

American Legion Auxiliary News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 4, 2008

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South Dakota VA Hospitals, Indian Reservations Benefit From American Legion Auxiliary Efforts

WATERTOWN, SD – It has been a 12-month labor of love. That is the best way to describe what the 16,000 members of the South Dakota American Legion Auxiliary accomplished in their mission to serve veterans, their families and the children of South Dakota.

The organization's efforts benefit the pastoral care program at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center, patients at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota State Veterans Home, and children on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian reservations.

"Our members have given from the heart," state Auxiliary President Lila Speckels said. "We raised funds for the pastoral care program which provided worship bulletins, bibles, care notes and materials which could be aired on the in-house chaplain's channel for Sioux Falls."

For patients in the State Veterans Home in Hot Springs, members of the South Dakota American Legion Auxiliary donated suitcases, socks and flip-flops. Members collected exercise equipment and fishing tackle and were challenged to collect 10,000 children's books for the Pine Ridge and Rosebud children.

"I am confident that we have those books now and will get even more during the convention," the Chamberlain resident said.

Auxiliary members from across the state will gather at the Watertown Event Center June 12-15 to report on these accomplishments and more. For Speckels, the statewide convention will mark the end of her year of leadership and bring the opportunity to share successes with the American Legion Auxiliary National President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan of Madison, Wis.

Speckels points with pride to the less glamorous accomplishments of the year as well. "We worked hard to improve communications," she said. "We added seven Commander's/President's Call meetings where leadership, membership and its benefits, and other topics could be covered in depth.

"We faced a need for change to keep the South Dakota American Legion Auxiliary vibrant and alive. We have more work to do, but we will continue to meet the future needs of veterans, their families and the children of America."

Pulvermacher-Ryan will address the convention, sharing the national effort of all members to endow a scholarship for "Educating Children of Warriors." The nation's largest patriotic women's organization has relied upon a small endowment fund and the general operating dollars to provide scholarships in the past.

"Our current operating budget makes the effort to continue funding these life-changing educational opportunities very challenging and uncertain," Pulvermacher-Ryan said. "Getting the endowment fund better grounded will ensure these scholarships will be available as long as there are military personnel with children. There's something powerful about knowing an organization's long-term needs will be met because we shared a passion for education."

Affiliated with The American Legion, the Auxiliary is a veterans' support organization with members in nearly 10,000 communities. The organization sponsors volunteer programs on the national and local levels, serving veterans, their children and their communities.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bio and hi-res photo at:
<http://www.legion-aux.org/NationalLeaders/NationalPresident/index.aspx>