



Illinois honors veterans and their families at State Fair

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SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) hosted a variety of activities for Veterans and their families during Veterans and Gold Star Family Day on Sunday, August 13, at the Illinois State Fair. Veterans and their families received complimentary admission.

"Our State Fair committee works hard for many months to prepare for this wonderful Day at the Illinois State Fair," said IDVA Director Erica Jeffries. "They provide Veterans and their families with an opportunity to have a great day at the Fair, be recognized for serving our country and to remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice."

The Day began with a Gold Star Family Memorial Service at 9:30 am on the Lincoln Stage. "This service focuses on the sacrifice of the families left behind, and reminds all of us that freedom is not free. It comes at a very precious price," said IDVA Director Jeffries.

A Kids Corner with a bounce house, crafts, face painting and balloon animals were available in the morning and afternoon for the Veteran's children. And a JROTC Exhibition Drill Team Competition was held on the street in front of the Lincoln Stage. JROTC teams were judged in an armed and unarmed competition.

Governor Rauner and IDVA Director Jeffries presented awards to Mr. George Pempek, of Springfield as the Illinois Veterans' Patriotic Volunteer of the Year and to Staab Funeral Home as the Illinois Veterans' Business of the Year. "These awards highlight the wonderful work being done for our veterans," said IDVA Director Erica Jeffries. "The Veteran Patriotic award honors the work of an Illinois Veteran whose contributions in Service to the Veteran community and their local communities are truly above and beyond. The Illinois Veterans' Business Appreciation Award highlights and honors the work of any business, organization or a non-profit that has significantly

helped veterans, and whose contributions to those who have served our country are documented and deserve to be recognized.”

IDVA is pleased to present them with an Illinois Flag and a proclamation from Governor Rauner acknowledging their contributions. Mr. James C. McCloughan, Medal of Honor Recipient and US Army Vietnam Veteran was the keynote speaker during the Official Program at Noon.

Veterans also enjoyed the musical entertainment of The Harmony Sisters and the Illinois National Guard Band – Soldiers of Swing. The Harmony Sisters are Kathleen Cicero and Julia Cicero. The sisters attend Willowbrook High School in Villa Park, and they have been singing together for the past several years. They specialize in harmonies made famous by the Andrews Sisters.

The Veteran Day activities finalized with a Patriotic Veterans Parade marching down Grandstand Avenue to the Grand Stands.