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Auxiliary

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Auxiliary *contents*



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ON THE COVER: ALA Department of California Poppy Chair Gabriella Ramos with Honorary Department Junior President Olivia Thuney. Ramos is working to increase the number of poppy makers (photo: Drew Bly). **ABOVE:** The "Wallbangers" of Airborne Command & Control Squadron 117 returned to their home base at Naval Base Ventura County Point Mugu, Calif., following deployment (photo: U.S. Navy Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jon Cason).



PROUD VETERAN: Joseph “Joe” Gray is a U.S. Marine Corps pilot who served in Vietnam and resides at the veterans home in Oxford, Miss.

Supporting our veterans has been the most rewarding experience serving as national president, and I’ve had the opportunity to meet so many of our nation’s heroes during my travels. Their stories of sacrifice, coupled with their passion to serve our country, inspire me to ensure they are never forgotten, and that their voices are forever heard. Whether under VA care, residing in a VA facility, or enjoying fun and fellowship at a local post, the veterans I’ve met remind me of the importance of advocating for the care they need to thrive and the attention they deserve to lead full and productive lives.

I have met veterans from all walks of life, different cultures, different faiths, and those who served both domestically and abroad. As I ask them about their service, they share a common response: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States and to support the freedoms we so value. While in Mississippi, I had the honor to join in on the fun with our Junior members to create “stars of honor,” which I lovingly placed on the residents’ doors at the Mississippi State Veterans Home.

As I traveled throughout the halls, I was joined by one special veteran who accompanied me and handed out American Legion newspapers to his fellow veterans. We had a great time together as he shared his pride of service, love of family, and love of country. My trip to Mississippi was not complete without meeting the family of Ronnie McNutt, who tragically took his own life. Ronnie’s family is honoring his memory by building a tiny home retreat to help other veterans who are struggling and in need of assistance. The American Legion Family in Mississippi is helping with supplies, activism, and support.

In so many departments I’ve visited, Junior members have played an integral role in highlighting the activities of the Legion Family. Department of New Hampshire Honorary Junior President Emma Davidson and I spent the day together retrieving wreaths at the New Hampshire Veterans Cemetery in Boscawen. In addition to our time together, she has raised over \$10,000 for special glider chairs gifted to the New Hampshire State Veterans Home in Tilton.

Our young Junior members are so interested, engaged, and do so much to spread fun and fellowship to the veteran community. As I traveled to the Mountaineer State, I couldn’t resist joining in with West Virginia and their Willy Wonka theme supporting the initiatives of Department President Laura Clark while bringing some joy to the Junior members.

Thank you to The American Legion Family for making 2024-2025 Mission Trainings so successful. It was wonderful to have many new members attend, and our big win was welcoming young Sons of The American Legion members to the Junior meetings.

Evolving to solidify our relevance as the leading Veteran Service Organization auxiliary means trying new things and adopting new ideas. Together and forever, we will continue to “Lead the Way” with commitment, dedication, and resolve on behalf of our members and especially those we serve.

Trish Ward
National President

ALA departments visited by National President Trish Ward since taking office in August 2024:



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We're apple pie, meaning what we do broadly appeals to Americans. We believe in helping all of our veterans and military because they fought for our freedoms. And so we must fight for them.

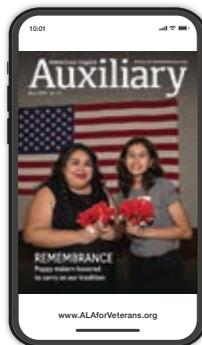
May is a month for American Legion Auxiliary members to tell our story loudly, proudly, and clearly to people who may not be familiar with us. They need to know we're the go-to organization when a veteran needs an extra hand, or a military unit could use a boost in morale via care packages.

Armed Forces Day, Military Spouse Appreciation Day, National Poppy Day®, and Memorial Day all fall under the month of May. This is our time to shine. While we're working at local events, distributing poppies,

or attending activities that honor our military and veterans, it's a great opportunity to remind our communities who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

It will always be up to us to remain a constant in veterans' and servicemembers' lives. When a government service is stopped or funding ends, for example, it's up to our local ALA units to fill that extremely important void. The ALA is even more critical in terms of the time, talent, and treasure our members provide. Our mission hasn't changed since our founding in 1919, and this is why.

So when you're out and about in May with your branded clothing and someone asks you what you do, use this time to really connect. The easy part is that most will agree — our veterans, military, and their families need people like us.



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

*A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families
May 2025*

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AMERICAN
LEGION
AUXILIARY

The American Legion Auxiliary, founded in 1919, is a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families. ALA members assist veterans in hospitals, advocate for veteran issues, support therapeutic creative arts festivals, distribute poppies for remembrance, and much more. In addition to serving the military community, the American Legion Auxiliary hosts

ALA Girls Nation and the ALA Girls State programs that teach future leaders about government and civic responsibility. Learn more at www.ALAForVeterans.org and @ALAForVeterans on Instagram and Facebook.

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Maryland support for local Air Force base

The American Legion Auxiliary 259, VFW 9619 Auxiliary, and Edna's Love Inc. assembled 900 snack bags for the Andrews Air Force Base 316th Security Forces Squadron and 816th Security Forces Squadron, supporting those assigned to the presidential detail for the inauguration.

Thank you to Commander Shay Brown for initially hosting at American Legion Post 259. Due to inclement weather, the operation relocated to VFW Post 9619, where Commander Todd Traynham provided space for volunteers to continue packing.

Master sergeants from the squadrons' command unit coordinated the pickup and distribution of the snack bags to the servicemembers on base.

A heartfelt thank-you to The American Legion Post 259

veterans, VFW 9619 post veterans, American Gold Star Mothers Inc., Zeta

Phi Beta Sorority Inc. (Lambda Gamma Zeta Chapter), and Ophelia Dog Grooming Co. for their support and contributions.

— LaTia Jones, Maryland



ALA member honored for 70 years of membership

Linda Richardson (left in photo), treasurer of Arkansas American Legion Auxiliary Unit 341 in Bella Vista, Ark., presented a membership card to Byrdine Pickart, 92. Pickart has been an Auxiliary member for 70 years, starting in her hometown of Blairstown, Iowa, shortly after her husband came home from the Korean War. While he was

in Korea, Byrdine lived in Seattle. She has held numerous positions in the Auxiliary through the years.

— Linda Richardson, Arkansas



Legion Family important in helping communities

Isn't the greatest battle we have as a nation within our own country? Just to throw out an idea involving the Legions becoming more popular or publicized. How about we make some slogan signs that read, "Contact the local Legion: helping people who have gone astray." It would be for all the lost out there struggling in a war all their own. A lot of towns seem to have Legions, so every town and Legion could get involved in helping the war on homelessness.

— Val Nattress, Pennsylvania

Wisconsin unit donates to AEF

ALA Unit 335 collected donations for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. The unit presented the Department of Wisconsin with a \$500 check to go toward the AEF.

— Nicole Welsh, Wisconsin

A celebration for longtime Michigan member

Eileen St. Amour will be 100 on Sept. 8. She has served the Munising, Mich., Auxiliary Unit 131 for 75 years, going on 76.

— Sue Passinault, Michigan



Poppy contests spark creativity in Iowa

At the Iowa 2025 Mid-Winter Conference, our poppy chair had a poppy contest in two categories. One was to make a display of poppies using unconventional items (no crepe poppies). No. 2: poetry. I wrote a poem about poppies and won the contest. Here is my poem:

Forever Poppy

Roses are red, for love so true

These poppies are in remembrance of you

You shed your blood without

any fear, to keep our homeland safe and secure

We will always remember your valor and fight whenever we see this small poppy in sight.

— Patti Rolf, Iowa

Corrections: On page 34 of the February 2025 issue, we inadvertently printed that ALA member Pat Plewa moved to Wisconsin in 2023, when it should have read 2003. On page 44, Peggy Parker was listed as a member of Unit 346 when it should have read Unit 364. We regret the errors.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM *you*

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TRY THIS WREATH CRAFT PROJECT WITH YOUR JUNIORS GROUP

At the 2024-2025 national Junior meetings, Juniors and young Sons of The American Legion participants learned more about Wreaths Across America. The national ALA's partnership with WAA began in August 2023 when the two organizations joined forces to build a stronger awareness of each group's common missions while supporting fundraising efforts nationwide.

The young members made miniature wreaths to take home and use as talking points about WAA. They also watched a video on how the wreaths are made and the meaning behind each piece.

Ten balsam bouquets make up each veteran's wreath, representing the 10 special qualities our veterans embody:

1. Their **belief** in a greater good.
2. Their **love** for each other.
3. Their **strength**, work ethic, and character.
4. Their **honesty** and integrity.
5. Their **humility**, selflessness, and modesty.
6. Their **ambitions** and aspirations.
7. Their **optimism** for America.
8. Their **concern** for the future.
9. Their **pride** in their duties.
10. Their **hopes and dreams** that didn't always come true, but left them with no regrets.

Ready to make your own wreath?

SUPPLIES:

- ★ Pine garland, 12"-18" length (Amazon has precut 14")
- ★ 3/8" width red velvet ribbon, cut to a 12-18" length

STEPS:

1. Bend the garland into a circle and twist the ends to secure it.
2. Take one ribbon, loop around the wreath, and knot the ends together to make a hanger.
3. Take the second ribbon and tie a bow around the wreath.



ALA JUNIOR MEMBER AMONG AMERICA250 CONTEST WINNERS

America250 is a nonpartisan initiative working to engage every American in commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States. America250 is hosting a contest for students in grades three to 12 to share their perspectives on what America means to them with the chance to travel to some of the country's most iconic historic and cultural landmarks.

ALA Department of Pennsylvania Junior Member Lydia Zink is one of those contest winners.

JUNIOR'S TRADING CARDS HELP SERVICE DOGS, HANDLERS



New Jersey Unit 286 Junior member Rosie Widmer makes trading cards of service dogs for their handlers to give out to those

interested in petting the working dog.

“When I was younger, we went to a carnival or festival and they were handing out cards for the service dogs with just a little information to get to know them — it was one of the stalls set up,” said Widmer. “I went to Mission Training last year and they brought in a service dog. And they showed us all the service dogs’ tricks, and that memory sort of came back up and that’s where this idea came from.”

Widmer works with her mom, ALA member Shannon Widmer, on the project. They find someone who is specifically a Legion member with a service dog and gather information and photos from that Legionnaire about the dog. After, they contact a printing company for quotes and then fundraise through bake sales and donations.

The dogs she has worked with so far have handed out thousands of cards.

Sarge (pictured above) is on his third batch, which is actually 3,000 cards, and a few other dogs are on their first batch, which is 1,000 cards.

Sarge’s cards have been handed out at Legion College, New Jersey Department Convention, and National Convention — “which means people all around the



United States have cards of Sarge,” Widmer added.

On each card is a photo of the dog, its birthdate, breed, favorite snack, who their handler is, and a biography of the dog.

Widmer offers advice for fellow Junior members who may want to take on a similar project.

“Go for it,” she said. “Instead of rejecting a kid from petting their dog [because the dog is working], this is a little fun thing they can hand the kid, and it explains everything.”

Can you describe the artwork you submitted into the America250 Contest?

I drew a portrait of myself, making sure to include my long, blonde hair and blue eyes, with a thought bubble coming from my head. Inside the thought bubble were drawings of different careers like president, judge, astronaut, doctor, architect, lawyer, scientist, teacher, and detective. On the artwork, I wrote, “America means freedom to be anything when I grow up.” I wanted to show how a girl like me could grow up to be any career she wants.

How did you feel when you found out you were one of the winners out of thousands?

I was really excited. I didn’t think I would win because of how many entries there were. I saw what the prizes were and thought I would try my best, not knowing what would happen. I couldn’t believe I was a winner, and I was able to choose the

trip I wanted out of a bunch of choices. I chose Yellowstone National Park because I would be able to fly on a plane to get there and see something that is on a lot of people’s bucket lists.

Tell us about your visit to Yellowstone National Park.

It started with my very first flight ever. We flew from Pennsylvania to Chicago, then to Bozeman, Montana. When we landed, I met some of the other winners and got on a bus and went to our hotel. The scenery was very different from where I live in Pennsylvania.

The next day, we got up and got on our tour bus at 6 a.m. We started the day by visiting the Roosevelt Arch entryway



into Yellowstone. As we drove, three huge bison came strolling down the road right past our bus! We made stops all along the way to different pull-offs to see different animals. I used a scope to watch wolf pups playing, watched a large group of bison rolling in the dirt, saw a coyote eating a bison carcass, and a pronghorn sneaked up on us and I was the first to spot it!

Read the rest of Zink’s experience at Yellowstone on the ALA national blog at www.ALAforVeterans.org/blog.



“Growing up in the organization instilled an understanding and appreciation for those who served and are serving our country.”

PAMELA THOMPSON



Pamela Thompson has been an American Legion Auxiliary member since the day she was born. Today, she continues her membership as a member

of Naugatuck Unit 17 in Connecticut. She remains a member to not only honor the service of her grandfather — World War II veteran Harold C. Lewis and many other family members — but to serve the mission.

How involved were you in the ALA as a child?

Most of my family members are part of The American Legion Family. Growing up, it was a three-generation affair — always Gram, Mom, and me. My grandmother was very active, which led to my mother becoming active, and raising me to be active. As an ALA

Junior, I served in many roles, including Honorary Department Junior President and 2001-2002 Honorary National Junior President. I always enjoyed the aspect of being with other Junior members who cared about the mission as much as I do. I have great memories of helping others, and I love to mentor our younger members so they have the same experiences I did. The Junior Activities program is near and dear to my heart, as is the ALA Girls State program. I attended ALA Laurel Girls State and have served as a counselor and in other various roles.

Where did your ALA path take you along the way?

I stepped back during college and my early career, but I always maintained my membership. I became active again about a decade ago when I was asked to serve on a national committee. Since then, I have served on several department- and

national-level committees, including Membership, Junior Activities, and ALA Girls Nation.

I have not been very active with my unit in Connecticut because I live in Boston; however, I sometimes volunteer — alongside my mom — for ALA Laurel Girls State when my schedule allows.

How has being an ALA member influenced your life?

The Auxiliary helped shape who I am today. Growing up in the organization instilled an understanding and appreciation for those who served and are serving our country. Additionally, the leadership opportunities as an ALA Junior member supported the development of my self-awareness, confidence, and self-esteem, not to mention taught me how to run an efficient meeting. I have had the opportunity to travel and meet wonderful, dedicated, and caring members across the organization. I have many aunts and uncles and lifelong friends as a result. I know that if I ever need anything, I have many who would be there for me and I for them.

Anything else you would like to add?

Knowing I can impact one person through one act reminds me that in the Auxiliary, that’s something we do. It can be a veteran, a family, a child, grandchild — we can really impact somebody’s life deeply. All members are important and contribute in their own way. Membership is not a one-size-fits-all.



LONGTIME MEMBER: Pamela Thompson (top) with her Gram distributing poppies. Above: Thompson at a Junior meeting at a young age; with her mother and grandmother during Honorary National Junior President installation day.

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“I think patriotism is like charity – it begins at home.”

— Henry James, American-British author



You know that feeling you get when you see the colors red, white, and blue? Pride for our veterans, military, and their families swells within you. You are proud to be related to or are the person who said yes to defending this nation. You are so moved by that patriotic feeling that you instill pride for those colors in your children, grandchildren, neighbors, everyone. They learn through you what love of country is. The grassroots level of the American Legion Auxiliary continues to serve our mission. As the well-known saying goes — even painted on the side of this pool — we are the home of the free because of the brave.

Above: Mya and Laiken Loosmore, Department of South Dakota Junior members, in their family pool painted by their mother, ALA member and artist Jennifer Loosmore. Also painted on the side of the pool is a list of family members who served in the Armed Forces.

ALA ACADEMY LIVE

**Since the
poppy is on
your mind this
month...**

Log in to the ALA Academy to watch a recording promoting National Poppy Day®, where you'll learn all of the details of this special day and connect to our mission.

Log in with your member ID today at www.ALAforVeterans.org.



What does Memorial Day mean to you?



"Memorial Day is a time filled with love, appreciation, and respect for the brave men and women who never made it home from serving in a war. My dad was in World War II, my grandfather in WWI. We remember and honor them with prayers, parades, and poppies."

— Julie Gebhardt, Florida



"A special day to honor and remember the heroes who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Lest we forget."

— Judy Casados, New Mexico



"Remembering the lost and fallen heroes, and appreciating the sacrifices and having deep reverence on that day."

— Jane M. McKnight, Kentucky



"Remembering our veterans and servicemembers who died serving our country. Remembering our families and friends who have died before us."

— Sharon Broghammer, South Dakota



"To me, it means to pay honor and respect to those who served in the military and passed on to glory, to those who were killed in action. They gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we could be free."

— Joyce Cooper, Maryland



"Memorial Day honors those heroes who died in service. It is a day to honor our heroes and remember the sacrifices of the men and women who gave their lives for our country and our freedom. Wearing the red poppy of remembrance is a way of honoring our heroes' sacrifice."

— AnnaMae Warnier, South Dakota



"A day to remember and honor those who paid the ultimate price and gave their life in service to our country."

— Dorothy Hazen, New Mexico



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HOW TO TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT A SHORT ALA ELEVATOR SPEECH GOES A LONG WAY

How many times have you been in a situation where you're talking with someone on a specific topic, and then that person gives you a 30-second explanation of details?

These kinds of brief presentations happen all the time in the working world, whether it's a job interview ("Tell me about yourself"), a product launch ("Our widget will change the world — here's how"), or an idea pitch ("I have three reasons why this will work").

They're known as elevator speeches because the amount of time you kick off this presentation from start to finish equals a ride up an elevator. American Legion Auxiliary members most certainly should have an elevator speech ready. Why? Because that brief amount of time could be what attracts a potential member to becoming an official member (or donor!).

Think about these very common scenarios:

- You're in line at the grocery store when someone sees your ALA branded jacket. They say they're vaguely familiar with the Auxiliary but want to know more about what the organization does.

- There's a stand down in your community and your unit has a table/booth at the event. Someone comes up to you and asks, "What's the American Legion Auxiliary?"

- Members are distributing poppies when a person accepting a flower says, "Tell me how your Auxiliary helps veterans."

Always be prepared. Can you give a quick introduction, provide details that highlight your unit's accomplishments, *and* give a call to action at the end? A person giving a good elevator speech has a positive demeanor while talking, sticks to the basics and doesn't ramble, and always offers something to wrap things up (e.g., invites you to call/text them for more info, asks you to attend a unit meeting, activity, etc.).

The best elevator speech is a short one:
30 to 60 seconds tops. Here's what to include:

Introduce. Hi! I'm Jane, and I'm a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 123.

Enlighten/educate. Our local ALA unit serves veterans, military, and their families, and has been part of the community for nearly a century. Every year, we volunteer hundreds of hours in the local VA hospital, we distribute poppies for donations on the days leading up to Memorial Day, and we host a flag education event at the elementary school.

Finish. If you're available the second Tuesday of the month, we'd love to have you at our unit meeting. If not, that's OK too because our members' dues make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Here is my number if you ever have any questions or want to chat for more information.



An elevator speech doesn't always have to be used for member recruitment. You can craft a quick promo on renewing dues, National Poppy Day®, and how your unit supports local schools. Do people mistakenly think you're with The American Legion? Have a speech ready that nicely educates on how the ALA is related to the Legion.



UTILIZING THE SPACE: Oklahoma American Legion Family Unit and Post 178 members take advantage of the updated post home to host events like this luncheon.

AFTER REVITALIZATION EFFORTS, OKLAHOMA UNIT NOW FLOURISHING

The Grove, Okla., American Legion Family was struggling. Doors to the post were open only for monthly meetings and fundraiser dinners, and that was not enough to cover the monthly utilities and expenses.

The post was about to close because of those financial issues. Then Grove American Legion Family leadership got together to figure out what they needed to do and how to revitalize the Family as a whole.

Bouncing back with new ideas

Unit 178 revitalized itself and is now thriving. So, how did they do it? They changed their focus.

“Our secret sauce is working together as a Family,” said Susan Engstrom, ALA Unit 178 president. “The family that works together, grows together.”

Here are a few of those changes:

- Opened the post for free coffee and donuts Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to noon.
- Unit members began calling their fellow members who hadn't attended meetings; more members began showing up and asked what could be done for them and what they could do for the organization to be better

and flourish. Members asked for suggestions and feedback.

- Service officers for the post started helping more veterans with their benefits. This change led to increased membership for the Family as a whole. Members asked the veteran if he/she was

“The family that works together, grows together.”

a member of The American Legion. If the answer was no, he/she was given an elevator speech on why they should become a member. Once they become a member, their spouses, daughters, sons, and grandchildren could become potential members of the Auxiliary and Sons. If they were into motorcycling, they could be members of The American Legion Riders.

- Gave new members a welcome letter explaining what the Grove American Legion Family does for veterans, active military, youth, and the community.

- Became active in community events — including nearby town parades and local radio stations, for example — utilizing the spotlights as a membership drive and promoting the Grove American Legion Family.

- Partnered with organizations like Veterans Alliance that serve the veteran community and youth. Veterans Alliance is a nationwide program that helps house homeless veterans and finds jobs for veterans.

Previous success ideas were continued

“Americanism stands at the heart of our Auxiliary programs as we teach respect for our country and our nation's flag,” said Engstrom. “While our Auxiliary promotes many patriotic youth programs, our unit's favorites are the Americanism Essay Contest and ALA Oklahoma Girls State.”

For 20 years, the Essay Contest has been alive and flourishing in Grove schools.

And for many years, the unit has sent six or more high school juniors to the ALA Oklahoma Girls State program. The lessons they encounter while participating there are brought back and utilized in their communities.

What you can do

Is your ALA unit struggling with membership and community outreach?

“Work with your local post and get involved with community events,” Engstrom said. “Let them know you are there to work the mission, service before self, helping our veterans, active military, and their families, and youth.”



Renew Your Membership from Anywhere

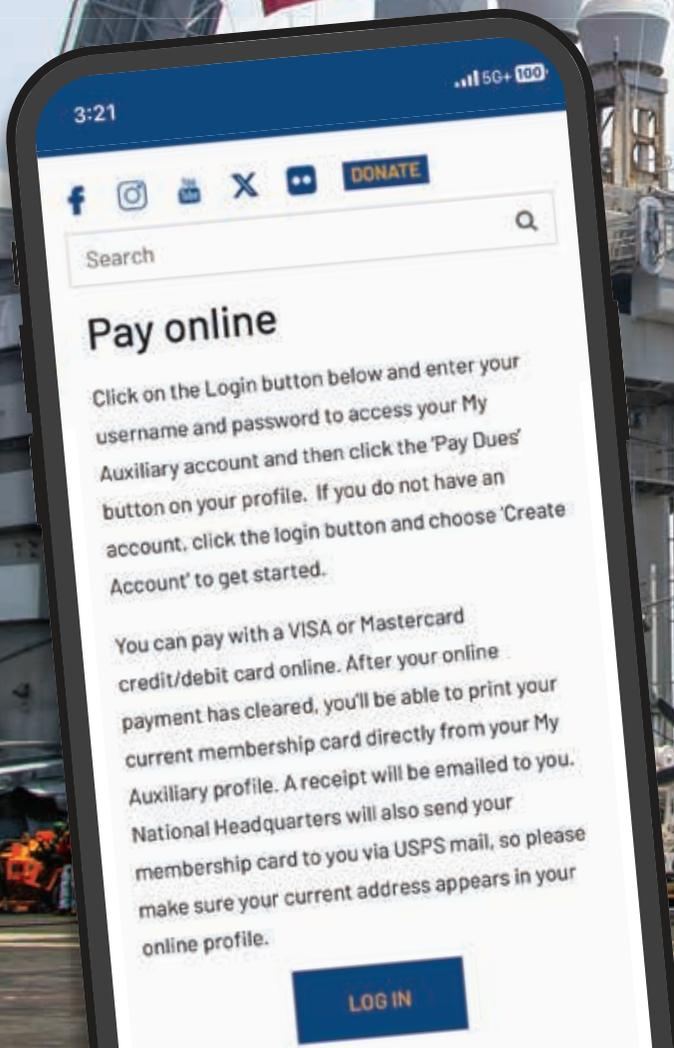


Photo: Aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, by Emma Burgess, Mass Communication Specialist Seaman, U.S. Navy.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS BRING NEW AUXILIARY MEMBERSHIP

The Niceville, Fla., American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion were struggling to attract new members. This problem was especially vexing considering their proximity to one of the largest military bases in the world.

“We’re on a busy highway,” said Deborah Miniaci, president and membership chair of Niceville’s ALA Unit 221. “We’ve been there since 1946, and we have Eglin Air Force Base here. But I have people who have told me they’ve driven by the post for 30 years and had no idea what we were.”

The Legion Family in Niceville decided that the very circumstance that made this lack of awareness and interest especially frustrating also presented a golden opportunity. Thanks to the community’s proximity to the Air Force base, military veterans and their families were everywhere.

They just needed to reach them.

The American Legion Family decided that meant visiting places where those with ties to the military are likely to



be. Additionally, the groups have hosted two activities that have helped them generate interest and membership — between September 2024 and February 2025, ALA Unit 221’s membership increased by 54.

Burger nights

To attract people to burger nights and get the community talking about the Legion Family, the Auxiliary created cards that members of the Legion and ALA hand out to veterans when they see them in stores. These cards are good for a burger and fries or onion rings at the post. ALA members prepare sides for the meals, help in the kitchen, and take orders during the events.

Burger nights offer the local Legion Family the opportunity

to let those in attendance know about the work the groups do in the community to support veterans and their loved ones. They also discuss membership eligibility requirements — and have applications ready for those who want to join.

Membership days

The American Legion hosts open houses, which it calls membership days. Once a month, the ALA is the featured group at these activities, and its members typically have a theme for their events. For example, Christmas in July offered donated baked goods for sale. A holiday membership event featured Christmas dinner, with wrapped gifts as door prizes.

At each open house, members of the Legion Family greet guests and answer questions about the organizations. Miniaci said one or two people generally become new members of the featured group at each of the events.

Miniaci attributes the success of these activities to the collaborative spirit behind them and to the commitment to getting — and keeping — people’s interest when they attend.

“We get people to realize that we take care of our veterans and the community,” she said.

5 key points for planning membership events



Interested in hosting events to attract new members to your ALA unit? Deborah Miniaci, president of Auxiliary Unit 221 in Niceville, Fla., has these suggestions:

1. **Open your doors.** Host some activities that nonmembers can attend.
2. **Build relationships.** Staff events with members who engage with visitors.
3. **Publicize on social media.** Complement in-person work with an online presence.
4. **Make changes as needed.** Stay open to making tweaks to improve processes.
5. **Treat newcomers with respect.** Make new members feel welcome and accepted.

ALA ACADEMY LIVE COURSES EDUCATE ON VARIETY OF ALA TOPICS

Have you participated in an ALA Academy Live webinar? Have you completed an ALA Academy course to gain a deeper level of understanding about the American Legion Auxiliary organization and advance your impact?

ALA Academy is a user-friendly online training platform that provides Auxiliary members with tools to enhance their membership and knowledge to further grow the organization, thus helping to fulfill our overall mission of better serving veterans, military, and their families.

A closer look at these training resources

Under the umbrella of ALA Academy, the American Legion Auxiliary offers all members — new and seasoned — free educational and informative learning opportunities through ALA Academy Live webinars. Auxiliary members of all ages and all levels in the organization can learn new skills and ways to serve by registering and participating in an ALA Academy Live webinar.

Presented by national staff and national leadership, as well as expert external presenters, these live webinar trainings are typically around 30 minutes long with time available at the end for



questions. Instead of a full day of trainings in person, the live webinars are designed in small chunks on a particular subject to offer a different way of obtaining information. The shorter timeframe allows members to absorb small bites of knowledge to help maximize their time.

These educational opportunities are beneficial for ALA members because they provide more access to information in case members are unable to attend other meetings like ALA Mission Trainings, National Convention, etc. ALA Academy Live webinars are offered at different times and days throughout the week, depending on what works best for the presenters, as well as the intended audience.

With almost all ALA

Academy Live webinars having at least 200 people registered in each session, the numbers prove just how much Auxiliary members enjoy the educational trainings.

Unable to attend a live webinar? Don't worry — all ALA Academy Live webinars are recorded and available on the ALA Academy webpage approximately two weeks following the live trainings. Catch up on any

Stay up-to-date on the latest webinar offerings by subscribing to ALA eNews, checking the national website at www.ALAforVeterans.org, and following our social media channels @ALAforVeterans.

previous recordings at www.ALAforVeterans.org. You will need to log in to the MyAuxiliary member portal to access the recordings.

The list of available recordings continues to grow:

- National Poppy Day®
- How to Apply for an Auxiliary Emergency Fund Grant
- Unlocking Your ALA Member Benefits!
- Navigating ALA National Scholarships
- National Executive Committee (NEC) Appeal Process
- ALA Leadership Series: So, You're a Department Chair. Now What?
- Wreaths Across America
- ALA Compliance Matters
- And so many more!

Look for ALA Academy webinars like these in the future:

- Social media engagement
- TAPS
- Armed Services YMCA
- Working with local military recruiters
- Community Service
- Awards process
- Caregiver

Do you have a course idea? Send it to pr@ALAforVeterans.org.



SHARE YOUR EVENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Nine out of 10 Americans are online daily, according to a 2024 report from Pew Research. So, it's important to have a plan to share American Legion Auxiliary event information digitally, especially on social media. As you make a digital plan, there are best practices that can help you attract more attention to your event:

Create graphics to help your event stand out

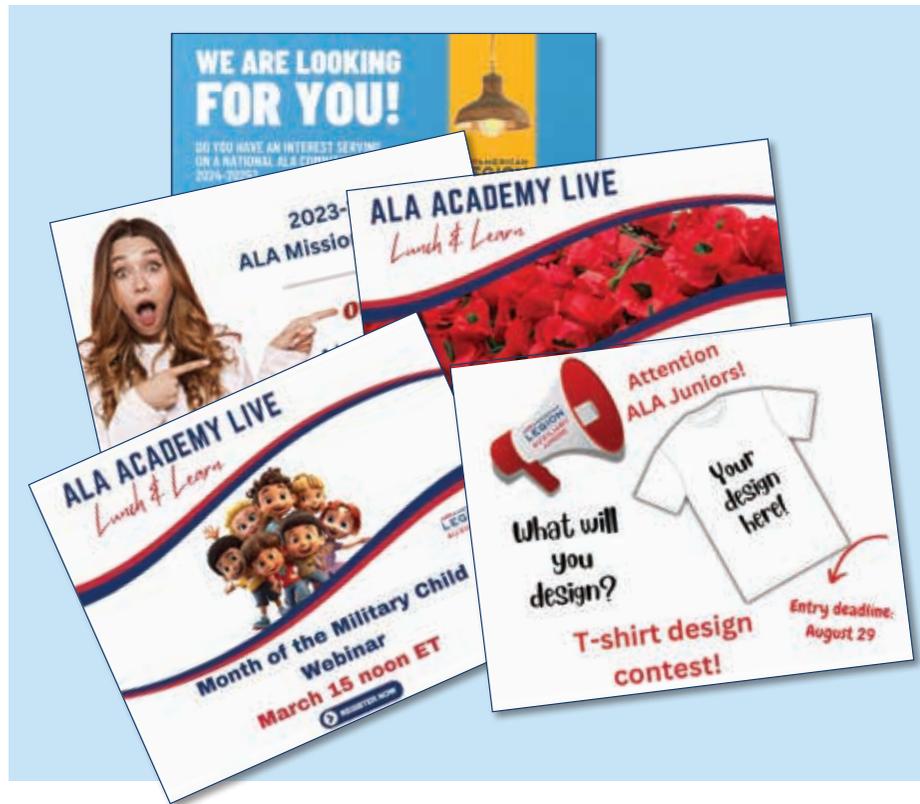
Begin by using a site such as Canva.com or Adobe Express. They can help you achieve a professional look, and for free or at a nominal cost to join. ALA National Headquarters often uses Canva for social media graphics.

Choose a font style and size that's easy to read. Also, limit the number of words on a graphic. Once you grab attention, those who want to know more details can read the text part of your post. Remember: Most people are looking at social media on their phones, so you don't want the words to be too small to read.

Add graphics or photos related to the event. You can find free images that are not copyrighted on the sites mentioned above. You can also use a photo sourcing site such as Pexels.com.

Always include the ALA logo on your graphic so it is easy for the public to see who is hosting the event.

Always double-check for



accuracy. Make sure your event name, date, time, and other details are correct.

If it is a public event, consider including that on the flyer, so nonmembers know right away they are welcome to attend.

Make a promotional plan

How often are you going to post the graphic on social media? You want to make sure people have plenty of opportunities to see your social post, but you don't want to flood their feeds with your event.

Who is going to monitor your post for comments and questions? Make sure someone is interacting with your audience

and answering their questions.

Are there community groups where you can share your event?

Encourage fellow members to share the graphic on their own accounts and in community groups. This can help attract more people to your event and maybe the media.

Remember: Social media is supposed to be fun! It's a valuable tool to spread the ALA's mission. Don't think of it as a chore. Find members who enjoy it, and ask them to be part of the team to manage social media. As always, we recommend a minimum of two administrators for your accounts.



It works!

ALA California Unit 746 member Anne Marie Fuller said regularly using social media "has been a helpful tool for our unit and district! We can connect quickly with members who live more remotely, as our district falls within a rural area. The wonderful asset of sharing a public event flyer online is that it is often reshared by people outside your initial circle. As the flyer gains in circulation, it can also be picked up by local news reporting agencies."

**American
Legion Auxiliary
Foundation's
Celebrating Women
of Service 2025
Honorees**

- All military women
- Amy Houghton-Ough
- Maj. Amy Meeks
Karpathios, USAF (Ret).
- Ann Guest
- Anndi Bownes
and Marri Krupco
- Barbara Bowen
- Betty Burdett, PNP
- Cathleen MacInnes
- Claudette Bevell
- Col. Glennie Millard
and Maj. Tracee Millard
- Denise Rohan
- Edith Mar
- Ellen Tierney
- Emma N. Karst
- EN1(SW) Anita Louise
Duggan, USN
- Joanna
- John Hungarter
- Kathryn Wilgus
- Larissa Manrique
- Lee R. Goodyear
and William F. Goodyear
- Linda Fagan
- Lois Halliday
- Maj. Malia & Sgt. Allison
Gregory
- Margaret Ladue
- Marie G. Reid
- Martine Caponera Terzic
- My sisters
- Past National President
Elizabeth "Lib" Stewart
- Patricia Harris
- Staff Sgt. Ashley Novinska
- Tammy Weeks Bove,
USMC veteran
- Terri L. Clinton
- The ALANHQ staff
- The ALANHQ
Development team

**THE FUTURE OF
GIVING: HOW WOMEN
ARE RESHAPING
PHILANTHROPY**

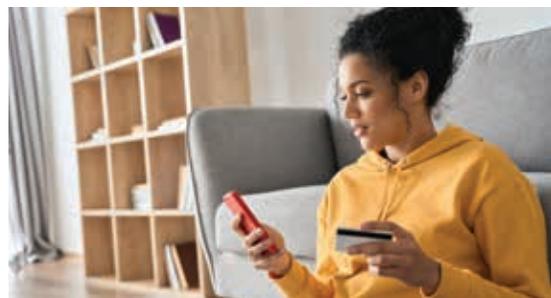
In 1919, when the American Legion Auxiliary was founded, the average woman was balancing domestic responsibilities, low-wage work, or activism while navigating rapidly changing societal roles that were shifting after World War I. Fast forward to 2025, and the average woman is more educated, financially independent, and career-driven with more opportunities than ever before.

The woman's role in the household — and all areas of society —

has changed dramatically in recent decades. Women's income has become more important to their families' economic well-being, and more women are directing their household's philanthropic giving.

Women tend to adopt a hands-on approach to philanthropy, often engaging deeply with the organizations they support. The American Legion Auxiliary is a great example of this collaborative relationship where members leverage their networks to amplify impact and donate to initiatives that improve the lives of the veterans they love and are likely the reason why they joined the organization.

Year after year, research conducted for the Women's Philanthropy Institute (WPI) has found that households headed by women at all levels of income and



wealth give more money and are more likely to give than similarly situated men. This difference is most pronounced in women born before or during the Baby Boom (1946-1964) whose income and assets put them in the top 25 percent of wealth holders. Women in this group give 156% more to charity than men.

As Baby Boomers age, a significant wealth transfer is

Women's philanthropic behavior is driven by empathy, community focus, financial empowerment, and a desire for social impact. As their wealth and influence continue to grow, they are expected to play an even bigger role in shaping the nonprofit sector and driving positive change.

underway, with women poised to inherit a substantial portion. In January 2025, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that women are expected to inherit 70% of the \$41 trillion in intergenerational wealth over the next 40 years, positioning them to have a

profound impact on philanthropic endeavors.

According to *Philanthropy News Digest*, private wealth held by women globally grew from \$34 trillion to \$51 trillion — a 50% increase between 2010 and 2016. This substantial growth has empowered women to become more prominent and influential philanthropists. While overall participation in charitable giving has declined, the resilience and adaptability of women — coupled with their increasing financial influence — suggest a shifting landscape in philanthropy.

HERE'S HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH HOSTING EVENTS

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 51 — along with the Legion and Sons of The American Legion — have been actively working to increase their visibility in the community and make the post home a local destination point.

By hosting several community events and improving the facility's aesthetics, the Family has slowly changed the perception that the post is just a bar and restaurant frequented by only members of the Legion Family. In spring 2023, the unit partnered with post members to complete an extensive refresh of the post home. This included cleaning, painting, and updating the decor.

"The post for many years has been an option for community events such as weddings, anniversary parties, graduations, and funerals," said Unit 51 President Linda Setterlund. "Since the refurbishing has been completed, many guests have commented that the space is more inviting and comfortable for families. There has been an increase in events, especially with families. Area Lions clubs, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, and other community organizations use the post rooms for their meetings."



Opening the post home to the community has helped the Legion Family not only flourish, but get their name out to potential members, volunteers, and donors.

Following are examples of their successful community outreach initiatives:

- In December, community associations and businesses hold their Christmas parties at the post. For the past two years, the Auxiliary has put on a free event for children of all ages. The children make decorations and gifts and wrap them to give to their families. They also enjoy a snack and visit with Santa.

- Bingo once a week, drawing in close to 100 guests each week.

- Cribbage, 500 Rummy, and the senior dance have seen an increase in attendance due to the welcoming atmosphere and comfort level.

- The outside of the building has been painted, along with murals added, increasing the

curb appeal. The murals are a wonderful way to draw attention from the highway, bringing in the local crowd, as well as out-of-towners passing by.

- The largest event is Veterans Day, which begins with the posting of colors by the post's Honor Guard, and the Pine City High School choir sings the National Anthem. Following

the program, a meal is served. The post partners with the Pine City VFW post, Auxiliary, Riders, Sons, and other community organizations to serve and honor

more than 250 veterans and members.

"We continue to get the word out that there are special events going on by advertising in local newspapers, radio, and putting up posters at local businesses," said Unit 51 Vice President Twyla Christian.

Working as a Family to recruit more members to work the mission and being active in the community has really benefited current members.

Setterlund and Christian said they are both incredibly proud of the post building and the entire American Legion Family.

"We strive to pass this emotion on to every person who walks through the doors," they said.

"Since the refurbishing has been completed, many guests have commented that the space is more inviting and comfortable for families."





WORKING TOGETHER: U.S. Marines with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment conduct MOUT training with Indonesian Marines during the Korps Marinir (KORMAR) Platoon Exchange 2019 program in Surabaya, Indonesia (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Eric Tso).

TIPS TO SUPPORT DEPLOYED SERVICEMEMBERS IN YOUR AREA

Sending care packages to deployed servicemembers and welcoming them home are just two of the many ways American Legion Auxiliary members show support to those serving our nation. Sometimes, finding deployed servicemembers can be challenging. However, collaborating with other local organizations can help American Legion Auxiliary members connect with those who are on duty.

Military Family Readiness Groups. This is a great option, but it may not be the easiest if you don't have an already established relationship with a Military Family Readiness Group. You can build a rapport by offering to volunteer with them or donate needed items.

Local USO. In addition to helping you connect with troops, there are opportunities for you to help a nearby USO. Consider working with your local office to provide items at the ready for servicemembers as they pass through on their way back from

deployments or as they travel to their next duty station.

Soldiers' Angels. This organization has a variety of campaigns you can offer to volunteer or partner with, along with helping you find those deployed.

Chaplain at a military installation. Because of Operations Security (OPSEC), information will be limited. But ALA members can always offer their support when needed.

Word of mouth. Keep a lookout at community events, church, and any other networking you do in your community. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to newly arrived military families. Contact your local Chamber of Commerce to see if you can be notified if a new military family moves in. Consider including a coupon for a free dinner at the post home via the Chamber's "Welcome Wagon" mailings (if offered in your area).

ART OF THE ASK

Don't expect organizations to

give you information just because you asked. Offer support before asking. And consistently ask how you can help. Let them know of any events the American Legion Auxiliary is hosting, and invite them. Asking, "How can I help?" is a much better approach than "Who's going where and when?" The bottom line is the importance

of building a relationship with these organizations.

KEEP OUR SERVICEMEMBERS SAFE

After learning where servicemembers are located, there are a few things to keep in mind. It's imperative to know OPSEC. This is a

process for protecting information and activities from adversaries. Don't inadvertently violate OPSEC by posting information on social media. That includes troop movement — such as a military unit's location, personnel names, ranks, or other IDs — and especially dates, times of flight arrivals, and departures.

Understanding OPSEC — don't post or tell anyone:

◆ **Where: troop movement or location**

◆ **Who: names, ranks, units**

◆ **When: dates, times of flights**



Remember the families

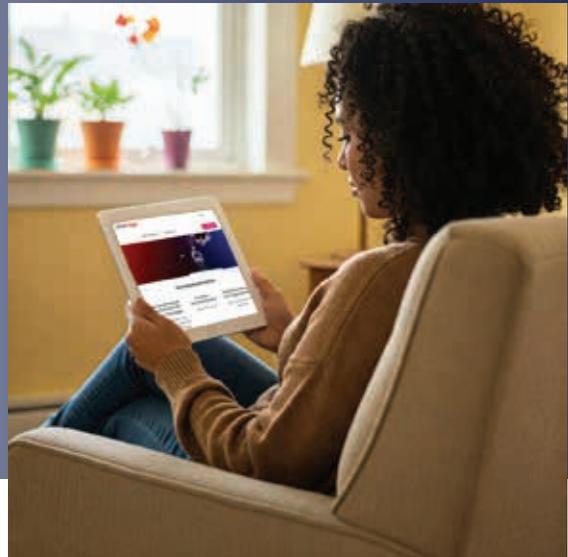
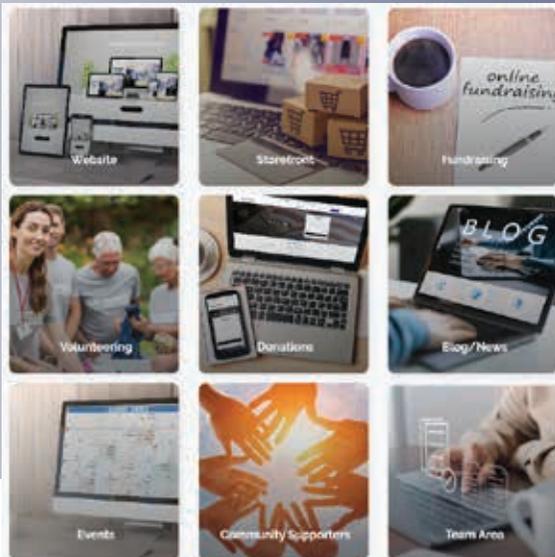
While you are looking for ways to support servicemembers, don't forget about the family members left behind. Your American Legion Auxiliary unit can support them or collaborate with organizations that support families (e.g., Armed Services YMCA, Operation Homefront, etc.).

Supporting the Legion Family and Mission

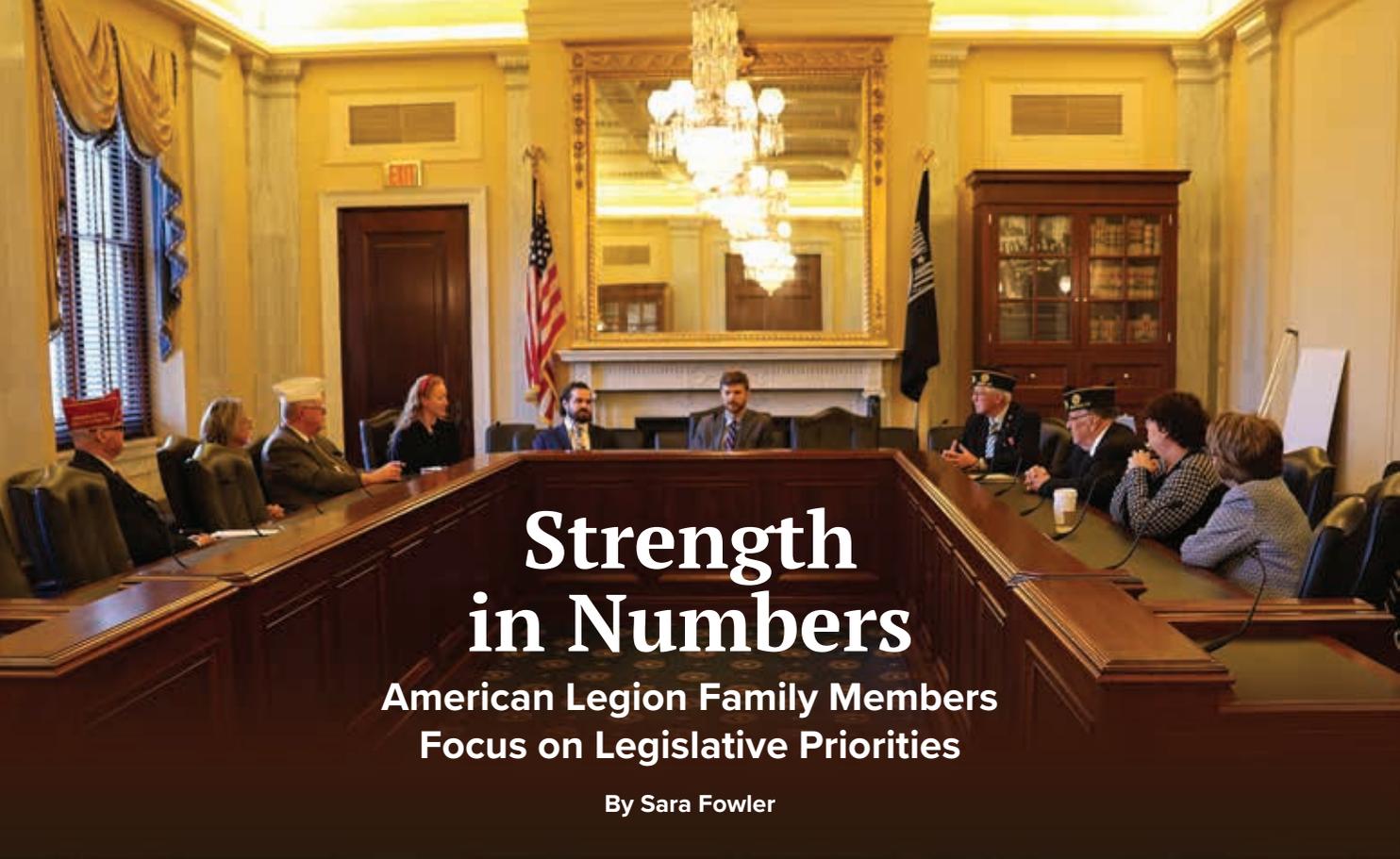
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Learn More on the ALA Member Benefits Webpage



Strength in Numbers

American Legion Family Members Focus on Legislative Priorities

By Sara Fowler

It's quite a sight to walk the halls of our nation's Capitol Building and spot American Legion caps, red and blue blazers, and American Legion Auxiliary brochures in hand, ready to leave behind on a legislator's desk.

The annual Washington Conference includes several informative gatherings of Legion Family members — commission meetings, Commander's Call, Commander's Rally, and meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill.

For this year's event, ALA National President Trish Ward invited the legislative chairs from each of the Auxiliary's 52 departments (states) to attend, along with a handful of national officers, chairs, and Past National Presidents.

Some of our members have been to this important event before, and for others, it's their first time getting to soak in the seriousness of advocating for our veterans as we work alongside The American Legion to discuss crucial, pro-veteran bills that we would like to have support from legislators.

ALA members had the opportunity to meet other members of The American Legion Family, learning as much as they could in those couple of days, taking the information back to their respective departments to help foster positive change for our nation's veterans, military, and their families.

A few ALA members shared their experience with *Auxiliary* magazine.

Jenell Hulse, Kansas

"I think whenever we have the opportunity to meet with legislators, we need to take advantage."

Hulse was a first-time participant at this event, excited when she found out she would be attending.

"I was in Washington, D.C. in September to meet with legislators about different banking issues," she said. "I think I got all of my jitters out then because this felt like smooth sailing."

During the Washington Conference, all those invited attended various Legion commission meetings: Legislative, National Security, Veterans Employment & Education, and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation.

This year, the Legislative Commission was held offsite at the Cannon House Building.

"I was pretty well-versed, as I had read a lot of the legislative priorities that the Legion had pushed out beforehand, but it definitely made me think more about the lack of community care we have for our veterans who live in rural communities," Hulse said.

Going to the Hill is often a favorite of members during this event. Hulse shared what her legislative appointments were like:

- Rep. Ron Estes and staff: "Awesome to hear that he is a member of the Legion Family."
- Rep. Derek Schmidt staff: "Met with a young man on the second day of his career there."

- Rep. Tracey Mann: “He does an incredible job of connecting with people. He is very engaged in conversation and makes you feel like you’re the only appointment of the day. Mann’s team escorted attendees to the Senate office building via the underground hallways and subway.”

- Sen. Jerry Moran staff: “He is a true advocate for veterans. He is a lawmaker we are all very proud of.”

For Hulse, it meant a lot to be around other ALA members nationwide in our capital for this event.

“I have seen a lot of things in this world, and nothing is ever as chilling as being in a room full of people as they recite the *Pledge of Allegiance*,” she recalled. “What incredibly powering minutes those were. Hearing and being a part of that always makes me so proud to be an American.”

Getting the opportunity to attend the Washington Conference, Hulse said it’s crucial for the ALA to have a presence.

“I think whenever we have the opportunity to meet with legislators, we need to take advantage,” she said. “It is so very important to advocate for what you believe in. We need to protect our veterans.”

Maggie Geiger, Wisconsin
“I had the rare opportunity to be part of the support system for the Legion, to help promote the legislative priorities by speaking from my heart and experiences as an ALA member.”

Like Hulse, this was also Geiger’s first time attending Washington Conference and representing her department. She was a bit shocked when she found out she would be going.

“I had to make sure my email was listed and it wasn’t a mistake,” she recalled. “It was an honor to

represent my department and all the members who regularly sign in to the Grassroots Action Center and let their voices be heard. Truly a humbling moment to realize I was asked to attend.”

Being part of the Legion’s Legislative Commission meeting was truly an honor for Geiger.

“It was a historical meeting for the Legislative Commission attendees to meet at Capitol Hill in the Cannon Caucus Room,” she said.

The meeting provided a deeper look at the Legion’s legislative priorities.

“[We learned about the] importance of getting members involved at our state/department levels to make sure we are standing behind and promoting the Legion’s agenda,” she said. “Wisconsin won an award for the most contacts to our legislators. I can’t wait to share with our ALA members and thank them for their continued support of the legislative priorities.”

Going to Capitol Hill was a memorable experience, Geiger said.

“Walking into the halls of Congress, with its history, the beauty of the building, and all the American flags lining the halls made me pause and reflect why I was here,” she said. “I had the opportunity to voice my concern and bring awareness for the men and women who have and are serving this beautiful country, and of the promises that were made to them.”

With fellow American Legion Family members, Geiger met with Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, Sen. Ron Johnson, and Sen. Tammy Baldwin. They discussed a few of the priorities during their meetings, including military quality of life, Be the One, protecting the Coast Guard, and ending veteran homelessness. At each meeting, Geiger brought up the ALA, what we do, and left behind ALA materials. Geiger added



D.C. PRESENCE
 (opposite page): Kansas Legion Family members with legislative staff. This page (clockwise from left): Virginia Legion Family during legislative discussions; statue of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was raised in Kansas; ALA members at a meeting; ALA member Jenell Hulse, Kansas; Wisconsin Legion Family.

that it was also neat to learn that many of the staff members in these offices were ALA Girls State alumnae or Legion Boys State alumni.

The ALA's participation at Washington Conference matters — there is strength in numbers.

"This was the ALA mission in action," she said. "As a member, we are always being told the importance of reporting, and how our volunteer hours are combined with all departments and are reported to Congress. I had the rare opportunity to be part of the support system for the Legion, to help promote the legislative priorities by speaking from my heart and experiences as an ALA member."

As the legislative chair for Wisconsin, Geiger said she can encourage members to reach out and assure them that their voices are being heard.

"Continue sending emails, letters, or call your representatives to let them know to support the Legion's legislative priorities," she said.

Karen Hunter, Virginia

"Our mission is to support The American Legion, veterans, military servicemembers, and military families."

"I was excited and a bit apprehensive as well," Hunter said when she found out she would be going. "But mostly excited I would be doing something worthwhile to benefit veterans and military servicemembers."

Hunter was assigned to attend the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation meeting.

"I learned so much," she recalled. "I learned many things about current data/statistics related to the Be the One initiative. I was surprised that the suicide rate has been relatively stable for the past several years. I learned about use of immersive virtual reality to assist veterans with PTSD. This was new to me and fascinating. I learned about ways the VA is trying to make access improved for veterans — collaboration with Uber/Lyft, vans to bring the VA to veteran locales rather than veterans traveling, tele-health appointments, online classes for the Columbia Protocol, and veteran burial/memorial benefits. Apparently, less than 50% [of veterans] are enrolled at the VA and even less actually engage. I was surprised by that."

Discussing legislative priorities that are important to the Family was a highlight for Hunter attending the Washington Conference:

- Sen. Mark Warner: "The Virginia American Legion Family delegation was made up of about 13-14 state and national leaders. Topics discussed: suicide prevention and Be the One mission, maintenance of military superiority and ensuring

national security in the global environment, transitioning servicemembers and their need for easy access to local, state, and federal resources."

- Rep. Don Beyer's Legislative Assistant Grace Brightbill: "Discussed the same issues named above."

- Rep. Jen Kiggans: "Discussed issues previously listed, as well as her 2025 American Legion Public Service Award. Her commitment to veterans and servicemembers by advocating for their health care, benefits, and policies that uphold promises made to those who have worn the uniform of our U.S. Armed Services has been exemplary. Her family is a military family. Virginia is very proud of her."

The Washington Conference is an opportunity to learn the perspectives, new ideas, and programs of different departments, Hunter said.

"We are American Legion Family members," she said. "Our mission is to support The American Legion, veterans, military servicemembers, and military families. One of the ways we do this is through legislative advocacy." ★



UNITED VOICE: ALA National President Trish Ward brings greetings at the Washington Conference; ALA members prior to the Commander's Call; members from Kansas and Missouri are ready to learn and take back information to their respective departments; Department of Virginia members with Sen. Mark Warner.



At a Glance: Issues American Legion Family members are closely watching

During Hill visits, American Legion Family members discussed the Legion's legislative priorities (some are noted below) in meetings with lawmakers. The ALA has been and will continue to be a strong advocate for veterans and national security issues promoted and supported by The American Legion. To see the full list of the Legion's legislative priorities, visit legion.org/legislative.

The war within



The suicide rate among veterans is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts.

The American Legion urges Congress to apply fund VA's suicide-prevention outreach budget, mental health treatment services, and peer-support programs.

Community care balance



Access to community care is essential for veterans, particularly those living in rural areas. An estimated 5 million veterans reside in rural communities, and approximately 58% of VA-enrolled veterans live in these areas, underscoring the need for accessible health care options. The American Legion firmly believes the VA should remain the cornerstone of veteran care.

Claims and appeals



VA often delays the processing of benefits claims simply because veterans filed their claims on incorrect forms (i.e., not the most current versions). Instead of delaying the claims process and depriving veterans of potential disability benefits, VA should move forward and ask for any additional information with notification letters.

Military quality of life



The American Legion believes that Congress and the Department of Defense must continue to improve quality-of-life conditions for servicemembers and military

families. Inflationary pressures resulting from the pandemic, supply-chain disruptions, rising energy costs, monetary policies and government spending, and support for multiple wars overseas have led to significant increases in the cost of living for Americans.

Border security



Transnational criminal organizations operate across borders to illegally facilitate capital gains or influence.

These crimes include drug smuggling, arms dealing, human trafficking, money laundering, and cybercrime. 107,543 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2023, even though U.S. Border Patrol agents seized more than 27,000 pounds of fentanyl. Moreover, nearly one-third of Border Patrol agents are veterans.

Lethality of the U.S. Armed Forces



Continued modernization of the U.S. Armed Forces is essential for maintaining military superiority and ensuring national security in an increasingly complex and dynamic global environment. As adversaries adopt new technologies and strategies, the United States must stay ahead by embracing cutting-edge solutions and modernizing its defense capabilities.

Protect Coast Guard pay and entitlements



U.S. Coast Guard personnel carry out missions vital to America's national security. Still, the Coast Guard is the only branch of service forced to work without pay during government shutdowns. The repeated threat of shutdowns brings unnecessary hardship on these servicemembers and their families and significant degradation in readiness.

End veteran homelessness



Prevention of veteran homelessness requires greater attention to underlying causes for veterans and their families.

Factors such as substance abuse, mental health, unemployment, and legal challenges contribute to the complexity of the issue. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Point-In-Time count estimates that 35,574 veterans are currently homeless, making up 5% of the total adult homeless population in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

National Guard and Reserve GI Bill parity



National Guard and Reserve servicemembers play a critical role in national defense, responding to

public health crises and global threats alike, and supporting law enforcement. However, they often face unique challenges, including prolonged absences from their families and civilian jobs, often incurring significant financial loss. Despite their contributions, many are denied a fundamental benefit: the GI Bill.



Remembering Those Who Gave Their Lives for Us Poppy Makers Reflect on Importance of Carrying on Tradition

By Sara Fowler

Memorial Day and Veterans Day are two major holidays when the red poppy is distributed at local supermarkets, area hardware stores, in front of American Legion post homes, and more locations throughout the country.

Although this flower is small — it is powerful! The poppy is a symbol to honor the fallen and support the living. The money collected is used to directly support veterans, active-duty servicemembers, and their families.

Distributing poppies in the more than 7,000 local communities where ALA members live is one way to show who we are and what our mission is about.

But all of those poppies — who makes them? For

a long time, only military veterans were allowed to make the flowers. But today, many ALA members and American Legion Family members contribute to the cause to ensure there are enough poppies each year for distribution.

ALA departments (states) and local units are holding more poppy making events to meet the demand, as well as teaching more people to make the crepe paper flower that we as an organization distribute year-round. Members gather in groups large and small to carefully put together intricate pieces that make up parts of this handmade flower.

ALA members from the departments of California and New Jersey share with *Auxiliary* magazine their

Poppy Funds CAN be used for:

- Items of necessity for homeless veterans or hospitalized servicemembers
- Grocery or gas cards for veterans in need
- Poppy kits or supplies for poppy distribution
- Honor Flight guardian fees
- ASYMCA food pantries

Poppy Funds CANNOT be used for:

- Investments, including certificates of deposit
- Deceased veterans or families of deceased veterans
- ALA Girls State or ALA Girls Nation fees
- Commercial property improvements, including

- Legion post homes
 - Items or improvements that will also be used by non-veterans
- Have a question about Poppy Funds? Email Poppy@ALAforVeterans.org.

poppy making experiences in hopes of encouraging more units and departments to take part.

Gabriella Ramos

Department of California poppy chair

Ramos served as California Unit 261 poppy chair from 2022-2024 before she was asked to be the department poppy chair for the 2024-2025 ALA administrative year.

“As department chair, I am here to help units and districts promote the Poppy Program and remind them how we use the Poppy Funds to serve our veterans,” she said.

Being in a room full of ALA members who were eager and excited to make poppies made for a great Sunday afternoon in California. About 50 Auxiliary members made over 1,000 poppies in just a few hours, with 40% being first-time poppy makers.

“I believe the first-timers got a sense of accomplishment and joy in making poppies, knowing they’re doing their part to ensure the remembrance of those who gave their lives for us,” Ramos said.

For many ALA departments, since COVID-19, the number of veterans making poppies has decreased.

“Many Auxiliary members stepped up and began making poppies to ensure our department would have enough poppies,” Ramos said. “Our first party went so well, we planned another. Five districts were present to assist in poppy making.”

A poppy making day like California’s helps to benefit the department with overall poppy distribution needs.

“The significance of the poppy is so important,” Ramos said. “We need the poppies to promote the Poppy Program so all of our heroes who gave their lives will be remembered and given the respect they deserve.”

Ramos said she hopes those who participated in the event left feeling happy and with a sense of pride.

“Poppies are necessary to share the Poppy Program and receive donations for our veterans,” she said. “The donations we receive are essential to



REMEMBRANCE FLOWER (opposite page): Department of California members displaying several of the 1,000 poppies from a poppy making event (photo: Drew Bly). This page: Members of New Jersey Unit 346 meet every Wednesday to make poppies.



The Poppy

After World War I, the poppy flourished in

Europe. Scientists attributed the growth to soils in France and Belgium becoming enriched with lime from the rubble left by the war. From the dirt and mud grew a beautiful red poppy, which came to symbolize the blood shed during battle following the publication of the wartime poem, *In Flanders Fields*. The poem was written by Canadian Lt. Col. John McCrae while serving on the front lines. On Sept. 27, 1920, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family to memorialize the soldiers who fought and died during the war. Led by the American Legion Auxiliary, each year members of The American Legion Family distribute poppies with a request that the person receiving the flower make a donation to support the future of veterans, active-duty military, and their families.



National Poppy Day®

Resources:

- *Poppy Program Guide*
- Coloring books
- Banners
- Media templates and logos
- Posters
- Poppy shop at American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales

Check out these resources and more at www.ALAforVeterans.org/National-Poppy-Day.

How to Participate

There are many ways individuals and groups can help bring greater awareness to this symbolic flower, honor our fallen, and support the living heroes on National Poppy Day:

- Wear a red poppy
- Collect donations
- Make a donation
- Distribute poppies
- Share on social media

the veterans we are serving, from Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation needs to the mission projects we support such as the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Armed Services YMCA food pantry locations, and to support Honor Flights.”

Ramos said departments or units that want to host their own poppy making event in the future shouldn't be scared to get started.

“It may seem intimidating at first, but it's possible,” she said. “Create a planning team and iron out all the details. As soon as you have your date, location, and time, make a flyer and start inviting people. Providing a welcoming and positive environment makes it enjoyable. Also, having food and snacks is always a plus.”

The Poppy Program is so important to our overall mission, Ramos said.

“Every time we wear a poppy, we are honoring

and paying our respects to those who gave their lives for our freedom,” she said. “I not only think of them, but also their families.”

It is the family ties that have helped give her a personal connection to the poppy.

“Although I never had the chance to meet him, my cousin Sylvia's son, U.S. Army Sgt. Arthur Mora Jr., gave his all in 2005,” she said. “Wearing the poppy shows my cousin's family — and especially his children — that he is not forgotten. We remember him, love him, and are forever grateful to him and for him.”

Mary Jane S. Pozarycki

Department of New Jersey Unit 346

Pozarycki became Unit 346 poppy chair in 2017.

“I wasn't planning on chairing anything to be honest, but it kind of fell in my lap, so I dove in,” she said. “As time has passed, I am honored to chair. It is our biggest fundraiser, and I have met so many veterans and heard so many family stories about veterans who are no longer with us.”

The current oldest member of the unit, 94-year-old Navy veteran Betty Holmes, told Pozarycki that Unit 346 was making poppies when she joined back in 1962. The current unit members are honored to carry on the tradition.

Unit 346 poppy makers meet every Wednesday at 10 a.m.

“It is very informal,” she said. “We are now a group of seven, but sometimes relatives visit, and they join us for the day. We've had people come and go for different reasons. We make poppies until 11:30, clean up, and go to lunch.”

A few of the original Unit 346 members who still help make the poppies are in their 90s. The poppy makers prepare poppies for ALA distribution, as well as for other veteran groups.

“We are all there to help veterans,” Pozarycki said. “We typically make at least 15,000 poppies a year — some years more. Holidays or really bad weather are the only days that keep us home.”

ALA units like 346 are working hard to increase poppy makers, which can be difficult. Sometimes, the distribution side is also a challenge for some units in the country.

The group has experienced a harder time with local businesses allowing for poppy distribution in recent years, which can impact the monies raised for our veterans, military, and their families.

“It is harder these days to find businesses that will let you distribute poppies,” she said. “COVID-19 changed that a lot. Corporations making these decisions changed that a lot. I think

one store had what they found out to be a fake charity seeking donations and that put an end to them hosting anyone. Some businesses want liability insurance for four hours. We are lucky to have a large grocery store that allows us eight days up to and including Memorial Day to distribute poppies in their vestibule.”

Each year during the week prior to Memorial Day, members of The American Legion Family volunteer 130 hours at the local grocery store to distribute poppies.

“The customers are very generous, and the employees are very kind,” Pozarycki said. “The unit raises an average of \$8,500 that week.”

In addition to physically distributing poppies at

the grocery store, they also have poppy donation cans at about 10 local businesses.

“Those donation cans are not as profitable, but if we educate or inform just one person about what the poppy represents, it is worth it,” she said.

Not only is increasing poppy makers and distributing the flower crucial, Pozarycki also understands the importance of educating the community about the American Legion Auxiliary and the poppy. She also works with a local newspaper to prepare an article about the flower and about National Poppy Day each year to assist in that educational component.

“It means a lot to me to be able to help veterans,” Pozarycki said. ★



HELPING HANDS: Members of the California American Legion Family gathered to make poppies that will be distributed to raise funds for our veterans, military, and their families. It was the first time making poppies for many (photos: Drew Bly).

Looking for ideas?



The American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program Facebook group is for members

to share ideas, projects, and information about the Poppy Program. It also keeps members updated on current information they may need to enhance the Poppy Program in their units. Find the group and request to join at www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAPoppy.



REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT ELIZABETH 'LIB' STEWART

It is with a heavy ALA heart we announce the passing of Past National President Elizabeth “Lib” Stewart. From the Department of North Carolina, Stewart served during the 1999-2000 administrative year. She led the American Legion Auxiliary into the new millennium with a plan to promote patriotism in America as we stood on the threshold of the 21st century. Stewart lived a life filled with incredible passion and service toward others, leaving a legacy of compassion, dedication, and inspiration.

“She truly was an incredible lady,” said ALA North Carolina Department Historian Linda Quinlan. “She was a person who I never, ever, ever, heard anyone say an unkind word about — and that is remarkable.”

After a long and fulfilling

life, Stewart passed away on Feb. 20, 2025, at the age of 91. She was born on June 26, 1933, to George Taft Stewart and Letha Bell, and lived her entire life in the Dixon County community near Kings Mountain, N.C.

Stewart began her American Legion Auxiliary legacy in 1969 by becoming a member of Otis D. Green Unit 155 in Kings Mountain. After years of service, Stewart became the department president of North

Carolina during the 1976-1977 administrative year.

She was eligible for Auxiliary membership through her two brothers, the late Ralph E. Stewart, who served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War, and the late retired Master Sgt. Herman Stewart, a career veteran who served in the Korean War and Vietnam War.

“Lib was always just so nice, so kind, and always encouraging,” said Quinlan. “She provided mentorship for virtually every North Carolina department president — people would always go to her because she possessed so much knowledge of all things Auxiliary. She just loved the Auxiliary so much.”

Stewart’s volunteer service journey to national president was a testament of her unwavering commitment to the Auxiliary’s mission. Her hard work and perseverance led her to serve on numerous committees and chairmanships at all levels of the organization. She was especially passionate about Veterans Affairs

& Rehabilitation and Children & Youth. Stewart also served as Southern Division national vice president, national historian, national parliamentarian, and national vice president.

During her term as national president, Stewart’s ALA focus was devoted to unit revitalization and promoting patriotism within the ALA and throughout America. Additionally, she used her platform to spread awareness of breast cancer.

Stewart enjoyed her longtime career as a local journalist for the *Kings Mountain Herald* newspaper in North Carolina. She began her career there and continued writing for them up until the summer before her passing. She received many writing awards throughout her life — one of the first-place newspaper awards she received was in 1988 for her first-person story, “Courage to Choose,” which was about her battle with breast cancer.

“You can certainly say that Lib Stewart experienced a life well-lived,” said Quinlan.



CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS: UPDATE YOUR GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

Our Constitution & Bylaws program informs and educates members of the American Legion Auxiliary on the importance and power of having properly written, regularly reviewed, and updated governing documents at all levels of the organization.

When was the last time you read our organization’s governing documents? These contain the rules provided to keep our mission front and center. Read them often to continue to understand and keep fresh in your mind how our organization operates.

Where are your department governing documents? If not accessible via the department website, are they distributed to all members annually? If they are not, contact your department Constitution & Bylaws chair or

department office to obtain a copy. All members should be reading and understanding the documents that describe how our organization functions.

Most members are interested in the unit Constitution & Bylaws and standing rules. In general, standing rules are easier to amend than the Bylaws, and the Constitution is rarely, if ever, amended, and should reflect revisions as we grow.

Remember: Before departments and units amend their governing documents, they must ensure the new wording does not conflict with the national governing documents. The national Constitution & Bylaws can be found at www.ALAForVeterans.org.

How are our governing documents changed? There

should be a statement in your documents that describes how to amend the Constitution & Bylaws. If your governing documents do not have this clause, it would be wise to get that updated.

A template to propose amendments can be found at www.ALAForVeterans.org.

The national Constitution & Bylaws Committee has provided some great information to the department chairs this administrative year. If you have questions on how to proceed, ask your department chair or contact the national committee.

Let’s be “Leading the Way” for the next generation.



Norma Tramm joined the ALA at 3 years old. She belongs to Frank Kray Unit 455 in Cold Spring, Minn.



5 Ways to Donate to the ALA

STEP 1:

 Donate Online

STEP 2:

 Give by Mail

STEP 3:

 Text “ALA” to 1-844-940-3450

STEP 4:

 Donate Monthly

STEP 5:

 Make a planned gift

To learn more about ways to donate to the ALA or make a gift online, visit www.ALAForVeterans.org and click on “Give.”

ALA GIRLS NATION: FOSTERING AMERICANISM AT ALA GIRLS NATION

 www.Facebook.com/ALAGirlsNation  www.Instagram.com/ALAGirlsNation

At the heart of the American Legion Auxiliary's Girls Nation program lies a deep commitment to Americanism. It starts when the senators arrive in Washington, D.C. and lasts a lifetime.

This weeklong program not only guides young leaders toward a deeper understanding of government but also instills a renewed sense of patriotism and an appreciation for sacrifices made by our veterans.

ALA Girls Nation curriculum is grounded in democracy. Our young leaders learn the importance of civil discussion and debate in order to write platforms, present federal legislation, and understand their responsibility for active civic engagement.

In addition, many opportunities are provided to practice and celebrate patriotism. Senators are taught proper flag etiquette by posting and retiring the American flag every day.

A place of honor is reserved for the POW/MIA table where we remember those who were prisoners of war and those who remain missing. The poppy story is shared, and a beautiful poppy wreath is made by the participants and placed at Arlington National Cemetery.

Special recognition is given to our Gold and Blue Star senators, and they receive pins to honor their family's service. We visit many memorials in Washington, D.C. to deepen our senators' understanding of sacrifice. All senators also

participate in a service project that directly impacts active-duty servicemembers or veterans.

One of the highlights from the week is when senators meet with their state representatives on Capitol Hill and see legislation in action.

We often hear from alumnae that the experience at ALA Girls Nation helped guide them toward their futures. They emphasize participation in ALA Girls Nation raised their knowledge of government and positively impacted their level of civic engagement. As you can see, ALA Girls Nation IS Americanism in action!



Valerie Hardy is a 21-year member and charter member of George Tadlock California eUnit 472.



Secure a subgrant in 3 simple steps

The ALA Foundation can serve as a recipient of grant funding for ALA departments, districts/counties, and units from a foundation, corporation, or entity that requires the recipient to be a 501(c)(3). The ALA Foundation then, in turn, will subgrant to the ALA entity according to the terms and conditions of the grantor. Secure a subgrant in 3 simple steps:



To learn more about subgranting opportunities and to apply, visit www.ALAFoundation.org/grants.

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. 03/2025

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES: MENTORING OUR JUNIOR MEMBERS

 www.instagram.com/ALAJuniors

Invest in the future by engaging in the present. This is a great motto to remind senior ALA members to involve our Junior membership in the American Legion Auxiliary. Junior members have been presenting a “Candle Ceremony” to senior members to represent that Juniors are the group that have many years to foster and serve the programs of the organization. It also shows senior membership that Juniors need guidance and involvement in the ALA’s programs to continue to uphold the organization’s principles.

Involving Junior members in American Legion Family meetings and activities provides opportunities to share experience and wisdom. Showing a tiny

tot respect for the American flag is an act of respect that can remain with them their entire life. These informal, spontaneous connections can teach them life skills and facilitate learning from all the ALA programs.

Mentoring Junior members in formal settings, conferences, and meetings offers structured delivery while connecting with Junior members on the goals of the ALA. *The Junior Activities Handbook*, the Junior Patch Program, and several ALA Academy Junior-focused webinars all offer ideas for guided learning. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to find these tools.

The key to retaining our Junior members is the connections they make.

Programs and patches offer resources, but an enthusiastic mentor who establishes a positive relationship with younger members can provide advice and wisdom. Engaging Junior members in helping with mission-based activities fosters interpersonal connections and learning. Fun activities are a must (talk to a Junior member who attended a national Junior meeting about Kahoot!).

Junior members are “Leading the Way” and will continue to lead our organization if they are given opportunities where they can be involved.



Jeanne Haas is a 72-year member of Phillips-Stuckey-Shaffer Unit 296, Gridley, Kan.

RISK & COMPLIANCE: HOW WE FULFILL OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Risk & Compliance Committee, in its role as a committee to the National Executive Committee, is charged with the oversight of identifying and addressing potential risks and mitigation of the risks of the American Legion Auxiliary and the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. These risks or exposures could be in the form of an operational risk, financial risk, strategic risk, or a cybersecurity (breaches) risk.

The committee is able to combat or divert harm to the organizations by ensuring the organizations have a proper foundation in place of which to operate to meet all legal, regulatory requirements, and protective measures.

How is the committee fulfilling its responsibilities?

The Risk & Compliance Committee continues to fulfill its responsibility with engaging the audit firm, reviewing the audited financial statements, and addressing any potential concerns of changing laws or regulations.

The annual audit for fiscal year 2024 was presented and adopted by the NEC at the mid-year meeting. This is a standard of practice for the committee but is necessary in providing confidence to our stakeholders — our donors, the public, and the communities we serve.

Each year, the committee continues to develop a better understanding of its importance to the NEC in its responsibilities.

This year, in collaboration with management, the

committee adopted a procedure to annually review all policies assigned to the committee. This step may seem excessive, but it is to ensure the committee and management maintain a fresh look at the policies in their application and protection of the organizations.

The Risk & Compliance Committee thanks our wonderful staff for their assistance and valuable guidance with the audit and the review of all internal policies. They, too, work hard to identify any risks and ensure we are in compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.



Kathy Dungan is a PUFLL member and Past National President. She belongs to Mississippi Unit 79.



Candidate:
National President
Pam Ray
Department of Illinois:
Urbana Unit 71
Eligibility: Through

late father, Clay Lofton, who served in the U.S. Army during World War II and the Korean War.

Offices Held: Served numerous unit-, district-, and department-level offices and chairmanships. National: chair of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, ALA Girls Nation, Junior Activities, National Security, Membership, Constitution & Bylaws, and Children & Youth committees. Served on the National Executive Committee and ALA Strategic Planning Committee; also served as vice chair of Americanism, Public Relations, and Junior Activities committees, as well as currently serving as American Legion Auxiliary national vice president.



Candidate:
National Vice President
Dr. Coral May Grout
Department of Massachusetts:

Eugene M. Connor Unit 193

Eligibility: Through father, Charles E. Grout, who served in the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines and Australia during WWII. Also adds military service of her grandfather, Stanislas Laplante, who served in the U.S. Army during WWI.

Offices Held: Served several unit-, district-, and department-level chairmanships and offices, including the district Education chair for 25 years and department president three times. National: chair of Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Education (twice), Americanism, Constitution & Bylaws, Public Relations, Legislative, Leadership, Community Service, and Junior Activities committees. Also served on the National Executive Committee, and as national secretary and national historian.

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



Candidate:
Central Division National Vice President
Ann Buchanan
Department of

West Virginia: Unit 16

Eligibility: Through husband, Fred B. Buchanan.



Candidate:
Eastern Division National Vice President
Ree Ross
Department of

Pennsylvania: Unit 534

Eligibility: Through late father, WWII veteran Benton W. Hardic; and husband, Ronald Ross, Vietnam War veteran.



Candidate:
Northwestern Division National Vice President
Shareen Johnson
Department of

Wyoming: Don Stough Unit 33

Eligibility: Through father, Master Chief Petty Officer John Sturgeon, who served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War and Vietnam War as a naval submariner. Also adds military service through her twin sister, Kathleen Ebert, who retired from the U.S. Navy after 20 years.



Candidate:
Southern Division National Vice President
Vickie Thrower-Mills
Department of

Alabama: Buford D. Byrom Unit 176

Eligibility: Through late father, Past Department Commander Grady Rutherford, who served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam Era; and adds military service of late husband, Jimmy N. Thrower, who also served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam Era.



Candidate:
Western Division National Vice President
Joan Cannon
Department of

California: Unit 249

Eligibility: Through father, JW Holloway, a retired chief petty officer who served in WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War. She also adds military service of her son, Desert Storm veteran David Cannon, U.S. Navy submariner.

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



Candidate:
National Historian
Angela M. Walker
Department of Illinois:
Unit 145
Eligibility: Through

herself as a U.S. Navy veteran.



Candidate:
National Historian
Sandra Lincoln
Department of Rhode Island: Lts. Armstrong-Gladding Unit 69

Eligibility: Through father, Norman Lincoln, who served in the U.S. Navy and National Guard.

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.

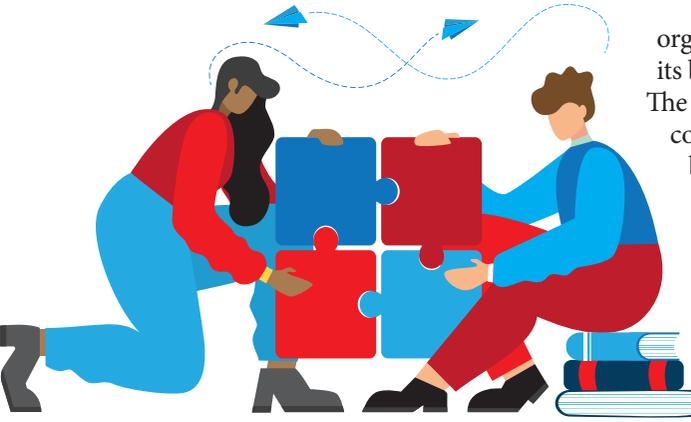


Candidate:
National Chaplain
Nancy Magginnis
Department of Indiana:
Kendallville Unit 86
Eligibility: Through

brother, Vietnam War veteran Don Leighty, U.S. Army; and father, Marve Leighty Jr., who served in the U.S. Army during 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 elected in their respective division caucus during National Convention. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to read more about the candidates for 2025-2026 office. Information presented on this page was provided by the candidates.



BRIEFING FROM GOVERNING BOARD'S MID-YEAR MEETING

Each administrative year, the American Legion Auxiliary's National Executive Committee holds three standard meetings to conduct official business of the organization. These regularly scheduled sessions play a fundamental role in the governance and operational effectiveness of the Auxiliary.

The NEC begins its annual term at an in-person meeting held immediately following the close of National Convention. The NEC, our governing board, meets again for a mid-year board meeting held virtually in February. Lastly, they close their annual term with an in-person pre-convention meeting immediately preceding National Convention. Throughout the year, the board will be called to special meetings as emergent organizational needs arise. Like all regularly scheduled ALA national board meetings, it is an open forum meeting.

The February 2025 Virtual Mid-Year NEC Meeting contained all the usual aspects of a standard NEC meeting. Highlights:

- The NEC voted to adopt the consent agenda containing national policies, national appointment changes, and charter cancellations. A consent agenda is a standard good governance practice utilized by large

organizations to expedite its business proceedings. The main purpose of a consent agenda is to bundle into a single action item the routine procedures, administrative details, and self-explanatory matters the board normally approves without discussion, debate, or motions.

Since questions or discussions on these items are not allowed during the meeting, utilizing a consent agenda frees up valuable time for the board to discuss more substantial agenda items.

- Historically, the ALA's national policies were reviewed and adopted by the board on a staggered three-year cycle, indicating that with almost 30 national policies, only about one-third (10) policies would be reviewed by the board any given year. This type of staggered review schedule prevented the board from being fully informed on the policies for which they must ensure are correctly implemented. But without full knowledge of all the national policies, board members cannot effectively do their duties. At the February NEC meeting, the process for national policy review was amended and now occurs annually. This means that each administrative year, the board will review, amend if necessary, and adopt all national policies. The new process helps ensure sound decision making, transparency, and project execution on behalf of the

national organization.

- The national Finance Committee made a recommendation and motion to increase the Auxiliary Emergency Fund by \$250,000. The additional finances came from the AEF fund balance, which sits at just under \$1 million. The increased funding was due to an unprecedented number of natural disasters, including multiple hurricanes that hit the East Coast, and devastating fires impacting the West Coast. By the end of Quarter 1, almost all of the original budgeted amount (\$215,000) had been granted to members in need. The decision was simple — if the board wanted to continue granting funds to our members in need, they had to approve the increase. The motion was made by national Finance Committee Chair Janet Jefford on behalf of the Finance Committee, passing unanimously.

- During each mid-year meeting, attendees receive a presentation from our external auditors. We received a clean audit, and the board voted to accept the external auditors' report. The Finance Committee also gave a Quarter 1 financials report with no red flags.

- Also discussed: basic mid-year agenda items. Among those were charter cancellations, national appointment changes, reports given from the national president, national secretary, national treasurer, executive director, Risk & Compliance Committee (vote required), Finance Committee (vote required), standing rules amendments, and any new business.

Visit ALA National Headquarters in Indianapolis!



Stop by for a tour and see the rich history of the American Legion Auxiliary. Interested in planning a tour? Drop in, call ahead at (317) 569-4500, or email us at ALAHQ@ALAforVeterans.org.



American Legion Auxiliary Foundation to Give Two Awards in 2025

The Donor Champion Award will be given to the department that makes the largest per capita donation to the ALA Foundation, and the **Veterans Champion Award** will be awarded to the department with the most approved grants.

Awards will be based on grants given and donations received from **June 1 – May 31.**

**AMERICAN
LEGION
AUXILIARY
FOUNDATION**

Provided by Monique Batiste, National Chaplain 2024-2025 | www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAchaplains

MAY

The Peace Within

I am sure we all know people who want peaceful lives. No chaos. Just peace. We also know people who live for “drama.” When we include others or when we participate in activities, form relationships, and friendships, join groups or organizations, we are likely to have our peace disturbed at some point. What does the phrase “Protect Your Peace” mean? It simply means making sure you are in a mentally healthy place. Your life is pleasant. There is no confusion. It is PEACEFUL.

People and situations can stir up our emotions. Get you all worked up. But when you decide to choose your peace, there may be decisions that can be simple. Or they can be life-changing. Sometimes choosing your peace and choosing you comes with a sacrifice. You may have to cut ties with someone you love or was in your life for years. Resign from things that once brought you joy, but now bring you pain, stress, and sadness.

Those of us strong enough to endure hang on a little longer. We just do not allow others or situations to control our emotions. We do not let the behaviors of others destroy our inner peace.

Organize your life around peace. Create a calming, daily routine and include prayers of peace. Meditate and find alone time. Your mental health is just as important as the things that cause you stress. The disturbing of the peace within us can emotionally break us down if we don't pay attention — causing even more damage.

Finding the peace you need and deserve may require teaching yourself how to be calm. It can be tough, but you can do it.

Life can also make us tired. Emotionally tired. Psalms 29:11 reads, “God gives us strength and blesses us with peace.” When you feel like hope is gone, pray for the peace

you need to get through. For strength when you are weak.

Prayer: Dear God, Give me peace of mind and guidance for all my life decisions. Remind me when I am unsure, that You are always here with me. Help calm my anxious thoughts and to grow stronger in faith. Amen.

JUNE

Humbleness

We all know those “me, my, mine, me, me” types of people. They have an overwhelming view of themselves. Braggers and boasters. Selfish, sometimes bully-like, showoffs, etc. This can be such a turnoff that others do not want to be around these types of individuals.

Over time, as we grow, we learn to be humble — to be thankful for our blessings instead of bragging in a way that can be hurtful to others or diminish the spirits of others. A person can have the most expensive home or car, and you would never know. The humble response would probably be something like, “It was by the grace of God.” Because it was. God gives us grace, even when we do not deserve it or the wonderful blessings, He bestows upon us.

Another humble person is the one who is unafraid to ask. Pride can stop you from doing so. God has a way of showing us this humbleness. During many unit meetings when we thought we knew more than the handbook, my grandmother would tell us, “Don't make me and the good Lord humble you!” Yikes! Meaning, do not think you know everything and then have to come back to her and ask for help.

Humbleness is admitting you were wrong and willing to learn and improve. Forgiving and not offending. If only we lived in a world where we were all humble and listened to each other more.

Prayer: God, lead me in humbleness. Teach me not to judge, as judgement in my heart limits good

work. Give me a spirit of forgiveness. I pray that through humility, love is seen in me. Amen.

JULY

Good Leaders Make Great Leaders

If you want to be a good leader, you must first be a good follower. How, you may ask? You learn from leaders who were once followers.

In order for your unit to grow, you must be able to lead and learn. Leadership also means you must be strong but soft. Firm but kind.

Have you ever been in a group where the person who wanted to be in charge could not lead the group? Leadership is the ability to influence, guide, and lead others toward a shared goal. Motivating your members and providing direction and vision shows members they can trust you to handle the business of their unit and teach them to lead as well.

Your skills are contributions to your unit. Support your members, and they will support you. Be mindful of your decision making. Be trustworthy. Communicate. Empower.

We all want to be the leader, but are you willing to put in the work? When you say, “I'm running for office so I can change some things!” Are you sincere about making a positive change, or do you just want to be an agitator? If you want change, be the change. When you bring negative, you get negative. People respond to what they receive.

Prayer: Dear God, bless our ALA leadership. Help them make decisions that are in the best interest of the Auxiliary. We pray You will give every leader the strength they need to continue to do the great work of the American Legion Auxiliary. Amen.



Monique Batiste is a 43-year member of the Ricard Stewart ALA Unit 505 in Baton Rouge, La.



MURAL, BENCH BRING POSITIVE FOCUS TO AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY POST

It started as separate projects to educate the public and memorialize veterans. It ended with a single ceremony featuring two pieces of artwork that promise to provide value to the Kirklin, Ind., community for years to come.

An event held at The American Legion Post 310 in Kirklin displayed a mural and bench that members of the local American Legion Auxiliary unit raised funds to support. The artwork the dedication ceremony featured is a testament to the importance of veterans and their service, as well as the collaborative spirit of those who made the display possible.

"We wanted everybody involved," said Linda Ward, ALA Unit 310 president, who spoke at the ceremony. "Some groups may have only two or three people who

are the worker bees. But if you get everybody involved, they'll come back for the next project."

Members of the local Legion Family — including the Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion — began by brainstorming about ways to grab the attention of those passing by Post 310 and to help them understand what goes on inside. They decided on a mural for the side of the building, and they knew just the people to do it.

Artist Leah Kallner, a member of Unit 310, and her husband, Scott Kallner, a member of Post 310, had created artwork elsewhere in the community. For The American Legion project, their work would be a mural 93 feet long, completed over two years, and in two parts.

The final product features

elements that members of the Legion Family suggested, such as veterans, the American flag, dog tags, and the post and unit number, 310.

"Everybody was excited once it began to come together," Ward said.

Meanwhile, a second project began to take shape. Some members of the local Legion Family had passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the post and unit couldn't gather to celebrate those members' lives. The Auxiliary unit decided a bench outside the post would be a good way to commemorate the members lost during that time and to pay tribute to servicemembers unaccounted for.

Then Unit 310 member Kyleen Lockard happened upon a woodworker displaying his wares at an area farmers market. When she asked if he'd be interested in creating a memorial bench for the Kirklin Legion Family, the artist — Charlie Brown, a veteran of the Marines — jumped at the opportunity.



By 2024, The American Legion post had a newly completed mural and bench on display, as well as a new flagpole, funded with the help of anonymous donations. The ceremony, conducted on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, celebrated the memory of members who had passed away and the completion of artwork that will serve as a symbol of what The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary represent. And it all was the result of teamwork, Ward said.

"We're a small post and unit," she said. "We enjoy reminding others that we're small, but we're mighty. And we never forget — *Service Not Self.*"

Tips for planning art for American Legion posts



Linda Ward, president of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 310 in Kirklin, Ind., shared some tips for others interested in securing commemorative artwork to display at their local Legion posts:

- 1. Consider your connections.** The artists who created the Post 310 mural were members of their own Legion Family.
- 2. Get out there.** A trip to a community farmers market led to the discovery of the woodworker who built their commemorative bench.
- 3. Be active on social media.** A post noting that the unit is seeking someone to help goes a long way.
- 4. Solicit input.** Project planning and brainstorming involved members from the entire Legion Family.



MEETING THE PRESIDENT: ALA Girls Nation alumna Adriana Unger Stacey had the opportunity to meet President Bill Clinton in 1995 while attending one of the ALA's premiere programs.

LASTING MEMORIES AND FRIENDSHIPS FOR ARKANSAS ALUMNA

Meeting President Bill Clinton as an ALA Girls Nation senator from Arkansas was one of several memories that stand out to Adriana Unger Stacey about attending ALA Girls Nation. In addition to this experience, she credits the program for giving her confidence and lifelong friends.

Dr. Unger Stacey attended ALA Arkansas Girls State and ALA Girls Nation in 1995. She is a board-certified psychiatrist who works largely with children, teens, and college students in a community practice in Fayetteville, Ark. She also teaches high school classes and is the medical adviser for two national nonprofit organizations — ScreenStrong and Phone Free Schools Movement.

What impact did ALA Girls State/Nation have on your life?

Attending ALA Girls State/Nation allowed me to have more confidence in myself as a young woman. I met so many amazing women and have made lifelong friendships with strong, confident women.

For a 17-year-old from a small town in Arkansas, to get to go to Washington, D.C. and meet amazing young women from all over the U.S. was an experience that was second to none. I learned confidence and leadership from the

program and from the other participants.

What is your favorite memory of the state and national programs?

I have so many amazing memories of my time at ALA Girls Nation. We got to “take over the White House” for a day. Bill Clinton was president at the time — and I was one of the senators from Arkansas — so that was so fun. Hilariously, the one thing I forgot to pack were my nice shoes, so I had on Converse All-Stars when I went to meet

the president. Also, we sang as a group for an intro for *Good Morning America*.

Are you still connected with anyone from the programs?

I still keep in touch with four women I met at ALA Girls Nation. I feel like this is a big feat given that we did not have cell phones or social media. We used to write each other letters and schedule phone calls.

I met Stephanie Olson Sullivan, one of the senators from Wyoming. We hit it off immediately. As our friendship grew, Stephanie became such a great friend to me, and she is even the godmother of my oldest child. We have seen each other through college years, challenging relationships,



Facts about ALA Girls Nation

- Founded in 1947
- Two participants are selected from each ALA Girls State program
- Participants represent their state as “senators”
- Next session: July 19-26, 2025

standing up at each other’s weddings, job changes, losing parents, and many other life milestones and challenges.



We’d love to hear your ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation stories!
Send us an email at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org.



ALA PROUD: Maryland Unit 166 member Delaney McDaniel (back row, second from right), a 2024 Spirit of Youth Scholarship recipient, with her unit. McDaniel enjoyed her years as a Junior and is excited to be an ALA senior member.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER PROUD OF JUNIOR MEMBER EXPERIENCE

The Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund is an umbrella that supports three separate scholarship opportunities for participants in American Legion Auxiliary programs. One is for American Legion Auxiliary Junior members, another for Junior Members of the Year, and one is for participants in the ALA Girls Nation program. Maryland Unit 166 member Delaney McDaniel was one of the 2024 recipients.

Do you have any favorite events or programs you participated in as an ALA Junior member?

If I were to pick three of my favorite over the past 11 years of being a Junior member, I would say packing boxes for troops around Christmastime, being able to go to Nashville, Tennessee, for a national ALA Junior member meeting, and playing putt-putt golf for “Stop Soldier Suicide” at my local post.

What did it mean to you to receive Junior Member of the Year twice at the state level?

I felt very honored and loved to be able to represent my unit.

What was your ALA Girls State experience like?

It was very eye opening. I was so glad I went and got to experience it! It was eye opening because I was able to spend the week on a college campus and meet a bunch of girls my age with the same interests and goals as me. It was overall a very fun and educational week — definitely recommend it to anyone who has an interest in applying.

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

I’m attending Towson University, majoring in early childhood education.

What sparked your interest in this area of study?

My mom inspired me to become a teacher — she is a middle school teacher. Growing up, I was able to watch and see her show love and support to all her students, and I want to be able to provide the same support and love to my future students.

What inspired you to apply for an ALA Spirit of Youth Scholarship?

College is expensive, so applying for this scholarship allowed me to be able to provide some financial support. The ALA Spirit of Youth scholarship was the perfect fit since I was an active Junior member for the ALA.

How did you feel when you found out you won this scholarship?

I was shocked and so thankful to be chosen as the recipient.

What would you say to other youth who are eligible for this scholarship?

Go for it! The worst that could happen is that you do not get it, but just try anyway.

Is there anything else you want to add?

I loved being a part of the Juniors program and cannot wait to continue my service as a senior member.



Join us in supporting our youth as they pursue a higher education. Donate to the ALA scholarship fund at www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships/spirit-of-youth.

**AMERICAN
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ALA Challenge Deck Limited Quantity Available!



Discover ways to get involved in your community and make a real difference in the lives of local veterans by using the ALA Challenge Deck.

When you donate \$35 or more to the ALA Foundation's Veteran Projects Fund, you will receive this 46-card deck that includes descriptions and links to additional resources for all of the ALA's programs, like Americanism and Children & Youth.

Learn more about the ALA Challenge Deck online at www.ALAforVeterans.org/ALA-Challenge-Deck.

Scan the QR code to donate, text CARD to 1-844-940-3450, or mail a check to ALA National Headquarters, 3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268.

Write "Challenge Deck" in the memo line.



MORE THAN 1.4 MILLION VETERANS REACHED THROUGH BUDDY CHECK PROGRAM

In 2024, 4,624 American Legion posts conducted Buddy Checks. As a result, 341,049 veterans were reached by phone, text, email, or in person to check on their well-being.

The American Legion's Buddy Check program is designed to give Legionnaires the tools to make contact, engage in conversation, assess risks, and direct veterans in need to the appropriate services. Resources are available at legion.org/buddycheck to help Legionnaires make Buddy Checks.

These resources include a toolkit that explains the program, provides steps to conducting a successful Buddy Check, gives sample scripts, a door hanger that is printer-



CONTACTING VETERANS: American Legion member Linda Sundberg dials the next phone number of a veteran to contact for Buddy Checks (Photo: The American Legion).

friendly and can be customized as a leave-behind when Legion Family members visit a veteran who is not at home, a fillable media advisory, and more.

Since May 2019, Legionnaires conduct Buddy Checks during the weeks of The American

Legion's birthday, March 15, and Veterans Day. Legion posts also perform this vital function whenever it makes the most sense in their communities.

Learn more at www.Legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/buddy-check.



INTERVIEW
KAMIN SAMUEL, PhD

EPISODE 249

AMERICAN LEGION
TANGO ALPHA LIMA PODCAST

5 YEARS AND GROWING FOR LEGION PODCAST

The award-winning American Legion *Tango Alpha Lima* podcast achieved a milestone April 1, celebrating its five-year anniversary. To honor this achievement, here are five recent episodes you don't want to miss:

• **Dr. Columbus Batiste**, "the Healthy Heart Doc," is a board-

certified interventional cardiologist who helps patients overcome heart disease. His goal is to educate people so that "each one can teach one" about the power of health.

• **Mazin Mozan**, an Iraqi veterinarian who helped U.S. troops during the war and now serves in the U.S. Army Reserves. "It was the cause and how I can help. It always drove

me in life to help others, doing anything I can do to help."

• **The Honorable Patrick Murphy**, the 32nd Army Under Secretary and America's first Iraq War veteran to serve in Congress. "It was like focusing like a bulldog on a bone when I had that opportunity to serve in the U.S. Congress to make it better for my brother and sister veterans."

• **Dr. Kamin Samuel**, the Navy's first Black female helicopter pilot who now mentors others. "We are so good at what our weaknesses are. If we can live in our strengths, that's the best we can do."

• **Army 1st Lt. Austin von Letkemann**, better known as MandatoryFunDay on Instagram, where he has more than 1.1 million followers. "I yell at my phone and post it on the Internet and now people want me to speak in front of crowds. I didn't expect that [popularity] because personally I don't find myself that interesting."

These are among the 300 *Tango Alpha Lima* episodes since the podcast kicked off in April 2020. All are available at legion.org/tangoalphalima, the Legion's YouTube channel, Apple podcasts, and other podcast platforms.



BE THE ONE APP NOW AVAILABLE TO ASSIST VETERANS IN CRISIS, THOSE AROUND THEM

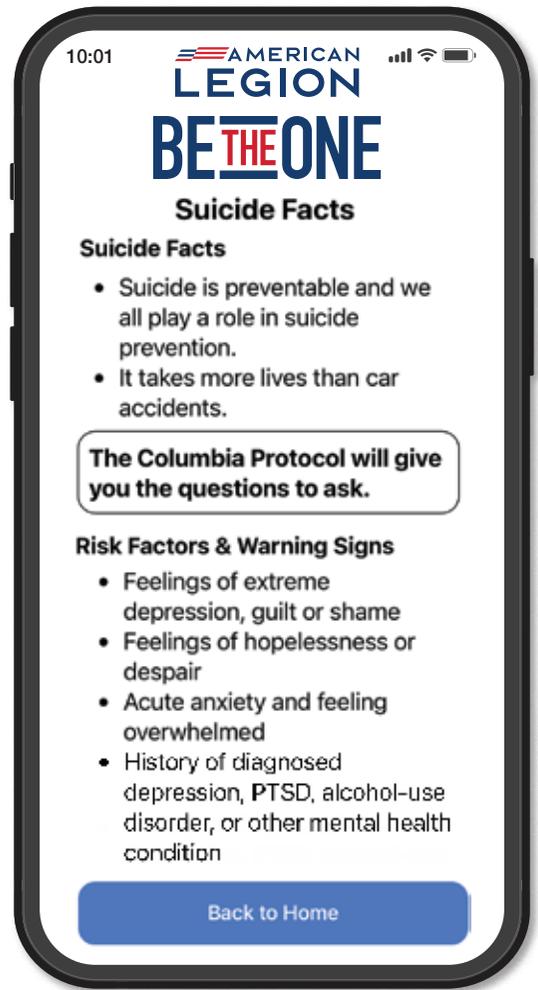
The Be the One app, developed by Columbia University and tailored to The American Legion's Be the One veteran suicide prevention mission, is available via both Apple and Google. The app used the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), the most evidence-supported tool of its kind. It asks a simple series of questions anyone can use anywhere to help prevent suicide.

Columbia Lighthouse Project's Wendy Lasko, who provides Be the One training, encouraged Legion Family members to download the app but said it is a work in progress. "We're going to refine this a little bit more. We can change these

questions," she said. "We may drill down a little bit more and say, 'Are you a spouse, are you whatever?' The issue is we don't want to ask too many questions. Because if you're in a situation where you need to get someone help immediately, you're not going to sit and answer 10 questions. We have to try to streamline as best as we can."

The app also provides links to local resources, facts about suicide, and hints to talking about suicide.

To download the app, visit the Apple App Store or Google Play and search Be The One - Columbia Protocol.



CONVERSATION, COMMUNICATION PART OF UTAH'S BE THE ONE FACEBOOK GROUP

The American Legion Department of Utah launched a Be the One Facebook group in 2023 under then-Department Commander Ninzel Rasmuson to educate, engage, and start conversation about the Legion's top priority: veteran suicide prevention. In less than two

years, the group has over 400 followers who include Utah Legion Family and community members, and members from other Legion departments.

Rasmuson has seen members of the Be the One Facebook group spread its message with others to create a wider impact. As an example, a Sons of The American Legion member met a woman whose son had experienced suicide ideation. He encouraged her to join the group, even though she was not a Legion Family member. Now, the two are creating a Be the One event in their community.

"What I wanted to achieve was a community," Rasmuson said about the group. "And the reason why that was important is because Legionnaires and American Legion Family overall, we're a community and I wanted

there to be ongoing conversation that was happening around the Be the One mission for The American Legion. The focus was to get conversation going, develop a better community within our department, and open up better communication. And that's what it's done."

Learn more about the Facebook group at www.Facebook.com/groups/1007224276944892/.

Be the One Resources

Take just 90 minutes to learn how to save the life of a veteran at risk of suicide. Sign up here for a free class: betheone.org/training.

The American Legion has recently updated its resources for Legion Family members to promote and conduct Be the One awareness events. Check them out here: betheone.org/resources.





Wisconsin Unit 185 member Terry Giles joined the American Legion Auxiliary in March 2021. Her husband has been a member of The American Legion post for years, but Giles had a lot going on with work, kids, and volunteering at her church. The ALA simply wasn't her focus. When the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021, she felt for the Gold Star Mothers and wanted to be part of an organization supporting our veterans, military, and their families, so she joined the Auxiliary.

In May 2021 — shortly after joining the ALA — she agreed to be the poppy chair and chaplain for her unit.

ACTIVE MEMBER: Terry Giles of Wisconsin Unit 185 at a celebration for her as 2024 Wisconsin Unit Member of the Year. Giles focuses on a few favorite ALA programs.

Can you share what your ALA membership means to you?

It means I am honoring the service of somebody I love. [My membership] just shows that I honor and respect them.

What would you say to seasoned unit members who haven't stepped into leadership roles yet within the ALA?

You're not expected to know everything. You don't have to do what the last person did in that position. You can create whatever your own interests are. You don't have to fill somebody else's shoes. Many think, *I can't do as much as she did; I don't have that many ideas, etc.* If you can manage a budget for a house, you can be the treasurer for the unit. If you've been a secretary at a school or church, you can be secretary of the unit.

What advice do you have for new members about becoming an active member in the ALA?

Do what you like. I'm a scrapbooker. I make posters for the display case outside our Legion and Auxiliary hall about Be the One or different things

using my scrapbooking skills. I am doing what I like to do.

Through my church, I know a woman who is a member of the Auxiliary. I was the poppy chair and knew she had helped with the Poppy Poster Contest. I asked her if she would take over the Poppy Poster Contest that we hadn't done for years, and she is still doing it. I told her if she does this, that would be the only thing she has to do. I'm not going to ask her to get involved in a bunch of other programs

— I am satisfied with what she is able to give.

You don't have to do everything. There are so many opportunities offered through the Auxiliary. We have 80 members in our unit — only about 10 show up to meetings and are active. Of the 10, half are not interested in leadership roles, but they are willing to assist with

fundraisers by donating time and talents where they can. Ten people can't do every single program, so we try to find out what members like to do, what skills they have, what their interests are, and then try to match those to one of the Auxiliary programs. If they get involved with just one thing that

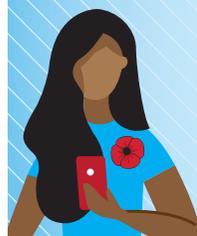
You don't have to do everything. There are so many opportunities offered through the Auxiliary.

means something to them, they are likely to get more involved over time.

Expecting too much from members who

have a busy life outside the Auxiliary isn't the way to get them involved. Let them evolve over time. By doing one thing, they may find something else the Auxiliary has to offer that interests them and they will get more involved — if not, count your blessings for what they are contributing to the Auxiliary and let it go.

Top 11 attributes of a great nonprofit leader:



1. Changemaker
2. Self-awareness
3. Agility
4. Empathy
5. Trust
6. Dedication
7. Persistence
8. Member focused
9. Financial literacy
10. Enthusiasm
11. Efficient communicator



Source: University of San Diego Professional and Continuing Education

ARIZONA UNIT'S SIMPLE IDEAS LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL POPPY DISTRIBUTION

Arizona Unit 115 in Glendale proves that by using basic ideas, units of any size can host successful poppy distribution events in their community. Last year, the unit held a poppy event at a local Fry's Food store the weekend before Veterans Day and collected \$320 for their poppy/welfare account.

"We are a small unit with only 32 members, but we are mighty," said Lori Muldner, unit president. "The members of our unit wanted an opportunity to share how The American Legion Family honors and supports our veterans, active-duty military, and their families in our community." Muldner said that through this activity, the unit was able to teach their community about the poppy and what it means to veterans.

Unit members started planning their poppy event by brainstorming what they could do at their activity, as well as possible locations where they could host it. Next, they worked with their local post and American Legion Riders to secure a Fry's grocery store where The American Legion Family had received permission to host activities.

Members set up an Auxiliary branded table at the grocery store and offered red crepe paper poppies and copies of the *In Flanders Fields* poem. Volunteers worked in shifts so that everyone had the opportunity to participate. In addition to red crepe paper flowers, the unit sold handmade crocheted poppies. When speaking to a passerby, members shared that any donations received would contribute directly to support programs aiding veterans and

military families in their local area.

They also used the opportunity for member recruitment by handing out informational brochures and membership applications to all who qualified. ALA Junior members got involved too — Christiana Talavera-Muldner participated as their poppy princess, wearing patriotic clothing, a poppy sash, and tiara.

Unit 115 plans to continue poppy distribution as an annual event on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Members involved



IMPORTANT FLOWER: ALA Junior member Christiana Talavera-Muldner (left) hands out a poppy to a passerby for Unit 115 during their poppy distribution event.

in putting the activity together were President Lori Muldner, Second Vice President Alisha Callahan, Chaplain Ruth Virgil-Kerr, Trinity Nickolas, and Junior member Christiana Talavera-Muldner.



Unit 115's tips on hosting poppy distribution events:

Partner with your American Legion post, Riders, and Sons. Check with your Legion Family to see who knows managers or individuals wanting to partner with your unit. Work with all members of your Legion Family to share ideas, find locations for events, and ways to fundraise.

Participate in shifts. If hosting a public event, it's important to offer shifts for your members so that everyone gets the opportunity to be involved and contribute.

Tell the public how your poppy funds will be used. Unit 115 shared the types of ways they planned to use the funds raised while handing out ALA At A Glance brochures and applications for The American

Legion Family to those who were eligible for membership.

Stand out and get noticed with ALA branded items. Wearing apparel emblazoned with the American Legion Auxiliary's name and logo is a great way to raise awareness of the ALA brand in your community — or get people curious enough to ask about our organization. Table covers, signs, apparel, and more can be found at American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales at emblem.legion.org.

To learn more about the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program and prepare for National Poppy Day® (May 23 this year), visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/National-Poppy-Day.



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



FOLLOW OUR ALA FACEBOOK GROUPS:

The ALA's national committee Facebook groups are online communities for ALA members to connect with one another, share ideas, ask questions, or discuss topics related to each committee. ALA Facebook groups provide members an arena for organic discussion about local programs or services and present the opportunity to cultivate ideas and brand awareness.

The groups are through the ALA National Headquarters' Facebook account and monitored by national staff and national committee chairs. The groups are private, so you do have to request to join.



SHARE AUXILIARY MAGAZINE IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

Finished reading *Auxiliary* magazine? Share it with others! After removing your address label, share it with your family or neighbors, or leave it at church or at a doctor's office!



NATIONAL POPPY DAY® TOOLS AVAILABLE FOR YOU!

Need last-minute poppy branding? Don't worry — we have you covered! The national website has poppy marketing resources available with the click of a few buttons. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org, log in to MyAuxiliary member portal, and click on the Poppy Committee page. Under Related Pages > Resources for Poppy Days, you'll find Poppy Day items that include the Poppy Kit. Download the materials you want and then print them!



COMING UP IN BETWEEN ISSUES OF AUXILIARY:

Before the next issue of *Auxiliary* hits your mailbox, view the latest updates from ALA National Headquarters digitally by following the ALA blog, social media (Facebook and Instagram handle: @ALAforVeterans), ALA eNews, and website. Here's a look at the next few months:

May 2025

- May 3-6: Department Leadership National Conference (DLNC) in Indianapolis
- May 9: National Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- May 11-18: National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Indianapolis #NVCAF
- May 10-17: Armed Forces Week
- May 17: Armed Forces Day

- May 23: National Poppy Day®
- May 26: Memorial Day June 2025

- June 6: Anniversary of the World War II Allied invasion in Normandy, France (D-Day)
- June 12: Women Veterans Day

- June 14: Flag Day
- June 14: U.S. Army's birthday
- June 27: National PTSD Awareness Day

July 2025:

- July 4: Independence Day

August:

- Aug. 4: U.S. Coast Guard birthday
- Aug. 7: Purple Heart Day
- Aug. 10: Agent Orange Awareness Day
- Aug. 22-28: ALA National Convention in Tampa Bay, Fla.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Check it out! ALA Poppy Coloring Book



Purchase online at emblem.legion.org or download free at www.ALAforVeterans.org/coloring-books.

“No one has ever become poor by giving.”

— Anne Frank, German diarist



May is a time of year when the poppy is distributed by American Legion Auxiliary members in communities across the country. This is like the Super Bowl for the Auxiliary. Members go out into small towns and big cities and talk about the poppy — the symbol of sacrifice our military has made — and inspire people to make a donation that will help our veterans, military, and their families. We all need that red flower to remind us to honor the fallen and support the living on National Poppy Day® and every day.

Above: Department of Connecticut ALA Unit 96 member Elaine Kotler with the Post 96 Color Guard at West Hartford's Annual Park Road Parade.

 **AMERICAN
LEGION**

AUXILIARY

American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters
3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268

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

More virtual meeting backgrounds



**We've updated our selection of virtual backgrounds!
Log in to the MyAuxiliary member portal and try them out
at your next ALA meeting.**

Download at www.ALAforVeterans.org.