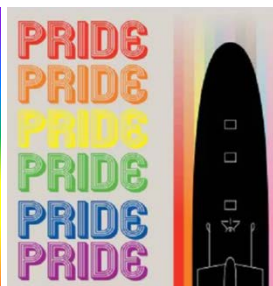


WH Pride 2023

On May 31, President Joe Biden issued a proclamation celebrating June as Pride Month: “Pride is a celebration of generations of LGBTQ+ people who have fought bravely to live openly and authentically. And it is a reminder that we still have generational work to do to ensure that everyone enjoys the full promise of equity, dignity, protection, and freedom. This country is stronger and more just when America’s leaders reflect the full diversity of our nation.” The White House hosted a Pride event on June 11, with rainbow lighting in the evenings.



DOD Pride 2023

Pride Month was celebrated in many ways by the U.S. Department of Defense. The Secretary of Defense, Lloyd J. Austin III, issued a news release on June 1 noting that “This Pride Month, we honor the service, commitment, and sacrifice of the LGBTQ+ Servicemembers and personnel who volunteer to defend our country. Their proud service adds to America’s strength. Their contributions to our national security are powerful. Members of this community have deployed to combat zones around the globe, held high-ranking positions in the Pentagon, and fought and died alongside their teammates. To defend our republic and win its wars, the ranks of the U.S military must remain open to all qualified patriots who seek to serve. Militaries that do not avail themselves of the best possible talent of their citizenry put themselves at a strategic disadvantage. We would be rendering ourselves less fit to our weighty task if we excluded from our ranks people who meet our standards and who have the skills, the guts, and the devotion to serve in uniform. I believe that the story of America should be one of widening freedom, not deepening discrimination. In 2021, I was honored to implement President Biden’s directive to ensure that transgender Americans who wish to serve and meet Department standards are able to do so—openly and free from discrimination. This often painful history has made something clear: Who you love and how you identify has nothing to do with how bravely you can fight for your country. When we speak up for the rights of all Americans, who can encourage all qualified Americans to stand a post, we strengthen both our democracy and our national security. The U.S. military is the greatest fighting force in history, and we intend to keep it that way. As Secretary of Defense, I remain decided to making sure that our LGBTQ+ personnel across the Joint Force can continue to serve the country that we all love with dignity and pride—this month and every other one. We thank you for your service—and we thank your spouses and your families, whose support makes your serve possible.” On June 7, the Pentagon hosted a Pride Event. The Honorable Gilbert R. Cisneros Jr., Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, opened, and was joined by Lt. Gen. DeAnna Burt, Chief Operations Officer, U.S. Space Force, Dixon Osburn, Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Dialogue (U.S.), and Cmdr. Emily Shilling, Deputy Program Manager, Naval Air Systems Command. Dixon noted that it was a “surreal and emotional” event as he reflected back on past efforts through SLDN to repeal DADT. Cmdr. Shilling received the 2022 LGBTQ+ Corporate Advocate of the Year Outie Award from Out & Equal for her advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community and working to improve the U.S. Navy’s inclusion.



Chicago Pride 2023

[Chicago Pride Fest](#) and [Chicago Pride Parade](#) celebrated diversity in hot and sunny Chicago with multiple Pride events in June and July along North Halsted and North Clark Avenues. The Chicago Chapter of AVER also

hosted a booth at the McCormick Allée in Cantigny Park Pride Picnic near Wheaton, IL; Chapter President Brandon Chong, Treasurer Larry Simpson, and Bruce Inman manned the booth (top left).



The Chicago Chapter of AVER again marched in the Chicago Pride Parade with our banners, service flags in the Honor Guard, and our 50' U.S. American flag complemented by help from a group of French students from the Seagull Institute and staff from the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. **Governor JB Pritzker, Mayor Brandon Johnson, and U.S. Representatives Mike Quigley and Jan Schakowsky** were in attendance as well. We heartfully acknowledge the support that **Quigley and Schakowsky** have given our organization over the past years.





Photo Captions and Credits: Page 1, bottom right. US Army Pride, Troops at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, June 1, by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicholas Renard. Chicago Pride Photos courtesy of David Strzepek and Vern Hester.

Movement Moments: The National LGBTQ Task Force at 50

Check out the podcast by Tanya Domi and Joe Zuniga, two U.S. military veterans and LGBTQ activists, on what inspired them to come out. See <https://thetaskforce.buzzsprout.com/2161543/12920698>.

Center for Military Readiness

While Pride was being celebrated worldwide this month, we need to remain cognizant of false analysis and hysteria from uninformed public policy organizations, like the Center for Military Readiness (CMR). They “promote high standards and sound priorities in the making of military personnel policies and takes the lead in defending elements of military culture that is essential for morale and readiness in the All-Volunteer Force.” Their President is Elaine Donnelly, a well-known conservative and anti-feminist concerned with preserving the “traditional” culture of the U.S. military. She opposes LGBTQ+ individuals serving in the military and favors limiting the service of women. The Board of Advisors includes James Dobson, evangelical Christian and founder of “Focus on the Family,” Frank Gaffney, well-known conspiracy theorist, and Colin Hanna, founder of “Let Freedom Ring,” a conservative advocacy organization. On January 7, they posted a challenge to Congress to “oppose, change, or repeal ‘woke’ policies in the military that are weakening morale and readiness.”

= Chicago Chapter 2022-2023 =

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Monthly In-person AVER Meetings for the Chicago Chapter • Join Us!

We meet up every month on **First Thursdays** at 7pm (Chicago, Central time zone) at the **Center on Halsted**. **Everyone** is welcome to attend our monthly Board meetings **in-person** or via Zoom!! For Zoom, **check the averchicago.org website for the active link** (click on the highlighted “Zoom” link near the bottom of the webpage) to get into the Zoom meeting. To join via audio: call 312-626-6799 with ID 488-863-384 and passcode 328090.

American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago Chapter, P.O. Box 29317, Chicago, IL 60629, Telephone: 773-752-0058, www.aver.us and www.averchicago.org. You can email any of the Chicago Chapter officers with the following address: president@averchicago.org, secretary@averchicago.org, or treasurer@averchicago.org.

Page 1 Photo Captions and Credits: Clockwise from upper left. US Army Pride, Troops at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, June 1, by Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicholas Renard. Chicago Photo courtesy of David Strzepek and Vern Hester.

Road Home Program – Upcoming Events for July

[Saturday, July 8, 8am-6pm: Veterans Softball Tournament and Family Fest 2023](#). The Chicago Park District and the Road Home Program at Rush are partnering to provide a day of fun for the entire family including a DJ, children’s activities, Mission BBQ, and a 16-inch softball tournament at Beverly Park, 2460 W 102nd St, Chicago, IL 60655. Register at Eventbrite.

[Sunday, July 9-Thursday, July 13: 2023 AVECO Convention: Speak Easy STL](#). This year’s conference will welcome not only the VA but additional sessions presented by State Approving Agencies from across the region as well as industry and colleague-led sessions. St. Louis Union Station Hotel, 1820 Market St, St. Louis, MO 63103.

[Tuesday, July 11, 5:30pm: Roll Call at Park Tavern](#). Monthly professional networking event sponsored by the CTA and Primerica. The Roll Call leadership team as well as corporate and community partners will be onsite to connect with veterans seeking professional development and career advancement. Road Home Program Staff will give facility tours for anyone interested. Park Tavern, 1645 W Jackson Blvd, Chicago, IL 60612.

[Saturday, July 15, 10am-12noon: Mental and Financial Wellness – Learn How to Take Action Today](#). Financial security includes researching and applying for government benefits and grants, accessing military discounts, and understanding the effects of military service on mental health and engaging in healthy self-care practices. Mathius Carter, Road Home Program Outreach Coordinator, author of “Instead of Sheep: A Soldier’s Way of Explaining PTSD to His Son, will be a presenter. The Other Side, 135 Beardsley St, Downtown Crystal Lake.

[Friday, July 28, 1-4pm: Illinois Joining Forces Regional Summit](#). Join industry leaders and veteran service providers for an afternoon of connection, conversation, and collaboration. The focus is on best practices for supporting servicemembers, veterans, and their families during times of transition. Blackberry Farm, 100 S Barnes Rd, Aurora, IL 60506.

[Saturday, July 29, 10am-4pm](#): Pritzker Military Museum and Library Veterans and Family Day. Workshops and activities for military families as well as book reading from the children’s book author Mathius Carter from his book “Instead of Sheep.” Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60603.

For more information, check out the Road Home Program: <https://roadhomeprogram.org/>

Valor Games Midwest: August 15-17

The Chicago Park District will be hosting the Valor Games at various locations across Chicago. This is a 3-day Paralympic sport competition for veterans with physical, visual, and invisible disabilities. This is an introductory-level competition; no previous experience is required to participate. Athletes will have the opportunity to compete in indoor rowing, biathlon, discus, shot put, archery, cycling, table tennis, and powerlifting. A Resource Fair is hosted at Soldier Field (Gate O, inside Concourse) on Tuesday, August 15, 11am-2pm. Connect with agencies and organizations for assistance in education, employment, housing, legal, disabilities, or more. Contact veterans@chicagoparkdistrict.com or <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/valor-games-midwest>.