

RESPECT FOR  
YESTERDAY,  
SUPPORT FOR  
TODAY,  
PLAN FOR  
TOMORROW



## Aging Matters

Nov. 2023 Newsletter from the Illinois Department on Aging

Office of  
Governor JB  
Pritzker

### Message From Director Paula Basta



News and  
Events

Can you believe it's already November? Perhaps you've begun decorating for the winter holidays, digging up time-tested family recipes, and planning get-togethers with loved ones.

Illinois' State  
Plan on Aging

The holiday season is often a time of connection and merriment, but older adults may experience conflicting feelings during this time of year. Grievers may find themselves feeling overwhelmed, anticipating how to handle gathering without a deceased loved one, or questioning whether it's okay to celebrate and feel happy amidst loss. These [seven tips](#) from the National Council on Aging may be helpful to anyone navigating grief during the holidays.

Find Services  
in Your Area

No matter what your holidays look like this year, I invite you to reflect on what you're grateful for and share that appreciation with others. I personally am grateful for the gift of aging, which has given me experience, wisdom, and a level of confidence I didn't have when I was young.

Senior  
Illinoisans Hall  
of Fame

That said, I know that aging is a mixed blessing. If you or a family member is experiencing aging-related challenges, IDoA can provide support. For information about eligibility and access to our [programs and services](#), contact the Senior HelpLine toll-free at 1-800-252-8966, 711 (TRS), or via email at [aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov](mailto:aging.ilsenior@illinois.gov).

License Plate  
Discount

Sincerely,



# National Family Caregivers Month (NFCM)



## National Family Caregivers Month

**IDoA**  
Illinois Department on Aging

November is National Family Caregivers Month, a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country. Family caregiving is very common; according to AARP, in 2020, one in five Americans were caregivers. Many caregivers live with or near the person for whom they provide care, while others may be long-distance caregivers residing in another city or state. No matter your circumstances, a variety of [resources](#) are available to family caregivers through IDoA, Illinois' 13 regional Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and numerous partner organizations.

AAAs can refer caregivers to locally available programs after assessing their needs and stress levels using a tool called TCARE. Possible referrals can include evidence-based training programs such as Savvy Caregiver®, Stress-Busting Program for Family Caregivers™, support groups, counseling and gap-filling services. Respite services are also available to provide caregivers with short-term relief for up to several days at a time.

To find caregiving resources and support in your area, visit [this page](#), or contact your local [AAA](#) and/or [caregiver resource center](#).

[Celebrate Caregivers on Social Media](#)

[Read President Biden's NFCM Proclamation](#)

To assess the extent to which currently available resources are meeting family caregivers' needs, IDoA has hosted 19 caregiver roundtables since August. Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton joined a



roundtable discussion last week and reflected on her own experience as a caregiver to her late mother with Alzheimer's disease.

**Pictured:** Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton (left) joined IDoA's recent caregiver roundtable at the Central West Regional Center in Chicago.

## A Veterans Day Q&A With IDVA Director Terry Prince



In honor of Veterans Day this Saturday, Nov. 11, the IDoA Communications team sat down with Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Terry Prince to learn more about the state agency he leads and resources available to older veterans and their families.

***We'd love for our readers to get to know you a little better. Could you tell us about yourself and your background prior to joining IDVA?***

I am a 31-year U.S. Navy veteran with a deep passion for serving those who have served. Prior to joining IDVA, I was the Superintendent of the Ohio Veterans Homes where we provided skilled nursing and domiciliary care for 800 veterans at three separate facilities, including the 5th largest Veterans home in the country. This was at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and our team worked tirelessly to protect the veterans in our care and the staff.

I was particularly happy to return to Illinois in April 2021 along with my wife Jennifer, also a U.S. Navy veteran. We were stationed together at the Great Lakes Naval Station in 1990 and married at the base chapel. Throughout my career, I served at 14 different duty stations around the world including the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, NC, and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. Happy to say that I was also the Senior Enlisted Advisor at the Defense Health Agency in Falls Church, VA, and closed out my career as the 13th Director of the U.S. Navy Hospital Corps and Force Master Chief of Navy Medicine.

Serving Illinois veterans and leading this remarkable team has been an honor. Our Veteran Service Officers, staff at our five Veterans' Homes, and the central office that supports them work tirelessly to achieve our mission of ensuring veterans thrive in Illinois. The need for veteran services has never been greater and we ensure that our Veteran Service Officers are accessible to guide them through the process of receiving their earned benefits. Veterans and their families are encouraged to call IDVA at **1-800-437-9824** to connect with a Veteran Service Officer.

***How does IDVA support older veterans and their caregivers? Are there opportunities for partnerships between IDVA and Illinois' Aging Network?***

IDVA maintains five long-term care homes across the state in Anna, Chicago, LaSalle, Manteno, and Quincy providing skilled care beds for up to 1,115 veterans (and in some cases, their spouses). Caring for our aging veterans is a passion for the medical professionals and staff at each of the homes. They have built strong communities and ensure that veterans know it is their home. The Veterans' Homes are also an incredibly good value for the level of care provided, making it more affordable and accessible. The model of our Veterans' Homes is to place the veteran at the "center" of all we do. This ensures our residents receive world-class care in a respectful space to prevent hopelessness, loneliness, or despair.

The senior home administrator (who leads the five Veterans' Homes) sits on the executive committee for the Older Adult Services Advisory Committee (OASAC) and the Illinois Commission on LGBTQ Aging. She is consistently in the community networking and training throughout the state to educate and reach as many seniors as possible. She offers IDVA homes' information, VSO information, and available benefits for senior veterans and families.

Additionally, our VSOs are out in the community attending events to walk people through the benefits and services available to them. The process can be confusing, and working one-on-one with a VSO makes it less daunting.

IDVA is eager to partner with the Illinois Department on Aging to serve as a resource for aging veterans seeking support. We can help them with benefits, skilled and domiciliary residential care, and veteran burial benefits.

### ***How are IDVA and the state of Illinois celebrating Veterans Day this year?***

Members of Team IDVA are attending events across the state throughout the month. A big event for IDVA is the [launch of Winter Riches](#), the Illinois Lottery ticket benefiting the IDVA Veterans' Grants Program. This \$2 ticket supports programs from selected veteran service organizations that apply for and are awarded a grant. We are also participating in events with Habitat for Humanity, several community events, and most importantly, we are proud to co-sponsor the Springfield Veterans Day Parade.

### ***Can you offer any suggestions for how to honor the veterans in our own lives and communities?***

Most importantly, stay connected to the veterans in your life and communities through a simple phone call, text or even stopping by to see them in person. Ask them if they are aware of the benefits that may have as a Veteran. Are they enrolled in VA health care? You will find that a majority are not aware or, that they are too proud to ask for help. These simple gestures communicate that you are grateful for their service, and you recognize they sacrificed to protect our nation.

Remember, veterans are a part of your communities. Staying connected can help them through the tough times. Volunteer and support veteran events and causes. Be engaged and bridge the gap between veterans and the community.

**Medicare Open Enrollment Is Here**

**PLANS  
CHANGE.  
SO CAN  
YOUR  
NEEDS.**



Your health needs can change from year to year—so do Medicare plan costs and coverage. Use Medicare Open Enrollment to compare prescription drug and health coverage options to find what best meets your needs. Get started at [medicare.gov/plan-compare](https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare). Got questions when comparing options during Medicare Open Enrollment? Free, unbiased, reliable information is within reach: contact Illinois' Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP) by calling **1-800-252-8966** or emailing [Aging.SHIP@Illinois.gov](mailto:Aging.SHIP@Illinois.gov).

[SHIP resources](#)

[Explore additional resources from the National Council on Aging](#)

**Utility Bill Assistance Available**

## UTILITY BILL ASSISTANCE:

Income-eligible households who meet one of the criteria below are eligible to apply starting Oct. 2

- Families with a child under 6
- Senior citizens (60+)
- Illinoisans with disabilities



Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity  
JB Pritzker, Governor

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps eligible low-income households pay for home energy services (primarily heating during winter months). The program began taking applications from older adults on Oct. 2 and will continue to accept applications until funding runs out. One-time annual benefits are paid directly to the utility company.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

To qualify for LIHEAP, gross household income (before taxes) for the past 30 days must not exceed \$2,430 for a single person or \$3,287 for a family of two. If you rent and your heat is included in the rent, your rent must be greater than 30% of your income to be eligible to receive assistance.

### **How to Apply**

Visit [helpillinoisfamilies.com](http://helpillinoisfamilies.com) to fill out and submit an online Request for Services form. After your Request for Services form has been submitted, you will receive an email or phone call from your local agency to review and confirm your eligibility and to determine the amount of your LIHEAP benefit.

You can also apply in person at your [local agency](#). If applying in person, please bring the following documents with you:

- Proof of past 30-day income through paystub, check or copy of check showing fixed income amount (e.g. SSA, VA, DHS benefits), or other proof of documentation for any

- income source,
- Copy of most recent bill for heating (usually gas, propane or electric) and/or electric bill issued within the last 30 days (if energy directly paid for).
  - Social security card or ITIN for residents who have them. Residents without ITIN or SSN can still apply and your Local Administering Agency will advise accordingly.
  - A copy of rental agreement (if renting) showing that heating utility(ies) is/are included, the monthly rental amount, and landlord contact information.
  - Proof the household received TANF or other benefits, such as Medical Eligibility or SNAP, if receiving assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

For application assistance, call **1-833-711-0374**.

## Senior Only Walk-In DMV Centers Now Open in Chicago Suburbs

# SENIOR ONLY DMV CENTERS

**WALK-IN**

**Monday through Friday | 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Offering full Driver and Motor Vehicle Services, including in-car driving tests

### **Evanston Civic Center**

2100 N. Ridge Road  
Evanston, IL

### **Seat Geek Stadium**

7000 S. Harlem Ave.  
Bridgeview, IL

To schedule appointments or for assistance with online renewals,

**Seniors may call 800-252-8980**

SECRETARY *of* STATE



ALEXI GIANNOULIAS

The Illinois Secretary of State's office recently launched a Skip-the-Line Program, meaning most driver's services facilities take customers by appointment only. In response to [reports of older adults having trouble securing appointments](#) for driver's tests, Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias [announced](#) his office has implemented a number of additions to the Skip-the-Line program, many of which are tailored specifically toward older adults:

- Opening two “Senior Only” walk-in centers in the Chicago area. The two locations, geared to drivers aged 70 and older, include the Evanston Civic Center, 2100 N. Ridge Road in Evanston and Seat Geek Stadium, 7000 S. Harlem Ave. in Bridgeview. Customers at these locations will not need appointments, as these walk-in centers are specifically designed to meet their needs. Older adults still have the option to make a standard appointment at these and other locations.
- Increasing the number of available appointments. Expanding scheduling availability will increase the number of in-car/road test appointments at Chicagoland DMVs by over 40%, or nearly 1,300 more per day.
- Adding additional call center features to serve drivers aged 70 and older who require a road exam. These callers will be routed directly to operators who will provide on-the-spot information, schedule appointments or assist with online renewals. Seniors may call **1-800-252-8980**.
- Adding new features to the appointment website. Customers can now filter DMVs by ZIP code, highlighting appointment openings at DMVs closest to them.

## MindWalk Research Study Seeks Participants





## A Mindful Walking Intervention for Older South Asian Family Caregivers of People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

MindWalk is a research study. This is a **12-week mindful walking intervention**. You will receive training on mindfulness strategies while you are walking. You will be sent a Fitbit to wear to track your physical activity. You will also receive an activity logbook to keep track of your walking, personalized text messages to help remind and motivate you to walk, and regular check-ins with a team member.

We are currently looking for **South Asian family caregivers (50 years or older)** caring for a person (of any age) with IDD like autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy & others who are interested in a mindful walking program.

You may participate if you:



- Only get about 60 minutes or less of physical activity a week.
- Do not currently engage in mindfulness training.
- Are experiencing stress.
- Own a smartphone with a data plan or Bluetooth-enabled device (e.g., tablets such as iPad that can also receive text messages.)

Note: We are looking for 50 participants who will be randomly assigned to be part of either the intervention or control group. All the participants, both in the intervention and the control group will get \$60 to complete assessments at 3 time-points (\$20 for each assessment). The participants in the intervention group will also get to keep the Fitbit device after the completion of the study. The outcomes & benefits of this intervention may include stress reduction, improvement in cognition, physical activity & self-efficacy. The participants in the control group will be provided with psychoeducation materials on benefits of walking.

Would you like to participate in this research study?  
If interested, please complete this form:  
<https://go.uic.edu/MindWalkScreeningForm>  
OR  
CALL: 312-996-1002 OR Email: [smurthy@uic.edu](mailto:smurthy@uic.edu)  
Sumithra Murthy, PhD (Principal Investigator)



10/18/2023, Version 6

The MindWalk project at the University of Illinois Chicago, which focuses on a mindful walking intervention for older South Asian family caregivers of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, is currently in need of participants. If you are interested in participating in the 12-week research study, complete [this screening form](#).

# Employment Opportunities

**Chief Internal Auditor**  
**Work Location:** Springfield

**Salary:** \$8,500 to \$10,500 monthly

**Application Deadline:** November 30, 2023

**Job Responsibilities:**

- Serves as Chief Internal Auditor.
- Determines the scope of audits to be conducted in response to operational changes or new knowledge.
- Serves as official Agency spokesperson on behalf of the Director and the agency to all internal and external entities including the Governor's office, the legislature, and the Office of Management and Budget.
- Serves as supervisor.
- Maintains accurate, objective, clear, concise, constructive, and timely communications with management.
- Applies professional audit standards to assure standards of Internal Audits are consistent with current standards of the profession.
- Assesses the training needs of staff to accomplish the Agency goals and to ensure compliance with Certified Professional Development (CPD) requirements.
- Performs other duties as assigned or required which are reasonably within the scope of duties enumerated above.

[Apply here](#)

## Events Recap

### State Ombudsman Offers Insights on Program Foundations and Advocacy Strategies at National Conference

Last week, Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsman Kelly Richards and IDoA Director Paula Basta attended the 2023 Consumer Voice Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. They participated in a panel discussion with representatives of the Administration for Community Living about the history of and vision for the Ombudsman program and how Illinois implements federal regulations for strong advocacy.



**Pictured:** Illinois Long-Term Care Ombudsman Kelly Richards (far left), IDoA Director Paula Basta (center) and ombudsmen from the Rockford area donned Halloween costumes at the 2023 Consumer Voice Conference in Baltimore, Maryland during the week of Oct. 31.

## Upcoming Events

The next meeting of the [Resident and Family Support Council](#) will be on Tuesday, Nov. 14 at 3 p.m.

Registration is not required for this meeting. Join the Zoom call by clicking the link below.

[Join the Resident and Family Support Council](#)



## **Kinship Care: Supporting Families Through Collaboration**

November 15, 2023 • 10:30 AM - 12 PM  
Virtual on Zoom • CEs Available

Do you serve grandparents or relatives raising children? Join AgeGuide for a virtual seminar on Wednesday, Nov. 15 from 10:30 a.m. to noon on supporting kinship families through partnerships, coordination and resources. The seminar will feature nationally renowned kinship care experts from the Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio and a panel of experts from the Illinois Department on Aging, the Department of Child and Family Services, State Representative Natalie Manley, Prairie State Legal Services, and Family Resource Center. CEUs are available through the Illinois Department on Aging for working professionals.

[Register here](#)

## **Items of Interest**

[Sec. of State Talks More Senior Services At Speaker Welch's Senior And Veterans](#)

[Resource Fair](#)

[Choir program uses music to make, retain memories](#)

[AARP welcomes SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS to the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities](#)

[Department on Aging recognizes National Family Caregivers Month](#)

[Reading Rewards](#)

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the **Senior HelpLine at (800) 252-8966; (888) 206-1327 (TTY)**



[Visit our website](#)