

The Insider

American Legion Department of Illinois News

JAN/FEB 2023



2024 ILLINOIS AMERICAN LEGION
FAMILY CARAVAN



JANUARY/FEBRUARY

FEB 11-12: **LINCOLN PILGRIMAGE**
(SPRINGFIELD, IL)

FEB 19: **PRESIDENTS DAY**
(OFFICE CLOSED)

FEB 24-28: **WASHINGTON CONFERENCE**

MAR 01-02: **ORATORICAL CONTEST**
(SPRINGFIELD, IL)

MAR 15: **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO**
THE AMERICAN LEGION!

MAR 22: **SPRING BOARD**
MEETING (22-23)
PATRIOTIC CONFERENCE
(SPRINGFIELD, IL)

MAR 29: **GOOD FRIDAY (OFFICE CLOSED)**

MAR 30: **SAL SPRING D.E.C.**

MAR 31: **HAPPY EASTER!**

APR 1: **95% CUTOFF**

APR 13: **SPRING D.E.C. (NORMAL, IL)**

MAY 6-9: **SPRING MEETINGS (INDY)**

MAY 14-18: **ARMED FORCES WEEK**

MAY 18: **ARMED FORCES DAY DINNER**
(1ST DIVISION)

MAY 27: **MEMORIAL DAY**
(OFFICE CLOSED)

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Back Cover Membership Report

2023—2024 DIVISION & DISTRICT MEETING DATES

DATE	DIST. / DIV.	TIME	POST	CITY
01/24/2024	9TH DISTRICT	7:00 PM	MERLE-GUILD POST 208	ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
01/25/2024	8TH DISTRICT	8:00 PM	REHFELDT-MEYER POST 474	MATTESON
02/04/2024	11TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	NEW LENOX POST 1977	NEW LENOX
02/07/2024	1ST DIVISION	TBD	MORTON GROVE	MORTON GROVE
02/14/2024	2ND DISTRICT	7:00 PM	TATTLER POST 973	CHICAGO
02/21/2024	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	ROGERS PARK POST 108	EVANSTON
02/22/2024	8TH DISTRICT	8:00 PM	TINLEY PARK POST 651	TINLEY PARK
02/25/2024	16TH DISTRICT	1:00 PM	BENAK'S ALE HOUSE	SHEFFIELD
02/28/2024	9TH DISTRICT	7:00 PM	BILLY CALDWELL POST 806	FRANKLINK PARK
03/03/2024	19TH DISTRICT	TBD	POST 105	DECATUR
03/10/2024	3RD DIVISION	1:00 PM	3RD DIV. SPRING MEETING—20TH DIST.	TBD
03/10/2024	23RD DISTRICT	1:00 PM	NEW BADEN POST 321	NEW BADEN
03/10/2024	21ST DISTRICT	1:00 PM	GUY BAIRD POST 554	CARLINVILLE
03/13/2024	2ND DISTRICT	7:00 PM	TATTLER POST 973	CHICAGO
03/15/2024	10TH DISTRICT	7:00 PM	LAKE ZURICH POST 964	LAKE ZURICH
03/20/2024	7TH DISTRICT	7:30 PM	JOSEPH M. SESTERHENN POST 166	MORTON
03/24/2024	4TH DIVISION	1:00 PM	CLINTON POST 183	CLINTON
03/27/2024	9TH DISTRICT	7:00 PM	IAVM @ RIVER GROVE POST 335	RIVER GROVE
03/28/2024	8TH DISTRICT	8:00 PM	HAZEL CREST POST 398	HAZEL CREST
04/03/2024	1ST DIVISION	TBD	MCKINLEY POST 231	MCKINLEY



Department
Commander,
DELMAR BUSKE

Greetings!

It has been a busy winter! I thought things would quiet down somewhat after the Veterans Day Pro-

grams, but that was not the case. The 1st weekend in December was the Pearl Harbor Day Festivities. Then on to New Orleans where we checked out the area for our National Convention this year. Our hotel is across the street from the convention center. That is a plus! We are in a nice hotel and it is close to everything. We are looking forward to a great convention. Our Illinois party will be a dinner cruise on the Mississippi river on a paddle wheeler boat.

I did several post visits in December. If any post would like for me to visit, please check with Cheryl. If I am free, I will go to any post for a visit.

The caravan this year was a challenge to say the least. Mother nature was not real fond of us this year. All in all only one post had to cancel their stop so that was a plus.

It was so nice to have National S. Vice Commander Mark Shreve on our caravan this year. What a wonderful role model he is. Always upbeat and ready to go. The caravan went well with very few problems. There are always some minor hiccups that happen, but that's just part of the process.

There were two extra stops on this years caravan. One was the Vietnam Wall in Perryville Mo. which was a very good stop. The other was Quincey Veterans Home. They are doing a lot of construction and when they are done is will be one of the best Veteran's home in the state.

As always, if anyone needs help with their membership, please contact our Membership Director to set up a Veterans Outreach program.



Department Sr. Vice
Commander,
JOSEPH LAMPERT

To Our American Legion Family,

We're back from yet another successful American Legion Family

Caravan. Having a travel-centric event in the middle of winter is always a little risky, but we always manage to make it work! This year, we had the holy trifacta of snow, ice and BELOW ZERO temperatures. We didn't let that stop us from having some fun. We had to cancel our Colona stop on the first night, but the rest of the caravan went as planned. Despite the weather, we completed 18 stops and collected 1,507 cards total!

We had the pleasure of hosting National Vice Commander Mark Shreve as our special guest this year. He was such a fun guy to travel with; always in a good mood and ready for the day.

We made a couple of additional stops during our travels to see a couple of great places—the Vietnam Wall in Perryville Missouri, which was very cool to see—and the opportunity to tour the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy, IL. They are taking on a huge renovation project that will provide an improved quality of life for our veterans and their families.

As I mentioned in my last article, a resolution was passed to increase dues by \$5.00 for the 2025 membership year at National Convention. This means the per capita will increase from \$35.00 to \$40.00. This is a perfect time to get a 5 year membership. With a 5 year membership, the per capita is locked at the current amount. Take advantage of this!

Our membership has improved over the last year—and continues to improve—because of the hard work you all contribute to this great organization. Please keep up the efforts so we can continue to be successful.



Department President,
**ANGIE
GOLIGHTLY**

Hello and happy
2024!

I started the year running
while taking part in my

first American Legion Family Membership Caravan. I'm sure it's obvious to all that we take our membership seriously. Neither snow nor cold will keep us from our appointed stops. Even if it is 15" of snow in a day or 30 degrees below with wind chill. That's commitment! And we do this every year.

What a joy it was to meet so many members where they live. I was able to see how similar but different Legion Posts were set up throughout our great State of Illinois. I loved being part of some 'family' celebrations, from honoring a 91-year-old Veterans birthday to seeing tears in the eyes of a hard-working member when he received his membership award. Hospitality was evident wherever we went. We have a great organization to be proud of. Seeing the new residents building at the Quincy Veterans home made me wish I could live there. I'm sure we all learned from National Vice Commander Mark Shreve. We were blessed to have him as our special guest.

Guess it's about time to start writing our year ends reports!

Thank you for your service!

Angie Golightly

American Legion Auxiliary

Department of Illinois President



Detachment Commander,
MICHAEL VOZAR

Greetings!

The 2024 Caravan was a success! Our travelling group included Detachment Commander Mike Vozar, Senior Vice Rick Allen, Caravan

Coordinator and PDC Jeff Trout, and Commanders Aide Wayne Madson. We were accompanied by National guest American Legion NVC Mark Shreve. We had excellent SAL turnouts at McHenry Post 491 (11th District), Chicago Post 735 (4th District) and Collinsville Post 365 (22nd District). At the 13th District stop in Lanark we signed up three Legionnaires as Dual Members including District Commander Lee Gibbs! The hospitality and camaraderie at every stop was evident. At least one Caravan member made an obvious impact for the good with a member of the American Legion Family. A lot of knowledge was shared.

I joined Illinois Leadership on a trip to the Quincy Veterans home to observe the remarkable state of the art renovation work being done there to better care for our veterans. We also visited the Missouri National Veterans Memorial in Perryville (across the Mississippi from Chester, Illinois) to pay our respects and had lunch at Perryville Post 133

Mattoon Squadron 88 and McHenry Squadron 491 were the high card turn in leaders with 30 cards each. We recognized 77 Squadrons for achieving 100% membership before caravan and an additional 7 Squadrons reached or exceeded 100% during Caravan. Our Detachment high Squadrons following Caravan (not including the 1/19/24 report) are Edwardsville 199 - 207.69%, Maple Park 312 - 193.33%, Morris 294 - 186.21%, Jerseyville 492 - 163.64%, Orient 1961 - 157.14%, and McHenry 491 - 156.06%. Great work all!

Proud Possessor of A Priceless Heritage,

Michael Vozar, Commander, Detachment of Illinois,
Sons of The American Legion

The Cold Never Bothered Us Anyway— The American Legion Family Completes 28th Annual Membership Caravan

The 2024 Illinois American Legion Family membership caravan is in the books. Despite the unfavorable weather, we had a good card turn in and attendance turnout. The caravan continues to be a great way to start off the second half of the membership year. The need to retain our current members and to recruit new ones remains a top priority.

Without membership, there is no American Legion.

We unfortunately had to cancel our Colona stop on the first night, but we still got the cards! A big thanks to Rodney Bennett going to Kewanee and then driving all the way back to Monmouth Post to deliver them in a snowstorm.

The Family had over 1500 cards turned in on 18 stops with over 700 people braving the elements to come out and turn in cards and see

the National Vice Commander and the Illinois Department Leadership speak.

Along the way, the caravan traveling party had the privilege of getting a behind the scenes tour of the \$300 million renovation taking place at the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy, IL. To learn more about this amazing project, see the following article on page 7.

Overall, it was a successful event considering the weather and the bitter cold. We made it through with no accidents or injuries, however it may take several weeks at home in Georgia for National Vice Commander Shreve to thaw out!

We thank everyone who traveled with us and all of our family members for taking the time to come to one of the stops. We're already looking forward to Caravan 2025. It will be here before we know it!



The American Legion Department of Illinois Family Caravan traveling party at the Missouri National Veterans Memorial in Perryville, MO.



Department Commander Delmar Buske and Department Adjutant Marty Conatser were both interviewed by Lisa Hinshaw of the Heyworth Buzz during their caravan stop in Heyworth.



Detachment Commander Mike Vozar and Department Senior Vice Commander Joe Lampert are always ready and willing to help.



Commander Vozar, President Golightly and Commander Buske during their tour of the renovations taking place at the Quincy veterans home

< (From left to right) Joe Lampert, Michael Funneman, Delmar Buske, Mark Shreve, Phil Mette



(From left to right) Department President Angie Golightly, Robert Gardner, Department Sr. Vice Commander Joe Lampert, Norman Flowers, Department Commander Delmar Buske, Detachment Commander Mike Vozar and National Vice Commander Mark Shreve



The caravan was also featured on WSIL News 3 during their stop at Carrier Mills post 364.



(From left to right) Department Sr. Vice Joe Lampert, Past National Commander J.R. Stillwell and Detachment Commander Mike Vozar.

Commander Vozar, President Golightly and Commander Buske during the Chatham stop.



(From left to right) Detachment Sr. Vice Rick Allen, Past Detachment Commander Bruno Williamson, Detachment Commander Mike Vozar and Detachment Sr. Special Aide to Commander Wayne Madson

Illinois American Legion Sees a Commitment to Quality of Care at State Veterans Home

Article by Cameran Richardson



The nearly 300 veterans and their spouses residing at the historic Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy will soon have new state-of-the-art facilities to move into that will provide enhanced care and amenities for a better quality of life. A 251,000-square-foot long-term care facility and a 74,900-square-foot independent living facility are under construction as part of a \$300 million renovation and rehabilitation project funded by the state of Illinois.

“We’ve always cared for our veterans out here. This home has always been a great place for care,” said Dave Clifford, chief engineer at the Illinois Veterans Home overseeing the construction. “But we sure are glad what we are getting now will better care for these residents. These residents are coming from different theaters, different wars and their needs are changing. This facility will be flexible enough to change with those needs and meet those needs. That is important to us.”

Clifford and Administrator Chuck Newton gave a tour of the new construction to American Legion Department of Illinois leadership and National Vice Commander Mark Shreve of Georgia, who was visiting the department, on Jan. 19. Dressed in personal protective equipment, Shreve, Illinois Past National Commander and Department Adjutant Marty Conatser, Department Commander Delmar Buske, Sons of The American Legion Detachment Commander Michael Vozar, Auxiliary Department President Angie Golightly, National Executive Committeeman Roy Weber and others walked through the long-term care and independent living facility to see for themselves the state-of-the-art facilities veterans and their loved one will call home.

It was important for Conatser to bring department leadership to help spread the word throughout the state to other Legion Family members of the dedication being made at the 138-year-old home to improve care for veterans. “There is a real commitment being made here,” Conatser said. “A lot of our veterans don’t realize that they have made this big of a commitment to bring it up to a state-of-the-art facility. It’s going to be top-notch. This home will eventually be the standard of more of a home setting for our veterans instead of just a room to live in.”

Legion Family members boarded a bus to tour parts of the 211-acre campus and new facilities. They first visited the long-term care facility, which Clifford described by saying, “It’s not a clinical building. You’re going to think you’re home. It’s a unique facility.”

The long-term care facility will house 210 skill-care beds and provide full amenities, to include a movie theater, pub and a café that the independent living residents will have full access to, verandas and a garden. It also has a state-of-the-art kitchen that will feed all residents, a pharmacy and an expansive laundry room that features a sheet folding and shirt-press machine. Shreve was impressed with the technology of a sheet folding machine.

“This is really a strong commitment to technology and improvement of the quality of life for our veterans,” he said. “I really love to see the improvements and everything that I look at in the lens of our veterans is really their quality of life, and what I see at this facility is a commitment to building that quality of life. And that when a veteran comes here, they’re going to be comfortable, they’re going to be calm



and they're going to be very happy with the things that go on here. If I was a veteran in Illinois, I would want to come here and have this as part of my future."

Both facilities are designed to provide a home-like environment with hardwood floors, large windows that open, spacious living quarters, tile, woodgrain finishings, barn doors leading to the bathroom, quality finishes, electric fireplaces in the common areas, and more. A covered four-season walkway will connect the two facilities for veterans, their spouses and staff to use.

The independent living facility will have 80 one-bedroom and studio apartments. Currently, residents living in the two domiciliary buildings were built in 1907 and 1909.

"This is a huge upgrade. Residents deserve this new infrastructure,

without a doubt," Clifford said, adding that the veterans are excited to move in. "The veterans love it. It's that piece of candy that you reach for but can't quite get to it yet, but you know it's going to be good when you get it. They are seeing this project from start to finish. They want to get in those buildings sooner than later. And we want them in those buildings. There's a hubbub all over campus."

With the new infrastructure, Clifford is excited to provide the veterans a true dining experience. The food currently served is put in meal delivery trays that, because of transportation, is not always hot, and the same food is put on each tray unless there is a specific dietary need. Now, meals will be served hot and fresh from a buffet, on a real plate, that comes directly from the new high-end kitchen in the long-term care facility.

"It's going to be a whole different meal experience," he said. "We want to create an experience for them, and that's what we are going to do."

Part of that experience will be the residents will never seeing a commercial truck backed up to the property, as it will all be done in a tunnel system in the back of the long-term care facility. "It's a neat thing that we are doing here," Clifford said. "I expect that this home will be an example for a boiler plate for the homes coming up in the future for federal VA homes. I really do see it. It's going to be a beautiful home."

The new facilities will be a welcome addition to the beautiful campus that the historic Illinois Veterans Home sits on.

Built in 1886 to serve disabled veterans of the Mexican and Civil War, the Illinois Veterans Home sits on 211 acres of land and is the largest and oldest veterans' home of the five in Illinois. Among the many things, the property features a chapel, museum, lake in the shape of Illinois for residents to fish, deer park, cemetery where 7,600 men and women are buried, and many historical buildings. The home used to be self-sustained from the city with its own cattle, gardens, coal-burning power plant and water system.

There is an activities director onsite to keep the residents engaged, while the home also hosts a car and tractor show, among other things. Plus, the physical therapy building has a 94-degree pool with a floor that rises and lowers for aquatic wheelchairs; only one of two in the state. "It's a great place to live. It really is," Clifford said.

And The American Legion is a great supporter of the home. A past American Legion Operation Warriors grant provided nine televisions, an Auxiliary member is on staff, and an American Legion pavilion with a large hand-laid stone fireplace overlooks the lake that was the project of Past Department of Illinois Commander Bill Atteberry. "You can put a big fire in there, and yes we do," Clifford said. "We have people who come here and use it. It's absolutely beautiful."



Additionally, members of Post 37 in Quincy consistently support the needs of the veterans with toiletries, clothing and other necessities. Post member Roger Schwengel would even talk with the veterans at the home about their needs and report that back to the construction crew. "He's been right there every step of the way as a representative of the veterans," Clifford said. "He would get a good feel for what they wanted and come back to the construction team and say, 'Here's what I'm hearing.' (The American Legion) is just an incredible organization. They love veterans."

As the Illinois Veterans Home continues with its multi-million dollar enhancement for the better care of its veterans, Conatser said, "You will see the Legion Family continue to support (the home). They are using the most innovative designs and desires to make it a more family-friendly area, and that makes a big difference. They've had troubles in the past, they're on the right path and they've made a major, major monetary to our veterans."



The long-term care and independent living facility are projected to be done by the spring and summer. It's a project that after 16 years on staff as the chief engineer, Clifford is proud of what the entire staff has done to provide the best care to veterans and their spouses.

"I've got a great team of people who I work with as well who are just as invested as I am," he said. "I simply love taking care of these veterans. They served us, (now) this is my time to serve them."

The American Legion Springfield Post 32

Home of & Originator of the National American Legion Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Abraham Lincoln

Sunday, February 11, 2024

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM American Legion Family Leadership Reception

All the National and Department Leadership are participating in this complimentary meet and greet reception that is open to our entire American Legion Family. Reception will be in the President Abraham Lincoln Doubletree Hotel Salon CD of the Ballroom. National Commander **Donald Hall, jr.** of The Sons of The American Legion is the Keynote Speaker.

4:30 PM – 1:00 AM Free Shuttle Service between Headquarters Hotel and Post 32

5:00 PM – 1:00 AM Open House at Springfield Post 32, The American Legion.

Open House at Springfield Post 32, The American Legion, 1120 Sangamon Avenue, Springfield, Illinois. Join us for music, refreshments, and fun.

4:00 PM – 9:00 PM Dinner at The Mess Hall Restaurant located at Post 32 – Costs Vary

Order from The Special Menu.

Monday, February 12, 2024

8:00 AM – 9:30 AM American Legion Family Breakfast

Honoring National President **Lisa Williamson**, represented by **Sharon Conatser**, PNP and Special Envoy, The American Legion Auxiliary (Keynote Speaker), and Guests of Honor National Commander **Daniel J. Seehafer**, The American Legion, and National Commander **Donald Hall, jr.**, The Sons of The American Legion.

9:30 AM – 10:00 AM Staging for The Pilgrimage

Cars and busses assemble for Distinguished Guests and others on Adams Street entrance to President Abraham Lincoln Springfield Hotel.

10:00 AM Pilgrimage departs hotel enroute to President Lincoln's Tomb.

10:30 – 11:30 AM Ceremony at President Abraham Lincoln's Tomb,

Wreath Placing Ceremony; Songs performed by Post 32 Legionnaire **Deanna Cagley**. Color Guard: 114th Infantry Regiment, Illinois Volunteers (Reactivated).

CHEF DE CHEMIN DE FER FRANK CAMPO'S HOMECOMING



MARCH 7 - 9, 2024
NORTHFIELD INN & SUITES
3280 NORTHFIELD DRIVE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS. 62702
217-523-7900

Come join us as we celebrate the Homecoming of our Chef de Chemin de Fer, Frank Campo. All events will be held at the host hotel, Northfield Inn and Suites. Room rates are \$99.00 for king/double queen or \$115.00 for king suite, all rates do not include sales tax which is currently 14%. **Make reservations directly with hotel and mention "40 & 8". Cut-off date is February 22, 2024, for reservations and ads.** The hotel is a short 5 minute drive from the Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport. For those arriving by air, please contact the hotel the day before to arrange pickup. There are plenty of restaurants nearby and the American Legion and VFW post are a short drive.

Besides our honored Chef, Springfield is the home of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States. The only home he ever owned is open to the public to tour. His final resting place is at Oak Ridge Cemetery and is the second most visited cemetery in the country besides Arlington National Cemetery. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is open to the public and charges a nominal fee for entrance. Springfield is also one of the stops on Historic Route 66 and home to the "corn dog".

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Thursday	Hospitality Room	3:00 P.M. to closing
Friday	Hospitality Room	9:00 A.M. to closing
Friday	Registration	12:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.
Saturday	Hospitality Room	9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.
	Cash Bar	6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.
	Banquet Dinner	7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

Program Booklet

1/2 Page	\$40.00
Full Page	\$80.00
Booster Names	\$ 2.00 Each

Meals: Choice of Chicken Cordon Bleu or Stuffed Roasted Pork Loin w/spinach, pine nuts, & onions. All meals include mushroom rice pilaf, honey glazed carrots, tossed salad, rolls, dessert, iced tea or coffee. Banquet tickets are \$50.00 each.

Booster Names: _____ Program Ad: _____

Banquet Chicken _____ Banquet Pork _____

Total for Ads, Boosters and Banquet \$ _____

Send Registration & Payment to: Jodie Cruthis - Campo
3 Lydia Lane, Riverton, Illinois. 62561
Email Ads to fpcampo@juno.com

CHAMPIONS AGAIN

—a Renewed Focus

The Joliet American Legion Band were crowned the 2023 National Champion Band at the 2023 National Convention. That's two consecutive titles (2022 & 2023) and 39 titles overall! The band has a rich history to be proud of and the Illinois American Legion Family should share in that pride. They are truly a bright spot for Patriotism and honoring all veterans.

Mike Fiske, the current Band Director explained that Joliet has been known as the City of Champions when it comes to bands. Starting in the twenties they had the National Champion High School Band from Joliet. Many members of those bands at the end of WWII formed the Joliet American Legion Band when they returned home in 1946.

The local community has and still does support their bands at all levels. The high schools, the local junior college and The Joliet American Legion Band are supported by American Legion Post 1080. You can feel the pride and dedication Mike and all the members of the band have in keeping their long history alive. It has been—and continues to be—a challenge.

All posts in Illinois have had to overcome troubles caused by Covid-19. The band had some special problems. They could not come together to rehearse for 14 months. The comradery of the band members is key in holding the band together. When they could come back together, they rehearsed outside—spaced 6 feet apart. Visualize a 50-piece band spaced out 6 feet apart outside trying to play in unison. They have refocused and have shown their commitment to excellence by winning two titles in a row.





In a visit with Band President Mike Bank and Vice President Ken Spreitzer, they helped me understand what motivated most of the members and the true dedication they have. In this time of turmoil, music brings people together—especially patriotic music. Being in the band requires members to pay attention to detail and work together. That’s how you win National Championships.

The band members are of all ages and backgrounds. You can’t play basketball in your 50s and 60s, but you can still play in the band. The band performs 10 to 15 events per year and practices weekly. I attended one practice and was amazed by the amount of set up time it took before they even began their two hour rehearsal followed by break down time. Everyone in the band is a volunteer.

The band is focused on a “threepeat” and is preparing for the National Convention in New Orleans in 2024. The cost of travel and housing for a 50-piece band to attend a National Convention can be over \$30,000. I would ask any post that could assist the Joliet Band in their quest for a “threepeat,” to please do so by donating. Your contributions—large or small—will help tremendously. Please send all donations to The American Legion State Headquarters, earmarked for the Joliet American Legion Band.



PREPARE FOR BUDDY CHECKS



It's time for American Legion Family members to strategize about the second round of Buddy Checks, an initiative calling on posts to re-connect with veterans in their communities.

The National Executive Committee passed Resolution 18 during Spring Meetings in May 2019, which calls for the twice-annual Buddy Checks to be conducted Legion-wide on the weeks of The American Legion's birthday—MARCH 16 and Veterans Day.

During the inaugural Buddy Checks in March of this year, posts across the United States reach out to veterans to see how they were doing.

Craig Annis, a service officer for American Legion Post 64 in Phoenix, AZ shared his personal experience with performing buddy checks. "I have to tell you, I'm 78 years old. I was a salesman all my life. I owned my own company for 20 years and retired, and I don't know that I've ever in my lifespan had such a rewarding experience in terms of talking to men and women who have served and are now on the latter stages of their life. They were so appreciative to just be contacted," Annis said.

"It's just a wonderful sense of accomplishment after you've talked to, you know, older members, middle-aged members, younger members, and when they all get back to you say, 'Hey, thanks for taking the time.'"

"I think if we keep getting the word out there about what the value is with Buddy Checks, hopefully more and more posts will realize it's a simple process and easy to do," he said. "We all like to know that somebody's thinking about us. You know, that's a natural need that I think we all have. We want to know somebody cares."

National has made a kit available to help guide posts on Buddy Checks. The **online resource** contains information on Buddy Checks, tips, answers to FAQs and downloadable resources such as a flyers, scripts and more.

American Legion Department of Illinois, Office of VA&R

We have had TREMENDOUS success with our meetings at Headquarters. We will continue to be available every third Wednesday, 0900 until 1400. Veterans and/or their family member will sign in upon arrival. Please remember we are now taking walk-ins AND appointments. Walk in meetings will be from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM; and 10:30 AM to 2:00 PM will be for appointments only. For those that plan to visit us we ask for your patience as we continue making adjustments to this new amenity. All questions should be directed to 312-980-4266.

It is suggested that you bring the following information with you to help expedite the process.

1. DD-214 and/or activation document
2. A list of your currently diagnosed conditions related to your military service.
3. If there is any relevant records or documents, you may bring them with you however do not bring in boxes. (Call us if you have questions)

Listen to Training Tuesday recordings



The American Legion Internal Affairs & Membership Division hosts a monthly virtual training to educate members on issues important to the organization. The training is held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. Eastern. The following are two recent recordings of Training Tuesday sessions. Listen to the recordings at legion.org/training/training-tuesdays.

Resolutions. This discussion was presented by Dean Erck, adjutant of American Legion Post 904 in Alexandria Bay, N.Y. Erck was instrumental in writing and getting Resolution No. 9: Department of Veterans Affairs S.A.V.E. Training at Posts passed by the National Executive Committee during the 2023 Fall Meetings. The resolution calls for posts to conduct the suicide prevention training in support of Be the One.

During the training, Erck shares what a resolution is, the do's and don'ts to writing a resolution, tips for lobbying support for a resolution, how to get a resolution passed from the post to department level, how resolutions are vital to the Legion's mission, and more.

21st Century Report. This training was presented by American Legion Internal Affairs Director Matt Herndon, who discussed the three areas of focus for the 21st Century Report: legacy and vision; membership and member engagement; and training. Throughout the training, Herndon shares examples of how the report can be implemented at all levels of the organization. You can download the report by visiting this link: <https://www.legion.org/membership/260349/21st-century-ad-hoc-committee-report>

During the 2017 Fall Meetings of The American Legion National Executive Committee, the 21st Century Ad-Hoc Committee was re-established to review the original 21st Century Report approved by the NEC during the 1997 Fall Meetings. The re-establishment of the committee was to update the report's recommendations for current and future needs to ensure The American Legion continues to serve community, state and nation.

Missed a Training Tuesday? Recorded sessions can be accessed on the Training Tuesday webpage.

The American Legion Manuel Perez, Jr. Post 1017 of Chicago partnered and collaborated as a community partner with our local chamber of commerce by hosting our Annual Community Christmas Tree Lighting at our Veterans Memorial Plaza named in Honor of WW II Congressional Medal of Honor Manuel Perez, Jr. these last five years.

Our activities have grown year after year, the Veteran Memorial Plaza has been a must attend from Memorial Day Ceremony, a local farmers market which included two Veteran Resource fairs on Saturdays over the summer, community garden clean ups, Veterans Day Ceremony and culminating with the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting with Santa Claus in December. These activities have developed into a true community partnership by inculcating a sense of individual obligation to our community state and nation. This event has drawn all of our local businesses, elected public officials from our US congressman, state senator, state representative, county commissioner and City of Chicago local alderman to each event.

Working with our local chamber of commerce and their membership we have worked to partner with Chevrolet, Acura, Toyota dealership, Target, Local Candy Company, ComEd, CIBC Bank, Chase Bank, Wintrust Bank, Old National Bank, Chicago Blackhawks, Los White Sox, Chicago Red Stars, Local grocery stores, Hispanic Business Network, local Attorney offices, several City of Chicago Departments and many other local businesses to donate toys to hand out to about 350 children and families left with coats and food baskets. In addition, we provided hot chocolate and Mexican sweet bread to everyone as we listened to Festive Christmas Music from a local DJ.

As we look forward year after year to participate and be included in a variety of community activities, this has been a positive way to engage our Veterans, It brings a sense of pride when parents come up to us and tell us that their sons and daughters are serving or they have a family member that recently got out of the military. This has worked as a recruitment opportunity where we have signed up a couple new members as a result.

Abundio Zaragoza, Jr.
Commander
Manuel Perez, Jr. Post #1017





#
\$50 per calendar.
Only 1250 calendars sold. Prizes daily.
Winning tickets will be returned to the
drawing pool for subsequent chances
to win. Prizes will be mailed.

ATTENTION: Special Olympics have changed their FOOD MENU

We will not be able to serve most non-perishable foods that we have served in the past at all games until further notice from Special Olympics. We still need help serving, handing out product, prepping, and runners. It limits us on how much product we will have available. We are accepting in-kind food donations and money donations still, to help purchase product. All small amounts add up. I'm sorry for the short notice for Winter games. You will be receiving Summer Games list in March and Tennis Game list in May. We had to hold a few substantial meetings to discuss what we will be able to do. When product is gone we are done for the day. If you plan on coming either day please call Sue Johnson at 815-222-3983. If you're having trouble reaching Sue, please call Dave Johnson at 815-520-4643. Locked in bananas, apples, granolas, crunch master crackers, go go squeeze.

Pirate bootie individual	Trail mix (no de-hydrated fruit)	Cuties/halos	Sugar free cookies— 3 or 4 in bag	Good Thins GF Wheat thins individual
Veggie Straws individual	Individual peanut butter pkgs	Mini carrots Celery sticks	Annie choco chip individual	Sunflower kernels
Pretzels individual <200cal	Rx minis Or kind bar minis	String cheese	Special K Pastry Crisps	Baked Lays Regular or BBQ

2024 Special Olympics Winter Games

Dave or Sue Johnson 815-520-4643

Dates: February 6; 8 am to 4 pm, February 7; 8 am to 4 pm & February 8; 8 am to 12 pm

Locations: Hanover, Illinois, Galena, Illinois

Chestnut Mountain, 8700 W Chestnut Mt. Rd. Hanover, IL 61040

Eagle Ridge, 444 Eagle Ridge Rd. Galena, IL 61036

I will be there from _____ To _____ Tuesday Feb 6

I will be there from _____ To _____ Wednesday Feb 7

I will be there from _____ To _____ Thursday Feb 8

Name _____ Address _____

Phone # _____ Post/Unit/Squadron # _____ Dist# _____ Div# _____

I will bring _____

Here is my donation of \$ _____ to help with supplies for Special Olympics

2024 DEPARTMENT CONVENTION AWARD PROGRAM DEADLINES

All forms are available online at www.illegion.org/awards

The American Legion has many awards available to posts and individuals. Each year, less and less submissions are sent in. There are nearly 800 posts. Each program has an outline and criteria to meet for each award. Details and submission instructions are available online www.illegion.org. Be sure to check the deadline for all award submissions some are approaching fast. **Don't miss the opportunity for your post to be recognized.** All winning Posts will be notified and receive recognition at the Department Convention this July in Springfield.

- Legionnaire of the Year Award—June 15
- Firefighter of the Year - May 31
- Law Officer of the Year - May 31
- TLW Legion Rider of the Year Award - March 31
- Chaplains Cross/Star of David Award - June 6
- Community Service Award - April 30
- Hall of Fame Award - April 30
- Public Relations Award - June 1
- Photo Contest & Calendar Contest - Friday prior to state convention

Need hard copies? Contact the Department Print Shop for a hard copy at 309-663-0361 or email: printshop@illegion.org

UPCOMING YOUTH PROGRAMS



**Department of Illinois
Oratorical Contest**

March 01-02, 2024



June 8-14, 2024



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
ILLINOIS
**Girls
STATE**
June 16-22, 2024



**Youth Police
Academy**
**June 23-28,
2024**



Remembrance Wreaths Laid at Lincoln's Tomb

Department Commander Delmar Buske with Michelle Rutherford support coordinator for survivor outreach services/Illinois and Post 32 Commander Cynthia Robbins and Post 32 Riders Chairman Mike Lee attending the Remembrance Wreaths event in December 2023.



2024 State Convention Book Application for Ad placement

BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION: _____
 CONTACT NAME: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____
 [Post use only] American Legion Post name: _____ Post No. _____

Slogan Choices: (three choices—choose one)

- ____ 1. We Are Proud To Be Part of
The American Legion Family
 ____ 2. Helping The American Legion
Help American's Veteran's
 ____ 3. We Proudly Stand Behind
The American Legion

Ad Choice: (please choose black & white or color)

Medal of Honor (full page--7-1/2 x 10 in.)
 Silver Star (half page--7-1/2 x 5 in.)
 Bronze Star (quarter page--3-3/4 x 5 in.)
 Purple Heart (3-3/4 x 3-3/8 in. "Business card")
 Commander Salute (3-3/4 -1-11/16 in.)
 Flag Page (1-3/4 - 1 in.)

Black & White Ad

Color Ad

\$230.00	_____	\$250.00	_____
\$120.00	_____	\$125.00	_____
\$90.00	_____	\$95.00	_____
\$75.00	_____	\$80.00	_____
\$60.00	_____	\$65.00	_____
\$25.00	_____	\$25.00	_____

Method of Payment (please check one) *All credit information will be kept confidential*

____ Check (Make Check payable to: AMERICAN LEGION DEPT. OF IL)
 Send Check to: American Legion, Dept. of IL 2720 E. Lincoln St. Bloomington, IL 61704
 ____ Credit Card _____
 EXP Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Security Code #: ____
 Card type: / MC / Visa / AmEx / Disc

VETERANS CORNER

Submitted by
Jerry Vogler

FOUR CHAPLAINS WWII REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

A ceremony of remembrance honoring the Four Chaplains that gave their lives to save young soldiers when their troop transport was torpedoed during WWII, will be held on Saturday, February 3, 2024, commencing at 11:00 a.m. This is the 81st anniversary of their unselfish acts of heroism that inspired America and the free world. The ceremony will be held inside the McLean County Historical Museum (Old County Courthouse).

VA BENEFIT MEANS TESTS

U.S. Veterans are eligible for disability benefits for service-related conditions hindering their health regardless of their income. Questions often arise, however, regarding income limitations and their impact on eligibility for disability benefits as Veterans explore the multitude of assistance programs offered by the VA. While the VA has no income limitations on receiving VA service-connected disability benefits, income does play a role in VA Health Care which uses a category system to help determine what health care services the Veteran will have access to. Falling below the VA national poverty income level may influence their access to copayment-free health care services. While Category 7 allows access to VA health care with reduced copayments, Priority Group 8 requires Veterans to bear full payments. All Veterans with service-connected disability ratings, (even a 0% rating) qualify for VA Health Care regardless of their level. Many Veterans have been enrolled in VA Health Care system but are denied actual Health Care through the VA at Clinics and VA Medical Centers. However, the VA recently lifted the "income means tests" for all World War II Veterans. Many Vietnam era Veterans were denied VA Health Care due to income means test, but currently all Veterans who served in-country or in specified southeast Asia locations where Agent Orange was used, are now eligible for VA Health Care regardless of disability rating or income level. Veterans who have been denied VA Health Care based on the income means test should reapply by contacting the Eligibility section of the VA Clinic or VA Medical Center nearest to them.

CENTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS (CWV)

Did you know that besides the standard VA benefits, including health care and service-connected disability compensation, the VA provides many lesser-known benefits to Women Veterans. E.g. Women's mental health services; Breast feeding supplies and lactation support; Post mastectomy prosthetic and support; Yoga, Tai Chi, and acupuncture; Pelvic Floor Therapy for pain, Urinary Issues and Constipation. The CWV is a great program to address mental and medical issues which are predominantly associated with women Veterans. However, according to the VA, Women Veterans are not using VA Benefits and Services to the extent anticipated when the CWV program was developed. WHY NOT? The VA has a survey on-line that is intended to identify why Women Veterans are not utilizing VA benefits. The survey can be found and completed by visiting <https://www.va.gov/womenvet/#survey>. Women Veterans, please help the VA improve both the services and benefits provided for you, as well as the participation rate of accessing those services and benefits!

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"There is here a great melting pot in which we must compound a precious metal. That metal is the metal of nationality."

- Woodrow Wilson

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



10TH ANNUAL AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY HAVEN RUN

(ALL VEHICLES WELCOME—
2, 3 OR 4 WHEELS)

APRIL 27, 2024

START AT COLLINSVILLE POST #365

REGISTRATION @ 8:30 AM / LEAVE @ 9:00 AM

Stops Include:

New Baden American Legion Post 321

Sparta American Legion Post 396

Sesser American Legion Post 560 (Lunch Stop)

McLeansboro American Legion Post 106

Carrier Mills American Legion Post 364

The Haven (BBQ & End of Run)

Cost to Participate: \$25/person

(to be paid the morning of the run or when you join the run at any stop)

Rooms blocked at Country Inn & Suites, Marion, IL—(618)997-2444

(Make reservations by March 27—Mention American Legion Haven Run 2024—\$120 plus tax)

YOU CAN JOIN THE RUN AT ANY STOP!

IF YOU WISH TO DONATE TOWARDS THE HAVEN, MEET US AT ANY STOP

CALL WAYNE MADSON WITH ANY QUESTIONS

(618)806-1408

madsonwsr@gmail.com

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE HAVEN

Phone: 309-663-0361 Fax: 309-663-5783
Email: hdqs@illegion.org Web: www.illegion.org

Department Commander
DELMAR BUSKE

Department Editor
SHANDI GREEN

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MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

DISTRICT & DIVISION RANKINGS

UPDATED 01/26/2024

Division	Commander
2	REECE, JR.
3	HINTON
4	VANCE
5	SCHOO
1	HEDRICK

District	Commander
20	Gardner
9	Kwiatkowski
11	Westerhausen
13	Gibbs
23	Matthiller
14	Page
25	Edwards
8	McNellis
19	Walker
17	Rodriguez

**Scan here to
visit the Dept.
website.**

