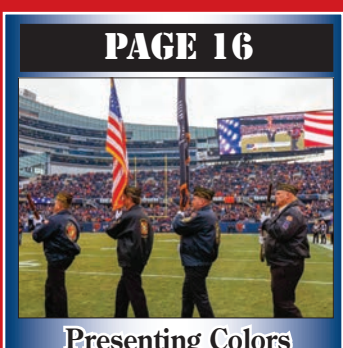
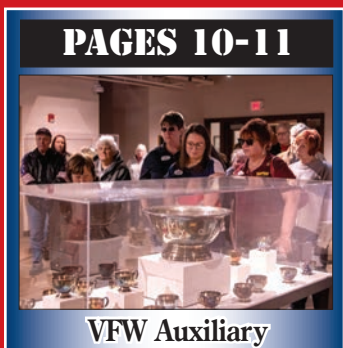


Kula, Garcia take state Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen top honors at state awards ceremony



The State of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars announced its Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen State Champions at the 77th annual Voice of Democracy banquet held Feb. 11 in Springfield.

Andrew Kula, a senior at Lemont Township High School in Lemont, Illinois, was named the VFW Department of Illinois' first-place winner in the 2022-23 Voice of Democracy Scholarship program.

Kula, son of Mark and Shannon Kula, is the recipient of the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism award in the amount of \$2,500.00.

Kula, the District 19 champion, was sponsored by Lemont 22 Honor Post 5819 and its Auxiliary in Lemont, Illinois.

Grace Garcia, an 8th grade student at the Holy Family Catholic Academy in Inverness, Illinois, was selected as Illinois' first-place winner of the VFW's 2022-23 Patriot's Pen youth essay contest.

Garcia, daughter of David and Margaret Garcia, is the recipient of the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism award in the amount of \$1,000.

Garcia, the District 4 champion who was sponsored by Arnold-Heath VFW Post 5151 in Streamwood, Illinois.

Both students were provided the opportunity to read their winning essays at the banquet.

In addition to Kula and Garcia, awards were presented to each of the remaining 16 District Voice of Democracy Champions as well as second, third, and fourth place State Patriot's Pen students.

Patriot's Pen Awards

• **Gaye Hines Memorial 2nd Place award** - MaKayla Korsmeyer, a 7th grade student at Highland Middle School in Highland, is the recipient of the Gaye Hines Memorial 2nd Place award in the amount of \$500.

Korsmeyer, the District 12 champion, was sponsored by Highland Post 5694 in Highland.

• **William Glenn Britt Memorial 3rd Place award** - Connor Allison, an 8th grade student at the Chillicothe Elementary Center and Junior High School in Chillicothe, is the recipient of the William Glenn Britt Memorial award in



State Commander Bobby Edwards and Department President Marvie Wisniewski presents Illinois' Voice of Democracy Champion Andrew Kula with the the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism award in the amount of \$2,500.00.



District 4 Commander Steve MacInnes accepts the John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism first place State Patriot's Pen award in the amount of \$1,000 on behalf of Patriot's Pen Champion Grace Garcia from State Commander Bobby Edwards and Department President Marvie Wisniewski.

the amount of \$400.

Allison, the District 9 champion, was sponsored by Marty Gollnitz Post 4999 and its Auxiliary in Chillicothe.

• **Raymond L. Moreland Memorial 4th Place award** - Christopher Mertz, an 8th grade student at McHenry Middle School in McHenry, is the recipient of the Raymond L. Moreland Memorial award in the amount of \$300.

Mertz, the District 5 champion, was sponsored by Fox River Post 4600 and its Auxiliary in McHenry.

Voice of Democracy Awards

• **2nd Place: George R. Cramer & Ray R. Soden Scholarship Award** - Annalyn Harper, a senior at Ridgeview High

School in Colfax, Illinois, is the recipient of the George R. Cramer and Ray R. Soden Scholarship Award in the amount of \$1,500.00.

Harper, the District 7 champion, was sponsored by Milton Hill Post 2029 in Saybrook.

• **3rd Place: Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award** - Rylee Jo Giffin, a junior at Marquette Academy High School in Ottawa, is the recipient of the Terry L. McKinney Memorial Scholarship Award in the amount of \$1,250.00.

Giffin, the District 9 champion, was sponsored by Marseilles Post 5506 in Marseilles.

• **4th Place: Dale & Catherine Clifton Award** - Abbigayle Miller, a senior at Edwardsville

High School in Edwardsville, is the recipient of the Dale and Catherine Clifton Award in the amount of \$1,000.00.

Miller, the District 12 champion, was sponsored by Earl W. Homer Memorial Post 7678 and its Auxiliary in Cottage Hills.

• **5th Place: Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary Award** - Sarah Restoff, a senior at Pinckneyville High School in Pinckneyville, is the recipient of the Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary Award in the amount of \$750.00.

Restoff, the District 13 champion, was sponsored by Wal-

See Voice of Democracy Continued on Page 8

Postmaster: Send address changes to V.F.W. Circulation Department, 406 West 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111.

Boyd Becomes Highest-Ranking Officer of Color in Illinois National Guard 300-Year History

South Side Chicago native, Illinois VFW member, receives 2nd star, promoting him to Major General

Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, the Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, and a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Illinois, made history Feb. 4 when he was promoted to Major General, making him the highest-ranking officer of color in the nearly 300-year history of the Illinois National Guard.

"I'm honored to congratulate Major General Rodney Boyd on his promotion — becoming the highest-ranking Black and officer of color in the Illinois National Guard's history," said Governor JB Pritzker. "This promotion speaks to the progress the Illinois National Guard has made in ensuring historically underrepresented communities are fairly represented within its ranks and given the same opportunities to excel as everyone else. Major General, congratulations on this extraordinary achievement—and on behalf of the State of Illinois, thank you for your service."

Boyd, who grew up on Chicago's South Side, received his second star promotion during a ceremony at the Carver Military Academy in Chicago, where Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton officiated.

"The promotion of Rodney Boyd to Major General is a tremendous milestone for the Illinois National Guard and a major step forward for our state," said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. "As we turn

to the voices of leaders and trailblazers this Black History Month, I'm proud to raise up General Boyd for making his mark and contributing to this chapter of American History. His leadership and dedication to service has built a legacy that will inspire future generations to reach new heights."

Boyd expressed feeling humbled and honored to be promoted to Major General. He said officers like Brig. Gen. (retired) Alicia Tate-Nadeau, the highest-ranking female officer in the history of the Illinois National Guard, and Lt. Col. (retired) Tammy Duckworth, who is now in the U.S. Senate and helped confirm his promotion, have helped pave the way for him as well as many future Illinois National Guard leaders.

He also pointed to Brig. Gen. Walt Whitfield, who commanded the 33rd Separate Infantry Brigade and was the last Black general in the Illinois National Guard before General Boyd, and Brig. Gen. Richard Jones who lent his name to the General Jones Armory on the South Side of Chicago, established the integrated 178th Infantry Regiment out of the all-Black "Fighting" 8th Infantry Regiment, and served as the U.S. Ambassador to Liberia.

"I stand on the shoulders of giants to achieve this second star. There are many minority leaders who have made their mark on the proud history of the Illinois National Guard.

Seeing someone that looks like you in the upper echelons can serve as an inspiration. A historic achievement like this never belongs to one person. I have my family to thank, especially Darlene, my wife of 32 years who has inspired and supported me through all the deployments and military commitments," said Boyd. "I have multiple mentors to thank, including my boss, Major General Neely. I have many teachers and role models to thank — people who motivated a kid from the South Side of Chicago to find success in life. I'm also grateful for many historical leaders in the Illinois National Guard and the military. I see tremendous talent coming up through the ranks now. There are leaders from many different backgrounds. It is the job of senior leaders to mentor and develop their replacements. I see that happening at all levels in the Illinois National Guard."

"Recruiting and retaining great talent that is reflective of the diversity of the State of Illinois is an important strategic goal for the Illinois National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Rich Neely, the Adjutant General of Illinois and Commander of the Illinois National Guard. "Rodney Boyd was chosen to Command the Illinois Army National Guard because he was the best officer for the job, period. General officers are developed over many years. This promotion reflects his hard work and talent as well as the progress the Illinois



Newly-promoted Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard, thanks friends and family for their support throughout his military service at the promotion ceremony Feb. 4 at Carver Military Academy in Chicago.

National Guard has made and continues to make in developing all its Soldiers and Airmen to their fullest potential."

Boyd grew up on the South Side of Chicago, often passing by the General Jones Armory and participating in the Bud Biliken Parade as a child. Seeing the service members parade by inspired him to join the Marine Corps in 1982. After completing his obligation as a Marine, he joined the Illinois Army National Guard.

In August 1990, he received his commission as a second lieutenant from the Officer Candidate School at Camp Lincoln, Springfield. He took on progressively more challenging staff and command assignments in logistics, plans, and operations, and deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. He commanded the 1644th Transportation Company, the 405th Brigade Support Battalion, and the 108th Sustainment Brigade. His first assignment as a general officer was as the Assistant Chief of Staff J4 (Joint Logistics Wartime) for U.S. Forces Korea.

Governor JB Pritzker appointed him as the Assistant Adjutant General - Army of the Illinois National Guard and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard on July 1, 2021.

In addition to his military achievements, Boyd worked in law enforcement for decades. He served with the Bellwood Police Department for 23 years, working his way up from a patrolman in 1990 to the Chief of Police from 2011 to 2013.

After retiring from the Bellwood Police Department, Boyd worked as a vice president for operations for JP Morgan Bank and as a supervisory criminal investigator for the Northwestern University Police Department. He worked for AASKI Technology Inc., which supports the Army National Guard Mission Command Training Support Program, prior to being appointed Commander of the Illinois

Army National Guard.

Boyd has been a lifelong learner. His professional military education includes the U.S. Army War College, the Joint Combined Warfighter Course, and the Dual-Status Commander Course. He holds a bachelor's degree in Criminology from Northern Illinois University, a Master of Arts degree in Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a second Master of Arts degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.



Darlene Boyd, wife of newly-promoted Maj. Gen. Rodney Boyd, pins new rank as sons, Rodney, Jr. and Randy look on. Boyd received his second star in a historical promotion Feb. 4 at the Carver Military Academy in Chicago, making him the highest ranking officer of color in the 300-year history of the Illinois National Guard.

ILLINOIS VFW NEWS

USPS 008-251

Official Publication of the Department of Illinois

Volume #60 Issue #3

The Illinois VFW News is published four times per year (September, December, March and June) by the Department of Illinois, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, 3300 Constitution Dr.,

Springfield, IL 62711. Periodical Postage paid at Springfield, IL and additional office: Stevens Point, WI.

Postmaster: Send address changes to V.F.W. Circulation Department, 406 West 34th Street, Kansas City, MO 64111.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE:

\$1.00 of the annual membership dues paid by each member to a Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Department of Illinois, is for a year's subscription to the Illinois VFW News. Subscription rates for non-members is \$2.00 per year, \$5.00 three years.

NEWS COPY & PHOTOS:

Send to Illinois VFW News, PO Box 13206, Springfield, Illinois 62791 or email to bwilson@vfwil.org. Deadline is the 1st of the month before above listed publishing months.

NEWSPAPER COMMITTEE:

Laurie Emmer, Chairman; Bobby Edwards; Joe Bartley; Editor: Barbara Wilson; Printer: Berlin Journal Newspapers, Berlin, WI 54923



Resolve to be more active in your Post, District this year!

Happy New Year! January and the New Year bring hope for the renewal of all that is good in our lives. It is time to make a resolution to set and pursue new goals, be stronger, do better and achieve, and to inspire others.

This New Year, why not resolve to become more active in your Post, District and Department and increase your efforts on behalf of the Post, District, Department, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars? Why not resolve to bring in at least one new Member before the end of this Post, District and Department year?

Comrades, veterans make a tremendous difference in the lives of our members and the people we serve, and you can be a part of that difference by sharing the pride that comes with active membership and volunteer service.

Post, District Officers, consider a resolution to strengthen your programs for youth, patriotism, Veterans, and those with

special needs, and strive during the remaining year to put a "face" on your Post/District and prove yourself reliable partner in the community.

We offer great appeal to those who know who we are and what we do; we just need to let the public know, along with our fellow veterans. Make a resolution to be loud and proud, and let your bright light shine throughout the community. This is also the time to plan for a strong finish for your Post, District year and to identify the capable Post/District Leaders for the coming year. You have worked diligently throughout this year to retain and increase membership and to serve your members and the Community, so finish strong and complete the year on a high note.

You know where you rank in your support of the Department of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars, so finish strong by achieving the National Commander-in-Chief's goal in further support of our great fraternal organization.

Post and Districts these final months of this 2022-2023 Year let us remember our Vision and Mission to our Great Fraternal Organization "The Veterans of Foreign Wars."

It is time we get back into our communities and show them that we CONTINUE TO "BE RELEVANT." It is time that we reach out to our members to get them back involved or even to simply catch up with them and make sure they are doing well. We need to make sure that we are always "relevant" with our Post members because our members are the lifeblood of this organization and always need to be a priority. I can tell you firsthand that when our leadership made calls to our members, they were grateful for the call and to hear from their fellow veterans.

Looking forward to the remainder of the 2022-2023 year and the 2023-2024 year coming up, I would like for the Post and Districts to think and start planning.

During this year's upcoming elections at the Post, District levels we must review five questions when planning for our future and for our elected leaderships engagement. (1) Where are we? (2) How are we doing? (3) What can we do to make things better? (4) Are members involved within the post, district activities and community? (5) How do we execute

post and district activities for the betterment of our great fraternal organization?

We must return to family-oriented activities to attract younger eligible veterans and change the mindset of the post is just a bar. Post and District Commanders leadership principals will be noticed, by their actions and engagement, by our members, as the person who is leading the Post or District.

Post and District Committees must also provide the excitement for other members to want to become apart and contribute their thoughts and ideas. Remember! Not One Person Can Do It Alone.

I would like to encourage "ALL" elected Post and District Trustees to review their duties and responsibilities. The trustees are the checks and balances to a well-organized and prosperous organization. Here is one example: At least monthly, review the Monthly Report of Receipts and Expenditures of the Post Quartermaster. Failure to follow can lead to a Post becoming insolvent and outside agencies applying judgments against the Post.

In these changing times, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, America's largest organization of combat Veterans knows all too well the experience of fighting a sometimes-invisible enemy. This unique understand-

ing, and situational readiness and dedication, has given this country the will to adapt and overcome all adversities through military service is perpetuating the VFW and its members' commitment to service. The VFW remains an organization of veterans #StillServing.

We have adapted to innovative ways of conducting our Post, District and Department meetings. We have 36,000 plus members represented in the 17 Districts and 258 Posts in the Department of Illinois. We need to strive to increase our membership back to 50,000 plus so we have the power and leverage to provide even greater support to the veterans. Know our members, posts, and districts are out there on the front lines every day serving our veterans, their families, and our communities. We need to do a better job of capturing that data and getting credit for our service hours by filling out and submitting the Dashboard's Five Pillars, (Old X-Sheet). The Veterans of Foreign Wars should take pride in their commitment to Veterans and today's military. Our programs ensure "no one" is forgotten. We as VFW members care passionately about serving their fellow citizens. Just as we pledged serving out time in uniform, we again vow to sustain a lifelong commitment to the Nation and our Communities.



With our Department Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen competitions over for this year, by now most Posts and Districts have conducted their "After Action Reviews" (AARs).

For those not familiar with this term, it's an evaluation of a completed process or event, identifying what worked well, what did not work well, and what should be done differently next time.

Having had the privilege of being the guest speaker at several District awards banquets over the last two years, I'd like to share some of my observations while they're still fresh in my mind.

Some things are consistently done very well. The food has always been good. The Posts have always been clean, tidy, and very presentable. And there typically seems to be sufficient volunteers who've been very helpful.

In some areas I've seen stark differences where some Districts were better than others. Three areas in particular stand out: Program organization, coordination with the Auxiliary and the pronunciation of names.

The well-organized Awards Programs have several things in common. They follow a pre-determined sequence of events. The Master of Ceremonies (MC) uses a script. Roles for VFW and Auxiliary participants are established.

Certificates and prize checks are in place, close at-hand, ready to be presented. A clear path to the presentation area at the front of the room is identified ahead of time. An opportunity for picture-taking is planned out. The whole process is so smooth that it's obvious some sort of rehearsal or at least a dry-run was conducted ahead of time.

Coordination with the Auxiliary is more apparent in some Districts than others. It should be obvious to the audience that the VFW and the Auxiliary have coordinated with each other. And remember to acknowledge and give credit to the appropriate individuals (just list them in the script). It's important that the event depicts a good working relationship with our Auxiliary. These events, after all, showcase both of our organizations for the public. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that we're both organized, work well together... and are both worth joining for those who may be qualified and so inclined.

Another challenging component is always the pronunciation of names; some are better at handling this than others. This should be considered among the most important components. Dale Carnegie wrote that "a person's name is to him or her, the sweetest

sound in any language." If the purpose of the event is to honor individuals, that should start with pronouncing their name correctly. When I was a VOD and Patriot's Pen MC, I found it best to phone the individuals with difficult names; people are always delighted to help someone asking for the proper pronunciation of their name. While talking to them I'd repeat the name. And if I had to leave a message, I'd ask them to call me back and then repeat their name twice on voicemail. Once I had the proper pronunciation, I'd write it out phonetically for the script or speakers note. It should be obvious to the audience that we sincerely tried to say their name correctly.

We don't want a student or their family left with the memory of the audience laughing at the careless mispronunciation of their name. We want them to go home feeling their achievement was celebrated in a dignified, patriotic manner that will always have a special meaning to them.

So few people interact with Veterans today, that it's important for us to put our best foot forward when we do—to dispel the negative stereotypes and reinforce the positive perceptions. It's essential that young people see that after military service, a person can still lead a productive life; that there are Veterans who continue serving, and are contributing to society. And their parents need to see a smoothly functioning Veteran's organization, just in case they may know of Veterans who'd be interested in joining an organization that's worth the time.



Happy New Year! This fiscal year is going by very fast. Before you know it, the Department, Districts and Posts will be nominating and electing new officers for the 2023-2024 year.

Congratulations to Andrew Kula who is the 2023 State of Illinois VFW Patriot's Pen first place winner. It was an honor to co-present the Terry L. McKinney Memorial Third Place Award for Voice of Democracy to Rylee Jo Giffin at the Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen State Awards Ceremony held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield Illinois on February 11, 2023.

I want to thank all the Post and Districts who participated in the Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy program this year. In case you didn't know, the Patriots Pen and VOD program is the VFW's premier annual Scholarship event. I would like to provide you a little history about the VOD program. This audio-essay program was established in 1947. The audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves in a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. Each year, nearly 25,000 9-12 grade students from across the country enter to win

their share of more than \$2 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the program. The Department of Illinois first place winner wins a \$2,500 dollar cash prize and the national first place winner receives a \$35,000 dollar scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school.

Patriots Pen students participating in their program have more participants competing than the Voice of Democracy. Each year, nearly 68,800 students in grades 6-8 enter the VFW's Patriot's Pen youth essay contest for a chance to win their share of more than \$1.4 million in state and national awards. The Department of Illinois first place winner wins a \$1,000 dollar cash prize and the national first place winner wins \$5,000.

During a District Meeting I attended last year, a Comrade gave a briefing on the Wall of Faces. The Wall of Faces is a virtual Wall of Faces that features a page dedicated to honoring and remembering every person whose name is inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. In an effort to further preserve the legacy of those who sacrificed all in Vietnam, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) is com-

**See Junior Vice
Continued on Page 4**

'Mama Bear' Combat Leader Retires from Illinois Army National Guard after more than Two Decades of Service

Elaine Nussbaum of Bloomington was a key leader of Paris' famed 1544th Transportation Company

Maj. Elaine Nussbaum of Bloomington has a sing-song voice, infectious laughter, and a smile that stretches across her face and never seems to go away – even after working a 20-hour day.

She is a 4-H Club alum, has competed in multiple scholastic bowl tournaments, performed with Illinois State University's Gamma Phi Circus, sings in her church choir, and played parts in Bloomington-Normal community theatre – although she has never been cast as a tough, determined, and combat-tested Army leader.

And that is exactly who she was for more than two decades in the Illinois Army National Guard.

Nussbaum, a life member of John H. Kraus Post 454 in Bloomington, officially retired after 22 years of service on Friday, Nov. 4, during a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard's headquarters on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Ill. During the ceremony she said that she does not "look or run or even sound like a Soldier."

That did not matter to the Soldiers who served with Nussbaum. They described an officer who led with authentic caring and kindness, who would work "crazy" long hours to ensure the troops had what they needed, and who would surprise those celebrating, or struggling, with small empathetic gifts. When she corrected Soldiers, it was always with respect and an eye toward personal and professional growth. They described an officer who lived all the Army Values – Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.

"To me, she is the epitome of what a leader should be in the military," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Amanda Camden, who has worked with Nussbaum in logistics for several years and been on multiple exercises with her. "I think she was born that way. Her thoughtfulness, her compassion – it is who she is at her core."

Camden's 13-year-old dog, Sadie, died two weeks before the Eager Lion exercise in Jordan this year. Nussbaum brought her a small stuffed animal that looked like Sadie. When her 8-year-old cat, Ollie, died during the exercise, Nussbaum was there to just listen. "Yes, they were pets. But she understood what they meant to me."

"Maj. Nussbaum has influenced me to be an empathic leader, look for the positive before giving up, take the time to think of others, and to take pride in everything I do," said 1st Sgt. Eric Daggett, who worked with Nussbaum in the Illinois Army National Guard commercial transportation office. "She is the smartest, kindest, most dedicated person I know," he added. "Whenever I encounter an unfamiliar challenge, am ready to throw in the towel, or am dealing with Soldier issues, I will always reflect on Maj. Nussbaum's influences. She has truly made me a better person."

Nussbaum started her career with the Paris-based 1544th Transportation Company, joining the unit as a Simultaneous Membership Program Cadet contracted with the Reserve Officer Training Corps at Illinois State University in Normal, Ill. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and commissioned as a second lieutenant in 2003.

Nussbaum graduated from the Transportation Officer Basic Course in 2004, received two weeks of deployment training at Fort Bliss, Texas, and was thrust into one of the most challenging combat deployments in the Illinois National Guard's modern history – the 2004 deployment of the 1544th Transportation Company to Iraq.

"She wasn't afraid – no, she was afraid. We all were. Anyone who says they weren't afraid is lying. But she didn't show her fear. She was a strong person for her



Col. Kevin Little, commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and the Illinois National Guard's human resource officer, presents Maj. Elaine Nussbaum with her retirement certificate during Nussbaum's retirement ceremony at Camp Lincoln, Springfield. Nussbaum, was a key leader in the famed Paris, Ill.-based 1544th Transportation Company and took care of her Soldiers for 22 years. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Justin Malone, Illinois National Guard)

Soldiers," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 (retired) Raymond "Keith" Butler, who served as one of the senior NCOs with Nussbaum on the 2004 deployment. "She listened to her NCOs, showed confidence in her Soldiers, and worked tirelessly – tons of hours – to take care of her Soldiers."

Five 1544th Transportation Company Soldiers were killed in action during the deployment: Staff Sgt. Ivory L. Phipps, 44, of Chicago, Ill.; Spc. Jeremy L. Ridlen, 23, of Maroa, Ill.; Sgt. Shawna Morrison, 26, of Paris, Ill.; Spc. Charles Lamb, 23, of Casey, Ill.; and Sgt. Jessica L.

year, home of record state and branch of service.

This was an eye-opening education to actually see photos of our Comrades whose names are inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. I hope all who have the opportunity to visit this Webpage do so.

I also hope that sometime in the near future, a website will be developed to honor Afghanistan and Iraq Freedom Veterans.

In closing, as I looked at the diverse photos of the Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives for our country to ensure Democracy, I can't help but think about the display presented at the Department Convention every year.

On display every year at the Department Convention, thanks to Fred Woods from Chief Pontiac Post 1699 in Cahokia, you will see the photos of fallen soldiers of Illinois since 9/11. At this year's Department Convention, please take the time out to view the photos of Illinois fallen soldiers since 9/11.

Cawvey, 21, of Mahomet, Ill. Many more of the company's Soldiers were wounded.

Nussbaum had to wait to deploy until after graduating from her officer basic course. Both Phipps and Ridlen were killed in action before she arrived in theater. Just days before Nussbaum left, she attended Jeremy Ridlen's funeral services in Illinois where she talked to Jeremy's twin brother, Jason, also a Soldier in the 1544th who had escorted his brother home from Iraq. "He gave us helpful hints – information we could use in theater. I was amazed by the selflessness. He was mourning his brother, and he was concerned about us. We had some truly incredible people in that unit."

"I would not take back a day I spent in the military except those days when we lost brothers and sisters," Nussbaum said. "I'm kind of protective of our five brothers and sisters. They were not just random people or numbers to us."

She is also protective of those who survived the deployment and carry on the legacy of the unit. "There was so much focus on the horrific losses. (The media) never talked about how the Soldiers kept on going – going back on mission the very next day after an incident. They didn't talk about what they accomplished. There was never any talk about how our Soldiers came back and worked great jobs, or started families, or went to school. Or, as a unit, how great they did at (Fort Chafee, Arkansas' Exportable Combat Training Capability) or (Fort Irwin, California's National Training Center) or learning to use and

maintain new equipment. They never focused on the positive stuff – the competency, strength, and resiliency of our Soldiers," Nussbaum said.

"Her leadership style has always been maternal," said Lt. Col. Bradley Roach, the commander of the 6th Battalion, 54th Security Forces Assistance Brigade. When Nussbaum was the commander of the 1544th Transportation Co. after the deployment, Roach was the commander of the then East St. Louis-based 1344th Transportation Co. The two became close friends as they worked together to improve training for their units. Nussbaum is the Godmother of Roach's 4-year-old daughter, Rosalyn, and still regularly plays Bunco with his wife, Rachal.

Nussbaum might be a kind soul with the tendency to see the best in people, but "don't mess with her Soldiers," Roach warned. Or, as Butler said, "If you poke mama bear, watch out."

There are multiple stories of Nussbaum coming to the defense of her Soldiers. There was the time during the 1544th deployment when she pulled her tired and weary Soldiers from a ceremony rehearsal. There was the time when she walked out on a senior officer when the idea of re-designating the 1544th was raised. As a logistics officer, she went through great lengths to ensure that Illinois National Guard Soldiers received adequate contracted lodging, meals, and laundry service during multiple state active duty missions in 2020.

But the most famous story is how "Major Nussbaum can take

**See Mama Bear
Continued on Page 5**

Junior Vice

Continued from Page 3

mitted to finding a photo to go with each of the more than 58,000 names on The Wall.

The Wall of Faces allows family and friends to share memories, post pictures and connect with each other. The Wall of Face is on the VVMF Web Site located at "vvmf.org". When you visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Website homepage, you will see the Tab to select the Wall of Faces Tab. Once you have selected that tab, you will see the faces of the Vietnam War Veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Once you're on that page you can search a name to bring up a profile that you can view.

If you select a photo, it will bring up the profile of that individual. In that profile you will see the date of casualty, date of birth, home of record and the panel and line number that the name can be viewed on the wall at the memorial in Washington, DC. In

addition, once you select to view profile, you will see the rank, casualty province, county of record, state and branch of service. Also on the profile page, you can submit additional photo's, leave a remembrance and request a rubbing.

Another tab selection on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Website is the "In Memory Program" tab. This tab takes you to a page where you will see photos and names of men and women veterans who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. Just like the Wall of Faces Tab, you can search a name which will bring up a profile that you can view. If you select a photo, it will bring up the profile of that individual. In that profile you will see the date of death, date of birth and home of record. In addition, once you select to view profile, you will see the date of birth, date of death, induction

Mama Bear

Continued from Page 4
a punch.”

After she was commissioned, but before the 1544th Transportation Co. deployed, Nussbaum volunteered to serve as the designated driver when some of the unit's NCOs decided to have a few drinks at a local bar after a day of training. As the night went on, a group of men decided to pick a fight with the Soldiers. Nussbaum tried to get the Soldiers into the car and away from the situation, but when it became apparent that the two groups were squaring off, Nussbaum jumped into the middle of it trying to break it up. She got hit, directly in the face, by an errant blow. She was mostly unfazed by the blow to the face and finally succeeded in getting her Soldiers home safely. But she sported a spectacular shiner for a couple of weeks.

“She will, without hesitation, jump right in the middle of it when it comes to protecting her Soldiers,” Butler said. That was true in a bar brawl before the deployment and it was true of firefights during the deployment. It earned her the respect and admiration of the Soldiers, Butler said. “We were really happy to have her with the unit.”

“I was fortunate to have exceptional NCOs that made my job a lot easier,” Nussbaum said. “I worked hard to learn as much as I could as fast as I could. I knew I could go to my NCOs with questions. They had the knowledge and experience. My biggest fear was making a decision that might get someone hurt.”

Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Tuttle, the first sergeant of the headquarters company of the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, who served as one of Nussbaum's squad leaders and later her platoon sergeant was among those trusted NCOs during the 1544th's 2004 deployment. “Soldier care is her forte,” Tuttle said. “She has dealt with some grumpy, high-strung NCOs. She listened to the troops, and if they had issues, she went above and beyond to resolve them. We were, and still are, a tight family. It was really good to get her back with the unit.”

Soon after Nussbaum arrived in Iraq, theater policy changed forcing the unit's female Soldiers out of the company housing area and into a big warehouse building with women from many different units. This created a host of problems. The 1544th was driving the roads of Iraq primarily at night protecting U.S. contractor KBR, Inc. and fuel convoys, and the females of the other units were on different sleep cycles. “She just went right to work squashing problems and taking care of our Soldiers. Our Soldiers needed to get rest so they could focus on the mission,” Tuttle said.

“She is very thorough in everything she does. She always gives 100 percent,” said Sgt. 1st Class Britt Talley, the Illinois Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion's resource NCO who served with Nussbaum on the Bilateral Embedded Staff Team (BEST) A12. The team deployed to Afghanistan from the fall of 2013 to the Spring of 2014 as a liaison team with our Polish allies. “(Major Nussbaum)

takes care of everyone else first, before herself,” Talley said. “She will work whatever hours needed to ensure the Soldiers are taken care of.”

Nussbaum admitted that she sometimes refocused her “loftier” goals to take care of others. “I reminded myself that we join not just to see what we can achieve as individuals, but what we can do to better the organization and serve the Soldiers in it. I often realized that perhaps the best place for me to do that was right where I was at that moment.”

She said that the Soldiers deserved that sacrifice. “I've been so impressed with their knowledge, their enthusiasm, their endurance - and not just physical endurance. If you set high standards for them, they will meet and exceed them. They will amaze you,” Nussbaum said. “I wanted to be better for them. They earned that. We (as leaders) owe it to them.”

She is “just an amazing individual” with a “crazy amount of work ethic,” said Col. Kevin Little, the Illinois National Guard's Director of Human Resources and Commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

“She gave me and other leaders the confidence that her work would be complete, thorough, clear, and most importantly, the confidence that the audience would understand the message or product being delivered,” Little said. “She emulates professionalism and creates an environment of smiles, learning, and critical thinking. She has the heart of a teacher and approached her subordinates, peers, and her leaders with products that require little to no explanation and could be implemented. She is a true professional and an example for all Soldiers, leaders, and staff.”

While Nussbaum worked extraordinarily hard throughout her military career to improve herself and her Soldiers, one thing she couldn't change was her cheerful disposition. In Iraq one of her senior NCOs said she had to get “meaner.”

“He asked why I was so happy all the time. I tried for a full day not to smile. I just couldn't do it,” she said. Once when 2nd Lt. Nussbaum and her Soldiers were engaged with the enemy, one of the NCOs overheard her laugh during the radio traffic. Later, he told her that “Either you are too dumb to know what was really going on or you're a lot tougher than we thought.”

Her answer: “Yes.” At that point in her career, she was working hard to fill her knowledge gap - and, yes, she was and still is a lot tougher than people think.

Nussbaum said she was grateful for her second deployment to Afghanistan as a more seasoned officer a decade after the first deployment to Iraq. The first, she said, “was the wild, wild west the whole time” with danger on the roads, frequent mortar attacks on base, and concerns about the base being overrun. In Afghanistan, her mission didn't have her out on the roads and the forward operating base was more secure at that time. “That second deployment allowed me to reflect.”

Her brother, Staff Sgt. John

Nussbaum, deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 to 2009 with the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, another tough and challenging deployment. Elaine Nussbaum said her younger brother's deployment helped her understand what the families of deployed Soldiers endure. “That was scary.”

Elaine and John Nussbaum have compared notes over two decades in the Army together. They have compared her experiences as an officer to his as an NCO, her experiences as a logistician to his as a combat arms Soldier, and both of their experiences in combat.

“We have spent the last 18 years since I enlisted sharing stories - mundane, funny, infuriating, and terrifying - seeking knowledge based on our different career paths, giving advice from a different perspective, and even commiserating at times,” John Nussbaum said.

“Between the two of us, we know what it's like to be enlisted, an officer, maneuver, support, and sustainment,” he added. “We learned different things, learned them in different ways, had different things asked of us, and had different spheres of influence. But together we found knowledge and counsel in those differences by looking to each other for advice about ‘what would the other side think?’ Or ‘how would they do this?’”

Staff Sgt. Nussbaum, who is seven years younger than his sister, was able to teach many of his Soldiers in the Cavalry “to appreciate the difficulties, nuance, and importance of the logistics world and the deceptively large influence it has on all aspects of the military” learned from his sister and Maj. Nussbaum absorbed a lot about reconnaissance, maneuver warfare, and operations from her brother.

“Between the two of us, we were lucky to have what I would consider the total Army experience,” John Nussbaum said. Together they learned “a fuller understanding of the military and a more commanding ability to accomplish our missions, to lead and care for our Soldiers, to be greater stewards of the profession, and to be more successful for our

own sakes,” he added.

But the two people in Maj. Nussbaum's family that influenced her the most never served in the military: her father, Michael, and her mother, Therese. “They were both hard-working and patriotic,” she said.

Both of the Nussbaum parents were proud of their children's military service. Both parents had fathers who served in World War II and Therese's brothers, Michael and Marty, were Vietnam veterans. “And both their kids deployed twice,” Elaine Nussbaum said.

Her father, who died in 2011, was an Eagle Scout who worked in local grocery store. He had a degree in history from the University of Iowa and was keenly interested in his daughter's military experience, even if he was a bit “baffled” by the thought of his cheerful little girl driving big cargo trucks and leading convoys in Iraq.

“We watched all the old war movies and programs on the History Channel, and he took us to the Prairie Aviation Air Show every summer where we toured historical aircraft and first experienced that familiar - now comforting - ‘Army smell’ of canvas, metal, fuel, paint, damp, and dust. He taught me how to properly fold and respect the Flag, honoring those who served and continue to serve under it,” Nussbaum said.

Most who know the family compare Elaine Nussbaum to her mother. They attend Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Bloomington together each Sunday. Therese Nussbaum, an avid reader and fellow 4-H alum, spent over 40 years as a registered nurse who “famously never left work on time” - a comparative fact that drew laughter at her daughter's retirement ceremony.

“She is the most thoughtful, caring person I know,” her daughter said. “Every year she took us to the local parades and ceremonies that commemorated the service of veterans like her father, uncles, brothers, nephews, and friends. She taught us to be dependable and prepared, and to respect those who serve and care

for others. We learned the importance of hard work, service, and patriotism early on from both of our parents.”

Those who served with Maj. Nussbaum said she has another family, that of the Illinois Army National Guard and the 1544th Transportation Co.

“She is fiercely dedicated to the 1544th. She viewed that unit's Soldiers as her kids,” said Lt. Col. (ret.) Rich Munyer, the Illinois National Guard's Construction Facilities Management Officer, who commanded the 1544th Transportation Co. after its 2004-2005 deployment to Iraq and worked with Nussbaum for several years in the Illinois Army National Guard logistics office. “Elaine will forever be part of the 1544th.”

Nussbaum was a member of the 1544th Transportation Co. for 11 years and commanded the unit for three and a half years, from October 2007 until April 2011.

Nussbaum said now that her Army career is complete, she hopes to go back to her original plan to become a school teacher. Several Soldiers said they have learned from Nussbaum's famous red pen on staff papers and other staff products, but, more importantly, from her coaching and mentoring.

“She was a great educator and had a way of passing on what she had learned to other Soldiers in a way most cannot,” Butler said. “As a commander, she empowered the NCOs and junior officers to lead from the front. She understood that people were not always going to do things 100 percent correct but pushed them to learn from their mistakes.”

Nussbaum also kept a hand in teaching throughout the years. For example, she tutored Camden's children, Mackenzie and Chloe, for about seven years. Both graduated high school as National Honor Society students.

“She always wanted to teach. She always thought the military was a stopgap until she eventually became a school teacher,” Munyer said. “I hope that's what she does. She'd be a good one. We had her for 20 years.”



Maj. Elaine Nussbaum salutes Col. Kevin Little, commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and the Illinois National Guard's human resource officer, after she was presented with the Meritorious Service Medal during her retirement ceremony at Camp Lincoln, Springfield. Nussbaum, was a key leader in the famed Paris, Ill.-based 1544th Transportation Company and took care of her Soldiers for 22 years. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Justin Malone, Illinois National Guard)



ROTC Hall of Fame presentation for Col. (ret.) Paul J. Hettich.

Hettich Inducted into U.S. Army ROTC National Hall of Fame

Colonel Paul J. Hettich, of Antioch, Illinois, was inducted into the 2022 class of the U.S. Army ROTC National Hall of Fame in October. The induction ceremony was conducted at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Washington, D.C.

The ceremony was hosted by U.S. Army Lt. Gen. (ret.) Raymond Mason, Director, Army Emergency Relief. The guest speaker was U.S. Army Gen. Gary M. Brito, Commanding General, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Antonio Munera, U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command, presented the inductees with a certificate, plaque, and medal.

The ceremony included: Welcome and introduction, lunch, U.S. Army Band performance, introduction of keynote speaker, keynote remarks, presentation of scholarships, presentation of AUSA-ROTC Best Company Awards, 2022 ROTC Hall of Fame Recognition video, ROTC Hall of Fame Induction, and closing remarks.

The U.S. Army Cadet Command Hall of Fame included 30 inductees from across the country and in rank from lieutenant general to civilian, and included five posthumous inductees.

Hall of Fame inductions are awarded to alumni whose character and distinguished service epitomize the qualities ROTC embodies. Inductee's achievements exemplify "Leadership Excellence" deserving this recognition.

In honor of an inductee's meritorious contribution to the nation, a permanent record of an inductee's service and accomplishments will be added to a prestigious assembly of Hall of Fame inductees, each an enduring model and source

of inspiration for Army ROTC Cadets. Each inductee received a certificate, plaque, and medal.

ROTC had its beginnings in the early 19th century when a handful of colleges offered military instruction to students.

Today, graduates of the Army ROTC program continue to play a vital role in preserving America's liberty.

ROTC boasts alumni such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell, Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, and Walmart founder Sam Walton.

Col. Hettich attended ROTC at Loyola University of Chicago where he was commissioned a second lieutenant on Aug. 26, 1987. He inducted into the Loyola University Chicago Rambler Battalion Hall of Fame on April 29, 2022.

Col. Hettich was mandatory retired with over 30 years of service on Sept. 1, 2017.

He commanded at all levels from Special Forces (Airborne) Detachment Commander (1987) to Acting Commanding General (2017) of an Expeditionary Sustainment Command. Paul completed five combat deployments to Kuwait/Iraq (3), Bosnia/Kosovo (1), and the Horn of Africa (1).

Col. Hettich is Adjutant, Antioch American Legion; Trustee, Executive Board, Lake County Veterans Assistance Commission; Senior Vice Commander, Antioch VFW; Vice President, Illinois, Reserve Organization Association; and Legislative Officer, Fort Sheridan Chapter, Reserve Organization Association. He is also an U.S. Army Reserve Ambassador for Illinois (two-star General protocol).

Col. Hettich is employed by the Lake County Sheriff's Department and Lake County Forest Preserve.



From Left St. Juvins post Commander James (Hoppy) Phillips, Mitch Bailey, Sherry Bailey Trammel and Post Adjutant/Quartermaster Keith Roseland with SGT Sheridan Bailey's uniform and memorabilia.

Coal City Honors Sheridan Bailey

Sheridan Bailey reported to the induction center in Chicago on Sept. 3 1951, the day before his 21st birthday, where he was selected for service in the United States Marine Corps.

While the Marines are usually considered an all volunteer service, during times of national emergency draftees are often routed to the Marines. Sheridan worked for his dad Virgil at Bailey Printing and Publishing where he was a printer. The Marines really didn't need any printers so he became a rifleman, every Marine is a rifleman.

After boot camp at Camp Pendleton, California, he was trained as a Radiotelephone Operator and promptly shipped off to Korea aboard the USNS General W. H. Gordon. On arrival in March, 1952, he was assigned to a 4.2 Inch Mortar Company as a Forward Observer/Radioman, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. His duties were to accompany rifle units to the front lines and call in and direct mortar fire if necessary to support the units he was assigned to. On the night of Sept. 6, 1952, he was accompanying a reinforced squad of Marine infantry relieving a critical outpost threatened by an enemy assault. For this mission he was awarded the Bronze Star with the "V" for valor and the Purple Heart

His citation reads: "For heroic achievement in connection with operations against the enemy while serving with a Marine infantry battalion in Korea on 6 September 1952. Serving as a radio operator, Corporal Bailey displayed exceptional ability, courage and professional skill in the performance of his duties.

While attached to a reinforced squad which effected the relief of a key outpost in the battalion zone of action, he repeatedly exposed himself to intense enemy fire in an effort to call in messages requesting supporting arms fire. When completion of the relief was delayed by an attack by a numerically superior enemy force, he continued transmitting and receiving messages, pertinent to the relief of



Sheridan Bailey as a 21-year-old Marine in Korea. He is holding a M1A1 Thompson sub-machine gun and wearing a M1911 pistol on his right hip. Radio operators and members of crew served weapons teams were usually armed with pistols and M1 carbines or sub-machine guns.

the strategic outpost. Although painfully wounded during the action, he refused medical treatment and remained at his vital communication post where he fired his weapon and cared for other wounded Marines.

Corporal Bailey's indomitable spirit and heroic actions served as an inspiration to all who observed him and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Corporal Bailey is authorized to wear the Combat "V".

While the citation is 70 years old Bailey's dedication to his duties and fellow Marines never faded. The Bronze Star Medal can be awarded for many achievements, however the "V" Device indicates heroic action in the face of the enemy

Bailey was also awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received from enemy forces, United Nations Medal (Korea), Korean Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal

In March 1953, Sheridan returned to Coal City on leave before returning to duty on April 20 where he reported to 3rd Marine Air Wing at Marine Corps Air Station, Miami. Discharged on Sept. 3 1953, Sergeant Bailey returned to Coal City and Bailey Printing where he worked until retirement in 1997. In 1955 he married Marilyn Gianu they made their home in Coal City and raised their children Mitch-

ell and Sherry Bailey Trammel.

Always active in the community, he was a Life Member of St. Juvins Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and one of the founding members of the Coal City Emergency Squad, the forerunner of today's EMS and a member of the Coal City Fire Department, later the Coal City Fire Protection District/EMS, for over 40 years. The writer, who knew he was a Marine and served in Korea, had no idea of his heroic achievements, was privileged to serve with Sheridan on both the Emergency Squad and Fire Departments where he was both a leader and a hands on member. In 2013 Sheridan received the first of the more than 550 commemorative personalized tapestry throws with branch of service logo presented by St. Juvins Post 1336 VFW to honor his service to a grateful nation.

Like many combat vets Sheridan never discussed his service experiences with his children. He passed in 2013 followed by Marilyn in September 2017, 65 years after his heroic action in defense of freedom.

Sergeant Sheridan Bailey's uniform, decorations and awards are on display at the entrance to the library.

Hometown Heroes is a co-operative partnership between the Coal City Public Library District and St. Juvins Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Illinois VFW, Auxiliary delivers annual Eulogy to Abe Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in a small house in Kentucky on Feb. 12, 1809. He lived his adult life in Illinois, serving in the Illinois Militia during the Black Hawk War and later as a lawyer in Springfield, before being elected as the 16th President of the United States.

The Department of Illinois Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Auxiliary paid tribute to President Abraham Lincoln at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois, Feb. 11, as part of the organization's annual Eulogy to Lincoln ceremony. The Eulogy ceremony is one of the events attended by junior high and high school students attending the VFW's annual Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen state banquet.

"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them," said Al Lipphardt, National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars, quoting William Shakespeare in the tribute. "Abraham Lincoln was by no means an ordinary man. As President, Abraham Lincoln exhibited leadership, honesty, connectivity, persistence, and intelligence in many different ways."

Lipphardt said Lincoln was able to decide what was important and what had to be done so he could achieve his goals.

"By being able to put aside his personal ambition to achieve other goals shows how strong minded Lincoln was," Lipphardt said. "Without Abraham Lincoln our country the United States of America would not be as great as it is today."

Lipphardt thanked the crowd for their attendance.

"By taking part in this observance, each of us reaffirms our belief in the course he set for our country," he said.

This year's ceremony also included a tribute to Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd.



National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt delivers the annual eulogy to President Abraham Lincoln Feb. 11.



National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape delivers the eulogy to Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of President Abraham Lincoln Feb. 11.

"Many outsiders looked upon the Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln union with much skepticism," said Jane Reape, National President, VFW Auxiliary. "Mary supported her husband socially and politically, not least when

Lincoln was elected president in 1860."

Reape said during her White House years, Mary Lincoln faced many personal difficulties generated by political divisions within the nation.



National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Al Lipphardt, State Commander Bobby Edwards, Department President Marvie Wiesniewski and National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape, lay a wreath at President Abraham Lincoln's Tomb Feb. 11.

"Her family was from a border state where slavery was permitted. Her family was slave owners," Reape said. "Several of her half-brothers served in the Confederate Army and were killed in action, and one brother served the Confederacy as a surgeon."

However, Mary staunchly supported her husband in his quest to save the Union and was strictly loyal to his policies. However, his presidency was cut short by an assassin's bullet – the first president to be assassinated.

On the night of Friday, April 14, 1865, they attended a showing of Our American Cousin at Ford's Theatre. About an hour and a half into the performance, Mary slipped her hand into her husband's and leaned over to ask of him what the others in their group would think of her bold display of affection. Before she could absorb his response, a man entered the box and pointed a revolver to

the back of the president's head and pulled the trigger. Lincoln slumped over. He would die on April 15, 1865.

She later wrote of his death, "I often think it would have been some solace to me and perhaps have lessened the grief, which is now breaking my heart-if my idolized had passed away, after an illness, and I had been permitted to watch over him and tend him to the last."

In choosing Oak Ridge Cemetery as Lincoln's final resting place, Reape said Mary was "simply fulfilling Lincoln's wishes."

"Mere weeks before his death, they'd taken a walk through the countryside," Reape said. "Mary described the small, quiet cemetery they'd found. It was serene and beautiful. Reportedly President Lincoln told his wife 'when I am gone, lay my remains in some quiet place like this'."



The 17 District Voice of Democracy champions and four state Patriot's Pen finalists join state and national VFW and Auxiliary leaders for the annual Eulogy to Abraham Lincoln at Lincoln's Tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery Feb.

11. Lincoln's Tomb was one of the Lincoln sites during the students' visit to Springfield Feb. 9-11.

Voice of Democracy

Continued from Page 1

tonville Memorial Post 9153 and its Auxiliary in Waltonville

• **6th Place: Edward Jarnell & Joseph Ross Award** - Gabriel Craycraft, a senior at Williamsville High School in Williamsville, is the recipient of the Edward Jarnell and Joseph Ross Award in the amount of \$600.00.

Craycraft, the District 10 champion, was sponsored by Northenders Post 10302 and its Auxiliary in Springfield.

• **7th Place: William Glenn Britt Memorial Award** - Colton Throgmorton, a senior at Crab Orchard High School in Marion, is the recipient of the William Glenn Britt Memorial Award in the amount of \$550.00.

Throgmorton, the District 15 champion, was sponsored by Heyde Pillow Post 1301 and its

Auxiliary in Marion.

• **8th Place: Dick Cosner Memorial Award** - Bailey Ryan, a senior at West Central High School in Biggsville, is the recipient of the Dick Cosner Memorial Award in the amount of \$500.00.

Ryan, the District 8 champion, was sponsored by J.W. Clendenin Post 2301 and Auxiliary in Monmouth.

• **9th Place: Vern and Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 and Auxiliary Award** - Michael Casner, a senior at Munster High School in Munster, Indiana, is the recipient of the Vern and Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 and Auxiliary Award in the amount of \$450.00.

Casner, the District 16 champion, was sponsored by Ehringer Brothers Post 8141 and its Auxiliary in Calumet City.

• **10th Place: Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award** - Kaitlynn Jones, a senior at Jones Homeschool Academy in Poplar Grove, is the recipient of the Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award in the amount of \$400.00.

Jones, the District 6 champion, was sponsored by Roscoe Post 2955 and its Auxiliary in Roscoe.

• **11th Place: Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award** - Carson Katzmann, a junior at Lincoln-Way Central High School in New Lenox, Illinois, is the recipient of the Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award in the amount of \$375.00.

Katzmann, the District 18 champion, was sponsored by Harry E. Anderson Post 9545 and its Auxiliary in New Lenox.

• **12th Place: West End Post 2004 award** - Zachary Hartwig, a junior at St. Patrick High School in Chicago, is the recipient of the West End Post

2004 Award in the amount of \$350.00.

Hartwig, the District 3 champion, was sponsored by Armed Forces Post 8322 in Chicago.

• **13th Place: Chester Spears Memorial Award** - Javien Brooks, a senior at Terre Haute North High School in Terre Haute, Indiana, is the recipient of the Chester Spears Memorial Award in the amount of \$325.00.

Brooks, the District 17 champion, was sponsored by Dow Stepp Memorial Post 5975 and its Auxiliary in Marshall.

Honorable Mention awards
Gaven Corpin, a junior at Conant High School in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, is the recipient of the District 10 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.

Corpin, the District 4 champion, was sponsored by Elk Grove Village Post 9284 and its Auxiliary in Elk Grove Village.

Thomas Hanks, a senior

at DuQuoin High School in DuQuoin, is the recipient of the District 11 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.

Hanks, the District 14 champion, was sponsored by DuQuoin Post 513 and its Auxiliary in DuQuoin.

Chloe Ashcraft, a senior at Pana High School in Pana, is the recipient of the District 12 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.

Ashcraft, the District 11 champion, was sponsored by Pana Post 4431 and its Auxiliary in Pana.

Jennifer Galvin, a sophomore at Marian Central Catholic High School in Woodstock, is the recipient of the District 15 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.

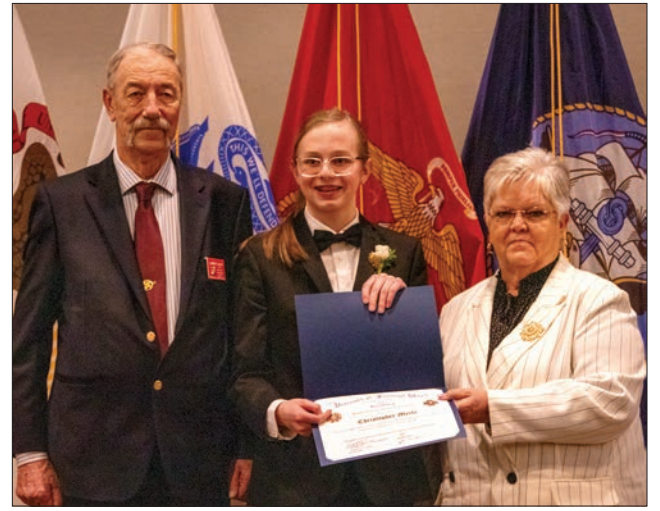
Galvin, the District 5 champion, was sponsored by Woodstock Post 5040 and its Auxiliary in Woodstock.



MaKayla Korsmeyer, a 7th grade student at Highland Middle School in Highland, is the recipient of the Gaye Hines Memorial 2nd Place award in the amount of \$500.



Connor Allison, an 8th grade student at the Chillicothe Elementary Center and Junior High School in Chillicothe, is the recipient of the William Glenn Britt Memorial award in the amount of \$400.



Christopher Mertz, an 8th grade student at McHenry Middle School in McHenry, is the recipient of the Raymond L. Moreland Memorial award in the amount of \$300.



Annalyn Harper, a senior at Ridgeview High School in Colfax, Illinois, is the recipient of the George R. Cramer and Ray R. Soden Scholarship Award in the amount of \$1,500.00.



Rylee Jo Giffin, a junior at Marquette Academy High School in Ottawa, is the recipient of the Terry L. McKinney Memorial Scholarship Award in the amount of \$1,250.00.



Abbigayle Miller, a senior at Edwardsville High School in Edwardsville, is the recipient of the Dale and Catherine Clifton Award in the amount of \$1,000.00.



Sarah Restoff, a senior at Pinckneyville High School in Pinckneyville, is the recipient of the Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary Award in the amount of \$750.00.



Cadets from the Civil Air Patrol Composite Squadron 36, Springfield, post the colors during the Illinois VFW Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen banquet, Feb. 11.



Gabriel Craycraft, a senior at Williamsville High School in Williamsville, is the recipient of the Edward Jarnell and Joseph Ross Award in the amount of \$600.00



Colton Throgmorton, a senior at Crab Orchard High School in Marion, is the recipient of the William Glenn Britt Memorial Award in the amount of \$550.00.



Bailey Ryan, a senior at West Central High School in Biggsville, is the recipient of the Dick Cosner Memorial Award in the amount of \$500.00.



Michael Casner, a senior at Munster High School in Munster, Indiana, is the recipient of the Vern and Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 and Auxiliary Award in the amount of \$450.00.



Kaitlynn Jones, a senior at Jones Homeschool Academy in Poplar Grove, is the recipient of the Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award in the amount of \$400.00.



Carson Katzmann, a junior at Lincoln-Way Central High School in New Lenox, Illinois, is the recipient of the Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award in the amount of \$375.00.



Zachary Hartwig, a junior at St. Patrick High School in Chicago, is the recipient of the West End Post 2004 Award in the amount of \$350.00.



Javien Brooks, a senior at Terre Haute North High School in Terre Haute, Indiana, is the recipient of the Chester Spears Memorial Award in the amount of \$325.00.



Andrew Kula, State Voice of Democracy champion, delivers his audio essay at the State Banquet Feb. 11 in Springfield.



Gaven Corpin, a junior at Conant High School in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, is the recipient of the District 10 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.



Chloe Ashcraft, a senior at Pana High School in Pana, is the recipient of the District 12 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.



Jennifer Galvin, a sophomore at Marian Central Catholic High School in Woodstock, is the recipient of the District 15 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.



Thomas Hanks, a senior at DuQuoin High School in DuQuoin, is the recipient of the District 11 Honorable Mention Award in the amount of \$300.00.

Congratulations to all the students who participated in this year's Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen programs

National Auxiliary President visits Illinois



National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape and Department President Marvie Wiesniewski.



Auxiliary President Marvie Wiesniewski throws an ax during the night out for the 98 percent Auxiliary presidents.



National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape hit a bullseye during a night of ax throwing during her visit to Illinois.



The Illinois VFW Auxiliary took a special tour of the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield during National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape's visit to Illinois.



National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape on a special night of ax throwing with Auxiliary Presidents who hit 98 percent in membership.



Col. (ret.) Paul Fanning, director, Illinois State Military Museum, Springfield, provides a guided tour of the museum to the Illinois VFW Auxiliary.



National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape throws during a night of ax throwing during her visit to Illinois.



Members of the Illinois VFW Auxiliary took a special tour of the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield during National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape's visit to Illinois.



The Illinois VFW Auxiliary and National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape tour the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield. During the tour they learned about some of the nearly 300-year history of the Illinois National Guard.

VFW Auxiliary

Auxiliary President

Marvie Wisniewski



VFW Auxiliary National President Visit to Illinois

VFW Auxiliary National President Jane Reape visited Illinois during our VOD/Patriot Pen Weekend in Springfield.

President Reape arrived in Springfield, Illinois on Thursday, Feb. 9 and was whisked off to join our “special” night of axe throwing. District Presidents who had reached 98 percent in membership joined Jane to have some laughs and jokes.

National President Jane was given an “Award” for throwing a bullseye!!! Friday brought a very informational tour of the National Guard Museum and then a meet and greet with the Department of Illinois.

We were able to surprise National President Jane with a zoom call from Commander-in-Chief Tim Borland. CIC Tim and NP Jane were able to

challenge each other in raising money for Voice of Democracy. The “winner” will be throwing a pie in the face of the other.

Team Illinois Auxiliary gave \$350.00 to the cause and are cheering on the Auxiliary to beat the VFW in funds raised!

Saturday was our C of A meeting and the VOD Banquet. Madam National President was given the opportunity to Present the 3rd Place winner with the award.

She also spoke on the importance of VOD and how it enhances the participants’ futures.

The Auxiliary was honored to have our National President join us for the weekend and look forward to Jane’s Convention in Arizona in July!



National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape is escorted through the Aisle of Flags by Illinois VFW Auxiliary Conduress Danielle Krull during a special reception in Reape’s honor at Northenders Post 10302 in Springfield, Feb. 10.



Above, National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape with Department President Marvie Wisniewski, Senior Vice President Lynn Smith, Junior Vice President Cindy Watters and Chaplain Diane Aherns at the State Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen banquet in Springfield, Feb. 11.



At left, National VFW Auxiliary President Jane Reape with Illinois VFW Auxiliary members during a special reception in her honor at Northenders Post 10302 in Springfield.

VFW Auxiliary Life Member Jana El-Sayed Wins State Crown

VFW Life Member retired Master Sgt. John F. Wulf’s granddaughter, Jana El-Sayed, was crowned Miss NH Volunteer 2023 at Artspace in Portsmouth, NH on November 23, 2022. She will represent the Granite State at the Miss Volunteer America Pageant in Jackson, TN in June 2023.

El-Sayed graduated from Granite State College and is now a graduate student at Simmons University in Boston studying Behavior Analysis currently with a 4.0. She was awarded a \$2,000 Miss Volunteer America

state Scholarship. Her community service platform is: The Butterfly Effect, working to provide a safe environment for all children. She has advocated for and testified for NH bills to protect children from child abuse and continues to volunteer and donate to Child Advocacy Centers. Jana has a passion for volunteering at hospital across New England providing hundreds of “Fun Bags” to hospitalized children.

She has been performing and studying voice since the fifth grade. She was the New Hampshire State North American Country Music Association’s Female Vocalist of the Year for Traditional Country and Gospel and then went to Tennessee to compete in the American Country Music Association International Competition where she won the International Female Vocalist of the Year award in her division.

El-Sayed shared, “I am so excited to represent Hudson and New Hampshire on the national stage this summer. This is a dream come true!”

The Miss Volunteer America Pageant is a new nationwide, service-oriented scholarship program based in Tennessee that seeks to empower young women across the country through educational scholarships and extraordinary opportunities, Miss Volunteer America was founded by Allison DeMarcus.



Jana El-Sayed, a life member of John H. Kraus Post 454 Auxiliary in Bloomington, was crowned Miss New Hampshire Volunteer.

Murdoch retires after 30 years of military service

By Staff Sgt. Geraldo Valdes
Illinois Army National Guard

Illinois Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 4 Chris Murdoch, an Air and Missile Defense Systems Integrator Warrant Officer with the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade of Normal, retired after 30 years of military service during a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard's Normal Readiness Center in Normal, Illinois on Nov. 5.

Murdoch, a life member of John H. Kraus Post 454 in Bloomington, was presented a proclamation celebrating his long career of service to his country and community by Illinois State Representative Dan Brady. Col. Kevin Little, commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, presented Murdoch with a Meritorious Service Medal upon his retirement.

Murdoch comes from a military family. His maternal grandfather fought in the trenches in World War I. His father was a career naval officer and all of his uncles save one served in the U.S. Navy.

Murdoch enlisted in the Navy in 1982 as a way to see the world. After graduating Navy basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center in North Chicago he attended training as an aviation electrician's mate at the Naval Air Training Center in Millington, Tenn., followed by Aircrew Candidate School at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Pensacola, Fla. He then attended Rescue Swimmer

School at Naval Air Station North Island in California.

Murdoch joined his first squadron, Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One in 1984 as a Sikorsky SH-3G Sea King helicopter crew chief and rescue swimmer. He transferred to HC-1 Detachment 6 onboard the USS Blue Ridge (LCC-19) in 1987. While serving there Murdoch accumulated 1,500 hours of helicopter flight time.

In 1990 Murdoch volunteered to attend Flight Engineer training for the Boeing E-6A Mercury Airborne Command Post and Communication Relay aircraft and joined Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron Three (VQ-3) at Naval Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii. While attached to VQ-3, he accumulated more than 1,840 hours of multi-engine heavy jet crew time.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War caused Murdoch to reexamine the way his career and life were going.

"At that point promotion was almost not an option," Murdoch said. "If you wanted to get promoted, someone ahead of you had to literally die. So, I had to take a hard look at what my career was going to be. I reluctantly left the Navy."

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Murdoch once again felt the urge to serve his country. A friend convinced him to look into joining the National Guard.

Murdoch spoke with a recruit-



Col. Kevin Little, Commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade presents Illinois Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 4 Chris Murdoch, an Air and Missile Defense Systems Integrator Warrant Officer with the Normal, Ill.-based brigade, with the Meritorious Service Medal. Murdoch retired after 30 years of military service during a ceremony at the Illinois National Guard's Normal Readiness Center on Nov. 5. (U.S. Army photo by Illinois National Guard Spc. Justin Malone.)

er and asked about joining with a guaranteed officer candidate school contract, but was informed that he was too old. However, the recruiter asked if he would be interested in being a warrant officer instead of a commissioned officer. He submitted a warrant officer packet and was assigned to the 33rd Military Police Battalion Headquarters Detachment.

While waiting for the packet to be processed, the 33rd MP Battalion was activated and deployed to Iraq where Murdoch served as the Property Book Noncommissioned

Officer from June 2006 to Sept. 2007.

After returning from Iraq, Murdoch attended the Warrant Officer Candidate School at Fort Rucker, Ala., and was pinned as a warrant officer in June 2008. Shortly after returning to Illinois Murdoch was called to flood duty as part of the 232nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. He led over 100 Soldiers and Airmen on the Mississippi River near Pleasant Hill in 2008.

Kathy Murdoch, Chris Murdoch's wife, said she visited her husband and some of his subordinates while they were working. They all went out to eat at the one local restaurant. All the locals came up and thanked them.

"It was humbling as a wife," Kathy Murdoch said. "Yeah, it was a pain in the butt having my husband gone for the three weeks you were gone and smelling like a manure pile and mud and muck. But it was worth it, him doing that. That's what the National Guard does. It goes in and helps."

CW4 Murdoch continued to serve, joining the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade in 2010 during its transition from a chem-

ical brigade based in Chicago to a maneuver enhancement brigade and its eventual relocation to Normal.

During his time in the National Guard, he has participated in over a dozen Warfighter exercises, as well as numerous other training activities. His unique dual expertise as both a 251A Army Information Systems Technician and as a 140A Air and Missile Defense (AMD) Systems Integrator Warrant Officer is rare and valuable. He participated in international exercises in Poland, South Korea, and Malawi and has supported numerous National Guard units, both inside and outside Illinois with his Air Defense and ADAC2 Systems Integration knowledge and expertise.

In 2020, Murdoch deployed to Ukraine for over 10 months as part of the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine. While there he provided doctrinal assistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

"Which as we all know they're getting it done over there," Murdoch said. "So it's good for me to know that I played a small part in that."

St. Juvin Post 1336 honors students

At the Feb. 1 meeting of the Coal City Community Unit District #1 Board St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars recognized the finalists in this year's Patriot Pen essay contest. All 15 of St. Juvin's finalists received a certificate and a power pack to charge their electronic devices.

This year's finalists were Ryland Clements, Leah Jensen, Emerson Koehn, Jaiden Leman, Jacob Munsterman, Abi Rose, Faith Horkavy, James Little, Grace Sitar, Kayla Kowalski, Cate Rush, Kory Lovell, Lily Gerrish, Kyla Stark, and Jayla Read.

Patriots Pen is a national contest sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States asking Middle School students to

compose a 300 to 400 word essay on a subject chosen by the National Commander. This year's theme was "My Pledge to our Veterans".

Entries are judged at each Post, then at the District level, the State level and finally the National level. Each Post can submit one entry to the District judging for each 15 entries received.

Contestants cannot identify themselves within their essay to include, but not limited to, their name, school, city, state, race, or national origin. Besides local recognition and awards there are over \$55,000 in scholarship awards available to participants.

While Patriot's Pen is a VFW program, without the cooperation of the Coal City Unit District's

Board, Middle School Principal Travis Johnson, Assistant Principal Rodney Monbrum and especially the Post's point man Social Studies teacher and Army veteran Jim Hitchcock and the "usual suspects" teachers Mrs. Melanie Urquiza, Mrs. Kate Cade and Mrs. Michelle Sobieck, our program would not be successful.

This year there were 225 middle school students submitting essays a participation rate of 49% of the school population. All participating students were given a US Flag pen in appreciation for their participation. The 15 finalists and families were invited to a pizza party held at Stone City VFW Post in Joliet.



Some of St. Juvin's finalists and their parents were present for this year's Patriot's Pen event were present at the February 1st meeting of the Coal City Unit School District #1 board meeting to receive recognition for their participation. They are (from left) Commander James "Hoppy" Phillips Emerson Koehn, Kyla Stark, Abi Rose, Jaden Leman, Ryland Clements, Kory Lovell, James Little and CCUD#1 Social Studies teacher Jim Hitchcock.



Col. Kevin Little, Commander of the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade presents Illinois Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 4 Chris Murdoch, an Air and Missile Defense Systems Integrator Warrant Officer with the Normal, Ill.-based brigade, with his retirement certificate at the Normal Readiness Center. (U.S. Army photo by Illinois National Guard Spc. Justin Malone.)

St. Juvin Post 1336 honors Prisoners of War, Missing in Action

Friday September 16 was National POW/MIA Recognition Day. St. Juvin Post 1336 VFW provided this year's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's poster and the Coal City Public Library District provided the perfect venue for its display next to the latest Hometown Heroes exhibit.

While we have no known POW's, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel from past conflicts to their families and the nation. Within this mission, they search for missing personnel from World War II (WWII), the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf Wars, and other recent conflicts. The research and operational missions include coordination with hundreds of countries and municipalities around the world.

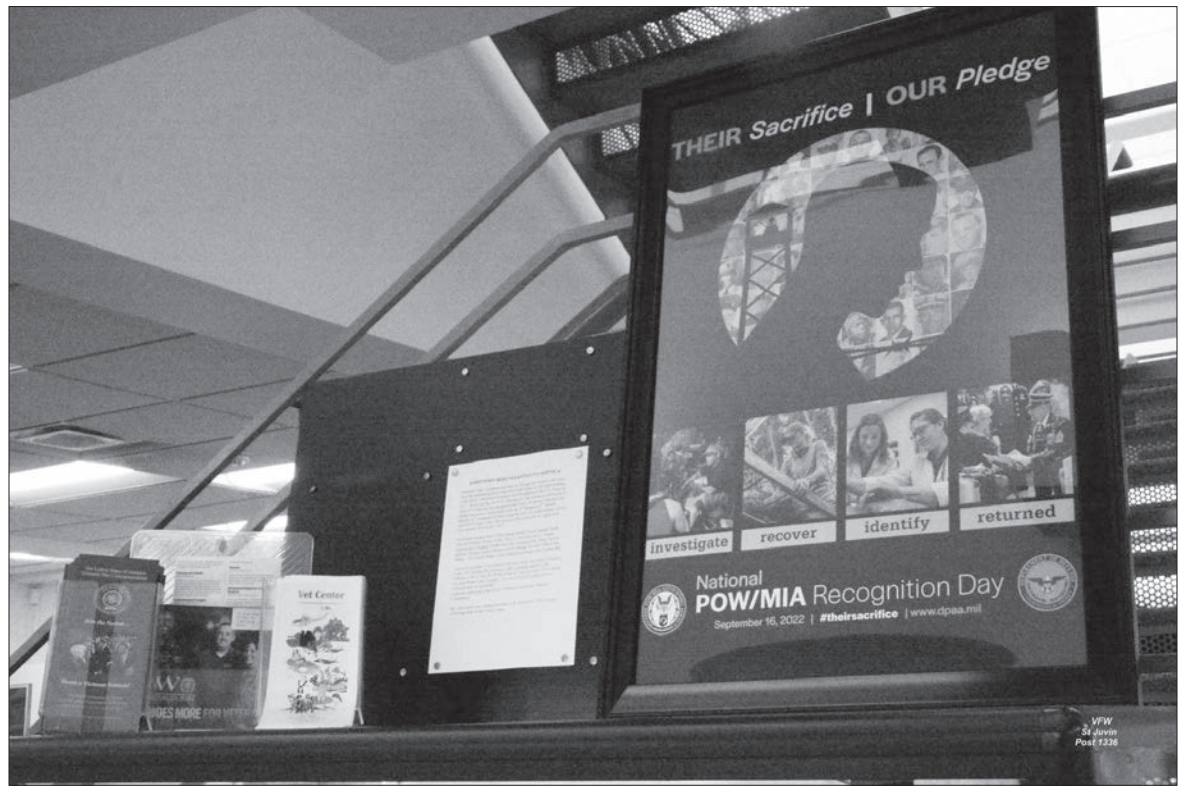
At present, more than 81,500 Americans remain missing from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars/other conflicts. Out of the more than 81,500 missing, 75 percent of the losses are

located in the Indo-Pacific area, and over 41,000 of the missing are presumed lost at sea (i.e. ship losses and known aircraft losses over water).

DPAA historians' research records and attempt to tie our missing to "Unknowns" interred in American Battle Monuments Cemeteries all across the globe, and National Cemeteries in the United States. Recent advances in DNA have been able to help identify our missing.

Recently, because of political instability in some countries which formally co-operated with recovery missions, activities have been focused on places where our "Unknowns" burials are accessible.

As an example of their efforts and successes, between June and November 2015, personnel from DPAA exhumed the unidentified crew members from the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, the "Punchbowl", for anthropological analysis. Of the 429 killed, 394 had been buried as unknown persons. As of Sept. 15, 2021, 346 had been identified. These identifications are made



2022 POW/MIA poster. Poster was on display at the Coal City Public Library's Hometown Heros exhibit.

at the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii and Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha NE with DNA analysis by the Armed Forces Medical Examiners System,

Dover Air Force Base DE.

The DPAA website provides profiles and pictures of our missing that have been identified and laid to permanent rest at their

loved ones preferred location.

You can see our identified heroes at www.dpaa.mil along with descriptions of their ongoing efforts.

Veterans go to School in Coal City, talk with students

On Nov. 9, members of St. Juvin Post 1336 VFW visited with the 4th and 5th grade students and staff at the historic Coal City Intermediate School home of the Community Veterans Memorial. What used to be an annual event had to be skipped for several years due to health concerns and school closures.

Post members presented their "History of the U.S. Flags" display covering flags used from Colonial times to today. The display consists of 3 by 5 foot flags used at various times by colonists and during and after the American Revolution.

Students participated by holding the flags and Post members answered questions about the flags and the "Pledge of Allegiance".

Post members also conducted a flag raffle presenting a U.S. Flag to the winners, one from each grade. Flag winners were: 4th grade student Drake Heath and 5th grader Caleb Hall.

After the presentation of the display students went outside and

visited with Jr. Vice-Commander Jim Richards where he explained the significance of the Community Veterans Memorial where over

1100 names of veterans from WWI, WWII, the Cold War, Korea, Vietnam and service in peace time are honored.

Post members would like to thank the Coal City Community Unit District #1, Intermediate School Principal Tracy Carlson,

and the entire school staff for the opportunity to present the flags and some of our important history to the students.



5th grade flag winner Caleb Hall with Commander Phillips and his teacher Amy Gaffigan.



Students (from left) Carter Shain and Lila Symons holding the First Navy Jack also the first flag used by the United States Marine Corps. This flag is believed to have flown aboard the Continental Fleet's flagship Alfred. In January, 1776. Commodore Esek Hopkins raised this flag to signal his fleet to attack British ships.



From left, 4th grade teacher Jenn Ness, Post Commander James "Hoppy" Phillips, Drake Heath and Principal Tracy Carlson.



Jr. Vice-Commander and Air Force vet Jim Richards answers question from the students about the Community Veterans Memorial.

Springfield Soldier Continues to Build on Military Career

Springfield resident and Illinois Army National Guard Soldier Eric Smith laid the initial foundation to his military career when he enlisted in January 1989 as a carpenter/mason serving in the 744th Engineer Company.

On Jan. 13, Smith, the Director of Logistics for the Illinois Army National Guard, and life member of LaFore Lock Post 755 in Springfield, continued to build on his 34 years of service when he was promoted to colonel in a ceremony at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield.

“Eric and I go way back. When I was a brigade commander, he was one of my battalion commanders,” said Brig. Gen. Rodney Boyd, Assistant Adjutant General – Army and Commander of the Illinois Army National Guard. “He would always take care of business and get the job done.”

Boyd said it was great to see someone he has worked with in the past get elevated to the next position.

“I know you will continue to do great work in our organization,” Boyd said. “The Directorate of Logistics is a very daunting position. Handling logistics

all across the organization is a very daunting task because not only do you deal with Soldiers but civilians who work within that directorate as well.”

Boyd said a Soldier doesn’t just get to be a director.

“You have to compete against your peers and stand out among your peers,” Boyd said. “You also have to demonstrate you can work with service members and civilians. Eric has proven that along the way. This job is a lot more responsibility, but I have no doubt Eric is ready to take on the task.”

Smith graduated from Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a Quartermaster officer in August 1998. He has served in a variety of leadership and staff positions including commander of the 1144th Transportation Motor Transport Battalion, executive officer for the 65th Troop Command, and deputy commander of the 129th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

“As a Soldier, you wait for years, hoping this moment will come,” Smith said. “I have been preparing for this my entire officer career. It has been a challenging and rewarding career up to this point.”

Smith said achieving a promotion to colonel is partly by chance, and partly timing.

“For me things worked out,” he said. “Here I am now, the director of logistics, the position I’ve worked toward for the last 20 years.”

Smith said he was humbled to receive the promotion and the single factor is the family support he has received over the years.

“I wanted the promotion, probably more for them because they have made more sacrifices than I did,” Smith said.

Smith thanked his family, wife, Lori, calling her the rock of the family, his two daughters, Reegan and Asya, and his mother, Candy.

“I owe my mother everything,” he said. “Especially the foresight to immigrate with me and my sister to this great country and for instilling in me to always move forward regardless of the circumstances.”

Smith also thanked the non-commissioned officers he has served with throughout his career.

“I truly believe I wouldn’t be here with the support of my NCOs,” he said. “You helped me navigate the things that are

really important to Soldiers.”

Smith also thanked the Directorate of Logistics staff.

“I can’t say enough about the support you’ve given me,” he said. “You’ve kept me on track and I look forward to the next couple of years.”

Smith has deployed numer-

ous times in his career, including as commander of the Bilateral Embedded Staff Team A-24 to Afghanistan in 2019-2020, support operations officer, Task Force Phoenix VIII, to Afghanistan in 2008-2009 and Operation Crescent Relief in support of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2005.



Newly promoted Col. Eric Smith, Director of Logistics for the Illinois Army National Guard thanks family and friends for their support throughout his 34 years of service during a promotion ceremony at Camp Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois.

Stockton Post 1304 Makes Donation to Boy Scout Pack 31

Illinois VFW Post 1304 Stockton, Illinois at their November meeting, passed a motion to donate to the Stockton Boy Scout Pack 31.

Recent court rulings, involving The Boy Scouts of America, have depleted or nearly depleted the coffers of many local packs

nationwide.

Post membership felt the Stockton Scout Pack is a valuable organization contributing to the healthy development of young boys and girls throughout the community thus the group unanimously approved a donation of \$2000.00.

On the following Wednesday Scout Master Kurth along with VFW Post 1304 Commander Ryan Bartell personally sponsored a Pizza and Bowling Party for all members of Pack 31. Pack members were also shown the workings of automatic pin spotter machines.



Stockton VFW Commander Ryan Bartell (center), Jr Vice Commander Tim Stocks (right), and Scoutmaster Cub Scout Pack 31 Brian Kurth.



Sarah Restoff, sponsored by VFW Post 9153 in Waltonville, advanced to state judging.

Centralia VFW Post 2055 Host District 13 Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy Banquet

Centralia Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2055 hosted the annual District 13 Voice of Democracy & Patriot's Pen Banquet on Saturday January 7, 2023. The Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Programs are two of the VFW's most important programs. These programs are a great way to instill Americanism and Patriotism in our youth. Patriots Pen is an essay contest for eighth grade and below students. Voice of Democracy is an audio essay contest for high school students.

The Patriot's Pen theme for this year is “My Pledge to our Veterans”. VFW District 13 had 201 entries and 13 students advanced to the banquet. Scholarships awarded at the local level for Patriot's Pen

totalled \$2,875. VFW District 13 awarded an additional \$850 to the winners at the banquet. Fourth place through thirteenth place each received \$25. Third, second, and first place winners received \$100, \$200, and \$300 respectively. District 13 Patriot's Pen top three winners were 3rd place Naomi Yancey VFW Post 8222 Albion, IL; 2nd place Ashlyn Weaver VFW Post 8222 Albion, IL; 1st place Rebekah Fleming VFW Post 4226 Olney, IL. Rebekah Fleming's essay advanced to competition at the state of Illinois level. Jaxey Donoho took 1st place in the local competition at VFW Post 2055, in Centralia, IL.

See District 13 VOD Continued on Page 15

VFW can help identify, verify Last Soldiers of Civil War in each county

**Bobby Welch, PSC
State Historian**

In 1919, the VFW's National Council of Administration unanimously adopted the following resolution: "All members of the Grand Army of the Republic are hereby admitted as honorary members to the VFW. Presentation of their Grand Army identification card or button will entitle them to any meeting of any Post of the VFW and to a seat."

Then-Commander-in-Chief F. Warner Karling said, "In honoring the Grand Army of the Republic, we honor ourselves." In subsequent years, VFW and GAR Posts would conduct Memorial Day ceremonies together and hold joint conventions in some states. For example, in 1925, VFW Post 728 in Danville, Illinois, incorporated the entire GAR Post from Kenesaw.

Illinois is rich with Civil War history, although the Illinois quota was only six regiments, the General Assembly authorized an initial 10.

By the war's end, 259,052 Illinois soldiers would serve. Of the total number, only 3,538 had to be drafted, and only 55 bought their way out by paying a substitute (a provision of the draft law of the time). The state fielded 17 infantry regiments, two light artillery regiments, eight independent artillery batteries, and several special units.

The state was a leading supplier of corn, wheat, and livestock to the army and to the nation; and Chicago was the West's leading commercial and industrial center. The strategic location of Cairo soon established that city as the troop and supply staging area for the Western campaigns.

Most of the troops mustered in at Camp Douglas in Chicago or Camp Butler in Springfield. Regiments represented ethnic, geographic, and cultural groups including the "First Scotch," the "Rock Island Rifles," the "Lead Mine Regiment," and the "Preacher's Regiment." Regiments were headed by the man who recruited them, and noncommissioned officers were elected by the men. Illinois also provided many of the Union Army's top officers.

By April, 1865, a total of 177 Illinois generals of all kinds had served at some time during the conflict; and the state boasted 53 brigadier generals, nine major generals, and one lieutenant general; including Stephen A. Hurlbut; Napoleon Bonaparte Buford; W.H.L. Wallace; John A. Logan; John A. McClernand; Richard Oglesby; John M. Palmer; Benjamin H. Grierson; John Pope; Silas A. Smith; Michael Lawler; and the greatest general of the war, U.S. Grant.

The loyalty of President Lincoln's home state was crucial, and Democratic Presidential candidate Stephen A. Douglas, southern Illinois Democrat John A. Logan, and Republican Civil War Gov. Richard Yates were all influential in gaining and maintaining support for the Union cause. Illinois supported the war materially, martially, and morally. The state did its fair share and more.

The Grand Army of the Republic was the great war Veteran organization of its time and was founded in Decatur, Illinois in 1866.

Right now, we as the next great war Veteran organization have an opportunity within Illinois to continue the good work of the 1919 National Council of

Administration and honor those Veterans by helping the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) with their Last Soldier Project.

The SUVCW is a fraternal organization dedicated to preserving the history and legacy of the Veteran heroes who fought and worked to save the Union in the American Civil War. Organized in 1881 and chartered by Congress in 1954, SUVCW is the legal heir and successor to the Grand Army of the Republic.

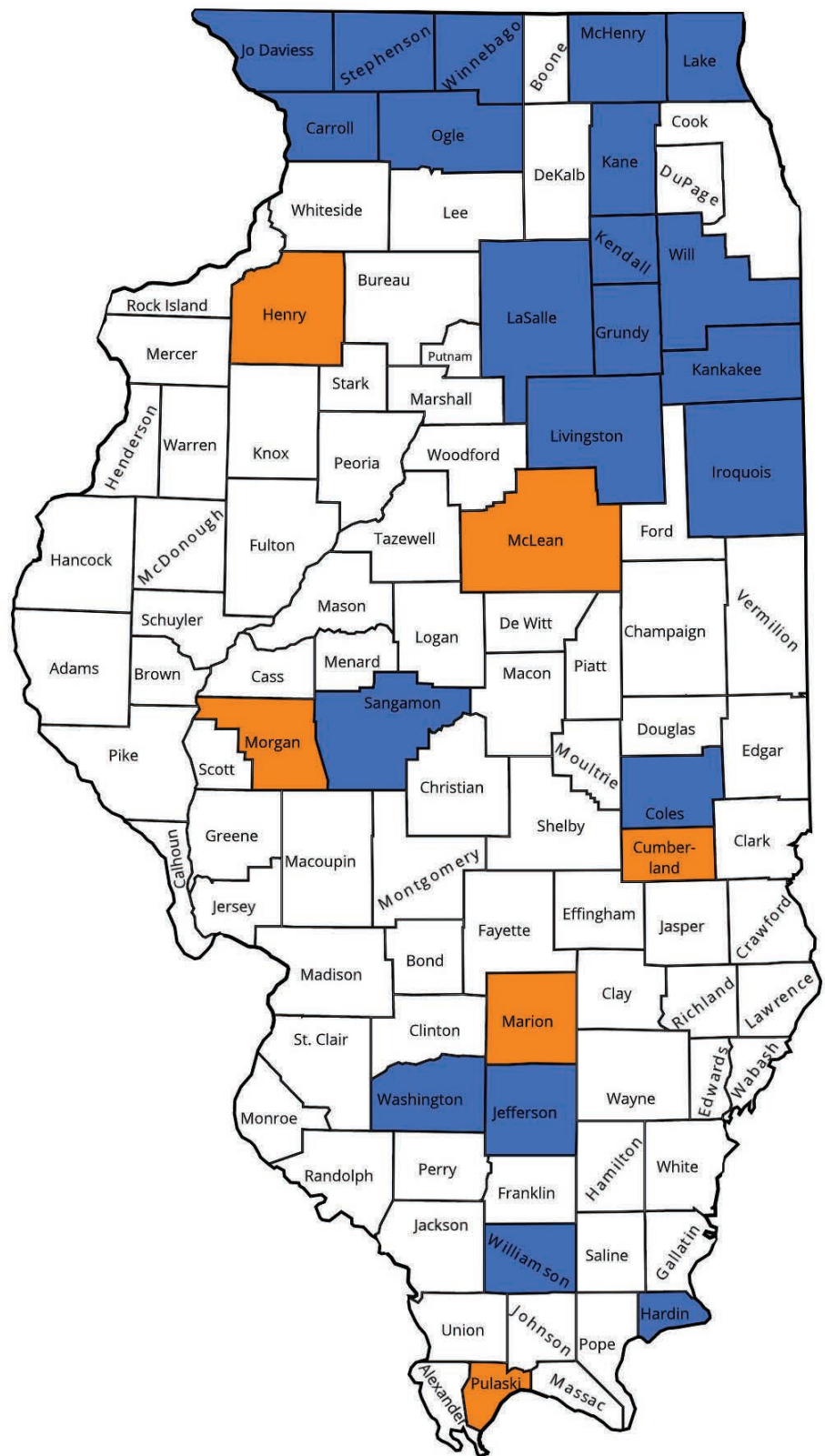
Beginning in 2003, the SUVCW embarked on the Last Soldier Project. The purpose of

the project is to locate and appropriately mark the final resting place of the last Civil War Union Veteran buried in each county/parish and in each state of this great country.

Of the 102 counties in Illinois, only 21 have identified "Last Soldiers" and 6 have possible "Last Soldiers" that need more research to verify the information. Out of the 21 Identified only a few have actually been marked with an identifying brass marker or had a ceremony to recognize them as the "Last Soldier."

The Department of Illinois, SUVCW has 11 camps with just over 500 total members in the state, with so few members, this is where we as the VFW can step in and help.

The VFW has at least one post in each county, please look at the attached map and if your county is not colored in, contact your County Historical Society, and see if they know who the last Union Veteran to be buried in their county is and the details of the burial (who, when and where) and email the info to me at bwelch.suvcwil@gmail.com.



Last Union Soldier identified and verified
 Last Union Soldier identified but needs verified

District 13 VOD Continued from Page 14

The Voice of Democracy theme for this year is "Why is the Veteran Important". VFW District 13 had 82 entries and nine students advanced to the banquet. There were eight VFW post and seven VFW Auxiliaries

participating from VFW District 13. Scholarships awarded at the local level for Voice of Democracy totaled \$4,750. VFW District 13 awarded an additional \$1,700 at the banquet to the winners. 6th through 9th place winners each received \$50. Fifth, fourth, third, second and first place winners received \$100, \$200, \$300, \$400, and

\$500 respectively. The top five winners were 5th place Savannah Young VFW Post 2244 Lawrenceville, IL; 4th place McKenna Poole VFW Post 4535 Fairfield, IL; 3rd place Alexia McKinney VFW Post 8222 Albion, IL; 2nd place Callista Ridgely VFW Post 4226 Olney, IL; 1st place Sarah Restoff VFW Post 9153 Waltonville, IL.

2023 & 2024 TOURS

sponsored by GRHS

July 30, 2023: FABULOUS AFRICA
 This tour visits Botswana (Chobe Game Park), Zambia, Zimbabwe (Victoria Falls), South Africa (Kruger Game Park), fly to Port Elizabeth and do the Garden Route (for whale watching) to Cape Town. LIMITED PARTICIPANTS.

October 17, 2023: SICILY & ITALY
 Palermo, Agrigento with the Valley of Temples, Siracusa, Taormina and to the top of Mt. Etna in Sicily before we fly to Naples, Italy and visit Pompeii, the Amalfi coast, Sorrento and then go on to Rome, Sienna, Florence, Ravenna and end in Venice. Sign up deadline March 15th.

April 27, 2024: GREECE
 You'll see everything from the Acropolis in Athens to Olympia, where the Olympic games began in 776 AC.

June 2-14, 2024: 80th Anniversary of D-day
 Visiting Holland, Belgium, France and Germany-WWI & WWII sights.
NEW! I have included many WWI sights and all of the WWII sights of my previous tours.
Tour already half sold!

EVERYONE WELCOME!

Vi Ranney
 Independent Tour Designer for GRHS
For brochures call or email:
 605-665-3596 | viranney@vyn.midco.net






District 4 VFW presents colors at Chicago Bears game

On Sunday, January 8, 2022, the Chicago Bears lined up for their final home game of the 2022-23 season at Soldier Field against the Minnesota Vikings. Unfortunately, the Bears lost the game, however, the pre-game ceremony was a BIG win for the 4th District Honor Guard as they carried the colors on to the field for the customary singing of the National Anthem before Kick Off.

The Honor Guard consist of Stewart Abbink and Dale Berg of Arlington Heights Post 981, as well as, Tom McMahon and Dino Moran of Schaumburg Post 2202. Rick Nieves of Post 2202 serves as the honor squads' social media liaison and does an outstanding job promoting the Honor Guard throughout Facebook and Instagram. Rick is also in charge of the VFW table which is set up at events to recruit new members and promote the many benefits and support that the VFW offers for veterans.

The 4th District had a rather informal Honor Guard for several years, but when Moran came aboard, he and Berg felt the need to make the squad much more formal.

"We felt that we needed to get permanent commitments from comrades prior to moving forward," Moran said. "Once we had solid commitments, I began to reach out to some of my professional connections for Honor Guard opportunities to present the colors to promote the VFW and the 4th District in the Chicagoland area."

One of these contacts was made last October when the Bears contacted him due to another friend's relationship with

the Bears, who gave the squad their game assignment. At 9:30 a.m. on Game Day, the honor guard was met by members of the Bear's Talent and Game Day Presentation Team and shown to a locker room so that they could change and prepare. After three very quick practice runs on the field and numerous walk throughs under the grandstands the squad felt confident and prepared. Nonetheless, at 10:45 a.m., Bears personnel came rushing towards the squad and told Moran that FOX Sports contacted the Bears and they were now going to broadcast the opening ceremony, with a dedication to Damar Hamlin who had a heart attack earlier in the week during the Bills and Bengals game.

"The young lady nervously tried to show and explain the new protocol to me on her iPad but I insisted that I go back on to the field to know exactly what the new mission called for", Moran said.

He returned approximately 15 minutes later to brief the rest of the squad on their new positioning and marching orders which was approaching quickly.

Moran went on to say how proud he was of the effort and focus that the squad put into preforming to the best of their ability to honorably represent the VFW and District 4. Upon completion of their duties, each squad member received a game ticket and \$20 each in "Bears Bucks" to spend at the stadium.

For squad member Tom McMahon, this was his first Honor Guard event. He proudly carried the POW flag but nerves were not a problem for this Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom

veteran. McMahon is looking forward to his next ceremony.

Stewart Abbink, a US Army veteran who served in Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan, has been a member of the Color Guard for about a year. He is very proud to have carried his rifle at several events including the 4th District's annual meeting and Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen Awards Banquet.

Moran has been busy promoting the VFW and the District 4 Honor Guard to where the Chicago Fire SC reached out to him from the Chicago Bulls contact requesting the Honor Guard to present the colors at their home opener at Soldier Field March 4. The Honor Guard will also be presenting the colors for Salute to Military Families Night at the Chicago Wolves hockey game April 8. Future dates and presentations of the colors are currently in the works for numerous baseball games this summer.



District 4's Honor Guard marches onto Soldier Field during the Chicago Bears game.



District 4's Honor Guard presents the colors during the National Anthem during the Chicago Bears game.



Olney Post 4226 celebrates VFW Birthday

Post Commander Steve Norris cuts a cake celebrating the Veterans of Foreign Wars' 123rd birthday.



The Bolingbrook VFW Post 5917, Bolingbrook American Legion Post 1288, joined with American Veterans Helping Veterans in making a donation of a 43" Samsung TV to the Illinois Army National Guard at North Riverside. Members Larry Shaver, Herschel Nelson, and John Davin.