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Auxiliary

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National President Pam Ray's Fundraising Focus: Spirit of Youth Scholarships

The future of the American Legion Auxiliary is not ahead of us — it is already here. National President Pam Ray recognizes the importance of investing in tomorrow's leaders and has selected the **Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund** as our 2025-2026 national fundraising focus.

You can help sustain this legacy. A gift in support of Ray's fundraising focus directly funds scholarships for deserving young leaders across the country. To make your contribution, text **SPiRiT** to **1-844-940-3450** or scan the QR code to donate today. Your generosity strengthens the ALA's mission and helps prepare the next generation to lead with purpose, compassion, and service.

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today:



www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships/spirit-of-youth

Auxiliary *contents*



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ON THE COVER: Members of The American Legion Family at Post/Unit 409 in Leo, Ind., who hold more than one membership across the organizations. Members here are dedicated to working together for veterans, military, and their families (photo by Bob Cross/FotoCross Photography). **ABOVE:** American Legion Auxiliary members at a Washington Conference commission meeting (photo by Sara N. Fowler/ALANHQ).



MEETING A ROSIE: National President Pam Ray with 101-year-old Department of Michigan member Delphine Klaput, whom she first met in Hawaii at the Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony where Klaput was recognized as a Rosie the Riveter.

So much is happening throughout our departments! Our mission is alive and well. Do we all do it the same way? No. However, we all do something. As I travel, I talk about my dad — my why. I remind everyone that by remembering your why and their selfless service, that why will encourage you to work our mission for those who served and for those currently serving.

North Carolina has a top-notch U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical center. The VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) director states that whenever he needs anything for the veterans,

Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). The reps and depts I have met are so compassionate. They care about their veterans.

While I was in Hawaii representing you at the Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony, I met six Rosie the Riveters who were attending. They were honored and recognized that entire weekend. The pride they feel in what they did to support World War II efforts is so touching to see. I share this with you because when I visited Michigan in February (very cold), I was so surprised to see one of those lovely ladies again. Delphine Klaput is 101 years old

and he has to do is pick up the phone and call the ALA representative, Jill. He quickly receives what he needs, plus so much more!

That has been true at any state veterans home or VAMC I have visited. I feel so much pride when I hear these comments. All those visits have shown me the importance of volunteering in these facilities. Please consider becoming a volunteer in a VAMC, state veterans home, or a Community-Based

and lives in Michigan. There is a Rosie the Riveter foundation, and the granddaughter of a Rosie — also known as a rosebud — has a branch in Michigan and was at their winter conference. She recognized me right away. She was wearing my pin for this year. Her daughter says she wears it all the time. What an honor for me!

What a gift I was given by all of you. I was able to attend the Chapel of Four Chaplains remembrance ceremonies in Philadelphia. The Air Force chaplain from Dover Air Force Base, Lt. Col. Keith Manry, gave a unique, touching ceremony. His words were so inspiring.

“Courage isn’t decided in a moment of crisis,” he said. “It is revealed. Courage is revealed not just in grand moments — such as the Four Chaplains — but in thousands of quiet, daily acts. It is the courage to choose integrity when no one is watching, to lead with compassion, and to serve a cause greater than oneself.”

Our veterans were those people. Our military are those people. Our American Legion Auxiliary can also be those people by living by our motto of *Service Not Self*. Remember: “A moment of truth doesn’t create character; it reveals it.” This is the legacy of the Four Chaplains whose courage and character were revealed that fateful day, Feb. 3, 1943. May we live our lives with the same purpose and courage of those four men.

Remain Mission Driven and Family Focused.

Pam Ray
National President



The 2025-2026 national fundraising focus is the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund, which supports three separate scholarship opportunities for participants in American Legion Auxiliary programs. For more information, visit www.ALAFORVeterans.org/scholarships/spirit-of-youth. To donate, text “SPIRIT” to 1-844-940-3450.

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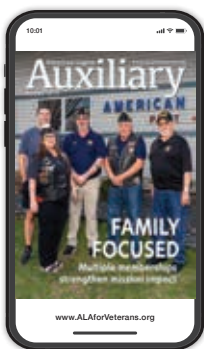
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GET READY: Our country turns 250 in July. Have you joined The American Legion Family's USA 250 Challenge yet?

It feels like everyone loves a good birthday. It's not just the cake, presents, and celebrations — it's the fact that we successfully turned another year older. Every trip around the sun is a time to re-evaluate how we can make a difference ... in our lives or someone else's.

That's not so hard when you're a member of The American Legion Family. Whether it's ALA, The American Legion,



Sons of The American Legion, or American Legion Riders, we all have one thing in common: veterans. Everything we do is in

support or honor of someone who wore the uniform. In fact, you can read some of these members' stories on pages 32-35 in this issue of *Auxiliary*.

How does all of this relate to birthdays? Celebrate the nation's semiquincentennial by taking

part in The American Legion Family's USA 250 Challenge. Your participation, whether as an individual or part of a team, helps honor our veterans and uplift communities nationwide, while promoting physical fitness, mental wellness, and community service.

Join the challenge, which culminates with America's birthday on July 4. Participants can engage as part of a team, like an ALA unit, or as an individual. You can do one category or go the extra mile and do all three.

Each registered participant receives a commemorative USA 250 Challenge T-shirt. Learn more at Legion.org/USA250.

And while you're in the patriotic mood, buy an American flag from American Legion Flags, which offers high-quality, made-in-the-USA flags for your home, business, or community. Every purchase helps support veterans, servicemembers, and programs that strengthen our nation. Shop now at AmericanLegionFlags.com.

AMERICAN LEGION

AUXILIARY

A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families
May 2026

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you for the beautiful tribute to her in the February 2026 issue. Her loving spirit of the veterans and others came shining through and why she was so special to so many people. Thank you!

— Paula Ross, New Hampshire

Member who makes homemade bracelets expresses gratitude for magazine article

I wanted to reach out and thank you for the beautiful article in February's *Auxiliary* magazine. Loved it, and I



AUXILIARY MEMBERS' HANDMADE BRACELETS PROMOTE BE THE ONE

The origin of a woman that handmade bracelet wearing 25 years in the USA. Her husband's name is... (The text continues with details about the bracelet's significance and the author's story.)

VALUE OF WHAT WE BRING TO THE MISSION
— I found that... (The text discusses the value of community and the mission of the organization.)

Honor to meet Past National President Kris West

I met National President West as an NEC for The American Legion of Montana in 2000 as she was enjoying her beginning as national president. Every year in November from 2000 to the final time of her grand service, Kris sent me a greeting card for Veterans Day. These greetings helped me keep my love of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. I will surely miss her encouragement and look forward to a reunion in the hereafter, where I will likely join her after my 100th birthday year 2037!

— Joyce Babcock, Montana

Gratitude for Past National President Kris West's memorial

On behalf of Kris' family, thank



feel so special. Overnight, I received 15 requests. So grateful you believed in me!

— Tina Burgess, Florida

Member praises quarterly Auxiliary magazine

The ALA magazine is excellent. It addresses so many issues that are not discussed even in other women's magazines. Thank you for creating such an interesting and helpful publication.

— Eileen Richard, Connecticut

Wisconsin ALA unit aids community with lunches

Members of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 469 of Marathon, Wis., generously contributed by



donating, shopping, preparing, and packing bag lunches for the Marathon County Meal Train.

The Meal Train provides lunches to vulnerable citizens in the community, including those without homes, those with disabilities, the elderly, and struggling families.

— Betty Blume, Wisconsin

Furry hero is honored

On March 13, we observed National K-9 Veterans Day. A presentation was made to Hero, a Belgian Malinois and explosives detection dog whose service helped save countless lives. Hero retired in August 2021. He now lives in Fort Wayne, Ind., with Jim Olds, an Army veteran. To honor



Hero, members of the American Legion Auxiliary presented him with a filet mignon at American Legion Post 97 in Auburn, Ind.

— Brandy Mason, Indiana

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.



MINNESOTA JUNIOR MEMBER PACKS APPLES, POSITIVE MESSAGES FOR TEACHERS

Junior member Abigail Koltes from the Department of Minnesota helped her unit pack apples in bags with messages for all area teachers. The gifts were delivered to six local schools.

This activity can be a great idea for other Juniors to use for Teacher Appreciation Week in May, at the start of the school year, or for American Education Week in November.

It took Koltes about two hours to complete the project, she said.

For all the gift bags, the same message was written: “Thank you for all you do for our students and community. We appreciate your dedication,” she said.

It meant a lot to Koltes to be part of a project like this for area teachers.

“It felt great to be able to give back to my teachers in the community and do a great act of kindness for education,” she said.

Her favorite part was delivering the apples to schools.

Koltes shares advice for other Junior members who may want to participate in a give-back project.

“Ask your local unit to help support your project,” she said. “Be genuine with your idea. Ask to see if other Junior members are interested in the project. Have fun and make positive impacts.”

INVOLVE YOUR JUNIORS IN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO VA&R

With the Auxiliary’s many committees, Junior members have several options to participate in a variety of volunteer work for our veterans, military, and their families.

One mission-focused committee Juniors can participate in volunteer work is Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R).

Pamela Thompson, national Junior Activities Committee Eastern Division chair, shared insight on how Junior members can be involved with this committee:

Why is it important for ALA Juniors to be involved in opportunities related to our VA&R Program?

Engaging in activities related to the VA&R Program offers Junior members immense opportunities to not only live the ALA mission but also learn about veterans, their lives, contributions to society, challenges, and celebrations from a young age.

How can senior members encourage their Juniors to get involved?

Senior members play a critical role in encouraging and supporting Junior member participation by inviting them to participate in ways that speak to their strengths and developing leadership skills. For example, not all Junior members will be interested in or be excited by supporting Christmas Gift Shops. They may prefer writing “Thinking of you” cards or creating art to share with veterans year-round.

It is important for senior members to discover with Juniors what activity or opportunity connects with each Junior’s

individuality and personality. Some Juniors may enjoy engaging in recording veterans’ oral history stories; others may enjoy leading a stand down or offering to play with younger children while veterans and their spouses take a coffee break. There is an engagement opportunity for each Junior member; it is our job as senior members to help them explore the options and find the one that feels right to them.

Senior members: Remember that Junior members are capable. Let them show you their strengths and interests, then assist as they find their niche.

Why is VA&R a core area?

This program and its activities supporting veterans’ needs IS living the mission loud and proud. This is one of the founding principles of the ALA: being there for our veterans and their families. As mentioned, with so many different ways one can work the program, there is something for everyone to be able to learn from veterans, develop leadership skills from a young age, gain confidence in speaking with and on behalf of veterans, and sharing the mission of the ALA with the general public.

Anything else to add?

The veteran demographic is changing; therefore, the needs are as well. Junior members have a unique opportunity to connect with younger veterans and their families in new ways as the ALA works to meet the moment. We have been doing this work for a long time, and the changing circumstances are opening a door for leadership by the next generation. Senior members: Look to your Juniors for creative ways to engage with the new demographic. Junior members: Don’t be afraid to share a bold idea! You are the future of this organization and will be supporting these veterans far into the future.



POWER OF TEAMWORK: Working together, Juniors and adult members can accomplish so much for our mission.

ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR JUNIORS TO ENGAGE WITH OUR VA&R PROGRAM

- Stand down: Lead a sock or toiletry drive (organize, publicize, request donations, and deliver).

- Offer to babysit (if old enough) for veterans’ children or offer to join them and their children at the park so parents can have a moment of rest.
- Visit with veterans at home or in the hospital. Some simply enjoy sitting together watching TV, playing cards, reading a book, or sharing their story. Be sure to check any restrictions in your area. Some facilities have age minimums or other restrictions in place.
- Create art or send cards year-round. Many veterans receive mail only on holidays. Brighten their day on a random Tuesday by sending a smile.

- Create and send short video messages — simple hellos, a funny joke, or a great dance can lift spirits.
 - Engage in a history project by recording oral histories, writing short stories, or interviewing veterans and their families.
- Many of these options can also be turned into leadership opportunities for Junior members. Organize friends, classmates, sports teams, or communities to engage together or manage one aspect of a larger collection drive. Remember: Juniors are capable. Give them the opportunity to show us how they will thrive at working the VA&R Program.

Rising Star Junior Award honors outstanding members

Like the ALA Junior Member of the Year program, the Rising Star Junior Award recognizes our younger members and their active participation in the ALA’s mission. Five Rising Star Juniors — one in each ALA division — will be selected by the national Junior Activities Committee. The ALA’s five divisions:

Central

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Eastern

Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont

Northwestern

Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

Southern

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

Western

Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington



- Winners will receive a citation plaque and will be authorized, along with their chaperones, to travel to the national Junior meeting in their division during the 2026-2027 administrative year.
- The application should be completed by the Junior member applying for the Rising Star Junior Award.
- Applicant must have been a Junior member at the start of the current ALA administrative year and be between the ages of 8-13.
- Applicant must be a Junior member in good standing of the American Legion Auxiliary.
- Applicant’s narrative should detail the Junior member’s ALA participation and activities during the past year, June 1, 2025 - May 31, 2026. Only activities from that time will be considered. Document with photographs, screenshots, and other evidence of the Junior’s ALA participation and activities.
- Essay questions should be the applicant’s original writing and will be checked for the use of AI. Essays deemed 20% or more written by AI will be disqualified.

Learn more at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Rising-Star-Juniors.



fallen servicemember, and shed some tears.

“Nobody [had] come to see him; nothing on his stone,” Reinoehl said. “Here’s this person: Nobody there knows who he or she is. And what do you think of the parents? I mean, I pity them. They don’t even know where their son or daughter is.”

Though knowing nothing about who the servicemember could be, Reinoehl wanted to give a moment to honor their sacrifice. Beyond recognizing the unknown servicemember, she also wanted to recognize the loss of the unknown family.

“That’s sad to me that you’ll never see your daughter or son, and you don’t even know where they are that you could go visit,” she said.

Being the wife of a veteran, as well as having many other relatives in the service, Reinoehl empathized with the feelings of worry that this family would have felt at the time. The moment represented the all-encompassing loss that war can have not only on servicemembers, but their loved ones.

“I often thought, ‘War really can take the life out of you — or me worrying about my husband, or even my brother, my uncles — all of them,’” Reinoehl said.

Reinoehl describes herself as the type of person who just helps a stranger, and that’s what contributed to

that moment.

She encourages other Auxiliary members — if they get the opportunity — to take a similar trip and see the military- and veteran-based sites in Europe. She said it was a worthwhile experience where you’ll learn a lot — not just the history — but also on taking a moment of recognition for those who came before us.

ALA MEMBER HAS MOVING EXPERIENCE AT GRAVE OF AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Joan Reinoehl, a 45-year Paid Up For Life member of Pennsylvania ALA Unit 272, experienced a deeply moving and profound trip to Europe (pictured above) observing war memorials, cemeteries, and monuments from World War I and WWII.

Reinoehl had an opportunity to go with her brother — who was traveling with other U.S. Marines — for a special two-week trip in June 2025.

She visited various veteran and military sites across France, Germany, and Belgium, learning much on the history of the wars.

While on the journey, the cemeteries where American soldiers from both wars were laid to rest stood out to Reinoehl the most.

Sites like Flanders Field and walking through them gave her anchors to the past, remembering that she was walking the same path as those soldiers before her.

“To think, you’re there and all this took place,” Reinoehl said. “When we were walking in the bush or in the fields, I would feel and think, ‘Oh, what if someone was shot here and was laying here where I’m standing?’ It just gave me the chills.”

Of all the memories made on this trip, Reinoehl also took a moment to slow down and honor the fallen servicemembers.

While touring the sites of Normandy, France, the group visited a cemetery where American servicemembers are buried.

Taking time walking through the burials to find servicemembers from Pennsylvania, Reinoehl came across a marker with no identifiable information.

Upon seeing the lone grave, she paused, said a prayer for the

“That’s sad to me that you’ll never see your daughter or son, and you don’t even know where they are that you could go visit.”

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“Freedom isn’t free.”

— Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Walter Hitchcock

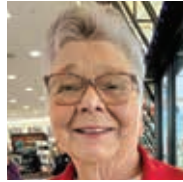


The poppy and the American Legion Auxiliary go hand in hand. Members have distributed millions of poppies for donations over the decades, raising money for veterans, military, and their families. This seemingly small gesture makes a world of difference for those who benefit from annual poppy distributions by the Auxiliary. The little red flower truly makes an impact on others and illustrates a core part of our mission. On the Friday before Memorial Day — National Poppy Day® — wear a red poppy to honor the fallen and support the living who have worn our nation’s uniform.

Above: Mrs. A.C. Carlson, then-national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, presents a poppy made by a disabled American veteran wounded in the World War to President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House in Washington, D.C., March 18, 1935 (AP Photo).

Check it out!

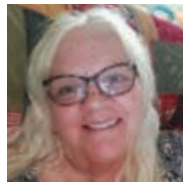
Does your unit host any summer projects or events that you're looking forward to?



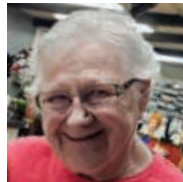
“Unit 260 in Tecumseh, Oklahoma, holds a Flag Day and flag retirement ceremony on the Saturday closest to Flag Day. Every year, we utilize our Sea Cadets to fold the flag and explain what each fold means. We also play Red Skelton’s *Pledge of Allegiance*, have a guest speaker, and much more.”
— Donna Snodgrass, Oklahoma



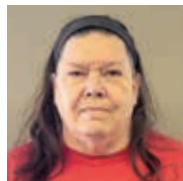
“Unit 360 in Weatherly, Pennsylvania, holds a Cards For Soldiers event. We assemble card kits for all-occasion cards and holidays. We send them unsigned with an envelope in a cellophane bag individually wrapped to military bases, USO, American Red Cross, etc., for soldiers to use (for free) to send to loved ones.”
— Judy Desrosiers, Pennsylvania



“Unit 494, Macedon, New York, participates in Heritage Days along the canal. We hand out school supplies, raffles, and information about our organization. It is a wonderful community event.”
— Sharon Celentano, New York



“Our small-town Unit 340 of 25 members participate in two summer events. The VFW does a weekly Brat Fry and invites us to cover baked goods, which is lucrative plus a great time to share friendship. We also join other veteran organizations at the weekly Berlin Farmers and Artists Market.”
— Barb Resop, Wisconsin



“Our Legion holds an annual parade and barbecue on the 5th of July. This year, the plans are getting bigger to celebrate the 250th of the U.S.”
— Leila Dean, Wyoming



“Woods W. Lynch Unit 19 in Midland, Texas, hands out about 900 Star Spangled Kids Kits at two events: the 4th of July kids parade and the Midland AirSho. We also teach about 100 kids to properly care for and fold the American flag at the AirSho. Our biggest summer project is partnering with Operation Homefront and holding a huge school supply drive.”
— Jane Bennett, Texas



“Our whole Legion Family has a big family day barbecue and games! Family fun for all ages!”
— Debi Graziano, Vermont

ALA Academy courses are designed to help members learn a variety of mission-related topics! View the self-paced courses and webinar recordings at www.ALAforVeterans.org/ALA-Academy.



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



KNOWING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE BENEFITS YOUR UNIT AND OUR MISSION

Behind every effective mission and product, there's an organized group. To have an organized group, you need a dynamic, genuine leader.

From national to the unit level, the Auxiliary's legacy of *Service Not Self* is carried out not only by our hardworking members, but by our dedicated, passionate leadership.

No leader or leadership position is the same, and to have the best outcome, it's important to dig deep into yourself and your group to find the best leadership style for you.

National Leadership Committee Chair Donna Dillard, along with the help of the entire Leadership Committee, put together an ALA Academy webinar about four leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, transformational, and servant.

This recording is available to our members on our ALA Academy page at member.legion-aux.org/member/online-training.

Explore the advice Dillard has for discovering your leadership style:

Why is it important for me to find my leadership style?

You can enhance confidence in your leadership abilities by recognizing your own style of leadership. Knowing your leadership style can help you use that knowledge to build

on your strengths and be aware of weak areas to avoid. And you can build on that strength when leading others to keep them motivated and build trust. Helping members recognize the benefits and drawbacks of each of the four types of leadership styles can also help them navigate challenging situations and ease some of the friction when different leadership styles collide with each other, enabling a more understanding environment to carry out the ALA's mission.

How do I develop and understand my leadership style?

Over the years, numerous leadership theories have been studied and tested. The studies have resulted in four distinct leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, transformational, and servant. There is a lot of information and theories about these styles on the internet today. The ALA Leadership Committee researched and developed a webinar members can watch, and there is a test you can take to gain more insight into your style of leadership. My advice is to start with the ALA Academy webinar, *Leadership in Unity: Exploring Leadership Styles*, take the leadership style quiz, and then members can decide to explore further avenues of information on the internet and in books if they desire.

How can I find the best leadership style for myself and my unit?

Make it fun — watch the leadership webinar on the ALA Academy as a group and then discuss each member's basic style of leadership. Study the different leadership styles and know that you may not fit perfectly into one category. The webinar recording offers insight into how to merge those styles for a productive project outcome and provides members with tools to define their individual leadership style. And again, there are books and internet articles for those who desire to study this topic further.

What are the myths or misconceptions about being a quality leader?

1. A good leader must have all the answers.

A good leader is well-informed, but they do not need to have all the answers. They know how to ask the questions and invite others to contribute.

2. If you want it done right or if you are ultimately responsible for something, you should just do it yourself.

With clear expectations, any member can fulfill a role and do it efficiently. A good leader will recognize and celebrate that, thus building confidence in others.

What's your leadership style?

- **Autocratic:** clear direction, strong control
- **Democratic:** inclusive, team-oriented
- **Transformational:** visionary, inspiring
- **Servant:** supportive, people first

Available to watch

Check out the ALA Academy webinar recording *Exploring Leadership Styles* to learn more on how you lead. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/ALA-Academy.

NEC APPEALS PROCESS AMENDED

The National Executive Committee (NEC) has long-held the authority to consider appeals, though the process for doing so has not always been clearly defined. At the Mid-Year NEC meeting in February, 33 proposed amendments to the National Standing Rules were presented to and adopted by the NEC. One of those amendments outlines in greater detail the process and authority by which the NEC considers appeals: *National Standing Rule V. National Executive Committee* has amended #8 and proceeding sections as follows:

8. The National Executive Committee has the authority to accept or reject appeals for consideration under the following categories:

Disciplinary action imposed on member:

Members disciplined by a unit have the right to appeal to the Department Executive Committee (DEC). The NEC may consider an appeal from a member under the following circumstances:

1. The DEC denied or prevented the member from accessing the established appeals process, including the member's submission to the DEC of a written statement outlining the alleged improper disciplinary action; or
2. The DEC fails to identify and address violations of member rights or principles of fundamental fairness, including adequate notice and opportunity to be heard; or
3. The DEC imposes disciplinary action on a member in violation of governing documents.

Disciplinary action imposed on unit:

Units disciplined by a

department have the right to appeal to the NEC. The NEC may consider appeals from units when:

1. The disciplinary action imposed by the department violated the principles of fundamental fairness including adequate notice and opportunity to be heard; or
 2. The disciplinary action imposed by the department violated national governing documents; or
 3. The cancellation or revocation of a unit charter was executed in violation of national governing documents.
9. The NEC has the authority to consider complaints regarding the failure of department leadership to adhere to the department's governing documents when:
1. Three or more units file the same complaint; or
 2. Three or more members of the DEC file the same complaint.
10. The National Executive Committee may establish procedural rules regarding the suspension, cancellation, or revocation of unit charters, with full power to revise or amend such rules.
11. A unit whose charter has been canceled without its consent may appeal the department's action to the National Executive Committee within 60 days of receipt of notice of the department's action.
- a) The unit shall provide by email a written appeal to the national secretary, the department president, and the department secretary that includes:
 - a reason why the NEC should grant the appeal
 - a chronology of events
 - supporting documentation in chronological order with original timestamps

- a copy of the unit's governing documents

- b) The national secretary shall notify the national president of the appeal.

- c) The department shall provide by email to the national secretary within two weeks of receipt of the unit's appeal:
 - a written summary justifying the cancellation of the unit's charter
 - a copy of all records and actions with original timestamps regarding the probation of the unit or cancellation of the unit's charter
 - a chronology of events
 - a copy of the department's governing documents

- a written summary justifying the cancellation of the unit's charter

- a copy of all records and actions with original timestamps regarding the probation of the unit or cancellation of the unit's charter

- a chronology of events
- a copy of the department's governing documents

- d) The national president, as presiding officer of the National Executive Committee, shall independently appoint a special subcommittee of three to five members of the National Executive Committee to review the appeal. Unless there is a regularly scheduled meeting, the national president shall call a special meeting of the National Executive Committee to be held within 30 days of the formation of the special subcommittee, informing the unit and department of the meeting.

- e) The special subcommittee shall make written findings of facts and recommendations to the National Executive Committee.

12. The national secretary shall inform both the unit and the department of the decision of the National Executive Committee, whose decision shall be final.

This amendment, along with the 32 additional amendments adopted by the NEC, can be found at www.ALAforVeterans.org in the MyAuxiliary member portal under Constitution & Bylaws.



LEGISLATION IN ACTION (this page): ALA member Mary Adams meets Sen. Marsha Blackburn at “Tennessee Tuesday.” Opposite page (left to right clockwise): ALA members at the National Security Commission meeting; ALA member Cassie Johnson and the Montana Legion Family meet with Sen. Steve Daines; Department of Illinois Family with Sen. Tammy Duckworth; Wyoming Family with Sen. John Barrasso’s staff; ALA member Julie Smith (far left) shares *Auxiliary* magazine with staff for Rep. Pat Harrigan.

‘MY VOICE MATTERS’

LEGION FAMILY MEMBERS ADVOCATE TOGETHER

Passion for advocating positive legislation for our veterans, military, and their families is alive and well.

Members of The American Legion Family joined together on Capitol Hill for the annual Washington Conference. Auxiliary members had a seat at the table to discuss the Legion’s legislative priorities, giving strength in numbers to help be a voice for those who serve and have served.

This year, 52 department (state) Auxiliary Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Committee chairs were invited to attend, with department National Executive Committee members stepping in where needed to represent the most Auxiliary members possible.

Alongside other members of the Family, ALA members attended commission meetings for Legislative, VA&R, National Security, and Veterans Employment & Education before attending the Commander’s Call, which included speakers

and information for Hill visits. The highlight for many ALA members was joining forces to meet with our nation’s senators, representatives, and their staffs to discuss The American Legion’s legislative agenda.

Julie Smith, North Carolina

Smith was excited when she found out she would be attending Washington Conference.

“It was something I have wanted to attend for a long time,” she said.

She was able to meet with eight of North Carolina’s senators, representatives, or staff, a larger number than most members experience at Washington Conference.

“At first, it was a little intimidating, but by the end of the day, I felt very comfortable speaking with the representatives or their staffers,” Smith said. “We provided each representative or

staffer with the point papers and The American Legion legislative agenda. Most importantly, we asked each one what we could do to help make sure we got these bills passed. The most common answer was to keep on advocating and making our voices heard.”

Being part of the meetings as a Family was beneficial, Smith said.

“I realized my voice matters not just to our veteran community but also to my veterans, my Legionnaires,” she said. “It was very important to have the Legionnaires with us. The representatives listened to them and showed great respect. My Legionnaires included two female veterans, and when they shared their stories of how the VA system has let them down, it was an emotional moment.”

Smith was grateful for the information shared from this year’s Washington Conference.

“I am fired up and energized to share what I’ve learned and to ensure everyone signs up for the Legion legislative alerts and VoterVoice,” Smith said.

Cassie Johnson, Montana

For Johnson, the event was her first time attending and first time in Washington, D.C.

“The Commander’s Call was a great experience, she said. “It really amped you up for your Hill visits,” Johnson said.

Like Smith, the Hill meetings began as a slightly intimidating experience from something so new to her but ended up being a comfortable event.

“They were very easy to talk to and understood why we were there,” she said.

“Montana is a very large

state and my four companions I was with are all from the west side of the state. I live on the east side, and we have very different needs than the west side. The west side

“I do think it is important for the entire Legion Family to stand together for these meetings – to be able to show others that we are all for the same cause – our veterans.”

of Montana has more options for our veterans. I live in a very rural area, and it is harder for our veterans to get their needs met. Our senators understood this.”

Working as a Legion Family, Johnson experienced firsthand what togetherness means.

“I do think it is important for the entire Legion Family to stand together for these meetings — to be able to show others that we are all for the same cause — our veterans,” she said.

Mary Adams, Tennessee

Adams was thrilled to receive the authorization to attend this year’s Washington Conference on behalf of the Auxiliary.

Adams enjoyed going to the Hill with her Legion Family Department of Tennessee, participating in “Tennessee Tuesday,” a meet-and-greet time with a few legislators and their staff members.

Legion Family members gave Sen. Marsha Blackburn and Sen. Bill Hagerty’s staffs a print flyer of The American Legion Family legislative priorities.

Adams also met with Rep. Tim Burchett.

“Initially, the two Legionnaires and I discussed our concerns with his staff,” she said. “As we were about to end, she asked us to wait a moment and left the room and returned with

Burchett. It was very nice to meet him.”

Adams additionally was able to meet with Sen. David Kustoff, who had just returned from Memphis.

“I had met him before, but this meeting was much more professional and personal,” she recalled. “He asked questions and listened.”

Getting to go to D.C. for the first time as a representative of the Auxiliary was an honor for Adams.

“This conference is so important to all our Legion Family members,” she said. “It is so great to hear all the things that go on in D.C. and in other departments.”

— By Sara N. Fowler





what is being discussed when the full name is never used in conversation or in writing.

Think back to when you first became a member. You were likely hearing and reading acronyms that you had no idea what they meant. In that spirit, be mindful of others and how they might feel — probably lost.

One idea to help your fellow members understand the acronyms your unit uses is to put together a cheat sheet for new members so they can feel part of the meeting, part of the event, and part of your unit.

Acronyms can be fun and helpful to use to save space in a written document or to talk faster in a meeting, but just remember to be mindful of use when it comes to these shortened words. Your audience matters and wants to understand correctly what is being communicated so they can keep focusing on our mission of serving veterans, military, and their families.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR AUDIENCE WHEN USING ALA ACRONYMS

ALA. PDP. DEC. NEC. PUFL.

American Legion Auxiliary acronyms — the common, the weird, the most unusual. The Auxiliary at all levels of the organization often uses acronyms in discussion and in writing. Some are well-known to many members while others may be more unique to a location in the country or even to an individual unit.

Some acronyms even have more than one definition. For example, “National.” That could refer to convention, National Headquarters, the national organization, and more.

Same with DEC: It could mean District Executive Committee, Division Executive Committee, or Department Executive Committee.

Acronyms are a part of the ALA — we understand that — but it’s important to remember that not all members speak the ALA language for a variety of reasons. They might be new to the organization, they are a potential member checking out an event, or they just simply haven’t been in the Auxiliary long enough to have heard or know what all the possible acronyms

used actually stand for.

Especially in writing: Be sure to always spell out on first reference (i.e., American Legion Auxiliary vs. ALA). This goes for meetings or presentations as well. Use the full name a few times — Auxiliary Emergency Fund — before switching to AEF.

Using the full name is especially crucial for any written documents sent to the media, as well as any interviews you might be a part of. Acronyms will not help in this situation and will just confuse the person. Get your point across about your event or unit — but use the full words for maximum understanding.

What about this one — GS? Girls State should not be shortened to GS. And, written like this, it’s missing something critical: ALA in front of it. We want our communities to know who puts this amazing program on, so adding the “ALA” in front of every Girls State reference reiterates and reminds while keeping our branding of the program strong.

Acronyms have their place, but when used all the time, they can leave members and nonmembers in the dark about



Here is a sampling of acronyms commonly used in the American Legion Auxiliary. Can you guess the meanings?

ALA	PR
NVCAF	MIA
TAL	NHQ
C&Y	NP
VA&R	PDC
C&B	PNC
NEC	PDP
DEC	PNP
DLNC	POW
SAL	PUFL
DG	VAVS
AEF	VSO

Tell us how you did! Email PR@ALAforVeterans.org.



HELPING OTHERS BENEFITS KIDS AND OUR ORGANIZATION

A 2025 Tufts University analysis shows that 50% of young people say they “rarely or never spend time in person with others in their community.”

It’s a worrying statistic, considering the lifelong benefits that community involvement provides for young people. But one simple activity can strengthen the community ties that are lacking among today’s youth.

That activity is volunteering.

Youth volunteering not only benefits the young people who participate, but it also strengthens support for the organizations they are assisting.

In the American Legion Auxiliary, members can encourage volunteering among their children and grandchildren and with Junior members and Sons of The American Legion youth.

“It is important for parents and grandparents to include their kids in all ALA activities,” said Melanie Taylor, ALA 2025-2026 national Children & Youth Committee chair. “It not only gives them a sense of worth, that they are contributing, but it also teaches them the importance of volunteering and serving their community, veterans, and military families.”

Research shows the value that children and teens derive from participating in volunteer activities:

- A 2017 study in *Social Science Research* shows that adolescents who voluntarily get involved in community activities are more likely to maintain that civic connection as adults.
- Survey data in *JAMA Network Open* in 2023 links volunteering with better health and decreased rates of anxiety and behavioral problems among children and teens.
- A 2025 analysis from the global Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development connects volunteering during teenage years with better workplace skills and higher earnings in the future.

There are also advantages for the groups that youth volunteers assist — and the organizations’ adult members.

Input from multiple generations can foster understanding and generate stronger ideas, leading to more impactful activities. And youth volunteering helps build a foundation for future support.

“They learn by doing,” Taylor said of children and teens who volunteer, “and will carry forward the values we have taught them by including them in our programs.”

YOUTH VOLUNTEER IDEAS FOR ALA UNITS

With the many positive outcomes of youth volunteering in mind, Melanie Taylor, ALA 2025-2026 national Children & Youth Committee chair, suggested that ALA units not only actively engage young family members but also encourage participation in an ALA youth program.

“If the kids are willing to help out, ask them what ideas they have that might benefit the activity your group is working on,” she said. “Let them lead the way, and the senior members assist. This builds a cohesive respect.”

Junior members and young SAL members can also take part in the ALA Patch Program to earn recognition while they learn about patriotism, health, fitness, and leadership — and serve their communities.

Possible community service activities:

- Collecting canned goods for a local food pantry or homeless shelter.
- Cleaning up parks in their community.
- Decorating a teacher’s classroom door during Teacher Appreciation Week.
- Supporting veterans and their families by co-chairing Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation or Poppy Program activities.

Taylor also recommended that adults encourage ALA youth volunteers even after an activity or event ends.

“Recognize their accomplishments and celebrate them, giving them a sense of pride,” she said. “By doing all these things, they will feel a part of The American Legion Family and be willing to participate and become our future leaders.”



SERVICE TO OTHERS: Amy Clark’s father, Durwood Forte (first and second photos), served in the U.S. Navy. Her husband, Joe Carter Clark (third photo), served in the U.S. Air Force.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY HONORS COLLECTIVE LEGACY OF SERVICE

Amy Clark and her husband, Joe Carter Clark, a U.S. Air Force veteran, were looking for volunteer opportunities in their community. They decided on The American Legion Family because they could not only volunteer, but honor their family’s legacy of service to our country.



Amy Clark

“My husband and I entered our empty-nest years and sought a meaningful way to stay connected to the military community that has shaped our lives, as well as honoring a commitment to my dad so that I could continue his work and service,” said Clark. “What began as a simple search for a meaningful volunteer opportunity soon became a personal mission to honor my late father and carry forward a proud military legacy that spans generations of my family.”

Clark is now a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 129 and the American Legion

Riders in Jacksonville Beach, Fla.

Her grandfather, Albert Forte, served in the U.S. Army. Her father, Durwood Forte, followed in her grandfather’s footsteps and served in the U.S. Navy. He served during the Vietnam War and Cuban Missile Crisis.

“His devotion to country inspired my lifelong respect for the men and women who serve,” said Clark.

Her great-grandfather, Wilbur Hawthorne, served during World War I in the U.S. Army, and her grandfather, Frank Hawthorne, served in the U.S. Army Air Force (predecessor of the U.S. Air Force), stationed in England during WWII. While serving in England, he met her grandmother, Mary Brigid Clerkin, an Irish nurse caring for wounded soldiers.

After the war, Clark’s grandparents married before returning to the United States.

“My grandmother and my mom came to America aboard the Queen Mary with the other war brides, bringing with them a

story of hope and new beginnings that became the foundation of my grandma’s American journey,” said Clark. “Last summer, for my mother’s 80th birthday, I had the privilege of taking her to California to revisit the Queen Mary, now permanently docked in Long Beach. Standing together on the same ship that carried her and my grandma across the Atlantic so many years ago was deeply emotional. The history, the stories, and their incredible courage all came alive once again.”

In addition to her father and grandparents, Clark’s great-uncle, Pfc. Dorsey Shuler, served in the U.S. Army. Unfortunately, Shuler was killed in action during WWII.

The military legacy continues today with Clark’s son, Carter, and daughter, Carley. Carter is serving in the U.S. Navy.

“His service fills us with pride and gratitude, knowing that the family’s devotion to service lives on,” said Clark. “Our daughter, Carley, plans on joining the military after completion of nursing school.

“For me, the Legion Family isn’t just an organization — it’s home, heart, and heritage,” said Clark. “It represents every brave soul in my family and every veteran whose sacrifice continues to shape the freedoms we honor every day.”



Tell us about the veteran in your life. Email PR@ALAFforVeterans.org.



FRIENDSHIPS FORMED: Eva Fipps (front row, far right) with other ALA Iowa Girls State senators. Bottom right photo: Fipps (right) and her best friend from high school.

ALA GIRLS STATE GAVE TOWN MAYOR A FOUNDATION TO LEAD

At 20 years old, Eva Fipps has made history — she’s currently the youngest female mayor in the United States.

Fipps serves Henderson, Iowa, a town of 144 residents, according to the 2020 U.S. Census. Fipps is juggling her mayoral position while being a full-time business administration student, working just under full-time, as well as doing extracurriculars that come with being a 20-year-old college woman with plans to attend law school.

What inspired her to run for election was her relationship with her city clerk, whom she would stop and visit with during her morning runs.

On one of her morning workouts, the clerk suggested Fipps run for mayor. After some encouragement, she decided to try, and now she’s sworn in.

Part of what gave her the confidence to run for office was her time at ALA Iowa Girls State.

While attending ALA Girls State, Fipps learned every individual aspect of government throughout the state, from local journalism to the state Senate and House of Representatives.

Fipps applied to every position and got city journalist.

Since being sworn in, she has accredited the ALA Girls State program for laying the foundation of knowledge she needed to run and be a successful mayor.

“Every day I look back, and I think of how much ALA Girls State helped me,” she said. “I think of all the small things I learned that you wouldn’t even think about on a day-to-day basis.”

ALA Girls State helped strengthen her skills — like public speaking, small talk, and other people-based skills.

“It definitely helped teach me how to interact with people I might not otherwise have had things in common with,” she said.

ALA Girls State made such a lasting impact on Fipps that she went back as a counselor in 2024 and plans to go back this summer. As a counselor, she had the opportunity to have an outside perspective after having an inside view attending the program.

“I got to see from an outside perspective how helpful this can be because I watched girls show up on the first day — barely knowing about how anything

worked — and I got to watch them leave talking about what they wanted to do with their futures, how they really loved this opportunity, and how they’d love to continue to do this in real life,” she said.

With ALA Girls State forming a foundation of confidence for her position, Fipps is focusing on using her platform of being the youngest currently serving mayor and youngest female mayor to uplift and accomplish tasks for her community.

Beyond being a leader for her community with her history-making mayoral triumph hitting the headlines, her leadership has become further reaching than she could imagine.

“There are so many things that make me so proud, not only of myself, but of others,” Fipps said. “I have people who have contacted our city hall just to say that seeing me in this position helped give them the courage to run for a similar or even higher position. So, just the pride in knowing I did something that might give other people courage to do things is extremely high.”

Fipps recognizes that the ALA Girls State programs greatly benefit young girls and women in this transitional moment of life, something she is grateful for.

“This is an extremely important opportunity that you can take to further not only your knowledge, but your understanding of how the world works, and when you’re going into adulthood, that’s something very important every student should do,” she said.





SACRED GROUND (above): Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver; (below): inscriptions on headstones' reverse side contain the names of family members of veterans.

HONORING VETERANS WITH THEIR FINAL RESTING PLACE

Many military veterans and their family members are eligible for burial in a U.S. national cemetery. For those interested in burial at one of these sites — or at another federal government-supported veterans burial location — planning ahead can simplify the process when the need arises.

Here are some basic details and resources to keep in mind when seeking a national cemetery burial:

Cemetery locations

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration maintains 157 national cemeteries and 35 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Additionally, the VA has provided financial support for 124 locally maintained cemeteries, called VA Grant-Funded Veterans Cemeteries, as well as 14 tribal cemeteries. Not all states have national

cemeteries, but options for veterans' burials are available in all 50 states as well as Guam, Saipan, and Puerto Rico.

A list of national cemeteries is at www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/all-national.asp. A searchable database of locations is available at www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/. To see a list of VA Grant-Funded Veterans Cemeteries, visit www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/all-grant-funded.asp.

Veteran eligibility

Generally, veterans who have met minimum active-duty service requirements and are without a dishonorable discharge, and those who died while in training or on active duty, are eligible for free burial in a national cemetery. Spouses, widows or widowers, minor children, and, in some cases, parents as well as adult children with disabilities, also may be eligible.

Complete details about who is

eligible and who is not eligible for burial in a national cemetery are available at www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/.

Those who want to be buried in a national cemetery can visit www.va.gov/burials-and-memorials/pre-need/form-10007-apply-for-eligibility/introduction now to complete a pre-need application and determine if they are eligible. This online application is the equivalent of VA Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery.

The application process can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on the availability of space and the circumstances of the application.

Those seeking a VA-supported burial for a family member who has already passed away should visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/schedule-a-burial/ for instructions.

VA Grant-Funded Veterans Cemeteries' eligibility requirements typically are similar to those of national cemeteries, but they may have different residency rules. More information is available through each cemetery as outlined at www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/all-grant-funded.asp.

Arlington National Cemetery and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, operated by the Department of the Army, have different eligibility



requirements. Information about those rules is available at www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Funerals/Scheduling-a-Funeral/Establishing-Eligibility.

The VA provides information about which application materials veterans and their families need, what factors they should consider, and how to apply for various types of burials for veterans. Those interested should visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility/ for this guidance.

Burial benefits

For veterans who qualify, national cemetery burial benefits include the following, provided at no cost to the family:

- Burial site at a national cemetery with available space
- Opening and closing of the grave
- Headstone or marker
- Presidential Memorial Certificate to honor the veteran
- Burial flag
- Care of the burial site and cemetery grounds

Veterans also can receive an online Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) profile page as well as military funeral honors. Additionally, family members of a veteran may be eligible for a burial allowance for the veteran to cover burial, funeral, and transportation costs not

American Legion grave markers

American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales sells free-standing bronze grave markers for all military branches and war eras. Also available are markers representing The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and The American Legion Riders.

Proceeds support American Legion programs.

There are no restrictions on who can purchase the markers, but those who plan to place one at a grave should contact the cemetery where it will be located to ensure that it adheres to display guidelines. Bronze markers range in price from \$46.99 to \$99.99. Plastic markers with emblems for the Legion and ALA are available for \$9.99.

For more information and to order from Emblem Sales, visit www.Emblem.Legion.org.



provided in the standard VA benefits.

More information about benefits and how to apply for them is available at www.va.gov/burials-memorials/ and in the *Guide to VA Burial and Memorial Benefits* at www.cem.va.gov/docs/wcag/outreach/Infosheet-Guide-to-VA-Burial-and-Memorial-Benefits.pdf.

Eligible family members may be buried at a national cemetery even if they die before the veteran, with burial typically in the same gravesite where the veteran will be buried. In this case, the inscription on the gravestone first carries the name of the family member who has died, with the name of the

veteran added when they pass away.

Headstones and markers

Upon request, the VA will furnish a government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of an eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world. For burial in national cemeteries, state veterans cemeteries, or military post or base cemeteries, officials from that site will order the headstone or marker based on information the veteran's next of kin provides.

Flat markers in granite, marble, and bronze and upright headstones in granite and marble are available. For the inurnment of cremated remains, families may choose bronze niche markers. Selected styles must comply with guidelines for the cemetery of the burial.

For veterans who died on or after Nov. 1, 1990, the VA may provide a government headstone or marker even if the grave also has a privately purchased headstone or marker. The National Cemetery Administration's website has additional information about headstones, markers, and other benefits at www.cem.va.gov/burial-memorial-benefits/.





PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR VALUES ARE

Mel Robbins, author and host of *The Mel Robbins Podcast*, released an episode in January 2026 titled, *The #1 Money Habit That Sets You Up for Financial Freedom*, featuring David Bach, a 10-time *New York Times* bestselling author and entrepreneur. During the conversation, the two discussed everything from debt and rent to retirement planning and what Bach calls the “automatic economy.” Bach shared several simple money habits and resources to help listeners take control of their finances and firmly said, “Either you have a plan for your money, or someone else does.”

The statement is both powerful and shocking. Bach explained that if money is coming into your bank account whether from a paycheck, IRA distribution, inheritance, or another source, you must allocate every dollar to something specific or it disappears.

Were you thinking: *How can I lose money if it's in my bank account?*

Let's play a game and find out. Take out a piece of paper and write down all of your “must have” expenses. This includes things like rent or mortgage payments, health care, car payments, groceries, and utilities. Next, make a list of your subscriptions and recurring expenses. This might include streaming services like Netflix, gym memberships, Amazon Subscribe & Save deliveries, monthly charitable donations, and any other automatic charges.

For many Americans — 7 out of 10 whom report living paycheck to paycheck — income arrives and quickly flows back out the door through various automatic payments. Businesses design their models this way. They don't just want you to buy something once; they want you to subscribe. They want you to set it and forget it, so you remain a customer for life and participate in the automatic economy that is so easy and attractive for the consumer.

However, the automatic economy isn't inherently a bad thing. In fact, when used intentionally, it can be one of the most powerful tools for building healthy financial habits.

Organizations like the American Legion Auxiliary operate in this environment as well. Just as companies hope you'll become a loyal customer, mission-driven nonprofits hope you'll become a long-term partner in the work they do. The Auxiliary doesn't just want you to be a member for one year — we want you to remain part of this community for life. When members choose to support the mission financially, recurring gifts allow that support to grow steadily over time.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that you control how many people have their hands in your piggy bank.

Let's do one more exercise. On that same piece of paper, write down a list of your personal values. This might include things such as honesty, kindness, generosity, service to others, supporting veterans and military families, or contributing to your family and community.

Now compare that list of values to your spending and subscription list. Do they align? If they do, congratulations! You are perfect and are living with intentionality. If they don't, consider what changes you could make to bring your spending closer to what matters most to you.

Bach says two things typically happen to people that force them to reconcile their financial situation — pain or clarity around what's important to them. Pain might come from financial stress or unexpected hardship. Clarity comes from intentionally deciding what matters most and building a financial plan around those priorities. Our hope is that you can skip the painful part and jump right to clarity.

For many Auxiliary members, that clarity includes supporting veterans, military, and their families.

When you choose to align your finances with those values — whether through membership, volunteer service, or a recurring charitable gift — you're making a conscious decision about where your dollars go and the impact

they create.

If the automatic economy is going to touch our finances anyway, we might as well use it as a force for good. Consider making space for supporting the ALA's mission work in your financial plan. Every ALA member deserves financial freedom that reflects their values, and when those values include service and generosity, the entire American Legion Family benefits.

When members choose to support the mission financially, recurring gifts allow that support to grow steadily over time.

The fourth annual American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Celebrating Women of Service honorees

ALA members and supporters participated in Celebrating Women of Service Day on March 8. Tribute gifts made in support of this giving campaign supported the ALA Mission Endowment Fund.

***Special thanks to the
Department of Illinois
for their generous
\$2,500 matching gift
in honor of National
President Pam Ray
and National Treasurer
Marybeth Revoir.***

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ALA Development Team
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Alice Allen
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All Female Military
and Veterans
Amanda Freeman
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Lauren Voeltz,
U.S. Army
Lily Cross
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Linda Stone
Linda Vance
Linda Sheppard
Lisa Johnston
Lisa Shore
Lucille Cole
Major General
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Margaret Smith,
Marine Corps
Margie Goepferd
- My Mother
Marion Korsmeier
Marjean Neve
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Mary Butt
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Michele DeGennaro
Michelle Lawrence,
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Michelle Lupo
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and Aunties
Ms. Kelly Lalonde
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of 408
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Stefanie Cooper
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Sue Koleno
Sue Sonnenberg
Susan Junker
Susie Tozier, Dept of CA
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The Honorable Dr.
Cashenna A. Cross,
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Retired Major
The Women of ALANHQ
Tina Bauer
Tracy Gregg
Valerie Hardy
Verlinda Prior
Vie Denney
Violet Manson
Viviana M. DeCohen,
U.S. Marine Corps
Whitney Strapp
Women of ALA Unit 276
in Maryland

**Honoree names are from gifts received made on or before March 9, 2026.*

Help the
next leader
in line
succeed



By Sara N. Fowler

Leadership and mentoring are incredibly important for the future of the American Legion Auxiliary as members pass down knowledge on how to move the mission forward. This is true for all levels of the organization — from unit to national.

Sharing leadership advice — ranging from how to run a meeting to working through difficult topics to successful mission-outreach ideas — can all benefit the next group of leaders to flourish and continue a mindset of veterans, military, and their families first.

It's important to weave mentorship into the fabric of the American Legion Auxiliary so it becomes standard practice to the next person in line. Success benefits everyone and ensures smooth transitions.

Leaving the next unit president, for example, to navigate the new-to-them position isn't helpful — mentoring can provide perspective and feedback on what has/hasn't worked that previous year and offer guidance. It doesn't mean everything has to be repeated verbatim from year to year — new and different ideas are great — but advice from previous experience is at least a good starting point.

According to *Harvard Business Review*, mentoring another person can strengthen confidence, decision-making, and collaboration in that future leader, which leads to productivity in successfully working the mission and leading others.

Servant leadership and what it means for ALA leaders

Dating back to the 1970s, servant leadership says leaders have a duty to focus primarily on meeting their mentees' needs rather than their own.

According to the article by Harvard, servant

leadership involves others in decision making and is based on ethical and caring behavior. You want the next person to succeed. You want them to continue moving the ALA forward in a positive direction.

Being a servant leader and focusing on mentoring others is a key component of success for the next generation of leaders.

The Harvard article talks about 10 leadership characteristics ALA members can utilize that will support our next generation of leaders:

- **Listening:** a commitment to listening intently to others paired with reflection and thoughtful response.
 - **Empathy:** an effort to understand, empathize with, and accept others for who they are.
 - **Healing:** a focus on helping others overcome emotional wounds and move toward wholeness.
 - **Awareness:** both general awareness and self-awareness, contributing to insight into power, ethics, and values.
 - **Persuasion:** a reliance on influence and reason rather than coercion or manipulation.
- **Conceptualization:** the ability to think beyond day-to-day realities and imagine broader possibilities.
- **Foresight:** efforts to understand lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future.
- **Stewardship:** acting with the understanding that leadership is a trust held for the greater good of society.
- **Commitment to the growth of people:** the belief that people have intrinsic value beyond their measurable contributions as workers.
- **Building community:** a desire to foster genuine community within organizations and institutions.

Servant leadership involves others in decision making and is based on ethical and caring behavior. You want the next person to succeed. You want them to continue moving the ALA forward in a positive direction.

National ALA Leadership Committee available for guidance

The purpose of the ALA's Leadership Committee is to better equip members to serve in leadership positions with confidence and skill.

Key program statements:

- To raise awareness of ALA leadership development opportunities.
- To promote participation in the ALA Academy.
- To enhance knowledge about ALA history, programs, and organization.

For more ideas and to connect with other leaders, request to join the committee's Facebook group at www.Facebook.com/groups/ALALeadership or email leadership@ALAforVeterans.org.

Knowing when to step down

It can be difficult to step down from a position when you have perhaps been in that role for years. But instead of thinking in terms of “I’m not in charge anymore,” shift your focus to that of mentorship and how your years of knowledge and skills can help the next person lead. Instead of being “the one in charge,” you are taking on an equally important role as their mentor.

An article in *Forbes* discusses some reasons why people can be hesitant to step down — which some ALA members probably relate to. But holding on to a position too long can stifle innovation, morale, and long-term growth at various levels within the Auxiliary. Here are a few reasons from the article that members in this position might relate to:

- Identity and self-worth: For many leaders, their role is not just a job; it’s a significant part of their identity. Stepping down can feel like losing a part of themselves, leading to a crisis of self-worth and purpose.
- Fear of obsolescence: The fear of becoming irrelevant is a powerful motivator. This fear is exactly why becoming a mentor to those in leadership positions is important — your skills and knowledge are still needed and valued.
- Power and control: Power can be intoxicating. The ability to make decisions, influence outcomes, and be at the center of an organization’s success can create a strong attachment to a leadership role. Stepping down might feel like a loss of influence.
- Legacy concerns: Many leaders are deeply concerned about their legacy. They fear that stepping down might lead to a loss of control over how they are remembered or that their successor might undo their work. Also, they may not have confidence in the next generation’s ability to be as effective as they are. This fear of losing control of their legacy may cause

them to stay in power to ensure their vision is preserved.

These are valid reasons to be afraid of stepping down. But staying on as a mentor instead will truly serve everyone involved.

Remember: Stepping down isn’t a bad thing. It can prevent a unit from being stagnant and allows new ideas and energy to be part of the ALA. It can be positive and a great way to give others the chance to try their hand at leadership to see where it might take them, the unit, department, and national organization.

Transitioning from leader to mentor

Mentoring can be a great, positive influence on fellow Auxiliary members, leading to progression within the unit level and above through leadership growth.

Being a mentor means you can be that member’s go-to for guidance and advice since you’ve been in the position already. You know what to expect, the unique questions and situations, and how to navigate them. You can answer the tough questions. You are a teacher, an asset to the next leader in line. Instead of thinking of not being the unit president, department president, or National Executive Committee member anymore (or any position at any level), remind yourself you are of value. You have such a plethora of knowledge to share. You can be much more supportive than you realize. Giving advice — whether it’s used or not — is beneficial for options and ideas.

Leadership and mentoring are part of the American Legion Auxiliary and can benefit the organization. The Auxiliary is a place for members to grow in their leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities to better serve our veterans, military, and their families. ★

Leadership courses available to all members

ALA Academy webinars are available to take from any device at any time. You can watch alone or in a group (perfect for unit or district training opportunities).

These previously recorded courses are designed for you to take at your convenience, with no need to pre-register. Check out the Academy today at www.ALAforVeterans.org with your member sign-in and step up your leadership!

Leadership courses available now:

- *ALA Leadership: Living Our Motto of Service Not Self*
- *Exploring Leadership Styles*

Check out page 16 in this issue of *Auxiliary* to learn about the different types of leadership styles. Understanding your style can make you become a better leader.



 AMERICAN
LEGION
AUXILIARY

Auxiliary Members Need Your Help

In 2025, American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters awarded \$529,168 to 274 ALA members who were recovering from a natural disaster or facing financial hardship. This assistance can only continue with your support.

Your gift to AEF ensures we have the resources to create impact today and sustain our mission into the future. Text AEF to 1-844-940-3450 or scan the QR code to donate today!

Scan here
to make a gift
today:



Follow Auxiliary Emergency Fund on Facebook to see the impact of your gift. Learn more at www.ALAFORVeterans.org/AEF.



BETTER TOGETHER: American Legion Family members of Post/Unit 409 in Leo, Ind. (photo: Bob Cross/FotoCross Photography).

A Family Affair

Multiple memberships in The American Legion Family benefit all of us

By Sara N. Fowler

Pride in membership. Pride in those who make us eligible to be part of The American Legion Family.

The American Legion Auxiliary has members throughout the country who have more than one membership in the Family: it could be ALA, Legion, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders.

These members annually commit to more than one overlapping mission, giving our veterans, military, and their families the most support possible in a variety of ways through this level of involvement.

Auxiliary magazine asked our members with multiple memberships to share their reasons for fully engaging in The American Legion Family:

Jennifer Smith, Department of Florida

Smith belongs to Unit/Post 82 in Florida. She is a U.S. Navy veteran and Legionnaire. Her husband,

Smitty, is a U.S. Navy veteran as well, eligible for the Auxiliary through Jennifer's service.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

It gives a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging. We plan events and service to our community, we work hard together, and we have a great time doing it. It is also a great way to meet some fascinating people in new places. When we first moved to Florida, we only knew the realtor. We heard an ad on the radio that the local American Legion Post 82 was selling hot wings. That night led us to join the post and meet some great people who have become family.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of The American Legion Family?

I wasn't thinking about the importance of committing to more than one part of the Family

at a time, but once I started attending both the Legion and Auxiliary meetings, some benefits did come to light. There was more continuity in event planning, in communicating about shared expenses, and better participation from everyone due to more involvement in the planning details. There are always going to be ebbs and flows in getting volunteers — from running the day-to-day operations to the big fundraising events. Through better communication and including all families at the planning phase, the increase in volunteers has been notable.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

Being a member has brought so many wonderful people into our lives. I'm sure every post has their share of characters, and our post has many from across the country. It is a great way to give back and have some fun along the way.

One new volunteer can change the look and feel of a committee, family, or even the entire post. If you are not participating at your local post, make an effort to visit the lounge, attend a meeting, or volunteer for an event. There is something for everyone, so take a step toward making a difference.

Pam and Roger Norton, Department of Vermont

Pam Norton

Pam Norton's Auxiliary membership is through her father, Paul Brunet, a Korean War veteran, and her American Legion membership is through her own five years of service in the U.S. Army.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

My memberships are my way of giving back to those who have and/or are serving by being vocal about the organizations, what they do, and can do to help our veterans and their families.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of the Family?

Belonging to each organization gives me the ability to look objectively at the other when I am working or volunteering.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

My standard comment is that by joining one organization, you are a voice to support our veterans to Congress. By joining more than one organization, you are showing your support to the

additional organizations. We help each other out, and sometimes the best way is to have an intimate knowledge of each.

Roger Norton

Roger Norton's Auxiliary membership is through his wife, Pam, Legion eligibility through his own service in the U.S. Air Force, and his membership in the Sons is through his grandfather, a World War II veteran. Norton also served in the Vermont Army National Guard.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

My membership is a way for me to continue being patriotic and serving my community, state, and nation.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of the Family?

The parts equal the whole. Each part of the Family has its place, and together, they complement each other and complete the Family.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

Anyone who has served their country or is eligible to join through a family member who has served should be proud to be a member. Together, we can continue to make this country a great country and a great place to live. Being a member in more than one part of the Family helps you to understand the whole of the organization.

Jamie Lethiecq, Department of Pennsylvania

Lethiecq served 22 years active duty and retired from the U.S. Army. His wife also served in the Army for eight years as both active duty and the National Guard. His grandfather served in the Army during the Korean War. Lethiecq and his wife are both members of The American Legion Riders as well.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

I have spent my entire adult life serving my country and giving back to my community. My memberships across The American Legion Family allow me to continue giving back to my community.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of the Family?

When I was initially the commander of my local American Legion post (The World War I Memorial Post 109 in Mechanicsburg, Pa.), I found that communication across the Family — as with

most families — was sometimes lacking. Since I was qualified as a member of each organization, I found that by joining each entity, I was able to provide communication across the Family. I encouraged and continue to encourage others who are qualified in different entities to become dual, tri, or quad members.

Additionally, as a man who served and retired as a command sergeant major, when I first went to a large annual dinner tied to one of our Department Executive Committee meetings, the Legionnaires were asked to stand, the Sons were asked to stand, the Riders were asked to stand, and the Auxiliary were asked to stand. I stood for each, but at the time, I was the only man who stood as an Auxiliary member, even though I knew several others who were eligible. Since then, every year I go, I stand proudly as an Auxiliary member, and now I am joined by others who no longer feel stigmatized to belong.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

By joining each of the organizations you are able to join, you can serve as both a communication and continuity hub for the Family. While it's not required, it is truly a benefit to the Family as a whole.

Clifford Shingleton, Department of West Virginia

Shingleton joined The American Legion through his own service in the U.S. Air Force. He joined the Auxiliary through his wife's service in the Air Force and joined the Sons through his father's Air Force service. He also joined the American Legion Riders to support all the other branches of the Family.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

Being a part of The American Legion Family helps me to support, in as many ways as I possibly can, all the programs of The American Legion.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of the Family?

I believe by joining multiple pieces of the Legion Family, you show much broader support for the pillars of The American Legion and increase membership and voice.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

Being a part of The American Legion Family and serving your community and fellow veterans allows you to continue to give service to your community,

state, and nation well beyond your years of service in the United States military. It also enables connectedness to other veterans and their families to help them when they are struggling.

Brandy Mason, Department of Indiana

Three of her grandparents qualified Mason for Auxiliary membership — grandfathers Emory Watson, Army during Korea, and Harry Dellinger, Marines in the South Pacific during World War II. He met Mason's grandmother, Majorie Dellinger, also a Marine, before leaving the States and they married when he returned. Mason also is an American Legion Rider.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

My membership is a way for me to honor my grandparents and never allow them to be forgotten. Their stories, and therefore a piece of them, remain so long as their names are spoken.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of the Family?

I was lucky enough to walk into Post 409 after moving nearby. It is unlike other Legion posts I've been to and not like the ones I was around growing up. The focus here is on service and family. I've never felt unwelcome on the whole. Any Family was happy to hear my ideas and have my help. Most members help with whatever event their schedule allows — being a member of the group organizing it or not. When one branch of our Family wins, we all win. I love that! We also try to include members' kids and grandkids. Service and family have become the culture here.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

Find a post, and a Family (or two or three) that match your passion. If it isn't what you want it to be, get involved to make it better. When people see your passion, they usually want to help too. Ask questions, never stop learning, never stop growing.

If you are trying to get more people involved, some recognition goes a long way. Make new people feel welcome. Be transparent and teach them about opportunities. Share your passion. You won't regret building someone up and seeing them take off on their own passions.

George Wallace, Department of Florida

Wallace served in the U.S. Army and gets his ALA eligibility through the military service of his wife,

Connie. She is retired Army as well and currently serves as the first sergeant in their Honor Guard.

What does your American Legion Family membership mean to you?

My Legion membership means that I am a part of an organization that has been helping veterans for 107 years. I am part of a Family that will always be there for me, no matter if I am struggling mentally, physically, or financially. The comradery that exists when I go to our post is tremendous. After retiring from the Army in 2019, I struggled to find what my new purpose in life was going to be. After some counseling with the VA, I had to find my new normal. Volunteering as our post's service officer not only allowed me to give back and help my fellow veterans, it helped me get to know the members of our post.

Why do you feel it's important to commit to more than one part of the Family?

Being a member of our Sons of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary is about membership numbers. I encourage all Legionnaires who are eligible to join the Sons and/or Auxiliary. I consider myself a "quad member," as I am a member of our Legion, Sons, Auxiliary, and Riders. My wife is a Legionnaire, Auxiliary, and Rider.

What advice would you give to others to join more than one part of The American Legion Family if they are eligible?

It all comes down to numbers. If you are able to join more than one Family, I highly encourage you to do so. Not only will it help your post, but it will help your department and national when it comes to showing our elected politicians the strength The American Legion Family brings to the table.

Read an extended version of these members' stories at www.ALForVeterans.org/blog. ★



Clifford Shingleton



Brandy Mason



George Wallace



Jamie Lethiecq



Jennifer Smith



Pam and Roger Norton

**AMERICAN
LEGION
FAMILY**

Are you ready to say yes?

If you're eligible to join more than one part of The American Legion Family, do it! Veterans, military, their families, and your community will thank you for taking that step of involvement toward our collective missions.

- Auxiliary: www.ALForVeterans.org
- Legion: www.Legion.org
- Sons: www.Legion.org/Sons
- Riders: www.Legion.org/AmericanLegionRiders



MIRIAM JUNGE'S DECADES OF ALA SERVICE WILL BE MISSED

The American Legion Auxiliary has lost a pillar of our organization with the passing of 2009 Honorary Past National President and 1978-1994 National Secretary Miriam Junge.

She was from Holgate in the Department of Ohio. Junge passed away Dec. 22, 2025.

Eligible through her late husband, a World War II U.S. Navy veteran, Junge focused her energy on the Auxiliary, being a strong and honorary life member of William F. Helmke American Legion Auxiliary Unit 340.

She served various unit-, department-, and national-level positions, including 1969 Department of Ohio president and as the national ALA Girls State chair for two years during her 78 years with the Auxiliary.

She also served as chair of the then-national Communications Committee and authored the *Communications Guide*, the first

publication in the ALA to be protected by copyright.

Outside of the ALA, Junge worked as a cost analyst at Gilson Screen Incorporated, a machinery company. She and her husband also owned and operated the Holgate Produce Company, which later became Melvin W. Junge & Sons.

Junge took great honor in all of her leadership positions, but the ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation programs gave her great pride.

During the 58th National Convention in New Orleans, Junge gave a report on the ALA Girls State programs.

“If there is any one program in the American Legion Auxiliary which appeals, illuminates, and gives meaning to both

youth and adult, that program would need to be Girls State,” she said.

Junge was appointed as deputy national secretary in November 1978 by then-National President Maxine Bigalow (1978-1979), serving to assist then-National Secretary Doris Anderson. When Anderson retired in March 1979, Junge assumed the position of national secretary.

She was the seventh woman in the ALA's long history of holding the position.

Serving as an Auxiliary volunteer for years, Junge enjoyed the new perspective of the organization she gained while transitioning to national secretary.

“One of the most interesting facets this position has afforded me is to see our organization from the other side of the

fence — that of the administrative staff,” she said in the May-June 1979 edition of the national ALA magazine.

In 2009 at the 89th National Convention, ALA leadership bestowed Junge as an Honorary Past National President to not only recognize her time as national secretary, but to also recognize the path she gave up while serving the Auxiliary as secretary for 15 years.

“You conducted yourself admirably during that term of office directing the office staff, reporting to the membership, and filling a very necessary role in our organization,” Past National President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan said in her speech at the convention to Junge. “You brought wonderful talent and strength to that position, handling the office efficiently, but well aware of the volunteer side of the organization as you had personally worked so tirelessly to support those efforts for so many years.”

Junge was shocked when she was awarded with the title.

“Never in a million years did I ever dream that I would have this wonderful privilege and this wonderful honor bestowed on me,” Junge said while accepting the title.

Junge had a lasting impact on the ALA from her time as a volunteer, in her various leadership positions, and as national secretary. She was a mentor to many and will be greatly missed.



JUNIOR ACTIVITIES: INVOLVING JUNIORS AND SONS BENEFITS EVERYONE

 www.instagram.com/ALAJuniors

Something amazing is happening at the national Junior meetings and in our Junior Activities program. Sons of The American Legion youth ages 8-17 have been invited to these five national meetings. This has not only increased attendance, but we have also tapped into a huge resource within our American Legion Family.

This year, National President Pam Ray's Mission Driven, Family Focused is a perfect opportunity to increase knowledge of our mission while having fun and including the entire youth of the Legion Family. While at the national Junior meetings, all youth attendees interact with games, meaningful videos and books of military service and sacrifice, making

crafts, and thoughtful service projects.

This year, we incorporated a fun team event to fill winter beanie hats with hygiene products, gloves, and other necessary items. The two teams raced to see who filled the most hats in the allotted time. Both teams received a special treat, and the competition was fun and entertaining. These Hats for Heroes were distributed to homeless or disadvantaged veterans in each ALA division. The national Junior meetings have opened the opportunity for our units in all departments to include young Sons in their Junior meetings and activities.

We notice the interaction between Juniors and young Sons; they are eager to learn and

appreciate being included. Young Sons can earn patches in the ALA Junior Patch Program. Juniors and young Sons can participate in Legion Family events, visit VA hospitals, convalescent homes, Veterans in Community Schools, and help with homeless veterans projects. Juniors and Sons are our future, our past, and our present.

Now is the perfect time to embrace our SAL youth to join our Junior members at their unit meetings, share in the learning experience, and participate in volunteer activities while they serve our mission together.



Anita Biggs is a 33-year member of Unit 252 in the Department of California.

 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Are You Using Old Branding?

Make sure your website, socials, stationery, etc., are up to date with the ALA word mark. Remember: The blue star emblem has not gone away.

Check out our resources at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

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CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS: GOVERNING DOCUMENTS — EVOLVING WITH THE TIMES

This year marks the 250th birthday of the U.S. The nation was initially governed by the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, its first Constitution, from March 1, 1781, until 1789. The current Constitution, drafted in 1787, became effective on March 4, 1789. The objective of composing the document was, as articulated by Delegate Edmund Randolph, “to insert essential principles only, lest the operations of government be hindered by rendering those provisions permanent and unalterable that ought to be adaptable to times and events.” To accommodate necessary changes over the years, the U.S. Constitution now encompasses 27 amendments.

The ALA adopted its

Constitution on Nov. 1-2, 1921, and its Bylaws on Oct. 16-20, 1922. To adapt to the evolving landscape, the Auxiliary’s governing documents now include Standing Rules and policies. Since the initial drafting, amendments have been ratified by convention delegates for several reasons, including compliance with government regulations, adaptation to media coverage, integration of technological advancements, and clarification of procedural matters.

At the 2025 National Convention, delegates approved two Constitution amendments, 10 Bylaws amendments, and two Standing Rules amendments. As with previous amendments, these clarify duties, discipline, and

charter cancellations. The reasons for national-level amendments are the same as those previously mentioned; these reasons also apply at the department and unit levels.

Before convention, it is time to review all governing documents for compliance with national and state regulations. In addition to ensuring all references for a topic are grouped in one section, it is important to improve the flow of information to facilitate comprehension. This annual review ensures governing documents provide clear directions to members.



Sallie Rossman is a 22-year member of Unit 325 in the Department of Virginia.



Securing the Future of Our Mission – Forever



The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation’s Mission Endowment Fund provides permanent financial support to sustain our mission for generations to come. Endowment contributions are invested to generate reliable, long-term funding. Annual earnings help support impactful programs such as ALA Girls Nation and Spirit of Youth Scholarships, empowering young leaders and advancing educational opportunities.

This disciplined approach strengthens financial stability and protects mission delivery through changing economic conditions.

A gift to the Mission Endowment Fund is a lasting investment in veterans, military families, and the future of the American Legion Auxiliary. Text MEF to 1-844-940-3450 or donate online by scanning the QR code today!



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RISK & COMPLIANCE: PROTECTING OUR MISSION — RISK MANAGEMENT FOR LOCAL UNITS

Effective risk management protects our legacy, finances, and volunteers — ensuring small oversights don't become major obstacles.

Financial integrity

Transparency is vital to protecting unit funds. Follow the “power of two” — never allow one person to handle finances in isolation. Require two signatures on every check, and ensure a non-signing officer reviews bank statements monthly. If using digital payment apps, link them strictly to unit accounts — never personal ones — and share login credentials between two officers to prevent lockout during leadership transitions.

Operational safety

Protecting our reputation

means reducing liability.

Before hosting events, verify insurance coverage and request a Certificate of Insurance (COI) from third-party vendors. When working with youth, “two-deep leadership” is non-negotiable: No adult should ever be alone with a minor, and background checks are mandatory. Additionally, maintain meticulous meeting minutes to document all votes and expenditures.

Governance and continuity

To insulate your unit from risk:

- Conflict of interest:

Implement a policy where officers recuse themselves from votes involving personal gain.

- Cross-training: Ensure multiple members understand

key roles to avoid continuity risk.

- Digital presence: Designate a moderator for social media to protect the ALA brand.

Modernizing bylaws

Your Constitution & Bylaws are your best insurance policy. Review them every two to three years to ensure they reflect modern realities. Outdated documents leave the unit vulnerable to procedural chaos and legal challenges. Clear, contemporary bylaws define authority, prevent power struggles, and ensure alignment with national and department requirements.



Carrie Davenport is a member of Unit 59 in the Department of New York.

ALA GIRLS NATION: HAPPY 250TH, AMERICA! HAPPY 79TH, ALA GIRLS NATION!

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

July 2026 will mark the 79th anniversary of ALA Girls Nation. The first session was held in 1947, 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19, and then ALA Girls Nation came roaring back in full force in 2021.

For over a quarter of a century, ALA Girls Nation has been a driving force in developing future leaders and promoting patriotism among young women. It was one of the first national leadership programs developed for girls. World War II had just ended. The Civil Rights Movement hadn't gotten started yet. Title IX wasn't even on the horizon. It was a very forward-thinking project for the ALA to tackle.

The location has always been in the Washington, D.C. area. Marymount College, the National 4-H Conference Center, and The William F. Bolger Center are the most recent sites.

Meeting the president and embarking on White House tours are highlights of the week. We have photos of Presidents Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama shaking hands and standing for photos with the senators. Laying a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery, visiting the monuments, and spending a day on Capitol Hill visiting their senators are traditional activities.

Writing a piece of legislation

and shepherding it through the committee hearings and floor debate is the ultimate accomplishment. ALA Girls Nation bills have made their way to Capitol Hill and statehouses. White lines on the edge of roads had its origin in ALA Girls State legislation.

Dresses, heels, pantyhose, hats, and white gloves are gone. But the education and mentorship of young, female leaders continues under the banner of American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation!



Jane Thurston is a 34-year member of the Department of Indiana.



Candidate:
National President
Dr. Coral May Grout
Department of
Massachusetts:
Eugene M. Connor

Unit 193

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

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



Candidate:
National Vice President
Dr. Lisa Chaplin
Department of
Virginia: Colonial

Heights Unit 284

Eligibility: Through father, John Thomas, who served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

Offices Held: Served several unit-, district-, and department-level chairmanships and offices, including ALA Virginia Girls State board member for five years and department president for a year. National: ALA Girls Nation, Legislative, Children & Youth, and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation committee chair.

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



Candidate:
Central Division National Vice President
Teri Miller
Department of

Illinois: Peoria Unit 2

Eligibility: Through father, Leonard R. Krapp Sr., U.S. Army Air Corps WWII.



Candidate:
Eastern Division National Vice President
Doreen Gallagher
Department of New

Jersey: Unit 346

Eligibility: Through father, John Gallagher, U.S. Army Vietnam, and maternal grandfather, Christopher Gifford, U.S. Army WWII.



Candidate:
Northwestern Division National Vice President
Jane Benzel
Department of South

Dakota: Battle Mt. Unit 71

Eligibility: Through grandfather Cecill Stanley, father John Stanley, husband Dale Benzel, and daughter Kim Benzel-Lewis.



Candidate:
Southern Division National Vice President
Patricia Murray
Department of

Arkansas: Wright-Brown Unit 158

Eligibility: Through father, Gordon C. Murray, grandfathers Homer H. Murray and George C. Osborn, and uncle, George C. Osborn Jr.



Candidate:
Western Division National Vice President
Peggy Robertson
Department of Utah:

Unit 79

Eligibility: Through husband John Gary Robertson, a Marine, father Kim D. Thompson, Army, and son Gary T. Robertson, Navy.

ALA chaplains provide spiritual and emotional guidance, sending dignity and respect to the occasion.



Candidate:
National Chaplain
Karen Marks
Department of Florida:
Unit 137

Eligibility: Through father, Ronald E. Marks, U.S. Army Korean War, and grandfather, John F. Marks, U.S. Navy WWII.



Candidate:
National Chaplain
AnnaMae Warnier
Department of South
Dakota: Cowen-Nilsen
Unit 86

Eligibility: Through grandfather Willie J. Kruse, WWI Army veteran, and son Aaron M. Theno Warnier, a Navy veteran.



Candidate:
National Chaplain
Debra Jeanne Haas
Department of Kansas:
Philips Stuckey
Shaffer Unit 296

Eligibility: Through father, Edward Crane, WWII Navy veteran, and husband Gary Haas, Air Force Vietnam veteran.

The national historian completes a historical record of the administrative year in which they serve.



Candidate:
National Historian
Denise Conrad
Department of Ohio:
Freedom Unit 183

Eligibility: Through grandfather, Leland Gorrill, WWII, father, Raymond Baker, Korean War, and husband, Charles Conrad, Vietnam War.



Candidate:
National Historian
Jane McKnight
Department of
Kentucky: Fort
Campbell Unit 233

Eligibility: Through father, Joseph Frank Foytek, WWII Army Air Corps. Her late husband, James Arlen McKnight, retired from the U.S. Army after 22 years.



Candidate:
National Historian
Elaine Kotler
Department of
Connecticut:
Gensi-Viola Windsor

Locks Unit 36

Eligibility: Through father, Alvin Kotler, U.S. Army Korean War.



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

Eligibility: Through father, Norman Lincoln, U.S. Navy and National Guard.



Candidate:
National Historian
Carissa McCann
Department of
California: Unit 81

Eligibility: Through father, Javier Guillermo-Tovar, U.S. Army mechanic.

Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to read more about the candidates. Information presented on this page was provided by the candidates.



BOARD ADOPTS AMENDMENTS, POLICIES AT NEC MID-YEAR MEETING

The American Legion Auxiliary's National Executive Committee (NEC) holds three regular meetings each administrative year to conduct official business of the organization. These meetings play a fundamental role in the operational effectiveness, governance, and progression of our organization.

The NEC begins its annual term at an in-person meeting held directly after the close of National Convention. In February, the board members meet virtually for a mid-year board meeting to hear financial reports, adopt policies, and adopt the external audit. The NEC closes its annual term during an in-person pre-convention meeting immediately before the start of National Convention.

The 2026 virtual Mid-Year NEC Meeting highlights:

33 Standing Rule amendments adopted

The National Executive Committee approved 33 amendments to the American Legion Auxiliary's Standing Rules, ensuring our governance framework continues to reflect current practices and the evolving needs of the organization.

Comprehensive review and adoption of 28 national policies

As part of the NEC's new annual policy review cycle, the board reviewed 28 national policies. Moving from a three-year cycle to an annual review ensures that new board members gain familiarity with all policies, while returning members stay current on updates. While none of the policies were brand-new, this annual adoption process strengthens board engagement and reinforces informed, effective governance.

Strategic planning momentum begins

Following the 2025 National Convention delegates' decision to establish the Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee as a national standing committee, the newly formed group presented its first report to

the NEC during the Mid-Year Meeting. In the coming months, the NEC will work closely with the Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee to shape the next phase of the organization's strategic plan, with updates to be shared with attendees at the 2026 ALA National Convention.

Clean audit and strong financial stewardship

The NEC formally adopted the ALA & American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Consolidated External Auditors Report. The auditors issued a clean audit and commended the organization for its transparency and strong fiscal responsibility.

ALA Honor Flight sponsorship

The American Legion Auxiliary national treasurer shared exciting updates on the ALA-sponsored all-female veteran Honor Flight scheduled for April. The ALA's sponsorship included ALA-branded merchandise gifted to all veterans and their guardians, as well as ALA-branded bus wraps on Lone Eagle buses in Washington, D.C.

Come take a tour of ALA National Headquarters in Indianapolis!

If you are in the Indianapolis area this summer and you haven't seen our building, we encourage you to stop by! Interested in planning a tour? Drop in, call ahead at (317) 569-4500, or email us at ALAHQ@ALAforVeterans.org. We can't wait to see you!



Provided by Nancy Magginnis, National Chaplain 2025-2026 | www.Facebook.com/groups/ALAchaplains

MAY

In Toby Keith's song *An American Soldier*, he talks first about what a soldier goes through then reminds us that he is protecting us so we can sleep at night.

"I'm an American soldier, an American

Beside my brothers and my sisters

I will proudly take a stand
When liberty's in jeopardy
I will always do what's right
I'm out here on the front lines
Sleep in peace tonight

American soldier, I'm an American soldier."

These words are comforting because we trust each and every servicemember for doing their job — their mission — to protect us day and night from America's enemies. Unfortunately, our servicemembers put their lives on the line ... they never know when the enemy might target them. We are grateful for our military.

When we observe Memorial Day, let us take time to remember the American servicemember who paid the ultimate sacrifice — who gave his/her life to defend our country. Let us remember their families — who hoped and prayed their loved one would not have to pay the ultimate price.

Dear God, we come to You in thanksgiving because American servicemembers chose to defend our country, so we could live in a free country. Thank You for their families who have suffered a loss — we can never repay, and they will never forget. God bless these families through their pain today and always. We ask that You continue to protect the military — keep them out of harm's way as they continue to fight for freedom for us. Amen.

JUNE

In the quiet times of my life, I often repeat the words to the song, *The Potter's Hand* by Darlene Zschech. This song reminds me that I need to just relax and depend on God for what He needs from me.

"Take me, mold me, use me, fill me

I give my life to the Potter's hand

Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me

I give my life to the Potter's hand."

It is always my desire for God to use me, guide me, and lead me to touch the lives of those around me. When I stop and put my life in His hands and allow Him to use me, I find the greatest rewards and find His purpose for my life. What better place could I ever be?

Please pray with me in your faith: *God, when I find myself trying to do anything without You, my life becomes chaotic and out of control. However, when I let You be the potter, and I am the clay, You craft me into Your perfect plan. It is at this time, I can feel You surrounding me and I am held in Your hand. Please use me to be all I can be for You. And all of God's people said: Amen.*

JULY

As we celebrate America's 250th birthday, it is only fitting that we reflect on Irving Berlin's *God Bless America*.

"While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,

Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free.

Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,

As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer:

God bless America, land that I love,

Stand beside her and guide her

Through the night with a light from above.

From the mountains, to the prairies,

To the oceans white with foam,

God bless America,
My home sweet home."

What beautiful words we can all share. Let's renew our vows to our country. Let's put aside our individual differences and cherish what our forefathers



created when they formed our country.

In the spirit of your faith, please pray: *God, You are truly awesome in the wisdom You provided to America's forefathers to establish the United States of America 250 years ago. We thank You for all You have done and we ask that You continue to guide our leadership for many more years to come. And all God's people said: Amen.*



Nancy Magginnis is a member of Unit 86 in the Department of Indiana.



HELPING POW/MIA: Carole Hickerson and her husband, Jim. Much of Carole’s life has been focused on helping find our nation’s missing and bringing them home.

NATIONWIDE EXPERIENCE WITH POW/MIA EFFORTS LEADS TO JOINING ALA

After decades as a leading advocate for missing servicemembers and their families, Carole Hickerson planned to slow down from the veteran-support work that has defined her adult life.

But the American Legion Auxiliary came calling — and soon, Hickerson added ALA membership to her long list of activities in support of veterans and their communities.

“It’s kind of hard for Carole Hanson Hickerson to stay out of things,” she said. She recently became a member of Hawaii ALA Unit 56 in Honolulu.

Indeed, the ability to “stay out of things” has not been Hickerson’s strong suit since 1967. That was the year she learned that her husband at the time — Steve Hanson, a Marine aviator serving in the Vietnam War — was missing in action. The news sparked a yearslong effort by Hickerson to learn what had happened to Hanson, whom she would later learn had been

killed in action.

Through her work to get answers about Hanson, she became a leader in the fight for information about all servicemembers missing in Southeast Asia. Her work spanned more than 50 years and spearheaded a national movement.

The roots of Hickerson’s advocacy are in a letter to the editor, which she wrote and sent to 300 newspapers across the nation to express frustration at her inability to

get answers about Hanson.

“I started getting all these letters from other POW/MIA families,” she said, “and it grew and grew.”

The resulting movement included a campaign that today Hickerson considers her proudest moment in support of those in the military who are missing: She helped lead the charge to sell bracelets that each had the name, rank, and date of loss of someone missing in Vietnam. Sales helped fund efforts to raise awareness of POW/MIA servicemembers.

“The POW bracelet was the thing that really involved so many people,” Hickerson said, “because each had one particular POW or MIA to pray for and think about, and they wore it all the time.”

Another symbol of Hickerson’s efforts to draw attention

to POW/MIAs continues to adorn flagpoles to this day. The design on the POW/MIA flag is the same one Hickerson drew for letterhead and business cards for the national nonprofit she and other wives of missing servicemembers established in 1970. The silhouette in the design is that of Steve Hanson.

The nonprofit organization would become the National League of POW/MIA Families.

In 1973, she married Jim Hickerson, who served in the Navy for 30 years and is a former Vietnam POW. The couple later moved from California to Hawaii, where, several years ago, Carole Hickerson spoke at an ALA Girls State function. Afterward, she remained in contact with Hawaii’s ALA Girls State director, Brister Thomas — who asked Hickerson to join the ALA.

Despite her interest in slowing down from advocacy work, Hickerson agreed to become a member. Now, she looks forward to lending any insight she can to an organization that, like Hickerson, has a long history of supporting veterans.

“It’s certainly organizations like this one that kept us going and were the first to start publicizing the issue of POWs and MIAs,” she said. “They’re just good Americans, and I’m appreciative and just thankful.”





USA'S BICENTENNIAL MARKED BY JOINT ALA GIRLS NATION, LEGION BOYS NATION SESSION IN 1976

Fifty years ago, the United States celebrated its bicentennial, marking 200 years of independence. To honor the milestone, the 1976 ALA Girls Nation and American Legion Boys Nation held a special 18-day joint session. Tara Bassett was one of the ALA Girls Nation senators that year, representing the ALA Girls State program in Oregon.

"It was phenomenal — the experience of a lifetime for us all," said Bassett.

To mark the bicentennial, each program chose three delegates from each state instead of the usual two. Another change to the program that year was a trip to Philadelphia, but it was canceled due to a Legionnaire's Disease outbreak at The American Legion Department of Pennsylvania Convention held there. Instead, the senators remained in Washington, D.C., which allowed them more time to sightsee and experience the nation's capital.

One of Bassett's favorite memories occurred near the Lincoln Memorial. As 300 senators began singing *Let There be Peace on Earth*, they were stopped by the National Park Service and informed demonstrations weren't allowed. While they couldn't sing that particular song, they were

permitted to sing *America the Beautiful* and the National Anthem.

ALA Girls Nation was not Bassett's first encounter with politics.

"I've always been involved in politics," she said. "My pioneer family from the Oregon Trail journey descended through 17 lines from the Mayflower,

and taught me that participation in government was expected, not just encouraged."

Following ALA Girls Nation, Bassett earned a bachelor's degree in political science and briefly attended Georgetown Law School. However, she decided to change course and embark on a 40-year career as a news anchor, meteorologist, and talk show host. Today, Bassett continues this work as a "502LIVEstreamer," covering local events and politics.

"I'm heavily involved in legislative efforts to improve animal welfare laws on the local and state level and speak to our elected officials on matters pertaining to all my areas of interest in serving vulnerable populations. So, the careers have merged beautifully," said Bassett.

She credits the 1976 ALA Girls Nation session with launching her career.

"It was the prominent listing on my resume as I entered the job market," she said. "It was a primary reason why I was able to start my meteorology career in the 50th market instead of the 150th."

Bassett noted that the experience frequently sparked interest from hiring managers and helped her develop essential skills in organizing, public speaking, and negotiating.

"I never applied for a job I didn't get," she added.

Bassett shares her passion with others.

"I've encouraged thousands of young folks over the years to take advantage of this amazing opportunity," she said.

When she isn't reporting or advocating for policy changes, Bassett serves as a volunteer organizer for Dogs On The Run 502, helping rescue and return lost dogs to their families in Louisville, Ky.



CHILDREN OF WARRIORS NATIONAL PRESIDENTS' SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT REFLECTS ON NURSING OPPORTUNITY

Reagan Morrell from South Dakota received one of the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarships to aid in her academic journey pursuing a degree at Purdue University. Starting out in the exploratory studies program, Morrell gained the time to direct her studies into nursing. Morell is eligible for the scholarship through her parents, both of whom are U.S. Air Force veterans. Her mother retired as an Air Force nurse, and her father retired after over 20 years as a fighter pilot. He now serves in the Air National Guard. Morrell plans to graduate May 2029 with a Bachelor of

Science degree in nursing. After spending time in the field, she hopes to go back to school to earn a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree.

What gave you the idea to pursue nursing?

In high school, my dad suggested to me so many times, "Reagan, why don't you think about nursing? I think you would really like it," and I was like, "Dad, no, no." Then I got to college, and they make you do a certain exploratory class when you're in the program here. I was just going through all the things and doing different shadowing. I was like, "Wow, I actually think I might enjoy nursing."

My mom is a nurse practitioner for women's health. She has a

business now where she does a lot of health and hormone therapies for specifically women's menstrual cycles and things like that. I got really excited about the possibility of nursing because I think I would really enjoy the type of patient care my mom does. It is, weirdly enough, my mom I would say who encouraged me in that.

How does this scholarship benefit you?

It helped me a lot, but I think it made coming to Purdue a lot more accessible because obviously monetary reasons and everything. It took a lot of that burden away, especially for my first semester and first year getting adjusted and into things. It allowed me to feel a lot more excitement about coming.

What advice do you have for others in the transitional phase from high school to university — especially military children?

The advice is to not put all this pressure on yourself to have it all figured out. Rely on your family — I mean, hopefully they can rely on their family — but to rely on the people

close to you for support, and to know the expectation isn't that you know exactly what's going on. You don't have to go into it knowing exactly what you're going to pursue, exactly what you're going to do when you graduate college, and exactly what the rest of your life is to look like. Give yourself grace in the process, and also, enjoy it.

What would you like ALA members to know about this scholarship's impact?

Honestly, I feel like it opens



so many doors to people who may be [going through] financial things, and feel like maybe a burden to the pursuit of their dreams and their schooling. That it provides such a relief, and it's been such a blessing in my life, actually, to get to know that my whole first semester was paid for. I'm sure other people who receive the scholarship also feel the same way where you're really grateful. It makes coming to college more exciting when you aren't so worried about "Oh my gosh, how am I going to pay for this?" in that moment.



The ALA offers 15 \$5,000 Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarships.

This scholarship aims to aid the children of our servicemembers and veterans with financial support for university. To learn more, go to www.ALAforVeterans.org/scholarships.



(Photo: Nickolas Wolf, The American Legion)

AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY CELEBRATING USA'S MILESTONE BIRTHDAY

THE TOP FUNDRAISING DEPARTMENTS IN SIX CATEGORIES WILL RECEIVE RECOGNITION

The American Legion Family USA 250 Challenge has kicked off a competition among the departments. Those with the highest fundraising totals at the conclusion of the challenge — which runs through July 4 — will be honored at the Legion's National Convention and receive a commemorative plaque.

One department will be declared the winner in each of six categories, grouped by membership size:

Category 1: California, Florida, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Category 2: Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Category 3: Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

Category 4: Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia.

Category 5: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Vermont.

Category 6: District of Columbia, France, Hawaii, Latin America, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, and Wyoming.

All funds raised from July 4, 2025, through July 4 of this year will count toward the department totals.

Rewards for fundraising participants

You can now earn special commemorative items by hitting various fundraising tiers:

- Participants who raise at least \$250 receive a USA 250 Challenge hat pin.

- Participants who raise at least \$500 receive a USA 250 Challenge coin and a personalized certificate of appreciation.

- Participants who raise at least \$2,500 receive a personalized plaque signed by National Commander Dan K. Wiley.

For assistance or questions, email donorservices@legion.org.

ALA MEMBER MAKING OVER 250 VISITS, CALLS WITH VETERANS

Jackie Williams heard about The American Legion's USA 250 Challenge last November while attending American Legion Auxiliary Mission Training in Albany, N.Y. Attendees of the training were asked to choose one of the three challenge categories — fitness, mental wellness, and community service — to log 250 miles or hours. Williams wrote her challenge on a sticky note.

"I was very excited to become a part of this challenge and chose Buddy Checks to thank a veteran for their service," said Williams, a member of Auxiliary Unit 746 in Corning, N.Y.

Buddy Checks have been a part of Williams' weekly routine after she lost her 50-year-old nephew, a U.S. Army veteran, to suicide four years ago.

"Even though he only lived 15 minutes from me, I did not know what he was going through. I did not check on him as often as I should. Now, I regularly check on veterans in my area at the Bath VA Medical Center. I thank them for their service, visit with them, and ask if there is anything they need. I make sure somebody is there for them."

As the Auxiliary's VA volunteer representative at the Bath VA Medical Center, Williams visits with veterans weekly and helps with activities.

Williams was the recipient of the 2024 Bath VAMC Voluntary Service Recognition for her commitment to veterans.

"When I leave there, I feel so good; I'm walking on cloud nine when I leave the VA every time," she said. "And these veterans



thank me for coming up and helping them. It's like, 'Don't thank me. I'm doing this for you. I want to thank you for what you've done for us.'"

Williams also has two local Legionnaires she checks on regularly by phone or on house visits and takes to their VA appointments. And she makes visits to the local community living center to check on veterans.

"I develop a friendship with some of the veterans at the VA and if they transfer to another facility, I always make sure I find out where they're going and check up with them," Williams said. "Just to stay in touch."

Buddy Checks for Williams go beyond the VA, phone calls, or

house visits.

"Anytime I'm out in public and I see a veteran wearing a military hat or something to indicate that they are a veteran, I walk up, and I thank them for their service," she said. "Then I ask how they are doing."

Williams hopes her Buddy Checks will be contagious among her fellow Auxiliary members and others.

"I am hoping that by my doing this, my friends will soon also stop to thank a veteran and ask how they are doing. So, this little act of compassion will spread, and veterans will know we are grateful for their service."

Williams has already surpassed 250 Buddy Checks for the USA 250 Challenge, which



concludes July 4 for America's 250th birthday. But she will not be done.

"My challenge will be complete, but my mission will continue, and I will answer the call and hopefully Be the One," she said.



MOU WITH AMERICA250 MAKES OFFICIAL YEARLONG PARTNERSHIP

During the Commander's Call portion of the Washington Conference in March, America250 Executive Vice President Jennifer Condon offered two suggestions that perfectly fit The American Legion Family:

Go to america250.org and register under America Gives: Through this initiative, individuals and organizations — such as posts, units, and squadrons — can record their hours of community service and have a chance to be chosen as one of 250 groups that can choose a charity for \$1 million in donations.

Hours recorded through the Legion Family USA 250 Challenge — 250 acts of fitness, wellness, and/or service in support of the Legion's Veterans & Children Foundation — can count toward the total. As of press time, more than 1.7 million hours of service have been recorded on America Gives since it debuted Jan. 1.

Rally your community around our flag for the 250th

anniversary: If ever there were an opportunity tailor-made for The American Legion Family, it's America Waves. Condon said the vision here is for everyone — from sea to shining sea — to raise our great U.S. flag in one mass expression of patriotism on July 4, 2026. Imagine streets lined with U.S. flags waved from suburban neighborhoods to main streets to country roads.

"We want to create a sea of red, white, and blue from town squares to stadiums to the National Mall," she said. "Imagine: Millions of Americans across generations lifting the same symbol at the same moment. That's what America Waves is all about." She made the point that "No organization has done more to honor and respect our flag than The American Legion."

Learn more at Legion.org/USA250.

Veteran Austin Holmes was in the U.S. Navy for just over seven years as an explosive ordnance disposal tech. He was deployed twice during that time. Since then, he has started a business and podcast to help others.



What did you enjoy most about your time in the military?

I loved my job. I loved doing the technical side. I got to do all the fun stuff — jumping out of airplanes, shooting guns, blowing stuff up, and of course diving — which was not something I initially even thought about. But it ended up being one of the things I loved the most as far as skillsets.

Is there anything else about your military service you want to share?



We always talk about the sacrifice that many military members make, but it's a sacrifice

at so many levels. It's not just the ultimate sacrifice. There are sacrifices on the family level, being away from your hometown, the time spent in training, and deployments themselves. You're sacrificing a part of your life to go serve your country, and that's very real.

Can you explain your business, Signal Raptor?

Signal Raptor is a service and software where we're really focused on helping people build their brand. One of the ways we do that is through public relations efforts.

My wife, Heather, started

Publicity for Good PR agency, and I joined a couple of years after the military. We were constantly being asked, "Do you have a program you can offer me when I'm just starting out?" That became one of our core focuses — helping people who are early in their branding journey — they've got a product or service and want to expand their reach.

We wanted to help people grow their brand in an affordable way. It's one of the hardest times in business when you don't have help, so we wanted to provide both the technical aspect and the service side to support them when they need it most.

Tell us about your podcast, OverPressure.

OverPressure is my opportunity to give back. I've had so many opportunities to learn through the military, events, communities, and online. I wanted to share my experience, help other people share their story, and put more voices into the world rather than fewer controlled voices.

What inspired you to create a podcast exploring what it takes to thrive as an entrepreneur when the pressure is on?

The pressure theme absolutely originated from the military side

of explosive ordnance disposal, dealing with incredibly stressful situations. But business is stressful every day too. There's pressure to perform, to move forward, to make an impact.

We talk about mental health all the time, but practical tools for dealing with daily pressure are few and far between. I feel like that's something I have a lot of experience in — not just surviving pressure, but thriving in it.

What advice do you have for people interested in entrepreneurship work?

Take action every day. Consistency pays off more than anything else.

A lot of things are scary until you step into them and realize they're not that bad. I did things in

the military that were harder than anything I've dealt with in business.

The hardest part of business is the people aspect, and honestly, that's true in the military too. Learning how to deal with

people is critical. Veterans are very capable of interacting in society and providing value because the military sets a framework for communication and teamwork.

Read an extended version of this article on the ALA blog at www.ALAforVeterans.org/blog.

"We talk about mental health all the time, but practical tools for dealing with daily pressure are few and far between."

NEBRASKA UNIT PRESENTS 'QUILTS OF HONOR' TO VETERANS IN CARE AND RETIREMENT CENTERS

In 2023, Nebraska Unit 216 started a handmade quilt project that brings together local people who enjoy sewing and quilting to craft patriotic-themed lap quilts that are presented to veterans staying in local care and retirement centers.

Quilts of Honor came about when an activity director at a local retirement center approached unit member Cindy Moore to see if their unit could help with a quilt presentation ceremony for the veterans in their care as part of the center's Veterans Day activities.

Moore presented the idea to her unit, and they came up with the idea for lap quilts. The unit didn't have a lot of quilters or sewing enthusiasts, so they reached out to churches, family members, and friends.

As organizer of the project, Unit 216 provides quilt kits with step-by-step instructions along with helpful hints and tips.

As an added step to honor the veteran, the unit also creates a custom label that is sewn onto each quilt with the recipient's name, the date they received the quilt, and a thank-you message for their service. Once the fabric and materials are assembled, they work with a local member of the community who has topstitch quilting equipment needed to finish the quilts.

Currently, the unit serves four care and retirement facilities in their community and have so far presented 87 quilts to veterans.

"Personally, this has been one of the most meaningful projects I have been involved with during my ALA career," shared Moore. "It has been a project that checks a lot of ALA mission boxes,



including honoring veterans, promoting patriotism, and bringing together members from the whole community to serve our veterans in need."

Originally, Moore said their unit thought this might be a one-off project, but after the response they received from the veterans, including many heartfelt thank-

you, lots of smiles, and bringing some to tears, it has been a no-brainer to keep the project going. The unit continues to support the program by collecting donations and raising funds for the project through raffles, dessert tables at annual fish fry events, and working concessions at community events.

Tips for starting a quilting group



Partner with a veteran care facility or retirement center: Reach out to local facilities to share the idea.



Start with a small group and involve the community: A single person with knowledge on quilting and sewing can make a significant impact. If forming a group, start with two to seven dedicated people to keep it manageable. Recruit volunteers through your membership, local churches, volunteer groups, friends, and family. Remember: You do not have to be a seasoned quilter to sew a lap quilt.



Provide instructions: Provide an information sheet with easy-to-follow instructions with pictures, as well as any tools needed.



Set standards for quality: Use durable materials that withstand frequent washing. Use simple, sturdy patterns that are both comforting and long-lasting. Unit 216 recommends longarm quilted or machine top stitched quilts as opposed to tie quilting, as tie quilts do not hold up to frequent washing.



Gather resources: Request fabric donations from local quilt and fabric shops, or plan fundraisers for the purchase of needed items.



Personalize: Include a customized label thanking the person for their service. Print your customized labels on cotton inkjet printer sheets (iron-on and machine washable). Iron your label on and stitch around. In addition, plan a special ceremony when presenting the quilt to recipients.



Share with local media: Create awareness about your project by inviting local media to cover your presentation ceremony. And be sure to post and share photos on your unit's social media accounts.



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



**NATIONAL POPPY DAY®
RESOURCES AVAILABLE!**

Are you in need of last-minute National Poppy Day resources? Check out our national website! You'll find downloadable posters, banners, poppy logos, media templates, an ALA poppy coloring book, as well as a direct link to poppy items at Emblem Sales. Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/National-Poppy-Day for free marketing resources provided by ALA National Headquarters.

There are so many ways American Legion Family members can participate and bring greater awareness to this symbolic flower on National Poppy Day. You can show your support by proudly wearing a red poppy, distributing poppies, sharing photos on social media, collecting donations, or making a donation to your local ALA unit's Poppy Fund.



**COMING UP BEFORE THE AUGUST
ISSUE OF AUXILIARY MAGAZINE:**

In between issues of the quarterly *Auxiliary* magazine, check out the latest updates from ALA National Headquarters digitally by following the ALA blog, social media (Facebook and Instagram handle: @ALAforVeterans), ALA eNews, and our website. Here's an overview of the next few months:

MAY 2026:

- May is National Military Appreciation Month
- May 1-4: Department Leadership National Conference (DLNC) in Indianapolis
- May 8: Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- May 13: Children of Fallen Patriots Day
- May 16: Armed Forces Day
- May 22: National Poppy Day®
- May 25: Memorial Day

JUNE 2026:

- June 1: Deadline for all department program entries for national awards
- June 6: Anniversary of the World War II Allied

Invasion in Normandy, France (D-Day)

- June 12: Women Veterans Day
- June 9-14: National Veterans Creative Arts Festival #NVCAF
- June 14: Flag Day
- June 14: U.S. Army's birthday
- June 19: Juneteenth
- June 27: National PTSD Awareness Day

JULY 2026:

- July 1: Department impact reports due
- July 4: Independence Day — the United States of America's 250th birthday!
- July 18-25: ALA Girls Nation in Washington, D.C.
- July 27: Korean War Veterans Armistice Day

AUGUST 2026:

- Aug. 4: U.S. Coast Guard birthday
- Aug. 7: Purple Heart Day
- Aug. 10: Agent Orange Awareness Day
- Aug. 29: U.S. Marine Corps Reserve birthday
- Aug. 28-Sept. 3: ALA National Convention in Louisville, Ky.

**COMMUNITY
CONNECTION ON ALA
FACEBOOK GROUPS!**

The American Legion Auxiliary national committee Facebook groups provide a safe place where ALA members can connect with one another, exchange ideas, ask questions, and engage in discussions related to each committee. These forums are valuable resources for learning more about specific ALA programs and staying informed on updates and activities within each one.

Each ALA national committee has a group on the ALA National Headquarters Facebook account that is managed by national committee members and national staff. To ensure the safety and credibility of the page and our members, all Facebook groups are private, so you do have to answer a few membership questions to join. All submitted posts must be approved to keep the page focused on mission-related content and to prevent spam or hateful/negative posts. You can find these groups by visiting ALA National Headquarters' Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/ALAforVeterans.



**CELEBRATE AMERICA'S
BIRTHDAY WITH US!**

You still have time to celebrate our nation's semiquincentennial by taking part in The American Legion Family USA 250 Challenge! Your participation — whether as an individual or part of a team — helps honor our veterans and uplift communities nationwide while promoting physical fitness, mental wellness, and community service. Visit Legion.org/USA250 for more information and to join!

“The essence of patriotism lies in a willingness to sacrifice for one’s country, just as true greatness finds expression, not in blessings enjoyed, but in good bestowed.”

— William Jennings Bryan, American lawyer and politician



Memorial Day for many is about cookouts and car racing — but let’s not forget what that day is truly for — to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. They said “yes” to wearing our nation’s uniform, knowing what it could lead to when they put it on for duty. They truly deserve our honor and respect for what they did for our country, our communities, and our families. We are forever grateful.

Above: Gustavo Vela, 70, salutes during the flag raising ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall replica at the Ebony Hills Golf Course in Edinburg, Texas (photo by Delcia Lopez/The Monitor via AP).

 AMERICAN
LEGION

AUXILIARY

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

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



USA 250 Challenge still going strong – join the cause!

There are three ways you can help celebrate America's 250th birthday as part of the USA 250 Challenge, which ends July 4.

- Register and achieve one or more goals in the challenge categories — fitness, mental wellness, and/or community service.
- Form a team, like an ALA unit, to do a challenge together!
- Donate to a participant to support their personal quest.

Each registered participant receives a commemorative USA 250 Challenge T-shirt.



For more information on ways to fulfill the categories, scan the QR code.

