

American Legion

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Auxiliary

February 2025 \$3.75



BRANDING AT ITS BEST

Patriotic products boost
Auxiliary image

AMERICAN LEGION

AUXILIARY



Photo: Hilary Ott/The American Legion

Are you a non-member reading this magazine?

The American Legion Auxiliary's membership includes male and female spouses, grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and direct and adopted female descendants of deceased veterans and today's members of The American Legion. Some of us are veterans ourselves.

Stop by www.ALAforVeterans.org to see how we support our mission of serving veterans, military, and their families.

Auxiliary *contents*

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Auxiliary units across the country help their American Legion post homes with renovations and fundraisers.

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American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales has hundreds of products for Auxiliary members, from apparel to jewelry to poppy items — helping us show our communities who we are.

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ON THE COVER: Branded shirts from American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales prominently showcase the Auxiliary's wordmark. To see a full list of all Auxiliary products sold by Emblem Sales, visit emblem.legion.org.

ABOVE: ALA Junior members and Sons of The American Legion youth made patriotic fans at this year's national Junior meetings. See page 8 in this issue of *Auxiliary* to learn more about the supplies required and how to make this craft with Junior members in your unit (photo: Aaron Meyer/ALANHQ).



MISSION EDUCATION:

National President Trish Ward and members use the ALA Challenge Deck of cards to collaborate, brainstorm, and execute the programs of the Auxiliary.

Connecting with American Legion Auxiliary grassroots members and sharing the priorities of the Department Excellence Initiative is a primary goal and focus for the 2024-2025 ALA administration. As I visit our departments and meet so many members, it is inspiring and encouraging to discuss opportunities where The American Legion Family can influence the outcome and improve the trajectory of membership in a positive way.

Traveling with a computer and projector, it's been amazing to deliver that message to some very small units — like Perkins-Plourde Unit 136 in Stockholm, Maine — as well as large gatherings like the Department of Florida's leadership conference. Whether it's 15 members or 300, I am ready to go and ready to deliver the message

to help our members and our organization get stronger.

We're having a great time, sharing excellent dialogue, engaging in compelling discussion, and having lots of fun. I've projected the presentation on as little as a sheet hanging from a wall, as well as large-format dual screens to a packed room. So, whatever the situation or wherever I am, the Department Excellence Initiative is front and center!

We're playing cards too! The American Legion Auxiliary

Challenge Deck is a great way to help our members and units get engaged and participate in projects and activities that support our mission. The best thing about the Challenge Deck is when you make a minimum donation to receive the cards, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Veteran Projects Fund wins too! All proceeds benefit the fund, so it's a win for our members, a win for the Foundation, and ultimately a win for those we serve! (Visit page 19 in this issue of *Auxiliary* to see how you can participate!)

It was humbling to attend the beautiful and solemn National Iraq - Afghanistan Memorial -

Remembering Our Fallen hosted by the Department of Delaware (visit www.patrioticproductions.org/rememberingourfallen to learn more). The memorial is a photographic experience with over 5,000 fallen and honors our country's military fallen from the Global War on Terror.

And it was an amazing time in Alabama where I had a meeting with Gov. Kay Ivey, a past American Legion Auxiliary Girls State citizen and ALA Girls Nation senator.

Members, units, and departments are accomplishing so much. I remain inspired by all you do in support of our goals and initiatives. Remember — as I share everywhere and often — the focus is on YOU and your good work as we “Lead the Way” to excellence through activism, engagement, and commitment. I will



see YOU on the trail as together, we make great things happen on behalf of our members and those we serve.

Trish Ward

Trish Ward
National President



National President Trish's first 150 days in office ... what's happened so far:

- 4 trips to Washington, D.C.
- Moderated 2 Mission Trainings
- Chaired 3 NEC meetings
- 5 times luggage overweight
- 1 time stuck in an elevator
- Over 45K airline miles
- 6 weeks in a boot with a broken foot
- 1 case of the norovirus
- Lots of drive miles
- Met hundreds of veterans
- Connected with tons of members
- Infinite amount of love for our mission

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BEHIND THE SCENES: ALA National Headquarters' Aaron Meyer photographs items for our feature on American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales. See page 32 for the full story.

There's a phrase we've all heard and know well: unconditional love. People usually use that term when describing pets, but there is some honesty and certainty with humans too. When it comes to American Legion Auxiliary members' love for veterans, military, and their families, it's definitely unconditional.

No strings attached.

When we were founded in 1919, hundreds of people immediately signed up for membership because they believed — unconditionally — in the mission and making sure our veterans were properly taken care of. It didn't matter how these veterans were injured or what ended their military careers — we just knew we needed to band together and advocate for them.

More than a century later, and we're still doing our thing. You'll recall how we frequently talk about how our mission has never changed. It's true for our volunteerism too. *Service Not Self*

isn't just a tagline in the ALA; it's a way of life for us.

Now, back to love. February is typically recognized as the month of love. How many greeting cards can your unit send to military, veterans, their families, and your fellow members? How many calls or texts do you think you can log for reaching out to those who may need a little lift in their spirits?

How many dollars can you donate to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation? We have 28 days.

Think about all of those people who joined our brand new organization in 1919. They got things done because they believed in our ALA, and they believed in our mission. Let's keep that 105-year-old momentum going.



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

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

February 2025

Published by

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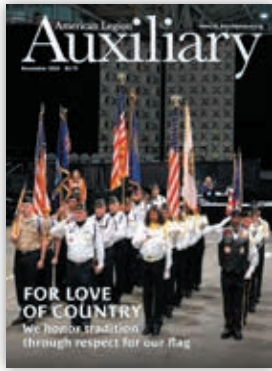
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Members continue supporting hurricane victims

We had talked a couple of years ago about our annual golf fundraiser, “Chip in for Vets”, which our unit has for a veterans community project (providing homes for homeless veterans).

Today I am contacting you because two members of our unit and their family donated an RV camper to homeless hurricane victims (a veteran in North Carolina) and it was delivered.

— Susan Panning, South Dakota

Helping others in the emergency room

Elmore Unit 26, Mountain Home, Idaho, prepares comfort bags containing a blanket, book, and stuffed animal. These bags are delivered to the emergency room at St. Luke’s Medical



Center. These comfort bags help ease the fear of the doctor, and comfort a crying child and

sometimes a stressed-out parent. The supplies are donated by our members. We have received many positive stories from the nurses in the ER concerning our comfort bags. The nurses let our unit know when their supplies are running low. We have delivered over 100 bags over the past year. We will continue this year as it helps keep our members involved with our presence in the community. This is a great Children & Youth program.

— Carmen Metzger, Idaho

What does your membership mean to you?

I joined the ALA to serve my community and to honor my father and his five brothers.

My father Arthur, a Navy Seabee, and his brothers Anthony, Harry, Lawrence, Louis, and Jack all served in World War II. Lawrence was the first to join. He was in the Navy at Pearl Harbor. His ship was The Tennessee. Jack, a Marine, was shot and received a Purple Heart. While overseas in the hospital, he said to his bunkmate, “Do you see that sailor walking over there? It looks like my brother Arthur.” And to his surprise and happiness, it was my father. All six brothers served honorably and safely returned home from the war.

Also, I honor my two brothers, Arthur, United States Marine, and Thomas, United States Army. They joined to serve America. I joined the American Legion Auxiliary to provide volunteer service and honor to them.

— Ann Schlinkert, Ohio

Fundraiser helps Maryland food bank

One of our yearly fundraisers includes collecting food and other goods to help the local food bank for needy families. Our amazing member, Deb Pittsnogle, sat out boxes. She collected multiple times a week. Other board members and ALA members did weekly raffles as well. Within only



one month of fundraising, we raised over \$700 to give to the Williamsport Food Bank in Williamsport, Md.

— Sarah Swan, Maryland

Regular unit activities benefit community

There are several things we do throughout the year to help our veterans and the community: Our food pantry allows us to keep our blessing box filled and to provide food boxes to our veterans; backpack program for the schools to make sure no child goes without supplies; help with the planning of the Memorial Day event; and the veterans in our area nursing facilities are shown a great holiday. The kids in our community come to the post for an afternoon with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

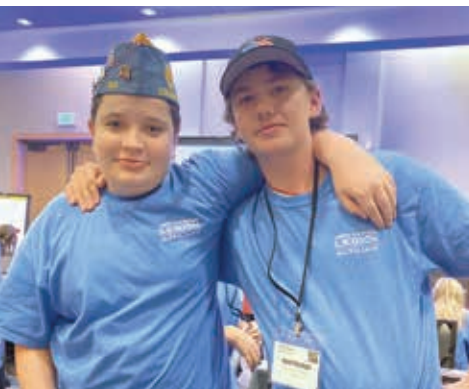
— Marsha Quinn, Tennessee

Correction: On page four of the November 2024 issue, we inadvertently printed a date as Sept. 4, 2023, when it should have read Sept. 4, 2024. We regret the error.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM you

Email: ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org or send letters to: ALA National Headquarters 3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268

Story and Photo Submissions: Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/Magazine for more details.



JUNIORS, SONS LEARN MORE ABOUT ALA MISSION AT NATIONAL JUNIOR MEETINGS

Young American Legion Family members attended the five national Junior meetings held during the 2024-2025 ALA administrative year. Participants had the chance to meet new friends, complete a mission-focused service project, play games, make crafts, and learn more about our organization and partnerships — plus, just tons of overall fun!

Juniors and Sons of The American Legion took part in icebreaker activities and learned

about the poppy and the national ALA's partnerships with Wreaths Across America and Honor Flight Network.

The service project during this administrative year's national Junior meetings was mail call cards for veterans attending future Honor Flights. Participants wrote inspirational messages and colored pictures on the cards for veterans to open while on their return flights with the program.

Two crafts were also made during the day-long event — patriotic fans and a zipper pull:



Patriotic Fans

SUPPLIES:

- ★ Paper handheld fans with wooden handle kit (can also use thick cardstock with paint stirrers for handles)
- ★ Markers, colored pencils, crayons
- ★ Patriotic embellishments such as stickers or washi tape
- ★ Double-sided tape

STEPS:

1. Decorate fans with design of your choice.
2. Fold in half.
3. Use double-sided tape to adhere fan to handle and seal folded sides together.



Patriotic Zipper Pull

SUPPLIES:

- ★ Swivel snap hooks
- ★ Patriotic ribbons: 1/8", 1/4", and 1/2" widths work best
- ★ Lighter (adult supervision required)

STEPS:

1. Cut ribbon into 12" pieces. You will need at least 4 pieces, but you can use as many as you like.
2. Have an adult use a lighter to melt the ends of the cut ribbons to prevent unraveling.
3. Use a cow hitch knot (also called a lark's head) to attach your ribbons to the hook.



HOW TO INCORPORATE MISSION-RELATED PROJECTS INTO YOUR JUNIOR ACTIVITIES

To instill a commitment to volunteerism and awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary mission, departments and units are encouraged to integrate mission-focused activities into their Junior Activities program — the focus being veterans, military, and their families.

Adopt a military family with a deployed family member

Work with your American Legion post or local U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs office to identify a family in your community.

- The Junior Activities chair should contact a family and introduce themselves as well as introduce the American Legion Auxiliary and explain our mission.
- Ask if you and a small group of Juniors can meet with the family to find out how the Juniors can help. Check to see if a senior member needs to be present for the family's comfort level or if Juniors can do the work on their own.
- Once the family agrees and you know the needs, create a calendar that specifies when Juniors will be at the home, how long they can stay, what they will be doing, and how many Juniors will be assisting.

- Be sure the family has the Junior Activities chair's contact information, as well as a copy of the calendar.
- Let the Juniors know this is their project and their responsibility to follow through on their assignments. Be sure you have backup Juniors scheduled in case something happens where a Junior can't make it.
- Suggested activities for the Juniors would be mowing the lawn, planting flowers in the yard or flower boxes, cleaning the house, babysitting (for an evening out or just for a short respite), or washing the car.
- Be sure you assign age-appropriate Juniors for the assigned task. Younger Juniors may not be able to handle complicated or strenuous activities. Have a start and an end date set clearly with the family. If you feel the need to continue services once the deployed family member is home, you can work something out with the family.

Mail for veterans and servicemembers

Many veterans and active military do not receive mail on a regular basis. Take the time to write them a note to let them know we are grateful for their service, and we support them.

- You may write letters or postcards. If you plan to keep it brief, a postcard is a better choice.

- When starting the letter, address the reader as Dear Veteran, Dear Servicemember, or Dear American Hero. Remember: If you address it to "soldier", that is a term used by the Army and your letters may go to a different branch of service.
 - Be sure Juniors do not sign their names or provide personal addresses. Correspondence should close with "Grateful Junior Member of the American Legion Auxiliary" and perhaps their first name.
 - When you send the letters, be sure to include an ALA logo, name, and address for return mail to let them know who is writing the letters.
 - For security reasons, it is best not to put the letters in individual envelopes when sending letters to servicemembers abroad.
 - Ask for a group photo of the servicemembers with their letters. The Juniors can then see how much their letters mean to our military.
 - Provide the Juniors with some patriotic stickers to add a personal flair to their letter.
 - Avoid the use of glitter.
- These are just a few ideas — there are many other projects you can do with your Juniors to emphasize our mission! Need more ideas? Reach out to JuniorActivities@ALAforVeterans.org.

PATCH PROGRAM CONTINUES TO BE CORNERSTONE OF JUNIOR ACTIVITIES



Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary, as well as school-aged Sons of The American Legion who often work alongside Juniors, may earn patches for activities in ALA programs,

such as Poppy, Leadership, Americanism, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, and more. Participating in the ALA Patch Program is a terrific way to be involved in learning about the Auxiliary and our Legion Family, volunteering in the community, and serving our country's veterans.

After earning patches, it can

sometimes be difficult to decide how to display them. Junior member Teriana displays her patches on an American Legion Riders vest.

PATCH PROGRAM LEVELS:

- ★ **Purple: Pre-school age 3 to kindergarten**
- ★ **Red: 1st to 4th grade**
- ★ **Gold: 5th to 8th grade**
- ★ **Blue: 9th to 12th grade**

“For me, the Honor Guard is an incredible way to say ‘Thank you’ — ‘Thank you for all you did for our country.’”

COURTNEY McMANUS



American Legion Family members nationwide honor the service and sacrifices of veterans by serving in Honor Guards. Those who volunteer to be part of an Honor Guard are fulfilling an important role. Imagine if you went to a military funeral and there wasn't a rifle salute, you didn't hear *Taps*, and there was no one to fold the flag and present it to the family. Imagine being at a parade and no one is marching with the American flag. You may not think of them every day, but Honor Guards are deeply important when it comes to honoring the men and women who served this country.

One of those volunteers is Georgia ALA Unit 42 member Courtney McManus: the first female member of Post 42's Honor Guard in spring 2024.

McManus joined the ALA more than nine years ago to honor the service of her grandfather, U.S. Air Force veteran Robert Rydell, and other family members. Recently, she found extra free time and decided to use that time to give back to veterans in Georgia by joining the Honor Guard.

What motivated you to join the Honor Guard?

The motivation to join was simple. Our Honor Guard had several Legionnaires who had

to step down for health reasons. It was sometimes difficult for them to have enough volunteers to shoot, fold, and call the bugle. The Sons were asked to pitch in, and my husband joined. So, I then asked the director, Jack Pierce, if I might be able to join as well. After a training session, I was in. My marching band and hunter safety courses paid off.

What does being a member of the Honor Guard mean to you?

For me, the Honor Guard is an incredible way to say “Thank you” — “Thank you for all you did for our country.” I also feel it gives families incredible closure for their loved one. It is a very powerful and emotional ceremony our veterans deserve.

What is your favorite thing about being part of the Honor Guard?

Our team! I have become very close with them. They accepted my skills and let me help; and for that, I am honored.

Any advice for other ALA members interested in joining an Honor Guard?

Reach out to your group and ask if they need help. You won't know until you try. My family has always encouraged me to never be afraid to try new things. This endeavor is one I am so glad I sought out!



HONORING VETERANS: Georgia ALA Unit 42 member Courtney McManus is the first female member of Post 42's Honor Guard.



Are you an ALA member who participates in your American Legion post's Honor Guard? Tell us about it! Email us at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org.

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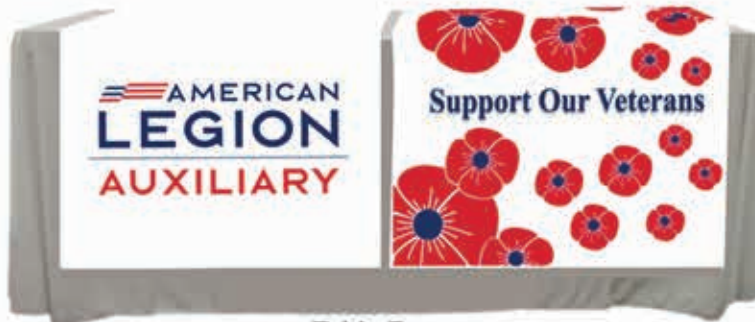


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**“Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles,
leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive
at its destination full of hope.”**

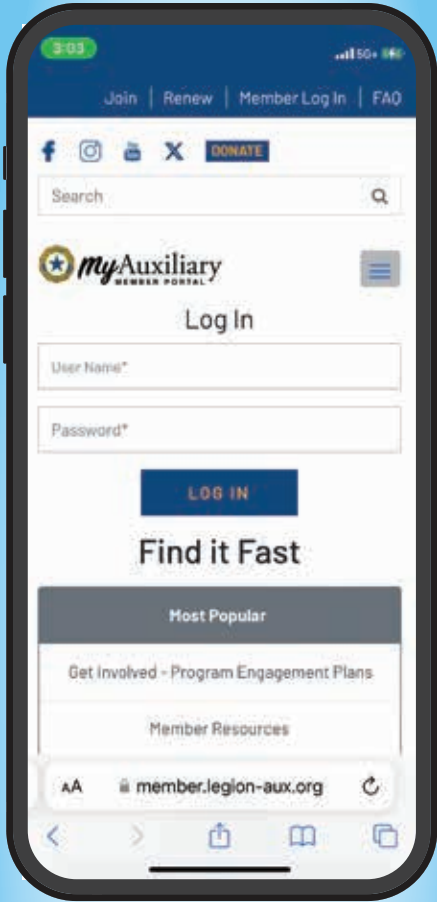
— Maya Angelou, American memoirist and poet



Love is powerful — love of people, love of community, self-love. In the world today, love isn't always as easy to come by as it should be. We struggle to give love at times. But loving our mission? That's easy. American Legion Auxiliary members love our veterans, military, and their families. We will continue to spread love to those who served, those who still serve, and those who will serve our country. That is a never-ending kind of love.

Above: Sgt. Alyssa Trimble hugs her daughter Addison at Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee. People welcomed soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, after seven months stationed in Kuwait (Mike De Sisti/Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel via AP).

Find it Fast!



Guides, marketing templates, program engagement plans, and more! It's all in the MyAuxiliary member portal.

Go to ALAforVeterans.org and click Member Log In.

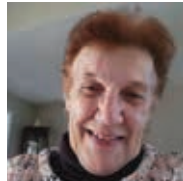


What is your favorite ALA program that you participate in and why?



"Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation because I love serving and spending time with our veterans and seeing the smile on their faces."

— Julie Smith, North Carolina



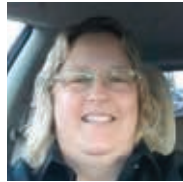
"Membership is my favorite. It's challenging and at the department level, we can work individually with the districts and units personally. With a strong membership, we can accomplish anything."

— Deb Chambers, Alabama



"ALA Girls State. I love the opportunity to teach and mold the future generation of leaders. They will take the future generation far, and it starts with this great program."

— Janice Boyer, Pennsylvania



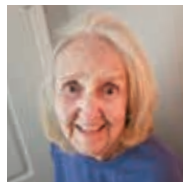
"Children & Youth. I love interacting with children (Juniors and young Sons). When my son joined the U.S. Marines and was deployed, I wanted to make sure young families were taken care of. I love promoting the military child's table."

— Mary Sypherd, Iowa



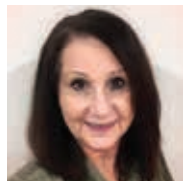
"Community Service is closest to my heart, especially after witnessing Hurricane Ian destroy our communities and five out of 15 American Legion posts in our district. What was so devastating was overshadowed by the support our units, districts, department, and National provided."

— Jan Farrington, Florida



"My favorite program is Community Service. It attracts people who have no idea what the ALA is all about, and gives us an opportunity to volunteer with people who are in our city and include us in their programs."

— Linda Ruyle, Arizona



"Poppy and Americanism. Both are grounded in patriotism, honor, and loyalty."

— Dixie Hutson Thornton, Mississippi



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MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS IN RECOVERY EFFORTS

During times of natural disasters, American Legion Auxiliary members step up to help. This was evident during the 2024 hurricane season as many members were affected by hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Florida members gather to promote AEF

On a Sunday last October, several ALA members from various units in Florida gathered at Post 252 in Seminole. Their purpose — to help ALA members recovering from damage caused by Hurricane Helene apply for grants from the national Auxiliary Emergency



Fund (AEF) and the department's AEF programs. As they were helping these members, another hurricane — Milton — was forecasted to make landfall in just a few days.

It wasn't the first time Florida members had heard about the AEF, thanks to the department's proactive work in spreading the word.

"We start in July at our Department Workshop explaining the requirements for both department and national AEF," said Mary Kelly Perkins, Florida department secretary.

Assisting with applications was one of the many ways



TO THE RESCUE: Unit members in Florida, pictured above and below, help ALA members impacted by hurricanes Helene and Milton.

members helped. Since the hurricanes, units have held various fundraisers and volunteers have found ways to help with daily needs.

"Members donated dinners, clothing, and even furniture to members who suffered losses from both hurricanes," said Perkins. Volunteers also provided rides and shelter for those in need.

Some post home buildings received hurricane damage, but that didn't stop their members from helping. Those members held fundraisers to restore the posts while they continued to host food drives and give to the community.

Helping recovery efforts in North Carolina

Heavy rains and flooding from Hurricane Helene caused massive damage in western North Carolina. Residents lost electricity, water, and communications. Blocked and washed-out roads prevented many residents from getting help and leaving their homes.

American Legion Family members found a variety of ways to help.

"We collected housewares, water, winter clothing, coats, gloves, scarves, hats, and blankets at units and posts throughout the state," said Toni Reale, Department of North Carolina president. "Units in other areas paid the dues for those units and donated to their department financial obligations. We have encouraged units to donate to the AEF, and many have. We are prepared to assist them in applying for funds."

Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF) grants are available for ALA members



AEF is a national grant assistance program that provides financial assistance to eligible members of the American Legion Auxiliary who have endured a significant setback as the result of an act of nature or other personal crisis. Grants may be awarded up to \$3,000. For more information or to apply, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/AEF.



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KEY TAKEAWAYS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

So nice, we're running it twice! Although we published this article in a previous issue of Auxiliary magazine, this important information bears repeating. To help you prepare for your department convention, we are sharing tips on what to do before, during, and after to get the most out of your business meeting.

After we get through the cold winter months, spring and summer will signal convention season for the American Legion Auxiliary. Governing documents play a lead role at convention, so we've come up with a quick checklist to help you prepare, conduct, and close the governance business of your 2025 department convention.

Prior to department convention:

- Review your governing documents and identify any areas that need to be updated (check state statutes, nonprofit laws, and corporate and solicitation of donations). Be sure to check the Constitution & Bylaws section at www.ALAforVeterans.org for a list of changes to the national Constitution & Bylaws and Standing Rules since December 2024.
- Set reasonable due dates and expectations from the date of the convention meeting for submission and review to prepare the materials. Prepare a communication plan.
- Provide a template to draft proposed changes on a three-column amendment form

(found on the C&B page of the national website), including detailed rationale (reasons) for the proposed change.

- Have a leadership group review the packet materials before distribution to ensure the agenda and documents align with the order of business.
- Host a virtual Q&A for members to ask clarifying questions prior to the vote at department convention. This will help prepare to present clarification points.
- Distribute proposed amendments to membership in preparation of the department convention vote per the required date in your governing documents.

During department convention:

- Have copies of proposed amendments on hand for members to review.
- Consider options for “live editing” on your convention screens. This allows members to see any changes made to the proposed amendments in real time.
- Utilizing electronic voting on-site? The chair should announce the outcome of each vote in true numbers, not percentages. For example, the chair would announce that the vote was “60 in favor and 40 opposed.”
- When a voice vote is close



and a member does not agree with how the chair calls it, the member can say “Division,” and the chair is required to do a visual vote (standing or hands raised). If a member wants a counted vote, they must make a motion to do a counted vote. The motion does require a second and is not debatable.

- Be sure to include the voting totals in the department convention meeting minutes.

After department convention:

- Make all necessary updates to the governing documents following the convention votes.
- Communicate the outcome — adopted, opposed, or tabled — of the governing document amendments to all members.
- If your unit/department has a website, consider posting a list of all amendments to the governing documents and an updated version of the full document to the unit/department website so members can download the most up-to-date version.
- Have a Minutes Review Committee edit and approve the convention minutes in a timely manner. Make the finalized convention minutes available to members via the website or other reliable communication methods.



Do you have questions about the ALA's Constitution & Bylaws program?
Email ConstitutionBylaws@ALAforVeterans.org for answers!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED

Every day, members of The American Legion Family find ways to support, honor, and remember those who have served our country. There are museums and memorials across the nation dedicated to Black Americans who have served in every major conflict in the United States since the American Revolution. We've compiled a list of a few you can visit:

African American Military History Museum

305 E. Sixth St., Hattiesburg, Miss.
www.HattiesburgUSO.com

Located inside a historic USO building, this museum highlights the service of African Americans, from the American Revolution through modern-day conflicts. While looking at the artifacts, photos, and displays, visitors will learn about the first Black naval aviator, the more than 500 Black World War II nurses, and more.

Tuskegee Airmen National Museum at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

315 E. Warren, Detroit, Mich.
www.tuskegeemuseum.org

This museum captures the history of the Tuskegee Airmen — the first all African American fighter pilot squadron. Visitors look back at the accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen while looking forward to the future of aviation. Through youth programs, the museum inspires and educates the next



MONUMENT OF THE 6888TH: This memorial honors World War II Women's Army Corps unit — the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion (photo: Keith L. Pope, Photographics and Graphics Design. Statue by Mr. Eddice Dixon. Copyrighted by: The 6888th Monument Committee).

generation of aviators and aerospace enthusiasts.

Buffalo Soldiers Museum

3816 Caroline St., Houston, Texas
www.BuffaloSoldiersMuseum.org

Visitors to this museum will learn about the African American regiments of the United States Army that served the American frontier. The Buffalo Soldiers were part of six segregated regiments in 1866 created to help rebuild after the Civil War. They were nicknamed the Buffalo Soldiers by the Native Americans who fought against them.

African American Veterans Monument

1 Marine Drive, Buffalo, N.Y.
www.aavmwny.org

This monument, located at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, recognizes the contributions of African

Americans who have served and are serving in all branches of the military. The monument recognizes the dates of the nation's 12 military conflicts and the longitude coordinates that represent the location where each conflict began.

The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion Monument

290 Stimson Ave., Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
www.womenofthe6888th.org

This monument at Fort Leavenworth honors the World War II Women's Army Corps (WAC) unit — the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. This unit was comprised predominantly of Black women with Mexican, Puerto Rican, and other ethnic groups. During WWII, the unit's mission was to support the war by lifting morale by sorting, repackaging, and redirecting millions of mail parcels backlogged in England and France for two to three years. The monument is in the Buffalo Soldier Monument Park at Fort Leavenworth. Other monuments honoring African American individuals are also in the park.



Coming in July 2025

African American Civil War Memorial and Museum
1925 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington, D.C.

This Washington, D.C. Museum is currently undergoing renovations and an expansion. The target date for reopening is July 2025. If you're in the area, you can still visit the memorial across the street. The Spirit of Freedom is a 9-foot bronze statue to honor the service and sacrifice of the over 200,000 African Americans who served in the U.S. Army and Navy during the Civil War.



RECOGNIZING OUR MILITARY: U.S. Coast Guard servicemembers participate in an Independence Day Parade on Alameda Island, Calif., on July 4, 2023 (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Hunter Schnabel).

MONTH OF MAY BRINGS SEVERAL MILITARY-RELATED RECOGNITION DAYS

There are celebratory days throughout the year that are tied to our military — from each branch’s birthday to Veterans Day and more, the calendar is full.

The month of May alone has several. Here’s a closer look:

Military Spouse Appreciation Day

The Friday before Mother’s Day — May 9 this year — honors the commitment and sacrifice our spouses of servicemembers make day in and day out while their loved one is away. The day was first observed in 1984.

Along with tremendous strength and love of country, military spouses often endure job losses, must adjust to new environments, and learn survival skills with the frequent and often unexpected developments that come with being a servicemember’s spouse.

Armed Forces Day

Held annually on the third Saturday in May, Armed Forces Day will be celebrated on May 17 this year.

The importance of Armed Forces Day is to honor our

military and acknowledge everything they do to protect this great country.

Some ways to commemorate this important day: flying the American flag; wearing red, white, and blue; donating to military support organizations like the American Legion Auxiliary; attending an Armed Forces Day parade; sending a care package to a servicemember away from home; or simply saying “Thank you” to a military servicemember.

National Poppy Day®

Poppy Day is celebrated in countries around the world. The American Legion Family brought National Poppy Day® to the United States by asking Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day. This year, it falls on May 23.

The red poppy has been a nationally recognized symbol of sacrifice worn by Americans since World War I to honor those who served and died for our country in all wars. 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 personnel, and their families with medical and financial needs.

Memorial Day

Memorial Day honors the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. For many of us, it’s a day off work or school and the unofficial start to summer. Before firing up the barbecue or taking a dip in the swimming pool May 26, consider paying your respects to our fallen heroes by taking part in a Memorial Day event around your community. Here are some ideas:

Attend a Memorial Day ceremony



Most communities host some type of Memorial Day ceremony. By doing a Google search or checking your local news outlets, you can find out what’s going on in your area.

Place a flag/poppy on the graves of veterans



Check to see if a group in your community has organized plans to decorate the graves of fallen servicemembers. Review and adhere to cemetery guidelines.

Observe the National Moment of Silence at 3 p.m.



Congress passed The National Moment of Remembrance Act to honor America’s fallen heroes. Per the law, Americans — wherever they are at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day — are encouraged to pause for one minute as part of an act of national unity.

**AMERICAN
LEGION
AUXILIARY
FOUNDATION**

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.





FAMILY LEGACY: clockwise, from left: Sarah Wiederstein, Karen Ripperger's daughter and ALA member, Ripperger, and Frances Prueitt, Ripperger's mother and ALA member who passed away in 2020.

ENCOURAGING CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP BEYOND A LOVED ONE'S DEATH IS A GROUP EFFORT

While no official numbers are available, the anecdotal evidence is clear: Many in the American Legion Auxiliary are members thanks to the financial generosity of family members.

What happens following the death of a family member who covered ALA dues for one or more of their loved ones? ALA Department of Iowa Chaplain Karen Ripperger said that too often, the answer is the surviving members — some of whom don't even realize their loved one paid their dues — simply allow their

ALA membership to lapse.

And that is a missed opportunity for the family to honor the legacy of the ALA member who passed away. When memberships end, so does the legacy of service.

"It's a trend I see all the time," said Ripperger, a member of ALA Unit 211 in Woodward, Iowa, and a former District 6 president. She described a typical encounter in these situations: "I ask, 'Are you a member of the American Legion Auxiliary?' and the response is, 'Well, I used to be, but my mom passed away, and she was paying for it.'"

To reverse this trend and ensure continued support of the ALA's mission, Ripperger recommended a group effort that includes all levels of the organization. Following are four actions ALA units and members can take while also keeping in mind the importance of letting time pass for grieving and healing:

Use teamwork. Ripperger suggested each unit assemble a committee — likely including the chaplain and membership chair — to recognize ALA members' deaths, connect with loved ones, and send messages of condolence. That same group can spearhead efforts to extend the opportunity for surviving members to continue their ALA membership.

Collect data. Ripperger advocates for maintaining records about which ALA members pay the dues of their loved ones. This data can help ALA units identify when it's appropriate to contact family members about continuing their own membership.

Maintain relationships. Members should maintain relationships with surviving

members, using multiple forms of communication to check in on them following their loss, and recognizing their loved one's support for veterans, military, their families, and communities.

Encourage support. At membership renewal time, Ripperger suggested that ALA units send a brief letter to surviving family members that again offers condolences, encourages continued membership, and provides information about how to renew, keeping in mind the time needed for the grieving process. She suggested adjusting the text according to the members' own personal information and background:

Dear Family Members:

We're so sorry that [NAME] passed away. As you know, s/he was very active with our local unit of the American Legion Auxiliary.

S/he believed so much in the ALA that s/he paid for his/her family members too. With her/his passing, we'd like you to personally consider renewing your membership to honor her/him.

Your loved one touched so many lives. It may bring comfort that you continue your membership to create a legacy to remember.

Sincerely, Unit [UNIT NUMBER]

"This is a relationship organization," Ripperger said, "and those relationships need to continue even when we have members who pass away."

SIMPLE GOES A LONG WAY IN ENRICHING MEMBERSHIP



Recruiting and retaining American Legion Auxiliary members is important throughout the membership year. Without members, we wouldn't be an organization.

Membership is in everything — every program, every event, every engagement, every personal encounter. All of it.

For most Auxiliary members, renewing year after year is a given and they don't need a nudge on why their membership matters. For others, it takes more convincing, more encouraging to sign up for another year — for various reasons. No matter the case, every member matters because collectively, we make a difference, and together, we can better serve our veterans, military, and their families.

Handwritten notes can go a long way

Have you ever thought what it might mean to a member if you included a thank-you note in each

member's renewal?

April Sinclair, 2024-2025 national Membership Committee chair, writes notes to every member of her unit in Alaska, thanking them for their renewal. It's a tedious but rewarding process, she said.

"It's the simple things in life that grab the attention of individuals," Sinclair said.

"Each year, at least one member will provide feedback, saying 'Thank you' for the note received with their membership card, and that it meant so much to them. You never know the one person you touch — it may be the member who will

want to be involved more or the one where the note has touched them in ways where no one will ever understand."

A simple phone call

Just like taking time to write a note, a phone call can go a long way for our members. For some, this is the form of communication they want. This personal touch helps them feel connected to the Auxiliary and inspired to renew for another year so their dues can assist the mission.

The American Legion's Buddy Check program has been very successful with checking on members looking out for each other and ALA units can implement a similar concept and check up on members at designated times each year before membership renewal time.

"It's the simple things — although simple — that go a very long way," Sinclair said.



Need ideas from other units and departments on how to enhance, boost, retain, and reclaim membership? Request to join the national Membership Committee's Facebook group at www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAmembership.



FILLING A NEED: ALA Unit 186 members on the back deck to The Compass, a shelter for veterans and families. The new housing addition was made possible through a Veteran Projects Fund grant.

ALA FOUNDATION GRANTS \$10,000 FOR EXPANSION OF TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FACILITY

To address homelessness in the Grand Strand areas of Horry County, S.C., American Legion Auxiliary Unit 186 was awarded a \$10,000 Veteran Projects Fund grant from the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation to complete a room addition to the veteran’s building at The Compass. Formerly North Strand Housing Shelter, The Compass provides emergency and transitional shelter for veterans, families with children, and individuals, helping them regain independence to re-enter the community.

In addition to providing shelter, The Compass also provides mental health services, case management support, spiritual wellness opportunities, and life skills for their residents. This is the second Veteran Projects Fund grant awarded to

ALA Unit 186 for a project at The Compass. The first was for materials to build a wheelchair ramp for the veteran’s building, which was constructed on Sept. 9, 2017, as part of the shelter’s National Day of Service and Remembrance Project.

The room addition to the veteran’s building is about more than just increasing capacity; it expands the facility’s ability to serve residents.

The addition is being used to accommodate child care for resident parents working nights or weekends and as a separate area for classes, counseling, and medical visits. Prior to having this additional space, veteran residents had to use their personal rooms for counseling and medical visits, as well as social visits from family and friends.

ALA Unit 186 has been involved with The Compass since its opening in December 2010.

ALA Foundation Board of Directors Secretary Anne Parker knew Executive Director Dana Black from church and joined The Compass’ board of trustees as their secretary. Black reached out to Parker for help with accounting software QuickBooks, and 14 years later, Parker remains an active member of the board. Black joined the Auxiliary in 2012, eligible under her father’s military service, and she serves as Unit 186 chaplain.

When unit members are not garnering financial support for The Compass, they are active in collecting paper goods and volunteering their time.



ALA Foundation’s Veterans Day of Giving 2024 Honorees

AD3 Sue McLendon
Alexander MacInnes
All military branches
All veterans
Allan G. Josephson
Bob Fleege
Bob Schuchardt
Capt. Melvin Shahin
Charles C. Bingham
Charles E. Grout
Charles H. Empley
Col (Ret.) John J. Hassett
Commander William Hanley
CSM (Ret.) Mack F. Rice Sr.
Dewie Jordan
Donald L. Fish
Donald L. Getz
Donald Palmer Oliphant
Donald William MacLeod
Erick Michaud
Everett Gordee
Frank Harley
G. Michael Long
Gary L. D. Haas
George Koski
George T. Dorsey

Isaac Threte Jr.
James Troglia - WWII
Jasen Golden
John C. and Lois A. Freitag
John L. Pritchett
John R. Wilson
John T. Bonaventura
John Wright
Joseph C. Downing
Joseph Spejewski
Kenneth J. Zimmerman
Kent P. Larsen
Kevin Nolan & Joseph Fant
Leo David L’Esperance
Loial Haas
Lt. Col. Justin Todd Floyd
Manuel G. Ramos
Max Edward Darby, SMSGT
Mervin Buck
Merwyn B. Burton
Michael K. Foley
Michael P. Coggins
Michele Longenderfer
MSG David Eugene House (Ret.) — Maryland
Myron Young

Nancy Brown-Park
Patricia Bauer
Peter Crowley
Preston John Dennis
Ray Clark
Robert F. Wallace
Robert J. Carns
Robert J. Bal
Robert L. Taborek
Roland Duscheck
Ross W. Guy
Rudy Kraemer
Russell L. Doris
Ryan Ayers
Samuel S. Mondello
Shane Fable
& John Quinn
Stephen D. Hooper
Talbert Lee Baggett
Thomas Biddle
Timothy P. Trant
Weldon and Frances Bellah
William R. Bishop
WWMorningstar
Zelensky St. John



VOLUNTEERING FOR VETERANS

Tips on where to go when you want to help

Answering the call of *Service Not Self* is a core value of the American Legion Auxiliary — it motivates our members into action and pushes us to advance the mission.

Volunteering for veterans is a way to show appreciation for the sacrifices they made for us and our great nation. Every day, ALA members demonstrate compassion and gratitude to veterans in a variety of ways that make a positive impact in their lives ... and ours.

“Volunteering for veterans is infectious — once you start volunteering, it’s hard to stop,” said ALA Department of Illinois member Patricia Kranzow. “Volunteers often get as much benefit from the experience as the veterans they serve.”

However, for some ALA members, it may be hard to volunteer at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center because the closest one is far away, or they are physically unable to serve in person. Don’t be discouraged — there are still ways to contribute to the cause.

Community Based Outpatient Clinics. CBOCs offer the most common outpatient services (like health and wellness checks) to provide routine appointments in a more convenient location. To find a

clinic, visit www.va.gov/find-locations.

Vet Centers. These facilities provide community-based counseling, outreach, and referral services for veterans. For more information about Vet Centers or to find locations, visit www.vetcenter.va.gov.

Compassionate Contact Corps. This is a virtual social program where volunteers are assigned to veterans who are socially isolated or experiencing loneliness. The volunteer calls the veteran weekly for 15 to 60 minutes to provide a form of socialization and companionship over a phone or video call. This is similar to The American Legion Buddy Check program. For more info about the program, visit www.volunteer.va.gov/cc.asp.

Veterans Creative Arts Festival. ALA members play a large role in competitions held nationwide. Members have been big supporters of local showcases through volunteering. If your VA facility does not currently host a local Veterans Creative Arts Festival, contact a VA staff member who instructs creative arts and recreational therapy or a voluntary services coordinator.

Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service. VAVS supports VA and Veterans Health Administration strategic goals by recruiting, supporting, and retaining a workforce of volunteers to assist management in the delivery of VA health care by improving access to care, assisting with long-term care, improving patient satisfaction, and much more. More details are at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Holiday Shop Helpers. During the holiday gift-giving season, many veterans don’t have the means to buy presents for their loved ones, so organize a holiday shop at your American Legion post home or a supportive health care facility. These shops allow veterans to select gifts to give their loved ones. If someone already hosts a Holiday Shop, donate items, wrap gifts to display, or mail them. You can also use this idea for other holidays.

ALA military/veteran service:



- Hours serving veterans/military: **3,740,088**
- Dollars raised/spent on veterans, military, and their families (veterans/active duty/reserve): **\$8,014,491**
- Dollars raised/spent on veterans, military, and their families (military families): **\$1,474,067**
- **TOTAL REPORTED: Dollars raised/spent for veterans, military, and their families: \$14,280,608**

Source: ALA 2023-2024 Impact Report



TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS: American Legion Family members attend an Indiana District 11 meeting. The district level connects units and departments.

HOW ALA'S INTERMEDIATE BODIES LIKE DISTRICTS MATTER TO OUR MISSION

Most American Legion Auxiliary members know there are a few different levels in the ALA — unit; local; department; state; and national is national. But what about the district level?

An important bridge between units and departments

“The districts in Indiana support the department leaders and their goals by disseminating their needs and progress to our units, and supporting our units to achieve their unit goals and the goals of the department,” said Melissa Clawson, Indiana District 11 president.

ALA districts, also referred to as counties or councils in some states, represent units, and the district has a voice to ensure our organization exists for another century, Clawson added. Active members at the district level attend department conferences, annual department conventions, and ALA National Convention to make certain all changes to the Constitution & Bylaws are fair and equitable for units, departments, and the national organization.

Leadership positions at the district level are the same as positions at national, department, and unit levels.

It's important for the ALA to have districts, Clawson said.

“Without the district level, there would be a lot more work for the department leaders to do,” she said. “Or there would be less support for our units that do amazing grassroots work for our veterans, military, and their families on top of supporting department goals.”

There are many benefits to having a district level as part of the overall structure of the ALA organization.

“The biggest benefit is to department leaders,” Clawson said.

The ALA's district level is often a steppingstone for members interested in pursuing department- and national-level positions.

“As similar as things are from level to level, they are that much different,” Clawson said. “With so much to learn — from running a meeting to conflict resolution to learning parliamentary procedure and many, many other skills needed — getting your ‘feet wet’ is very much a requirement if you want to be a successful leader on the next level. Learning the ALA way is also its own map to navigate, but having the ALA Academy sure does help.”

Clawson offers advice for what all members can do to support the district level, which, in turn, helps all levels of the Auxiliary.

“Attend district meetings,” she encouraged. “For some reason, there is this myth that if the district is involved, the unit is ‘in trouble.’ Nothing could be further from the truth, and if more unit members attended our district meetings, they would see our purpose as a district is to support our department and our units however we can.”

How we're structured: Levels of the American Legion Auxiliary



- Unit (over 7,000 in the U.S. and other countries)
- Intermediate bodies: District/county/council (varies per state)
- Department (52)

- Division (5)
 - National (headquartered in Indianapolis)
- Learn more: www.ALAFORVeterans.org/about/organizational-structure.

Did you know?

Most districts don't receive membership dues and/or assessments. Costs must be covered without those funds.

Example of main expenses:

- Administrative costs of running the district.
- Supporting department and

district president's focus area(s).

- Travel and hotel stays for delegates who represent units at department conferences, department conventions, and the ALA National Convention.
- Annual department visitation.
- Help fund programs of the national organization.

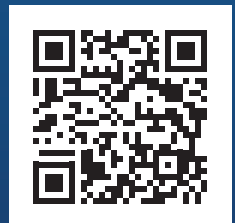
Make A Difference Every Month

- Do More
 - Do Less
 - Do More With Less
- 

Benefits of Monthly Giving

- 1. SET IT AND FORGET IT**
Monthly donations are automatic.
Simply enter your credit card information once and you're all set!
- 2. JOIN AN EXCLUSIVE COMMUNITY**
When you make monthly gifts, it helps you stay connected with the ALA and know where your money goes.
- 3. MAKE A LITTLE GO A LONG WAY**
You can choose your monthly gift to start as low as \$10/month and 100% of your donation is tax deductible.

Become a monthly donor today by scanning the QR code below or by visiting www.ALAforVeterans.org/donate.





Home Sweet Home

*Units help renovate
and revitalize their post homes*

By Sara Fowler

American Legion post homes serve as a gathering place for members of The American Legion Family to conduct business meetings, host community outreach events, and continue serving our veterans, military, and their families in many ways.

There are more than 12,000 local posts in communities throughout the world. Within those walls are varied services like hall rentals and canteens, as well as planning for programs such as American Legion Baseball, Legion and ALA Girls State, Legion Riders, American Legion Oratorical Contest, and more to benefit veterans, military, their families, and the local community.

Just like your home, the post needs routine maintenance as well — roof, kitchen, chairs, paint, and more. Because we're an American Legion Family, Auxiliary units often help with those projects — hosting fundraisers on a regular basis to upgrade the post home — so these buildings can continue serving our collective missions.

ALA members nationwide are happy to assist with these improvements because doing so helps everyone. From increasing membership to boosting morale to being known as a welcoming place in our communities, regularly taking care of the post benefits all who walk through its doors.

A few ALA members shared with *Auxiliary* magazine about their post home revitalization and maintenance efforts, showcasing the importance of the Legion Family.

Unit 19: Midland, Texas Jane Bennett

Helping its post home with building projects has been a proud part of Texas Unit 19's role. Members have hosted hundreds of fundraisers and solicited donations to remodel two hallway bathrooms to make them ADA compliant.

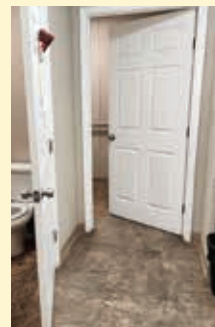
"We completely gutted these rooms, replaced flooring, vanities, and toilet stalls," said Unit 19 President Jane Bennett, who's also a former interior designer. "We constructed specific accessible rooms in each bathroom and added a dressing area in the ladies' room for events/rentals with full-length mirrors."

Their most recent project was to raise enough money to paint the back meeting hall in a sandy color and paint the acoustic ceiling in black.

"We love the new paint and lighting in the back hall, which is where we hold all of our post meetings and conventions, bingo, events like Veterans Night Out dances and karaoke contests, and the annual chili cookoff," Bennett said.

After that update, the Family realized the old light fixtures were mismatched, so the unit solicited donations to update the 18 fixtures to LED to make everything uniform.

"They also help with electricity costs for the post in actual cost to operate and help with air conditioning costs in our long, hot summers because



UNIT 19, TEXAS:
This unit has helped its post home financially with many different needs, ranging from remodeling bathrooms to make them ADA compliant to new paint to updated light fixtures.

they put off no heat,” she added. “We also raised money to replace all of the folding chairs in our meeting hall and purchased black leather executive office chairs for our canteen. We are currently looking at replacing our barstools in the canteen.”

The unit also helped pay for plumbing repairs in the post building.

To help finance post home projects, Unit 19 hosts fundraisers throughout the year to secure monies to make the needed improvements:

- They rent out the back hall for Auxiliary bingo three nights a week, a year-round fundraiser. Bingo sessions are open to the public and are heavily advertised.
- Annual Holiday Marketplace and Food Drive brings in between \$3,000 and \$4,000 with vendors, food, music, a bake sale, and raffle baskets.
- Lotto hats, stuffed cooler raffles, and gift card hats with cards are donated from local businesses.
- Bake sales and cake auctions in the canteen raise extra money for post projects.

- Work with Lowe’s, Home Depot, and Ace Hardware for huge discounts on supplies and products. Local contractors and craftspeople will usually give great discounts or donate their time if the unit asks.

- Hosted a “Tejano Night” dance on the post patio to raise money to fix plumbing issues. The unit sold food plates, had a DJ donate his time, offered raffle items, and had about 70 people attend.

- Host monthly “Auxiliary Burger Nights” in the canteen on Legion meeting nights to help get more members out for the meeting and raise money for canteen improvements.

The unit’s favorite post project so far: hallway bathrooms “that are now beautiful and accessible to all.”

“These are used every day by members, visitors, and event attendees,” Bennett said. “We have many members who are in wheelchairs, use walkers or canes, or just have trouble walking or getting up.”

Being part of the community is always on Unit 19’s radar. They host or participate in several events,

“Supporting our post should feel like a collaborative effort, not a burden”



UNIT 138, FLORIDA: The post home for this unit was hit hard by two hurricanes back to back. Members got to work right away, hosting fundraisers in the parking lot during rebuilding and renovations.

including Family Days, chili cookoff, Operation Homefront, Meals on Wheels, and more. Because they host some of these events, the revitalization of the post home has been incredibly important to the entire Family.

Unit 138: Tampa, Fla. **Dawn Davis**

Florida Post 138 was devastated by back-to-back hurricanes in 2024.

“In August, Hurricane Debbie caused major flooding that damaged our septic system, forcing us to close for several days, and completely redo the lift station,” Unit 138 member Dawn Davis said. “Then in September, Hurricane Helene hit us hard, leaving our building under 3 to 4 feet of water. The flooding lifted our deck off its structure, and we had to gut the entire post down to the studs. Our storage buildings were moved off their bases, and we lost parts of our pavilion area. All our appliances, furniture — everything — was destroyed.

“Just as we finished gutting the building, Hurricane Milton came through. This time, we suffered wind damage: huge portions of our roof were torn off, our pavilions were demolished, and debris was scattered everywhere. It’s been a tough time, but we’re determined to rebuild. With everyone pitching in — through volunteering, fundraising, and spreading the word — we’ll bring our post back stronger than ever.”

After the hurricanes, the Post 138 Family immediately held a fundraiser in the parking lot to continue mission momentum.

“Our unit put together a fundraiser called ‘Parking Lot Block Party.’ This occurs every Saturday in the parking lot of our post,” Davis said. “We set up tents, tables, and a makeshift canteen. One of our members owns a food truck and donates a portion back of the sales. We have another member who runs karaoke for free. In addition, we have raffles, merchandise, and a membership table set up. All proceeds from the month of November were donated to our post.”

Davis said her unit feels very fortunate to help with the funding to rebuild their post home.

“We are humbled by the outpouring of love and camaraderie this devastation has brought,” she said. “To be able to help with the rebuilding of our home in whatever capacity we are able to is a blessing.”

For fellow American Legion Auxiliary units

wanting to help their post home with rebuilding and general improvements, Davis offers advice from her unit’s experience.

“Supporting our post should feel like a collaborative effort, not a burden,” she said. “When we all contribute in meaningful ways like organizing raffles, bake sales, or fundraising events, we’re not just raising funds — we’re strengthening our community ties. Each small act of help — from donating items to volunteering time — is part of the bigger picture of maintaining and improving our post for everyone. Working together not only meets immediate needs but also reinforces our collective dedication to the Auxiliary’s values and purpose.”

The importance of The American Legion Family was really brought to the forefront after the devastation of the hurricanes, forcing the Post 138 Family to get creative when it came to meeting for business and when hosting events.

“Our post home is more than just a building; it’s our family,” Davis said. “Without it, we feel incomplete. But we’ve learned that even without a physical home, we can still carry out our mission. We don’t stop, and we won’t let the damage define us. We are the Rising Rosies of Unit 138, and our spirit is stronger than ever. We are so fortunate to have such an incredible American Legion Family at our post. We are so proud of what we’re accomplishing together, and we will rise from this stronger, united, and more determined than ever to serve our community.”

The unit and post have been active in the Port Tampa community over the years. Together, they host a variety of events that bring everyone together — members and non-members. Events include the annual poker run supporting Toys for Tots to community traditions like the Fishing Tournament, Trunk or Treat, Santa visits, and Pancakes with the Easter Bunny. The

Family’s biggest event, the Frogmen Swim, unites people each January to support Gold Star Families, drawing people from all around. The Family also provides for homeless veterans — another reason to push to rebuild quickly.

“For our homeless veterans, our post is a sanctuary where they can come to fish and enjoy peace a few times a year,” Davis said. “We’re honored to be a safe and welcoming space for them and for all in our area. Even as we rebuild, we’re committed to remaining a vital part of this community, ensuring

**“We are Family
and want to
be able to have
functions
for the Legion
Family and the
community”**

everyone has a place to connect, support, and be supported.”

Being part of the renovation is important to the Auxiliary, Davis said. It gives ALA members a purpose and continues the mission.

“I am so very proud of these extraordinary members of our Auxiliary and our Post 138 Family,” she said. “We are working together harmoniously to build a strong foundation as we rebuild our post.”

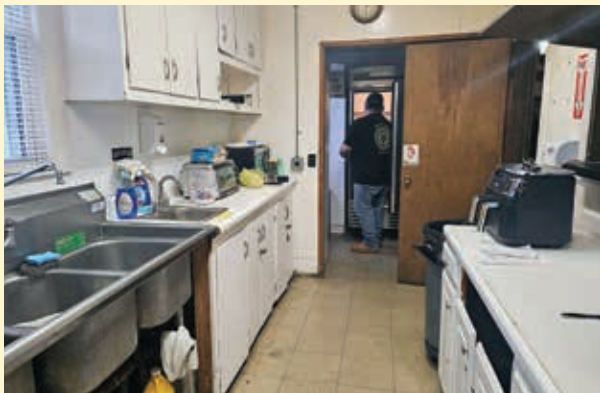
Unit 266: Granby, Mass. Roswitha Ladue

Seeing the need to help the post home with its kitchen, Unit 266 jumped into action.

“The existing kitchen is exceedingly small and not easy to work in for more than one or two people,” said Roswitha Ladue, unit historian and actively involved in fundraising for the post. “The real reason is that the hood is nonfunctional and does not meet the newest guidelines. Plus, all appliances are outdated and not working well. During COVID-19, everything was closed, but after that, we realized that we could not use the kitchen anymore. The American Legion board talked to people in the restaurant business to advise on the best course of action.”

Since the old kitchen space is extremely limited and needs quite a bit of repair, the advice was to move the kitchen across the hall to a much larger space that functions as storage now. The two areas of the post home will be switched to accommodate a larger kitchen. It will have a four-burner gas range, grill, work and prep areas, refrigeration, and a sink.

To help fund the new kitchen, the unit decided to do a 12 Days of Christmas fundraiser at the end of 2024.



UNIT 266, MASSACHUSETTS: Just like many posts, units often utilize the kitchen to host dinners and bake sales. That has been made difficult to do for Unit/Post 266 with such a small kitchen (above), so ALA members held fundraisers at the end of 2024 to help out financially so a larger, updated kitchen can be built.



Sun to snow: climate-based fundraiser ideas depending on your American Legion post home’s location

Warmer weather

- Bonfire/cookout
- Outdoor family events (kids’ crafts, games, prizes, etc.)
- Golf tournament
- Auction
- Walk-a-thon

Colder weather

- Dinner inside the post home
- Dance/dinner
- Booth at local event
- Food and donations for local food banks
- Polar Plunge
- Movie night
- Craft workshop
- Drive-thru donation events

“We did a raffle with higher value prizes, which were all donated by the community, every day, from December 11 to December 22,” she said. “One name was pulled for that day’s gift; every name went in the raffle again to be pulled again. The funds from the raffle are going into our kitchen renovation fund.”

The kitchen had previously been used for events like Breakfast with Santa, Easter Bunny Breakfast, Flag Day, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day after the parades. The Legion Family is ready to get back to positively using the space.

It’s a special feeling for the unit to help out with improvements at the post home, Ladue said.

“We are Family and want to be able to have functions for the Legion Family and the community again and bring our Juniors in for special get togethers with meals,” she said. “To us, that feels important, and we think it enables us to give back to our veterans and community.”

Ladue encourages other Legion Family groups that want to work together on post improvements to truly make it a Family effort.

“The Legion applied for a grant from Home Depot which was approved,” she said. “The funds will be used for the kitchen — work, appliances — and to beautify the Legion hall and grounds. We also have fundraisers in different forms to raise money, and we spread the word in the community to ask for help from other veteran organizations.”

Always a work in progress

Just like the Legion posts mentioned above, many of these buildings throughout the country are a labor of love for their members. From chair upgrades to fresh paint to a whole new roof, post home maintenance — small fixes to large renovations — matters in providing a welcoming, warm atmosphere for veterans, military, their families, and communities. ★

**AMERICAN
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Planning a Creative Arts Festival? The ALA Foundation Can Help!

If your unit or department hosts a local Veterans Creative Arts Festival or offers art therapy courses in partnership with a participating National Veterans Creative Arts Festival VA medical facility, grant funds up to \$2,500 may be awarded for needs that contribute to these efforts.

Learn more and apply at www.ALAFoundation.org/grants. Grants are only awarded to ALA units, districts/counties, and departments in good standing with the IRS.



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Stay Updated on Current Legislative Priorities

The American Legion Auxiliary supports the public policy positions of The American Legion. See how you can make a difference:
www.votervoice.net/AmericanLegion/home.

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Pride in Membership

Branded items highlight the ALA

By Sara Fowler

T-shirts. Hats. Pins. Scarves. Buttons. Jewelry. There are hundreds of items available for American Legion Auxiliary members to purchase from American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales.

Founded in 1919, Emblem Sales is an internal division of The American Legion National Headquarters.

“When the American Legion Auxiliary was officially formed shortly after the Legion, the Emblem Division — as it was called — responded immediately by offering items specifically for the Auxiliary,” said Kevin Carothers, Emblem Sales marketing manager. “So, Emblem Sales has been a part of the Legion Family right from the very start.”

A highlight of purchasing from Emblem Sales: The proceeds come back to American Legion Family programs.

“It’s one of the main reasons anyone can feel good about shopping with Emblem Sales,” Carothers said. “Our proceeds help to fund all the wonderful American Legion Family programs, initiatives, and activities that help our veterans, our military families, and our local communities. We also share those proceeds with all our Legion department headquarters, as well as with the Auxiliary National Headquarters.”

Focused on our military community, American-made products are of utmost importance. In fact, The American Legion passed a resolution in 2006 that says when sourcing products bearing the names and/or emblems of The American Legion Family, Emblem Sales is required to give preference to American-made products where quality and price are comparable.



“This does make our job much more difficult, as we spend a considerable amount of time trying to source products that are affordably made in America, and, when forced to import, to avoid products made outside the U.S. — which our members have made clear that they do not wish us to carry,” Carothers said. “The same ‘Buy American’ resolution we follow also requires us to source American flags that are USA-made. We would never even consider importing American flags anyway.”

American flags are the largest volume category of merchandise Emblem Sales sells. Over 1 million American flags are sold each year, and all are made in the U.S., with U.S. materials, by U.S. workers.

When it comes to ALA-specific products, over the last five years, Emblem Sales has paid over \$300,000 in royalties to the American Legion Auxiliary, Carothers said. These royalties are a direct result of members purchasing Auxiliary merchandise.

A few of those members shared their Emblem Sales stories with *Auxiliary* magazine.

Hilda Lindt, Department of Texas

“My Emblem Sales catalog has a special place on my bookshelf,” Lindt said. “I ordered my very first Auxiliary polo from them and have been hooked ever since.”

When she was a new Auxiliary member in 2017, Lindt started attending as many meetings as possible. She noticed several members were wearing Auxiliary clothing, necklaces, earrings, and more. She asked the post commander if he knew where she could purchase those items.

“He went into the office and gave me my first Emblem Sales catalog,” she recalled.

Lindt has been ordering items ever since, ranging from apparel, scarves, totes, and stickers to hats, umbrellas, jewelry, and more. Lindt has even ordered personalized table coverings, pop-up tents, banners, and flags as special orders.

“I love everything, but I especially love the jewelry,” she said.

For over 100 years, the mission of Emblem Sales has never changed. The purpose of this division is threefold:

- 1) Provide merchandise that is needed or desired to support The American Legion Family at all levels.**
- 2) Although the Legion is a nonprofit organization, Emblem Sales operates as a for-profit division, with proceeds helping to fund the programs and activities of the Legion Family.**
- 3) Help to protect the names, emblems, and logos from unauthorized use, as they are federally protected trademarks.**





AUXILIARY BRANDING: Members are able to purchase many items from Emblem Sales. Hilda Lindt (top three photos) has bought products from Emblem Sales over the years — from hats to banners to tabletop displays; Pat Plewa proudly wears her branded attire at an event; and Patricia Wooden (right), wears an Emblem Sales sweatshirt.

With so many options, Lindt orders items for her unit, gifts to give unit members and officers, and items for herself.

With proceeds going back to the Legion Family, it makes shopping easy for her.

“It is a great feeling to know we are investing in ourselves and our veterans and that we aren’t giving our money to big box stores,” she said.

For members who haven’t purchased from Emblem Sales yet, Lindt said now is the time to start.

“I told a new member just the other day all about Emblem Sales,” she said. “We had last year’s catalog in the office at the post that I gave her to peruse. I told her where to go on the website to order her own copy of the catalog. I encourage all members to order from Emblem Sales. The quality is impeccable.”

Pat Plewa, Department of Wisconsin

In 2023, Plewa and her husband moved to Wisconsin from Illinois, and wanted to wear apparel that showed their memberships in the Legion Family.

“I have used the Emblem Sales catalog a lot for Poppy Day supplies, ALA pamphlets, pins, patches, badges, clothing, jewelry, children magazines for schools, and home flags,” Plewa said. “My husband, and now I, have purchased an outdoor flag for a motel in our town each year and they are very pleased with the quality and the price. Plus, the purchase helps support The American Legion Family. You can mention the post you belong to when you order.”

Like other members who order items from Emblem Sales, Plewa has a few personal favorites.

“The ALA cap and cardigan I wear for ALA funeral services since I am unit and county chaplain, my new sweatshirt with the new logo, and my ‘honor and support veterans’ pin,” she said.

Plewa buys for herself and her unit, such as Poppy Day canisters and ribbons to recognize members, and 100 Halloween books last year for distribution at the local schools.

For Plewa, it’s about giving back through the monies that are returned to American Legion Family programs.

“As an ALA member, I want to honor my World War II father, my Vietnam Era husband, and I want to serve our veterans, military, and their families wherever the money is needed,” she said.

Patricia Wooden, Department of New York

Wooden has been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary for five years. She has bought items such as different shirts in a variety of colors, which she wears on special occasions like Independence Day and Memorial Day.

“None of them have faded, the prices are reasonable, and the shirts enhance your appearance,” she said about the products.

She also has assorted hats with different styles and designs for the ALA events she attends.

“I cannot forget my earrings that look like they were bought from Macy’s,” she said. “I love my apparel and jewelry.”



Did you know?

Emblem Sales ships over 100,000 orders every year and operates with a staff of 20 full-time employees. Order today at Emblem.Legion.org.

Wooden encourages members to check out the inventory for themselves.

“I recommend that if you need items to look great, go online and look into the Emblem Sales catalog,” she said. “You will be very satisfied with their products.”

A closer look at Emblem Sales’ focus on the Auxiliary

With a variety of items available for American Legion Auxiliary members, Emblem Sales provides great options for outwardly branding our organization.

“In 2023, we sold almost 200,000 individual Auxiliary items, which included everything from apparel, jewelry, awards, booklets, pins, decals, patches — you name it,” Carothers said. “And that number does not include poppies — of which we sold over 750,000 last year.”

The top three items units purchase from Emblem Sales are poppies, coloring books (Poppy, Halloween, and *America The Beautiful*), and apparel (T-shirts, polos, and blouses). Additionally, other popular items are patches, decals, *Unit Guide Books*, and membership pins.

Emblem Sales is always developing new items. So, how does this division get ideas for new products?

“We rely heavily on member feedback,” he said. “We love suggestions. One thing that is great about our members is that they are vocal. They are not shy about offering their suggestions, which is awesome. We get lots of suggestions — either by phone, by email, or in person at meetings and conventions. We collect all of those suggestions, and once a year, we sit down and review them as potential new items. From that review, we build a shopping list of items we wish to pursue and develop in the upcoming year.”

Carothers recommended checking Emblem.Legion.org often, as it’s the first place to see new items appear.

For ALA members who want an item that is made on demand or not stocked, it can be requested. Emblem Sales handles approximately 1,000 special orders every year. If a member does not see something on the Emblem Sales website or in their catalog, they can contact the special orders staff at specialorders@legion.org or 1-866-632-7131.

A love for all Auxiliary branded items has made ALA member Lindt set quite a goal for herself, which, in turn, will continue to greatly benefit The American Legion Family.

“It is my goal to have Auxiliary everything in the catalog,” she said. “I won’t stop making purchases until I have achieved that goal.” ★

Looking for poppy-specific items ahead of National Poppy Day®? Visit poppy.legion.org.





SALUTE TO SERVICEMEMBERS AWARD HONORS OUR NATION'S HEROES

Our American Legion Auxiliary Salute to Servicemembers Award honors all military personnel who are currently serving our country in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Space Force, and the National Guard/Reserve. The award is given to one servicemember from each branch of service, as well as National Guard/Reserve.

Each year, recipients are invited to attend the ALA National Convention as honored guests where they are presented with the award on stage and given the opportunity to share their story with the convention general assembly.

National Security Committee Vice Chair Lisa Williamson encourages all ALA members to nominate an enlisted national hero for this award. Think of the servicemembers in your post home, neighborhood, family, or community who continue to uphold our values and mission, as well as the *Service Not Self* mindset.

Williamson shares her support of ALA members nominating servicemembers for this award:

What is the committee looking for in a nominee for the Salute to Servicemembers Award?

Our U.S. servicemembers are exemplary examples of our nation, but when you find one who also goes above and beyond — both within the military and as an integral part of the community where they are stationed — they are more than admirable and should be acknowledged for this. It's this can-do attitude we should all strive for.

What has changed during the submission process since last year?

For 2024-2025, we made the submission process much easier. An ALA member/entity is now charged with making the nomination — rather than the servicemember — to effectively tell the story of why they feel this person is head and shoulders above their peers and worthy of this award.

We also removed a requirement of submitting video, as that sometimes could be intimidating for both the ALA member/unit and the servicemember. A simple narrative (no more than 1,000 words), a picture of the servicemember, and the endorsement from their

command group now are the only requirements.

Why is this award meaningful for the recipient?

As a recipient of the Salute to Servicemembers Award, they will have the privilege of being a member of a small but diverse group of servicemembers who have shown their dedication to not only their military careers, but also their communities during their time in uniform. This acknowledges their contributions that go beyond their military career, displaying their impact on the wider community. It also strengthens the relationship between our military and our organization.

How can units/districts/ departments promote this award?

Each division chair has emailed information about the Salute to Servicemembers Award to all department National Security chairs. It's a matter of the department chairs passing along the information to the units and members. Share, share, share! I would rather be inundated with a lot of submissions than not have every branch represented. Our goal is to have at least one submission from every state.

For more information about recipient eligibility, requirements, and to submit a Salute to Servicemembers nominee, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/Salute-to-Servicemembers-Award.

The nominating form, along with all supporting documentation, must be completed and submitted by June 1, 2025, at 5 p.m. ET.



ALA Salute to Servicemembers Award Form

Nomination eligibility: An enlisted servicemember (pay grade E1-E9) currently serving in the United States Armed Forces. Award form online at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Salute-to-Servicemembers-Award-Form.

AUXILIARY EMERGENCY FUND: EDUCATE AND GET INVOLVED — SUPPORTING MEMBERS THROUGH THE AEF

 www.Facebook.com/groups/AuxEmergencyFund

The American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund plays a crucial role in supporting members during times of disaster or financial hardship. Already just two months into the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the AEF program has awarded more than \$150,000 in assistance funds demonstrating the importance of “members helping members.”

Help us educate and raise awareness among members on the availability and key points of the AEF program. Eligible members seeking assistance can apply for a grant and may be awarded up to \$3,000 to help recover from a natural disaster or during a financial hardship. Since AEF applications are

submitted directly to ALA National Headquarters and reviewed by a committee, confidentiality and privacy is assured for members seeking assistance. Visit the ALA website at ALAforVeterans.org/AEF to learn more about the AEF program.

In addition to educating, members are encouraged to get involved and support the fund in a variety of ways. ALA departments and units can explore new and creative ways to raise funds in support of the AEF program. Join and visit the AEF Facebook group to learn about creative fundraising ideas currently in use by ALA units. Individual members can make

a one-time or monthly donation online — just a small monthly \$5 donation can help transform lives. 100% of every AEF donation goes toward helping eligible ALA members with qualifying expenses.

Under the leadership of ALA National President Trish Ward and the Department Excellence Initiative, let’s unite to educate and donate to ensure every member receives the support they deserve during trying times. Together, we can make a lasting impact!



Brister Thomas is a military spouse and daughter from Auxiliary eUnit 56 in Hawaii.




AUXILIARY

Members Helping Members

When disaster strikes, you have the power to make a difference. Donating to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund helps ALA members facing financial hardship or suffering the effects of a natural disaster. Together, we can help rebuild lives and bring hope where it’s needed most.

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



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AMERICANISM: UNITED WE STAND — CONTINUE TO FOSTER OUR FLAG

 www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAAmericanism



In 1919, The American Legion was founded on four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth. Each of these pillars encompasses a variety of programs that benefit our nation's veterans, military, their families, the youth of America, and ordinary U.S. citizens.

Americanism is the third pillar.

As stated in our Preamble to the Constitution of the American Legion Auxiliary: For God and country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent

Americanism.

As members of the American Legion Auxiliary, together we can make a difference in our communities and schools by promoting Americanism.

Our youth are our grassroots. Work closely with children and youth to support Americanism in their schools by promoting the ALA's Americanism Essay Contest — "What does *America the Beautiful* mean to me (regarding veterans and our military)?" — and by promoting Star-Spangled Kids. Get involved educating our youth on the history of the United States, such as patriotism, Americanism, and the U.S. Constitution. We must teach our youth about Americanism because they are our future. Work side by side with The American Legion to promote the Legion's Americanism

programs.

Lead the way by being informed on U.S. flag history, flag etiquette, and proper disposal methods. Also, promote the observation of patriotic holidays so your community will look to the ALA.

Don't forget to protect the American flag. The American Legion urges Congress to pass the Flag Code Modernization Act of 2021. No other symbol so readily and clearly says "America." We are a nation of diversity. The one unifying symbol of America in war and peace is the United States flag.

For more information regarding our Americanism program, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.



Christine Trahan is a 36-year member of the Auxiliary. She belongs to Beaumont Unit 33 in Beaumont, Texas.

CHILDREN & YOUTH: HONOR THE SACRIFICES MILITARY CHILDREN MAKE

 www.Facebook.com/groups/ALACHildrenandYouth

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, military children are the largest demographic in the military community other than servicemembers themselves, numbering approximately 1.6 million worldwide. We know that deployment comes at a great personal sacrifice for the servicemember — and we thank them for their service — but are we always mindful of the sacrifices made by their children?

As ALA members, we are duty-bound to recognize these kids for their service and sacrifice as well. One way to do that is through the *Kids of Deployed are Heroes Too*, or *KDH2* initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to honor military children who experience separation

from one or both parents who are deployed, whether it be to a war zone, for a short tour, or on an extended temporary duty assignment.

Many of us want to do just that, but don't know how to go about it. We can volunteer with a Family Readiness Group, host an event at our own Legion post home to celebrate military kids, or participate in community events and distribute "I'm a Hero 2" stickers and honor buttons to these kids along with "Proud Parent of a Military Child" and "Proud Grandparent of a Military Child" honor buttons to their parents and/or grandparents.

A Legion post event can also provide a great opportunity for

ALA Juniors and Sons youth to perform the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony to bring awareness to their service as part of the military community. We can collaborate with like-minded organizations to broaden our impact and enhance our efforts in our own individual communities. Many special occasions take place for these children and youth without their deployed parents to share in them, so it is our obligation as ALA members to step up and recognize them as integral parts of the military community.



Dr. Lisa Chaplin is a 40-year member of the ALA. She is a member of Unit 284 in Colonial Heights, Va.

LEGISLATIVE: ADVOCATING TO LEGISLATORS

 www.Facebook.com/groups/ALALegislative

The American Legion Auxiliary is a group of dedicated citizens who engage in our Legislative program to provide information and assistance to Auxiliary members to advocate for The American Legion's Legislative Agenda. Awareness of the Legion's legislative priorities prepares ALA members to effectively communicate with legislators concerning impending legislation at all levels of our government.

Auxiliary members must connect with the 119th U.S. Congress incumbent and incoming legislators on the issues of The American Legion Legislative Agenda. The Legion's Grassroots Action Center provides a comprehensive platform to sign up for action alerts, check the status of pending legislation, locate

legislators' contact information, suggest correspondence, and report interaction with legislators.

Auxiliary members' interactions — whether in person, by telephone, or electronically — with legislators is a crucial voice for our veterans, military, and their families. Utilizing knowledgeable information to persuade elected officials is essential for achieving The American Legion's priorities. It is often the process of changing or reforming attitudes toward the needed legislature.

Resources available on The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary Legislative webpages empower members to achieve the mission of the Auxiliary's Legislative Program — to provide information and assistance to members to advocate

for The American Legion's agenda.

When advocating for the Legion's Legislative Agenda, the Legion Family is a crucial voice from local to national government. Those we advocate for have answered the call to serve this country and preserve our freedom of speech. Therefore, it is essential to use this freedom of speech to advocate for our veterans, military, and their families.



Scan QR code, or connect to www.votervoice.net/mobile/AmericanLegion/home.



Sallie Rossman is a 20-year PUFLL member of the Auxiliary. She is a member of Memorial Unit 325 in Virginia.

NATIONAL SECURITY: COLLABORATE WITH OTHER VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

 www.Facebook.com/groups/ALANatISec

The ALA National Security program promotes a strong national defense by strengthening and supporting military servicemembers and their families. As Auxiliary members, we can accomplish this by joining forces with our partner organizations that also strive to improve the quality of life for our veterans, military, and their families.

In the 2013-2014 administrative year, The American Legion expanded the use of poppy funds to include the assistance of active-duty servicemembers and their families. Now as the cost of living continues to rise throughout the country, many servicemembers struggle more and more to feed their families. Today, through a national memorandum of agreement between the ALA and the Armed

Services YMCA (ASYMCA), units and departments can use poppy funds to help support ASYMCA's mission to address these food insecurities. By partnering with the Armed Services YMCA, we can accomplish this need together!

With over 160 years of service, the ASYMCA is dedicated to serving active-duty military servicemembers and their families of all branches of the armed forces. The ASYMCA provides a variety of programs, including assistance and support programs.

Through these programs, local ASYMCA branches help with food and basic necessities for military families to combat food insecurities and help reduce financial stress, enabling them to focus on mission readiness.

Food assistance is available in nine states: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia.

There is no time like the present to help join the cause of providing a better quality of life for all military families in our armed forces. By supporting the existing network of food pantries and food distribution events offered by the ASYMCA with the donation of Auxiliary poppy funds, we can win the war together in this ongoing need.

For more information on ASYMCA and poppy funds, visit www.ALAFORVeterans.org/poppyfunds.



Michele DeGennaro is a 22-year member of Hudson Unit 335 in Florida.

POPPY: LET'S GET YOUNGER MEMBERS INVOLVED AS POPPY AMBASSADORS

 www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAPoppy

Units are always looking for ways to make their poppy distribution days more successful. There is no better way than to get our younger members involved. People just can't resist those adorable kids!

It would be ideal if units had a Little Miss Poppy, but we know that for whatever the reasons, it is not always possible. What about our younger Sons of The American Legion? We know they would like to be involved, but they don't always know how. Because of all of that, we need to look at other ways to get these younger members to be part of the program. Why not welcome them to be poppy ambassadors?

So, what exactly is a poppy ambassador? Quite simply, it's a

Junior member of the American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion. The age range would be toddlers to age 17. A unit can decide for themselves when and where these poppy ambassadors will participate.

Just remember: They must be accompanied by an adult member (parent/guardian if possible) in good standing at all public events, such as Poppy Days, parades, ceremonies, etc., and they should have a "permission to use photographs/videos" form on file that is signed by parent/guardian. Above all, they should have fun being a poppy ambassador as they learn about how important this program is!

We know our younger

members are the future of our organization, so it's important that we get them involved at an early age. Making our Junior Auxiliary members and young Sons of The American Legion poppy ambassadors will go a long way in getting these members involved in a fun way, while teaching them the importance of this great program.

Find more information and guidelines about poppy ambassadors at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Poppy.



Diana Sirovina is a 36-year member of the Auxiliary. She belongs to Bixby-Hansen Unit 171 in Union Grove, Wis.



Travel to the past with ALA history-focused blog series

Through the *American Legion Auxiliary History's Mysteries*, every month you can learn more about the Auxiliary's Cavalcade of Memories Museum, ALA members, projects in the archives, recent acquisitions, and so much more.



Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/history-blog.

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ALA MISSION TRAININGS CONTINUE TO INFORM AND INSPIRE

Throughout the country, American Legion Auxiliary members participated in ALA Mission Trainings to gain valuable insight into our organization to help advance their ALA membership and our mission of serving veterans, military, and their families. These one-day trainings are for members at all levels of the Auxiliary who are passionate about enhancing the ALA's mission outreach programs.

During the administrative year, there are typically five Mission Training opportunities in each ALA division throughout the country during the fall/winter months. With different presenters and topics every year, the meetings uphold our vision of providing support for our veterans, military, and their families by shaping a positive future in an atmosphere of fellowship, patriotism, peace, and security.

Historic milestone for The American Legion Family

The American Legion Auxiliary, The American Legion, and Sons of The American Legion demonstrated strong

family ties and unity within our organizations by coming together and hosting three separate one-day trainings at the same facilities in Denver and Boston. Much like National Convention, all three organizations held educational sessions concurrently. These learning opportunities allowed Legion Family members to encourage one another to attend their respective organizations' training.

Attendees not only helped shape the future of Legion Family events, but also strengthened bonds across our organizations. By coming together *and* working together, the overall mission of each organization continued to flourish.

Overview of the three sessions

American Legion Auxiliary Mission Trainings: covered many ALA mission outreach programs through engaging sessions that aimed to inspire and educate members. Attendees learned valuable information about evolving our membership to attract the next generation of members, and ultimately, leaders, by addressing generational needs and engagement strategies. They

discussed connections with all ALA youth-centric programs to better deliver our mission. The trainings also focused on how the veteran community has changed throughout the years and how working with outside organizations with a similar mission is beneficial for the future of our organization. Attendees were able to interact with members outside of their states and share ideas they can take back to their units — implementing those ideas into action.

The American Legion's Inaugural National Regional Information Conference: the emphasis was concentrated on enabling The American Legion Family to promote the founding principles of The American Legion through focused regional training and education, ensuring collaboration and networking of all Legion Family members. They challenged members to fully understand the Legion legacy and prepare them to lead The American Legion beyond the 21st century. Through American Legion Family education, members can facilitate a culture to create an environment where the needs of our organizations, veterans, youth, and community are fulfilled.

Sons of The American Legion — Priceless Heritage — The Legion's Best Kept Secret: discussed history of the Sons and how Legion posts can charter a squadron. They learned how beneficial it is for squadron members who bring families with younger children into post homes to participate and how Sons are committed to the four pillars of The American Legion. Attendees left with resources to develop and keep squadrons active and involved.



Follow our social media channels for information on 2025-2026 Mission Trainings: @ALAFORVETERANS.

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

FEBRUARY

LOVE

Patience is the willingness and ability to endure difficult people and situations without giving into anger or giving up hope.

Ofentimes in life, we may feel like the world is closing in on us. We want to quit because we can't get cooperation from a person who we need that from or a situation that appears it can't be fixed — especially with things and people we love. Time and patience may be required.

Love is patient. So, we must be. There will be moments when things can get really hard and the love we show doesn't get the response we expect, or we think our kindness went unnoticed. Frustration sets in and you may feel unappreciated. But because of love, we have patience, and practicing patience is a form of love. It costs nothing to be kind.

Did you know that potential members of the ALA “vet” us (the old-school members) before we vet them? They decide if they want to be a part of who we are based on our reception of them — the way we welcome them, the way we treat them. Our kindness is the deal breaker in the decisions of new members and membership. It can make or break your unit and our organization. Members participate when they feel included, and by being friendly and considerate toward others, we lose members when we are not.

Love is not dishonest, it does not envy, and does not keep record of wrong-doing.

One of the worst feelings in the world is to be lied on or lied to. And a jealous, envious person is a dangerous person. 1 Corinthians 13:5-7 tells us these things. It also tells us that love does not boast or brag about “the love or the things it does for you.” It doesn't keep count of your wrongs either.

Being honest is the best practice

you can make. People know they can trust you, and your word goes a long way. Many don't understand the destruction that can be caused by lies and dishonesty. Jealousy isn't a good look on any of us. Instead of being angry or jealous that Susie won an award and you did not, cheer her on and congratulate her. That's what love does! None of us is perfect, so stop keeping count of the faults of others.

Spread love, always.

Prayer: *May love shine through us all. May we be vessels of grace and compassion. We pray for the ability to love unconditionally and without reservation. We are thankful for wisdom and grace to love others deeply. Amen.*

MARCH

FAITH

Complete trust in someone or something, belief in something with no proof — this is FAITH.

Have you ever had to make a huge decision and you were unsure what you decided was best for you? Not knowing the outcome and being anxious? It happens more often than you know. We are quicker to doubt than trust. Being a huge believer in faith came with many challenges. That is what led me to this journey of faith. The hardest part (and sometimes it can get hard) is the unknown. Believing it will happen. Without proof. We must believe that what we ask for in prayer will happen. We will receive the answer we prayed for. It will work out for our good with FAITH.

Fear comes from not being able to see what's next, and until you trust and take that big step out, you will never know what you could have done! Have you ever wanted to apply for a national ALA leadership position and felt you would not get it? What was the fear? Why were you afraid? Not having faith in yourself can cause you to miss out on opportunities. We sometimes feel we are not good

enough, lack confidence, and have a whole lot of doubt. All we need is a little faith (mustard seed size) and belief in self. The next time you feel unsure of yourself, or you have any doubt, pray a little prayer of faith.

Prayer: *Open my eyes to see things clearly. To see things working for me and around me in my favor. Help me to understand nothing happens by accident. My FAITH helps me trust when I cannot see what is for me. Amen.*

APRIL

FRESH START

Every spring, we plan to put away winter items and prepare our homes for all things spring. Flowers, spring cleaning, gardening — fresh starts.

In life, we are sometimes thrown curveballs, and it will force us into new starts. It may be the end of a relationship, end of a job you loved, the loss of something or someone dear to you — anything that makes us create anew. Those old things have a way of hanging around and keeping us from new beginnings. We tend to sometimes get distracted, and our start gets delayed. It may be hard at first, but you will get moving and through it.

Starting over can be scary, and you may have to do it alone. Do not allow the thoughts and words of doubters stray you away from your plans. Those plans were put in place for you. You were born to be great. And every fresh start is the beginning of something bigger and better. Stay positive. Stay focused. Dream big.

Jeremiah 29:11 reads, “For I know the plans I have for you! Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Prayer: *We are thankful for new beginnings — another chance to be great, to do good works, to be a better me. Amen.*



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

VETERANS BRING UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES TO THE AUXILIARY

The American Legion Auxiliary has nearly 550,000 members, each bringing their own background to the organization's work to support veterans, military, and their families.

For the 4,900 ALA members we have data on who are veterans, that background includes their own military service. It's a perspective one veteran and ALA member, Yvette Perry-Fancher of Unit 64 in Indiana, said fits perfectly with the Auxiliary's mission of embracing *Service Not Self*.

"It's just like the military: You don't do this thing by yourself," Perry-Fancher said. "It's bigger than you. Everybody plays their roles and has a hand."

Continuing service

Perry-Fancher's service in the Army — from 1989 to 2011 — included assignments as a personnel manager, paralegal, and assistant inspector general working with servicemembers as they deployed to the Gulf War. She joined The American Legion more than 30 years ago, unaware at the time

"It's another opportunity to lend your time, your talent, and your treasure to help people."

that her father, an Air Force veteran, also had been a member.

It would be nearly 20 years before Perry-Fancher learned about the American

Legion Auxiliary and her eligibility to join the organization. A fellow member of Legion Post 64 in Indianapolis asked her if she'd considered joining the Auxiliary.

Once Perry-Fancher discovered the story behind the ALA and its founding members — women who wanted to continue their support for their family members who were servicemembers and veterans following World War I — she realized it was a perfect way to use her Army experience.

"I never really ended my military service," said Perry-Fancher, "because then I started helping veterans. I'm very proud of that."



Encouraging stories

Stories like hers show the importance of recognizing the unique insights each member brings to their role in the ALA, Perry-Fancher said.

To take advantage of the perspectives of each ALA member — including those who have served in the military themselves — Perry-Fancher recommended those in the Legion Family actively seek out ways to encourage new membership. After all, she noted, it was only after a member of the Legion approached her about joining the ALA that she began to understand the organization and its many activities and programs advancing its mission.

When people join the ALA, she suggested inviting them to share their stories about why they believe in the mission of supporting veterans, military, their families, and communities.

"Let people know about the different things they can do in the American Legion Auxiliary and The American Legion," Perry-Fancher said. "Any person who's a member of the military would love to be a part of it. It's another opportunity to lend your time, your talent, and your treasure to help people."

Valuing veterans' role in the ALA

Army veteran Yvette Perry-Fancher said her story can provide insight into how the ALA can recognize the value veterans bring to the group. Tips for drawing on veterans' experiences:

1. Ask if they've considered joining the American Legion Auxiliary.
2. Encourage them to share their stories with and in support of the military.
3. Celebrate each member's unique background and military service.



THE CONNECTIONS OF ALA GIRLS STATE — FROM CHILDHOOD FRIENDS TO CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Moving and attending a new school — something Patty Parker experienced often as the daughter of a Navy recruiter and aviation ordnanceman. Parker found herself making new friends, and then losing contact after the next move. However, fate reconnected Parker with not one, but three childhood best friends through ALA Girls State.

“We moved from Bremerton, Washington, to San Diego, California, to Whidbey Island, Washington, and back to Bremerton where he retired,” said Parker, ALA Washington Girls State 1966 participant. “Imagine my surprise at seeing both of my two best friends — one from first grade in Bremerton and another from sixth grade in Whidbey Island — at ALA Girls State the summer before my senior year of high school!”

Rekindling those friendships was a cherished memory, but Parker took away even more from the experience. The program opened many doors and even the chance to co-write legislation.

“Learning about government and the hands-on legislative experience of ALA Girls State paid exponential dividends,” said Parker. “As a result of attending ALA Girls State, I was fortunate to be selected to serve as a page for one day in the Washington



state legislature during my senior year of high school.”

Parker credits the program for giving her an advantage in her career as a teacher, specifically learning about government and how to work well with others.

“I was hired for every job I ever applied for, and many times, ALA Girls State was mentioned,” said Parker. “Seeing that on a resume immediately implies leadership and good character.”

In 1991, she co-wrote a bill in Virginia. It all started after she and three others began an eight-hour Defensive Driver Improvement Program through the National Safety Council.

“I presented it to the commissioner of transportation for the state of Virginia to make it an option in lieu of a conviction for drivers charged

with traffic offenses,” said Parker. “The commissioner liked the idea, and it went from there.”

That led to a meeting with her senator and ended with the senator’s aide and Parker co-writing a bill about the program. The bill became a law after a unanimous vote.

“One year later, I spoke at the Virginia Commonwealth’s Attorneys Convention and presented the program as an option to conviction — or a possible reduction of points,” said Parker. “It was well-received, and judges began to offer it as an option.” Parker’s company, DriveSafe Inc., was the very first driver improvement school in Virginia.

Her parents were members of The American Legion Family for more than 60 years. However, she didn’t become an Auxiliary member until 2024 when she joined ALA Unit 346 in Woodbridge, Va. Parker decided to become a member because of a dear friend and to get involved with ALA Girls State.

“My intent is to assist with the interviewing and selection of our local ALA Girls State Committee,” she said. “I have been blessed by my own personal experience, and I am looking forward to helping today’s young women do the same.”

“I was hired for every job I ever applied for, and many times, ALA Girls State was mentioned”

Potential ALA Members in your ALAGS Program



Many participants in ALA Girls State programs are not ALA members, but some are eligible for membership in our organization. Be sure to include applications in your ALA Girls State participants’ packets. Download applications at www.ALAforVeterans.org/join.

SCHOLARSHIP HELPS ALA MEMBER WITH CAREER IN ARCHITECTURE

American Legion Auxiliary Junior members are the future of our organization. To reward those who retain their membership into adulthood, the American Legion Auxiliary offers the Member Loyalty Scholarship to current college students. Rachel Sampson is a Member Loyalty Scholarship recipient studying architecture with a minor in historic preservation at Mississippi State University.



Tell us about yourself and your connection to the military.

My hometown is Morgantown, West Virginia. In my free time, I enjoy writing and playing the violin. Both of my parents were in the Army, and that had a big impact on me growing up. I dealt with my fair share of moving and my dad deployed, and those moments helped build me into the person I am today. After my dad retired, we started getting active with our local American Legion Auxiliary Unit 174, and I still do my best to be active when I am home for summer and winter breaks.

Can you share your interest in architecture?

I have always seen the beauty in architecture, and oftentimes when I visited a city with my

family, my parents would have to pull me along by my hand as we went walking because my head would be tilted up to look at the skyscrapers instead of anything else. I want to work with older buildings, which is why I'm minoring in historic preservation. I want to be able to preserve the beautiful, detailed architecture of the past so that future generations can see it and fall in love the same way I have.

Tell us about additional experiences preparing you for your career.

I shadowed a number of architecture firms in my hometown when I was home for breaks between semesters, and I have done a lot of traveling to look at different areas of architecture. This summer, I went on a study abroad trip to Iceland and Scandinavia (specifically Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). I'll never forget seeing the

preservation work being done at Bryggen in Norway. The oldest building on that street was from 1150 — that's a kind of age we can't even fathom in America.

How will being a recipient of the ALA Member Loyalty Scholarship benefit you?

There are a number of additional expenses in an architecture degree — like purchasing software, tools, and model making materials — so this scholarship will reduce that burden for me and allow me to focus more on my studies.

Why is it important for donors to support the ALA's scholarship funds?

It's important for a number of reasons, but especially because these funds directly impact the education and futures of young people, particularly those connected to military families. Additionally, these scholarships encourage recipients to continue honoring their military heritage and contribute to their communities, reinforcing the values of the ALA, such as loyalty, service, and dedication to country.

What are the top jobs for architecture majors?

ARCHITECT: By using creative thinking and problem-solving skills, architects design and plan structures, buildings, and other physical requirements, including functionality, aesthetics, and safety.

URBAN PLANNER: Considers factors of population growth, land use, and transportation. Possesses research and analytical skills for effective urban solutions.

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Translates creative visions into planning spaces for practicality and aesthetics within budget and timeline constraints. Has understanding for design trends and building codes.



WE'VE CHANGED NAMES

The Junior Member Loyalty Scholarship is now the Member Loyalty Scholarship.

Have questions on eligibility or how to apply? Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships or email Education@ALAforVeterans.org.



SENATE PASSES HELLO GIRLS CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

The Senate unanimously passed the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act, a measure to honor the landmark service of the brave women who served in the Army as telephone operators and connected American and French military forces on the front lines of World War I.

The legislation, sponsored

by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chair Jon Tester, would award the women of the U.S. Army Signal Corps — dubbed the Hello Girls — with the Congressional Gold Medal for their service to the nation and subsequent 60-year fight to be recognized as veterans.

The American Legion has long supported the designation, including the passage of Resolution No. 110 — Support for Congressional Gold Medal for Signal Corps Female Telephone

Operators of WWI — by the National Executive Committee in 2018. More recently, the Legion conducted an email campaign that led to Legionnaires sending more than 21,000 messages to Congress in support of the bill.

Additionally, American Legion staff in Washington, D.C. have worked with members of Congress and allied organizations for months to make sure the Legion perspective was heard and The American Legion Family's support for the measure was known.

HELP CELEBRATE AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL'S CENTENNIAL

American Legion Baseball will celebrate its centennial in 2025, and The American Legion is looking to build a collection of stories, photos, and more to commemorate the milestone.

If your American Legion Family sponsors or has sponsored an American Legion Baseball team, or you played

Legion Baseball, please share details and mementoes through the Baseball category on www.Legiontown.org.

Among the details members are encouraged to share:

- Who are some of the successful alumni who played American Legion Baseball for



your program?

- What are some of the memorable moments from your Legion Baseball program?

• If you played Legion Baseball, what are some of your favorite memories and how did the program impact your life?

Keep up on plans for American Legion Baseball's 100th anniversary celebration at www.Legion.org/baseball.



TOP FIVE RESOURCES FOR YOUR BE THE ONE EVENT

Is your post, district, or department planning a Be the One event? Downloadable tools are available at betheone.org/ resources to help Legion Family members support The American Legion's mission to reduce veteran suicide.

Event PDF: This one-sheeter is a general guide to coordinating a Be the One event, with links to social media graphics to promote your event, community and media engagement, merchandise, and more.

Local brochure: This Word document can be customized for Be the One events or distributed at any community event where the Legion's mission can be shared. The trifold's back page has instructions on how to customize it. Posts also can use the back page to add contact information, a QR code with a link to the post website or the 988 Veterans Crisis Line, a list

of local mental health resources, post service officer information, and more.

How-to video: Department of Wisconsin Commander Jim Johnson gives best practices on how to conduct a Be the One walk, from picking a route to advertising and promotion. Johnson has organized and led four suicide awareness walks in his department.

Sample media advisory and press release: Download the documents, update them with your Be the One event information, and distribute to local media, community partners, and others.

Materials: Print-ready pop-up banners, flags, posters, table covers, and more are available for your event. Download the items you want and order them from a local print shop.



BE THE ONE: American Legion Family members sign up for and participate in Be the One walks throughout the country to raise awareness of suicide prevention. The Family continues to advocate for those who are struggling and to provide the resources to help them (Photos: The American Legion).

LISTEN, RATE, AND SHARE THE AMERICAN LEGION PODCAST

The American Legion's *Tango Alpha Lima* podcast is on a roll. It eclipsed 300,000 downloads since its launch, receiving another major podcast award, and bringing more discussions about Be the One to light.

Still, it cannot continue its upward trajectory without the help of its Alphas — American Legion Family members who listen to or watch the podcast. Here are five ways you can be an Alpha:

Listen or view the podcast. There are more than 270 *Tango Alpha Lima* episodes since its debut in April 2020.

All are available at legion.org/ tangoalphalima, the Legion's YouTube channel, Apple podcasts, and other podcast platforms.



Subscribe. Never miss out on an episode when you subscribe to the podcast. Regular episodes are published every Tuesday morning, and a new, special Be

the One podcast is available on the first of every month.

Rate and review the podcast. Visit the podcast page on your iPhone or other service to rate and review it. This helps other podcast listeners find it and become listeners.

Share. Like an episode? Share it with family members, fellow veterans, and others. You can send it via email, share on social media, text it to a friend, or call their attention to it in other ways.

Recommend to a friend. Most podcast listeners learn about podcasts from family and friends. Tell a fellow veteran or loved one about why you regularly listen to *Tango Alpha Lima*.

Serving our veterans, military, and their families is our mission. To see that mission through, we often collaborate with other organizations. Located at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., is the Stronghold Food Pantry, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to serving American military families facing food insecurity by providing food, necessities, and resources with care and dignity. CEO and Founder Monica Bassett is a military spouse — just like many of our American Legion Auxiliary members. The pantry, like others in the country, is ready to help our military families in need.



TAKING CARE: Stronghold Food Pantry CEO and Founder Monica Bassett grabs a box of food for distribution.

Can you share any personal experiences that led to a passion for helping military families overcome food insecurity?

As the daughter of a Vietnam veteran, my passion is deeply personal, though I didn't initially connect the dots when I jumped into action. Growing up, my family faced challenges that led us to rely on a food pantry. It only took one incident — my father getting injured and unable to work — to change our circumstances and become food insecure.



How can military families utilize services from the pantry?

We launched our Ambassador Program in 2023. With this program, we are able to reach more military families around the globe. We receive an average of one to five confidential applications from this program each month, and depending on funding and resources, we strive to fulfill them all. In 2023, we served an average of 20 individuals daily, distributing over 70,000 pounds of food and resources to military families worldwide.

How can our American Legion Auxiliary units help military families with food insecurity issues in their communities?

A great example comes from the efforts of American Legion Auxiliary Kansas Unit 370. This unit has dedicated itself to learning about military food insecurity and actively supports initiatives like mobile pantries, holiday meals, and the Angel Tree program.

Units can start by researching local food pantries near military installations to identify those that serve military families. Once potential partners are identified, it's important to reach out, whether by phone or by email. Each food pantry has its own unique requirements, so introducing yourself as a supporter of the military community is crucial.

In your outreach, be sure to inquire about their statistics,

how many military families they support, what the most frequent request from a military family is, if they have specific needs, and if your donation can be earmarked to serve veteran and military families in need.

Any suggestions for a unit that might want to partner with an established food pantry or even create a food pantry in their community?

Start with thorough research into the local food insecurity climate. Understanding the specific needs of your community is crucial. Don't hesitate to ask hard questions or seek clarity on the challenges military families face. Education is vital — the more informed you are, the better support you can provide.



WISCONSIN UNIT 186 BEGINS GRAVE MARKER PROJECT TO RECOGNIZE PAST AUXILIARY MEMBERS

Four years ago, ALA Unit 186 in Independence, Wis., began discussions about recognizing recently deceased members with a bronze Auxiliary emblem grave marker at local cemeteries.

Unit Historian Joan Gunderson reported members all agreed it was a great idea but wondered: Where do you draw the line? They didn't want to just acknowledge a few when so many others had done so much throughout the 100-year history of their unit. In addition, they wondered where they would find historical information and how they would pay for such an undertaking.

A few months later, they were given boxes full of their unit history that was found by the local library when cleaning out the basement. The boxes, along with binders of information that had been passed down from unit president to unit president, amounted to a lot of valuable material.

"Priceless information was found about our past members — going back to 1924 when

we were first chartered," said Gunderson. "We were able to find 380 former members."

Gunderson said they've learned a lot about the generosity and service of their past unit members. During the Depression, they contributed to a school milk program for children in need, along with food baskets and clothing drives for families. During World War II, the unit purchased war bonds to support our troops, and throughout the years, the unit has gifted donations and supplies to area VA facilities and local hospitals, as well as support to various community organizations and causes.

Using the online grave index service www.FindAGrave.com as well as old obituaries, Unit 186 discovered that 221 of the former members were buried in area

cemeteries, and the remainder were buried throughout the United States.

After four years of gathering information and collecting donations, the unit launched their Markers for Members service project. Placement of markers began with the most current members, and the unit is working on systematically going back to those identified as past members.

Gunderson reported 145 markers have been placed to date, and they are 77% funded for their goal of 222 markers.



TRIBUTE: ALA members Joan Sosalla, Joan Gunderson, Jane Matchey, Barb Sylla, Rita Olson, Charlotte Gamroth, Kathy Smieja, Debra Kampa, and Doris Mish place a marker at the grave of Agatha Benigna Marsolek, the first vice president of ALA Unit 186.



Tips for starting a grave marker project

- **Create a detailed plan** and the scope of your project. Recognize recent members or members throughout your unit history. Assign a point person, set a timeline, goals, and outcomes. Explore options for funding.
- **Community engagement:** Involve your American Legion Family, and consider unit historian and community volunteers to assist with research, design, and installation.
- **Access records:** Utilize your unit archives, historical societies, and online databases.
- **Gravesite identification:** Use cemetery maps, obituaries, and grave indexes.
- **Shop grave marker selection at American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales:** Emblem Sales offers a variety of different branded grave markers at Emblem.Legion.org.
- **Research policies and regulations:** Contact the cemetery to learn about their specific rules and installation procedures.
- **Be respectful:** Always handle the cemetery and gravesites with sensitivity and care.



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



COMING UP:

In between issues of *Auxiliary* — our quarterly magazine that hits mailboxes in February, May, August, and November — view the latest updates from ALA National Headquarters digitally. Follow the ALA blog, social media, ALA eNews, and our website. Here's a look at what's coming soon:

February 2025

- Feb. 22: Virtual Mid-Year ALA National Executive Committee Meeting
- Feb. 22-26: The American Legion Washington Conference

March 2025

- March 1: ALA national scholarship applications due
- March 8: ALA Foundation – Celebrating Women of Service
- March 15: The American Legion's 106th birthday

April 2025

- April: Month of the Military Child (#MOMC)
- April 15: Purple Up! Day for Military Kids — wear your purple!
- April 26: American Legion Family Day

May 2025

- May 9: National Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- May 11-18: National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Indianapolis
- May 17: Armed Forces Day
- May 23: National Poppy Day®
- May 26: Memorial Day



IMPROVE YOUR EDUCATION:

Learn new skills and ways to serve at www.ALAforVeterans.org/ALA-Academy. You will need to log in to access the recordings.



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD:

ALA members work hard to keep veterans' issues in front of legislators. Sign up for Legislative Action Alerts at www.votervoices.net/AmericanLegion/home and alerts at www.votervoices.net/AmericanLegion/Register.

SHOWCASE YOUR PASSION:

We want to hear from you! Share how you fulfill the ALA mission or any good works happening. Submit photos and stories of you/your unit serving the mission! Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/Magazine/Submissions or email pr@ALAforVeterans.org.



PROMOTE NATIONAL POPPY DAY®:

Check out the resources at www.ALAforVeterans.org. Log in to MyAuxiliary and click the Poppy Committee page. Under "Related Pages," then "Resources for Poppy Days," you'll find the "poppy kit." Some of the ideas and materials available to you:

- Donation can label

- Poppy bookmark
- Poppy Days news release template
- Poppy poster templates and banners
- Poppy coloring book
- Instructions on how to make felt poppy flowers
- Recipe for poppy cookie

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

The 2024 Annual Report is Here



Download today at www.ALAforVeterans.org/About/Annual-Reports

“A dog is the only thing on Earth that loves you more than he loves himself.”

— Josh Billings, American humorist and lecturer



Dogs often pull at the heartstrings — from children to older adults — as they search for snuggles, lick faces, and do tricks to get just one more treat. Some of them serve as working dogs, keeping our military members safe and out of harm’s way. On National K9 Veterans Day coming up on March 13, we are extra grateful to our four-legged friends that serve our military’s missions alongside our brave servicemembers.

Above: Ax, a dog in the Volusia County, Fla., Sheriff’s Office, looks up at his handler after receiving the Medal of Bravery from Animals in War & Peace, in Washington, D.C., last March. Seven dogs that served in law enforcement and military operations were honored for their service at the event (photo: Allison Bailey/NurPhoto via AP).

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3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268

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and their Families*

Celebrating Women of Service

International Women's Day is March 8. Support the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation by donating to the Celebrating Women of Service campaign in honor of a woman who inspires you. A tribute donation offers you a thoughtful way to celebrate a special person while contributing to the ALA Foundation's mission to positively impact the lives of veterans, military, and their families by funding ALA programs.

Honor their service today by scanning the QR code, texting **WOMAN** to **1-844-940-3450**, or mailing a check to the ALA Foundation at **3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268**.

Scan here
to make
a gift:

