



From the Desk of Department President Diane:

As your Department President I am so honored to be invited to your events happening in Illinois, plus I can add in a few family trips which make traveling even sweeter.

The first weekend of September I was scheduled to attend District 10 meeting in Quincy. I grew up in Missouri south of Hannibal, and Quincy was my dad's go to for shopping, it was a big deal when I was a kid. So, I was able to stay at my cousin's cottage in Louisiana, Missouri. I spent Friday evening visiting with him, then on Saturday my niece and I spent the day visiting my parents & family cemetery then some antiquing and dinner. It was great to reconnect, I honestly don't remember ever spending one on one time with either one of them in the past, another first in my life. Sunday, I took the scenic route to Quincy. It was great to see everyone from the 10th District. Karen Hirstein did a fine job running the meeting, we covered the Auxiliary Programs, enjoyed a wonderful lunch, and renewed friendships. We did miss representation from Chatham Auxiliary 4763 and Havana Auxiliary 6408. Which I understand life gets in the way, however it is important that someone from each Auxiliary attend the district meeting, carpool, spend time together, that's how we make our auxiliaries stronger.

On September 12th, I headed to Red Bud, to attend events with the 14th District. I was honored to spend the weekend with Kathy & Clyde Rowold, what a wonderful B & B. We met Ed & Emma for dinner Friday evening, then Saturday we attended O'Fallon Post & Auxiliary 805 Bacon Fest. They really know how to work together! The "Second Generation Swing" band was exceptional, great orchestra, not just a band...the food of course was delicious, anything with bacon has my vote. Honestly, I changed my schedule from the 16th District to be able to attend. We need to have some fun and learn what other Auxiliaries are doing. We should all take time to go to other Districts and Posts to attend their events when possible, to learn and take similar events to other

parts of Illinois...

Sunday was the 14th District Auxiliary meeting, another great meal, wow! It was hosted by Millstadt 7980, Laurie Lesperance hosted a wonderful meeting, she asked me to read the letter that I had sent out, it was good for me to read it again. It was a hard letter to write, coming from a low point, after a rough day and 5 hours on the road, lots of time to think about it. Monday, we went to tour John Cochran VA Hospital and the Jefferson Barracks Fisher House, this was a great day seeing all that is happening...volunteers are needed, and the ones who are working are doing a fantastic job!

As a Department Officer we spend lots of time on the road, went to Michigan this past weekend, another 8+ hours on the road to and from VFW National Home. This ride home was much more pleasant, lots of positive changes and upgrades at National Home, every time I visit there is something new to be seen, always changing for the good of our veterans and their families.

This trip I have been thinking on what this Marching Forward will address, it's like pick one, which will it be? To be on a more positive note, the 25 words of affirmation, I need to look them up, because we need to use them more instead of complaining and finding fault.

I have been sending letters to Auxiliaries that don't attend their District meetings, if your Auxiliary President can't attend, please send a couple of your members, District meetings are important, there is encouragement, fellowship and hopefully you will learn at least one new thing, I always do. You don't have to be an officer to attend, my mentor took me to lots of meetings, district, state and National, and I am thankful for her. She will be 100 years in just a couple of weeks and still going and still mentoring.

Part of my road trips are spent praying in the Spirit, I don't know what everyone is going thru, and I am not sure what lies ahead but Father God knows all things, sees all things and He is gracious and merciful. I am so grateful that He has blessed me by being your president, I recently visited the 2nd floor nurses at Hines VA, 16 years ago I was there, an Open-Heart patient, defective aortic valve replacement. Five days after surgery almost ready to go home, I died, my husband and daughter were in my room. I was reopened, and spent 12 minutes getting back into surgery, they told my husband I probably wouldn't know him, generally with that much time it causes extensive damage. Father God protected me through it all, I didn't lose memory, I recovered quickly, and

the staff at Hines always welcomes me when I visit with hugs and cheers, 16 years!

It is an honor to lift others up and Romans 8:26-27 pretty much sums up because I don't know how to pray, and thankfully the Holy Spirit does and is merciful, gracious and loving. I can lean on Him and rest in His peace knowing I am where I am supposed to be. Semper Fi

Diane Ahrens



From the Department Secretary:

I can't believe it's October already. In a couple weeks we will be attending Big 10 Conference. This year it's in my backyard! It will be a rare instance when I don't have to drive hours to get somewhere!

I want to remind you of the Circle of Excellence and what is due next! If you haven't attended training and got all the boxes checked yet, you can get training at the next Council meeting on October 11th in Elgin, IL. At the Holiday Inn, 495 Airport Rd., Elgin, Illinois. Auxiliary Officers, President, Secretary, and Treasurer must be paid before December 31st if an annual member. In order to get points for the Circle of Excellence you must pay your dues by October 31, 2025. Let's get those dues paid now. Your 990 needs to be filed by November 15th and a copy must be sent to the Department Treasurer before you get credit. Donations to all the hospitals, hospital pledge, donations to VMS and NVS must be made by December 31, 2025. As an Auxiliary Treasurer, I make sure all donations are made before the first deadline. Then I don't have to worry about anything except membership. It's also time that you have sent your second dues notice if you haven't done so yet. I have a few Program Books, if you want to buy one, let me know. Thanks so much for all you do!

Rhonda Borkgren, Secretary



October 2025

Treasurer's Notes



To all Treasurers and Membership Chairman:

Please mark your calendar for **January 1, 2026**.

A new Membership Application will be introduced. **Only the January 2026 application will be accepted for new, rejoin and transfer applications.** All older copies of membership applications will not be accepted.

There will be some processing differences as the information for paying the Life Memberships by Credit Card will be removed from the application and a new process will be implemented. This process will provide a more secure way to process credit card payment than what is done today.

Please watch for more detailed information as training material is developed and the new application is available. I will be doing training in person and via Zoom in November so that we will all be ready prior to the implementation of this new process.

Linda Lorenz
Department Treasurer



Americanism

Thank you to all Auxiliaries reporting Americanism activities—it's inspiring to see your dedication to flag education, patriotic observances, and honoring veterans. Last month's POW/MIA Recognition Day reminded us of the more than 7,500 Americans still missing and the importance of ceremonies like the Missing Man Table.

Please mark these upcoming dates:

- 📅 Gold Star Mother's & Family Day – Last Sunday in September
- 📅 VFW Day – September 29
- 📅 Global War on Terrorism & Desert Storm Veterans Day – October 7
- 📅 Day of the Deployed – October 26
- 📅 Veterans Day – November 11
- 📅 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day – December 7

As your Patriotic Instructor, I would also like to remind everyone of the importance of our Auxiliary Rituals. They are a cornerstone of our traditions and help maintain order and respect

during meetings. A quick refresher: One rap = Attention, Two = Rise, Three = Be seated.

Let's continue promoting pride, respect, and remembrance in all we do.

By Tara Skipper, Department of Illinois Americanism Chair & Patriotic Instructor



Holiday Cheer is Almost Here: How Our Organization Helps Others via Auxiliary Outreach

Greetings Auxiliary Friends!

The holidays ahead of us are such a wonderful time—full of joy, reflection, and kindness. It's when we gather together, celebrate, and intentionally look for ways to bring a little extra warmth into each other's lives. At the same time, we're reminded that those who do great work in our community could often use a helping hand. That's when our members are needed to step in and spread the true spirit of the season by supporting those who need it most.

Auxiliary Outreach is about expanding our power to do good. We know that by teaming up with other groups, we can amplify the benefit to our communities! That's why we partner with local churches, schools, and other nonprofits to make their events better. By providing our time and energy, we're able to assist others to organize events and reach more people than ever. In the process, we make friendships, learn new skills, and have an opportunity to share what we do in the VFW Auxiliary.

Auxiliary outreach is also about building a more connected community. The friendships and goodwill we create now last well beyond the season. Friends we make while partnering with someone else may lead to identifying a Veteran in need or potential new Auxiliary members. You just never know where a conversation could lead.

Take the time now to look ahead at groups in your community that may need some extra manpower in their service efforts. Discuss them in your meetings and approve in your minutes how you can best interact and assist. Then get out there and be the amazing people that you are.

Thank you for serving with your heart,

Beth Costa-Bland

Dept Auxiliary Outreach Chair



National Home

This was the first time I had been to Illinois Day at National Home. The support they give our Veterans and their families is phenomenal. This is why we need to get their name out to our community. Put the Home's brochure in local businesses. if they will allow you. Even if it only helps one you have done your job.

Buddy®Poppy

With Veteran's Day around the corner, it is time to get those Poppy Drives organized.

Remember when purchasing your poppies a portion goes to the National Home. The money you collect goes in your Relief Fund. This fund helps our Veteran's, their families, our brothers, and sisters who are in need.

Keep those reports coming in, it is great to see what all you are doing with the poppies.

Happy Fall everyone! Harvest is in full swing. There will be slow moving vehicles out on the road.

So please watch out for them, do not be in a rush, they are doing their job.

Buddy® Poppy/National Home

Carol Shutts Chairman



Grave Registration

It with profound sadness that I deliver the loss of our beloved sister,

Patti McLeod passed away on September 6th . Patti was Past Department Secretary and Past Department Assistant Treasurer. On Monday, October 6th at Abraham Lincoln Cemetery in Elwood, IL. Committal services will take place at 10:00 am. Continue to keep her husband Robert and her entire family in your prayers.

Past 8th District President, Diana Rader went to her heavenly home on September 11th .

Keep Diana's family in your prayers. She also worked the registration booth at Department Convention for years.

Peggy Blair, Daughter of VAVS Rep. Maggie Davis passed away on August 17th .

Keep the families of Patti, Diana, and Peggy in your prayer.

As Chaplain we have several responsibilities which we have been elected to uphold.

The VFW National Organization outlines the duties of the Chaplain to perform duties in

connection with their office as the Ritual may prescribe, or the President may require.

When performing your duties they are to be conducted with reverence and respect. All Members should stand in accordance with our Ritual (Auxiliary, District and Department meetings). There should be no movement of the membership within the meeting room except for those outlined in the Ritual. The meeting room should remain silent without distractions. Your Guard has a very important role in not allowing anyone to enter the meeting space until the opening services have been completed and Officers have returned to their respective stations. This same attention and respect are also given when closing services are conducted.

Remember the Bible is to be closed when conducting event not related to our Ritual. This process gets overlooked more often than we think. This is unacceptable and disrespectful.

As Chaplain, you conduct other solemn ceremonies which are detailed in the 2025 Ritual manual on page 90. On occasion you may also be asked to provide an Invocation and/or benediction at special events not outlined in our Ritual manual. There are prayers for these occasions that the National Chaplain has provided to all Department Chaplains. You may also want to create prayers having a defined meaning for the event you were asked to pray.

One final thought, as Chaplain, listen, comfort, and not be judgmental whenever a Members ask to speak with you. Sometimes, as Chaplain you may be the only person they may feel comfortable speaking with. Listen to their conversation which sometimes may take on different tones. As Chaplain do not become agitated, defensive or offensive toward your members. Respect that member, they are putting confidence in you and your position. Most importantly, if the member is asking for assistance ask them for their approval to include others to find an answer. Respect all our Members.

Michael **Maruszak – Department Chaplain**



Hospital Report

I want to give a shout out to District 11 and District 15 for the great job they did on

collecting items for our Veterans at Illiana and Marion. You rock!! I know that many other Districts and Auxiliaries are doing similar projects. Please make sure to post them on the Department website or send me pictures of your projects. A special thank you to District 15 for also including some pet supplies in their project. What a great way to kick off our special project for the Hospital Program this year.

The holidays will be fast approaching. I am not even sure where the summer went to. Please make plans to include our Veterans at our VA facilities or local facilities with events that will include or benefit them. Please make sure to think of our women Veterans when planning these events.

It is great to see that many of our VA facilities are working hard or have already completed projects for Women's centers at their facilities. Reach out to your local VA facility to see what they need for these Women's centers.

Work with your local youth groups to make cards or little gifts for our Veterans. I know that our Veterans enjoy them very much and love that our youth are thinking about them. This can also benefit the Auxiliary. You can report ½ in Hospital and ½ in Youth activities. You are also educating our youth on what our Veterans have done for them to enjoy the things they do.

Keep up the great work you are doing and make sure to REPORT, REPORT, REPORT!!

Laura Knackstedt, Chairman



LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OCTOBER 2025



**Kathryn Rowold
Chairman**

As part of this year's 'gratitude attitude' theme and lighting the way between veterans, their families and legislators, this time of year is the perfect time to demonstrate our appreciation.

As stated at VFW Auxiliary National Convention this year by National Legislative Ambassador Amy Jo Lett, "A simple thank you can fuel meaningful change." Veterans Day and Christmas are prime days to contact veterans and legislators with messages of thanks and advocacy. Below are some ideas of how to create thank you notes with a purpose:

- Host a note-writing campaign to thank veterans.
- Connect this with a community veterans' event such as Veterans Day celebrations
- Pair notes with QR codes directing recipients to VFW Action Corps Weekly and VFW Priority Goals. QR codes can be pasted into the card and/or a separate note in the card
- Work with youth to decorate the cards

A reminder that this year's Legislative Program awards at the Department and National level will be presented to the Auxiliary Chairman and District Chairman with the most outstanding activity and/or event to create thank-you notes and cards to veterans that include links to VFW Action Corps Weekly and/or the VFW Priority Goals.

Enjoy the fall season and THANK YOU for all you do for our veterans!



Membership

Illinois is kicking off a great membership year. As of this moment Illinois sits at 82.83%. This is up from two weeks ago when we were at 81.37%. Our sprinkle squads across the state of Illinois have been busy.

We sent out email traffic to the Districts as well as posted on Department of Illinois VFW Auxiliary's Facebook page about getting our annual members' dues notices out. Pointing out that folks can email those notices, however leadership should assess if some should be general mailed out due to email address challenges.

Our State's first target for achievements were to get to 85% by the 3rd of August. We had 3 Districts hit 85% as of the 3rd of August. District 12 (87.63%), District 08 (88.75%), and District 03 (90.70%). We had 58 Auxiliaries hit 85%. Of those we had 39 auxiliaries hit 90%. Of those we had 20 auxiliaries hit 95% and of those we had 11 Auxiliaries hit 100% or more. The exiting part was we had **64** "New" life or annual members.

All of these Districts and Auxiliaries were put into our drawing at the C.O.A Saturday the 23rd of August at Tinley Park, Illinois. As a reminder, those that hit 85% by the 3rd of August receive one opportunity. Those who hit 95% receive two opportunities. Those who hit 100% receive 3 opportunities and those that hit 101% receive 4 opportunities.

It was exciting to have Danetta Wakefield, National Council Member #5, visiting from Missouri pull the lucky winners for the opportunity to spin on the Reward Wheel. Besides cash, there were also Life Membership vouchers. From the District pool was District 12. The lucky winner for the the Auxiliary pool was Paul McVey Auxiliary 1592 out of District 17.

District 12 spun and won \$500.00 and Auxiliary 1592 spun and won \$250.00 .



But here is even greater news, as of 8/22/2025 we had a continued growth of 4 Districts hitting 85% or better. As District 12, District 08, and District 03 climbed above 89%, we saw District 07, District 14, District 18 and District 17 get up over that 85% hurdle. We had 3 more auxiliaries get over 85% and we had “new” membership grow 13 more new members to 77 in just two weeks.

The Illinois Sprinkel Squads are doing their thing and we are on our way to getting the membership above 100%.

Respectfully,

Alena Kim & Katie Makey

Alena Kim & Katie Makey

Co-Chairman of Membership

vfwauxakim@gmail.com 253-355-0613 & katieilauxmembership@gmail.com 224-627-2329



?? VFW Auxiliary Scholarship Bulletin – Fall 2025 Edition

As we move into fall, it's time to rally support and participation for our incredible scholarship programs. Here are a few key reminders:

?? Scholars App Reminder

Auxiliary Chairmen — please contact your Post District Chairman to ensure your Post/Auxiliary is included in the Scholars App. This platform helps promote our scholarship contests and

streamlines submissions. If your Post hasn't been added yet, let me know and I'll help get you included!

?? Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen Contests

The deadline to submit entries for both the Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen contests is October 31, 2025. These programs give students a platform to express their patriotism and win valuable scholarships. Let's make sure every eligible student has the opportunity to participate!

?? Continuing Education Scholarship

This year, we're thrilled that National President Lois Callahan has chosen the Continuing Education Scholarship as her Special Project. As your Department Chairman, I'm excited to help grow this opportunity for our members and their families.

This scholarship supports Auxiliary members and their immediate family members who wish to further their education. Your donations help expand the number of awards available!

How to Donate: Via MALTA under the "Make a Gift" tab Or mail a check to National Headquarters, earmarked: "National President's 2025–2026 Special Project"

Eligibility Requirements: Deadline is February 15, 2026; Must be an Auxiliary member for at least one year, or a spouse/child of a member; Must demonstrate financial need; Must be at least 21 years old; Must submit an essay (300 words or less); Applications will be available on the Scholarship Program webpage at vfwauxiliaryil.org and in MALTA under Member Resources & Scholarships. Follow the directions on the application on submitting the application.

?? Special Drawing Announcement

To encourage support, I'm holding a drawing for any Auxiliary that donates \$25 or more to the National President's Special Project. Our Department Treasurer Linda Lorenz will track donations from the auxiliaries, and the winner will be announced at the Department Convention in June 2026!

Let's work together to make this year's scholarship program a success — for our youth, our members, and our future.

Barb Sweger, Department of IL Scholarship Chairman



Veterans & Family Support

What are some of the Veterans and Family Support programs offered through the VFW?

VA Claims and Separation Benefits

Financial Grants

Student Veteran Support

Mental Wellness

We are going to talk about VA Claims & Separation Benefits in this issue: Did you know the VFW is the largest organization of combat veterans. And there are many frustrations that sometimes arise when transitioning out of the military or filing a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The claims process can be confusing and one that service members and veterans shouldn't try to navigate alone. That's why the VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) was established to help all veterans, service members, their families and survivors.

NVS consists of a nationwide network of VFW Accredited Service Officers and Pre-Discharge Representatives who are experts in navigating VA processes and the key to our Veterans success. We don't want our Veterans to fall victim to "claim sharks" - companies that illegally represent veterans through the VA claims process and can charge thousands for doing so. Our cadre of highly trained and professional advocates help veterans cut through bureaucratic red tape. VA reports veterans represented by the VFW have recouped \$14.6 billion in compensation and pension on behalf of veterans and eligible family members in fiscal year 2024.

VFW Accredited Service Officers are trained experts, helping veterans develop their case with ease by reviewing and applying current law, pertinent legislation, regulations and medical histories. As skilled professionals, they assist in filing for disability compensation, rehabilitation and education programs, pension and death benefits, and employment and training programs. Furthermore, they won't hesitate to request hearings before the VA and the Board of Veterans Appeals to present oral arguments when needed.

VFW Accredited Service Officers are with America's veterans every step of the way once they're ready to file a claim. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer -- FREE OF

CHARGE -- to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process.

Pre-Discharge

In 2001, through a cooperative initiative with the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VFW Pre-Discharge program was established. This program

ensures separating and retiring active-duty military personnel receive assistance in obtaining their VA entitlements and benefits upon discharge.

VFW Pre-Discharge representatives guide military personnel through the VA claims process and can assist with the preparation and submission of forms and evidence to VA prior to separation from active duty. They can also answer questions about VA benefits and entitlements.

Our Pre-Discharge offices are located on or near major military installations across the country. If you are within 180 days of discharge, you can contact VFW Pre-Discharge representative to get the process underway. Here's an easy checklist of what you should bring to your appointment and more information on what to expect at a compensation and pension exam.

Unfortunately, not all our Service Members, Veterans or Family members are aware of these programs that are free. So it is very important to get the word out and donate to the NVS to help aid with the services that they provide for free .

Jennifer Hunter, Chairman



Youth Activities

WELCOME FALL!

Along with the seasons changing, so are our activities. We're now transitioning to more indoor events which opens up great opportunities to involve our youth.

The Auxiliary is in a unique position to help teach our youth the skills to become responsible adults through serving our country, communities and veterans. We have a new generation of veterans who need the support of

family, friends and country as they serve overseas and when they come home from conflicts. Involve youth groups with your events, projects and activities, the extra energy of our youth might be just what's needed to put that event, project or activity over the top. Today's youth are the future of our nation, involved them in all our Programs.

PATRIOTISM THROUGH LITERACY

Patriotism can be fostered by using literature to educate our youth about our national history, symbols and heroes. Reading books about our historical events and figures, hosting read-a-thons, creating patriotic art, and donating patriotic books to libraries and schools.

Celebrate and discuss every holiday. Take it beyond July 4th and Memorial Day. Veterans' Day, Flag Day, D-Day, Pearl Harbor Day, 9-11, we have many important days throughout the year. Talk to our youth about Patriotism and why the dates are significant to Americans.

ILLUSTRATING AMERICA

Spark the creativity of our youth. This patriotic themed contest is for our K-8 graders enrolled in public, private or parochial school or home study program. Entries will be judged on patriotic themes and technique. Official form, details on requirements and contest rules can be found on MALTA Member Resources or on the VFW Auxiliary website.

Deadlines:

Entries received by:

VFW Auxiliary - March 31

Department - April 15

National Headquarters - May 5

REMEMBER everyone likes to be recognized and acknowledged, especially our youth.

RAP Cards and Youth Acts of Kindness Certificates can be found on MALTA Member Resources. You can alter the templates to suit your needs.

A random Act of Kindness business sized card can be easily carried and

presented as you observe them in the act. The same thing applies to our RAP Cards. Recognizing the actions at the time will have a significant impact on that child.

When working with youth, it's always important to consider their safety and needs. Ensure that all youth you encounter have the best experience possible.

Always respect the time commitments of our youth. Be clear about when an event or project starts and when it ends.

Parents should always be welcome to stay and take part in the activity.

Always make sure the proper safety measures are taken for everyone involved. Also ensure the activities or projects are age appropriate.

Be extremely conscious of the location where you bring or meet the Youth.

Maintain and model healthy boundaries with children, be a role model.

It only takes a minute to make a difference in the life of a child. There are many small, positive things we can all do to help protect and nurture our children. A few words of praise and encouragement to a child, listening carefully to what child has to say, showing a child you care, are simple actions that have a profound impact on a child's life.

Please feel free to reach out!!

Cathie Cook

Magickmaster@aol.com

