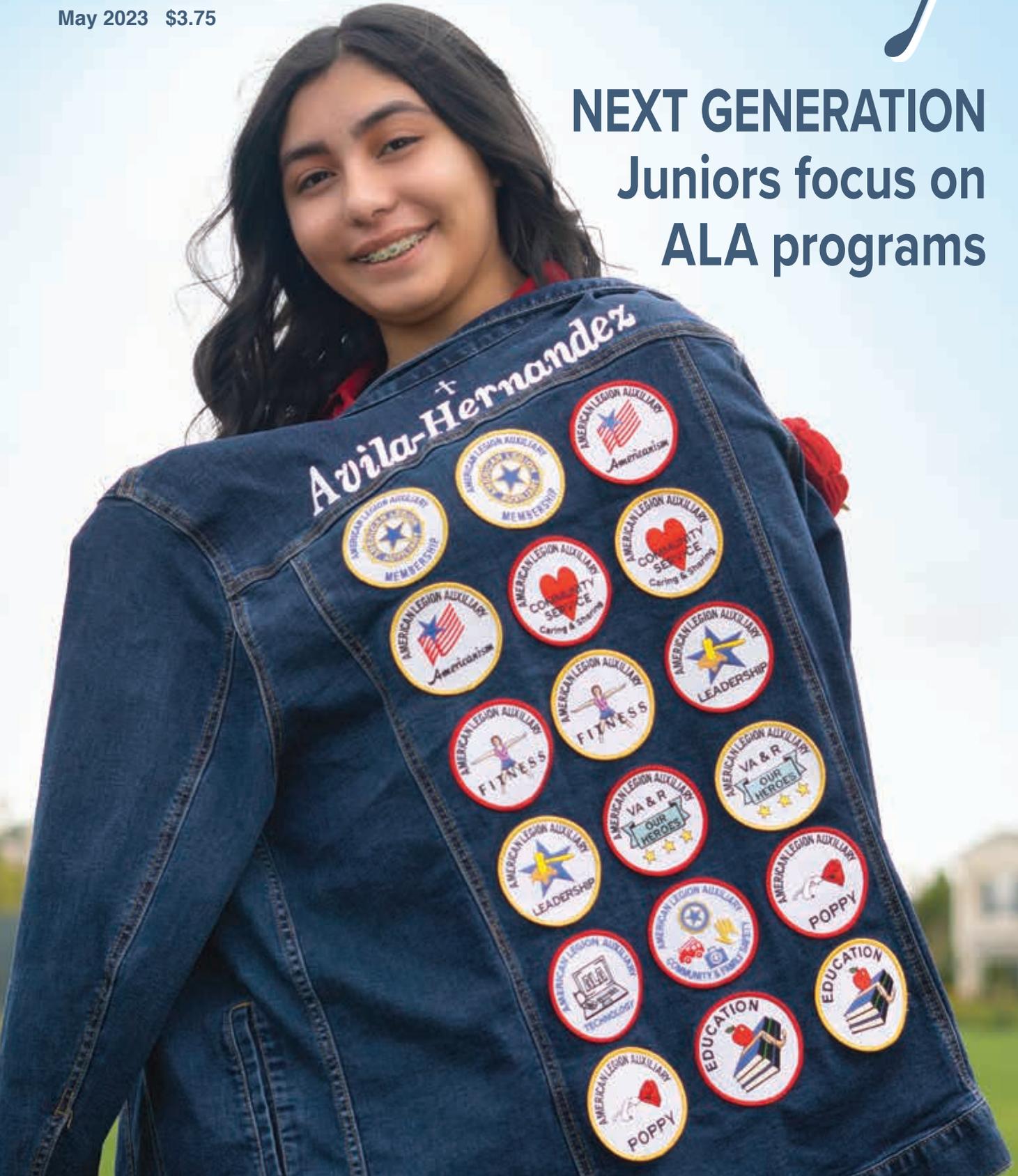


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Auxiliary

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ON THE COVER: ALA Junior member Rebeka Avila-Hernandez, California Unit 299, has multiple Junior Activities patches and counting (photo: William Camargo). Read more on page 8. **ABOVE:** Members of Schuylkill Haven, Pa., American Legion Auxiliary Unit 38 — Kathy Wingle (left), Cosette Pohronezny, Kathy Schaeffer, and Kathy Bainbridge — ring the bell and read names of those killed in service from Schuylkill County and a Prisoner of War during a Memorial Day program at the Schuylkill County Vietnam Veterans Memorial in May 2021 (Jacqueline Dormer/*Republican Herald* via AP).



FOR THE MISSION: National President Vickie Koutz addresses the National Security Commission at the Legion’s Washington, D.C. Conference. She discussed the importance of the ALA’s 2022-2023 focus on continued POW/MIA awareness.

It’s hard to believe we are over the halfway mark for the 2022-2023 administrative year! What an incredible experience it has been so far.

I have thoroughly enjoyed spending time with so many of our unit members. You are the grassroots of this organization. You make a difference in the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, and I’ve enjoyed witnessing the ALA mission in action at the unit level.

Seeing departments host leadership workshops, watching Oratorical Contest events, and being part of a spring conference have been a few of the experiences I’ve had over the last few months.

It was an honor to attend this year’s American Legion Washington, D.C. Conference. It has been two years since we were able to have this event in person. I loved seeing the energy of our members as they sat in on Legion commission meetings, attended important informational sessions, and interacted on Capitol Hill with their senators and representatives. I had the opportunity to speak at the National Security Commission meeting about POW/MIA awareness. I loved giving that speech and could really talk about my passion for this topic.

We truly do make a difference when we attend this event as a Legion Family. I’m looking forward

to the Legion’s legislative agenda being discussed in Congress during this term. For more information on the event from the point of view of ALA members who attended, please turn to page 26 in this issue of *Auxiliary*.

As an organization, we have a big activity coming up in May that annually makes a difference in the lives of those we serve. I’m looking forward to seeing the poppy in communities throughout the country, as well as participating in poppy distribution myself.

What you do as a member of this organization matters!

National Poppy Day® is May 26 this year, the Friday before Memorial Day. Wear a red poppy to honor the fallen and support the living who have worn our nation’s uniform.

Millions of American Legion Auxiliary poppies are distributed annually by ALA units, raising money for veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and their families. Poppy distribution is a great way to get out in our communities and let people know who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

Do you have an event planned for this special day? Make sure people know about it by advertising. Be sure to promote your unit activities on

your social media, reach out to local media outlets, include announcements in your unit and post home newsletters, and more. We have resources available to help you promote your American Legion Family National Poppy Day events and activities, including banners, posters, and media templates. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to download these items today.

The meaning behind the poppy is a wonderful educational tool and great way to recruit members, volunteers, and donors to the American Legion Auxiliary. If you need American Legion Family membership applications, there are two versions — color and black-and-white — available for download from www.ALAforVeterans.org. The black-and-white version was created to be printer friendly from your home office. However, the traditional brochures are still available from your department headquarters office.

Speaking of membership, keep your efforts up! They are making a difference! For example, in March, we were up 4,100 members as the same time last year. I’m looking forward to seeing where we end up with our membership numbers at the end of this administrative year. Keep on recruiting and retaining members!

As I continue seeing our members work the ALA programs firsthand throughout the country, I’m reminded why we were created as an organization in the first place. Sometimes when we are working our programs, the activities and outreach we do can seem minor, but collectively added up from every unit and every department, we are truly making a difference. What you do as a member of this organization matters! Thank you for providing your time, talents, and treasures so the ALA can continue to be a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families.

Vickie Koutz
National President

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HOME: Come visit us the next time you're traveling through Indianapolis.

Time flies when you're having fun, as the old saying goes. At ALA National Headquarters, we also say time is on fire because of how busy things get as the summertime nears. We've been working with members of all levels to sum up the happenings of our current administrative year while planning for the next. Following is a smattering of the latest NHQ activities:

We have a new ED at the helm. ALA National Headquarters has named Sara T. Riegel as its executive director. Riegel has been with National Headquarters since 2011 and has served in several positions, including ALA national treasurer, compliance officer, and managerial roles within the Finance Division. The executive director's responsibilities include management of National Headquarters staff and



operations, fiscal management of assets, working with the governing board and its chair (national president), and building external relationships. Riegel is a member of ALA Indiana eUnit 438 in Indianapolis.

Quick refresher on your member dues: Starting in July, members will be able to renew their membership for the 2024 membership year. As a reminder, at the 2022 National Convention, delegates voted to increase the national portion of membership dues from \$12 to \$18. The national portion of dues for Junior members (those under the age of 18) will remain the same at \$2.50. Annual membership dues are comprised of three portions: national, department (state), and unit, which, when added together, equal your total annual membership dues. Questions about your membership? Email us at membership@ALAforVeterans.org.



National Convention prep is well underway. Our largest gathering of members, guests, and distinguished speakers, the weeklong National Convention is held annually in cities across America for the purpose of electing officers, receiving reports, conducting other ALA business, and, most of all, having fun while celebrating our accomplishments from the administrative year. See you in Charlotte, N.C., in August! Follow our social media @ALAforVeterans for the latest updates and how to register to attend.

AMERICAN LEGION

AUXILIARY

*A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families*
May 2023

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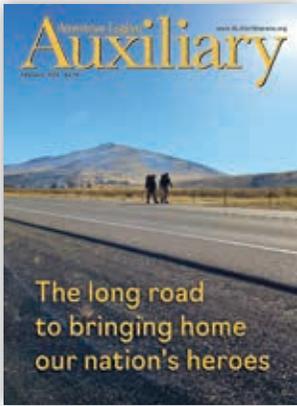
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Texas VAMC says ‘thanks’ for magazines

On behalf of the Houston Michael E. DeBakey VAMC (580) patients and staff, we would like to extend our appreciation to you for your donation of magazines.

It is through the efforts of community partners like you that allow us to continue the quality care and services that we seek to provide for our deserving veterans. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you again for future events.

Thank you for your continued support and advocacy.
— Barbra Bell, Chief, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement, Texas

Congrats on receiving distinguished award

American Legion Auxiliary member Joyce Lacey received the USS Minneapolis Saint Paul LCS 21 Plank Owner Certificate Plaque for serving under the distinguished leadership of Adm. Mike Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations.

Lacey, who served on the Commissioning Committee for the USS Minneapolis Saint Paul LCS 21 (a highly capable Naval Combat Vessel that serves its nation with courage, pride, and devotion

to duty), was very honored to be awarded this great distinction.

Lacey serves as vice president of community engagement for the Navy League of the United States, Minnesota Council, and on the Youth Pillar Committee for American Legion Auxiliary Unit 357. Lacey has been an American Legion Auxiliary member for 44 years.

— Joyce Lacey, Minnesota

Who else accepts plastic lids?

In the February 2023 magazine, there was an article: “New Jersey Juniors collect unique items for bench and picnic table project.”

I live in Port St. Lucie, Fla. The school district and the city had a project where caps and lids were collected for Buddy Benches. The program ended because the processing plant that manufactured the benches burned down.



My 55+ community continued to collect the caps because I had found a different organization, Roundtable of St. Lucie County, that had hoped to also have benches made for youngsters. Their contact went out of business.

Since I have seven to eight large

plastic trash bags of caps and lids in my garage, my question is: Do you know of any companies in Florida that are a collection/manufacturing site?

— Pat La Balbo, Florida



Sea Cadets helped boost business career

Thank you for including the article about the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps in the February 2023 issue of the ALA magazine. As I was enrolling in the Katharine Gibbs School in 1970, I also became the secretary to the commanding officer of the USNSCC Compton Division in Perth Amboy, N.J. Women were not yet allowed to be Sea Cadets, but the excellent training afforded my brother and other young men in the unit started them on their military careers.

I gained valuable experience as an ensign and administrative officer, which looked very impressive on my résumé as I began my business career. Throughout the years with the Sea Cadets, I was able to study the same material as the men in the unit and have been very proud to have been connected with this outstanding organization.

— Rosemary Hilbert, New Jersey

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MADE WITH LOVE: Junior member Madison Freideman (left) sells her homemade jewelry during an event. She recently donated part of her proceeds back to her New Jersey Unit 346.

JUNIOR MEMBER SELLS JEWELRY, GIVES BACK TO HER ALA NEW JERSEY UNIT

Only a year into making jewelry, ALA Junior member Madison Freideman, 17, focuses on the intricacy involved with her next set of earrings.

“I kind of just started making my own earrings, then making my own necklaces and bracelets,” she said.

“I like having a bunch of choices in jewelry to wear.”

She uses nickel-free earring hooks, wires, and buys beads from Michael’s, JoAnn’s, flea markets, or from family and friends.

“I think it’s fun to create all these different things, and it gives me a

wide variety of things to make,” she said. “I definitely like making earrings the most. They are a lot easier.”

Freideman ended up doing more than just making jewelry for herself for everyday wear — she decided to sell it at an ALA event, offering earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, pins, and wine glass charms.

She decided to donate part of the proceeds to her New Jersey ALA Unit 346.

“They had given me the opportunity to sell the jewelry, that donating back

to them would be a good thing to do,” she said. “They had helped me, so I wanted to help them in return.”

Fellow Unit 346 members were happy to see Freideman give back. She encourages other Junior members to do the same with their units. She has since sold her accessories at other events.

“It’s definitely a good thing to do,” she said. “The Auxiliary is very supportive of all the Juniors and wants them to do the best for us so we can do the best for them.”

CALIFORNIA JUNIOR HOPES TO INSPIRE OTHER YOUTH TO EARN PATCHES AND JOIN THE ALA

ALA Junior member Rebeka Avila-Hernandez, California Unit 299, has multiple Junior Activities patches and counting since she began participating in the ALA Patch Program last year.

“I earned so many patches quickly because I was able to fulfill some of the requirements through homeschooling, Chino Valley Young Marines as a Young Marine private first class, as a competitor in JiuJitsu, and as an active member in the Auxiliary,” she said.

Her interest in the Patch Program began as a desire to be an

example to other Junior members, as well as it being fun.

“I like the Patch Program because it teaches me life skills and helps me learn more about the Auxiliary,” she said.

With so many patches, Avila-Hernandez started wearing them on a jean jacket, which has often sparked conversations about Juniors and the ALA. She has even recruited more than 10 new American Legion Family members from these conversations.

“I wear my jacket because it gives me a sense of accomplishment,” she said. “I want to inspire other Juniors to earn as many patches as I have. Wearing the jacket gives me opportunities to show them my accomplishments and to tell them more about the Auxiliary and hopefully get more members.”



For other Juniors who haven’t gotten involved in the Patch Program yet, Avila-Hernandez offers advice from her own experiences.

“Working on patches allows you to learn to help and bless people,” she said. “It might take time from your day,

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING JUNIORS LONG DISTANCE

Most ALA units have Junior members who live near their American Legion post home and can attend meetings and activities in person. Other units are unique in that they have Juniors who are members but live in different states. That's the case with Maryland Unit 233.

"Units have Juniors but often do nothing with them," said Mayvee Smith, Unit 233 president. "They don't always have anyone who wants to do anything with Juniors. They are just a number."

Smith's unit, however, makes sure Junior members are more than just a number — even those who don't live in the area.

For example, you don't have to live in the same state to participate in the Poppy Poster Contest, Americanism Essay Contest, the ALA Patch Program, packing military care boxes, and more. Information on an activity can be sent to the Junior and then sent back to the unit in Maryland. In addition to participating in programs, Juniors

but it could help you in the future with your college applications and scholarships. It could also be placed on your résumé."

As she continues to earn patches, Avila-Hernandez, like other Juniors involved in this program, understands the significance of being part of it.

"The Patch Program is important because the patches encourage Juniors to participate in activities and events," she said. "It has taught me to think of others and to know more about those who have sacrificed so much for our country. Even though I am just a kid, I have learned that I can do things to change the world for the greater good. Other kids can do it too."

from other states can also be recognized with a certificate of membership for five years, 10 years, etc., and their membership pin.

"A lot of it is just including them even if they are out of state," Smith said.

For younger Junior members who aren't yet old enough to participate in some of these programs, Smith said they send them a picture to color, and then it's sent back to the unit. As a thank-you for participating, the Junior is then mailed something in return.

Unit 233 has Junior members from various states such as Delaware, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida, and Ohio, to name a few.

"I recruit active-duty military," Smith said, explaining why many Juniors are out of state. "We always say to the parents, 'If you need anything where you are, let us know.'"

In addition to active-duty military families, many Unit 233 out-of-state Juniors are granddaughters of members of the Maryland unit.

One of those Juniors is Smith's granddaughter, who lives in Florida, and she mentors from a distance through the year. She goes to Florida in September for her granddaughter's birthday and in December to participate in Wreaths Across America.



Smith even found Unit 5 in Tampa, Fla., and asked if her granddaughter could be a part of the Wreaths Across America program and say the Pledge of Allegiance at that event. The unit president didn't mind that neither one was a member of Unit 5.

"I tell my Juniors that if they see a program put on by the Legion or Auxiliary, go there and let them know you want to participate," Smith said. "I pray they are as open as Unit 5 was with us. It's OK to participate with another unit."

"There's not a program we have that a Junior can't participate in," Smith said.

Having experience with mentoring Juniors, Smith offers advice to other senior members who may want to get more involved with our younger members.

"Get the parents involved because of the Junior — not necessarily recruit the parents — but let Juniors participate in the programs," she said.

JUNIORS CAN USE THE MYAUXILIARY MEMBER PORTAL TOO

- Access ALA Academy courses
- Download Junior Patch Program materials
- Download ALA coloring books
- And much more!

Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to get started today.



“One of the things I like most is the family aspect. We’re fortunate that all of our entities work together to make an impact. The unity in action is very nice.”

STEVE DEFEO



As an Air Force veteran who served from 1979 to 1991, Steve DeFeo of Indianapolis is all in when it comes to his commitment to supporting The American Legion Family.

After signing up for membership as an American Legion member after separating from the military in 1991, DeFeo decided to honor his father’s service as a World War II veteran by becoming a member of Sons of The American Legion.

And, in 2019, after American Legion delegates approved changes to the Constitution and Bylaws to replace the word “wife” with “spouse” for American Legion Auxiliary membership criteria, DeFeo decided to honor his wife’s service in the Air Force by becoming an ALA member.

Not only does DeFeo actively contribute as a member of all three organizations, he serves as the national historian for National Sons of The American Legion Commander Chris Carlton.

DeFeo and his wife, Rebecca, who are parents of two sons, Michael and Andrew, serve as members of The American Legion Family for Kenneth N. Dowden KND Wayne Post 64 in Indianapolis.

What are some of your earliest memories of military service?

My father was a World War II

veteran. He was a pharmacist mate on a ship in the Pacific. Like most World War II veterans, he really didn’t talk much about his service. My uncles also were in the armed forces as well during World War II. They didn’t talk much about it either. But I grew up knowing about military service. When the time came for me to figure out what to do with myself, I decided on communications and journalism as a college major and minor. I started questioning how to best apply my skills. I could either try to make it in a very volatile field in the civilian world, or I could join the military. I decided on the military. One thing led to another and I was stationed at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas, which is where my wife was stationed as well.

Is that where you met Rebecca?

Although we both served, I would have never met her if we weren’t sent on a temporary duty assignment in Italy. I worked for the wing, which was the combat arm of the base, and she worked for the support arm of the base. The interaction between those two isn’t exactly that great. But we were moved from where we were in Italy because of a convention. Everyone was walking around when we first got there. And we ended up at a place for lunch. She asked the group, ‘Who wants to go to Venice?’ I’m not usually the type of guy who speaks up in a situation like that, but I asked myself: *Do I want to just sit here and do nothing?* I volunteered to join her for the tour and the rest is history.

What prompted you to join The American Legion Family?

At the time, we were about to become empty nesters. We wanted to get out and do things together. My wife’s friend was a member of the post that we belong to now. She brought us over there. We liked the group and the Legion itself for what it does. So, as we learned more about it, we decided to join.

Why did you join SAL and ALA?

With SAL, I recognized the importance of being a dual member and being involved in all aspects of Legion. I understood the importance of SAL and wanted to show my support for them and help out when I could. And when they made the rule change for ALA, because of my eligibility I decided to take advantage of it and support the ALA in honor of my wife. It was a good move for them to change the rule. Male spouses who are not military and not eligible to be a Sons member need a place in the Legion as well.

What programs stand out to you in terms of impact?

The programs that have to do with service, letting people know what’s available to them, have a lot of impact. But the programs my wife and I personally get a lot of satisfaction from are the ones we do at the post, especially activities with kids involved. Between the Legion and the Riders, we have an annual Christmas giveaway, including food and gifts, for more than 50 families.

What do you like most about being a part of all three American Legion organizations?

One of the things we like most is the family aspect. We’re fortunate that all our entities work together. The unity in action is very nice.

**“Life is very interesting ... in the end,
some of your greatest pains
become your greatest strengths.”**

— Drew Barrymore, actress



We know her as a symbol of strength, lifting us up during the darkest of moments. Though tattered, she tells us everything will be OK after a tornado rips through her town. We see her all over the place during Independence Day celebrations, taking on forms of banners, decals, and even jewelry. Her name is Old Glory, and you can be sure American Legion Auxiliary members will be displaying her on Memorial Day to honor and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.

I wear a poppy ...



“Because I want to be reminded of the sacrifices our veterans made for my freedoms, and to show my gratitude for my grandfather, father, husband, daughter, and cousins, all who served proudly.”
— Jennifer Turner, California



“In memory of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.”
— Tammy Snider, North Carolina



“To honor my dad, a World War II Navy veteran who died when I was only 4 years old, and for all of our veterans who fought and served our country.”
— Cat Perry, Texas



“To remind myself of our past, but to give an opportunity to start a conversation with someone who could be part of our future.”
— Mindi Rue, Ohio



“It’s a conversation starter. I get to explain the tradition and why it’s important to honor our military daily and how the ALA is involved in that mission.”
— Cindy Harper, Mississippi



“It is a symbol of remembrance of those veterans who lost their lives fighting to retain our country’s freedom.”
— Patricia Patrick, California



“I wear the poppy proudly to never forget all of our veterans and to remember the story of the poppy so our future never forgets.”
— Deb Weatherbee, Michigan

Mission Outreach Happenings



Is your local VAMC opening back up for ALA volunteers? Tell us about it! Email ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at @ALAforVeterans. You could be featured in an upcoming issue of *Auxiliary*.



Americans can finally have lustrous hair so thick... “It will cover up your bald spots,” says top US Doctor

Clinical trials show new hair loss breakthrough helps both men and women naturally renourish hair – without drugs, surgery, or side effect

Thousands are rushing to get a new hair restoration method based on surprising new studies from the University of California.

It is the world's first and only hair loss solution that revives dead hair follicles. And studies confirm it helps men and women regrow a thick, full head of hair, even after years of balding.

Now, with news of this breakthrough spreading like wildfire — the manufacturers are struggling to keep up with overwhelming demand.

That's because, unlike other methods, it is prescription-free, drug-free, and has no side effects. And while hair transplants can cost \$4,000 or more, this new approach costs pennies on the dollar and doesn't involve going to the doctor's office.

Instead, it leverages cutting-edge technology to prevent hair loss, fills in embarrassing bald spots, and **Re-Nourishes** thinning hair — with results you can see and feel in 30 days or less.

As Jeanne F. from San Diego, CA reports: “When my husband began to use this product, all he had on top of his head was fuzz. His hair began to grow after 30 days and now it is about 2 to 3 inches long!”

Surprising Truth About Hair Loss

It is commonly believed that hair loss is hereditary.

Unfortunately, most people think there is nothing they can do to stop it. However, while many doctors will tell you that thinning hair, a receding hairline, and bald spots are due to your genetics, this is not the whole story.

“While genetics play a role, it's not the main reason you lose hair,” says Dr. Al Sears, the nation's top anti-aging doctor. “And surprisingly it's not just your age, thyroid, hormones, stress, or a vitamin deficiency, either.”

The latest scientific research

reveals that hair loss is primarily caused by the stem cells in your hair follicles dying.

“This discovery is a true breakthrough because by reviving these stem cells on your scalp, you can stop hair loss dead in its tracks and trigger new hair growth, even in areas that have been thinning for years,” explains Dr. Sears.

Now, at his world-famous clinic, the Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine in Palm Beach, Florida, Dr. Sears and his team have used this game-changing discovery to develop a brand-new hair restoration formula that is taking the country by storm.

Breakthrough research proves this discovery helps fill in bald spots, re-nourishes thinning hair, and leads to the appearance of noticeable growth in as little as 30 days.

Sold under the name **Re-Nourish**, it is flying off the shelves with men and women of all ages raving about the results it delivers.

“I have seen a significant improvement in hair growth. Previously, you could see thinning areas at the back of my head and now hair has grown over it,” says Peter W. from Ontario, Canada.

And Susan D. from Fort Pierce, Florida reports, “My hair was thinning. So, I began to use **Re-Nourish** every day on the front part of my scalp. Now I have thicker hair.”

Appearance of Thick Hair In As Little As 30 Days

Scientists now know that stem cells are the lifeblood of your hair follicles.

Research from the University of California shows they're the reason you're able to grow hair. However, these stem cells aren't always active. In fact, studies reveal they're only active during certain phases of the hair growth cycle.

“Your hair grows in three phases,” explains Dr. Sears. “First, you have the anagen phase, the hair growing phase. Then the catagen phase, when hair gets ready to shed. And finally, the telogen phase, where your hair is pushed from the follicle and falls out.”

As you get older it becomes harder for your hair follicles to complete this three-phase cycle. The results? Your hairs get stuck in the telogen phase. This is when they start falling out and stop regrowing, no matter what you try.

This process doesn't happen overnight, says Dr. Sears.

“At first, your hair dries out, becoming brittle, thin, and harder to style. Then, you start finding hairs on your pillow and down the drain. Finally, you're left with bald spots that age you prematurely.”

Fortunately, **Re-Nourish** puts a stop to this. It revives the dead stem cells in your hair follicles and reactivates your hair's three-phase cycle, triggering new growth in as little as 30 days — even in areas that've been balding for years.

Reawakens Dead Hair Follicles

For years, scientists couldn't figure out why hair follicle stem cells died.

However, a study from the University of California finally found the answer.

It has to do with T-cells — an important immune cell in your body. The researchers discovered these T-cells are the only way to command hair follicles to grow new hair.

More importantly, they showed that T-cells helped revive the stem cells in your hair follicles — spurring new growth, filling in bald spots and natural hairline.

Re-Nourish uses a unique blend of all-natural ingredients. By spraying it on your hair once per day, scientific studies show you can revive dead stem cells and improve the appearance of thicker,

fuller hair.

For example, the key nutrient of **Re-Nourish** was tested on a group of severely balding women.

After 6 months, nearly 70% of the women saw significant improvement in hair growth. Their hair was noticeably fuller, thicker, and healthier looking. Most exciting of all, they grew new hair on parts of their scalp that had been bald for years.

In another study, Italian researchers gathered a group of both men and women with thinning hair and applied the core ingredient of **Re-Nourish**. After 12 weeks, they reported a staggering 74% increase in hair growth.

“It's really mind-boggling that my hair started growing back,” says Zan R., another **Re-Nourish** customer.

With results like this, it's no surprise that demand for **Re-Nourish** is soaring. Thousands of men and women are scrambling to get their hands on the limited supply available.

Re-Nourish is not currently available in any store at any price. But we've secured a small batch for our readers.

Try Re-Nourish 100% Risk-Free

To secure the hot, new **Re-Nourish** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-926-9016** TODAY. “It's not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Re-Nourish**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back.”

Call NOW at **1-800-926-9016** to secure your supply of **Re-Nourish**. Use Promo Code **AMLRN423** when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!



BACK AT THE VA: Department of Arkansas members prepare items for their annual Gift Shop; volunteers take a break from serving coffee during National Salute to Veteran Patients Week; items displayed at the Gift Shop.

VA FACILITIES GRADUALLY OPENING DOORS TO VOLUNTEERS ARKANSAS MEMBERS HAPPILY RESUMING THEIR MISSION OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Founded in 1946 to provide for veterans in VA healthcare facilities, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) is the largest volunteer program in federal government, with more than 350 national and community organizations involved in support of their mission.

Since our founding, American Legion Auxiliary volunteers have

served alongside other veterans support organization volunteers and members of the community in the VAVS program. The VAVS supports VA and VHA (Veterans Health Administration) goals as a supplemental workforce of volunteers to assist in the delivery of services, but many of the customary roles changed in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

While the VA continues to engage volunteers in essential assignments and accepts donations of personal protective equipment, many of the roles VAVS volunteers were involved in — like visits to the VA facility units and patients — have stopped.

However, the pause appears to be changing at some facilities. In January, Patricia Murray, an ALA VAVS volunteer, was proud to post in the national ALA Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Facebook group that the Arkansas Auxiliary and Legion department's VAVS volunteers were back in the facility and serving coffee to visitors at the John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans' Hospital. They currently serve coffee to visitors on

the first and third Wednesday each month in an atrium on the campus.

Members were really excited to be back.

"We have been asking about returning for a long time," said Murray. "So, when they announced the VA was opening up, we jumped at the opportunity."

During the pandemic, Murray said, members were limited to donations only, except for the annual Gift Shop. They missed 2020 but picked up the activity again in 2022. As of press time, members are still limited to serving coffee to visitors but have been told they may be able to start visiting units again soon.

While activities at local VA facilities may be returning, the VA recommends volunteers and visitors to always check their VAMC's COVID-19 health protection levels before they go. The VA says that as COVID-19 levels change in local communities, they'll adjust health protection levels at each facility to meet current needs. These can include guidelines for masks, COVID-19 symptom screening, and visitors.

The VA recommends all potential visitors go to their local VA health facility's website in advance to check the current health protection level. Any changes in levels are updated on the websites on Mondays.



**Has your Auxiliary VAVS group started to return to your local VA facility?
Tell us about it! Email ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org.**



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CREATE UNIQUE CRAFTS FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

Promote patriotism this Independence Day with fun and creative crafts for all ages. You can make these decorations on your own or ask your children, family, and friends to assist. Try working with your local Auxiliary unit to implement an arts and crafts time, and don't forget to ask Junior members to join in on the fun! While crafting these July 4 decorations, re-educate all members on the incredible significance of what this day means — the birth of American independence.

PATRIOTIC MASON JARS:

Looking for an easy and creative way to spice up your Fourth of July decorations? These patriotic luminaires are fun to make and aesthetically pleasing. The jars are great table decorations and can be used year after year for all patriotic festivities. (Source: todayscreativelife.com/memorial-day-craft/)

Materials needed:

- Pint- or quart-sized Mason jar(s)
- White, long-grain rice (not instant)
- Blue and red food coloring
- Rubbing alcohol
- Ziploc baggies
- Votive, tealight, or tapered candle(s)
- Paper plates or wax paper

Instructions:

1. Pour your rice into three different Ziploc baggies.
2. Add a few drops of rubbing alcohol inside with the rice.
3. Squeeze several drops of food coloring into the baggies. Add more food coloring if you want your rice to be a darker, more intense color.
4. Seal your baggies closed and mix/shake the food coloring and rice around.
5. Once the rice is fully glazed, pour it onto a paper plate or wax paper and spread out to dry.
6. Let rice dry.



7. Once your rice is ready, scoop the red rice into your mason jars first, followed by plain white rice and then blue rice. Use about 1/2 to 2/3 cups of rice for each layer into pint jars or use about 1 to 1.5 cups into the quart jars.
8. Lastly, place your votive or tealight candle on top of the rice, and voila!

How to use patriotic Mason jars for Independence Day festivities:

- As table décor — these jars are great on their own, arranged together, or in a line. Use them at your Fourth of July party for creative decorating.
- As luminaires — brighten up a room or walkway for an aesthetic and artsy look.
- As a miniature flag holder — instead of candles, place small American flags in the rice to incorporate even more Americanism.
- As a food/drink label holder — instead of a tapered candle, use a popsicle stick to write the food or drink that is on display.

RED, WHITE, AND BLUE WINDCATCHER:

This budget-friendly craft requires only a few materials and leaves virtually no mess — win, win! These patriotic windcatchers are easy to make and offer a unique way to spread Americanism. Make them for your home or American Legion Family post home, or give one to a veteran in your life. (Source: momprofessionals.com/2018/06/super-easy-and-clean-patriotic-craft.html)

Materials needed:

- Blue plastic cups
- Hole punch
- Red and white ribbon
- White star stickers
- A pipe cleaner

Directions:

1. Use your hole puncher to punch holes along the rim of a blue cup, making around 12 holes.
2. Cut six long strips of red ribbon and six long strips of white ribbon to decorate each cup.
3. Thread the ribbon through the hole punches, switching between white and red ribbon. Pull ribbon through.
4. Tie ribbon tight.
5. Decorate your blue cup with the star stickers.
6. Poke a hole in the bottom of the blue cup (which is the top of wind chime) and put a pipe cleaner through to hang the decoration.
7. Dangle the windcatcher outside for a festive finish, or wave it around during an Independence Day parade.

Auxiliary Word Search

G E D P E R S S Z K J L E O P H C S A F Q S
 R N C T I S R E C I F F O N Z Z S K N P O N
 X J I N H X N L T Y T J H C C K G D T K A H
 P D S T U I N O I T I D A R T S N N J E T Z
 C Z X S E E T T I M M O C E R E M O N Y L S
 S F D E V E N O I T A R B E L E C T I O N P
 D C S R M R M G R S U B N R O G T F B P D P
 G T O D E O C F R T E L N C G L N S A V D C
 S F F D O Y L I M A F N O I G E L I E V W E
 M A W A R D S R E K A E P S R Z M H T S N L
 X A O H S W M T C S T R O P E R N S O O H B
 T I U N W V I S C T D H G N I R A H S E V E

MEETING
ELECTION
RESOLUTIONS
VOTING

CELEBRATION
OFFICERS
CEREMONY
LEGION FAMILY

TRADITION
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Answers can be found on page 50.

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MEMBERSHIP DUES: TO HOLD OR NOT TO HOLD?

Serving as an ALA membership chair comes with big responsibility, especially in large units. It's understandable that chairs look for ways to make their duties more efficient. However, what may be a time saver for a chair could have a negative impact on membership and ALA members.

During a national Membership Committee quarterly Zoom meeting, department chairs voiced concerns that membership applications and renewals aren't being remitted as soon as they are received. Instead, some chairs hold on to these files until they have several, and then turn them in all at once.

The national Membership Committee realized this issue needed to be addressed. You may have seen an informational post in the ALA Membership Program Facebook group regarding not holding memberships. The social media post explained why the practice should stop.

"The reasons to not hold on to membership and the importance of turning in membership go hand in hand," said Tracy Kinnick, national Membership Committee vice chair. "We never know day to day what is going to happen in our lives."

Consider this:

- What if a membership chair had all of the applications and money in their

home and a fire, flood, or some other disaster happens? The applications and cash would be lost.

- What if the chair is unable to continue serving?
- What if a member needed to apply for AEF and they appeared in ALAMIS, the national member database, as not in good standing? They wouldn't qualify for the needed funds.

money," said Kinnick. "Too many times, we have heard stories of membership money coming up missing — although we never want to assume — it does happen, and it can happen. The transparency of membership can build trust and excitement when units reach their goals."

Process memberships faster with full-access ALAMIS

This tool allows units to pay membership dues directly and immediately shows members as paid in the membership database. For units interested in full access to ALAMIS, they first must get approval from their department office, then complete training provided by the ALA national Membership staff. The unit will need to have a unit credit/debit card attached to their bank account to utilize full access.

"The benefits of full access are that you immediately get credit for the units, and the ability to manage the membership information as far as addresses, email, phone, etc.," said Kinnick. "Even if you have just one membership to enter, you are not having to worry about going over your postage limit. You enter the member and are done! It is a valuable tool for units ready for that kind of tech move."

Remember: Members can always pay directly online at www.ALAforVeterans.org or by phone at (317) 569-4570.



- What if the member was given a membership card, but the money was never paid to National? The member's original join date on their membership card will be affected if the dues are never received by National.

Bottom line: The best practice is to forward memberships as they come in.

"By sending in memberships ASAP, we are also showing transparency with

2023 ALA national Membership Committee has been using its group to post informative information weekly. They call these posts "Membership Mondays." Some of the posts address common questions that have come up during the program's quarterly meetings, and others are from their own experiences.

"There are a lot of issues out there regarding membership — what's true, what's not true, how and what to do in certain situations, where to go to get this information," said 2022-2023 ALA Membership Chair Linda

Tome. "It makes people think. It also allows for communication and idea sharing to improve our membership goals and create transparency within our organization."

Tome encourages members to take advantage of this resource.

"Members can post their questions in the national Membership Facebook group and one of our very knowledgeable committee members usually answers rather quickly."

To see a list of the ALA's official Facebook groups, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/social-media.



HAVE QUESTIONS? NEED IDEAS?

ALA Facebook groups provide members a place to learn about Auxiliary programs, have questions answered, and share ideas. The 2022-



KEEP GOING: Texas Unit 511 members donated 100 teddy bears in January to Department President Myra Cooper's Community Service project. The bears were given to first responders to help console children involved in crisis situations.

TEXAS ALA UNIT SAYS DON'T GIVE UP ON GROWING MEMBERSHIP

A unit that 18 months ago was inactive now is forging strong community partnerships, coordinating a variety of activities — and setting the pace for growth in its state.

Texas Unit 511's membership stands at 67 today, up from 27 in July. But things were different when Kimberly Wheeler, whose brother is an Army veteran, attended an informational meeting about the Dallas-based unit in January 2022.



Kimberly Wheeler,
unit
president

The unit then was a group of 13 who maintained their membership through online dues. Members hadn't actively worked toward organizational goals supporting veterans, military, and their families in five years.

Following that meeting, Wheeler and the other nine people in attendance joined Unit 511. In the summer, Wheeler became unit president.

Since then, Unit 511 has organized a flurry of events and programs. In activities like a school supply giveaway, cancer awareness walk, Thanksgiving basket distribution, and Christmas toy drive, members have rallied support from other veterans organizations

and community groups to advance a variety of community causes.

Wheeler says this commitment to activity has helped turn a once-sleepy unit searching for new members into a growing group that now has people proactively asking how they can join.

What inspired you to join the American Legion Auxiliary?

Sharon Shumate, the [Texas 5th] district president, shared the mission and vision of the American Legion Auxiliary. You could hear her passion about helping veterans, families, and the community. My brother was in the service, and I'd just never thought about the things servicepeople go through. I felt like this was something I wanted to be a part of, to give back through something that's very meaningful.

What are some examples of the community support your unit has provided through its recent activities?

Our first big service project was a back-to-school bash. We [gave] 100 backpacks full of school supplies to veterans, their children, and children in the community. ... Another one of our big projects was to organize a walk to raise money for the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Members and friends of

members raised more than \$500.

We've built a partnership with a school called Multiple Careers Magnet Center, which is a school [in Dallas] for students with disabilities. We participated in its Veterans Day parade and went to the school to talk to students about why to say no to drugs.

How has organizing a variety of activities helped in increasing your unit's membership?

We have a membership drive with every project, and we have partnerships with schools and in the community. A lot of people thought there was nothing going on, but then they see us working on projects like putting toiletry bags together for homeless women veterans or soliciting turkeys for the turkey drive.

Once they see that, they feel that this is a good cause. I will go to the [American Legion] post after work, and there may be someone sitting there with their membership application and money. It just brings tears to your eyes.

What lessons have you learned that other units can apply to their own efforts to build membership?

I'd say make sure you're visible. Make sure you have literature out about the organization and can explain it. I also think just making sure you encourage every member to use their strengths is important. You can't do it all by yourself, and you want to make sure you make every member feel valuable.

Also, it's important to have constant communication. Many times, members can't come to an event. But we make sure they are aware of what's going on by having a group text or email, and they share ideas. They joke with me all the time that they may receive five emails from me in a day.

We are in a large, urban area, so we can attract more members, maybe, than a rural area. But continue to utilize those members you have, and someday you know your membership will increase. Don't ever give up.



MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS: PROVIDING HOPE AFTER HURRICANE IAN

On the morning of Sept. 28, 2022, Hurricane Ian intensified into a Category 4 hurricane over the Gulf of Mexico, with maximum sustained winds of 155 mph, just shy of a Category 5 storm. Ian came ashore near Cayo Costa, Fla., at 3:05 p.m. EDT with maximum sustained winds of 150 mph, tying the record for the fifth-strongest hurricane on record to strike the United States. It was the strongest hurricane to hit Florida since Michael in 2018.

Hurricane Ian caused catastrophic damage with losses estimated to be \$113 billion. Communities are still reeling from the devastation, and the journey back to normalcy seems like a long trek for many of our ALA members in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Carolinas.

ALA member Cynthia Weant

recalled seeing the devastation after enduring the 10-hour storm from her Port Charlotte, Fla., home.

“The next morning, with the sun now shining, our family ventured out to evaluate the neighborhood damage,” Weant said. “Seeing nothing but jaw-dropping

Financial support for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund program is made possible only by the generosity of our members’ support and philanthropic donors.

devastation in every direction — and far worse than we could have imagined — a wave of shock swept over us. This monster storm spared no one. It was obvious that this was no ordinary hurricane and presented no ordinary cleanup. We

would need weeks, undoubtedly months, of hard work, community resources, and all available agencies for this recovery. The daunting task ahead was just that: daunting.”

In the wake of that kind of destruction, where do you start? How do you begin to pick up the pieces of your life and move forward?

When we find ourselves in a crisis, we often turn to our community for help. We seek out assistance programs from government entities, local foundations, and membership organizations we belong to. In this case, Weant turned to the American Legion Auxiliary’s Auxiliary Emergency Fund grant assistance program. As a member of the Auxiliary, Weant applied for grant funding and based on the documentation provided, was

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AUXILIARY

Auxiliary Emergency Fund

For ALA members who have endured a significant financial setback as the result of an act of nature or other personal crisis, the Auxiliary Emergency Fund's national grant program can provide assistance to eligible members.

And for those who want to help — let's make a difference by ensuring we have funds now and in the future by donating to the AEF.

awarded the maximum funds of \$2,400 in the wake of this disaster. Auxiliary members who have maintained their current ALA membership for three consecutive years and not been awarded an AEF grant in the past 12 months are eligible to apply for this incredible benefit.

Weant recounted her experience with the Auxiliary Emergency Fund grant program.

“The assistance we received was overwhelming, and then when I found the opportunity to apply for an Auxiliary Emergency Fund grant, I decided to submit my application,” Weant said. “Within days, I was notified that my application was approved and the funds from the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters were deposited into my account! I was overjoyed, not only by the swift deposit, but the relief to have available cash to start our cleanup.”

Since Oct. 1, 2022, ALA National Headquarters has received 69 Auxiliary Emergency Fund grant applications because of Hurricane Ian and awarded \$116,789 to members directly affected by that storm. Financial support for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund program is made possible only by the generosity of our members' support and philanthropic donors. Donors who contribute to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund help ALA members like Cynthia Weant regain their footing after life as they know it has been swept out from under their feet.

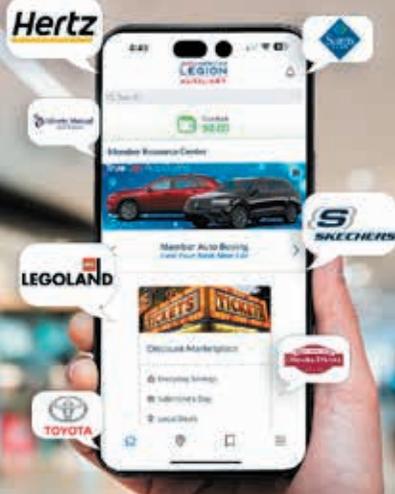
Weant extends a heartfelt thank-you: “A simple ‘thank you’ does not seem like enough to express my extreme gratitude toward your organization for this generous helping hand! In the spirit of the Auxiliary motto, you proved once again *Service Not Self.*”



Learn more at www.ALAforVeterans.org/AEF.

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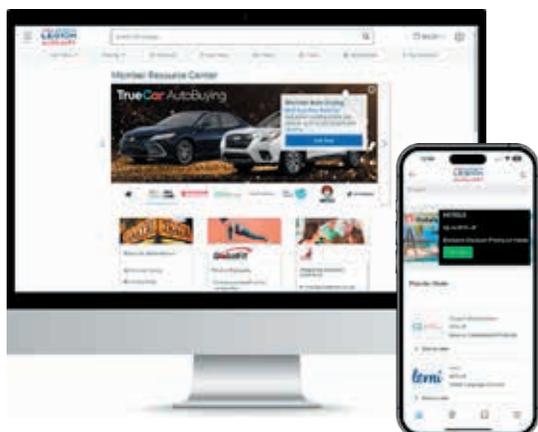
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CONSIDER A RECYCLING PROGRAM IN YOUR LEGION POST HOME

Earth Day is celebrated each year in April, but doing good for the environment is something we can all do, every day. While we may take part in recycling efforts in our own homes, it's also important to make sure we are doing our part in our American Legion post homes.

Here are some tips to help get you started if you don't already have a recycling program at your post home.

Tip 1: Find out what is recyclable in your area

MasterClass.com published the following list of items that can typically be put into your recycling bin. However, most recycling resource organizations suggest you check with your local recycling center, municipality, and waste hauler to find out what kind of materials are accepted in your area. If pickup or curbside service isn't available in your area, try finding a public drop-off area. They advise most major cities have locations that accept recyclables free of charge.

Common recyclable items:

- **Cans:** Aluminum and steel cans can be recycled, as long as they're empty and rinsed. Recycling centers will not accept aluminum foil covered in food waste because it can contaminate other recycling materials.
- **Glass:** You can recycle glass bottles and jars, as long as they're empty and rinsed. Do not recycle window glass, or kitchen glassware, like cups or plates. These materials can contaminate other recyclable materials.
- **Paper products:** You can recycle cardboard boxes, newspaper, printer paper, magazines, mail, and paper tubes. Do not recycle paper, paper towels, toilet paper, or cardboard that is greasy or covered in food waste because it can contaminate other recycling materials.
- **Cartons:** Food and beverage



cartons like milk cartons, juice cartons, or soup cartons can all be recycled, along with their caps, as long as they're empty and rinsed.

- **Plastics #1 and #2:** You can recycle plastic containers with the numbers 1 or 2 inside the triangle recycling symbol, as long as they're empty and rinsed — in general, this includes thick plastic bottles, jugs, and tubs for kitchen, bathroom, or laundry materials. You can also recycle plastic water bottles.

Tip 2: Conduct a waste audit

We're not saying you need to dive headfirst into a dumpster, but Earth911.com recommends conducting a waste audit of items that typically make up your trash composition. They recommend surveying the contents of your trash to get an idea of what items are going into your trash and determine what items you can start to recycle.

Tip 3: Set up recycling bins for designated items

To help make recycling as easy as possible, MasterClass.com advises setting up a recycling bin next to each of your trash cans. However, they point out that you shouldn't line your recycling container with a plastic bag. These bags are typically not recyclable, and you should avoid using them.

Tip 4: Keep your local recycling rules posted somewhere visible

If you're like us, sometimes looking at both the trash and

recycling bins side by side is like staring into an abyss and having no idea what to put where. It can sometimes be confusing about what goes in the trash or what's recyclable. MasterClass advises to keep a list of rules or an infographic near the bin so you can quickly reference. We found a printable resource guide and tips online at Waste Management.

Tip 5: Recycling bottles, cans, electronics, and more as a fundraiser

In a blog article posted at www.FundraisingIP.com, the authors write that one option to raise funds in a "green" and environmentally friendly way is to organize a collection drive for items such as bottles, cans, ink cartridges, electronics, and more. They explain that many states have a refund policy where they'll pay a set amount per item or pay by the pound for collected and returned containers. They advise groups to check their state's guidelines.

In addition to collection drives, they also suggest that groups collect cans and bottles as part of a roadside, beach, or river cleanup effort, and do even more for their local environment by cleaning up refuse.

For American Legion Auxiliary units, this could be included as part of your ALA Community Service program activities and recorded as volunteer hours. If your post home currently has a recycling program or hosts a recycling event as a fundraiser, please share your story with us on our social media @ALAFORVeterans.



LET'S GET READY FOR CONVENTION!

The special convention season is in our near future, so to help you prepare, we thought it would be beneficial to share some questions from the past.

Question: We are getting our governing docs ready for department convention, and I think we need an update. Can we just copy the national Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules?

Answer: Unfortunately, no. While unit and department governing documents cannot conflict with national governing documents, they do need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of the department or unit and not copied verbatim from the national C&B/SRs. For example, the national governing documents reference every national program; however, a smaller unit or department might not have enough members to actively participate in all of the programs — choosing instead to focus their efforts on just a couple — which is absolutely acceptable.

Bonus answer: Remember that all incorporated nonprofits are accountable to the laws of the state in which they are incorporated, so your governing documents must not be in breach of state law.

Question: If we change our governing documents at convention, we must get it approved by National. Same as if a unit changes theirs, the department must approve, right?

Answer: Incorrect. The National Organization does not approve department C&Bs. The National Organization can only speak to the national C&B. The National Organization can offer guidance but not mandates. The department relationship with National is similar to the unit's relationship to the department. *ALA National Standing Rule XI. Units* states that units operate independently with **their** own C&B.

Question: We have transcripts of our convention, so we don't need to have minutes, right?

Answer: Incorrect. Transcripts and minutes are different. While transcripts are a verbatim written account of all words spoken during a meeting, minutes are a concise record of the event providing details on issues raised, action items, and outcomes. State law requires all corporations (yes, departments are corporations) to hold valid corporate meetings and keep corporate minutes of those meetings. Meeting

minutes are meant to be shared, but don't disseminate them until the meeting chair has a chance to review and approve them. Opt for digital copies of meeting minutes instead of distributing paper copies if possible. Sharing digital copies online means all members can have ongoing access, and they will be preserved as part of the department/unit records.

Question: If we cannot have a convention, can we change our officers?

Answer: Look in your bylaws for the wording on the term lengths. For example, at the national level, our national officers serve "until their successors are elected," and elections occur during National Convention. If elections are tied to your convention, then one option might be that the officers choose to resign (just not all at once!). Then you would look in your bylaws for the process of *filling vacancies*. Many department bylaws involve the Department Executive Committee in the process of filling vacancies.



Look at your department bylaws to see how the time and place of your convention is determined. Is your meeting tied to The American Legion? At the national level, the ALA National Convention "shall be held annually at the same time and place as the convention of The American Legion." There's no flexibility there. However, if your C&B has a clause that begins with "or," you might have some flexibility.

See what happened at previous ALA National Conventions and NEC meetings: Check out the proceedings documents online at www.ALAforVeterans.org/member/proceedings.

Is it Mission Outreach or Mission Awareness?

Important Note About Reporting Volunteer Hours

We'd like to provide some clarity on questions we've received about counting volunteer hours:

MISSION OUTREACH

- preparing care packages for deployed troops
- helping wounded warriors and elderly veterans at home
- activities related to distributing poppies
- fundraising events that benefit veterans
- assisting with veterans hiring fairs
- advocating for The American Legion legislative agenda

MISSION AWARENESS

- flying the American flag
- wearing red on Fridays to show respect and support for troops and veterans

Volunteer hours should reflect *direct* mission service and *direct* impact in your community. Our impact numbers (aka your hours) need to reflect members' actual hands-on mission outreach, as Congress uses those numbers when considering funding in the veterans realm. By reporting non-service (i.e., wearing a red shirt for 8 hours), it misrepresents the actual hours serving veterans' needs in your community and could ultimately hurt further federal funding as it looks like we are meeting the needs without that additional funding.



Questions?

Email programs@ALAforVeterans.org.



ALA members add value to legislative talks

Legion Family returns to Capitol Hill

By Sara Fowler

It has been two years since the sight of American Legion caps, Auxiliary pins, and legislative priority pamphlets in hand were seen in person in our nation's capital.

2023 brought The American Legion Family back to Capitol Hill for The American Legion's Washington Conference. The event consisted of commission meetings, learning the Legion's legislative agenda for Congress, and in-person visits with senators and representatives.

"I believe it is critical for The American Legion Family to make their presence known on the Hill and work with our senators/representatives to push legislation that will help our veterans and active-duty military," said Barb Washburn, 2022-2023 National Security chair and Department of Nebraska member. "If we do not continue to share our agenda, how will this type of legislation be moved forward?"

Those who attended the event felt privileged to be part of it.

"I felt very honored and humbled to be able to represent the Auxiliary family," said Carmen Metzger, Department of Idaho Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation chair.

Some members had attended the conference previously in various capacities over the years, while others were first-timers.

"I was honored to be invited by the Auxiliary, but also being a veteran myself, it just made it that much more valuable for me," said Kim Vincent, Department of Oklahoma VA&R chair, Navy veteran, and first-time attendee. "I had my Legion cap and my Auxiliary pin there as a dual member."

Learning a lot at Legion commission meetings

Auxiliary members were invited to attend American Legion commission meetings. Diligently taking notes, members were educated in the VA&R Commission, Veterans Employment & Education Commission, National Security Commission, and Legislative Commission meetings.

"What really caught my attention was the afternoon session with a panel of guests speaking on homelessness with veterans and suicide, and I really enjoyed that because there was so much more discussion with veterans sitting out in the audience with me," Vincent said of the VE&E meeting. "I know those issues are very prevalent and have been for some years, and I'm excited to take some of that info back to our community and state."

Washburn said she also learned quite a bit that she can share with her department.

"It was good to hear the commission is focusing on

quality of life for our servicemembers, which is key to recruiting and retaining our military force,” she said of the National Security meeting. “I found it interesting the amount of ammunition that the U.S. delivers to other countries, and the possible challenges our nation faces with increased production in terms of personnel and equipment. The continual focus on repatriation of our POW/MIA remains an important facet of our National Security program.”

Advocating American Legion legislative priorities

The evening before the Hill visits, Legion Family members attended Know Before You Go, an informational session that goes in depth on the Legion’s legislative priorities for Congress.

“Know Before You Go is always an informative session that helps attendees focus on the most important Legion legislative initiatives,” Washburn said. “Being able to hear the rationale behind these initiatives and have talking points definitely helped our delegation be prepared to talk with our senators and representatives.”

Each year, the Legion shares its legislative priorities with Congress during the Hill visits, as well as during

“I believe it is critical for The American Legion Family to make their presence known on the Hill and work with our senators/representatives to push legislation that will help our veterans and active-duty military.”

the commander’s testimony. To help prepare Family members for these meetings, the Commander’s Call had several speakers provide information ahead of time, including Vickie Koutz, 2022-2023 ALA national president.

“The Auxiliary stands with you in our nation’s capital — there is strength in numbers as we prepare to meet with elected officials to discuss the legislative initiatives and priorities important to The American Legion Family and the people we serve,” Koutz said.

The American Legion’s legislative priorities:

- Mental health and suicide prevention: The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts with more than 6,000 veterans losing their lives to suicide annually. The American Legion encourages Congress to enhance access to alternative therapies, robustly fund U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ suicide prevention outreach budget, and continue to invest in mental health research.

- PACT Act: Implementation and oversight: The passage of the SFC Heath Robinson PACT Act in the 117th Congress ensured millions of toxic exposed



LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (opposite page): American Legion Auxiliary members like Barb Washburn (in red jacket), learn alongside Legion members in a commission meeting. This page, clockwise: Members of the Department of Idaho meet with Rep. Mike Simpson (R) to discuss legislative priorities; Auxiliary members take notes during the Camp Lejeune Justice Act meeting and commission meetings; National President Vickie Koutz speaks at the Commander’s Call.



LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS: Department of Illinois American Legion Family members with legislative assistants of Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D); American Legion Auxiliary member and veteran Kim Vincent, along with fellow Department of Oklahoma Legionnaires, with Sen. James Lankford (R).

veterans will now have the access to health care and compensation they rightfully deserve. The American Legion urges Congress to provide the necessary oversight and funding to ensure VA has the resources they need to properly implement this legislation.

- **Guard and Reserve GI Bill parity:** National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are being deprived of education benefits that active-duty servicemembers enjoy, despite completing the same duties. The American Legion believes that every day in uniform counts, and urges Congress to recognize the service of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as eligible for the GI Bill.

- **Pay the Coast Guard:** U.S. Coast Guard personnel carry out missions vital to our national security, but they are the only military branch working without pay during government shutdowns, due to their status under the Department of Homeland Security.

The American Legion urges Congress to reintroduce and pass the Unwavering Support for our Coast Guard Act, which would guarantee that Coast Guard personnel are paid without delay, even in the case of a government shutdown.

- **Protect veterans from predatory actors:** America’s veterans are being targeted by predatory actors who seek to profit from an array of benefits that have been rightfully earned by those who have served our nation. The American Legion urges Congress to oppose any legislation that seeks to elevate the standing of unaccredited predatory claims companies by legitimizing practices that target veterans and impose a cap on legal services provided in association with the Camp Lejeune Justice Act.

- **Support our Afghan allies:** We have a code in the U.S. military, “no one left behind.” For two decades, we fought shoulder-to-shoulder with brave Afghan allies who served with and protected American forces, fighting for the freedom of Afghanistan and its people. The American Legion urges Congress to reintroduce and pass the legislation that would grant permanent legal status to Afghan refugees and improve the special

immigrant visa process for Afghans who served alongside U.S. servicemembers.

Other legislative priorities include protect the American flag, military quality of life, concurrent receipt, GI Bill for honorable service, and VA health care modernization. To learn more, visit www.Legion.org.

During the conference, Legion Family members met representatives and senators in person to present the Legion’s legislative priorities for this Congress.

“I feel communicating in person is so much better than emails,” Metzger said. “Both parties have a chance to ask questions, and they need to know the views of their constituents, which, in this case, was veterans.”

Metzger’s Department of Idaho was able to meet with two representatives — one senator had COVID-19 and one had to go vote, so they met with the legislative assistants in those cases — which was still helpful and gave them the chance to discuss topics of importance.

Washburn also had a chance to meet with members of Congress with the Department of Nebraska. As it often happens with Hill visits, a congressional member isn’t always available, sometimes there is no ample time for discussion, and other issues can sometimes impact the scheduled appointments.

“We have a newly appointed senator who is trying to get assimilated into the D.C. world, and while he listened, did not seem to be engaged,” she said. “Our other senator, who serves on the Armed Services Committee, is very focused on the military and her legislative staff was taking notes. She plans to be a co-sponsor on several of the bills on the Legion’s agenda. One of our representatives is the chair of the House Quality of Life Committee and is focused on ensuring our servicemembers are being taken care of. Our other two representatives were in and out of hearings and had little time to speak with us. They did take copies of the Legion agenda and staff will research.”

“Much of the legislative agenda affects the family, and we need to be knowledgeable of how to help our veterans with their benefits, etc., and many of us will be caregivers.”

Commander's Testimony explains Legion's stance on issues

On the final day of the conference, Legion Family members supported American Legion National Commander Vincent J. "Jim" Troiola as he explained the legislative priorities before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees.

"To us, suicide prevention is a pact we share with our friends and comrades of military service: a promise from each of us in The American Legion to 'Be the One' to save at least one other veteran from suicide," Troiola said of that legislative priority.

Congressional committee members then had the opportunity to ask questions of the commander and Legion staff about the important topics.

Taking advantage of peer-to-peer networking opportunities

Throughout the conference, members were also able to network with fellow ALA members from across the country.

"I enjoyed that," said dual member Vincent. "We got to network with one another and hear a few things going on in their communities at a department-to-department level."

The member-to-member connection is an important part of the event for many.

"It is always so wonderful to connect with ALA members from all over the country — some longtime friends and some who are now friends," Washburn said. "The time we can share together helps us to build our bonds and network of support. So many great ideas are shared at any event where we have attendees from all over the country."

ALA presence matters

"It is important that the Auxiliary has a presence in D.C.," Metzger said. "Much of the legislative agenda affects the family, and we need to be knowledgeable of how to help our veterans with their benefits, etc., and many of us will be caregivers."

Washburn agrees, noting it is critical for the ALA to be present at this conference.

"Many times, we are the ones who spearhead conversation and push the issues," she said. "The unity of The American Legion Family in D.C. demonstrates to our legislators that we share a common mission. And there is strength in numbers."

The annual conference is a great learning, networking, and advocacy opportunity for American Legion Auxiliary members nationwide.

"I have a better understanding of how it all runs above the state level at our federal level," Vincent said. "It was very interesting. I would love to go back again." ★

Law firm educates Auxiliary members on Camp Lejeune Justice Act

This year, ALA National President Vickie Koutz invited Auxiliary department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation chairs to attend The American Legion's Washington Conference, specifically for a special meeting with Bergmann & Moore LLC, a national law firm managed by former U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs attorneys serving The American Legion and its members.

The American Legion National Executive Committee has passed a national resolution approving a memorandum of understanding with B&M. The firm provides no-cost representation to Legionnaires, family members, and others with The American Legion.

"We would like your support so we can get the message out — the accurate message," said Glenn R. Bergmann, who came to speak to Auxiliary members in D.C.

The Camp Lejeune Justice Act applies to military personnel, their families, and civilians who were exposed to the toxic water supply for at least 30 days between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987. Exposure to the toxic water has caused multiple forms of cancer, neurological disorders, miscarriage, death, and other injuries.

Bergmann & Moore is working with The American

Legion to ensure its members and their families are not taken advantage of by large mass tort firms that spend millions of dollars advertising on TV but don't understand VA benefits.

Bergmann said American Legion Auxiliary members can support this cause in three ways:

- Outreach: notify membership about the facts
- Promote understanding to counter confusion
- Correct misrepresentations

"I did not know much about the Camp Lejeune Justice Act, so I learned a lot," said Carmen Metzger, Department of Idaho Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation chair. "It is up to us to help get the correct information out to our veterans and family members. Many veterans are being taken advantage of by the ad on TV and the high-priced lawyers. The law firm Bergmann & Moore is there to help veterans receive the maximum benefits allowed under the law and protect them against predators."

For more information, visit www.camplejunelitigationteam.com/AL or call (800) 898-9450. Follow American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters' social media accounts @ALforVeterans for updates.



PAYING TRIBUTE: (Left) Flags are placed on veterans' graves by Unit/Post 158 in Arkansas. Unit/Post 414 in Massachusetts reads the names of veterans who have passed. Ohio Unit 38 hosted a poppy drive in 2022.

Honoring and remembering our nation's heroes

By Jennifer Donovan

May is a special month for American Legion Family members and all Americans to show appreciation to servicemembers, veterans, military spouses, and remember those who gave their lives protecting our freedoms. May is Military Appreciation Month and includes several military holidays like National Poppy Day® and Memorial Day.

National Poppy Day falls on the Friday before Memorial Day (May 26 this year). Many ALA units already have plans, but if you don't, there is still time! If you don't have a lot of resources, think of something small (but impactful) like a table outside your post home or in front of a local business. You can find printable resources at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

We've heard from several units across the country about their Poppy Program activities and how they are observing National Poppy Day and Memorial Day.

Members revive their unit with Poppy Program

Ohio Unit 38 in Martins Ferry proves you can revive poppy activities in your community. Unit members have been planning for this year's event after a successful 2022 event. Last year, the unit held its first poppy drive in more than 15 years.

"Our desire to do a poppy drive was from our desire to

reactivate Auxiliary Unit 38 in support of our veterans and their families," said Jane Klug, unit president. "A poppy drive hasn't been done in over 15-plus years in our city. Some say more like 20 years. Our members can't remember the last time they've seen any organization hold a poppy drive in the city of Martins Ferry. It's one of the first steps we've taken to resuscitate our unit."

Members of Unit 38 include the community in their poppy activities. They distribute poppy coloring books and poppy paper plate-making kits to second grade students in two local schools, totaling more than 145 students. Coloring pages are displayed in the windows of local businesses, and the paper plate poppies are planted by monuments in the city park.

ALA Junior members get involved too, participating in the poppy drive by handing out poppy cookies from a local bakery, along with traditional crepe paper poppies. The Juniors also create a poppy memorial wall at the post home.

Not only did the 2022 poppy drive bring awareness to the significance of the poppy, but it helped membership.

"We attracted new members for all our groups: Legionnaires, Sons, and the ALA," said Klug.

Georgia promotes connection to famed Moina Michael

In 1918, Moina Michael, who later became known as "The Poppy Lady," read the *In Flanders Fields* poem by Canadian Lt. Col. John McCrae. Inspired, she vowed to always wear a red poppy as a sign of remembrance. Michael gave poppies to others to wear and urged groups to adopt the poppy to honor and support veterans.

Michael's birthplace and burial is in Walton County, Ga. A few years ago, ALA member Cathy Rush Hedges moved to the area and learned of the area's connection to Michael after seeing a road sign for the Moina Michael Highway. Hedges was familiar with Michael and poppies from childhood because her parents were members of The American Legion Family.

Hedges wondered if community members knew of Michael's history. As education chair of Unit 233 in Loganville, Hedges had an idea to take Michael's story to local students. She worked with the unit's poppy chair, and they began by approaching the local high school principal. He loved the idea and connected the pair to the agricultural instructor at the school.

"He was familiar with the significance of poppies due to military members in his family," said Hedges. "However, he was amazed by the local connection."

Today, Unit 233 provides poppy seeds for the students, and they are told the history of the poppy and Michael's connection to the flower. This year, two schools are taking part in the project.

Hedges said it's rewarding when she hears from students. She's had several mention that they've seen poppies growing along Moina Michael Highway.

"Another reward came when a student remarked on my poppy scarf: 'Your scarf has poppies on it. We learned about poppies and what they mean from our agriculture teacher.

Did you know poppy funds can be used for Honor Flights?

The ALA has a partnership with the Honor Flight Network. Poppy funds may be donated to Honor Flight Hubs for the following expenses:

FOR THE VETERAN:

- Wheelchair-accessible buses
- Food and nutrition
- Oxygen
- Wheelchairs
- Medical teams on each flight (one medic per bus; there are sometimes up to six medics per flight), funds to cover the medic's food, identifying apparel, medical supplies, travel expenses, and hotel

GUARDIAN:

- Airfare to accompany the veteran on the trip
- Food and nutrition
- Hotel accommodations to remain with the veteran during the trip

- Guardian training and associated needs to execute necessary tasks: food, room rental, medical training, identifying articles of clothing
- When required: transportation to the airport with the veteran
- When required: hotel for the night before the flight with the veteran

Have questions about poppy funds? Watch the recording *Using Poppy Funds to Serve Our Mission*.

It can be found in the ALA Academy in the MyAuxiliary member portal at www.ALAforVeterans.org.



Are you the ones who gave us the seeds?" said Hedges.

The unit also works with the city council to have Poppy Day proclaimed in Loganville.

The Department of Georgia pays honor to Michael by continuing a tradition she started. Each year, they release an anchor covered in poppies into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Tybee Island to honor those who sacrificed their lives at sea.

Paying tribute to the heroes buried at local cemeteries

Honoring those who made the ultimate sacrifice doesn't stop on National Poppy Day. ALA units, along with The American Legion Family, will take part in memorial services, parades, and other events to honor and remember the fallen.

Members of Brown-Wright Unit 158 in Arkansas work alongside Post 158 members to place flags on veterans' graves.

"Unit 158 has a flag fund that is used to purchase larger flags for the cemeteries," said Charlotte Purdy, Children & Youth, Public Relations, and Junior Activities chair for the unit and Public Relations chair for the Department of Arkansas. "This idea came after Past Post Commander Johnny Purdy Sr. and his wife, Audrey, were traveling to deliver church pew cushions and noticed a cemetery with larger flags when Johnny said, 'I want to have flags like this on our cemetery.' That was all it took for them to see a vision and make it possible!"

Residents of DeWitt, where Unit 158 is located, support the efforts of The American Legion Family and have made donations to the flag fund so that all local cemeteries have the larger flags.

"It took a little over a year for the community to realize where the flags came from, but once they did, the outpouring of support has been immeasurable," said Purdy. "It is a humbling experience each and every year to stand at the foot of the grave of one of our country's veterans and pay tribute to them for their sacrifice."

To make sure no veteran is forgotten, maps are created of the cemetery to know where veterans' graves are located. ALA Junior members are also involved. They help place flags and spend hours before Memorial Day attaching wooden dowels to the flags to make sure they never touch the ground.

"That one moment of silence — standing at the foot of the grave of a veteran — that moment is more powerful than any word or act. It is just you and them," said Purdy. "And when you place the flag ... well, that feeling is always so overwhelming because we wouldn't be here today if it weren't for them!"

Memorial Day begins with the reading of names for Massachusetts unit

Memorial Day starts early in the morning for Unit 414 and The American Legion Family in

Sutton, Mass. Members visit area cemeteries starting at 6 a.m. During each cemetery visit, they read the names of all veterans in the community who have passed.

"Then we participate in the annual Memorial Day parade in town," said Beth Hallene, unit member. "We finish up with a small ceremony at our post for a reading of all members' names from the Dudley-Gendron post home who have passed on."

Following the reading of names, the community is invited to join the Legion Family for a luncheon. ★

Save the date!
May: Military Appreciation Month and Month of the Military Caregiver
May 8: Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day)
May 12: Military Spouse Appreciation Day
May 20: Armed Forces Day
May 26: National Poppy Day®
May 29: Memorial Day

A mentoring change for the next group of leaders

Department implements two-year terms for program chairs



By Sara Fowler

For many American Legion Auxiliary members at the unit level, it can take about a year serving a chairmanship to truly understand the program, and because of the ALA's "one and done" administrative year structure, it's time for the next person to lead.

To help better prepare upcoming leaders for their role in the ALA, one department changed its governing documents to provide mentoring opportunities for its leaders.

At South Dakota's 2022 department convention, members voted for department program chairs to serve a two-year term with alternating chairs elected each year. Half were elected for one year and half for two years. The reasoning was to give the new chairs a mentor to help serve as a guide during that first year.

A mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser, or an experienced person in a company, college, or school who trains and counsels new employees or students.

From the definition and from practice, mentors really do have an influence on those they help.

"I think for me, if I hadn't reached out to those who were in leadership positions years ago, I don't think my

year [as president] would have gone as well," said South Dakota member Mary Jo Stier. "Our previous leaders are huge mentors. That's a lot of the mentoring is being able to reach out to them. I was very fortunate to have them."

The idea of implementing a two-year department mentorship program came from Stier. After attending her first ALA Mission Training event and continuing to move up through leadership positions, she questioned why chairmanships are only one year. She thought it would be better to appoint six chairs one year and then six the next year.

"You would always have a chairman to help with the next one," she said. "You don't have a clue what you are doing when you first come in and hope you are doing things right. It's an opportunity to learn from someone the first year."

South Dakota members voted to try it out, knowing if it didn't work out, they could go back to the previous system.

"I've always said the first year is to learn and the second year is to really work the chairmanship," said Laura "Susie" Clyde, 2022-2023 national historian and South Dakota member who has held many leadership roles within the department.

"I've always said the first year is to learn and the second year is to really work the chairmanship."

Clyde understands the difficulty of sometimes finding enough people and the right people to be chairmen.

Stier said she hopes the chair rotation lasts a few years and the next few presidents and chairs “give it an honest go.”

She added it’s been a lot easier to find six people than 12 for all of the committees South Dakota has. Departments that struggle with getting leadership positions filled might find this concept very beneficial.

The mentoring is designed for the incoming chair to have a go-to person if they have questions. In addition to mentoring, the goal is also to get leaders more involved in district and department convention meetings to understand what is going on in the department and to better prepare for their upcoming role.

“If you don’t understand why things are the way they are, it’s important to feel comfortable asking questions,” Stier said.

She’s even seen mentoring between different programs. Last year, the Americanism chair stepped up and helped the Education chair.

Seeing the new system in place, Clyde said there are definite benefits to the two-year policy.

“I think the members get more out of it,” she said. “I have seen nothing wrong with the two-year program. I wouldn’t have a problem with putting a president in for two years. The first year is learning, and the second year is sharing what you’ve learned.”

In addition to the department two-year terms, South Dakota also changed the program rotation that is traditionally part of the first and second vice positions at the department level. Instead of having Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth as the roles that lead to first and second vice, it’s now Leadership for first vice and Constitution & Bylaws for second vice.

The mentoring is designed for the incoming chair to have a go-to person if they have questions.

“We felt that as upcoming leaders, you need to know how to lead, and as an upcoming unit president, you better know the C&B,” Stier said.

The department doesn’t have anything in place yet to provide direct guidance on mentoring, but there’s been discussion about providing training for chairmen during the mid-winter meeting.

“The members are really willing to give it a try,” Stier said. “You get someone like me who wants to think outside the box. I’m all about trying things. If it doesn’t work, you can say you tried it. The members are very, very good to me. They are so willing to do things we haven’t done before.”

Clyde agreed and is happy to say the feedback has been positive.

“I can’t say anything bad about it because I haven’t seen anything bad about it,” she said. “I know when I was president a lifetime ago, I spent two years talking to people about being chairmen when I was president, and still had trouble finding people. Mary Jo made it happen, and I’m so glad she did. I have nothing but praise about it.”

Nearly a year into the mentoring program, Stier offers advice to other departments that may want to try out this new concept.

“Don’t be afraid to think outside the box,” she said. “It’s not going to happen overnight. This was almost a four-year thing. It took me up until being unit president, talking to people, talking to members, and seeing what they think.”

Stier added to not get defeated if it doesn’t work — and to try it again.

Clyde encourages departments to look into making two-year programs out of their chairmanships.

“It just makes things so easy,” she said. “The mentoring comes on its own.” ★

Primary benefits of an ALA program chair serving longer than a single, one-year term:

- Serving for only one year does not allow adequate time for most department or unit chairs to become familiar with their programs, let alone lead the program.
- Programs are enhanced by motivated members willing to learn and be able to participate and gain experience, which can be better accomplished in a two-year term. Chairs need to be motivated to serve and willing to acquire the knowledge needed to become subject-matter experts of their program.
- Serving just one year, some program chairs can be hesitant to ask questions or voice an opinion about their program. They may feel like they have to do everything status quo since they have only one year to work with.
- With longer terms, chairs will have more time to be mentored by previous chairs and feel empowered to make changes to improve the program and provide continuity during those two years.



NEW ALA ACADEMY COURSE AVAILABLE

ALA Academy recently added a new course — *ALA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*. This course was created to: help our members recognize biased language and performance bias and implement strategies to overcome them; identify and properly use interrupters to create a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere for all; and demonstrate the ability to coach others on the importance of inclusion and equity within the ALA.

This 30-minute module will lead you and your ALA unit to a more diverse organization, allowing the Auxiliary to help more veterans — creating a larger volunteer pool and improving community engagement and outreach. Having a diverse ALA membership gives us the ability to better relate to and address the needs of the community and also allows the ALA to have a broader voice in the communities we serve.

Throughout the course, you will learn why we stress the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the ALA and how doing so forms an environment where everyone feels accepted. You will discover how to recognize and combat different types of bias and stereotypes, and also gain insight to the types of impressions you may have about situations in which you are exposed to every day. Throughout the course, you will learn how to recognize, address, and overcome common stereotypes and

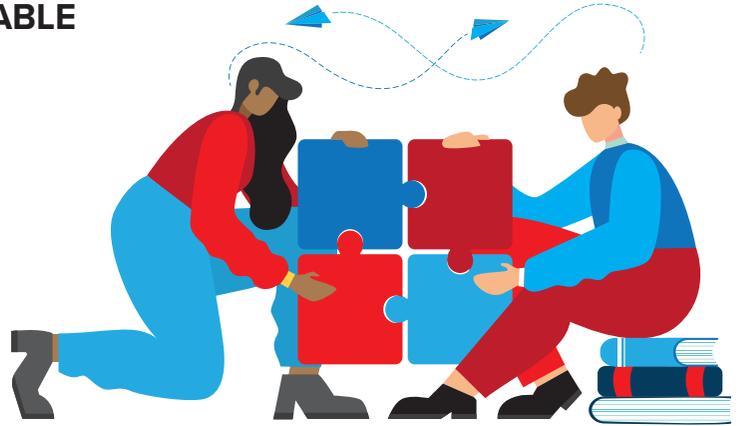
biases, along with so much more.

The *ALA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* course covers a variety of topics like defining diversity, equity, and inclusion; advantages of a diverse ALA membership; types of bias; observing equity; interrupter strategies to stop bias; biased language; and building an inclusive culture.

Your commitment to upholding diversity, equity, and inclusion within your unit will help the ALA build a more inclusive culture across our organization. Before you take the course, familiarize yourself with these definitions, which are used throughout:

Diversity is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, ability, and age (among others). Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and placing a positive value on these differences.

Equity looks to ensure people have access to the same treatment, opportunity, and advancement, with an emphasis on identifying and removing barriers that prevent



participation from some groups.

Inclusion ensures that those who are diverse actually feel and are welcomed by a group.

A **bias** includes words, phrases, and/or sweeping generalizations that do not fairly represent all individuals within a group.

A **stereotype** is an assigned generalization or preconceived characteristics attributed to a certain set of people. They can include oversimplified generalizations that may be untrue or only partially true.

ALA Academy self-paced courses:

- *ALA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*
- *ALA 101*
- *ALA Fundraising Course*
- *ALA Juniors E-Learning Course*
- *ALA Branding and Why it Matters to Me*
- *Establishing an ALA Culture of Goodwill*
- *ALA Leadership: Living Our Motto of Service Not Self*



What is ALA Academy?

ALA Academy is a user-friendly online training platform that offers new learning opportunities for members of all ages. ALA Academy courses are free educational trainings that provide a deeper level of understanding about the American Legion Auxiliary as an organization.

The Academy allows for self-paced learning, peer sharing, peer mentoring, and opportunities for ongoing training. The courses don't have to be completed all at once. You can complete them at your own pace and at your own convenience.

ALA GIRLS NATION: VOLUNTEERS SERVING A PURPOSE

 www.Facebook.com/ALAGirlsNation



The American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program has been preparing female high school

students for civic leadership since 1937. Since then, every generation of teens has been shaped by the social, political, and economic events of the day. Our members have continuously adapted to the shape of our society and remain steadfast to delivery of our mission through the changes.

Studies show that most young people do not usually develop a specific purpose and then go become an expert in it. Rather, they are exposed to something new that helps them develop their own sense of purpose. In most cases, experiences lead to developing purpose. Through the tireless preparation and execution of your ALA Girls State program, you give them the experiences to

help discover their own sense of purpose. You never know how these experiences will shape them down the road.

For this reason, your dedication and commitment to the ALA Girls State program serves a great purpose in our society, and for that, we are always grateful.

Today's teenagers are the first generation whose lives are saturated by mobile technology and social media. Two years of a pandemic showed that we can take that technology and actually use it to continue our programs and keep our young people engaged in learning. This year, we will take what we have learned and incorporate and modify those lessons into our live programs.

ALA National Headquarters staff, along with the ALA Girls Nation Committee members, offer resources to help ALA Girls State programs to network and share ideas among departments. Twice a year, they host

an ALA Girls State Zoom meeting that is open to all department ALA Girls State directors and chairmen. It is a great tool for states to share ideas and ask questions about their programs.

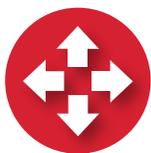
Another resource is the ALA Girls State Leadership Conference held in Indianapolis each September. Guest speakers are present to discuss important information such as insurance, social media, diversity, and the event offers many other networking tools. For more information on how to access event information, contact your division's ALA Girls Nation chairman.

Thank you, volunteers! The American Legion Auxiliary continues to shine as an example of unselfish giving.



Donna Dillard is a PUFL member of Lake Kiowa Unit 265 in Lake Kiowa, Texas.

RISK & COMPLIANCE: PLANNING AND PROTECTING ALA POLICY



Your Risk & Compliance Committee is a quiet committee. We are behind

the scenes ensuring the American Legion Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation maintain our integrity, financial credibility, and long-term visibility so that we can continue the mission of taking care of veterans, our military, and their families. We fill a critical role in our nonprofit organization.

As important as it is for the National Organization, this function is just as vital at department levels. I recommend you have a committee tasked to meet with your auditors

to ensure all information is given in a timely manner, and that your department is handling business in accordance with your policies. Their duty is to monitor and control major financial risk exposure, including fraud, cybersecurity, and data privacy issues.

At National, we have added a new layer of protection, having completed an extensive analysis of our information technology system. The review conducted by an outside firm identified 14 areas of moderate risk within the ALA and ALA Foundation systems. Moderate means these items may cause exposure to risk, but they can be cleared up in a timely manner. We

would like to thank leadership of the ALA and National Headquarters staff for all of their hard work on both the financial audit and the IT audit.

On a personal note, our committee has felt your love in the cards, texts, and kind words in the passing of our beloved chairman Jeri Greenwell. In her honor, we are taking care of the business of this organization that she loved so much.



Carol Westergren is a 12-year member of ALA Unit 91 in Beebe, Ark.

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES: EARN WHILE YOU LEARN THROUGH ALA PATCH PROGRAM



The future of the American Legion Auxiliary is in the hands of our Junior members. The ALA mission statement in part says, “In the Spirit of *Service Not Self*” — we reflect on these words as we look at the future of this organization. Our Junior Activities program is one that strives to make Junior members educated and knowledgeable of the many programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. The Junior Patch Program allows Juniors/Sons of

Goodwill, History, Leadership, Membership, National Security, Physical Fitness, Poppy, Star Spangled Kids, and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, depending on which of the three levels in the Patch Program group they are in.

New this year for the Red Level 1 (Grade K-3) is the Digital Media Patch. There are criteria and activities that must be met to earn a specific patch in each level. The requirements teach Juniors/SAL

The American Legion youth to learn and earn patches in Americanism, Caregiving, Community & Family Safety, Community Service, Education,

youth about the ALA’s mission. A one-time limited edition patch this year is the National Veterans Creative Art Festival Patch, created for Juniors/SAL youth to get involved in raising funds for National Veterans Creative Arts Festival caregivers, one of National President Vickie Koutz’s focus areas for the 2022-2023 administrative year.

Juniors/SAL youth can earn this patch by raising \$5 for each year of their age. For example, an 8-year-old would need to raise \$40 (8 x \$5 = \$40). Juniors can raise funds as a group or individually. For forms, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.



Starr Purnell is a 28-year member of the Auxiliary. She belongs to Howard J. Purnell Memorial Unit 145 in Salisbury, Md.

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS: GOVERNING DOCUMENTS ARE GREAT!



If you ever visit the National Archives in Washington D.C., you can view the United States

Constitution in all its historical splendor. There, sealed in the most scientifically advanced housing that modern preservation technology can provide, are the supreme governing documents of our great country. While the American Legion Auxiliary does not display our governing documents in such a grandiose manner, they are as important to this organization at every level as the U.S. Constitution is to our country.

Our Constitution & Bylaws provide the governance structure for our organization and how it will function. These documents furnish answers to the important questions that arise, such as eligibility, purpose, officers, executive committee, meetings, and how we can amend

the documents. They tell us in very certain terms how we elect our officers, their specific term in office, how we fill vacancies, and even how we discipline members, should the need arise.

Standing Rules provide greater detail about administrative policies. In this document, answers to specific questions about dues, meeting times, finances, gifts, donations, and special events can be found. Standing Rules address specific things that may be unique to a particular unit or department.

The key to keeping our organization healthy and productive is to make sure our governing documents are reviewed and updated regularly. When the national Constitution & Bylaws and Standing Rules change, all unit, counties, districts, and departments should automatically update their governing documents. Just remember that the documents for

any of these entities cannot be in conflict with the national governing documents.

Some members consider reviewing and revising our governing documents a daunting task, but it doesn’t have to be that way. If we view the process as the best means to keep our groups functioning as efficiently as possible, it won’t be a chore at all! Due diligence now will eliminate questions later.

Our governing documents are great! They may not be on display like the U.S. Constitution, but having them up to date and accessible to our members is the very best thing we can do so we have a healthy organization that functions as a team to support our veterans, military, and their families, and our communities.



Diana Sirovina is a 35-year member of the Auxiliary. She belongs to Bixby-Hansen Unit 171 in Union Grove, Wisc.



Candidate: National President
LISA WILLIAMSON
 Department of Alaska:
 C. Russell Huber Unit 57

Eligibility: Through son, Kyle, who serves in the Alaska Air Guard. Also adds military service of her adoptive father, Keith LaChance.

Offices Held: Served/serving several unit-level positions and multiple department-level offices and chairmanships. National: served as chair of the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Children & Youth, Education, Legislative, Constitution & Bylaws, Public Relations, and Junior Activities committees, and as 100th Anniversary Committee member, National Executive Committee member, ALA Centennial Strategic Plan strategy co-captain, and American Legion Auxiliary national vice president.



Candidate: National Vice President
TRISH WARD
 Department of Kansas:
 John P. Hand Unit 250

Eligibility: Through father, John M. Brusati, U.S. Army, World War II; and grandfather, Edmund S. Lindberg, U.S. Navy, WWII.

Offices Held: Served in several unit-, district-, and department-level positions. National: Chair of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Children & Youth, Constitution & Bylaws, Leadership, Legislative, ALA Girls Nation, Public Relations, Membership, and Auxiliary Emergency Fund committees; served as Central Division National Vice President; National Executive Committee member; American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors member; and served on the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan Team.

American Legion Auxiliary members elect five national division vice presidents, one from each ALA division.



Candidate: Central Division National Vice President
CAROL T. ROBINSON
 Department of Ohio:
 Unit 776 in Riverside

Eligibility: Through late brother, William A. Hawkins, who served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.



Candidate: Eastern Division National Vice President
DEBRA TIERNAN
 Department of Vermont:
 Ballard-Hobart Unit 36

Eligibility: Through father, Harold "Zeke" St. John, U.S. Navy veteran, WWII.



Candidate: Northwestern Division National Vice President
KAREN SUSAG
 Department of Montana:
 Broadwater Unit 42

Eligibility: Through husband, Vietnam veteran Michael G. Susag, U.S. Air Force; and father, Oscar Webster, WWI. Also adds military service of brother, Harold Webster, U.S. Army; brother, Alfred Webster, U.S. Navy; and son, Christopher Susag, U.S. Navy.



Candidate: Southern Division National Vice President
CHRISTINE TRAHAN
 Department of Texas:
 Beaumont Unit 33

Eligibility: Through father, Charles Wheeler, U.S. Navy; brother, Chuck Wheeler, U.S. Marine Corps; spouse, Michael Trahan, U.S. Marine Corps; and sons, Michael Trahan, U.S. Air Force and Dusty Trahan, U.S. Marine Corps.



Candidate: Western Division National Vice President
JEANETTE (JAN) CUSHING
 Department of

Arizona: Earl E. Mitchell Unit 29
Eligibility: Through husband, George, U.S. Air Force veteran, Vietnam War.

The national historian completes a historical record of the administrative year in which they serve, maintain, and update the historical records of the American Legion Auxiliary.



Candidate: National Historian
DONNA THURMAN
 Department of Kentucky: Hardin Unit 113

Eligibility: Through father, Kenneth A. Johnson, U.S. Army sergeant. Also adds military service of late husband, Col. J.W. Thurman.



Candidate: National Historian
YVONNE BRUNNER
 Department of New York:
 Unit 144

Eligibility: Through father, Korean War veteran Armand Quiles Serrano, U.S. Air Force; and husband, Joseph A. Brunner Jr., U.S. Navy.

American Legion Auxiliary chaplains express our founding principle of service to God and country and celebrate diversity among people and faiths. They also provide spiritual and emotional guidance, sending dignity and respect to the occasion.



Candidate: National Chaplain
BRENDA COLLINS
 Department of South Carolina: Unit 0003

Eligibility: Through husband, U.S. Air Force veteran John F. Collins, Vietnam.



Candidate: National Chaplain
BRISTER THOMAS
 Department of Hawaii:
 Unit 56

Eligibility: Through husband, Mark, U.S. Navy veteran. Also adds military service of father, U.S. Marine Corps pilot in Vietnam; and grandfather, U.S. Navy, WWII.

WHEN ARE ALA NATIONAL OFFICERS ELECTED?

These national officer positions serve one-year terms and are elected at National Convention, serving until adjournment of the following National Convention. In addition to these candidates, any member in good standing may be nominated for any of these national offices from the floor at National Convention. ALA national division vice presidents are nominated in their respective division caucuses and are elected by convention delegates. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to read more about the candidates for 2023-2024 office. Information presented on this page was provided by the candidates.

REMEMBERING LONGTIME NATIONAL MEMBER JERI GREENWELL

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of former national Risk & Compliance Committee Chair Jeri Greenwell. From the Department of Maine, and a longtime member of the American Legion Auxiliary, Jeri always put the ALA's mission first. Her dedication and commitment to our nation's veterans, military, and their families, was truly inspiring.

After complications following a scheduled surgery, Jeri, 67, passed away Dec. 31, 2022.

The daughter of two U.S. Marines, Jeri was born Jan. 29, 1955, to Dana and Carolyn Brooks in Rumford, Maine. She graduated from Telstar High School in 1972 and Husson University in 1974. Jeri married Jerry A. Greenwell on April 15, 1990. The two had a son named Jerry Allen Jr.

Jeri was an active member of the community and spent much of her time helping others. She took on many different leadership positions within the American Legion Auxiliary at all levels. She was Past National Chaplain during the 2007-2008 administration year; Past Eastern Division National Vice President (1986-1987); Past Department President (1983-1984);

Second District President (1979-1980); Oxford County Council President (1978-1979); Maine's Mundt-Allen Unit 81 President (1975-1976, 1981-1982, 2006-2012); Mundt-Allen Unit 81 vice president (2012-2016); and most recently, Jeri served as national Risk & Compliance Committee Chair (2022-2023). Always exhibiting *Service Not Self*, Jeri served on countless unit, district, department, and national committees. Her allegiance to enhancing the lives of veterans, military, and their families never frayed.

An ALA Paid Up For Life (PUFL) member, Jeri was also part of the Auxiliary's Legacy Society — a group of dedicated individuals who have given or committed a planned gift to the ALA or American Legion Auxiliary Foundation in their estate plan. Jeri said the American Legion Auxiliary had given her so much over her nearly 53 years as a member, and that's why she made it a priority to give back.

"I really feel that you should devote all of your passion and support to the program that best reflects your values; the ALA certainly does that," Jeri said in an

article from the August 2020 *Auxiliary* magazine.

Having spent winters in Titusville, Fla., and summers in Bethel, Maine, Jeri was able to share her love for veterans

in both of the places she called home. In addition to her American Legion Auxiliary mission work, Jeri spent her time serving and supporting other community organizations. In Titusville, she was a charter member of The American Legion Riders Post 67, and a member of the VFW 4228 Auxiliary. Jeri became national spokesperson for the National Meningitis Association, and member of its National Advisory Committee. In Maine, Jeri was a member of the Maine Adaptive Sports' Veterans No Boundaries Committee, a retired board member of Maine 4H Foundation, and Life Member of the Bethel Historical Society.

Jeri's infectious smile, cool accent, and passionate personality will be missed greatly.



HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED AT THE MID-YEAR NEC MEETING



Our national governing board, the ALA National Executive Committee, met virtually Feb. 25 for its mid-year meeting. The open event was held via Zoom and consisted of voting members of the board and guests. The following actions were taken by the NEC:

- Via consent agenda, the NEC adopted the updated national appointments list, charter cancellations, and eight updated national policies, including AEF Grant Policy, Business Card Policy, NHQ Investment Policy, NHQ Purchasing Policy, Disbursement of Funds Policy, Endorsement Policy, National President's Project Policy, and the Travel Reimbursement Policy.
- Members of the new Ethical Conduct Committee, established by vote of the 2023 National Convention delegates, were included in the appointments list and include Chairman

Janice Gravely, and committee members Rhonda Montgomery, Rhonda Dohr, KariAnn Noechel, Karla Washington, and Jonette Barley.

- The board also adopted to pursue a specialty group license plate through the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles. If the special license plate is secured, it will be for Indiana residents only and will be available in 2024. The proceeds will benefit the national AEF Fund so we can continue to assist members in need.
- The ALA and American Legion Auxiliary Foundation consolidated financial statements for fiscal year 2022 were presented to the board by external auditors from Blue & Company. The board adopted both ALA and ALAF statements as presented.

The NEC will next meet in person during the ALA's National Convention in August in Charlotte, N.C.

Provided by Karen Peel, National Chaplain 2022-2023 | www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAchaplains

MAY

WHAT IS MEMORIAL DAY?

Memorial Day is not a reason for mattress sales, car sales, furniture sales, loud, flashy parades with balloons and bicycles, neighborhood cookouts, swimming, and games — the official beginning of summer.

Memorial Day is the most somber day of the year that we commemorate, deserving of all honor, comparable to the Christian All Saints' Day.

Those we commemorate on this day are saints: true martyrs to the cause of our freedoms. They made the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives for those of others — each of us.

How do we say thank-you to those who shed their blood for all of us who came after them? Be good citizens; support and contribute to your community, military, police, elected officials; vote following your heart and conscience, not the crowd; if you see that someone needs help, offer because waiting to be asked diminishes the value of the effort. Remember and hold to those traditions which honor our heritage and history: Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day. They each have their own meanings, purposes, and ideals.

We mourn those who have fallen. We honor their lives and memories. We thank them for their sacrifices. We cherish and appreciate the freedoms they secured for us.

Dear Lord, help us to remember and emulate their sense of duty and to appreciate their sacrifices they made for us. This sacrifice allows us to feel good about being an American every day. Cherish the freedoms we are privileged to have every day of our lives. Remember. Amen.

Contributed by Kathy Croathers, Unit 473, Copley, Ohio.

JUNE

SEIZE THE DAY

Ever since Horace penned *carpe diem* (“seize the day”), and probably long before that, philosophers, poets, and many others have urged us to make the most of the present. Here are a few examples:

- Finish each day and be done with it. This day is all that is good and fair. It is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on yesterdays. — Ralph Waldo Emerson

- Don't look back on happiness or dream of it in the future. You are only sure of today; do not let yourself be cheated out of it. — Henry Ward Beecher

These wise authors say basically the same thing, but the psalmist says it best. Why? Because the psalmist gives credit for the gift of today to the Lord, the one who made it and deserves the credit.

What will you do to seize today? Yes, we can learn from yesterday and from our mistakes and successes, but today deserves all of our attention. So, choose to focus on the present, doing and saying things that reflect your gratitude to the Lord who made this day and gave it to you.

I am so grateful for this day, Lord. Teach me new ways to show it in my life.

JULY

INDEPENDENCE DAY

A Freedom Blessing:

May you always have your life in God's hands.

May liberty surround you.

May your pursuit of happiness always come true.

May you have health and coins in your pocket.

May the sun shine in your life.

May the rainbow always follow the rain.

May you always know a friend is near.

May God fill your heart, our country, and the world with peace.

May God bless America and place His love in your heart.

(Source: Chaplain's Prayer Book)

God, we remember the courage and determination of our founding fathers. We remember our brave men and women who served and are serving today. We thank them that we are able to live in a nation that is free. Many gave so much for that freedom. It is because of them that we carry on the American Legion Auxiliary principles of justice, freedom, and democracy. Lord, make us proud to be Americans. Teach us to be sensitive to the needs of others. Help us to continue to help our veterans, as well as those in need. Be with us and guide us, we pray. Amen.



Karen Peel is a 32-year member of Firestone Memorial Unit 449 in Akron, Ohio.

Defining Generations by Birth Year

The Silent Generation: 1928-1945

Baby Boomers: 1946-1964

Generation X: 1965-1980

Millennials: 1981-1996

Gen Z: 1997-2010

Generation Alpha: 2010-2025



WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary can be broken down in several different ways: some people joined the organization to support its mission of serving veterans, military, and their families; honoring a servicemember or veteran inspired some to sign up for membership; and others simply like the social aspects of belonging to a unit.

But there's one thing our members have in common — all of us are from different generations.

The ALA has an advantage, age-wise, in the way our membership eligibility is structured: You can become a member directly from the womb or complete an application as an octogenarian.

Let's use this built-in ALA member benefit to teach others about the characteristics of each generation, and to appreciate that we're all different.

Identities of each generation, according to *Indeed* and *Parents*:

The Silent Generation is the oldest group, offering mentorship to younger generations. These people value loyalty and make an effort to help others. Their strong work ethic means they might be more serious in nature, preferring more formal environments.

Previously the largest generation, **Baby Boomers** are hardworking individuals who are more likely to value an established hierarchy of responsibility and authority.

Many Boomers want to continue working, even though they have the opportunity to retire. People in this generation believe authority comes from experience. Because of this, some Boomers may be more likely to trust an older person vs. younger person's point of view.

Generation X, or Gen Xers as they're commonly known, are independent and value more relaxed, flexible environments. This group is still actively raising children and therefore strives for a healthy work-life balance. Responsible for the rise of modern technology, Gen X is very comfortable with computers, smart devices, and learning new tech.

While the previous generation may have jumpstarted the tech boom, **Millennials** are the first to have grown up in the age of being tech savvy. Millennials seek meaningful projects. Passionate about relaxed environments, Millennials aren't afraid to challenge authority and status quo. They're now the largest living adult generation.

Gen Z tends to have a more global mindset. This group grew up on things that relied on technology, making Gen Z more adaptive to change. They want to work in and belong to places that value diversity and social responsibility.

The youngest, **Generation Alpha**, has always known social media ... and screens for that matter. Their technology skills are extremely sharp. Their formative years were shaped by

the pandemic, and they hold strong values for family time. This group — the most diverse of any generation — cares about climate change and is passionate about inclusivity.

So, what can we do as American Legion Auxiliary members in our organization of multiple generations? While it's important not to generalize or stereotype people under the characteristics of their generation, it is good to take the time and study why people may make the decisions they do, or why they say the things they do.

A Boomer, for example, shouldn't discount or dismiss a younger person's ideas in a unit meeting just because the member hasn't been part of the ALA very long. A Millennial shouldn't immediately use the "OK, Boomer" phrase seen on social media just because the Boomer's beliefs tend to be more trusting of authority. And Gen Xers, being the middle child of the larger generations, should act as a bridge to build stronger relationships between the generations to support the ALA's mission outreach activities.

The key takeaways in all of this generation talk — when we take the time to learn more about the people around us, we have a better understanding of who they are, their background, their interests, and goals. What are some ways we can apply that knowledge in our American Legion Auxiliary units, membership, and mission service? Do you have ideas? Tell us at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org.

FLORIDA EMPOWERS ALA MEMBERS THROUGH STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

How do you take proper minutes? What are the duties of a unit secretary? A district treasurer? And what's in the American Legion Auxiliary's Constitution & Bylaws? As with many other organizations, understanding all aspects of ALA membership engagement can take time.

ALA's Department of Florida, recognizing that there's a lot to digest about membership, launched an annual leadership training program, Auxiliary Basic Concept School, or ABC School for short, to make sure all of its members have the opportunity to flourish. Each year, about 10 certified instructors travel throughout the district area — from beyond Panama City to the Gulf of Mexico — to teach members lessons on various ALA-related topics, ranging from protocol to officer duties and bylaws.

According to Jane Hardacre, ALA



Department of Florida president, the leadership training sessions empower the ALA members who have attended them. Hardacre said that having a better understanding of the organization has helped many members become more involved.

“When you get into a unit or district, you find out that members need help. After training, we find more instances where unit members are not afraid to speak up to be recognized by their unit president,” said Hardacre, who also has served as an instructor for nearly 10 years. “They feel more confident about speaking up at meetings.”

The training sessions are developed to recognize levels of understanding among members, and ensure that the lessons are relatable and easy to understand, Hardacre added.

“We offer training that encompasses everything from programs and protocols to positions and their roles,” she said. “For example, in answer to the question ‘How do you take proper minutes?’, we would explain the process of documenting when the meeting started, whether you had a quorum, if motions were made, who made the motions, who seconded the motion, and then the outcome of the motion. You don't need to include all the discussions, like ‘Susie said this,’ and ‘Sherry said this.’ Minutes must be concise, to the point, no interpretation, and no personal feelings.”

More seasoned members may undergo more in-depth training on various topics like mentoring,

leadership, and branding, Hardacre said.

Hardacre also stresses the importance of keeping things entertaining, inclusive, and engaging as part of the instructional process. Even the name of the school originated from a naming contest when it was developed about 20 years ago, she said. The learning sessions often are taught as games, including *Jeopardy* and *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* Other times, questions are simply pulled from a bucket and read by each participant to enhance engagement.

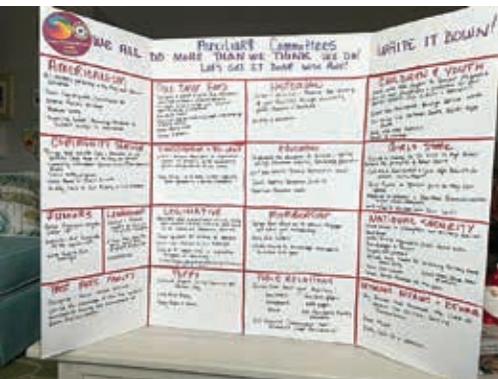
ABC School instructors also make sure they share the source of their information, such as a specific page in the *ALA Department Operations Guide*.

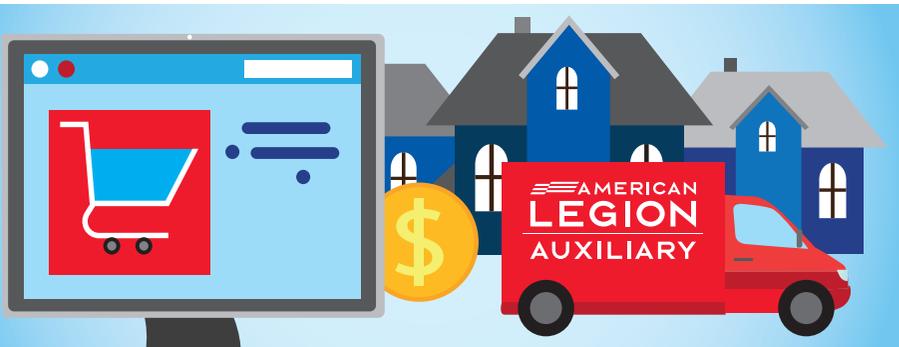
“We quote exactly where we got the information,” Hardacre said.

The ALA Department of Florida has received such positive feedback about the ABC School over the years that it has strengthened its commitment to the program. The organization ensures the program is included in the department's budget each year.

“We love the participation on the unit level. Our organization deserves that type of commitment,” said Hardacre, noting that leadership had recently decided to send instructors in pairs, taking advantage of the ability to add the dynamics that come with a team with a minimal increase in travel expenses.

“We are continually surprised by the positive energy we receive in the classrooms,” she said. “It's powerful and inspiring.”





SAVE MONEY FOR YOUR ALAGS PROGRAM BY CREATING A WISH LIST

Wish lists aren't just for birthdays and holidays — they can be used for ALA Girls State programs. Using sites such as Amazon.com or Walmart.com, programs can create a list of items needed. This gives ALA members, ALA Girls State alumnae, and donors an easy way to show support.

ALA Louisiana Girls State uses Amazon.com to create a wish list that is sent via their department secretary to members and their ALA Girls State alumnae. Those who wish to participate can either buy an item directly from Amazon.com or purchase items on the list elsewhere.

To start your list, think of the things your program purchases each year.

"We put everything [on the list] — literally!" said Rachel Funel,

ALA Louisiana Girls State director. "We always ask for tangible items: infirmery supplies such as Band-Aids or Advil. Other items include, but are not limited to, Ziploc bags, garbage bags, printer paper, printer cartridges, arts and craft supplies, patriotic colors, poppy wreath materials, lanyards, and laundry items, etc."

For those who don't purchase online, Funel says the Louisiana program collects items at events such as Mid-Winter Conference. The items are put in storage until they are needed.

"We have an overwhelming positive response. For our department members, they donate to continue to support the program they love."

Funel says Louisiana also includes monetary donations on the list for things that cannot be purchased in stores, such as banners, signs, and other program-related expenses.

ALA IOWA GIRLS STATE: RAISING FUNDS AT MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

For 15 years, the ALA Iowa Girls State program has hosted a silent auction during the department's Mid-Winter Conference, and attendees donate gift baskets and other items. This year, they added a second fundraising event — a poppy painting session.

"When we had a similar event at National Convention a couple of years ago, we had several Iowa members attend," said Mary Andersen, ALA Iowa Girls State director. "They had a great time, which inspired us to try our own event."

The program enlisted a local artist to lead the session.



"An Iowa artist was hired but worked just for expenses — his hotel and transportation — because while he does do paint parties as a business, he will help out fundraising causes," said Andersen. "Our supplies came out of our budget, but we did accept freewill donations to help cover costs."

For other ALA Girls State

programs interested in doing a similar fundraiser, Andersen recommends taking advanced reservations to help determine the number of supplies needed and room size.

ALA Iowa Girls State plans on hosting the event again.

"It was great fun," said Andersen. "We hope to plan another event at a future conference!"

ALA Girls State and American Legion Boys State participants may qualify for a Samsung American Legion Scholarship, available for high school juniors who participate in the current session of ALA Girls State or American Legion Boys State and are a direct descendant (or legally adopted child) of a U.S. military veteran who served honorably on active duty during a period of war (April 6, 1917 to Nov. 11, 1918; or Dec. 7, 1941, until a date as determined by Congress). Applications must be submitted prior to day one of their state's program. For more information, visit www.Legion.org/Scholarships/Samsung.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Are You Using Old Branding?

Make sure your website, socials, stationery, etc., are up to date with the new logo. Remember: The blue star emblem has not gone away. See details in the revised *ALA Branding Guide* at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Member/Guides/Branding-Guide.



5 Steps to Double Your Donation

Matching Gift Process

STEP 1:



Individual
donates
to ALA
Foundation

STEP 2:



Individual
checks eligibility
for a company
gift match

STEP 3:



Individual
submits
request for a
gift match

STEP 4:



Company
reviews
the match
request

STEP 5:



Company
matches
the
donation

Contact your human resources, employee benefits, or community relations office to determine if your company matches employee charitable donations. For more information, visit ALAFoundation.org.

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity that supports the American Legion Auxiliary. All gifts to the Foundation are tax-deductible as allowed by the United States Tax Code and U.S. Internal Revenue Service. © American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters. All rights reserved. 02/2023



Keep an eye out for 2023-2024 ALA Mission Training dates

In these one-day conferences, you'll be inspired while learning more about working the ALA's core programs in an interactive and fun environment. **BONUS:** National Junior meetings are held at the same time and in the same city as Mission Training events.

Learn more: www.ALAFforVeterans.org/Meetings/Mission-Training.

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SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT GRATEFUL FOR ALA'S COMMITMENT TO HELPING MILITARY KIDS

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsors the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship to support the children of our warriors. These scholarships are awarded to 15 students annually who excel in academics and volunteer in their communities.

Eligible to apply for this scholarship through her father, a U.S. Air Force officer, Anne Mountcastle grew up in a military family. She moved every two years, lived overseas, and experienced quite a lot as a military kid.

We understand you recently returned from overseas.

When I was starting eighth grade, my dad announced the next assignment was Taiwan. I spent the first two years of high school in a country I had to Google!

After sophomore year, I expected to go home and graduate in America with a somewhat typical American high school experience. Then came the big decision: Either my dad goes on a year deployment, or the family moves to South Korea. So, I ended up graduating from Osan Middle High School at Osan Air Force base in South Korea.

How did you find out about the ALA Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship?

At the start of senior year, Wednesday and Friday nights were scholarship nights in the Mountcastle household. My dad and I sat down at the kitchen counter and reviewed our scholarship spreadsheet, and he coached me to set goals and meet deadlines. My dad found the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship through searching on the internet.

What was cool about this was it was a great bonding experience for my dad and me.

How did you feel when you learned you were a winning recipient?

I was elated and extremely honored. These scholarships recognize the commitment and sacrifice it takes to be a military kid above all else. When you travel around the world, you lose a foothold in a hometown that has local resources for kids leaving high school. I

was so grateful that the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship was made available to me even though I was far away.

What college are you attending, and what are you studying?

I attend the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. I am a nursing major pursuing my bachelor of science degree.

What piqued your interest in this career?

I always knew I wanted to lead a life of service. I was inspired by my dad and mom serving our country and our family. It wasn't until my junior year that I decided on nursing. My family went back to America to visit for the summer, and I went with my grandma to one of her chemotherapy appointments. During the visit, the nurses were incredible. I was met with their smiles and excitement. They had an incredible wealth of knowledge and happily explained everything to me.



That was when I decided I wanted to be a nurse.

Any advice to other students who may want to apply for this scholarship?

Do the work. Your hard work in school and your affiliation in the military is something people want to invest in. Take the time to apply for scholarships. I applied to a lot. I was rejected by some. I won this one. I lost right from the start on every application I did not submit.

What would you say to donors who support ALA scholarship funds to financially help students like you?

It is truly an honor to receive your generosity. Thank you for your support and believing in kids like me. We move around a lot, and that lack of roots in a local community can sometimes impact our access to resources like local scholarships. My family and I are so grateful the ALA is committed to helping military kids.



BE THE ONE: University of Memphis Distinguished Professor of Psychology Dr. David Rudd speaks during the Commander’s Call at the 2023 American Legion Washington Conference in February (photo: Jeric Wilhelmsen/American Legion).

LEADING FROM THE FRONT TO HALT VETERAN SUICIDES

During his travels to small posts across the nation, American Legion National Commander Vincent J. “Jim” Troiola witnesses the value of Be the One.

Family members of veterans who have taken their own life share their grief with Troiola. “They don’t have answers for it; they don’t know why,” he said.

Case in point: About three or four months ago, a veteran revealed a secret to Troiola.

“I’ve been out of the Vietnam War for almost 50 years now,” the commander recalled the man saying. “He said, ‘My brother took his own life. You’re the only one who knows that. My family thinks he died from injuries he received. He shot himself. It really broke me up. You realize how bad it is out there.’”

During The American Legion Washington Conference in March, Dr. David Rudd, an expert on post-traumatic stress disorder and veteran suicide, addressed Legionnaires on the topic.

Rudd, who was deployed during the Gulf War with the Army’s 2nd Armored Division, is the spokesman for The American Legion’s Be the One initiative that aims to reduce the rate of veteran suicide. The mission is to drive more awareness about the issue and available



resources while lessening the stigma some associate with mental health treatment.

“This campaign is important not just for the Legion but for the entire country,” said Rudd, a lifetime



member of The American Legion. “It creates an opportunity to set an example and drive awareness of the difficult problem of suicide among the veteran population. It is a problem that has become more challenging over the past two decades.”

Rudd pointed out that it is normal for those exposed to trauma, combat or otherwise, to face challenges in processing the experience and finding ways to cope with it.

“Often just talking about the problem helps,” he said. “Acknowledging the reality makes an incredible difference. What the Legion’s Be the One campaign allows us to do is to show that those consequences are normal for the exposure to very unusual circumstances.”

The Be the One campaign is not just for veterans, Rudd noted, encouraging everyone to learn how they can participate.

“I would encourage you to embrace the full potential that the campaign represents,” he said. “It has the potential to do things in a very significant way, not just for the Legion but for the entire country.”

Already, Troiola has seen the support for Be the One as he visits veterans, servicemembers, and their family members from coast to coast.

“They realize how sincere The American Legion is about handling this situation,” he said. “But we need more people out there getting involved, more people in these communities because that is where it is all happening. And when you get out there, you wonder if the problem is worse than they are saying. And I believe it is.

“But I do know that we are making a difference.”

By Henry Howard and Hilary Ott



ARE YOU LISTENING?

Do you listen to podcasts? Have you checked out *Tango Alpha Lima*?

This podcast discusses issues important to veterans, servicemembers, and those who support them.

Exciting news, the new co-host is an ALA member! Learn more about ALA member, military spouse, comedian, and *Tango Alpha Lima* co-host Ashley Gutermuth on page 48 of this issue of *Auxiliary* magazine.

All episodes are available in both audio and video formats. You can download episodes on iTunes, Stitcher, or other major podcast-hosting sites. You can also view it on the Legion's YouTube channel.

APP FOR VETERANS REACHES MILESTONE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs app has surpassed more than 1 million downloads. The app, developed with input from veterans, provides a convenient way for veterans to access information.

- The app includes several features:
- Securely message health care team
 - View vaccination record
 - Contact the Veterans Crisis Line
 - Download documents
 - Manage appointments
 - Check status of claims and appeals
 - Schedule appointments

Learn more: www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-and-benefits

TAKE A TRIP BACK IN TIME

Sons of The American Legion turned 90 in 2022. And now you can learn more about their history. Decades of SAL newsletters are now available online. More than 1,400 pages of newsletters from the last 50 years have been uploaded to The American Legion Digital Archive.

The newsletters focus on national SAL activities. The newsletters:

- *The Legion Heir* – 1938-1941
- *SALutations* – 1967-1985
- *National Update* – 1986-2018

To browse the collection, visit www.Archive.Legion.org.

APPLY NOW FOR LEGION NATIONAL COLOR GUARD CONTEST

Applications are being accepted for The American Legion's National Color Guard Contest at National Convention in Charlotte, N.C. The contest will be held Aug. 25.

There are four classes of competition:

- Advancing/Retiring Colors
- Military
- Military-Open
- Open

To be considered for the National Commander's Color Guard, units must compete in either Military or Military-Open and Advancing/Retiring Colors. Units can represent any part of the Legion Family or have a combination of members in the unit. Applications are due to The American Legion National Headquarters by July 21.

For contest applications and rules, go to www.Legion.org/Convention/Contests.



Ashley Gutermuth is a stand-up comedian, actor, military spouse, and member of the American Legion Auxiliary. And in mid-January, she added a new title: co-host of The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast.

She previously appeared as a guest in this podcast episode from last year.

Now Gutermuth, who is partnering with co-host Jeff Daly, is taking over regular co-hosting duties from Ashley Gorbulja. While Gorbulja is stepping aside from regular co-hosting duties, she will return periodically to Tango Alpha Lima as a guest. And, she is already working on a special podcast series for The American Legion.

Gutermuth, who is married to a pilot in the U.S. Air Force Reserves, appeared on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon where she was chosen by Jerry Seinfeld to win the “Seinfeld Challenge.” In 2021, she won the headliner category of the U.S. Comedy Contest.

Here is more about the newest member of the Tango Alpha Lima podcast team:



(Photo: Jack Saady)



(Photo: @PhotoLadyPhotos)

Introduce yourself to us — who is Ashley Gutermuth?

I am a stand-up comedian, actor, military spouse, and military advocate. I have six Roombas. I used to have seven, but the seventh one ran away to a dirtier house.

When did you first realize you had a knack for comedy?

I have always loved comedy and making people laugh. I grew up listening to comedy nearly constantly. I used to go to work with my parents, and we would listen to British comedy on the long commutes.

What does it mean to you to be part of The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast?

I love being a part of the *Tango Alpha Lima* podcast! I had a great time when I was a guest, and it's exciting to be able to

transition to being a host. It's so nice to be part of a wonderful team.

Where do you see the podcast growing in the years to come?

I imagine Jeff and I will eventually end up in some sort of bunker talking about which MRE tastes best and fist fighting over the tiny bottle of Tabasco.

You're active on social media. For some people, social media can lead to a negative experience. Tell us about your approach to making it a safe place for those seeking entertainment and

positive experiences?

Social media can be a dumpster fire. I have people hurling abuse at me every day. However, I get to decide how it impacts me. Anyone who is insulting others online is only acting out because they are unhappy with their own life. I try to be compassionate to them. Ultimately, my goal is to make it so my pages are fun places for people to hang out and interact with one another.

What else should we know about you, the podcast, and all the things?

I run every day, whether I want to or not. My running streak turned 8 years old in January. About three years ago, I started picking up litter while I run and have picked up over 1,000 pounds of trash. Sometimes people are curious about the most disgusting thing I've ever found. I would tell you but I want you to be able to sleep at night. If I'm not performing or running, you will probably find me using my metal detector or deep in a garbage bin, trying to find treasure. Last week, I found a shirt that read, "World's Best Grandpa." Fits perfectly.

SOUTH DAKOTA UNIT RAISES MORE THAN \$14,000 TO HELP PROVIDE HOMES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

In November 2022, ALA Unit 15 in Sioux Falls, S.D., presented the Veterans Community Project (VCP) with a check of more than \$14,000 for the Sioux Falls VCP Village housing project. Raised via a golf tournament organized by the unit, the funds are being used to supply needed items for a specialized community of 25 tiny homes with on-site, wraparound support services designed to equip homeless veterans with the tools needed to return to a stable, prosperous, and independent life.

Auxiliary magazine spoke with Susan Panning, the 2022 ALA unit president, regarding the project's success.

Tell us about the importance of the Veterans Community Project in your community and how ALA Unit 15 became involved.

Currently, there may be over 120 homeless veterans living on the streets of Sioux Falls. The Veterans Community Project is a 501(c)(3) organization founded by a group of combat veterans in Kansas City, Missouri, frustrated by the rampant homelessness within the veteran community. The VCP Village will be a specialized community of 25 tiny homes consisting of two styles — five family-style homes to house up to seven people — and 20 homes that will house one to two people.

VCP's specially trained team will address the underlying causes of his or her homelessness, and each resident will have a case manager who will help ensure each resident has success moving into a more sustainable housing opportunity.

On June 30, 2022, the VCP in Sioux Falls broke ground. When I heard about this amazing proposal to help homeless veterans in Sioux Falls, I made it one of my goals as unit president to get my unit involved.

Tell us about your fundraising activities for this project.

At first, I remodeled a milk carton that we placed at local functions to obtain some donations. Our unit VA&R chairperson designed an actual tiny home which we placed around businesses in Sioux Falls to gather donations. One of our members donated a lot of fabric. And several of our Unit 15 members who belong to their church quilting group made several quilts that will be placed in the homes. Three of our Unit 15 members — Kasey Jacobson, Karen Dunham, and Deb Metzger — really got serious and planned the golf tournament.

Tell us about the golf tournament your unit organized.

On Aug. 16, 2022, our unit held the first American Legion Auxiliary Chip In For Vets Golf Tournament. 120 people made up 30 teams of four. We had various sponsorships for

this tournament at each hole. In addition, we gathered door prizes and also put together swag bags for each participant. We charged an entry fee per person for the tournament, which included coffee, rolls, golfing, carts, and box lunches. There were also opportunities to win prizes and raffles. VCP hosted a hole so they could tell golfers about the tiny home project and hand out information. After expenses, this tournament raised \$14,600.

How will the funds be used?

Our project will help furnish the tiny homes with kitchen appliances, utensils, linens, flags, and flag holders for each home. After each veteran has gotten established and able to move on to their own housing, they will be able to take all personal property with them, so this will be an ongoing project for us to resupply these items.



FOR HOMELESS VETERANS (from left): quilts, designed by Unit 15 members and their church quilting group, that will be placed in the tiny homes; Unit 15 members Karen Dunham, Deb Metzger, and Kasey Jacobson with the unit's golf tournament banner; collection boxes designed as tiny homes were placed around businesses in Sioux Falls to gather donations; construction of a tiny home at Sioux Falls VCP Village.



Visit our social media at www.ALAforVeterans.org/social-media



SPRING CLEAN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

When was the last time you checked your social media accounts to make sure information is up to date?

For example:

- On your social media pages, do you refer to the ALA correctly or does information reflect the ALA as a women's organization? Remember: Men are now eligible for our membership.
- Do you use an old tagline that National no longer uses? The ALA is a community of

volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families.

- Do you have out-of-date resources posted?

If the answer is yes to any of the above, take these steps:

- Refer to www.ALAforVeterans.org for the latest membership eligibility requirements, taglines, logos, forms, etc., and make sure everything matches.
- Remove any out-of-date resources.

Questions? Email PublicRelations@ALAforVeterans.org.



USE CAUTION ON ALA SOCIAL MEDIA

Are you following unofficial Facebook pages that aren't affiliated with ALA National Headquarters, departments, divisions, or units?

There are many unofficial accounts created by members. We advise you to use caution when following these accounts. While they were likely created without malicious intent, they can lead to incorrect information being pushed to a widespread audience. We've also found that these pages often have only one admin and with no oversight to make sure what you're reading is authentic or released by National. Look for warning signs — if the account has only one admin who isn't a member in a leadership or staff position, can you trust it? In most cases, there are good intentions, but the best intentions can have negative effects. For a list of the official national Facebook groups, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/Social-Media.



HAVE FUN WITH US ON INSTAGRAM!

Join us on our Instagram page for behind-the-scenes content, fun polls, and reels! Download or open the Instagram app and search for [@ALAforVeterans](https://www.instagram.com/ALAforVeterans).



COMING UP

In between issues of *Auxiliary* magazine, you can follow the ALA blog, social media, ALA eNews, and our website. Here's a look at what's coming soon:

- National Poppy Day®: Friday before Memorial Day (May 26 this year)
 - Memorial Day: May 29
 - Flag Day: June 14
 - Independence Day: July 4
 - ALA Girls Nation: July 22-29
 - ALA National Convention: Aug. 25-31

Auxiliary Word Search answers from page 16:

G E D P E R S S Z K J L E O P H C S A F Q S
 R N C T I S R E C I F F O N Z Z S K N P O N
 X J I N H X N L T Y T J H C C K G D T K A H
 P D S T U I N O I T I D A R T S N N J E T Z
 C Z X S E E T T I M M O C E R E M O N Y L S
 S F D E V E N O I T A R B E L E C T I O N P
 D C S R M R M G R S U B N R O G T F B P D P
 G T O D E O C F R T E L N C G L N S A V D C
 S F F D O Y L I M A F N O I G E L I E V W E
 M A W A R D S R E K A E P S R Z M H T S N L
 X A O H S W M T C S T R O P E R N S O O H B
 T I U N W V I S C T D H G N I R A H S E V E

GET READY FOR NATIONAL POPPY DAY!



Rhinestone T-shirt
(407.961X)



Poppy Flower T-shirt
(407.962X)



Poppy Day T-shirt
(707.961X)



Poppy Pin
(715.961)



Poppy Day Bracelet
(414.960)

Many additional Poppy items available on our web site!

* Proceeds support American Legion Family programs



Emblem.Legion.org

AUX MG 0523

“Always have an attitude of gratitude.”

— Sterling K. Brown, actor

thank
you

Have you ever heard someone say, “Happy Mother’s Father’s Day!” when sending best wishes? We know: Technically, these two holidays are separate — Mother’s Day in May and Father’s Day in June — but if your significant other is in the military, you might know the dates as one. Military spouses who are parents instantly become known as Mom *and* Dad to their kids while the servicemember is mobilized for duty. And those without children don’t necessarily have an easy route ahead of them either while their partner is “over there.” They often experience feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression. What can we do on Military Spouse Appreciation Day in May? We can tell these people “thank you,” because they serve too.

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Serving Veterans, Military,
and their Families*

Got plans for National Poppy Day[®]?

We're always thinking of our heroes
who made the ultimate sacrifice.
May is a special month for honor
and remembrance. How will your unit
participate in National Poppy Day
(May 26 this year)?

www.ALforVeterans.org/poppy