



# NEWS RELEASE



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**NEWS RELEASE # 07152024**  
**DATE:** July 15, 2024  
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## **FROM METROPOLIS TO ROCKFORD, GOLD STAR 500 RIDES TO PRESERVE THE MEMORIES OF REAL HEROES, OUR FALLEN SERVICE MEMBERS**

*Sept. 24-28 Ride Through Illinois Strives to 'Always Remember, Never Forget' Illinois' Fallen Military Members*

**SPRINGFIELD, Illinois** – The Gold Star 500 might start in Superman's hometown of Metropolis (Illinois), but Gold Star Mission's more than 512-mile Gold Star 500 endurance bicycle ride is honoring real heroes from Sept. 24-28.

The Gold Star 500 helps ensure we 'Always Remember, Never Forget' the sacrifices of our fallen Illinois service members and their families. This year the ride will traverse nearly the entire state running from Metropolis in Southern Illinois up to Rockford in the north. The funds raised from the Gold Star 500 go to awarding scholarships in the names of Illinois' fallen service members as well as toward videos memorializing the state's fallen through interviews with their families, friends, and those who served with them.

"Ensuring that the memory of our fallen service members stays alive is vitally important to the soul of our nation," said Barry Tobias, President of Gold Star Mission. "These men and women were willing – and did – give everything for freedom and the United States of America."

Gold Star Mission has awarded well over \$283,000 in scholarships, each in honor of Illinois' over 300 service members who have fallen since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The Fallen Heroes History Project has created nine videos, each about a half-hour in length, with family, friends, and fellow service members telling viewers about the lives these heroes lived and their patriotism and sacrifice. All the proceeds from the Gold Star 500 go toward the scholarships or the

Fallen Heroes History Project. The nine professional videos produced so far can be found at this link: [GSM - The Gold Star Mission](#).

"The Fallen Heroes History Project helps people connect with these heroes and their families and to better understand the sacrifice of the fallen service member and the sacrifice of the fathers, mothers, spouses and children," Tobias said. "The goal is to have a video produced for each of Illinois' fallen and to have those videos help keep their memories alive for perpetuity."

This year the ride will start in Metropolis. On Sept. 24, the riders will travel 101 miles from Metropolis to Mount Vernon with brief stops in Vienna, Goreville, and Sesser. On Sept. 25 the Gold Star 500 riders will travel 104 miles from Mount Vernon to Mattoon with stops in Salem and Effingham. On Sept. 26, the riders will travel 102 miles from Mattoon to Normal with a brief stop in Urbana. On Sept. 27, the riders will travel 112 miles from Normal to Princeton with a brief stop in Peoria. On the final day of the Gold Star 500, Sept. 28, the riders will travel 101 miles from Princeton to closing ceremonies in Rockford with brief stops in Mendota and Rochelle.

(The attachment to this release has addresses and approximate times for each stop. Because of the nature of endurance bicycling, the times are approximate. During previous Gold Star 500 events, the riders have arrived within 15 minutes of the times advertised.)

The ride is scheduled to end during Gold Star Family weekend just before Gold Star Mothers' Day on Sunday, Sept. 29.

Many of those who volunteer with Gold Star Mission are active or retired members of the Armed Forces, or Gold Star Family members. A group of active and retired Illinois National Guard members started Gold Star Mission in 2017 with the goal of creating awareness of the more than 300 Illinois military members killed since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and awarding scholarships in their names through a rigorous 500-mile, 5-day bicycle ride – the Gold Star 500.

For the past couple years, the Gold Star 500 has had participants from Poland and Gold Star Mission riders have participated in a similar ride in Poland for fallen Polish service members. Many of the Gold Star Mission volunteers were involved in the Illinois National Guard's State Partnership Program with Poland or had co-deployed with the Polish to Iraq or Afghanistan. The Illinois National

Guard co-deployed with the Polish on combat tours first to Iraq and then to Afghanistan for 17 consecutive years. Gold Star Mission events have led to friendships between Illinois Gold Star families and the families of fallen Polish service members.

Each year the organization has grown. Organizers have added the annual Run for the Fallen, the General Logan 200 bicycle ride, a presence at the State Fair's Veterans Day, in addition to its Scholarship Awards and Appreciation Dinner. The organization participates in events honoring fallen Illinois service members and Gold Star families throughout the year.

In 2022, the organization has also launched the Gold Star Mission Fallen Heroes History Project. The project completed two videos in 2022 and five more in 2023 and two more so far in 2024. More videos are being produced as funds become available.

For more information about the Gold Star Mission or how to get involved visit <https://goldstarmission.org/> or e-mail: [goldStarMission@gmail.com](mailto:goldStarMission@gmail.com).

High-resolution photographs are available can be downloaded from the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service from this link: [DVIDS - Images - Illinois National Guard Members, Polish Partners, participate in 500-mile Bicycle Ride to 'Always Remember' Our Fallen \[Image 2 of 14\] \(dvidshub.net\)](#).

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2024 ~ Gold Star 500

**Total: 5 Days, 510+ Miles**

**Day 1 – Tuesday 24 September 2024 (Metropolis to Mt. Vernon)**

7:00 am Depart – Superman Statue (Metropolis)  
7:48 am Mermet Springs Scuba (Belknap)  
8:48 am Vienna VFW Post #5222  
10:03 am Goreville Village Park  
11:38 am Herrin American Legion Post #645 Lunch (45 minute stop)  
1:48 pm Sesser-Valier High School (Sesser)  
2:48 pm Waltonville VFW Post #9153  
3:47 pm Mt. Vernon Township High School

**Day 2 – Wednesday 25 September 2024 (Mt. Vernon to Mattoon)**

7:00 am Depart – Mt Vernon Township High School  
7:58 am Dix Community Center  
9:13 am Salem High School  
10:33 am South-Central High School (Farina)  
12:13 pm Altamont VFW Post #7676  
1:47 pm Effingham Army National Guard Armory Lunch (45 minute stop)  
3:07 pm Neoga American Legion Post #458  
4:22 pm Mattoon YMCA

**Day 3 – Thursday 26 September 2024 (Mattoon to Normal)**

7:00 am Depart – Mattoon Army National Guard Armory  
8:00 am Kelly Moore Memorial Park (Arcola)  
9:29 am Pesotum American Legion Post #580  
10:55 am Urbana VFW Post #630 Lunch (45 minute stop)  
12:58 pm Mansfield American Legion Post #650  
2:28 pm Le Roy American Legion Post #79  
3:58 pm Normal Community High School

**Day 4 – Friday 27 September 2024 (Normal to Princeton)**

7:00 am Depart – Normal Community High School  
8:07 am White Oak Community Center (Carlock)  
9:19 am Deer Creek Town Hall  
10:17 am Washington VFW Post #9016  
11:25 am Caterpillar AB Building (100 NE Adams St, Peoria) Lunch (45 minute stop)  
1:32 pm River Valley Coop (Edelstein)  
3:05 pm Hodges Park (Bradford)  
4:44 pm Wyand VFW Post #663  
5:29 pm Princeton High School

**Day 5 – Saturday 28 September 2024 (Princeton to Rockford)**

7:00 am Depart – Princeton High School  
7:56 am Ladd Veterans Park  
9:44 am ADM Facility (Mendota)  
10:59 am Village House of Praise (Compton)  
12:26 pm Rochelle VFW Post #3878 Lunch (45 minute stop)  
2:08 pm Davis Junction Community Park  
3:19 pm End of Ride - Rockford VFW Post #5149 (7th Street)

*Note: Times above are approximate, and can shift +/- 15 minutes, based on factors outside our control, including weather, traffic, etc.*

8-9-2024

**“ALWAYS REMEMBER ~ NEVER FORGET”**