ISP Director Brendan Kelley.



Denis Sackett with Congressman Darin LaHood, who was recently elected to the 16th Congressional District here in Illinois. LaHood is looking forward to bimonthly Veterans meetings to gather ideas to take back to D.C.



Over the last five years, the small 60-member Harvey S. Ruel American Legion Post #1164 has been helping other veterans. Ken Kurtz of Post 1164, also referred to as the St. George American Legion because of the small village they meet in, wanted to raise money to help other veterans living at the Illinois Veterans Home in Manteno, Illinois. When Ken started the fund, he asked his fellow Legionnaires to help him raise money to buy clothing and other items the residents could use. Everyone in the post was glad to help, but Ken always contributed a large chunk of the money himself. That's why the new fund is called the "Ken Kurtz VA Memorial Home Fund."

In this past year, using collections at their meetings and donations from members and friends, the post raised \$2,685.00. \$2,681 of that money was used to buy all these items for the residents of IVHM: 80 assorted T-shirts, 20 pairs of assorted shoes with Velcro, 18 Navy hats, 6 Marine Hats, 12 Army hats, 6 Coast Guard hats, 6 Air Force hats, 10 small sweatpants, 29 large sweatpants, 32 XL sweatpants, 36 quarts of Chicken Noodle soup, 36 quarts of Cream of Chicken Noodle soup, 40 gallons of Hawaiian punch and 800 assorted coffee creamers.

Right before November 11, 2022—Veterans Day—four of the members of the post—1. Mike Spade, the Commander; 2. Larry Blanchette, the Senior Vice Commander; 3. Tim Rehmer, the Adjutant; and 4. Bruce Wood—delivered all of the things they had purchased to the Illinois Veterans Home, and Michelle Shear, the coordinator at IVHM, was there to help them unload and thank them for everything they'd brought. Ken Kurtz wanted to be there, but his health wouldn't allow it. Ken passed away shortly after the donations were delivered to IVHM, but his fund will be continued and will help veterans living at IVHM in the future. Post #1164 will always remember Ken for his generosity and determination to help others, and they will always remember other veterans who have given so much for our country.



APPENING



Pictured above are Galena's Scouts during previous events. This year, Blackhawk Area Council would like to invite you to join in the U.S. Grant Pilgrimage. Celebrating its 69th Anniversary, this is the Midwest's Biggest Scouting event of the year! This year's theme is "Medal of Honor," where they will be honoring Sergeant Henry H. Taylor for his acts at Vicksburg!

For more information, visit
blackhawkscouting.org/USgrantpilgrimage

The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall, a 3/5 scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D. C., will make a visit to Rock Falls, IL, from Thursday, August 31, through Monday, September 4, 2023. The wall will be on display along the Rock River, at the RB&W District Park, 201 E. Second Street, Rock Falls. The tribute is being organized by the Rock Falls Tourism Department.



Art Risavy, Mayor of City of Edwardsville, wrote a proclamation naming the week of January 16, 2023 as "American Legion Membership Caravan Week." This plaque was presented to American Legion Edwardsville Post 199 Commander Wes Sterling, Post 199 Adjutant David Schindler, and American Legion Department of Illinois 22nd District Commander Ronald Swaim at Edwardsville City Hall on January 17, 2023.

Pictured (left to right): David Schindler, Ronald Swaim, Wes Sterling and Art Risavy



ON THE ROAD AGAIN 2023 MEMBERSHIP CARAVAN



The 2023 Membership Caravan is a wrap! In 9 days, the Department of Illinois Membership Department gathered 1,790 cards total between TAL, AUX and SAL.



Commander Lomac Payton



President Janet Bacon



Sr. Vice Delmar Buske

Who Wore it Better?



When you're in Superman territory, you have to take the obligatory superhero photo. Not all heroes wear capes, but these ones did! *From left to right: National Vice Commander Ken Hylton, Membership Secretary Dee Dalton, and NEC Wayne Erickson



Detachment Commander
Kevin O'Connell



National Commander
Chris Carlton



Membership Director
Jim Talaska



Ken Hylton, Kevin O'Connell, Eugene Gort (and daughter), and
Chris Carlton

2022—2023 DIVISION & DISTRICT MEETING DATES

DATE	DIST. / DIV.	TIME	POST	CITY
02/01/2023	1ST DIVISION	7:30 PM	MORTON GROVE POST 134 (DEC @7:00)	MORTON GROVE
02/15/2023	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	EVANSTON POST 42	EVANSTON
02/18/2023	14TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	EAST MOLINE POST 227	EAST MOLINE
02/18/2023	13TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	LANARK POST 357	LANARK
03/05/2023	15TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	IPAVA POST 17	IPAVA
03/05/2023	16TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	GLASFORD POST 35	GLASFORD
03/11/2023	5TH DIVISION	1:00 PM	COLUMBIA POST 581	COLUMBIA
03/12/2023	3RD DIVISION	1:00 PM	PEORIA POST 2	PEORIA
03/12/2023	18TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	DANVILLE POST 210	DANVILLE
03/12/2023	19TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	DECATUR POST 105 / LUNCH @ 11:30	DECATUR
03/12/2023	21ST DISTRICT	1:00 PM	PALMYRA POST 1034	PALMYRA
03/15/2023	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	JOSEPH M. SESTERHENN POST 166 @ MORTON GROVE POST 134	MORTON GROVE
03/17/2023	10TH DISTRICT	7:00 PM	ROUND LAKE POST 1111	ROUND LAKE PARK
03/19/2023	23RD DISTRICT	1:00 PM	LOCATION TBD	TBD
04/02/2023	22ND DISTRICT	1:00 PM	NASHVILLE POST 110	NASHVILLE
04/02/2023	25TH DISTRICT	TBD	CHESTER POST 487	CHESTER
04/05/2023	1ST DIVISION	7:30 PM	TATTLER POST 973 (DEC @ 7:00)	CHICAGO
04/19/2023	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	EVANSTON POST 42	EVANSTON
05/17/2023	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	MORTON GROVE POST 134	MORTON GROVE
05/19/2023	10TH DISTRICT	7:00 PM	LAKE REGION POST 703	FOX LAKE

HOMECOMING

DETACHMENT COMMANDER



KEVIN O'CONNELL

SATURDAY APRIL 1, 2023

TINLEY PARK AMERICAN LEGION POST #615

17423 67TH COURT TINLEY PARK, IL

COCKTAILS 6-7PM

DINNER 7-8PM

PROGRAM 8PM

MUSIC 8:30-11:30PM

CATERING BY RICH'S PIZZA JOINT
ITALIAN BEEF, BAKED CHICKEN, PASTA

DISCOUNTED HOTEL RATES
HOLIDAY INN TINLEY PARK
18320 NORTH CREEK DRIVE
708.580.6844

CODE: SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

TICKET INFORMATION

\$35 PERSON - MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO TAMMY GIRTEN
SEND THIS FORM TO 6879 COMO COURT TINLEY PARK, IL 60477

NAME: _____ POST _____

OF PEOPLE _____ AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____



American Legion Department of Illinois, First Division
Cordially invites you to attend the Fourth Annual

Veterans Winter Ball

Saturday, February 18, 2023
Entertainment



5:00 p.m. Hosted Social Hour
6:00 p.m. Program followed by Five-Course Dinner
Host Bar / Dance floor open after dinner service to 11:30 pm

Crystal Sky Banquets
7941 47th Street in McCook
Free parking is available ~ Main door off Joliet Road and Joliet Ave

Black Tie or Mess Dress Appreciated
Please R.S.V.P. by February 3, 2023

Please remit the section below the dotted line together with your payment to:
American Legion First Division Council, P.O. Box 280 Riverside, Illinois 60546-0280

RSVP

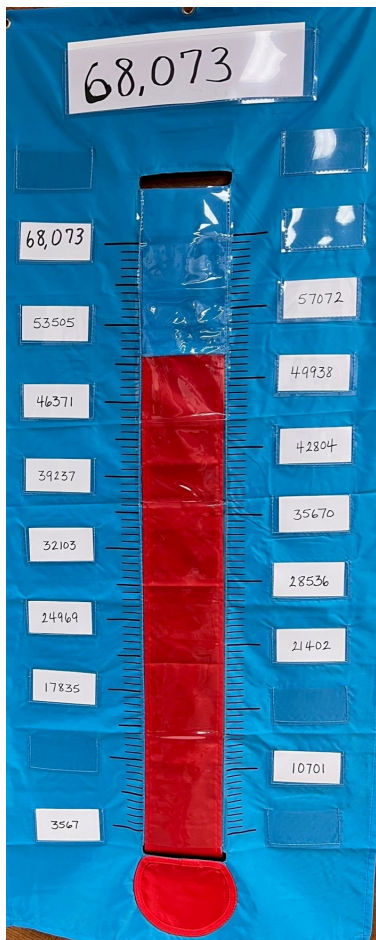
M _____

Has reserved _____ seat(s) for

Fourth Annual Veterans Winter Ball on February 18, 2023

Cost of dinner per person (pp) will be \$75.00 postmarked by February 3, 2023

Indicate on response - Post/Unit/Squadron: _____ District: _____



From the Membership Desk:

Greetings all,

Well the hard work is paying off but we cannot relax. We got a bump from Caravan but still need about 3100 cards by February 15 to meet National 85% goal. We are still tracking to be able to be a 100% Department by Close of Books but its going to take all of us to put in the effort.

We as of this printing are at 51,368 that means we are currently needing 24 cards per post from the 700 posts in Illinois to reach our goal.

If you need help reach out to your District and Division Officers and if you are interested in a revitalization at a Post or District or Division level please contact me at Department.

I will help where I can and get you whatever lists you need that I can.

We can do this but it will take all of us.

Thanks for all you do,

Jim Talaska

Membership Director

American Legion Department of Illinois, Office of VA&R

The American Legion Department of Illinois has three VA&R Office. Those are located at the Chicago VA&R Regional Office, Marion and Hines. Our offices are located either in or adjacent to A VA Medical Center (Veteran Health Administration - VHA). There are currently 152 VA Medical Centers and approximately 1,400 community-based outpatient clinics in the US.

Nationally, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) currently serves nearly 5.2 million Veterans and survivors who receive either compensation or pension benefits. In the past four years alone, VBA has added more than one million Veterans to its compensation rolls, which is more than the active-duty Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard combined. In fiscal year 2018, VBA delivered over \$91 billion in Veterans' compensation and pension benefits.

There is also the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). Twenty percent (105,845 Veterans interred in FY 2020) of U.S. Veterans who died (estimated 592,682 in FY 2020) in the U.S. and Puerto Rico in FY 2020 were buried in a national, state or tribal Veterans cemetery. As new national, state and tribal Veterans cemeteries open, this percentage is expected to increase.

Since 1973, when VA managed 82 national cemeteries, annual interments in VA national cemeteries have increased by more than 348% from 36,422 to 126,884 in FY 2020.

Of the 126,844 interments conducted in FY 2020, 63% were in the 20 busiest national cemeteries: Riverside (CA); Calverton (NY); Florida (FL); Jefferson Barracks (MO); Dallas-Fort Worth (TX); Fort Snelling (MN); Fort Sam Houston (TX) Great Lakes (MI); Abraham Lincoln (IL); Fort Logan (CO); Houston (TX); Miramar/Ft. Rosecrans (CA); National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona (AZ); Sacramento Valley (CA); Willamette (OR); Tahoma (WA); Ohio Western Reserve (OH); South Florida (FL); Massachusetts (MA); and Sarasota (FL).

VETERANS CORNER

*Submitted by
Jerry Vogler*

FOUR CHAPLAINS 80TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

World War II saw countless heroic acts of bravery, patriotism, faith and commitment! The story of the Four Chaplains is one of the most remarkable exhibitions of those heroic qualities that has ever occurred and witnessed by so many. The combined Normal American Legion Post 635 and Bloomington American Legion Post 56 Honor Guard will hold a ceremony honoring those Four Chaplains and their remarkable acts of bravery and self-sacrifice on Friday, February 3, 2023, at the McLean County Museum of History (the old McLean County Courthouse). The ceremony will be held inside the Museum in the court room and will commence promptly at 11:00 a.m. There will be a speaker followed by an outside three-volley rifle salute, Taps, and a bagpiper to close the ceremony. The personal sacrifices of the Four Chaplains, giving up their lives so that others could live not only was an inspiration to the free world and the effort to win World War II but occurred at a time when inter-religious cooperation and love was not at its best. McLean County has a personal connection to the Four Chaplains, as Reverend George Fox, (one of the Four Chaplains) attended Illinois Wesleyan University and preached in local churches including in Downs. Take a few minutes from your Friday, February 3, 2023, day to learn the inspiring details of that fateful day when the Four Chaplains exhibited the very best of the qualities that make up being an American!

VA EXTENDS HEALTHCARE TO VETERANS IN SUICIDAL CRISIS The VA announced that starting January 17, 2023, Veterans in acute suicidal crisis will be able to go to any VA or non-VA facility for emergency health care at no cost. Veterans DO NOT need to be enrolled in the VA healthcare system to use this benefit. This is a tremendous improvement in Veterans' mental health care, especially for the two-thirds of Veterans who have not enrolled in VA health care because of the income means test for eligibility, or because the Veteran did not enroll for other reasons. The new benefit will provide, pay for, or reimburse for treatment of eligible individuals' emergency suicide care, transportation costs and follow-up care at a VA or non-VA facility for up to 30 days of inpatient care and 90 days of outpatient care. This program also will make appropriate referrals for care following the period of emergency suicide care and determine eligibility for other VA services and benefits. Eligibility includes Veterans who were discharged or released from active duty after more than 24 months of active service under conditions other than dishonorable; former members of the armed forces, including reserve service members, who served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable; or former armed forces members who were the victim of a physical assault of a sexual nature, a battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment while serving in the armed forces. Availability and access to this mental health benefit is not enough! Veterans, family members and friends of Veterans spread the word and become champions of this program and encourage those Veterans who may be in suicidal crisis to seek the VA for appropriate help. This is the only way that this program can accomplish its goal of reducing suicide among the Veteran population. Visit <https://www.va.gov/OPA/PRESSREL/> for more information.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are happy to include your District/Division Meeting Dates, Happenings at your local post/community, announcements, etc.

**Email sgreen@illegion.org OR send by mail to:
American Legion, Dept. of IL
P.O. Box 2910 Bloomington, IL 61702
ATTN: SHANDI GREEN**

Please submit any changes or updates to previous submissions to Shandi Green as soon as possible.

NOTE: WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO INCLUDE YOUR SUBMISSIONS BUT CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL BE. IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE, PLEASE SUBMIT BY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR



ILLINOIS PREMIER BOYS STATE REGISTRATION OPEN

Now! Yes, right now. Identify those deserving youth that are excelling all around your community. They are identified in the paper every week as standouts in the high school golf, football, volleyball, cheer squad, poms, fall play, band, and cross country programs amongst others. These are the kids parents you talk to now and have them register for boys and girls state. Registration is open for boys state. Get your commitments early. There is no shortage of kids that can go. Don't undersell or under represent your community. If your local post somehow can't afford to sponsor 6 or so kids interested, reach out to your district officers. They will find a post that will help. Register at illinoisboystate.org.



We are doing another Haven Run this year, Saturday April 29th and Sunday April 30th. We be starting at American Legion Post 90 in Marshall. We will be stopping at Metropolis Saturday night. Sunday around noon we end at the Haven with a BBQ. All vehicles welcomed. Cost is \$25 per person more details to follow. Questions contact Wayne Madson 618-806-1408

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LOMAC PAYTON

Department Editor
SHANDI GREEN

Now Is The Time To Stand Together For Our Flag

* One year Subscription to the Department News
\$20.00 for 11 issues

Newsletter articles must be at Department Headquarters by the
15th of each month for it to be in the next month's issue.

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