

New Illinois Veterans' Affairs Office in East Alton Outlines Planned Services

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EAST ALTON - The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs East Alton office hosted an open house to inform veterans about the services available to them in Madison County.

From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 27, 2023, Veterans' Service Officer (VSO) Douglas Figge and Southern Region Supervisor Jeff Lewis welcomed veterans at the new East Alton office, located at 606 W. St. Louis Avenue. The office opened in April after moving from its previous location at Lewis and Clark Community College.

"This is a great idea. The county that we're covering is Madison, and so we wanted to make sure this area was covered, and this East Alton office is perfect for that," Lewis said. "That's a very important thing, that veterans are informed. To make sure they're aware, that they know who their local VSO is and then make sure they make at least one contact with them. More if possible, but at least one so that can tell them, 'Hey, this is what's available and this is what we can do for you.'"

As the Madison County VSO, Figge regularly sits down with veterans to talk through the services and benefits they can receive. He said most veterans know about federal programs, but Illinois has several statewide programs that more veterans can take advantage of.

Figge's main duties are "to help veterans apply for and obtain federal and state veterans' benefits," Lewis explained. The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs has information about these services on their [official website at Veterans.Illinois.gov](https://www.veterans.illinois.gov), but VSOs like Figge can help veterans determine what they're eligible for and how to apply.

While events like East Alton's open house are one way for people to connect with a VSO, you can also [find a VSO online](#). The [Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs website](#) has [a map of women VSOs](#) for people who are more comfortable speaking with a woman, or you can scroll through [the Illinois VSO directory](#) to locate information about your county's VSO.

Locally, Figge is at the East Alton office every weekday. He encourages people to make appointments, but he is happy to talk to anyone who walks in if he's available. To connect with him, call the East Alton office at 618-251-7854 or his cell at 217-685-5469. You can also email him at doug.figge@illinois.gov.

"I wanted to do something where I felt like I was making changes, making differences in people's lives," Figge added. "I have had quite a few veterans come in and tell me how much they appreciate the service, and it means a lot."

