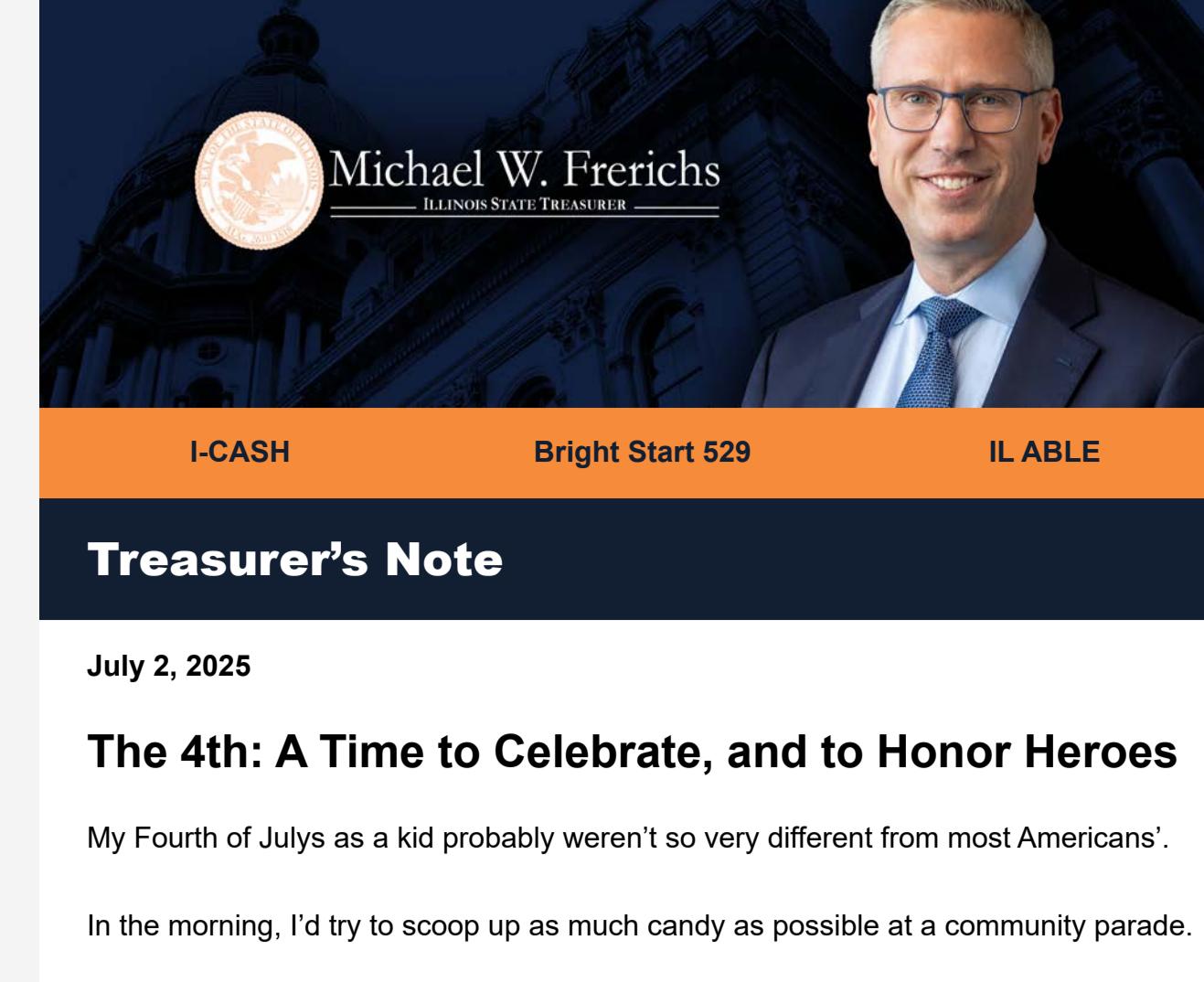


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Treasurer's Note

July 2, 2025

The 4th: A Time to Celebrate, and to Honor Heroes

My Fourth of Julys as a kid probably weren't so very different from most Americans'.

In the morning, I'd try to scoop up as much candy as possible at a community parade.

Then I would watch my uncles and their fellow firefighters battle in a water ball contest. If this wasn't part of your childhood and you don't know what this means, you can see how soaked they get in this [YouTube video](#).

Afterward, we'd play in the above-ground pool at my aunt's family barbecue. In the evening, when I got a little older, Mom and Dad would let me walk around the town carnival with friends.

And, of course, we'd cap off the night sitting on lawn chairs and blankets watching fireworks.

I remember a lot of Fourth fun, but I don't recall thinking as a child about the sacrifices people made so that we could live in this country and celebrate. Ironically, the times I thought most about that on Independence Day were when I was living outside our country.

Last year, I [told you about](#) a summer in eastern Germany and celebrating on a U.S. military base in Berlin. Being in a recently communist country made me think a lot about our freedom and its defense.

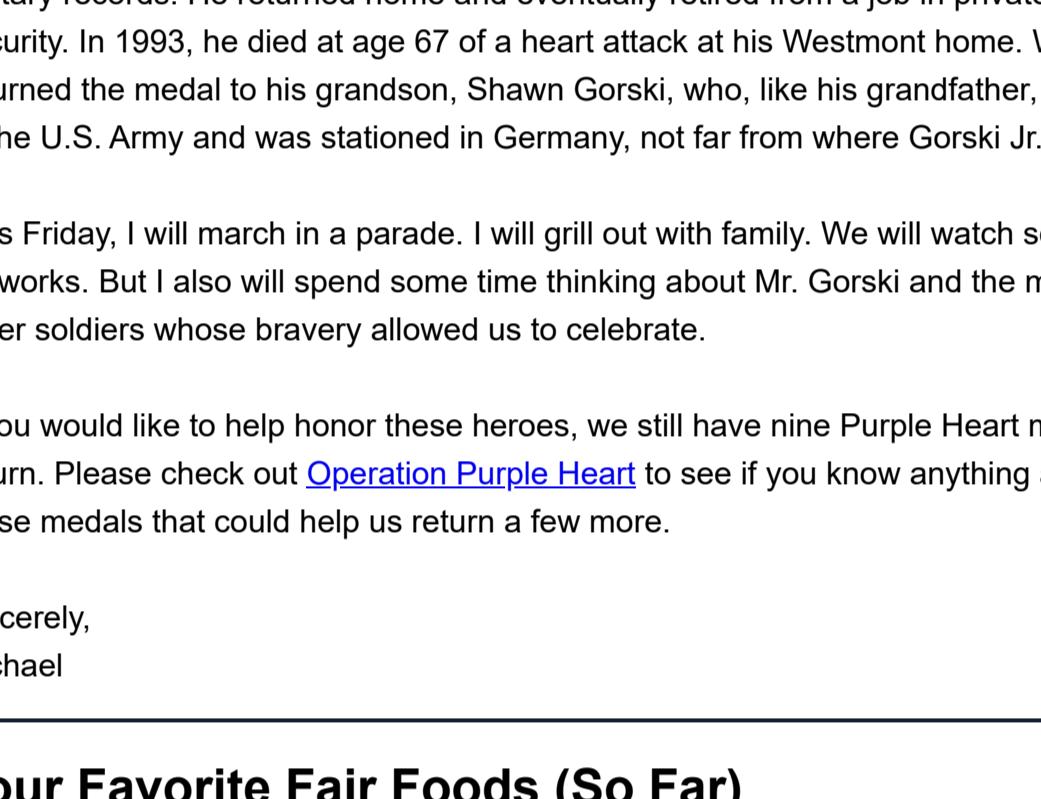
There were no celebrations in Taiwan on July 4, 1996, but it was the Independence Day I had the longest conversations about the cost of defending our freedoms. For the people of Taiwan, it was just a school day. I was teaching English, which meant I had to work, but at night a fellow American and I decided to grab dinner, down a few beers, and celebrate.

We talked about what we loved about America and what we missed by living in Asia. Eventually, we discussed the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and battles in the Pacific during World War II.

Summer in south Taiwan is very hot. We speculated on what it was like to march through the jungle or wade onto a beach under fire in uniform and full battle gear. It must have been so grueling and terrifying, and I was thankful so many soldiers had been willing to do that for our country.

The Fourth of July had always been a time of fun and excitement. That day, I also felt genuine gratitude.

I was reminded of that feeling recently. The Fox River American Legion Post 75 in Geneva hosted the return of [our 14th Purple Heart](#) to the grandson of a World War II veteran who earned the medal while fighting to liberate Germany.



It's always a privilege to return a Purple Heart to its rightful owner. Watch the video to see this one returned to Shawn Gorski, grandson of World War II veteran Edward Gorski Jr.

Chicago's Private First-Class Edward Gorski Jr. enlisted in April 1944 after turning 18 a few months earlier. He was part of the Army's 65th Infantry Division that fought through France and Germany. Gorski Jr. fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

He earned the Purple Heart during a nighttime mortar attack on May 2, 1945. It was cold — bitterly cold. So cold that a few of the soldiers, knowing the risks of giving away their position, hunkered down in a foxhole and lit a small fire just to try to get the feeling back in their hands.

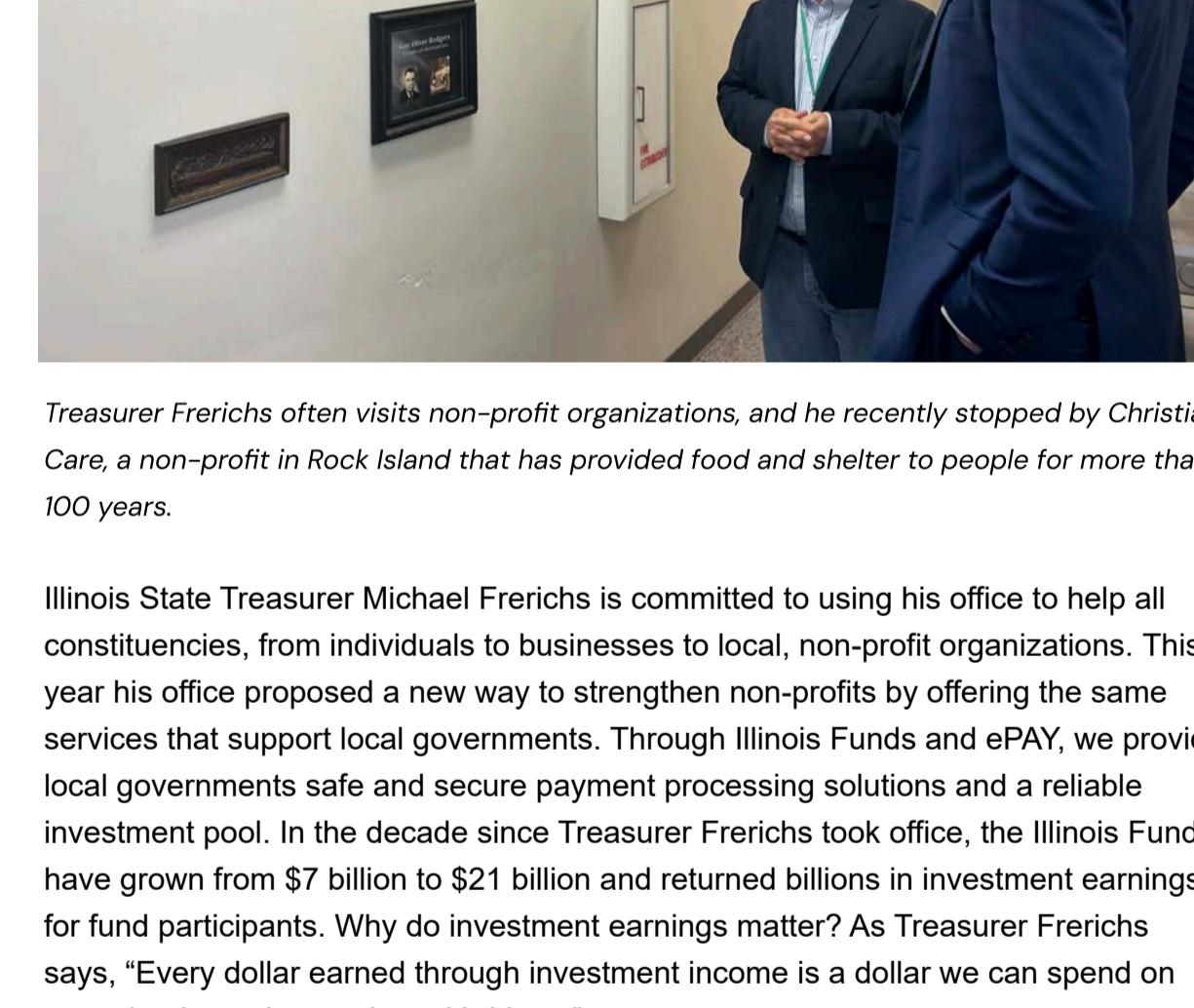
You can imagine what happened. German artillery fire opened up and Private Gorski, then only 19 years old, suffered wounds to his face and nearly lost an eye. Thankfully, he survived.

Gorski Jr. also earned the European African Middle Eastern campaign medal with two Bronze Stars, a good conduct medal and a combat infantry medal, according to his military records. He returned home and eventually retired from a job in private security. In 1993, he died at age 67 of a heart attack at his Westmont home. We returned the medal to his grandson, Shawn Gorski, who, like his grandfather, served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany, not far from where Gorski Jr. fought.

This Friday, I will march in a parade. I will grill out with family. We will watch some fireworks. But I also will spend some time thinking about Mr. Gorski and the millions of other soldiers whose bravery allowed us to celebrate.

If you would like to help honor these heroes, we still have nine Purple Heart medals to return. Please check out [Operation Purple Heart](#) to see if you know anything about these medals that could help us return a few more.

Sincerely,
Michael

Your Favorite Fair Foods (So Far)

It's time to reveal the results (so far) of our survey in the last newsletter, which asked, "What's Your Favorite Fair Food?"

Many of you stuck with the classics — funnel cake, corn dog, and lemon shake-up — as your top choices. The next five were elephant ear, ribeye steak sandwich, corn on the cob, mini donuts, and apple cider slushie.

One person said they don't have a favorite fair food and "love them all."

We're keeping the survey open until the start of the Illinois State Fair, so make sure to cast your vote!

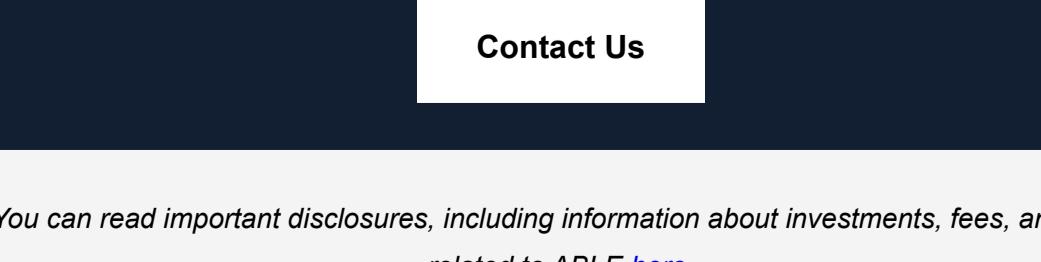
[Tell Us Your Favorite Fair Food!](#)**We Need Your Help**

Treasurer Frerichs often visits non-profit organizations, and he recently stopped by Christian Care, a non-profit in Rock Island that has provided food and shelter to people for more than 100 years.

Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs is committed to using his office to help all constituencies, from individuals to businesses to local, non-profit organizations. This year his office proposed a new way to strengthen non-profits by offering the same services that support local governments. Through Illinois Funds and ePAY, we provide local governments safe and secure payment processing solutions and a reliable investment pool. In the decade since Treasurer Frerichs took office, the Illinois Funds have grown from \$7 billion to \$21 billion and returned billions in investment earnings for fund participants. Why do investment earnings matter? As Treasurer Frerichs says, "Every dollar earned through investment income is a dollar we can spend on our schools, parks, roads and bridges."

We are pleased to report that the General Assembly passed SB 246, which will offer treasury services for eligible non-profit organizations. The bill awaits Governor JB Pritzker's signature. This legislation will benefit non-profit organizations, such as your local parent teacher council, senior center, booster club, food pantry, and many more. Participants will be able to invest in a safe, liquid investment vehicle that provides better returns and lower fees than what is currently available to them. Eligible non-profits will be able to take advantage of the ePAY system, allowing them to receive donations electronically through secure and convenient payment channels. You can find the organizations and individuals who supported the legislation [here](#).

Will you lend additional support? If this program will benefit your community, please email us at outreach@illinoistreasurer.gov today! We will add your name to our growing list of supporters. It is Treasurer Frerichs' hope that this legislation continues to improve the quality of life in your community by strengthening the non-profits that need our help.

Make It Happen with Illinois ABLE

Check out the [video](#) to learn more about Bradley, who owns an Illinois ABLE savings account.

We're proud to have co-explored hundreds of Chicago-enhancing products 2025, where thousands attend interactive workshops, and learn about our [Illinois ABLE](#) program.

Eligible people with disabilities can save and invest in their ABLE account to pay for a long list of expenses — all while protecting their federal benefits, such as SSI and Medicaid. And there are tax benefits — especially for Illinois taxpayers. It's a game-changer that helps prepare for the unexpected and builds quality of life.

Bradley uses his Illinois ABLE savings account to pay for his service dog, Ruby. Bradley uses his Illinois ABLE account. Watch the [video](#) to see how Bradley uses his Illinois ABLE account.

And thanks to everyone who visited our booth, shared their stories, and asked Illinois Treasurer's Office.

[Contact Us](#)

Illinois State Treasurer Michael W. Frerichs

Springfield, IL 62701

[Contact Us](#)

You can read important disclosures, including information about investments, fees, and risks related to ABLE [here](#).

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