



St. Charles Veterans Center

St. Charles Veterans Center Presents Community Programs

The St. Charles Veterans Center opened its doors on Memorial Day 2018.

Since then, the mission of our combined veteran organizations has expanded to include further engaging our community in activities with our veterans beyond providing the St. Charles Memorial Day parade and ceremonies, Veterans Day event support and Color/Honor Guard services for local veterans. The Center now hosts the meetings of four St. Charles veteran organizations: VFW, American Legion, AMVETS and the Vietnam Veterans of America as well as the local chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Kane Co. Republican Women's Group and Changing Children's Worlds Foundation.

Any community group can request meeting space at no charge, as dates become available. Contact us at 630-377-9845 or stcharlesveterans@gmail.com.

In June and July the American Legion invited area disabled veterans from local care centers and those from Hines VA Hospital to cruise along the Fox River in the St. Charles Belle paddlewheel boats, enjoying a catered dinner and games sponsored by local volunteer group, Random Acts Matter as well as the American Legion Auxiliary. We hosted a record number of veterans, in over thirty years of having provided the cruise.

The steps of Baker Community Center were the scene of a character reenactment in August, as we partnered with the local Salvation Army to provide an account of the inception of "Doughnut Day" through the story of local St. Charles WWI veteran Dwight Jennings, as portrayed by American Legion member and Post Historian Anthony Catella. We were honored to share the program with the new Commanding Officer of the Salvation Army, Scott Smith.

In July, "Ring a Bell for a Veteran" invited the community to recognize any number of veterans by reciting their name and ringing the Civil War-era bell located in front of the St. Charles History Museum, as we partnered with Museum Director Alison Costanzo and our Legion Auxiliary. We researched and shared the unique history of the bell. Over sixty residents turned out for the event. In September the first American Legion Post 342 Annual 5K Walk/Run, sponsored by Dick Pond, greeted 41 enthusiastic area participants in the driving rain as well as the Springfield-based Gold Star Mission 500 mile bicycle marathon, for their final rest stop before crossing the finish line at Cantigny in Winfield. This was the second year of support for GSM by the St. Charles Veterans Center. In 2017 we hosted the Fallen Hero Remembrance and Closing Ceremony in Mount St. Mary's Park.

In October we “haunted” the Center for the first time with a mad scientist lab, a Vietnam Vet’s campsite, giant spider web, grave yard and much more, to invite area families to enjoy a free hot dog/chili bar as well as doughnuts donated by Marmion Academy’s Abbey Farms. Every family received a free pumpkin and a costume contest. We awarded prizes from Colonial Café, Gun Barrel Coffee and others.

Next, on November 9th our “Meet a Veteran” event launches after our free Quarterly Breakfast provides a free breakfast buffet to any veteran at 8am. We invite the community to stop by for free games provided by veterans from several war eras: WWII, Korea and Vietnam. DAR volunteers will guide children to create their own take-home games! Recall days before electronic games, when kids amused themselves with inventions made from simple materials they had on-hand.

Meet our vets in uniform. Many of our veterans will visit local schools to present at their Veterans Day assemblies. Afterward there will be a chili luncheon provided by the American Legion Post 342 Auxiliary. As well, Carol Stream {disabled} veteran artist Don Ryan endeavors to paint 100 WWII veterans between 2019-2020 for an ultimate exhibit to be held in the Chicagoland area. Our local WWII vets Bob Pennington, Angelo Di Liberti and Norman Skala are subjects for his project. Don paints at Cantigny and at our Veterans Center.

Please consider contacting our Center with the names of veterans who may like to join in any of our projects, as well to join any one of our posts. Our website: www.stcharlesveteranscenter.org.

Contact your Service Officer, Kane Co. VA for advisement, regarding available benefits: Jake Zimmerman 800-273-8255