



The Navigator April 1, 2025

From the Desk of Department President Cindy:

As this year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on what an incredible journey it has been. I am profoundly grateful for the trust you placed in me to lead this year. It has been an absolute joy to serve alongside you, and I've cherished every single meeting we've shared. Where's Watters certainly added to the fun.

One of the highlights of this year has been the impactful work we accomplished together for our Veterans and their families. From providing essential items in backpacks for the homeless, to donating diapers to service members with young children, to offering personal interaction through visits—and perhaps even introducing a furry companion—your dedication has been nothing short of inspiring. Thank you doesn't begin to express the gratitude I feel for each of you. Your unwavering commitment to going above and beyond has been extraordinary.

I came into this role with high expectations, and you surpassed them all. The tremendous contributions to This Able Veteran, both in funds raised and in the outpouring of backpacks and other support, are nothing short of spectacular. This year's success has exceeded all my hopes, but our work is not yet done. Our focus now shifts to membership. Achieving 100% membership is critical to bringing the Department into the Circle of Excellence. Together, we can ensure that Illinois shines brightly in Ohio within that prestigious recognition.

This year marked the first time an invitation from the VFW to attend the Legislation Conference in Washington, D.C. It was a privilege for the Commander and me to accompany our VOD winner as he participated in the National Competition. Although Illinois was not announced as the 1st place scholarship winner, we were deeply honored to represent our state on such a significant platform.

During the conference, Doug Jameson served as the leader of our delegation in discussions with Senators, Representatives, and/or their staff. Together, we advocated on behalf of veterans, addressing key topics that are of critical importance to their well-being and future. I did manage to sneak away for a couple hours one day to visit the giant panda bears at the zoo. They were more than accepting to wear the Where's Watters hat for a photo opportunity.

By the time you read this, I will have had the honor of attending a profoundly moving event with This Able Veteran on March 28, where individuals will meet their service animals for the first time. I am deeply humbled and excited to be invited to such an intimate and transformative occasion.

Thank you for making this an unforgettable year. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the line officers, chairpersons, committee members, and every individual member for your exceptional dedication and remarkable contributions throughout this year. Your hard work and commitment have truly made a difference. Thank you! Let's continue to work together, driving forward with the same passion and dedication to achieving even greater goals next year. I would like to extend my best wishes to Diane Ahrens, the Line Officers, Chairman and members for a great new year in 25-26.

Love,
Cindy

Treasurer's Ramblings

Treasurer's Points

Delegates for the Department Convention in June 2025 will be elected at your April Meeting. Prior to your meeting, you will receive an email with the number of delegates and alternates for your auxiliary that will need to be elected. The email will also contain the President and Delegate fee that you will need to send to the Department Treasurer. There will be no invoices mailed as has been done in the past.

Just a reminder: the delegate fee was increased to \$10.00 at the convention held in June 2024. Whether your auxiliary plans to attend convention or not, this fee is due to the Department by May 15, 2025. This money is used to help pay for the Convention expenses. If not paid, your auxiliary will be considered in arrears.

Remember your audits **MUST** be current for your auxiliary to vote at the District, Department and National Convention.

REMINDERS:

- Auxiliary and District audits should be sent/emailed/faxed to the Department Treasurer. Please refer to your roster for the correct information.
- o The second quarter Auxiliary audit was due by July 31st
- o Your third quarter audit was due by October 31st
- o Your Fourth Quarter audit was due by January 31st
- o Your next audit for January 1 thru March 31, 2025 is due by April 30th
- o All audits must be received and verified prior to Department Convention or the Auxiliary/District will not be allowed to cast their vote. Also, National will be notified and you will not be able to vote at the National Convention in July.

If you need any help or have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I am here to help you.

From Secretary Rhonda Borkgren:

I can't believe how fast this year is flying by. Here we are having an election of officers already. I hope to see many new faces! I want to go over the information needed at your next Auxiliary meeting. First you need to do nomination and election of officers during new business. Just follow the Ritual book on page 42. It tells you exactly what to do. You will also need to elect delegates to the District, Department, and National Convention. For District you elect 1 Delegate for every 15 members or fraction thereof. For Department you elect 1 Delegate for every 30 members or fraction thereof. National Delegates are 1 for every 35 members or fraction thereof. A delegate is elected for a period of one year. Try to choose Delegates who will be attending Conventions. If you have a commander's wife who never attends auxiliary meetings, but you know she goes to Department and National Conventions with her husband, make her a delegate. When she registers, your auxiliary will have a vote. It helps the Department and your Auxiliary.

Once you are finished with election the SECRETARY should go into MALTA and under Installation Reports enter the information of who was elected. By doing it as soon as you are finished with election, you ensure your auxiliary will get the maximum number of points on the Circle of Excellence for next year! You will also need to send your Delegate form to Linda along with your delegate fees. While you are in MALTA, enter your Auxiliary Delegates for National Convention. They can only be entered by the Secretary, and they must be entered in MALTA. You can't snail mail them. If you have any problems, please call me at 309-714-8077 and I will walk you through it.

Your packet will be emailed to both the Secretary and President. One of you will need to print off the forms and take them to your April meeting.

Americanism Karen Hirstein



Another year is coming to a close it has been my pleasure to serve as the Americanism Chairman this year. I received numerous great reports on all the activities that all the Auxiliary's have done and continue to do. April 5th is the Gold Star Spouses Day so please remember not only the parents but the wife or husband, along with any children. I want to thank all of you that submitted reports and let us continue to promote Flag Education and citizenship everywhere plus help each other to be the best we can be. My heart goes out to all parents, spouses, children and brothers and sisters of our fallen servicemen and women. God Bless everyone.

Auxiliary Outreach Denita Ricci

GREETINGS!

It is hard to believe that our auxiliary reporting year will be coming to an end in just a couple short weeks. However, I know many members are still participating in Auxiliary Outreach projects so keep reporting through April 15th! Any Auxiliary Outreach projects after April 15th should be logged and reported in the new year following the convention in June.

Now comes the FUN part, reviewing all your Auxiliaries' efforts for the AWARDS!

CONGRATULATIONS! As of the beginning of March, I received a total of 150 reports. Many of those reports contained multiple days of Auxiliary Outreach reporting! I am so impressed by the number of members who are clearly committed to helping in their community and who spotlight what we do!

COLLAGES: The collages are coming in and I cannot wait to see all the creative layouts spotlighting the members who stood up and helped other organizations!

FOLLOW- UPS: Auxiliary Presidents may receive an email from me if I am missing your report for this program. I am happy to assist you in getting your time reported in the new system! I know change can be challenging.

Feel free to call or text me with any questions.

“Volunteering is at the very core of being a human. No one has ever made it through life

without someone else's help.” ~ Heather French Henry

IT HAS BEEN A GREAT YEAR!

Thank you for all you do for your community.

Best regards,

Denita Ricci

Department of Illinois Auxiliary Outreach Chairman

denita14aux@gmail.com | 847-951-9260

Buddy Poppy Cheryl Miller

Happy Spring everyone! Do you have your Easter baskets ready?

The days keep flying by on our calendars and soon we will be at the end of this reporting year. The X-sheet shows that 49 Auxiliaries have not yet reported in this program. Surely you have all done something with poppies or made your Health & Happiness or National Home General Fund donation. Your numbers do count, especially for donations. It only takes a few minutes to fill in those blanks on the report so please complete them before April 15th, which is the deadline.

Hopefully you've made a good head start on your poppy display. The display must be entered into your District competition to be eligible for Department judging. Just enter "VFW Poppy displays" in the Facebook search block to see pictures of the past beautiful work which has been done across the state.

Does your Auxiliary and/or Post have a Poppy drive over the Memorial Day weekend? If so, you should get those pretty red flowers ordered. You should allow at least four weeks to receive your order. Poppy drives are also something that you can report on! Do you follow posts on Facebook by the VFW National Home? Recent posts include a ribbon cutting for the new 43rd home, the Missouri/Pollett House. This is named after the

first family to reside at the National Home. Each week they highlight one of the houses and the sponsor. There are frequent posts about the children residing at the home and all the various events that they participate in. It's a very interesting and informative site, so please look it up and follow along with their news.

As always, if you have any questions or need help, please contact me!

Extension and Revitalization John Watters

As we prepare to close out our current year and look forward to the new one, it is essential to emphasize the importance of mentoring. Mentoring is a critical aspect of our work, and without it, we would fail to pass on valuable knowledge to our future members.

Mentoring is for everyone, regardless of whether you are a Department Officer, Auxiliary Officer or just a member. The fact is, all members mentor others, often without even realizing it. Reflect on when you first joined this organization; you had to learn many different things, such as when to stand or what is parade rest, and it is mentoring that has brought us to where we are today. We live in changing times and must adapt to meet current needs. We are all better members because of teaching one another. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our Deputy Chiefs of Staff. We have had a busy year working with auxiliaries, and our entire Department line and staff have mentored and supported all our efforts. I cannot thank them enough for their dedication to our organization and our veterans. As we move forward into the new year, let's remain mindful of the future of mentoring.

I've truly enjoyed my appointment this year as Department Chief of Staff. Thank you, Madam President Cindy, for the opportunity to work with such an outstanding group this year.

Historian Kathy Sullivan

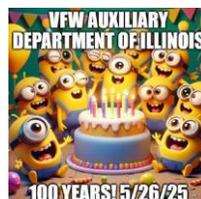
Facebook Page: Department of Illinois VFW Auxiliary
Cathy Sullivan : sully717@hotmail.com

National Theme: From Our Roots to Our Branches Extending Service to Our Veterans

Department Theme: Navigating the Future-A Compass for Leadership and Unity

OMG! Our last issue of the 2024-2025 year ☐

First and foremost I would like to **THANK** everyone for their efforts in getting a picture of each auxiliary for our Department's upcoming *100th Birthday on May 26th 2025!* Keep it up!



Historian & Media Relations is one of easiest programs to be reported in!

Reporting closes 4/15/25 so please get reported before then.

We can get 100% reported “easy peasy”

- ✓ Be sure to report if you have a Facebook page and/or share one with your Post.
- ✓ Be sure to report if you send a monthly or quarterly newsletter to you members.
- ✓ Create a Historian’s book for your President. Think about how much they’ll enjoy looking at it in the future!
- ✓ One “EXTRA” way to get reported is to “take a pic & post a pic” of your auxiliary for our Department’s 100th Birthday! I will report any auxiliary that does this, but that needs to happen before 4/15/25!
- Thank you all for “playing along” as we kept track of #WheresWatters. I hope you had as much fun as I did with it. President Cindy’s “scrapbook” will certainly be “colorful” ☐ We CAN have fun while doing the good work of the Auxiliary!
- President Cindy is still making her official visits, so please make sure you are documenting “#WheresWatters”; there is a District award up for grab\$.

Our National President Brenda Bryant is still “Branching Across America” Follow along with this QR code:



Please keep **Preserving** (our history), **Reporting** (our activities) & **Celebrating** (our Dept. 100th Birthday)!

The year is not over yet!



Hospital Chairman Laura Knackstedt

Thank you for everyone for their great support of the hospital program. For the first time in several years, we have exceeded our goal for raising funds for the hospital pledge. The hospital pledge is very important to our Veterans and our VA facilities. This allows our reps to be able to travel back and forth to our facilities without undo expenses to them. Many of our VA reps travel great distances to make visits and bring supplies to our Veterans at our VA facilities. Thank you all again for supporting this part of the program.

Hopefully many of you were able to visit our Veterans and our VA facilities. The wonderful work that we do for our Veterans at these facilities is amazing. Without your help many of our Veterans would go without simple everyday items. The 17 additional phone chargers are on order and hopefully will have been delivered to our VA hospitals when this article is published. Thank you all for your donations that made this possible. Many of our facilities are continuing to make improvements to their campuses. Upgrades to existing buildings along with construction on new buildings to better support our Veterans. We need to continue to fight with Congress to provide funds for these projects. Our Veterans deserve it for the sacrifices they have made for our country.

Even though our year is coming to a close, we need to continue to support, provide for and visit our Veterans at our VA facilities and our local facilities. Our Veterans look forward to our visits and enjoy the conversations we have with them. Making them feel like they are not forgotten is very important to their well-being both physically and mentally. Please keep up the great work you all are doing. I am very proud to be a part of this great organization and knowing that our Veterans are our top priority. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!

Legislative Lisa Rivera

It has been an extraordinarily successful year for VFW-supported legislation. Congratulations Legislative Team Illinois! Your hard work and vigilance made the quality of life for our veterans, active military, and military families much better because you were advocates, you were informed, and you were engaged. Continue to be all those things.

The reports were very well done and showed all your passion for the work you did. I am so proud of all of you! Keep up the wonderful work brothers and sisters! Respond to every Action Alert received from Action Corp and continue to report on all your activities. Remember to check in on your senior veterans and keep our active military in your prayers. I wish you all much success in your legislative endeavors for the upcoming new term year.

Thank you, Madam Department President, Cindy, for this appointment. It was my honor, my pleasure, and my great privilege to be a part of your chairmen team.

Enjoy the Spring season! Happy Easter to you all! See you at convention!

Lisa Rivera, Department Legislative Chairman

Membership Kathryn Rowold, Mary Lee Co-Chairman



As Watters Flight 2025 is collecting boarding passes for Department Convention in Columbus, OH in August, we must continue Navigating the Future to reach 101%+ in membership by June 30, 2025.

Annual dues must be received at VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters by June 30, 2025, for the member to maintain his or her continuous years of membership within the organization.

And don't stop recruiting new passengers (members) for our flight! Be sure every area of the application is completed. It is important to include who recruited the new member (your name and membership number) to receive credit towards recruiting awards. Be sure the member's name, address, phone, email and date of birth are included. Phone and email address are vital when it comes to contacting the member.

For the application, how do you determine whether to check "post affiliated" or "non-affiliated". If the Veteran they are joining under is a member of the post they are joining, then they are POST affiliated and just need his or her name, membership number and relationship to them. Non-affiliated means your Veteran is not a member of the post you are joining or is deceased. You need to include the relationship, name of Veteran, Post number if a member, name of campaign ribbons or medals, dates and location of service. A credit card or ACH can only be used for a life membership. Be sure the application is signed and dated.

Thank you for all the work you have done to maintain and grow our membership in this great organization. We look forward to a full flight with a waiting list on Watters Flight 2025!

Scholarships Laurie Sparwasser

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AND PATRIOT'S PEN

Our Voice of Democracy Department winner, Joseph Martinez, received a \$2000 award at the National Competition and our Department Patriot's Pen winner, Georgia Roscoe, won \$1000 at National. Congratulations to both of these remarkable young people.

The only Scholarship program left to work is the Patriotic Art.

YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART - 2-D

All the information for this contest should be at the schools. It is due to your Auxiliary by March 31st. This is for any High School student in grades 9-12, except for foreign exchange students, previous National winners in the Patriotic Art contest, students age 20 or older, GED and adult education students.

This must be on canvas or paper. The students can use watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempers, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, marker or any other media.

DO NOT frame this art. Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board. If matted, it must be matted in white. DO NOT use color mats. Reinforce the back with heavy paper.

Mounted and floating mats may also be used.

The art should not be smaller than 8" x 10" and no larger than 18" x 24", not including the mat.

3-D YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART

Entries for this contest can be paper, paper-mache, pottery, sculpture, fabric, wood, metalwork, etc.

Entries cannot be larger than 18" in any direction and cannot weight more than 5 pounds.

Jewelry, digital art and photography are not accepted.

A student can enter both the 2-D and 3-D contests.

There is no District judging in Illinois for either contest. Send your 1st place winners to me by April 15, 2025. Every Auxiliary can send me a 1st place winner in each category.

Remember to please send these to me by UPS or Fed Ex. Last year the USPS did not get me an art picture until May 15th even though it stated it needed to be delivered by April 15th. I want every student that enters the contest and is your 1st place winner to be judged at the Department level.

***Make sure the application is completed and signed by the student and a parent or guardian. Your Auxiliary name, number, Department, and signature by your Scholarship chairman should also be completed on the application before sending it to me. ***

Please recognize your winners by giving them an award at an award ceremony and recognize the parents and teachers. Also, put pictures in the newspaper or Facebook of your winners.

If your Auxiliary is able, please make a donation to the Illinois Patriotic Art Fund sent to our Department Treasurer and/or the National Patriotic Art Escrow Fund on MALTA, so the award amounts can be increased.

Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Laurie Sparwasser
Dept. of Illinois Scholarship Chairman
618-593-4376

Veterans and Family Support Tammy Napier

As the 2024-2025 "Navigating the Future" Auxiliary year swiftly comes to a close, I want to take a moment to extend my heartfelt thanks to all members, Auxiliaries, and Districts who have contributed their time, energy, and resources to projects benefiting our Veterans, active-duty military, their families, and our communities. Your hard work and dedication have truly made a difference, and the impact of your efforts will be felt for years to come.



Your dedication to the essential programs that make up the Veterans and Family Support (VFS) program has been nothing short of inspiring. Whether through donations, hands-on service, or heartfelt support, you've helped ensure that our mission continues to thrive. Thank you for your unwavering support throughout the year. I genuinely appreciate all that you've done.

Please remember, the 2024-2025 Auxiliary reporting year will end on April 15, 2025. However, the work we do for our Veterans does not stop once the reporting year concludes.

The Veterans and Family Support Program is an ongoing effort, and any reports received after April 15th will be forwarded to the 2025-2026 Department Veterans and Family Support Chairman.

Please, keep up the outstanding work for the VFS program as we move forward toward a new Auxiliary year. I hope to see everyone at the Department Convention in Springfield!

Youth Activities Barb Sweger

Hello everyone!

As we approach the Department Convention in Springfield, IL on June 6-7, 2025, I'd like to remind all of you that the deadline for submitting auxiliary and district award forms is quickly approaching—April 15th. Be sure to get your forms submitted by then to ensure your youth's achievements are recognized!

On another exciting note, I can't wait for the Illustrating America entries to start rolling in—this has always been my favorite part of the program! The artwork created by our talented youth never fails to impress, and I look forward to seeing the creative masterpieces they've come up with this year.

Let's keep encouraging and supporting the young artists and achievers in our communities. They are our future, and their talents deserve to be celebrated!

Thank you all for your continued dedication to the youth activities in our department. See you in Springfield!