

American Legion Auxiliary News Release
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Nation's Largest Women's Patriotic Organization to Gather in Washington DC

INDIANAPOLIS – Nearly 350 members representing 10,000 American Legion Auxiliary units will convene in the nation's capital March 31-April 2 for its 27th annual Awareness Assembly. The mid-year conference provides an opportunity for the leadership of the organization to hear from Washington experts on issues relevant to its mission and to meet with Congressional representatives on key veterans issues during this time of war.

Scheduled to address the conference are MG Craig Whelden, Retired, The Army Community Covenant and Marion Sakowitz, Military OneSource Outreach Assistant. Sakowitz will guide members through a tutorial on how to use the Military OneSource website as a valuable resource when helping military and veteran families. Director of the Army's Community Covenant Task Force, Whelden will discuss the initiative to bring America's communities closer to the Army's soldiers and their families through the signing of Community Covenants all across the country and in selected overseas locations.

A legislative rally will be held with The American Legion on April 1 and Auxiliary members will meet with their senators and representatives on Capitol Hill to discuss the organization's legislative initiatives. The membership has been monitoring issues including the update of the Montgomery GI Bill, homelessness among veterans, military sexual trauma, and access to mental health treatment for military families. Legislation related to those topics will be at the center of the organization's advocacy efforts.

A highlight of the assembly is the presentation of the Public Spirit Awards, recognizing outstanding individuals and organizations for efforts that especially benefit our military, veterans and their families. The Auxiliary's National President, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, will present the awards to Karen Degner, coordinator for Military Families Connect; Marian Chirichella, founder of the Angels of Mercy program; Karen Grimord, founder and president of the Landstuhl Hospital Care Project; and Elizabeth Johnston, president and founder of Mothers of Military Support (MOMS) at a special luncheon in their honor on March 31.

Other activities include a panel discussion featuring eight teens from Operation Military Kids Speak Out for Military Kids. The teens will talk about issues faced by them and other youth who find themselves "suddenly military," and allow members a firsthand glimpse of life in a military family.

About the American Legion Auxiliary

Affiliated with The American Legion, the Auxiliary is a veterans' support organization with 862,000 members to complement the 2.7 million members of The American Legion. The

organization sponsors volunteer programs on the national and local levels, focusing on three major areas: veterans, young people and the community.