

Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Program - Serving Those Who Served

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Successful program assisted Veterans in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD - All throughout the month of November, now established as “Veterans Month,” hundreds of volunteers participated across the state of Illinois in the Serving Those Who Served (STWS) Program. Their goal was to make an impact in the

lives of veterans throughout Illinois through a community service program designed by the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs.

“We wanted to offer more to our Illinois Heroes than one more Veterans Day program or parade. We knew we could count on our fellow Illinoisans to volunteer and assist our veterans,” IDVA Director Erica Jeffries said.

The STWS program brought in seven other partners to increase the success of the program. Serve Illinois, Chicago Cares, Boeing, Corporation for National & Community Service, Illinois Joining Forces, Student Veterans of America and Campus Compact. Each of these partners assisted the program with either volunteers, funding or community service projects. The program allowed organizations to register a project for volunteers to assist with during the month of November. The website created through Serve Illinois allowed Illinoisans to look for a project in their area and sign up to volunteer for that project. At the end of the month, there were 41 projects drawing in 570 volunteers. Collectively, the projects provided service, support, and assistance to over 3,730 Illinois Veterans.

“We had volunteers at our Veteran Homes, assisting with community libraries and painting and updating various facilities. We also assisted moving new furniture into 5 permanent homes for several homeless Veterans,” added Jeffries.

This was the first year for this program and it is planned to become an annual event. IDVA estimated having 570 volunteers working this month which equaled about 2,280 hours of much needed and welcomed community service for our Illinois Heroes. According to the Points of Light, the total number of volunteer hours has an economic impact of \$53,716.80.

Traditionally, volunteer time has been estimated using a single dollar value for all types of volunteering. The Value of Volunteer Time, which is updated annually, is made available by Independent Sector. The current Independent Sector rate is \$23.56 per hour ([2015](#)).

Other projects included, but not limited to, bingo games at VA hospitals; Veteran Appreciation luncheon; Honor Flight reception; volunteering at a day long Veteran job fair; painting walls at various Veteran Homes; distribution of coats to homeless veterans; interviewed and recorded veteran stories, which were also submitted to the Library of Congress; assisted with restoration of Civil War statue; assembled 80 care packages for Fischer House; volunteered at a Veteran Stand Down; delivered over 2000 items to the Marion VA for homeless veterans and veterans in need; collected items for

veterans in need; organized donation drives for veterans in need; assisted in cleanup of lots and veteran's park; taught patriotism to elementary students on Veteran's Day and visited with veterans in our Illinois Veterans home.

These numbers only include the reporting organizations which does not include a number of other projects in neighborhoods, schools, and veteran organizations around that state that also gave service.