

Excellence:

The VA Illiana Standard



VA Illiana staff leading the way (from left):
Iyan Smith, Parthenia Davis, Jennifer Shuman, Sheila Warren, and Tamara Wilson

About VA Illiana

About VA Illiana Health Care System

For more than 125 years, VA Illiana has stood ready to keep America's promise to Veterans. The foundation for VA Illiana's legacy was laid by those who served under Abraham Lincoln as their commander-in-chief, fighting for the Union and emancipation.

Today, VA Illiana—America's eighth-oldest VA location of care and a CMS 5-star health system—is on a mission to become the health care provider of choice for Veterans. VA Illiana is guided by a commitment to the Veteran experience, the employee experience, and the journey to becoming a high reliability organization.

As one of only 12 VA health care systems nationwide holding Pathway to Excellence designation, VA Illiana fosters a culture of excellence, empowerment, and improvement. Daily, VA Illiana's more than 1,500 public servants shape the future of Veteran care through dedication to quality and innovation that has had a nationwide impact. VA Illiana's six locations of care serve more than 28,000 Veterans across 30 counties.

Trust
92%
Score

*VA Illiana Community Living Center
Veterans Village
Danville, Illinois*



Executive Leadership



Staci Williams, PharmD, RPh
Executive Director

Director's Message

At VA Illiana, our legacy of caring runs deep. Since 1898, Veterans have found healing and hope within our walls. Here, we place Veterans at the center of all we do as we continue to keep President Lincoln's promise to America's Veterans, their families, and their caregivers. Keeping this promise means excellence is our standard, zero harm is our goal, and earning Veteran trust is always at the fore.

Here, we are public servants. Our staff are dedicated to the communities we serve, and our leaders are committed to empowering their teams to grow and excel. A firm commitment to values like quality, well-being, and safety guide our approach to the employee experience.

Our 125th Anniversary Celebration throughout 2023 was a moment to both look forward to our future and to salute our past. Veterans and staff alike connected with VA Illiana's legacy in many ways. This legacy now becomes ours to honor. Constantly mindful of this responsibility, we will continue our work to honor the legacy of our past while serving the Veterans of today.



Richard Griffith, MHA, FACHE
Associate Director



Laura Archer, MBA, BSN, CCM
Acting Associate Director,
Patient Care Services



Zahoor Waseem
MD, MBA, FACP
Chief of Staff

By the Numbers

VA Illiana: By the Numbers

VA Illiana proudly serves a diverse Veteran population across a catchment area that includes both metro and highly rural areas. Every Veteran who trusts us with their care has a unique story of service, sacrifice, and patriotism. Our health care teams value each Veteran as an individual and honor their personal journey.

To better understand our impact, we use metrics and data to track trends that allow us to tailor our care to the needs of those we serve. Far from simply numbers on a page, VA Illiana views Veteran data as a critical tool to keep our promise to the Veterans of central Illinois and west-central Indiana.



Unique Veterans

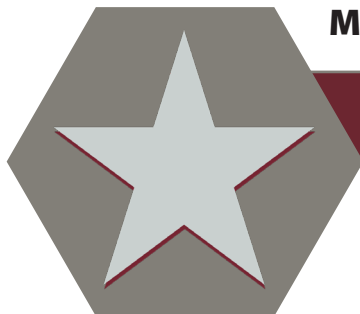
29,807



Women Veterans

3,056

33% increase from previous year.



Minority Veterans

3,075

Telehealth Visits

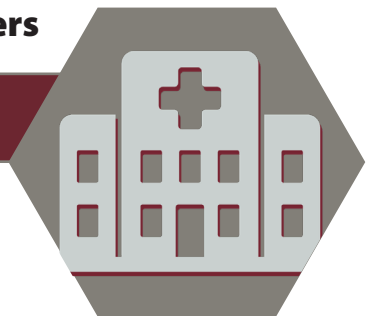
8,631

31% increase from previous year.



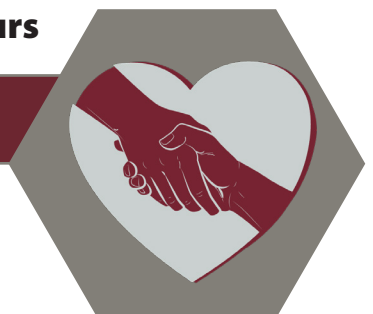
Encounters

415,439



Volunteer Hours

12,517

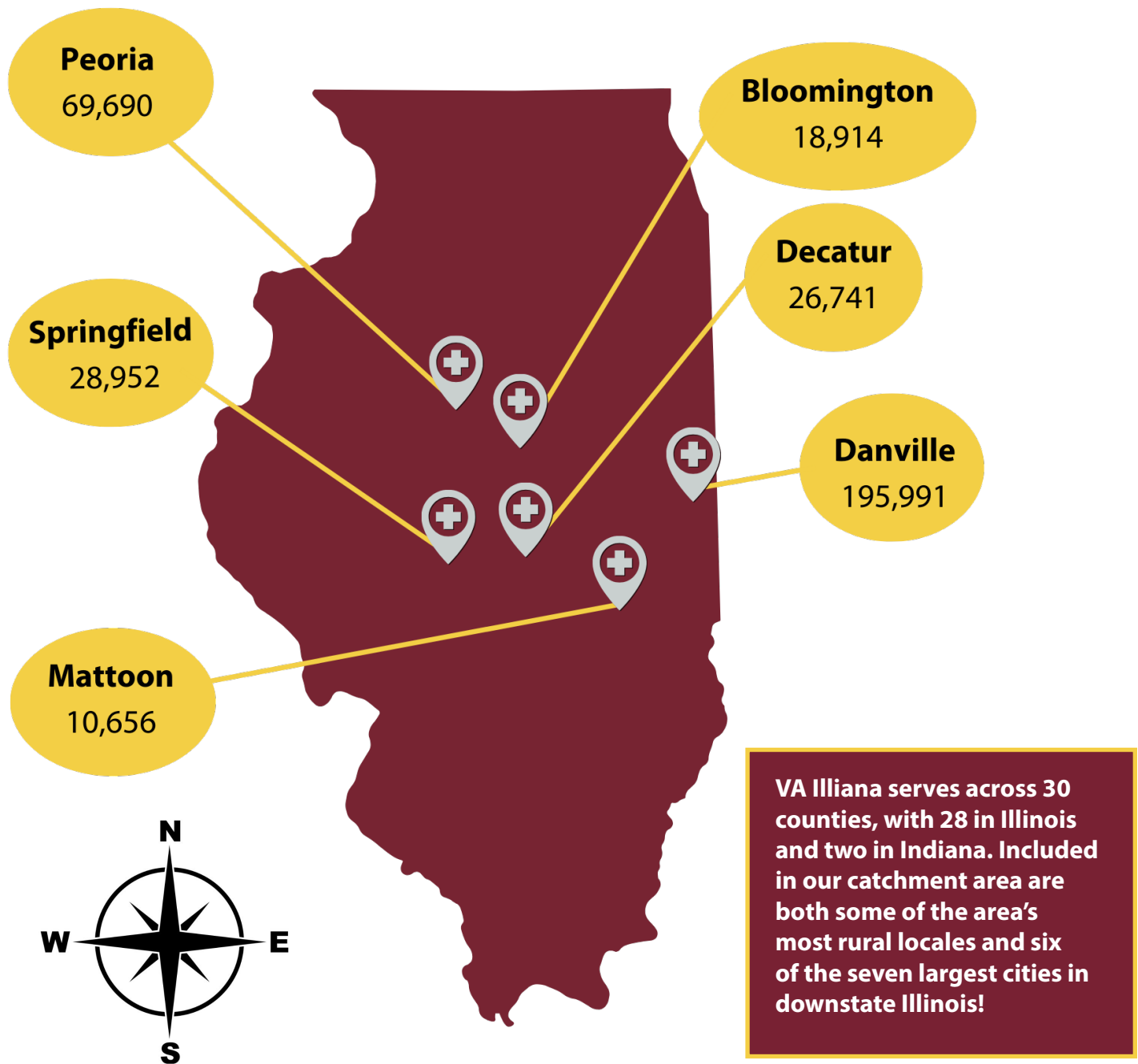


Locations and Visits



A History of Service

The Veterans of VA Illiana's catchment area have always stood ready to answer the call for our nation. In addition to being home to generations of Veterans, the downstate cities of Illinois have been important hubs of manufacturing and agricultural processing during times of war and peace.



Implementing the PACT Act

Keeping the Promise:

Toxic Exposure Screenings a Key Element of FY23 PACT Act Implementation

Upon the passage of the Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, VA Illiana joined VA's nationwide effort to connect Veterans with new care and benefits. Toxic exposure screening examinations, a major element of the PACT Act, were a major part of VA Illiana's work implementing this historic expansion of care throughout 2023. These toxic exposure screenings begin an important conversation between Veterans and their medical providers about exposure health risks.

Leeann Capace, an environmental registry clinician and examiner at VA Illiana, said every Veteran should consider undergoing this brief but important exam.

"As a clinician, I want every Veteran to know that no matter where or when they served, they have earned the right to this examination," she said. "Toxins are not confined to duty stations where formal registries already exist, nor are they confined to combat zones. At VA Illiana, our team performs exams for existing VA registries and a general toxic exposure examination during which Veterans can document any in-service exposure."

Capace noted that VA is making it easier than ever to connect Veterans with these exams, leveraging advances in telehealth to reach Veterans who may have otherwise gone unscreened.

"We offer exams in person, via video connect, or by telephone," she said. "We accommodate Veterans so they can meet via the modality that works best for them. It's all about the Veteran. We're making it as easy as possible for them to document their exposure and connect with care."

VA Illiana's work implementing the PACT Act continues beyond 2023, and Capace and her team encourage all Veterans to ask about setting up a screening as soon as they are ready.



Taking the first step: talking with your provider about toxic exposure screening.

125 Years of Service

VA Illiana: Proudly Serving for 125 Years

Since 1898, Veterans in central Illinois and west-central Indiana have trusted VA Illiana to provide the world-class care they earned through their service to our nation.

In January 2023, VA Illiana embarked on a year-long celebration honoring 125 years of service to those who have served. With a goal of connecting today's Veterans and staff with VA Illiana's legacy of caring, this initiative was a chance to highlight the value VA brings to both Veterans and the broader community.

Each month, events at the medical center, clinics, and community partner sites highlighted diverse aspects of VA's mission and educated participants about VA Illiana's proud history.



Bandstand and Barracks, Soldiers' Home, Danville, Illinois (1907)



Mess Hall, Soldiers' Home, Danville, Illinois (1910)

The celebration reached a crescendo on July 26, 2023, at the VA Illiana Summer VetFest and 125th Anniversary Celebration. With the medical center's special activities room filled with Veterans, staff, VA and elected officials, and members of the public, VA Illiana came together to formally honor those who have written the VA Illiana story over the last 125 years. Through word, song, and even poetry, VA Illiana rendered a crisp collective salute to all who have served and those who have cared for them.

VA Illiana's anniversary celebrations brought together Veterans and team members and events took place indoors, outdoors, and even virtually. Events were both synchronous and asynchronous, maximizing the opportunity for all to participate without disruption to the mission of Veteran care. Attendees left each event having experienced new perspectives on their work and on why VA's mission is as critical today as it was when Civil War Veterans called VA Illiana their home.

Celebrating 125 Years



Kickoff Event

VA Illiana began its 125th Anniversary Celebration in January 2023 with a kickoff event featuring music and cupcakes for Veterans and staff. Attendees engaged with resource tables sharing information about services and benefits. The event helped build excitement for the celebrations to come and gave an introduction to why VA Illiana chose to honor its 125th anniversary.



Barbershop Chorus Concert at the Canopy

The Building 98 canopy entrance hosted its first-ever musical performance on May 31, 2023. The Danville Barbershop Chorus performed musical selections included "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Be Our Guest," and "The Mansions of the Lord." Veterans from VA Illiana's Veterans Village attended the event, as well as Veterans participating in the medical center's residential rehabilitation treatment program.



Historic Grounds Tour

In March, VA Illiana hosted historic grounds tours for Veterans, staff, and members of the public, showcasing the deep history of the sprawling Danville campus. Guests enjoyed an in-depth audio tour from the comfort of VA Illiana's Gem e6 shuttle, learning about how Veteran needs shaped the health care system's development.



Summer VetFest and 125th Anniversary Ceremony

July's Summer VetFest and 125th Anniversary ceremony included outreach at VA Illiana's clinics and virtual engagement opportunities, aimed at formally honoring VA Illiana's history and connecting Veterans with new care and benefits available under the historic PACT Act expansion of care. A host of VA leaders, elected officials, and community partners joined the health care system to celebrate this special day.

of Caring for Veterans



Chapel Grand Re-Opening

Following a lengthy closure amid the Covid-19 pandemic, VA Illiana's historic chapel re-opened in August 2023. This "open-house" style event was an opportunity for Veterans, caregivers, family members, and members of the community to learn about the history of the chapel.



VA Illiana Through the Generations

In June, VA Illiana strengthened its partnership with the Danville Public Library as it highlighted stories of family service. The "VA Illiana Through the Generations" exhibit explored the way in which service to Veterans through VA employment is a family tradition for many in the region. The exhibit included static posters and written interviews with VA staff about the experience of life in a VA family.

Historic Road Show and PACT Act Event

In September, it was all about the clinics. VA Illiana carefully packed up selected historic artifacts and PACT Act outreach materials and visited all five clinics, connecting with Veterans who may not have had the chance to experience a VA Illiana 125th anniversary event. These events drew a throughline between VA's history of providing care and the promise of new care and benefits under the historic PACT Act.



DACC Pop-Up Exhibition

VA Illiana leaned into its historic ties with Danville Area Community College to host a pop-up exhibit featuring historic artifacts from VA Illiana's storage archives. Eligibility and enrollment staff were on site and connected with Veterans seeking to enroll in VA care.

Envisioning Excellence

VA Illiana's Pathway Designation Status a Testament to Foresight, Clinical Excellence

In 2016, VA Illiana Nursing Service leaders saw an opportunity for VA Illiana to join a select group of health care systems committed to nurse empowerment and excellent care: those receiving the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Pathway to Excellence Designation.

These nurses understood the scale of the task ahead of them. Led by former VA Illiana Associate Director, Patient Care Services (ADPCS) Kelley Sermak and former Deputy ADPCS Robin Gordon, they set out toward a goal so distant it was hardly visible. During this journey, they displayed the same vision of excellent Veteran care that has made VA Illiana an innovator for 125 years.

"Choosing to pursue Pathway designation means aiming high—and at the start that was both thrilling and a little overwhelming," said Gordon. "The nurses who helped build the initial momentum and buy-in for Pathway designation saw a brilliant future for nursing at VA Illiana."



In choosing to pursue designation, VA Illiana committed to a multiyear process of cultural transformation and collective growth. This journey inspired VA Illiana nurses amidst a global pandemic and a national nursing shortage in the daily pursuit of excellent care. Working toward designation also asked every nurse to take ownership of Pathway's framework grounded in shared decision-making, leadership, safety, quality, well-being, and professional development. Steadily, VA Illiana implemented nursing best practices that amplified the voices of those providing care and built a culture in which all nurses are respected, valued, and heard.

On September 19, 2023—more than seven years later—VA Illiana achieved Pathway to Excellence designation status, earning a place among just 11 other Pathway-designated VA health care systems.



VA Illiana nursing leaders wear historic attire to draw attention to Pathway Designation.

VA Illiana Achieves Pathway Designation



VA Illiana nurses celebrate National Nurses Week.

For Sermak, attaining Pathway designation has always been about more than the results of any objective measurement tool, no matter how impressive. Rather, it represents a true commitment to improving the employee experience for nurses on the front lines of Veteran care.

“From the very beginning, VA Illiana nursing leaders have viewed Pathway designation status as an achievement that both empowers our nurses and leads to the best possible care for the Veterans we serve,” said Sermak. “Excellent Veteran care follows from a culture in which nurses are supported and standards are consistently high. Pathway designation status means that VA Illiana is a place nurses can come not just to practice, but to grow, excel, and thrive.”

Looking ahead, Sermak added Pathway’s four-year designation term means continuous improvement will be essential for the health system. She said that Pathway designation can serve as a guide for staff in their daily work.

“We earned this designation thanks in part to the foresight and work of the nurse leaders who made designation a goal seven years ago,” she said. She added that each day, VA nurses can strive to incorporate Pathway principles even more deeply into their practice for the benefit of future generations.

“The example of those who came before embodies the commitment to growth that drives our profession forward,” Sermak said. “Now, it’s up to us to continue that work for the Veterans who count on VA Illiana and the nurses who’ll come next.”

2023: Key Moments

Canopy Addition

Snow, rain, hail—Yes, the weather in central Illinois can be taxing for everyone. For some, these obstacles can make a task like going for a routine checkup nearly impossible.

VA employee Chad Hardin, noticed the difficulties some Veterans were experiencing. He noticed it was often difficult for those using a wheelchair or other mobility assistive equipment to reach the entrance, even in fair weather. During spring downpours or winter snowstorms, these difficulties only increased.



The Canopy shelters those entering or preparing to depart.

He proposed an upgrade to the entrance that would shorten the distance to the entrance and give some protection from the elements. This proposal was the beginning of the building 98 canopy project.

The infrastructure upgrade provided a circle drive from the street that is also covered by a protective overhang that extends to the accessible parking spaces in front of the building. VA and community leaders officially opened the upgraded entrance, which represents a \$1.3 million addition to the medical center, in December 2022. Veterans and staff alike have praised the benefits of the new entrance.

“I think that it makes things much more convenient,” said one VA Illiana Veteran. “I get a ride here and with this entrance I can roll right up to the van and stay dry while I wait. It’s a great improvement.”

“The canopy project is one example of how staff can propose meaningful changes to improve the patient experience,” said VA Illiana’s facility management service chief Mark Shoviak. “This addition not only provides a better experience during regular operations, but it also gives us the opportunity to use this space in new ways.”

VA Illiana Earns a CMS 5-Star Rating

In July 2023, VA Illiana Health Care System was awarded a 5-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the highest-possible star rating awarded. 2023 marked the first time CMS has included VA facilities in their annual Overall Hospital Quality Star Ratings.



The attainment of this 5-star rating means Veterans in west-central Indiana and central Illinois have access to top-quality and comprehensive physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual care that much exceeds national quality averages.

The CMS uses 5 categories – mortality, safety of care, readmission, patient experience, and timely and effective care – to award a quality rating for each hospital. The more stars (out of 5), the better a hospital performed on the available quality measures. Overall, 67% of VA hospitals included in the CMS annual Overall Hospital Quality Star Ratings received either 4 or 5 stars, compared to only 41% of non-VA hospitals. These findings are the latest in a series of recent evaluations showing the effectiveness of VA health care compared to non-VA health care.



*Honoring the legacy of our past
Serving the Veterans of today*

VA Illiana

VA Illiana Leading the Way

Alternative Dispute Resolution Supports I*DEA Principles

Since 2021, the work of the VA Illiana Equal Opportunity Program Office (EEO) has been guided by the principles laid out in the I*DEA Action Plan. Promoting Inclusion, embracing diversity, ensuring equity, and providing access to all is at the root of VA Illiana's efforts to improve the Veteran and employee experience.



An important way of ensuring equity and providing access to employees is through the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process. In FY23, VA Illiana resolved 79 informal cases utilizing Alternative Dispute Resolution. The process is fair, voluntary, neutral, and confidential. It is just one of the tools used to maintain a healthy work environment for all who answer the call to serve Veterans.

Preventing Burnout with Focus Friday

Throughout 2023, VA Illiana continued its journey to increase productivity, improve focus, and step-up employee engagement in all work environments. At the center of this ongoing journey has been the Focus Friday initiative. As the journey continues, VA Illiana has reaffirmed its commitment to this wellness-centered initiative.

Simply stated, Focus Friday is a day without unnecessary meetings. VA Illiana's Focus Friday initiative aligns with broader system and VHA goals of integrating Whole Health principles into the workplace and embracing the tenants of REBOOT (Reduce Employee Burnout and Optimizing Organizational Thriving) to address burnout and promote a fulfilling professional environment. With employees often citing the frequency of meetings as a barrier to productivity, Focus Friday aims to help staff create more time for deep, meaningful work.

Collaboration is an essential part of meeting VA's mission of Veteran care, and Focus Friday embraces that fact. Rather than seeking to simply decrease or eliminate communication, the Focus Friday initiative encourages staff to make meetings more intentional, goal-oriented, and impactful. By scheduling structured meetings Monday through Thursday and reserving Friday for "deep work," employees can build a workflow that allows them to work on tasks without distraction and work empowered by the fruits of meetings earlier in the week.

Focus Friday does not mean a Friday without communication. Activities like Friday huddles, one-on-one clinical supervision, planning discussions, and structured meetings that support strategic goals all have a place on Fridays. That is because they facilitate deep work and have the power to move work processes forward. Work groups may even find the collaboration needed to complete tasks and projects flows more freely on Fridays as members can truly "dig into" their respective tasks in service to Veterans.

Serving With Us

Join our Team!

Build your career with us at VA, where you'll become part of the nation's largest health care team, earn great benefits, and enjoy a balanced lifestyle.

Working with us is more than a career. It's a way to show your passion for serving Veterans. We want to help you develop your unique talents as you work to improve the lives of Veterans and their families.

To learn more, contact VA Illiana Human Resources at 217-554-4548 or email VISN12HRDanvilleSBU@va.gov today.



*Scan to browse
VA Illiana careers*

Where will your VA journey lead?



Generations of service: After completing a nursing assistant training program, Jalaya Amaraegbu is pinned by her mother, Claudine Jackson, who is also a VA Illiana employee.

VA Illiana Locations of Care



Danville VA Medical Center

1900 East Main Street
Danville, IL 61832-5100
Phone: 217-554-3000



Bloomington VA Clinic

207 Hamilton Road
Bloomington, IL 61704-7527
Phone: 309-827-4090



Bob Michel VA Clinic

7717 North Orange Prairie Road
Peoria, IL 61615-9323
Phone: 309-589-6800



Decatur VA Clinic

792 North Sunnyside Road
Decatur, IL 62522-1156
Phone: 217-362-5442



Mattoon VA Clinic

501 Lakeland Boulevard, Suite D
Mattoon, IL 61938-5283
Phone: 217-258-3370



Springfield VA Clinic

5850 South 6th Street, Suite A
Springfield, IL 62703-5162
Phone: 217-529-5046