

American Legion Auxiliary

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February 2020 \$3.75

**Opening ALA
Membership
to Better
Fulfill Our
Mission**



**Chanin Nuntavong,
One of the First Male ALA Members**



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

ON THE COVER: Legionnaire and U.S. Marine Corps veteran Chanin Nuntavong joined the American Legion Auxiliary as soon as he heard that ALA membership eligibility was expanded to male spouses of veterans and servicemembers (photo: Rod Lamkey Jr.). **ABOVE** (from left): national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee members Barbara Washburn, Darlene Allen, Janice MacLeod, and Paulette Caron improv dance with veteran participant Patrick Plugge at the 2019 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (photo: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs).



ALA MISSION-FILLED MOMENTS (top): Visiting with veteran Jeff Schenkelberg at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center in Aurora, Colo.; (bottom): standing beside Ralph Bozella, chairman of The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, at the Washington, D.C. Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Optimism seemed to radiate from Jeff Schenkelberg, a veteran I met recently at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center in Aurora, Colo. I sat by Jeff's hospital bed, and we talked. He voiced appreciation for the staff at Rocky Mountain, and to The American Legion Family for all we do. As it turns out, Jeff's father is a past commander of Legion Post 7 in Carroll, Iowa.

Meeting Jeff was a moving experience, and not just because of his gratitude or his Legion Family connection. It was also his upbeat demeanor, which, I'm told, he has maintained throughout his lengthy hospital stay.

Impressive as well were veteran Karl Milner and his wife, Kathy, who I met at the Jewell VA Clinic in Aurora. With Kathy's support and help from his service dog named Red, Karl was adjusting to having a prosthetic leg. Karl also wanted to share his gratitude with me. I thanked the Milners and Jeff for all they've given in service and sacrifice to our nation.

Paired with *Celebrating a Century of Service* during the ALA's centennial this administrative year is our national focus on the health and well-being of our veterans, military, and their families — including their adaptive needs, such as prosthetics.

Most people will never completely understand what life is like for

someone who requires prosthetics, sensory aids, and other similarly purposed equipment, but I wanted to try. During my visit with the Department of Colorado on our stop at the Jewell VA Clinic, I tried out a driving simulator followed by a specially equipped tricycle. Later, I wore an exoskeleton mobility suit. Then, I worked at going back and forth between a track chair and kayak.

One of the biggest eye openers for me was wearing, and trying to walk with, a prosthetic leg. Learning to balance, walk, and maneuver with it was challenging. (A video of me walking with the prosthetic leg, plus pictures of me trying other assistive devices, can be viewed at Facebook.com/ALANationalpresident). My experiences using those adaptive aids were brief but unforgettable moments. For many of our veterans, military, and their families, adaptive aids are part of everyday life.

On another note: I've noticed the enthusiasm within ALA units welcoming the male spouses of veterans and servicemembers into Auxiliary membership. I am so pleased, and I encourage all ALA members to do the same. These new members are more than numbers added to our membership rolls. They are military spouses who, like other ALA members, endeavor to help and honor veterans, military, and their

families. Learn more about a few of these new members in this edition of *Auxiliary* magazine, starting on page 44.

Another mission-oriented part of my travels was participation in The American Legion's "System Worth Saving" site visit to the Washington, D.C. Veterans Affairs Medical Center. On this visit, I accompanied American Legion National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Chairman Ralph Bozella, as well as George Mitchell, the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division deputy director of health policy. We met with veterans and their families, plus the center's administrators and employees, to learn about the successes, challenges, and limitations there.

These were among a series of visits to VA medical facilities and regional offices done each year by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. Observations and information gathered during the visits are assembled annually into a System Worth Saving Report, which goes to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs officials, members of Congress, and the President of the United States.

I attended another System Worth Saving site visit at the Lexington VA



Health Care System in Kentucky. It was great to participate alongside the Legion.

Finally, thank you to everyone who planned or attended activities during my ALA and Legion Family visits, including my homecoming events in Iowa. I look forward to more mission-filled moments and centennial celebrations that await our Legion Family. I hope you do too!

Nicole Clapp

Nicole Clapp
National President

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BEHIND THE *scenes*

NOTES FROM NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS



WORKING TOGETHER: Several divisions from national ALA and American Legion headquarters met in December to discuss new Legion Family marketing opportunities.

TIME TO GET CREATIVE ADDRESSING OUR IDENTITY

“What’s in a name?” While most of us can say we’re darn proud of our name after a century of existence, that famous line from the great William Shakespeare could have lots of outside people asking the same about the American Legion Auxiliary.

Conversations with non-members/the public sometimes go like this: “Are you the Legion?” “Well, no; but we’re part of them.” “Then what’s an auxiliary? What does it do?”

Back in 1919 when the ALA was established, people spoke differently. The English language was more formal in nature, a thorough grasp of grammar was strictly enforced in schools, and everyone wrote like college professors. Even in some of the ALA’s most menial historical pieces like old office memos, you’ll see this prim prose in action.

What does all of this have to do with us today? We know the ALA is experiencing a membership slide. Attendance is down at unit meetings and service activities. But we can fix that by making some seemingly

minor changes. Let’s start with how we refer to ourselves. No, we’re not planning a name change. However, we can use a different descriptor/tagline to more accurately reflect our brand, who we are, and what we do: *A Community of Volunteers Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families.*

In the coming months, you’ll see more of this key marketing phrase throughout national ALA media, and we’ll provide you with oodles of ways you can utilize it to your unit’s advantage. The choice is ours — adapt to the changing times around us, or stick with statements that may not provide outsiders a more aptly written description of who we are.

Notable NHQ: Kelly Circle joins ALA National Headquarters as its new executive director

Kelly, who came aboard NHQ late last year, graduated with honors from Northwest Missouri State University with a bachelor’s degree in psychology. She earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Kansas School of Law and completed her Ph.D. in education at Saint Louis University. Kelly joined ALA Unit 153 in Olathe, Kan., in 2006 to honor the service of her father and mother, who met while serving in the U.S. Navy. Kelly has served on a variety of district and department committees, as well as Second District vice president and president. She has been honored to serve four years on the government staff at ALA Girls Nation. Kelly’s responsibilities include management of National Headquarters staff and operations, fiscal management of assets, working with the governing board and its chair (national president), and building external relationships.

ALA ON THE GO

Auxiliary magazine is fully digital and available for download at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

TOOLS & TIPS IN A CLICK

In addition, you’ll find expanded magazine content, valuable unit and department resources, plus downloadable templates, news releases, and other ALA promotional materials available on the ALA website 24/7.



American Legion Auxiliary

A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families
February 2020



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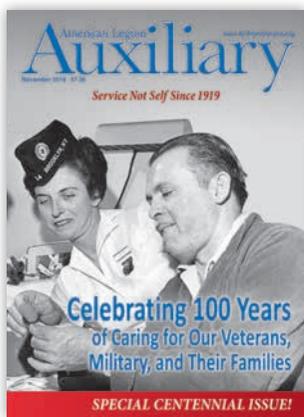
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LOVING THE CENTENNIAL MAGAZINE ISSUE

This magazine is just over the top; it's just so beautiful in celebrating our 100 years!

— Mary H. Adame, California

NEED THAT NECK PILLOW PATTERN FOR MILITARY

I just received my first ALA magazine; thank you. I read the article [on page 20] about handmade pillows for heroes. It references a pattern in the instructions. I didn't see a pattern or a place to get one. Could you help with this, please? I'd love to make some of the pillows. Thank you.

— Jule A. Weaver, Pennsylvania

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thank you for being part of the American Legion Auxiliary's community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families! The ALA member interviewed for this article was Judy Hennis. Her email is judyhennis@hotmail.com and she is more than happy to answer your questions.

USING CRAFTING TALENTS TO BENEFIT VETERANS

Just received my November issue of *Auxiliary* magazine. I want to say "thanks" for the page of Reflections — three months [of prayers]. I enjoy that so much.

Also, when my husband needed to go to a VA hospital, we went to the one in Iowa City, Iowa. I found out every veteran who is overnight in the hospital gets a lap robe given to them to take home. So, I began making them — pieced and knitted. Since 1999 (when I retired), I've made 479 pieced and 245 knit robes. During the Iraq war, I made Christmas stockings to be filled with goodies. Since then, I make them for our local unit (Illinois 91) to fill for nursing homes and the VA in Peoria, Ill.

The veterans are my charity.

That concludes my helping veterans. I'm only 89 years young!

— Clea J. Riggins, Illinois

THANK YOU FROM MISSOURI VA MEDICAL CENTER

On behalf of the Columbia MO-Harry Truman VAMC patients and staff, we would like to extend our appreciation to you for your donation of magazines.

It is through the efforts of community partners like you that allow us to continue the quality care and services that we seek to provide our deserving veterans. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you again for future events.

Thank you for your continued support.

— Ron Graves, Chief, Voluntary Services, Columbia MO-Harry Truman VAMC



CALIFORNIA UNIT PUTS ALA'S CENTENNIAL ON PUBLIC DISPLAY

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 795 found a unique way to advertise and celebrate 100 years of service. Our small town library, the South Lake Tahoe Branch of the El Dorado County Library, has a three-part display case in the lobby, which it offers to groups, businesses, or individuals to create a display and maintain it for a month for all the town to see.

Our members collected various patriotic artifacts and assembled a three-way depiction of Americana

as you can see in the photograph. In front of the display is a small table offering applications for eligible locals to apply for membership in the Legion, Auxiliary, or Sons of The American Legion.

We are asking you to share this in the American Legion Auxiliary magazine because it is red, white, and blue, very colorful, and hopefully will promote recognition, appreciation of veterans and of the Legion, and attract new members.

— Carol Olivas, President, and Sandy McKnight, Secretary: Stella Van Dyke Johnson Auxiliary Unit 795, California

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.

JUNIOR members



SMILING FACES: Children donating to homeless women veterans project.

FLORIDA REBUILDS ITS JUNIOR ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Persistence, support, and working together have helped the Department of Florida rejuvenate its Junior Activities program.

About eight years ago, the program was placed under the Children & Youth Committee in that department. Junior Activities was considered a failing committee, and no one was willing to continue the program at the time, said Dara Oliver, Department of Florida Junior Activities chair.

Fast forward to about three years ago when Oliver moved to

Florida from New York and began finding out more details about the non-existent Junior program and what could be done to get it going again.

A Juniors pilot program was initiated to begin rebuilding.

“We had a lot of support, and we need to have our Juniors,” Oliver said. “Everyone always says, ‘The Juniors are our future,’ and they are — but if we can’t build it up together, our organization won’t last another 100 years.”

As Oliver and others worked

to rebuild the program, they faced some challenges.

Submitting resolutions to change the bylaws was difficult because of how infrequently the Department Executive Committee meets. Additionally, making sure the paperwork was all submitted correctly was also another obstacle.

Currently, there are nearly 800 paid Juniors in the department.

“Every day, we are working harder and thinking of creative ways to get together to collaborate on projects,” Oliver said. “Working on [the ALA Patch Program] is the best way Juniors can still be involved and actively participate.”

Once Juniors see there’s a reward, they might want to continue and do bigger projects, she added. They may also have suggestions — so listen!

“Find out what they want to do, and just keep encouraging them to support our veterans, military, and their families, our communities, and children and youth,” she said. “Let them look at all our programs, and help them decide what area or program they would like to participate in.”

Juniors may need a little extra guidance along the way. Help them, and make them feel part of the unit.



RETRIEVING FREEDOM:

Zoe pictured with service dog, Hallie, at Retrieving Freedom in Waverly, Iowa. Zoe’s project donated \$10,000 to Retrieving Freedom to sponsor a service dog for a veteran.

JUNIOR MEMBER OF THE YEAR HAS HEART FOR MISSION

ALA Junior member Zoe Walz lives the mission of the Auxiliary every day through various projects and activities — not to receive any kind of accolade — but to give back

to our veterans, military, and their families.

When she found out she was the ALA Junior Member of the Year, she was speechless.

“I was shocked!” she recalled. “I had no idea I had even been nominated.”

Turns out, her unit president, Cindy Meyer, was the one who nominated her for this award.

“She has a heart of gold and has been very supportive to me and my family,” Walz said of Meyer.

Walz is eligible for ALA membership through her dad. She’s been involved in several projects over the years, from distributing poppies on Memorial Day and assisting with flag setup at the ceremony to attending Memorial

Day and Veterans Day services.

One particular project she has focused on has been Remember Everyone Deployed (RED) Friday.

“My RED project was a very special activity,” she said. “When I started my RED project, I had no idea the impact it would have for me. This award is a special honor, and it serves as a reminder to me to continue to give back.”

Walz said she enjoys membership in the ALA because of all she’s able to do.

“Being part of the ALA has given me the opportunity to meet and collaborate with several members of my community,” she said. “On top of that, I really enjoy the feeling you get from giving back.”

FORMER JUNIOR CREDITS ADAPTIVE SPORTS FOR SAVING HER LIFE

Karah Behrend's connection to the military started through family. She furthered that tie at a young age when she joined the Auxiliary as a Junior in 1997. She was eligible through her grandparents, Edward and Julie Carney.

"My favorite memory growing up was volunteering at the VA hospitals for the Christmas shops every year," she said. "I would spend hours talking to veterans and listening to their stories."

The Auxiliary has meant a lot to Behrend over the years.

"The ALA is a community of people who truly believe in service before self and leading by example, which definitely helped instill both of those traits into my values," she said.

In 2011, she enlisted in the U.S. Air Force to become a communication signals intelligence analyst.

"I joined the Air Force because I wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself and follow in my family's footsteps," Behrend said.



LIFE-CHANGING: Karah Behrend poses next to a Mitsubishi she drove in the Rebelle Rally, the country's longest and hardest off-road navigation rally. She was the first person with a disability to not only compete, but to podium as well; Behrend is very involved in adaptive sports through Warrior Games.

In 2015, she was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease called reflex sympathetic dystrophy. A year later, Behrend was involved in a car accident requiring three back surgeries. The disease spread through her spinal cord at that time. In 2018, it caused paralysis in her lower body and parts of her hands and arms, leaving her as a C7 quadriplegic. The portion of the spinal cord corresponding to the

C7 vertebra communicates with the tricep muscles. She medically retired from the Air Force in 2018.

Not one to quit life because it gets difficult, that same year she competed for the first time in the U.S. Department of Defense Warrior Games. She won silver and bronze medals in rowing, a gold medal in track in a women's 4-by-100 relay, gold medals in both shotput and discus, and set new Warrior Games records.

She currently plays wheelchair rugby for the Oscar Mike Militia, the first and only all-veteran wheelchair rugby team in the world. Behrend said the mission of the Oscar Mike Foundation is to get injured veterans up and on the move again after life-changing injuries and illnesses.

"Adaptive sports saved my life," she said. "It gave me drive and ambition when I had no other reason to get out of bed. It taught me to be persistent and continue to be innovative when I didn't think I could figure out a way to get something done. It taught me that strength and independence were things to strive for and continue to push further and further, not just dream of."

This year, ALA National President Nicole Clapp is focusing on the health and well-being of veterans, military, and their families, giving extra emphasis to veterans like Behrend by drawing more attention to the adaptive sports. For many like Behrend, involvement in these sporting events has improved and positively impacted her life.



SHOW YOUR POPPY PRIDE WITH THIS CHOKER/BRACELET FOR JUNIORS

National Poppy Day® is just around the corner! Those who have attended national Junior meetings have been making poppy choker/bracelets — and now you can too. This project is fun, easy, and suitable for a wide range of ages. Happy crafting!

What You Need:

- 1) Red felt, approximately 2"x 2" per poppy.
- 2) 1/2" black felt circles, pre-cut with sticky backs.
- 3) Small adhesive rhinestone gems, 5mm.
- 4) 3/4 - 7/8" black ribbon. Velvet works well.
- 5) Small adhesive-backed hook and loop fastener dots.
- 6) Glue gun and glue sticks.

What To Do:

- 1) Trace poppy design onto red felt, using poppy template or freehand.
- 2) Cut out poppy.
- 3) Remove backing from black felt circle; place circle in middle of poppy.
- 4) Remove rhinestone gem and place in center of black circle.
- 5) Cut ribbon to 1" longer than needed for choker or bracelet.
- 6) Remove a set of hook and loop fastener dots. Place one on each end of ribbon so they align.
- 7) Use glue gun to adhere poppy to ribbon.

I AM THE ALA

“I am very proud to have been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary for 81 years. God Bless America!”

LEONA BRAASCH



Growing up as a part of The American Legion Family, Leona Braasch knew the sacrifices her father and other servicemembers made for our great nation, but she didn't know she would also

be growing a military and Legion Family herself.

At the age of 90, Braasch still hangs the American flag.

“My father was a die-hard patriot. The flag had to be out for all the holidays. I think it is instilled in me, and the whole family really,” said Braasch, Nebraska Unit 132 member.

Braasch's 81-year commitment as a member of the American Legion Auxiliary hasn't changed since the day she signed up in 1939. She is continuously honoring and supporting veterans, military, and their families. Her own family is built around the military, and has really become a true American Legion Family.

Her father, John J. Sedlacek, served in the U.S. Army during World War I. Her brother decided to keep the military tradition alive and served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. Both were proud members of The American Legion. Braasch's husband served in the U.S. Navy during WWII, and her grandson was a U.S. Marine in the Iraq War. Four out of the five branches of the military are represented in this strong family.

Continuing to grow her Legion Family, Braasch's son is a member

of the Sons of The American Legion, and she has four great-granddaughters who are Junior ALA members.

Braasch remembers honoring Memorial Day as an ALA Junior and wearing a white dress and placing wreaths at cemeteries. She also remembers distributing poppies on Poppy Days. This year, she plans to have her great-granddaughters help, just like she did as a young Junior member.

Why did you join the American Legion Auxiliary?

My father was in the first World War, and he was a patriot from the word “go.” He ended up joining the Legion, and my mother joined the Auxiliary. She was president when we started the Junior members Auxiliary, and that's why I joined. I was 10 years old.

What influenced you to keep your ALA membership all these years?

I just always liked the organization, and we do a lot of great things. I pay my dues every year. I was pretty active. Unfortunately, I'm not so active anymore. I just felt like it was a worthwhile thing to do.

How has being in a military family impacted your ALA membership?

I think we need to be really proud of all these fellas and what they have done for us in the service. If it wasn't for them, I think we would all have to worry just a little bit about where we'd be today. They have sacrificed an awful lot.

What leadership roles have you held as an ALA member?

I was unit president for three years, and I was secretary for one year. I've been on several different committees — about every committee we have had. Now I'm just on the calling committee. I don't have to do a lot; just talk.

What projects are you working on now?

Making sure we take gifts to veterans in the VA hospitals. Just gathering different things they need, like deodorant. We try to help with that every month. We have one project every month.

What does the ALA centennial celebration mean to you?

I think it's a marvelous thing, really. I mean, goodness, there aren't a lot of organizations that have been in existence for that length of time. And they have done so much good for this country. People don't realize how much the Auxiliary and the Legion have done for their veterans.

What does your ALA membership mean to you?

I'm very proud of the fact that I've been able to be a member for 81 years. To me, it's a great organization.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY UNIT:
Unit 132
Stromsburg, Neb.

ELIGIBILITY THROUGH:
John J. Sedlacek, father
(U.S. Army, World War I)

YEARS IN THE ALA: 81

SHARE YOUR MEMBERSHIP STORY! Tell us about yourself and how you support the American Legion Auxiliary as a unit member who also loves the ALA's mission of serving veterans, the military, and their families. Contact us at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org or (317) 569-4500.

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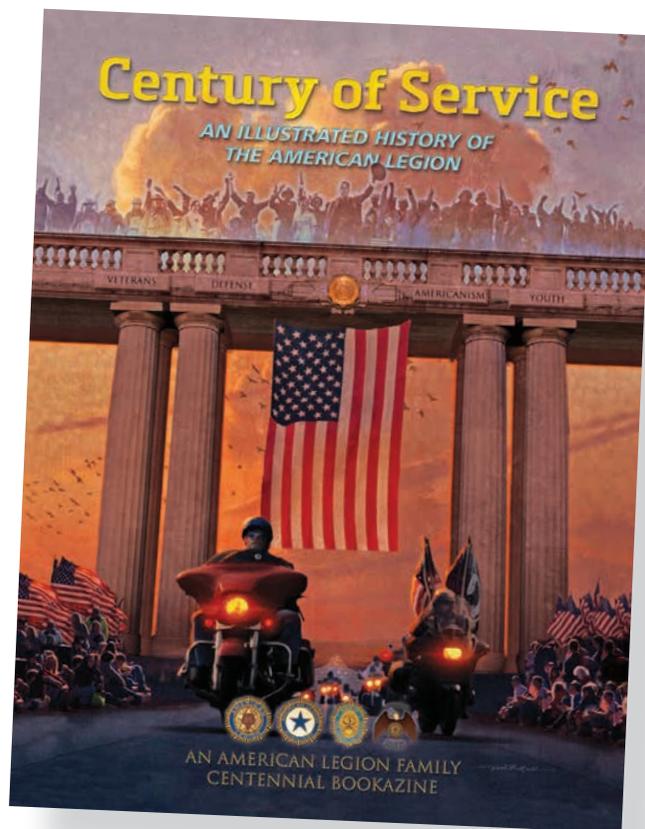
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— Martin Luther King Jr.



(Photo: Amy C. Elliott/The American Legion)

With diversity and inclusiveness, the American Legion Auxiliary is a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families. Under our far-reaching umbrella of community, the ALA welcomes members and nonmember-volunteers from a variety of backgrounds — differing races, ages, ethnicities, and physical ability levels, for example. We respect the differences among ourselves while successfully working together on our common mission of honoring and supporting those we serve. That’s an achievement worth celebrating today ... and every day!



What are some neat events/activities your unit conducts?

WHAT'S
YOUR
STORY?

We're looking for stories to share in the 2020 issues of *Auxiliary* magazine:

MILITARY SPOUSES:

- How do you cope when your military spouse is in another country or leaving for drill? How do you hold down the fort while they're away?

POPPY MAKING:

- Tell us about your regular poppy making efforts and how you distribute them.

VALUE OF YOUR ALA MEMBERSHIP:

- How has your ALA membership benefited your career? Have you learned leadership, public speaking, teamwork, or received helpful training?

Email us at:
ALAMagazine
@ALAforVeterans.org



"Our unit has hosted a prom in the past for our members. We even had a king and queen. This year, we had a homecoming. The tables were all decorated with different area high school [themes]."

— Maria Delgado Cazares, Texas



"Unit 123 in the Philippines provided free Thanksgiving dinner for veterans."

— Elisa Hughes, Philippines



"We host an awards ceremony every year for the Americanism Essay Contest winners. The winners, their families, teachers, and principals are invited. We have even signed up a few members because of this event."

— Sherri McGee, Indiana



"Unit 2 in West Warwick, R.I., partners with local restaurants to provide a Sunday meal once a month to a local veterans home."

— Amy Wallace, Rhode Island



"We host a community egg hunt as an American Legion Family in Willard, Ky., with several churches in the area. We hide 20,000 plastic Easter eggs. We also serve a hot meal, give away over 1,000 books, have prizes for the kids, and more. And it's all free!"

— Whitney Dellaire, Kentucky



"Our unit put together snack boxes for American Education Week, and the Legion members delivered them to six schools. We also adopted five veterans for Christmas at the Hastings veterans home."

— Tracy Gurneau, Minnesota



"Unit 16 in Gainesville, Fla., makes blessing buckets for the local homeless and transitioning veterans to survive the cold winter nights. Each bucket holds personal hygiene items, socks, a blanket, pillow, tarps, and more."

— Ronna Jackson, Florida

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SHARING BOOKS: Unit 539 members (from left) Linda Marie Doege, Judy Booth, and Joyce Zaiontz stand proudly next to their newest unit project, the Little Free Library.

LEGION FAMILY WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE COMMUNITY

By sharing a love for reading, you can strengthen your mind and community. American Legion Auxiliary Unit 539 in St. Hedwig, Texas, supports veterans, the military, and their families, and they also encourage reading good books by opening a Little Free Library at their post home for the community to enjoy.

The Little Free Library is a worldwide nonprofit organization that gives children the opportunity to further their knowledge through access to more books.

“We were looking for something to do for the community, and a

member happened to see a story in a newspaper and said we should do this too. We looked into it and decided it was something we could do,” said Unit 539 President Linda Marie Doege.

Little libraries are available for purchase on the Little Free Library’s website. Instead of buying one, Unit 539 received help from recently joined ALA member Duane Dick, who works in carpentry and built the library for the unit and his wife, Mayor Dee Grimm, Post and Unit 539 dual member.

Building the library was part of an American Legion Family

collaboration. A Unit 539 member helped by creating the graphic design pieces on it, and a Legionnaire welded the library onto a bracket for durability.

Anyone is welcome to borrow a book, and book donations are accepted. The unit has a designated member who keeps an eye on the library to avoid any risqué titles being donated. She also checks regularly for any damages.

People can take a book, read it, and then return it to any Little Free Library. Unit 539 asks that borrowers not steal any books. To safeguard, the unit purchased stamps that prevent someone from selling stolen Little Free Library books.

Unit 539 registered the location of their library through the Little Free Library website. By clicking on the map and choosing an option such as City, State, ZIP code, or Near Me, it will pinpoint the libraries in those areas.

“We wanted to represent the Auxiliary; that’s why we painted poppies on there,” said Doege. “It was rewarding to be able to do something for the community like this.”

HONORING NEW YORK’S HOMETOWN HEROES



After reading an *Auxiliary* magazine article over two years ago regarding honoring veterans with a service project,

ALA member Linda Belmont of Unit 32 in Walton, N.Y., was motivated to begin a unique and lengthy project. She began writing a military book inspired by her father, Samuel P. Belmont (U.S. Army, World War II), and the other local veterans and servicemembers of her hometown.

“Most importantly, it’s a way for me to honor my father. But also, for me to honor all the veterans who served and to hopefully give them a

big thank-you,” Belmont said.

Two years later, at the beginning of the American Legion Auxiliary’s centennial, Belmont’s *Thank You for Your Service* was finished. Nearly 200 pages were dedicated to veterans from the Walton community who served during the Civil War through the Cold War.

Belmont found most of her information using the facilities of her book sponsor, the Walton Historical Society. She gathered more information by writing questionnaires and distributing them to Auxiliary families in Walton who may have been connected to the servicemembers during that timeframe. Belmont interviewed numerous people, and also put an ad in the local paper for people to contact her.

Thank You for Your Service mentions 1,110 past and present United States veterans related to the Walton area. The Walton Historical Society gave Belmont listings of soldiers from their town who fought in each war, from the Civil War through the Cold War. Depending on the information she had, some veterans had many pages, some had one page, and others shared pages throughout her book.

The book is already being rented out of the local school’s library as a historical resource. And after the publication came out, more Walton military families reached out to Belmont wanting to be honored in the book.

“It’s impossible to get everybody. So, I guess there is going to be another one,” said Belmont.

Good works to share? Visit www.ALForVeterans.org for details.

DISABLED VETERANS LEADING THE CHARGE IN ADAPTIVE SPORT MOVEMENT

Guest Column Written by Dawna Callahan, Founder, All In Sport Consulting

Did you know that veterans with physical disabilities have led the way for others to participate and compete in adaptive sport?

ALA National President Nicole Clapp's 2019-2020 focus is on injured veterans and their engagement in adaptive sport to positively impact their physical and mental well-being. What is adaptive sport, and how does it play a role in the lives of those veterans living with a disability? How can American Legion Auxiliary members get involved and serve veterans engaging in adaptive sport? Provided below is a brief history of the adaptive sport movement and how Auxiliary members can support the national president's service focus.

One simple idea

Dr. Ludwig Guttmann, "grandfather" of the adaptive sport movement, had a revolutionary idea that physical activity could be a cure for adversity and disability. As a neurosurgeon at England's Stoke Mandeville Hospital in 1944, Guttmann was charged by the British government to establish a rehabilitation center to support the mass injuries experienced by soldiers during World War II. He believed that sport and physical activity of those injured would provide hope, decrease despair, rebuild self-esteem, and renew a sense of purpose.

Guttmann initially introduced recreational adaptive sport opportunities like wheelchair basketball and archery to assist with rehabilitation. Given the competitive nature of the young veterans, these recreational opportunities soon evolved into competitions among injured servicemembers.

Because of Guttmann's bold vision of using sport as an innovative form of rehabilitation, individuals with physical disabilities across the world, including injured servicemembers,

now know that life can be meaningful and fulfilling. Disability does not have to be a barrier.

Evolution

Fast forward to the 21st century. It's exciting to recognize the growth and technological advances of the adaptive sport movement. In 2007, the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee launched the Paralympic Military Program to specifically provide adaptive sport opportunities for injured military and veterans across the country.

The program involved collaboration from the U.S. departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and community-based adaptive sport programs already offering those with disabilities an opportunity to participate in sport in their local community. The impetus of the program: Rather than doing physical therapy at a VA facility, get veterans active in sport on the archery range, paddling on a river, or playing volleyball at the local YMCA.

The program's success is evident as it evolved from sport participation and introduction to developing elite-level athletes. In 2016 at the Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, 35 U.S. military veterans represented the Stars and Stripes competing at the highest level of sport.

VA support

Last fall, the VA announced recipients of its annual adaptive sport grants for disabled veterans. The 2019-2020 grant awards were distributed to 126 community-based adaptive sport organizations across the country, totaling \$14.8 million. Grant recipients are collaborating with both VA facilities and veterans service organizations to provide expert coaching and training in diverse sport offerings. The grant promotes rehabilitation, quality of life, and community reintegration.



GUEST SPEAKER: Competitive wheelchair racer Dawna Callahan speaks to attendees at the 2019 ALA Department Leadership National Conference.

It's anticipated this year's grant program will reach 11,000 veterans with a disability.

Be a part of the movement

There are hundreds of adaptive sport programs across the country supporting injured veterans and their quest to stay active and healthy through recreation and sport. Volunteer at a program, and experience firsthand the positive effects the power of sport has on these veterans' lives. See what opportunities exist locally by visiting these national adaptive sport organization websites:

www.disabledsportsusa.org/chapters/location-map
www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/find-a-club

About Dawna Callahan: A competitive wheelchair racer, Dawna Callahan has been involved with adaptive sport professionally for more than 20 years. Most recently, she founded All In Sport Consulting, a national adaptive sport consulting group. Dawna placed fifth in the Boston Marathon in 2010. She's held volunteer leadership positions with the Metro Denver Sports Commission Associate Board, Vail Veterans Program, and the Colorado Colfax Marathon.



Dear Goodwill Gail,
When referring to our local American Legion Auxiliary, why can't our members just say unit such-and-such and NOT Post such-and-such? I have tried to correct people who say "post" instead of "unit," but they get upset with me. How should I handle this situation?
Signed, We Are Units

similar to, "You may not be aware, but the American Legion Auxiliary should be referred to as a unit, not a post." Briefly explain the difference and let them know it's a common mistake. When you're polite, they'll likely make it up to you by covering future events.

So, how can your unit help members make it a habit to say "unit"?

- Make it fun! Offer incentives to members who say it correctly. Every time someone correctly says "unit," enter their name into a drawing for a prize. Consider a prize that includes branding of your unit. The drawing could be held quarterly or annually.

- Unit leadership needs to be the example. Leadership should check social media accounts, websites, newsletters, etc., to make sure "unit" is being used correctly.

- Add an education component to your meetings. This could be a fact that is talked about during a meeting.

- In your newsletters, place a friendly reminder to say "unit" instead of "post."

- Set up a jar to collect money. If someone says "post" instead of "unit," they have to donate money to the jar. The money could then go back to the unit.

Old habits are hard to change, so patience is important.

In the Spirit of *Service Not Self*,
Goodwill Gail

Need some advice on how to approach conflict within the ALA? Email pr@ALAforsVeterans.org with the subject line "Goodwill Gail." We'll create a pen name so that you remain anonymous.

Dear *We Are Units*,

You are correct. Members should refer to their local-level American Legion Auxiliary as a unit, not a post. The confusion often happens due to the fact that units are housed inside posts.

Be mindful that the person referring to the unit as a post may not be aware there is a difference. The person may be new or was told it was a post when joining. If the person is never corrected or hears others refer to your unit as a post, they will never realize there's a bit more to who we are.

The most important thing to remember: Be nice when correcting someone and explaining the difference between Legionnaires and the ALA unit members serving alongside them. This educational lesson applies to members and non-members.

For example, if you witness an

ALA member say, "I'm a member of Post 123," talk to the member when the opportunity arises. You can say something like, "I heard you say you are a member of Post 123. Has anyone ever told you that we are part of a unit? The American Legion is the post. Don't feel bad; it is a common mistake."

If someone outside of the organization, such as the media, is incorrect, be understanding. Realize it can be complicated for those who aren't connected to our organization to understand the difference, especially if you're hosting an event at a post. If you are talking to a reporter, explain that the event is being hosted by the unit, and explain the difference. The reporter will appreciate the clarification. If you see it written incorrectly in a publication, contact the publication. First, thank the person for covering the event. Next, say something



NEW ALA ACADEMY COURSE AVAILABLE: *How to Deal with Conflict* — how you handle conflict determines whether it turns into a major battle or leads to a deeper understanding of others and a more positive relationship. In this course, you'll learn about conflict and the process of resolving it in a professional, positive, and proactive manner. This ALA Academy course is one of eight currently available! Log in today at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

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— Sherri H., Granville, NY



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A study by the National Institute on Aging suggests older individuals with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop Alzheimer's and dementia over time than those who retain their hearing. They suggest that an intervention — such as a hearing aid — could delay or prevent this by improving hearing!

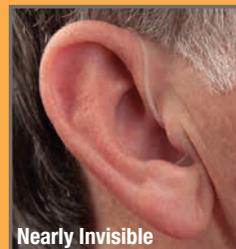
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SPECIAL OCCASION FOR KIDS: Post 144 Legionnaire Frank Busa and Auxiliary members Mary Ann Busa (left) and Rosanne Spinner dressed in costumes for their Special Friends Dance last fall.

NEW YORK UNIT AND POST DANCING FOR YOUTH

A time-honored tradition began over half a century ago for American Legion Auxiliary Unit 144 in Williston, N.Y. Twice a year, this unit hosts a “Special Friends Dance” for developmentally challenged children and young adults.

“It’s a time when you can give back and make a difference,” said Unit 144 member Rosanne Spinner. “It’s the heart of what we do.”

The dance allows guests to forget their worries and escape into the rhythm for two nights each year. Unit 144 hosts one dance at the end of October, which allows the special friends to dress up in costumes and have a fun and unique Halloween experience. The other Special Friends Dance is in April to honor The American Legion Family’s Children & Youth month.

The Special Friends Dance brings youth together for an entertaining night full of food, drinks, desserts, and dancing. There’s a DJ who plays any song the guests request, Legionnaires hand out soda, and there are never any empty trays of food.

For the past 57 years, Unit 144 has hosted the dance at their post home with help from the Legionnaires, who set up tables before the Auxiliary gets there to decorate, and they are first in line to help clean everything up.

“The unit and post have worked together this whole time. We couldn’t do it without them,” said Mary Ann Busa, Unit 144 Children & Youth chair and Special Friends Dance organizer.

In 2002, Busa inherited the project from her mentor and dear friend Rosemary Wilenski. After Wilenski passed away, Busa continued to honor her memory. The Special Friends Dance grows more each year and the rest of Unit/Post 144 plan to keep the tradition alive for years to come.

As an extra exciting treat for the bi-annual dance: Unit 144 Junior member Lily Frohnhoefer and her Girl Scout Troop 1177 started a project called “Stuffed Animals for Love.” They collect gently used stuffed animals and dolls, clean them, and repurpose them as take-

home gifts at each dance. The gifts also come with adoption certificates that show the new names and birthdates of each stuffed animal and doll. During the October 2019 dance, the special friends were excited to see their take-home treasures dressed in homemade costumes courtesy of the Girls Scouts. This ongoing project began two years ago, and they don’t plan on stopping it anytime soon.

“It’s amazing that these girls are doing this project. Everybody was so grateful,” said Spinner.

Each guest goes home with their hearts and hands full. Not only do they receive a new “friend,” they also leave with a beautiful plant. East Williston Florist donates 100 plants for every dance. Frank Busa, Past Post 144 Commander, arranges the time and date to pick up the plants. He brings them back to the post home for all children to take with them and enjoy. He said the guests seem to really appreciate the plants, and they are always excited to take them home.

Mary Ann Busa never knows how many people to expect for these dances. She sends about 60 invitations, twice a year, every year. Most of the invitations are sent to developmentally challenged children and youth living in group homes. She does ask for RSVPs, although most of the time Unit 144 members have to wait to see who comes.

The talk of the legendary Special Friends Dance must have spread from group home to group home, because on one occasion, Busa had 17 RSVPs for the dance, and 75 special friends made an appearance. Unit/Post 144 could not have been more excited for the unexpected guests.

“It’s not a party where the public is invited. It’s a private party for them. It’s such a feel-good thing to do,” said Spinner. “It’s something I look forward to every year.”



Do you have tips on asking members to volunteer more at the post home? Does it always seem like the same members volunteer at your events? Looking for new blood to help? If you have a success story on how you corralled new volunteers, tell us about it. You could be featured in a future issue of *Auxiliary* magazine.

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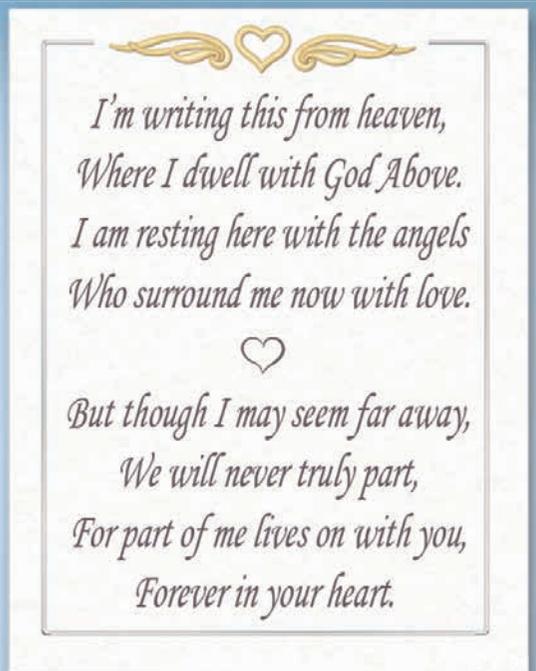
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A SIMPLE GESTURE CAN GO A LONG WAY

Have you ever done something small to later find out the large impact it made? Now multiply that by 20,000 each year — quite an impact.

As part of an overall fundraising plan, the American Legion Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation distribute direct mail packages to members and supporters asking for donations to help carry out our mission of serving veterans, military, and their families.

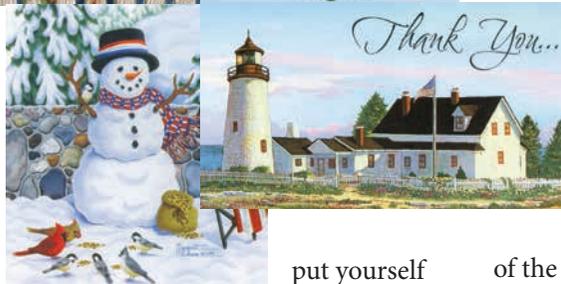
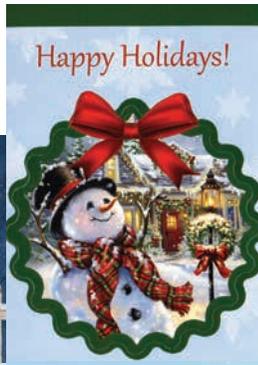
Included in some of these packages: a small card, ornament, or postcard inviting donors to write a personalized message to a veteran, sign it, and return it with a donation to the Auxiliary's donation processing center.

If you've filled out one of these cards, maybe you've wondered if a veteran ever received your message. In short, yes! While you may never know who received your card, our donation processing center collects and distributes the cards to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers across the country — where they eventually reach veterans.

Each VA medical facility that receives these cards has its own unique distribution method. No

matter the method used, the main goal is to reach a veteran and let them know someone out there is not only thinking about them, but appreciative of the sacrifices they made.

If you're still trying to decide whether it's worth your time and effort, just



put yourself
in the shoes of

these veterans. Some may be facing serious challenges while working to overcome an illness or injury. While some days may be better than others, we can never fully understand the struggles veterans may go through.

It takes such little effort to sign and return a card; just imagine the amount of happiness that small gesture brings to these heroes.

Want to take up this card project in your unit?

If you're moved by this effort and are interested in implementing a project like this in your American Legion Auxiliary unit, perhaps you'd like to keep it simple and order cards that are already designed. There are plenty of options, whether you shop around online or at a store.

Maybe you'd like to take it to the next level and put your creativity skills to the test. Whether you design the card on a computer or by hand and have it mass produced, it holds a valuable meaning!

If you'd like to have a variety of cards, invite Junior ALA members or members who can't attend meetings but still want to stay involved, and challenge them to come up with a design and message for each card.

When it comes to distribution, think outside of the box. Whether it's a Memorial Day service or neighborhood cookout, be on watch for events in your community where veterans may be present. This makes for a great opportunity to personally pass these cards along and put smiles on the faces of veterans.

ALA RECEIVES GRANTS FROM CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION

In early 2019, staff at the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters applied for two grants from The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. In October, the ALA received word that an award in the amount of \$122,342.50 had been granted to the organization.

The grant money will serve two

purposes. First, it will provide 28 youth scholarships.

Second, the grants will help fund the American Legion Auxiliary Juniors' "Indivisible" Project, which will allow for the purchase of The American Legion's book, *Indivisible — The Story of our Flag*, which will be distributed as an instructional resource to each Junior Auxiliary member at the 2020 national Junior meetings.

"Anytime the Juniors can take something home from a national Junior meeting, it helps reinforce what they've learned that day," said ALA National Headquarters' Senior Program Coordinator Kristin Hinshaw. "This book will give them a physical reminder of our Americanism program and something they can take back to their department and unit to share with their fellow Juniors."



We beat our #GivingTuesday Goal!

Thank you for supporting the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation on #GivingTuesday in late 2019. We surpassed our goal of \$30,000, raising over \$45,000. One hundred percent of these donations go directly to supporting veterans, military, and their families through grants and mission outreach. Visit www.ALAFoundation.org to learn more about the impact you are making.



your community, refer to the report to read the call to action. Your ALA unit can look at this call to action and make a plan to address it in your community.

Other resources from Military Family Research Institute:

Visit www.mfri.purdue.edu to see more of MFRI's research and find other valuable resources. For example, you can learn how to host a family stand down.

MFRI also supports female veterans and military members pursuing higher education through the Focus Forward Fellowship. The American Legion Auxiliary is supporting the Focus Forward Fellowship by sponsoring two fellows in 2020. This fellowship is an enrichment program designed for women student veterans pursuing higher education. *Let us know if your American Legion Auxiliary unit utilizes these sites. Auxiliary magazine would love to hear your success story! Contact us at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org.*

ONLINE TOOL HELPS ALA MEMBERS EFFECTIVELY SERVE MISSION

Measuring Our Communities: The State of Military and Veteran Families in the United States

Do you wish there was a resource for learning more about the demographics and needs of military and veteran families in your community? You don't have to wish any longer, because it does exist.

The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University hosts the interactive website www.measuringcommunities.org. MFRI uses its research to identify needs throughout the country and help shape policies, programs, and practices to improve the well-being of veterans and their families. American Legion Auxiliary units can use this information to discover the needs of veterans, military, and their families in local communities.

Kathy Broniarczyk, senior director for outreach and operations at the Military Family Research Institute, says this website is useful for those who want to make the most impact. Users can quickly identify the needs in their local military communities.

Broniarczyk points out that passion for a project may overshadow current need. For example, an ALA unit may be passionate about unemployment, but the community may have a low unemployment rate for veterans. So, should employment programs be the main focus, or should the focus turn to the greater need? This can help unit leaders make informed decisions on focus areas.

When visiting www.measuringcommunities.org, you will be asked for an organization

ID. American Legion Auxiliary members should enter ALAMC20. This will give you full access to the site.

We suggest you start with *Measuring our Communities 2019 Report: The State of Military and Veterans Families in the United States*. This file focuses on the female veteran and their spouse. Learn about topics such as employment, education, housing, the challenges, and the states where the need is greatest.

The next step is to learn more about the needs in your community. Snapshots will give you a look at the same topics at the state and county levels. Once you learn the needs in

WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARTS

Get creative, crafty, and ready for the concert. See page 28 for our National Veterans Creative Arts Festival story about the arts' healing powers!

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CARVINGS
COLLAGE

Answers can be found on page 57.



PLAN BEFOREHAND BE READY TO STOP ALA MEMBERSHIP SLIDES BY RECRUITING

Many people belong to your American Legion Auxiliary unit, and a high percentage of the members participate often with ALA programs and mission-oriented outreach. Your unit has consistently met its membership recruitment goals.

But what happens when a few members move out of town while others decide not to renew their memberships, and efforts to persuade them to stay in the ALA unit, or rejoin later, fail? You might find your unit losing that core group of Auxiliary members who participate often. Next thing you know, membership at your unit dips even more. Unit effectiveness — in terms of fulfilling the ALA's mission of serving and supporting veterans, military, and their families; mentoring youth; and enhancing communities — declines. What now?

The answer is recruitment. It's best to have a recruitment plan ready to put into action at the first sight of a significant slide in membership. There's no need to eliminate existing recruitment techniques, especially if they have worked previously. Instead, build on those with additional approaches and strategies to help find, attract, and sign up new members.

"Look to people who are either already serving veterans, who are part of military families, or those who are

veterans themselves. Sometimes, especially when people have transitioned out of the military, they miss that camaraderie. Also, look to other groups with missions similar to the ALAs. Talk to your neighbors. You never know who's eligible until you start talking to people," said Lauren Lloyd, vice chairman of the ALA's national Membership Committee.

Elevator Speech

Once it's determined where else to seek potential members, it's a good idea to have a couple of positive points about the ALA and our mission crafted into a brief statement (often called an "elevator speech") that you can mention at recruitment events or during a one-on-one conversation. The statement should take less than 30 seconds, the duration of a short elevator ride, to deliver. For ideas about preparing your elevator speech, check out the ALA blog post titled, *Spread the Mission: Use an Elevator Speech*, at ALAforVeterans.wordpress.com.

What if you are spending more than 30 seconds with a potential member, and the person wants to hear more about the ALA and what we do? Be prepared ahead of time for this by having additional information

ready to discuss. For example, how much volunteer time did the ALA dedicate to serving veterans, military, and their families last year? One source for this sort of information is the ALA's annual impact reports. Pair that with comparable figures from your unit and your department to talk about the ALA's positive effect locally, nationally, and internationally.

"If you look at the impact of all of our volunteer work, it's [valued at] over a billion dollars. Who wouldn't want to be part of something like that? It shows that you would be giving your time to a good cause," Lloyd said.

Show the ALA's Impact

Some people respond better when impact is illustrated in a short example of our mission in action, benefitting those we serve. Be ready to share your unit's or department's top two or three most impactful or inspiring mission-based programs, activities, or ongoing projects. Feel free to summarize and share a brief success story of another ALA unit as well when talking about our organization as a whole. Find these stories on the ALA blog at ALAforVeterans.wordpress.com, or throughout various issues of *Auxiliary* magazine.

Other people put more stock in what they see and experience versus what you say. Invite potential members to volunteer at your unit's mission-oriented activities and events. Demonstrate the sense of family shared among Auxiliary members — including ALA Juniors, or when possible, as an American Legion Family that also encompasses your local American Legion post, and local Sons of The American Legion squadron.

Have a couple of membership applications handy for those ready to join. Or, refer interested individuals to www.ALAforVeterans.org where they can sign up online or get more information.

"People nowadays are really selective about what they're joining. But if we're showing them what we've done and the impact of that, people can be encouraged to engage a little bit more with us — and maybe decide to join," Lloyd said.

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THANKING OUR VETERANS: The 2019 Veterans Day parade in New York City (photo: George Etheredge/The American Legion).

RENEWING YOUR ALA MEMBERSHIP IS IMPORTANT; HERE'S WHY

The American Legion Auxiliary has members from all walks of life who come together to support veterans, military, and their families. Military service is a sacrifice for the whole family — that's why ALA members are there to ease the burden. Renewing your membership each year helps support our mission while also building friendships, gaining leadership skills, promoting patriotism, and advocating for those who have fought for our country.

"I was signed up as an infant by my parents. At the age of 18, we were given the choice to continue or not. There was no decision at all — the opportunity to help veterans is one that is unique and rewarding," said 2019-2020 National Membership Chair Pam Ray.

Since 1919, members have continued to raise millions of dollars to sustain ALA programs that help advance the mission of service. Whether or not you're able to actively

participate in ALA service projects or attend meetings, your dues make our mission outreach possible and help ensure the future growth and prosperity of the ALA.

Are you the membership chair for your unit? Are you a member who wants others to renew too? There are many ways to reconnect

"The opportunity to help veterans is one that is unique and rewarding"

to ALA members in renewing their membership. Instead of focusing on the numbers, remind members the reason(s) they joined the Auxiliary in the first place.

"I have continued my membership for a total of 62 years now. I continued at first to honor my father's service. I stay now to work our mission and

honor my entire family and their commitment to the veterans and to the organization," said Ray.

Your personal dedication to our nation's military and veterans is the reason we are able to celebrate 100 years of service. Let us focus on making a stronger impact in our second century by continuing to push the value of our members' volunteer service. Not only does renewing your membership help grow the mission, it also provides you with information and resources that help make your ALA membership meaningful.

"If you can share a story from the heart, it is a great recruitment tool," Ray said. "If you share your 'hidden paycheck' you receive from belonging to the ALA, [members] will want to experience that as well. Find what tugs at their heart within the organization," Ray said. "Encourage them to get involved. Allow them to bring new ideas to the table. If they feel valued, they will continue to renew. Asking someone to join and not recognizing their strengths will not have someone anxious to renew their membership."

The American Legion conducts Buddy Checks twice a year as a way to reach out to members, reconnect with veterans, and renew memberships. The Auxiliary can mirror this concept to add a personal touch to membership renewals. Contact ALA members who have not yet renewed their membership with a personal visit, phone call, email, or a combination of all. The important part is to communicate and connect with the members in your community to let them know you care. Visit legion.org/membership/buddycheck to see how your local ALA unit can accomplish the same idea.

Learn more about the easy ways you can renew your ALA membership:



- Visit www.ALAforVeterans.org to renew online with your member ID on your card. You must log in to pay your dues. Click "Renew Here" and log in with your username and password. If you do not have a username or password, simply click "Sign Up" to get started.

- Pay by phone to ALA National Headquarters

at (317) 569-4570, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST. Visa/MasterCard or Visa/MasterCard Debit are accepted when renewing online or by phone.

- Contact your local ALA unit to let them know you want to mail your 2020 dues payment. The unit will provide a mailing address. Please make all checks payable to "American Legion Auxiliary." If you prefer, you can visit your unit and pay your dues directly to an Auxiliary officer.

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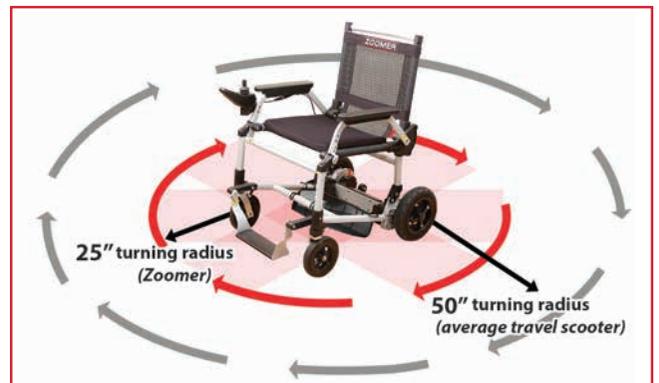
Remember when you were a child and got your first bicycle? I do. It gave me a sense of independence... I felt like I could go anywhere, and it was so much easier and more enjoyable than walking. Well, at my age, that bike wouldn't do me much good. Fortunately, there's a new invention that gives me the freedom and independence to go wherever I want... safely and easily. It's called the Zoomer, and it's changed my life.

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‘Why we do what we do’

Auxiliary members and returning veterans reflect on healing power of arts festival



Veteran Gary Satchell was down on his luck. His motorized scooter had been damaged by the airlines on his way to the 2019 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) in Kalamazoo, Mich. He began his week feeling frustrated, depressed, and sad. Satchell felt like he was a burden to those around him.

But he wasn't a burden — not even close. ALA member and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Eastern Division Chair Paulette Caron showed him that by doing what the ALA does best — helping our veterans every day, everywhere, in any way we can.

“To be able to get him his meal, to take him to his practices, to just talk to him, and see the smile on his face,” she said. “He’s just been thankful. But it was me who was thankful.”

As the week went on, Satchell’s scooter was fixed and he resumed life as normal, perfecting his guitar and vocal skills to perform *Mustang Sally* with his band at the stage show.

“He kept saying, ‘I don’t need help,’” Caron said. “However, if anyone said, ‘Do you need help?’ he said, ‘Yeah, but you need to go get Paulette.’ It was unbelievable. I thought he had just made an impact on me. But I was able to make an impact on him.”

Caron’s first time at the Festival was a life-changing experience, as it often is for most American Legion Auxiliary members. They quickly refer to veterans by first name, and many members develop a personal relationship with them. This event truly showcases the ALA’s mission in action — supporting our veterans and their families.

Throughout the week, ALA members assisted with a wide range of duties, from registration to sewing, ironing, and steaming costumes, to helping with meals.

“We had great members out this week, and some who come every year so they can show the veterans that it isn’t just writing a check,” Caron said. “It is interacting, it’s personally thanking them, and it’s personally letting them know we are a co-presenter because we care.”

Members acted as an extra hand, a warm smile, a listening ear, and more. They saw firsthand the overwhelming positive impact the arts have on our nation’s veterans, giving them the chance to heal from visible and invisible wounds, days and even decades after their service.

“The art therapy happening in the VA facilities is crucial for these veterans to sustain a productive life,” Caron added. “This gives them a focus. It lets them know they have a way to bring joy to other people — that what they do matters.”

ALA members ended the week feeling blessed and thankful for such a rewarding experience of supporting those who serve.

“It was amazing. It was heartwarming,” Caron said. “It truly brings out why we do what we do.”

ALA Makes Annual Festival a Priority

As co-presenters, and with members involved at both the local and national level, the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival truly demonstrates what the ALA is — a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families.

The event brings together creative veterans throughout the country who made it to the national level after competing at

local VA facilities. There were 5,648 entries submitted into the local competitions, with over 3,500 entries judged at the national level in 150 categories of visual art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music.

The American Legion Auxiliary has been ‘doing what we do’ since 2000 when then-National President Kristine West wanted to focus on veterans as her special project, leading to the ALA becoming a sponsor of NVCAF. She asked the national presidents after her to also support the program — not as their special project, but to at least promote the program so the sponsorship could continue.

The commitment to the Festival 20 years ago was \$75,000, and the ALA surpassed that.

“We went overboard, and everyone got behind the program,” West recalled.

She never dreamed the connection to this event would grow to what it is today with monetary and volunteer support to the level of the ALA as a co-presenter of the Festival since 2014 alongside the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

“The ALA’s commitment and hands-on interactions help to enhance the experiences for veterans and their caregivers,” said Amy Kimbler, NVCAF director. “Most days, the ALA volunteers are the first faces the veterans see before breakfast and the last faces they see before going to bed after visiting the hospitality room. These interactions, these moments help to make the event memorable for all involved.”

As we continue into our next century of service, West urges ALA members to continue to support the Festival, which in turn supports our mission.

“It’s great that the Festival has moved around across the country so more people can be exposed, and members can see it firsthand,” she said. “It just tugs at them, and you can see it.”

Knowing West’s connection to the Festival and 2019-2020 being a monumental time for the organization, ALA National President Nicole Clapp invited West to attend this year’s event as a guest of honor.

“When I was asked to be national president for our centennial, it was a simple decision for me to want to invite Kris to come and celebrate 20 years of her dedication, vision, and foresight so that we would be standing here today,” Clapp said.

Our organization has had a positive impact on this Festival for 20 years and counting. The ALA’s involvement in this event is crucial to our nation’s heroes and their health and well-being. *Auxiliary* magazine sat down with a few veterans who have been to five or more Festivals to talk about the difference it has made in their lives.

Sean Connolly

Branch of service: U.S. Navy

Festival participation: Visual artist

VA facility: Lakewood, Wash.

Number of times to the national Festival: 12

“Twenty-two veterans kill themselves per day, so there are 22 guys and ladies scattered throughout the whole project itself,” Connolly said, describing his collage made from recycled leather bags, jackets, and purses.



A LOOK AT THE WEEK (opposite page, top to bottom): Participants pose in front of the ALA banner; caregivers help make blankets during the companion social; ALA volunteers help a caregiver in the hospitality suite; Carson Schaffer talks to ALA leadership. This page, top to bottom, left to right: Ivan Taylor strums the guitar during his band’s performance; Nate Moran poses with stage crew; Patricia Sennett salutes the flag; Rebecca Heissler hits a high note; Rick Stang belts out a solo; veterans take a break in between rehearsals; Mary Jean Houlahan performs a dance number with her dance partner, Sergh Aliev (feature photos: courtesy U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and ALA NHQ staff).



TALENTED VETERANS GATHER FROM ACROSS THE NATION (top to bottom, left to right): Chris Martyn creates a candle at the Kalamazoo Candle Co. during a caregiver outing; Sean Connolly explains his artwork; the 2019-2020 American Legion Auxiliary national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee; veterans take a break to chat in the hospitality suite; writer Nina Pervel discusses the inspiration behind her work; Randall Harrod with his artwork; and Jay Jamerson performs his rendition of *Simple Man*.

His art piece is appropriately titled *22 Hidden Faces*. At first glance, it looks like a bunch of marbles.

Like most of the veterans who submit artwork for the Festival, the inspiration comes from personal topics. Connolly is no exception. A few of the faces are his shipmates.

“In the dead center of the piece, one I always point out, is one of my old buddies,” he said. “Every time I look at it, that’s all I see. I don’t see the rest. I know where they’re at. Some of them I hid really well from myself because it was too painful to see. His image I wanted to be dead center.”

Over the years, Connolly has toiled with different categories for the Festival, but he mainly focuses on leather. He got bored of doing the standard leather Western floral design and wanted to make use of all his scrap leather. He had a dream about making paint, but using leather. Connolly started with punching holes 3/16-inch size in a bag until all the color was gone and saved it as a pallet color. The rest is history.

Connolly enjoys what he does, but the arts are also a healing process for him. When he first started working on using paint from leather, he was going through rough times.

“I’d go back to my studio [after a counseling session] and let those emotions just pour out of my hands,” he said. “I was creating pieces that were really dark. They were really violent, or they were stuff I couldn’t even submit to the Festival; they were too painful. Some of them I don’t even look at. I put them away. I can’t even hang them on the wall. But as time went on, as I was working through all these issues and the things I needed to do for myself, it became more poignant where you could see all my artwork up on the wall. You see this dark period, and all the sudden it went from using black colors and browns to a scene of all these flowers with mountains in the sky.”

From then on, his artwork became more colorful, more bright, and more brilliant.

For veterans like Connolly, this Festival is a life-changing event.

“I don’t think I would be creating stuff without [the Festival] or having the vet center to work through these things,” he said. “I would just be doing the standard wallets, the standard purses — what normal leather crafters do. I would be entering that stuff, instead of me. Now I’m me.”

Rebecca Heissler

Branch of service: U.S. Air Force

Festival participation: Performer

VA facility: Bay Pines, Fla.

Number of times to the national Festival: 13+

“[Military service] was one of the proudest things I’ve ever done,” Heissler said. “I miss it. I miss the camaraderie. I think that’s why this Festival is important. There’s no one who understands you as well as your fellow brothers and sisters.”

Heissler has been a regular at the Festival over the years, mainly as a performer, both individually and in groups. Because of her experience with the event, she’s able to help mentor other veterans.

This year, she made it to the national level with her group, Tones of Harmony. For those who have never been to the Festival, she said it's "life changing for sure."

"People from all over the states who have never met one another, they come together the first day, never sang together, and by the end of the week, you sound like you have been doing this forever together," Heissler said. "My music therapist says there's a little bit of magic."

That magic is felt throughout the week by all involved with the event. For veterans, the week is about the journey of those seven days, not the destination.

"The stage show is actually the end product, and we all work for that, but the whole journey and experience between Monday and Monday is what you live for," Heissler said.

The arts have helped her through the years on a number of levels, and she encourages others to find their passion.

"Being able to express yourself is one of the most important things for communicating," she said. "I find it bridges the gap between what's going on inside to the outside world. It helps when you don't even realize it ... I don't know where I would be without [the arts]."

In addition to time spent performing with her fellow veterans, Heissler interacts with members of the American Legion Auxiliary at meals and social events. She joined the organization after her first national Festival.

An ALA member approached her about membership, and she and her daughters joined. The Auxiliary further helped Heissler's family when she got really sick and was being evaluated for a heart transplant. The family was getting close to losing their house. A fellow ALA member told her about the Auxiliary Emergency Fund, and the family applied and received the grant.

"The ALA stepped up and helped us take care of our bills for two or three months just to bridge that gap until we could get back on our feet again," she said. "It wasn't just because of the Festival — we know they are there for the veterans. We've had to have their help."

Ivan Taylor

Branch of service: U.S. Air Force

Festival participation: Performer

VA facility: Aurora, Colo.

Number of times to the national Festival: 5

"What I found with our music, it brings us [veterans] together," Taylor said about the healing power of the arts. "It's kind of therapeutic. You are on the same level; you relate to them. They can tell you their problems, and you can tell

them the problems you have. It's a method of socialization by being with other veterans versus being isolated by yourself. That's why people love this week so much to be amongst other veterans."

Having attended multiple Festivals, Taylor has learned how to make the week a success through experience of knowing what to expect each day.

"It's like a marathon versus a sprint," he said. "The first year I went, I almost lost my voice before the regular performance because I was singing full out. Now they tell newcomers to take your time, pace yourselves."

Like many veterans, day one is often a favorite.

"Seeing old friends you haven't seen for quite a while [is one of my favorite parts]," he said. "You have the time to meet and talk with them."

This year, Taylor, along with veteran Gary Satchell, entered the national competition with his band, Vets in Tune, who played *Mustang Sally*. He was excited because he had always come to the Festival as part of the chorus, not

performing as an individual act with his band.

Taking part in yet another Festival, Taylor knows how beneficial the arts are.

"All veterans should take advantage of the arts," he said. "The more publicity we give to it, the more exposure we will get, and more veterans will participate in it."

John Koelsch

Branch of service: U.S. Army

Festival participation: Performer

VA facility: Salem, Va.

Number of times to the national Festival: 6

Koelsch started off entering the Veterans Creative Arts Festival local contest as a writer and has developed his abilities to include performer as well.

After submitting creative writing pieces, Koelsch turned to drama. He is working toward a medal at the local level in each division.

This year, he submitted a group piece to his local Festival, with each individual talking about the 'things we brought home' — the feelings, thoughts, and ideas surrounding deployment.

"It's terribly emotional," he said. "Generally, I'm not someone who gets emotional. It hit a chord."

The Festival and the challenges and triumphs it presents help bring the veterans closer together throughout the week, mimicking the bonding and camaraderie they experienced while in uniform.

"You are able to open up because you are safe here," he said. "This is where you don't have to worry. If you behave a certain way, everyone else will understand. They've done something similar."

BY THE NUMBERS

2019 NVCAF Local Competition

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities that participated in the 2019 National Veterans Creative Arts competition: **130**
- Total veteran participation: **3,552**
- First-time participants in the competition at the local level **1,605**
- Returning participants to the competition at the local level: **1,947**
- Male veterans competing in local competitions: **2,742**
- Female veterans competing in local competitions: **810**

Since 2017, more than 20% of participants in local creative arts competitions have been female veterans.

Some of the Gold Medal art entries at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival



Mosaic Kit
"Flutter"
Catherine D'Angelo



Crocheting/Knitting
"Heroes Shadowed"
Alexandra Brown



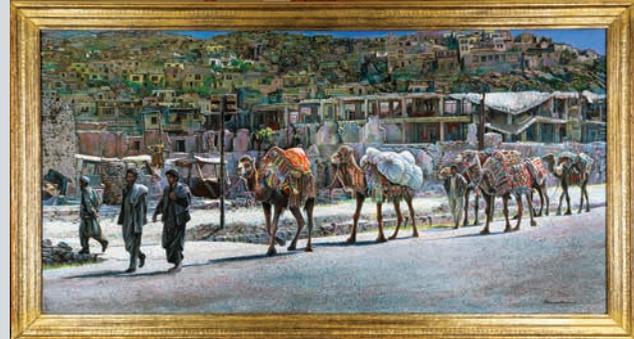
Jewelry
"Wild Leaf"
Tim Wehrle



Fabric Art Kit
"Underground Railroad Sampler"
James Nickel



Acrylic Painting
"PTSD"
Steven Scadden



Military Combat Experience
"The Color of Kabul"
Dennis Linn



Latch Hook Kit
"Rainbow Horse"
Christine Lesueur



Oil Painting
"Lady in Bed"
Jerry Zabel



String Art Kit
"Dream Catcher Hearts"
Manuel Ornelas



Figurine Painting Kit
"Michael the Archangel"
Colleen Johnson



Color Photography
"Profile Man After Earth"
Joe Vasquez



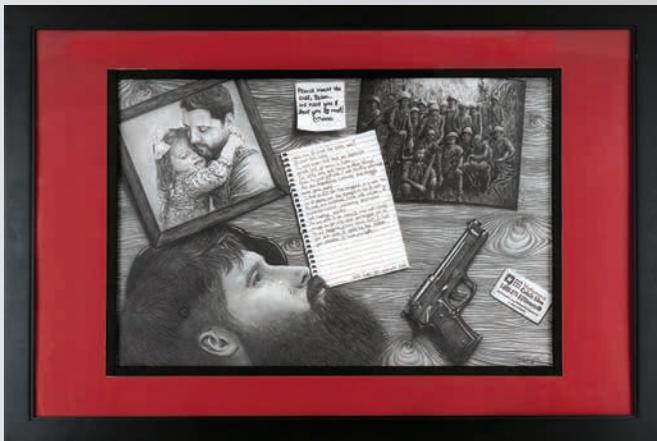
Scroll Saw/Fretwork
"Time to Rest"
Ray Hollermann



Model Building Kit
"Wagons of the Old West"
Jerry Moser



Black and White Photography
"Futures Past"
Randall Harrod



Monochromatic Drawing
"The Lucky One?"
Brian Small



Suncatcher or Sand Art Kit
"Sandy"
Patricia Sennett



Special Recognition Mental Health Challenges
"Steelhead"
Steve Kost



Pastels
"Sky Blue on Seven Mile Creek"
Richard Babcock



Leather Carving/Tooling
"Tree of Life"
Michael North



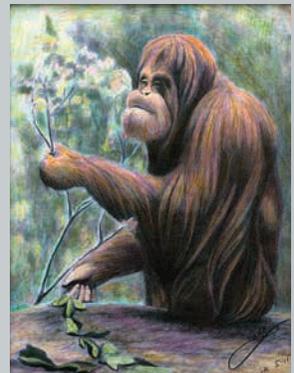
Pottery
"Sea Green Donut Teapot"
Katharine Hunt



Carving
"A Sacred Resting Place"
John Lopez



Paint by Number Kit
"Eagle Hunter"
Jozsef Stadler



Craft Coloring Kit
"Ape"
Deborah Mark



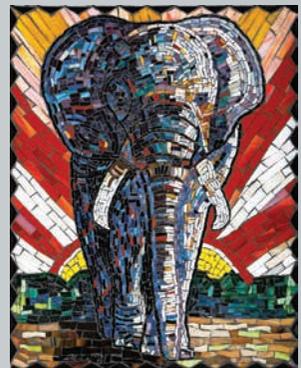
Needlework
"Behind the Mask"
Glema Gordon



Group Art Category — "Spread Your Wings"
The Warriors - Sandi Cimorelli, William Coe, Charles Economos, David Galaska, Ron Muthig, Bruce Rivers, Richard Smalls, Christopher Spanhake



Special Recognition Physical Disability
"Perception Set-B"
Barry Farley



Mosaic
"Elephant in the Sun"
Michael Dobbs

There are many veterans who attend the Festival who have post-traumatic stress disorder. Koelsch is one of them.

“This has been very helpful,” he said. “I can just be myself and not be sensitive about it ... there’s nothing better for veterans with PTSD than creativity.”

Creativity continues at the national Festival where there’s no competition — everyone already has a gold medal — but now they have a job to do.

“You’re really here representing every veteran there is,” Koelsch said. “We have a responsibility to honor that.”

He offers advice to first-time participants.

“It’s going to be chaos,” he said. “You need to go in and relax, and participate, and soak it up. By the end of the week, your life will change.”

Once he started attending, Koelsch worked to get others to compete at the local level, knowing how beneficial it is. There are at least 10 people who have come to the national Festival because of him.

“It just fulfills a space in me that’s good, that’s very positive,” he said. “I enjoy watching people come here and blossom.”

Rick Stang

Branch of service: *U.S. Marine Corps*

Festival participation: *Performer*

VA facility: *St. Paul, Minn.*

Number of times to the national Festival: *25*

Stang’s first Festival was in 1993, and he’s pretty much attended ever since.

He has always entered as a performing artist, first starting off submitting solo entries. Over the years, it has been more difficult to get a gold medal because the competition in that category has increased. He then began doing wheelchair dances with his wife and other friends, then branched out to duets.

Stang enjoys coming back each year and seeing familiar faces.

“It’s like seeing your relatives at a family reunion once a year,” he said. “That’s what is enjoyable to me.”

Participation in the Festival has led Stang to other performing opportunities outside of NVCAF.

“All because of the creative arts, I was able to do other things because I got invited,” he said. “It opened up some doors. Things I would have never had the chance to do.”

Like other veterans at the Festival, Stang believes in the power of the arts to heal and make a difference.

“The poetry and the artwork, where people who are really struggling maybe mentally and physically in their art or their words, you really get a sense of what they

have gone through, what they are going through,” he said. “It’s more of the therapeutic value ... I think when you go to the local VA and the local art shows, them explaining their art and their ordeal and their life and what they’ve gone through — it’s just amazing how they can do what they do.”

Having participated for 25 years, Stang offers his own advice to someone who wants to enter at the local level for the first time.

“Find a song you really enjoy if you are performing and that you think other people would enjoy,” he said. “You have that connection with a familiar song. You will sing it much better than something that’s just popular.”

Also, being a repeat performer, Stang has tips for those who want to return more than once.

“Anything that’s a solo is going to have heavier competition,” he said. “If you can get into things like Broadway or other categories that aren’t as popular, you can still end up getting a gold medal. They may not put it in the show, but they might invite you to be a chorus member, like I did this year.”

Festival from Start to Finish: It Takes a Village

Performers arrived Monday and were busy throughout the week with rehearsals — striving to improve, singing together on the beat, and practicing individual acts to prepare for the main stage show.

Artists and writers arrived Wednesday, quickly bonding over their shared military experiences. They participated in art and writing workshops, learning different skills to perfect their craft. The workshops led to lots of laughing, sharing of ideas, and making friends.

The week was emotional, with many participants saying the arts helped them get through tough times as a powerful healer, no matter what may be ailing them physically, emotionally, and mentally. During the Festival, artists received an opportunity to briefly talk about their works during the week — one getting so emotional that fellow veterans in the crowd stood up and clapped to show support. At the Writers Showcase, one writer was so choked up with emotion reading their work that someone else stepped in to finish the story.

As the saying goes, it takes a village. From veterans to staff and volunteers to caregivers to donors, the Festival truly is a labor of love for all involved in the event’s success.

Throughout the week, caregivers are supporting their veterans at rehearsals, art workshops, and more. In addition to supporting veterans, the American Legion Auxiliary shared that same compassion for caregivers at the Festival by treating them to special outings — making candles and touring a local museum.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Learn about the person who puts the national Festival together from start to finish. Check out the ALA blog at www.ALAforVeterans.wordpress.com to read about Amy Kimbler, the new (and very busy!) NVCAF director.

Bill Heissler attended with his wife, Rebecca (the U.S. Air Force veteran previously featured in this article).

“When she gets in practice, I have to watch her because she won’t eat right; she won’t drink right,” he said. “She will be sitting up there singing her heart out and slowly tilting to one side or the other because she’s crashing and doesn’t even realize it. I keep her where she needs to be.”

Having experience as a caregiver, Bill Heissler offers advice for others who may be in that same situation or will someday be a caregiver.

“Patience and understanding,” he said. “You are going to hear the same thing over and over again. Whatever is ailing them, you’re going to hear it. You have to take yourself out of the equation ... you learn to roll with the punches. And just be there for each other.”

Getting the opportunity to participate in caregiver-focused activities made Bill realize he was not alone, and that others face similar difficulties.

“It’s challenging, but when you watch them and they are having good days, it’s all worth it,” he said.

An event of this magnitude that supports veterans and their families wouldn’t be possible without the monetary support of its many donors. One of those donors is ALA member Bobbi Cox of Unit 291 in Newport Harbor, Calif. She has been a member of the Auxiliary for about 35 years and has been donating for nearly a decade.

Her interest in the Festival is twofold — it brings together two things she cares about: veterans and dance. Cox said she was inspired by the Festival right away.

“It was this merger of the performing arts and the value of the arts and education and expression and the human condition with veterans,” she said. “It’s a perfect match. It’s incredibly wonderful.”

It is meaningful for Cox to see what a difference her monetary contribution is making in the lives of our nation’s veterans.

“It makes you want to do more and better,” she said. “It’s very stimulating and satisfying. The arts are what make us human.”

As a gold medal sponsor of the event, Cox offers a tip to those who want to donate, but perhaps can’t give much.

“Any amount of money, you add it up, and it becomes significant,” she said.

To donate to the Veterans Creative Arts Festival, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org/donate and select “American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Natl/Local Veterans Creative Arts Festival(s).”

Veterans, ALA volunteers, and VA staff all benefit from the Festival, leaving the week with newfound friends, experiences, and an even greater appreciation of the value of the arts.

“You can’t walk away without a feeling of even more gratitude,” ALA member Paulette Caron said, citing the impact Gary Satchell and other veterans had on her. “It was absolutely just an experience of a lifetime.” ★

By Sara Fowler, Staff Writer



A LIFE-CHANGING WEEK (top to bottom, left to right): ALA member Bobbi Cox takes a photo of Brian Small’s artwork; ALA members Paulette Caron (left) and Barbara Washburn complete the next step in candlemaking; caregiver Janine Dougherty mixes the oil for her candle; the Department of Michigan hosted the always popular hospitality suite; Amy Clark sings her heart out during the stage show; John Koelsch stays in tune with the chorus during rehearsals.

IMPACT ALA!

HOW TO SERVE THE ALA'S MISSION WITH EVEN MORE STRENGTH

If you've completed *Mission Training: 101*, we have your next opportunity!

Do you want to be an agent of change in this new century as part of a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families? If so, *Mission Training: 201* is designed for you to interact with other members and the mission!

The goal of *Mission Training: 201* is to provide information and guides to engage and inspire volunteers at the grassroots level for members and nonmembers.

This one-day course is designed for volunteers with a passion to make a big difference in how we serve our mission, those with a passion to see our organization greatly improve,

and volunteers who are seeking to be part of a team to attract, recruit, and retain others.

This educational opportunity will leave you with the skills to engage, solve roadblocks, develop long-range plans, and construct a specific list of volunteer opportunities in your communities.

In the first of several modules designed to keep volunteers inspired and invigorated, the training sessions will focus on a few key areas, including exploring creative recruitment; providing excellent induction and training; making volunteers feel welcome; and establishing excellent communication at all levels of the organization.

See the box below for spring

Mission Training: 201 events happening near you. Questions? Contact ALA National Headquarters' Events Team at meetings@ALAforVeterans.org or (317) 569-4500.



Mission Training 201: Development



Are you up for the next level of ALA training? This course goes beyond *Mission Training: 101* to further help make a difference in our organization by equipping volunteers with the necessary tools and skills that are needed to successfully engage with veterans, military, and their families.

If you're ready to challenge yourself and better serve the mission, sign up today for one of the upcoming 201 training sessions:

- ★ Hartford, Conn. – March 14, 2020
- ★ Albuquerque, N.M. – March 21, 2020
- ★ Nashville, Tenn. – March 28, 2020

Register now at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Meetings. All dates are Saturdays. See you in March!

www.ALAforVeterans.org

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CHILDREN & YOUTH: ALA AWARDS CELEBRATE CENTURY OF SERVICE

Michigan high school student Jamie Harper rescued an older couple whose truck caught fire after colliding with a school bus. Once Jamie saw the fire and realized the occupants were unable to open the doors from inside, he leapt into action.

Six-year-old Jermaine Bell of South Carolina saved his money to take his family on a trip to Disney World for his 7th birthday. Instead, he bought hundreds of hot dogs and served them to Hurricane Dorian evacuees passing through their town.

What do Jamie and Jermaine have in common, other than being good citizens? Both were recently presented with an American Legion Auxiliary award — the Youth Hero Award for Jamie, and the Good Deed Award for Jermaine.

What is the difference?

■ Youth Hero Award — Youth should demonstrate a physical act of valor.

■ Good Deed Award — Youth should demonstrate a leadership role in community service, and a specific deed should be present.

As the American Legion Auxiliary celebrates a century of service, what better way to celebrate our youth than awarding acts of heroism and good citizenship?

In celebration of our 100th anniversary, a goal to present 100 of each award this administrative year has been set.

To help attain this goal, ALA members should keep an eye open for possible recipients — on television, in the newspaper, and of course, on social media. Once deserving youths are identified,

follow up and submit them to their ALA department to, in turn, be certified and sent along to National Headquarters.

Once the award is back in your unit's hands, make sure to include local media during the award presentation. At a minimum, take lots of photos and share on social media using the hashtags #ALAYouthHero and #ALAGoodDeed.

Additional Children & Youth information, including the Youth Hero and Good Deed Award nomination forms and press release template, can be found at www.ALAFORVeterans.org.



Lisa Williamson is a 30-year member of C. Russell Huber Unit 57 in Fairbanks, Alaska.

POPPY: NATIONAL POPPY DAY® IS MAY 22 — ARE YOU PREPARED?



Since its adoption in 1920 as the memorial flower of The American Legion Family, the red poppy has been recognized worldwide as a tribute to servicemembers who have fought and died since World War I.

The American Legion Family was also instrumental in petitioning Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day®, which will be May 22 this year. Last year, the American Legion Auxiliary raised \$5.5 million

from donations. One hundred percent of those donations were used exclusively to support veterans, military, and their families.

To prepare for the big poppy activities in May, units should begin identifying their volunteers and distribution locations.

To expand your volunteer base and increase donations, consider asking Legionnaires and Sons of The American

Legion to assist at designated, permitted sites such as stores, post offices, libraries, and even post homes.

Prepare a poppy proclamation (template located at www.ALAFORVeterans.org), and present to your local or state government officials.

Has your Auxiliary unit considered using smartphones and/or card readers as a fundraising tool

not only for poppy donations but for other unit events? Collecting funds with a mobile device is a fast and seamless way to engage all generations. You might want to start exploring mobile fundraising tools by Googling blogs on the topic.

The national ALA website, www.ALAFORVeterans.org, has various tools already prepared to promote the Poppy Program and help units increase their donations.

Everything you need to develop a successful Poppy Program is there at your fingertips — easy-to-use media templates, bookmarks, poppy collection cans, labels and much, much more. Check it out!

For more ideas, join the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program Facebook group where members are sharing their stories daily.



Beth McGinn is an 18-year member of Oak Orchard-Riverdale Unit 28 in Millsboro, Del.

LEGISLATIVE: FOLLOW THE LEGION'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

It is as true today as it was when the American Legion Auxiliary was formed. The ALA's Legislative program follows the direction of The American Legion's legislative priorities. In 1943, The American Legion presented an Omnibus Bill, which soon became known to history as the GI Bill of Rights. It was signed into law on June 22, 1944, by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Past National Commander of The American Legion, Harry W. Colmery, was credited with drawing up the first draft of the GI Bill. You can be certain that the ALA had a part in advocating for this most important document to become law.

In addition, we recently had the signing of the Forever GI Bill, also called the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistant Act of 2017. Do you know someone

who benefited from this legislation? Share your stories and encourage members to become legislative advocates.

We make a difference when we advocate with The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion to enhance the lives of those who protect our freedom.

Connect with our ALA Legislative Facebook group at www.Facebook.com/groups/ALALegislative to find current information on the Legion's legislative agenda. We are also posting a video on the second Monday of each month. Make sure you answer the questions when you request to join the group.

As always, a lot of information can be found on the ALA website at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Programs/Legislative. You can find The American Legion's legislative

agenda at www.legion.org/legislative.

It is important to know if your senator or representative is a co-sponsor of a bill prior to contacting them for their support. You can find this information by going to congress.gov.

Thank you to those who have been faithfully connecting with elected officials to advance the priorities of the Legion's legislative agenda.

If you don't have computer access, contact your ALA department legislative chair for information. Write a letter, as your voice is important.



Norma Tramm is a member of Unit 455 in Cold Spring, Minn. She has been a member since she was 4.

NATIONAL SECURITY: SERVING OUR MILITARY, THEIR FAMILIES

The first Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense was held in Washington, D.C., in February 1925 under the leadership of ALA National President Mrs. O.D. Oliphant.

Wartime rationing and travel restrictions continued to affect every American, forcing the cancellation of the annual conference in 1942.

In 1951, the American Legion Auxiliary withdrew from the 26th annual Women's Conference on National Defense due to policies that ran counter to The American Legion concerns. The Women's Forum on National Security evolved from this action.

First Lady Mamie Eisenhower, and Pat Nixon, wife of the vice president, hosted the first Women's Forum on National Security at the White House in 1953, chaired by then-National President Mrs. Rae Ashton. Seven hundred representatives from 10 of the

largest patriotic organizations attended this first meeting.

The American Legion Auxiliary Awareness Assembly, held in Washington, D.C. replaced the Women's Forum on National Security in 1981. Our National Security program was included in each of the eight regional conferences.

As you can see, the ALA's National Security program was one of our organization's founding programs and continues strong even today.

There are three objectives in the National Security program. Objective one is to support the needs of military servicemembers and their families. In 2015, the American Legion Auxiliary published the *ALA Military Readiness Action Guide* online as a resource to assist in locating services for active-duty, reservists, and National Guard members. Check out these resources at

www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Objective two is to assist military spouses in obtaining and maintaining employment. You can do this by promoting military spouse job fairs in your community and working with The American Legion or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Objective three is to support the National Security program of The American Legion. Getting involved in the Citizens Corps Council or completing a Community Emergency Response Training Course (CERT), are just two suggested ideas. For more information, visit www.legion.org.

May is National Security Month, so plan something special for our troops and honor them.



Melanie Taylor is a 28-year PUFLL Auxiliary member. She belongs to William Russell Ledford Unit 293 in California.

AMERICANISM: WAYS TO PROMOTE ALA STAR-SPANGLED KIDS

Star-Spangled Kids began as an American Legion Auxiliary Children & Youth program initiative to promote the history and meaning of the Constitution. This year, it has been moved and will be reported under our Americanism program with the same emphasis on the Constitution. However, it has expanded the initiative to include patriotism and Americanism. The Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, flag etiquette, and the National Anthem are just a few topics covered under this initiative.

Encourage veterans to speak in our children's classrooms about what our nation's documents mean to them. Our children need to know that our nation's flag represents freedom to our veterans and military.

By teaching our children about the Constitution, it may be an early introduction to The American Legion Oratorical Contest, which is focused on the United States Constitution. It could spark the next round of children to compete in this amazing contest.

In addition to bringing in veterans or military to speak in classrooms, here are more ways you can promote Star-Spangled Kids:

- Create a Unit Citizenship Award for children who have demonstrated and upheld the ideals of the Constitution.
- Hold a contest about the most fascinating facts about the Constitution. Present certificates and/or treats to participants.
- Distribute patriotic coloring book pages for children in primary grades.
- Distribute pocket copies of the Constitution to high school students to encourage them to participate in The American Legion Oratorical Contest.
- Have students work as a team to represent the original signers of the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. Have them dress the part and act out signing the document.
- Contact children in other youth groups such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, student councils, key clubs, boys/girls clubs, etc., and have a veteran speak to them.

Since this is the 100th anniversary celebration of the American Legion Auxiliary, let's do something fun to celebrate our milestone with Star-Spangled Kids. For example:

- Record 100 Star-Spangled Kids singing the National Anthem or reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Serve 100 red, white, and blue cupcakes to younger grades for reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and telling what it means to them.
- Have Star-Spangled Kids distribute 100 small flags at a patriotic community event.
- Distribute 100 flags to the crowd prior to the Pledge of Allegiance or National Anthem at a sports event.

Don't forget to document what you do, and report it in your Americanism narrative. For further information and how-to suggestions, refer to the national website under Americanism at www.ALAforVeterans.org.



Denise Conrad is a 26-year PUFL member of Freedom Unit 183, Pemberville, Ohio.

AUXILIARY EMERGENCY FUND: 50 YEARS HELPING OUR MEMBERS

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund provides temporary financial assistance to eligible members during times of financial crisis or weather-related emergencies and natural disasters.

2019 marked the fifth consecutive year in which more than \$10 billion worth of weather disasters impacted the United States. More than 200 tornadoes devastated the Midwest, causing massive amounts of damage. Hurricane Dorian caused \$7.5 billion in damage. Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Delaware suffered the most damage. And some states were affected by wildfires: Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii,

Oregon, Idaho, California, Nevada, Texas, and New Mexico.

We have members who experience financial crises, which can be caused by various reasons—loss of a job due to health issues, sudden severe medical conditions, or a death in the family causing the loss of income are just a few. Since Sept. 1, 2019, we have received \$14,292 in donations for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. We have granted \$35,603 to our members, which is more than twice the amount of our contributions currently.

Not only are we celebrating the 100th anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary, but it is the 50th

year for the AEF program. We can continue making an impact on our American Legion Auxiliary members. Ask your unit members to seek out members who may need help. They may not realize that the AEF is available to them.

At the same time, make sure you are encouraging fundraising events and opportunities to collect donations for the AEF fund.

The AEF benefit alone is a great reason to belong to our American Legion Auxiliary.



Vickie Thrower-Mills is a 37-year member of Buford D. Byrom Unit 176 in Huntsville, Ala.

IMPACT ALA!

WHAT'S NEW AT NHQ

ALA FOUNDATION BOARD AWARDS GRANTS TO DEPARTMENTS, UNITS

The ALA Foundation Board of Directors' in-person fall meeting focused on storytelling, media training, and grant requests.

Board members (pictured below) learned how to tell a compelling and concise story that illustrates the power of the ALA Foundation. They worked on ways to set and reach goals for fundraising and getting the word out.

In addition, the board also received media training from ALA National Headquarters staff. The presentation focused on developing a relationship with media, newspaper/TV/radio basics, how to prepare for interviews, and more.

During the board meeting, seven grants were awarded, totaling \$12,369:

Veteran Projects Fund grants

■ \$4,480: Department of Nebraska to buy and install a Lucynt System, which projects games onto the floor or table. It is used to keep dementia and Alzheimer's patients engaged and moving at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home.

■ \$943: Kentucky Unit 74 to replace, install, and insure a new washer and dryer in the communal laundry room at Pennyroyal

Veterans Center, a homeless shelter that houses up to 50 veterans at a time.

Veterans Creative Arts Festival grants

■ \$2,190: Kansas District 5 to assist with supplies including easels, awards, and art supplies for their 2nd Annual Robert J. Dole Veteran Art Show.

■ \$2,500: Department of Vermont to assist with their veteran art show at the White River Junction VA Medical Center, for advertising, paper products, and art supplies.

Mission in Action grants

■ \$1,200: Department of North Dakota for branded backdrops, a vehicle wrap, tabletop displays, branded tablecloths, and a pop-up tent to use at their ALA Girls State program.

■ \$540: Department of South Carolina to purchase table banners, storage tubs, and a branded sign to use at their department convention and conferences.

■ \$516: Department of New York to purchase a

backdrop and table cover for use at all department functions.

Are you interested in sharing your leadership skills, prior board experience, grassroots fundraising ideas, and more? The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors is looking for individuals who are excited to join a board committed to build, promote, and sustain the ALA Foundation.

"We encourage anyone to apply for a position on the board who is passionate about serving veterans and military and raising money for the American Legion Auxiliary," said Doris Hammeke, Foundation board president. "We would love to see the board grow more diverse and better reflect the diversity of our membership."

For more information and the application, visit www.ALAFoundation.org. The deadline to apply is April 1.



IN-PERSON MEETING: Learn more about the ALA Foundation Board of Directors by visiting ALAFoundation.org.

PILOT PROGRAM FOR DEPARTMENT SECRETARIES SUCCESSFUL

To help new department secretaries gain insight into American Legion Auxiliary systems, practices, policies, and mission-relevant information at the most basic level, ALA National Headquarters hosted a department secretary orientation training pilot program in late 2019.

This pilot training was designed for department secretaries who have been in their position for less than one year. Immediately following

Department Organizational Effectiveness Training, four department secretaries participated in this extended training.

Topics included a brief overview of National Headquarters; branding and emblem usage; mission outreach programs; ALA national events and training; national president and division vice president visits; eligibility and joining the organization; unit procedures; compliance; and

membership processing.

In the last five years, department secretary turnover has remained constant with close to one-third being replaced yearly. This pilot program is working to reverse that statistic and provide more training and tools to succeed.

The training will be offered on a semi-regular basis and open to new department secretaries with at least six months of on-the-job experience.

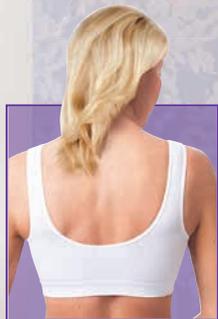
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IMPACT ALA! REFLECTIONS

Provided by *Mary Anne Casadei, National Chaplain 2019-2020* | www.Facebook.com/groups/alachaplains

FEBRUARY

“Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his Commandments... They are gracious, merciful, and righteous... They are not afraid of evil tidings, their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord. Their hearts are steady: they will not be afraid: in the end, they will look in triumph on their foes.”

PSALM 112: 1, 4, 7-8

Can you imagine the courage of the four men of God, who, on Feb. 2, 1943, on the deck of the USAT Dorchester gave up their only means of survival? They knew they were going to die, but it did not stop them from saving others. They were last seen on the deck of the Dorchester, arms linked, their heads bowed in prayer. Would you have the courage to give up your life jacket to save another? God gives us courage when we least expect it. It was because of their faith that these four chaplains were able to make the supreme sacrifice with open hearts and with God leading their way. They were not afraid; their hearts were firm and secure in the Lord.

The month of February is set aside to honor these courageous men of God. What better way to honor them than by having a Four Chaplains service at your meeting? You would be surprised at the number of new American Legion Auxiliary members who have no idea what the Chapel of Four Chaplains is. Pay tribute to them with a wreath-laying ceremony, or host a luncheon where you recognize these brave individuals and read their story.

“Dear God, give me the courage and strength to do the right thing. Grant that I remain faithful to You. I ask this in your name. Amen.”

MARCH

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

ISAIAH 41:10

How often do you worry about things that haven't happened yet? We spend a great deal of time and emotion on things that never happen. “What if I don't like my new boss?” “What if I mess up on my report?” “What if my test results come back positive?”

Worries have something in common: They're focused on the future. They make you wait to see what happens. Many times, after much worrying, we find that all that worry was in vain. Then we are free to move on to the next worrisome problem.

Worry gives us the feeling of being in control. It is only an illusion. We only control our choices — nothing else. Take a deep breath. There is great freedom in knowing God is in control. He has always been in control, and He will always be in control. What a relief!

Our God wants us to be without burden. He wants us to be free from worry. With Him in control, we can give up fear, give up worry. When you find yourself worrying, turn your heart toward God and thank Him for having everything under control.

Do not waste more time on worrying. When times get difficult, remember that our God is in control.

“Dear God, I will turn my worries over to You. You lift my burdens; You ease my pain. You free me from all anxiety. You are my salvation. Thank You for always watching over me. You are always in control. Amen.”

APRIL

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a child shall in no wise enter therein.”

MARK 10:14

God wants us to humble ourselves as a child, in order to obtain Heaven. Children are God's greatest gift. Children are His promise for a future. He places them in high esteem. “Who so shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

MATTHEW 18

We should also hold our children in high esteem. Honor them; keep them safe. Let them know how very important they are to us. Life is hard enough for our children. We need to be their safe place to rest. They need to know that we will protect them, love them, give them comfort, and never judge them. Bullying is at epidemic proportions now. Would you know what to look for? What would you do if your child was bullied? It is our job to investigate, to find out what to do. God is bidding us to protect our children and in doing so, we honor Him.

“Father God, we ask that You protect our children. Bless them and keep them close to You. I ask that You give me a pure heart so that I may joyfully serve You. I thank You for Your great love and protection. Amen.”



Mary Anne Casadei is a PUFLL member of Henry P. Smith Unit 24 in Rome, N.Y.



(Photo: George Etheredge/The American Legion)

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

ALA and ALA Foundation Web Activity

www.ALAforVeterans.org

76,059 users with 232,586 page views

REFERRAL TRAFFIC

- Direct: 50% (users typed in address)
- Organic: 39% (found us through searches like “American Legion Auxiliary” or “American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program”)
- Referral: 8% (came to us through other sites like a department site or Legion.org)
- Social media: 2%

TOP PAGES VIEWED AFTER HOMEPAGE

- Member Login
- ALA Girls State
- Poppy
- Register
- Members

ALAFoundation.org

859 users with 2,186 page views

REFERRAL TRAFFIC

- 56% Direct
- 21% Social media
- 20% Organic

TOP PAGES VIEWED AFTER HOMEPAGE

- Grants
- Donate
- Giving Tuesday
- About the Foundation
- Contact

Data on this page represents a 30-day snapshot.

MAKING HISTORY! Male Spouses of Veterans and Servicemembers Join the American Legion Auxiliary



NEW MALE ALA MEMBERS (left to right): Brandon Sinner with his spouse, Bobbie, a U.S. Army veteran; Chanin Nuntavong with his spouse, Jennifer, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran; Charles Stephenson with his spouse, Paula, a U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserve veteran.

Honoring their spouse's military service. Showing care and appreciation for veterans, military, and their families. Being part of something positive that's bigger than oneself. Supporting The American Legion Family.

Those are among the many reasons voiced by numerous male spouses of U.S. military veterans and servicemembers who have joined the American Legion Auxiliary after ALA membership eligibility was extended to them nearly six months ago. Those are the same reasons given by many women who have become ALA members throughout the last 100 years.

Such motivations underscore what the American Legion Auxiliary is: a community of volunteers serving veterans, military, and their families. Offering the opportunity to join the ALA to male spouses of veterans and servicemembers makes sense, considering the population we aim to serve. It helps us become even more inclusive.

For a long time, America's military was predominantly male. But the number of women serving in the military has been on the rise

for several decades. Currently, 1.9 million women veterans are living in the United States, and 9% of the U.S. military is female. By 2045, it's estimated that 18% of the military will be comprised of women. Female spouses of women veterans have already been able to join the ALA, as long as other membership criteria are met.

Auxiliary membership eligibility has been extended to include male spouses of U.S. veterans and servicemembers who served in either of the following periods: April 6, 1917 to Nov. 11, 1918; and any time after Dec. 7, 1941. Other eligibility requirements can be found at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

As of presstime, more than 400 male spouses of veterans or servicemembers have joined the ALA.

This change in ALA eligibility regarding male spouses became official when ALA delegates at the Auxiliary's 99th annual National Convention in August 2019 voted to update the ALA's Constitution & Bylaws so that it states the following: "Eligibility for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary is determined by The American Legion."

The Legion's delegates to its 2019 National Convention, also in August, voted to change the wording in the ALA's membership criteria — replacing "wife" with "spouse" — in the Legion's Constitution & Bylaws.

Read on to meet a few of our newest ALA members who are male spouses of veterans.

BRANDON SINNER



**South Carolina
ALA Member of
Unit 15 in Sumter,
S.C.
U.S. Army and U.S.
Army National
Guard veteran**

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Army veteran Bobbie Sinner, who serves in the Army National Guard in South Carolina. She is a Legionnaire of Post 7 in Lexington, S.C., and an ALA member of Unit 15 in Sumter.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIP:** Also a Legionnaire of Post 7 in Lexington.

Brandon Sinner walked into a room full of women who cheered and waved signs with welcome

messages directed at him during the ALA Department of South Carolina's fall conference. A camera crew from a regional television news station was filming. The news? Sinner had recently become the first male spouse American Legion Auxiliary member in South Carolina.

While Sinner doesn't like being the center of attention, he said he appreciated the warm welcome.

"I know those ladies out there love the ALA. I know this change is a big deal for them. I wanted to be there to support [them], support my wife, support the Auxiliary, and the entire Legion Family," he added. "I don't have any issues about being in a room full of women or a room full of men. Everybody's equal in my eyes, and each person has something to bring to the table."

Long before ALA membership criteria were established for male spouses of veterans, Sinner had already taken on a support role in his family as a stay-at-home dad and devoted husband. He and his wife, Bobbie, have two daughters: ALA Junior members Elsie, 10, and Esper, 4. Sinner feels his perspective as a veteran and a father within a military family could be valuable to the ALA, whose mission is to honor and support veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

Sinner shared a short story about one of his fatherhood experiences during his wife's military deployment:

"When our oldest daughter was a year old, Bobbie was deployed to Afghanistan for nine months. I was an infantry guy; I wasn't trained for anything like taking care of our 1-year-old baby. Twelve months in Iraq was easier than nine months at home with a 1-year-old! I'm like, 'Is she eating enough? Is she getting enough sleep? Am I doing this right?'"

"We were able to Skype with Bobbie. She recorded videos of herself reading children's stories and sent them home for Elsie. One of the coolest things was, when Bobbie got home, Elsie knew exactly who

her mother was and went right to her. There was no delay or nudge, or anything like that. Once that happened, I knew I did everything right.

"I've just done it all. I really think [having been in] the military helped me out with that. The traditional gender roles stuff goes out the window when you're a family unit. You're a team. One covers down for the other one. That's basically what happens."

Sinner said he sees the Legion Family as a team also, and he's happy to take on another support role through his ALA membership.

CHARLES "CHUCK" STEPHENSON



Utah

**ALA Member of Unit 27 in Farmington, Utah
U.S. Army Reserve veteran**

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserve veteran Paula Stephenson, a Paid Up For Life Legionnaire and ALA unit member of Post and Unit 27 in Farmington.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIP:** Also a PUFL Legionnaire of Post 27 in Farmington and member of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 27 in Farmington.

U.S. Army veteran Charles "Chuck" Stephenson of Utah was already a Legionnaire and member of the Sons of The American Legion when he became a male spouse American Legion Auxiliary member in September. While belonging to each of the three main organizations within The American Legion Family at the same time is unusual, Stephenson said he didn't join the Auxiliary for bragging rights.

"It's the same reason I joined the Sons of The American Legion when someone said to me, 'It's a way to honor your father's service.' And I thought joining the Auxiliary is just an excellent way to honor my spouse's service. I know she's very proud of her service, and I'm always

trying to support her the best way I can. For me, it was a no-brainer," Stephenson said. He joined the Sons under the service of his father, World War II Army veteran Archie Bert Stephenson.

"There aren't very many people we know who fall into this category where they're eligible to become members of the Auxiliary, the Legion, and the Sons. I think it's an amazing opportunity to pay tribute to the service of those I love, and a great way to support other veterans, military, and their families," he added.

Offering Auxiliary membership to male spouses of veterans makes an important statement to the world, Stephenson said.

"It shows that The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary are willing to change with the times. Let's let everybody who's eligible have the ability be a part of our great organizations. It's a step in the right direction," he explained. "You know, sometimes there are assumptions made about who is the veteran in military families. I've seen that done. You just kind of have to flip that switch in your mind and see that the female spouse can be the veteran, or both spouses can be veterans."

CHANIN NUNTAVONG



Greater Washington, D.C. Area

**ALA Member of Unit 364 in Woodbridge, Va.
U.S. Marine Corps veteran**

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Marine Corps veteran Jennifer Nuntavong. She is a Legionnaire of Post 364 in Woodbridge.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIP:** Legionnaire of Post 43 in Hollywood, Calif.

As soon as Chanin Nuntavong heard that ALA membership eligibility was expanded to male spouses, he decided to become an American Legion Auxiliary member. He didn't hesitate following through with his decision.

“It’s my honor to do so. I’m very proud of my wife’s service. I am proud of all spouses who have been there for their loved ones as they served our country,” he said. “I spent 22 years as a Marine, and throughout my career, a lot of my female colleagues had male spouses who had never served. And they are the ones who held down the home front while their spouses were deployed.

That’s an important part of the family and the balance of everything. I think that should be rewarded and honored, and I think that’s what the Auxiliary does.”

Expanding membership opportunities to eligible male spouses of veterans and servicemembers adds another dimension to the already inclusive and diverse American Legion

Auxiliary and The American Legion Family.

“The inclusiveness — just getting everyone involved — is the biggest thing. The Legion Family has always been welcoming to me and my family. It’s home for us. As long as we keep doing what we’re doing, it’ll be home to other veterans, servicemembers, and their families,” Nuntavong said.

WHAT HE SAID

A Chat with More Male Spouse ALA Members

Why did you join the American Legion Auxiliary?

RICHARD HAZELMYER



**Washington State
ALA PUFL member
of Unit 243 in North
Spokane, Wash.
Veteran: U.S. Army,
and U.S. Air Force**

“The [ALA] ladies do a fantastic job and I’m happy to help them. It’s an honor to be part of the American Legion Auxiliary, and it’s a great way to pay tribute to my wife for her military service.”

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Army veteran Linda Hazelmeyer, a PUFL Legionnaire of Post 9 in Spokane, Wash., and Auxiliary PUFL member of Unit 243 in North Spokane.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:** Also a PUFL Legionnaire of Post 243 in North Spokane.

JAMES CHARLES “CHUCK” TIBBS



**Illinois
ALA PUFL Member
of Unit 672 in
Middletown, Ill.
Veteran: U.S.
Navy**

“My PUFL American Legion Auxiliary membership was a Christmas gift from my mom, Elsie, who is also a PUFL Auxiliary member — and so is my wife, Valerie. My Auxiliary membership was a really

good gift because I got to honor my wife’s service and become more involved in the Legion Family.”

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Navy veteran Valerie Tibbs, an ALA PUFL member of Unit 672, and Legionnaire of Post 672, in Middletown.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:** Also a Legionnaire of Post 672 in Middletown.

BRANDAN ROTEN



**Kentucky
ALA Member
of Unit 87 in
Hodgenville, Ky.**

“I want to be part of something bigger than myself — something that helps veterans and military families, and something that honors my wife’s service.”

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Army veteran Ashley Roten, a Legionnaire and ALA member of Post and Unit 87 in Hodgenville.

How can this change to ALA membership eligibility help strengthen the entire American Legion Family?

MIKE MONSERUD



**Iowa
ALA member of Unit
37 in Ames, Iowa
Veteran: U.S. Navy**

“We need to keep membership strong in all parts of our

Legion Family. Without one part of the Legion Family, we lose a lot of our power when we are advocating for our veterans, our military, and our military families.”

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Navy veteran Jennifer Monserud, a Legionnaire and ALA member of Post and Unit 37 in Ames.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:** Legionnaire of Post 37, member of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 37, and Legion Rider member at Post 37 in Ames.

PHILLIP BRUGGER



**Idaho
ALA PUFL Member
of Unit 7 in Twin
Falls, Idaho
Veteran: U.S. Air
Force and U.S. Air
Force Reserve**

“It’s an encouragement to get more people interested in The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion, and their activities.”

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of Linda Brugger, veteran of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force Reserve. She is a PUFL Auxiliary member and Legionnaire of Unit and Post 7 in Twin Falls.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:** Also a PUFL Legionnaire of Post 7 in Twin Falls.



100 Monthly Donors for 100 Years of Service

For a century, veterans, military, and their families have relied on the American Legion Auxiliary to provide financial, mental, and physical support in times of need. Our goal is simple — be there for them for another 100 years.

Please consider starting a monthly gift to the Auxiliary or ALA Foundation. For as little as \$10 a month, this consistent income will provide support for our nation's heroes. Help us reach 100 monthly donors to celebrate our 100 years of service.



Learn more and enroll at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Monthly-Gifts

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GEORGE ROBINSON



Michigan
ALA member of
Unit 459 in Grand
Rapids, Mich.
Veteran: U.S.
Navy

“We’re trying to promote the Legion Family any way we can. Being dual members puts [my wife and me] in more contact with the Auxiliary. Our post doesn’t have an Auxiliary unit.”

- **ALA ELIGIBILITY:** Spouse of U.S. Navy veteran Theresa Robinson, an ALA member of Unit 459 in Grand Rapids, Mich., and Legionnaire of Post 311 in East Grand Rapids.

- **HIS OTHER LEGION FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:** Also a Legionnaire at Post 311 in East Grand Rapids.

The veterans whose military service made these male spouses eligible to join the ALA will be featured in a short series on the ALA blog at www.ALAforVeterans.wordpress.com. Check it out!

HOW YOU CAN WELCOME MALE SPOUSE ALA MEMBERS AT ALL AUXILIARY LEVELS

It doesn’t take extreme efforts to welcome male spouses to Auxiliary meetings, events, activities, and programs. Treat these men the same as you would other ALA members. Try to be as inclusive as possible to everyone. Following are a few additional suggestions:

- Conduct “getting-to-know-you” icebreakers at meetings and events for everybody, especially new members. Avoid singling out men in the group. Include the male spouse Auxiliary members in discussions and planning, and in activities and events. Be open to what they have to say or contribute. They may offer different perspectives, talents, ideas, and resources.

- You can ditch the phrases “world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization” and “ladies’ Auxiliary” in reference to the American Legion Auxiliary.

- When speaking or writing, consider using non-gender-specific words.

- Consider changing any gender-specific references on the websites and social media accounts representing your ALA unit, district, department, etc.

- The same thing goes for ALA-related paperwork, including your governing documents, promotional materials, communication vehicles (such as newsletters), and forms. Feel free to continue using your existing membership applications if you want — just write in a box for “male spouses/widowers” in the “applicant’s relationship to veteran” area, and add another box for “other conflicts/service periods” in the “veteran served” section for those who served during a time not currently listed.

Please contact your department for additional assistance on, or questions about, adapting existing membership applications to reflect these two recent changes to eligibility criteria. Updated versions of our Auxiliary membership application can be printed from the ALA national website at www.ALAforVeterans.org. ★

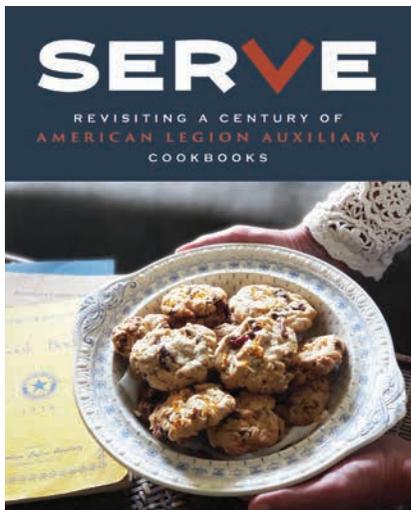
By Landa Bagley, Staff Writer

Celebrating a Century of Service: The many ways American Legion Auxiliary units are commemorating our centennial

Though our birthday officially was in November, the celebration of our centennial continues throughout this administrative year. ALA units are finding a variety of ways to celebrate the Auxiliary's major milestone: a century of service to veterans, military, and their families; and to youth and local communities. Read on to learn about some of the mission-based ways Auxiliary members are celebrating our centennial year.

AUXILIARY COOKBOOK OFFERS RECIPES, HISTORY, AND COMMON GROUND

Cookbooks can be great meal starters. American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1879 at Colorado State University says their commemorative cookbook can also be a



conversation starter — especially for ALA members trying to connect with veterans, military, and their families from various backgrounds and generations.

“Food serves where words fail us. This is a timeless, universal way for people to connect to one another,” said Unit 1879

Secretary Ann Diaz. “Sprinkled between our recipes are food stories from veterans to inspire communication and bridge generations.”

The recipes in Unit 1879's *Serve: Revisiting a Century of American Legion Auxiliary Cookbooks* are from

previously published ALA unit and department recipe books. For decades, community-level ALA members have put together and sold cookbooks as fundraisers, with proceeds used for programs and activities that support or honor the ALA's mission.

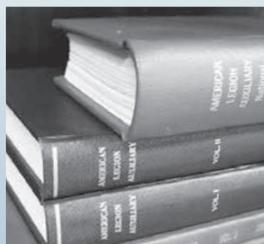
Serve contains at least one recipe from all 50 states plus Puerto Rico, representing numerous eras. The oldest recipe dates back to 1919, and the most recent one is from 2018. Most recipes were drawn from the 86 vintage ALA cookbooks donated or loaned to Unit 1879 for the project. There was at least one cookbook from nearly every department. Co-managed by Unit 1879 President Karen Boehler and Diaz, the project took two years to complete.

“*Serve* honors those who have sacrificed as part of America's military over the past 100 years, and recognizes those ALA members who spent hours creating cookbooks in which they shared their well-loved recipes,” Boehler said. “ALA members across America have collaborated with us to locate cookbooks, test recipes, and share their excitement about this labor of love.”

Funds raised from *Serve* will support existing mental wellness programs, particularly creative arts-based programs, for veterans, Diaz said.

For more information about *Serve*, including the cookbook's cost and how to order it, visit www.alaservecookbook.com or email the unit at ala1879csu@gmail.com.

100: ALA History Facts Did you know?



of Wisconsin. At various times throughout the ALA's 100-year history, the Community Service Committee carried out numerous

- The national Community Service Committee was established in 1926, during the term of Past National President Adalin Macauley

programs — including one aimed at establishing libraries, or improving existing ones, to make books more accessible to the public.

- The American Legion Auxiliary's Children & Youth Program started out as “Child Welfare” in the 1923-1924 ALA administrative



Bonus ALA history note:

Unit 1879 has a unique place in the history of the American Legion Auxiliary. To date, it is the first and only ALA unit that is college campus affiliated. Unit 1879 at Colorado State University is affiliated through the school's Student Veterans of America chapter.

KANSAS UNIT SHARES POPPY HISTORY WITH CHILDREN

Nestled in the small rural community of Natoma, Kan., is yet another testament to the American Legion Auxiliary's long legacy of honoring and supporting veterans, military, and their families; mentoring youth; and promoting patriotism.

ALA Unit 109 in Natoma celebrated the Auxiliary's centennial by reading — to all elementary school children in the community — *The Poppy Lady*, a book about the history of Moina Michael. The unit also donated a copy of the book to the elementary school library and another to the community's library.

“One way to honor our history is to preserve it by passing it on to children. It's training a new generation to understand the cost of freedom and the special meaning of the red poppy.

We're planting the seeds through this wonderful book,” said Unit 109 President Laah Tucker.

Unit 109 Vice President Mary Murphy, also the elementary school's librarian, told the children

about Michael's dedication to World War I veterans, widows, and orphans, and how she wore a handmade red poppy in remembrance until she died. Murphy also explained that the red poppy is the official flower of the ALA and The American Legion. She also shared that we wear poppies to honor America's fallen military heroes and in support of our nation's military, veterans, and their families.

And, Murphy told the children — in terms they



year and was changed to “Children & Youth” in the 1970-1971 administrative year. The ALA's Youth Hero Award, which recognizes someone younger than 18 who performs a heroic act of bravery, became part of Children & Youth in 2002-2003. The Good Deed Award was added shortly after to recognize youths who contribute through community service. In 2013-2014,

the Kids of Deployed are Heroes Too (KDH2) initiative was started to help military kids feel special, and not ignored, when their family member is deployed.

• ALA's Committee on Constitution and Bylaws was originally called



the Constitution Committee. The name change was in place by 1927. Created by the Auxiliary's Committee on Permanent Organization in 1921 — at the ALA's first National Convention — the Constitution Committee's job was to draft a national constitution. — Compiled by ALA member Carol Campbell

could understand — how the ALA distributes red crepe paper poppies in exchange for donations, with all money collected directly supporting veterans, military, and their families through ALA's many programs. In Kansas, thousands of red paper poppies are handmade by veterans. Those poppies are distributed throughout Kansas and in some other states.

The reading program was only a part of Unit 109's centennial celebration. There was also a special supper and other assorted events and activities to commemorate the ALA's major milestone.

CONTINUING ALA'S TRADITION OF GIVING

In celebration of the ALA's 100th anniversary, Auxiliary Unit 94 in Leavenworth, Kan., hosted an early Thanksgiving

Dinner at Post 94 for the area's homeless veterans Nov. 10 — the ALA's 100th birthday. That day, 55 meals were served to homeless veterans. There were also 15 meals served to veterans who live at a local Veterans Affairs residential facility.

Also treated to a holiday meal during this event were several other homeless individuals who are not veterans. As part of the event, Unit 94 members distributed thank-you bags to the veterans served,

and others in need. Bags contained winter necessities such as hats, gloves, scarves, socks, and throw blankets.



American Legion Auxiliary Unit 459 in Grand Rapids, Mich., honored the ALA's centennial by donating money to the local court specifically for veterans. There is a dollar amount on the check given to the local court, but the value of the message on the handwritten note that accompanied the check is priceless. The note, penned by Unit President Margo Forrester states: Dear FVTC (Friends of the Veteran's Treatment Court), The National American Legion Auxiliary is turning 100 on Nov. 10, 2019. In honor of this milestone, the Northeastern Unit 459 would like to donate \$250. We love our veterans!

Festive celebrations are occurring as well throughout various ALA units and departments. Visit Facebook.com/alaforveterans to see the fun and creative events and activities.

ALA MEMBERS' MAJOR MILESTONES

Just as the American Legion Auxiliary has reached its centennial, ALA members are arriving at major milestones of their own every day. *Auxiliary* magazine showcases current members who either have reached an age of 100 years or older, or who have had an ALA membership anniversary of 75 or more continuous years. Let's celebrate!

Helen Cypher, Pennsylvania

At 107 years old, Helen Cypher of Cabot, Pa., is known for many things. She's been an American Legion Auxiliary member for 72 years. She was a teacher for 40 years, much of that time spent in a one-room schoolhouse before moving into an elementary school building. Until her recent relocation to an assisted living facility, she lived in the same house for 79 years.



MILESTONE MEMBER: American Legion Auxiliary member Helen Cypher of Cabot, Pa., turned 107 years old Sept. 5. Cypher has been a member of ALA Unit 683 in Saxonburg for 72 years.

homemade cinnamon buns and rolls, baked breads, dinner rolls, and sweet rolls.

"Cooking and baking for the [Legion Family] dinners, and for bingo" are among her favorite ALA memories, said Cypher of Unit 683 in Saxonburg. Cypher also baked for her church, St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, which occasionally serves dinners to

those in need. She made bread for some of those meals also.

"Her buns and cinnamon rolls are the stuff of legends. But baking aside, Mrs. Cypher has set an example of dedication and hard work for our Auxiliary unit. She was still taking tickets at our dinners and bingo nights when she was 100 years old," said Jill Cavalero, president of Unit 683. "Mrs. Cypher is an inspiration to the next generation."

A connection among people from different generations who come together under a common cause of selfless service is what the ALA means to Cypher. "It is the place where the old and young work and learn from each other," she said.

Days after turning 107 on Sept. 5, Cypher met with Unit 683's Junior members. There is a photo of her with several Juniors flocked around her, and another of Cypher holding a small American flag and large teddy bear covered in a red ALA Juniors T-shirt.

Into the hands of younger generations within her local Legion Family, Cypher entrusted her coveted recipes which she said she got from her mother, Salina Denny. Legionnaire Andy Durand baked her cinnamon rolls and buns for several years before handing the recipes over to Cavalero. This past summer, ALA Junior Daisy Curran began learning how to bake the buns.

"The ALA — it was a way of life for our mother," said Cypher's daughter Sandy Grau of Midlothian, Va. "Love your God. Love your country. She has been doing them both."

Cypher joined the ALA in 1947 under the military service of her husband, World War II veteran Philip Eugene Cypher. He served in the U.S. Army. The couple had two children: Grau, and U.S. Air Force veteran Philip Dennis Cypher of Freeport, Pa. Their son served in the Vietnam War.

Additional members' extraordinary milestones

- Lola Droge, of Unit 326 in Bern, Kan., turned 100 years old Oct. 16.
- Edna Hawk, of Unit 588 in Varina, Iowa, began her 85th year of continuous membership in September.
- Carolyn Miller, of Unit 1 in Portland, Ore., began her 83rd year of continuous membership in September.
- Alvina Wendl, of Unit 20 in Dedham, Iowa, turned 105 years old Oct. 12.

Is there a member in your American Legion Auxiliary unit who has turned 100 years old or older, or who has an ALA membership anniversary of 75 or more continuous years? With that member's permission, tell us about it! He or she may be showcased in *Auxiliary* magazine. Submit information to ALA National Headquarters using the online form at www.ALAforVeterans.org/magazine or by contacting us at 3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268. ★

By Landa Bagley, Staff Writer

Building ALA brand loyalty



PROPER USE OF ALA EMBLEM POSITIVELY SHAPES OUR BRAND

The American Legion Auxiliary emblem has remained unchanged since the organization began over 100 years ago. Many companies will make adjustments to their logos as time goes on — some are minor tweaks, and others make massive changes.

The iconic blue star and yellow rays of the ALA logo have remained untouched over the century, keeping in step with our mission.

Our emblem is the main identifier of our organization, and it's one of our most valuable assets. Printing the emblem on office supplies, apparel, and other items is important to help identify who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Utilizing our emblem as a branding tool will only help further the ALA's position as the premier organization for our veterans, military, and their families. It's important to educate members and nonmembers about what the emblem stands for.

Let's break it down:

- On a blue circle in letters of gold stands the name, American Legion Auxiliary. The words emphasize Americanism and service.

- Unity and loyalty are represented by the unbroken circles in blue and gold.

- Set against a gold background, symbolic of rays of the sun and representing the principles of Justice, Freedom, Democracy, and Loyalty, dispelling the darkness of violence, strife, and evil.

- The Star of Blue is the emblem of service in war; it is no less the emblem of service in a time of peace.

- The field of white exemplifies the hope of freedom.

Use of the American Legion Auxiliary emblem is controlled by the national organization. No unit, county, district, or department of the American Legion

Auxiliary, and no officer or member thereof, has authority to grant the right to manufacture, reproduce, or deal in items bearing the name and/or emblem of the American Legion Auxiliary.

All requests for approval to use the emblem must first be sent to the department secretary. The request letter must state who will perform the duplicating (manufacturer), the name of the product, its intended use, and the exact amount being ordered. Additional quantities require new authority. The department secretary indicates her acknowledgement and signs before forwarding the request to the national secretary.

In addition to choosing the correct color, it's important to know the proper presentation of the emblem.

The following displays are prohibited: condensing, skewing, distorting, modifying in any way;

stretching of the emblem; applying any visual effect; changing or altering the typeface or placement of typeface; deleting any element of the emblem; allowing type or other items to obscure emblem; and printing or using a low-resolution or unreadable graphic.

Additional information on displaying the emblem:

- The emblem should be prominently displayed at the top of any production with nothing placed above it except for the American flag.

- It should be legible and large enough to read the American Legion Auxiliary name.

For visual examples on emblem placement, see the *ALA Branding Guide*.

Not using the emblem properly, printing incorrect colors, or not obtaining the proper permission will negatively affect our brand in the public's eye. Consistency at the unit and department level when it comes to the emblem will only help the organization with recruiting and retaining members as well as garner a positive opinion of the ALA in communities across the country.

To get started on your next project using the emblem, download the ALA emblem approval request form at www.ALAforVeterans.org. Do you have further emblem questions? Email emblem@ALAforVeterans.org.

Depending on the need of the emblem, there are five color versions available: four-color, two-color, one-color, grayscale (black), and reversed.



- The four-color emblem should be used as much as possible — it is the most common version and the one we want the public to be most familiar with.

- The two-color emblem should be used on items such as envelopes, letterheads, business cards, and other items when printed in bulk for cost savings.

- The one-color emblem should be used at the designer's discretion, usually for cost savings.



- The grayscale or black emblem should be used only when items will be printed and copied in black. Otherwise, use a color version.



- A reversed logo (white) can be used on such things as T-shirts, when white is required to print on top of a color.

To learn even more about the specific use and purpose of each color, download the *ALA Branding Guide* from www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Choosing the correct color for printing will assist with branding the organization both internally and externally as well as help out with cost savings.

ALL THINGS ALA GIRLS STATE

ALA Girls State programs have an everlasting impact on the lives of young women. For one past Louisiana attendee, the program has led to an almost 16-year commitment.

When Rachel Funel attended ALA Louisiana Girls State in 2005, she discovered she wanted to remain part of this newly found sisterhood. Upon completion of the program, she was eager to return the following year as a rookie counselor. Now Funel is approaching her 16th year with the program and her second year as ALA Louisiana Girls State director.

Funel says she is motivated to return each year because the program promotes individualism and being yourself. She enjoys seeing young women discover their potential as ALA Louisiana Girls State pushes them to reach past their limits to take on the impossible.

Rachel Funel



What is your favorite thing about ALA Girls State?

ALA Louisiana Girls State, simply stated, is a sisterhood.

We come together to achieve the unimaginable, to put our differences aside, and create a mythical state that we want the world to be. We have the chance to honor veterans and members currently in the military by giving back to the community and promote patriotism unlike any other. As the ALA Girls State programs each conclude, girls who came as strangers eventually leave as sisters, with a pride in their country and gratitude to those who have and continue to serve.

What changes have been implemented to ALA Louisiana Girls State under your leadership?

Since my short tenure as director, ALA Louisiana Girls State has seen many positive changes to the program. In 2019, we started the first

college fair and a women-led career panel. We also had state officers, such as the lieutenant governor for the state of Louisiana, visit and speak. For 2020's session, we're looking forward to online registration, starting our program a half-day earlier to provide more academic time to the delegates, as well as more interactive projects.

Why did you become an ALA member?

The American Legion Auxiliary has always been part of my family through my aunt, who has been part of the ALA since I was a child. She is the primary reason I attended ALA Louisiana Girls State (she was my sponsor!), and after seeing her commitment to the organization, I eventually joined the Auxiliary to continue to give back to my state and community as she once did. In order to promote and continue active membership in the Department of Louisiana, we ask all staff of ALA Louisiana Girls State to become members of the Auxiliary (if eligible) so they can continue to give back to the organization and ALA Girls State program.

ALA GIRLS STATE: A TRADITION FOR A SOUTH DAKOTA FAMILY

Penny Norris and her three daughters have a special bond: They all have attended ALA Girls State in South Dakota.

"It was a great honor to be selected," said Penny, who attended in 1976. "It showed me that there is an entire world outside the tiny part I live in." The experience remained with Penny, so she encouraged her daughters to attend. "I wanted my girls to also see what a big world there is out there. I wanted them to be given the information to be interested in a career path that would involve government service."

All three daughters say their decision to attend ALA Girls State was influenced by their mom. "I decided to go after hearing my mom talk about how amazing the experience was," said Dannale Norris, who attended in 2014. "I think ALA Girls State is different than it was for my mother because it isn't just about government. It's also



about creating networks with other girls that will last a lifetime."

Kirsten Marshall attended in 2017 and credits the program with not only teaching her about government, but making her grow personally. "I have become more interested in how state government works," Kristen said. "It made me more outgoing."

"I think attending ALA Girls State has had a great deal of influence in my civic involvement," said Lexie Marshall, who attended in 2019. Lexie also said she had fun meeting new people, who she remains in contact with today.

This family encourages other young women to get involved in their local ALA Girls State program. "Girls should go because it is empowering for [them] to learn about government and take part in it," said Dannale.

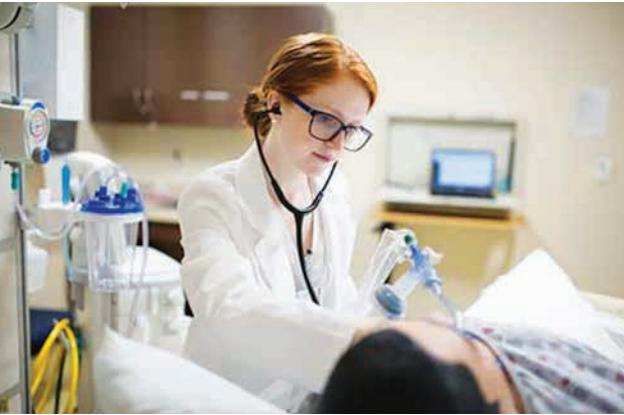
SAMSUNG 'LET'S GROW' CHALLENGE

ALA Girls State leaders, did you know your program can win prizes by increasing scholarship applications? Encourage girls to apply for the Samsung American Legion Scholarship Program. Prizes will be awarded for:

- Highest year to year growth in total applications by a state.
 - Highest year to year growth in ALA Girls State applications by a state.
- For more on this scholarship and to apply, visit Legion.org.

ALA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Each year, the American Legion Auxiliary offers scholarships to exceptional military children, ALA members, and ALA Girls State participants to help offset the growing cost of a college education. Here are some of the remarkable accomplishments those recipients have gone on to achieve.



Allison Horne **2016 Spirit of Youth Scholarship**

Allison Horne joined the American Legion Auxiliary when she was just 11 years old. Her grandparents were and remain the inspiration for her membership.

“My grandmother is a very active member in my New Jersey Unit 127, and I was eligible through my grandfather’s bravery,” Horne said.

Her grandfather, who served in the Korean War, told Horne countless stories about his experiences. She could tell the impact these memories had on him, and even as a young child, she knew what he had sacrificed was extraordinary.

“That took a lot of dedication,” Horne said. “It makes me really proud that someone in my family served.”

Horne believes membership in the ALA is a way to uphold the honor and respect that veterans deserve. Little did she know, the Auxiliary would give back to her as she started planning for her future.

“When I first applied to colleges, funds were very tight,” she explained. “I was the last of three kids to go to college, so when it came time for me, I wanted to see if I could do anything to ease that financial burden.”

Her grandmother recommended she apply for the ALA Spirit of Youth scholarship, and she received it in summer 2016.

“It really meant so much to me,” Horne said. “It allowed me to go to my dream school, Samford University, and get the education I

always dreamed of.”

Horne graduated early in December 2019 with a degree in nursing and has plans to work in a cardiac intensive care unit. She knows she is not alone in saying that financial support like the Spirit of Youth scholarship is the only reason this feat was possible.

“Scholarships are so important because they bring people into the education system who normally couldn’t get there,” Horne said. “I just thank the American Legion Auxiliary because I really wouldn’t be here without them.”

Liza Ruzicka **2015 Children of Warriors** **National Presidents’ Scholarship**

Liza Ruzicka has always had a unique experience with education. Having attended over half a dozen school districts and many more schools, Ruzicka and her five younger siblings’ educations were rife with inconsistent curriculums. Ruzicka never got to finish learning cursive. Her sister was taught Civil War history three years in a row.

As a military child living in and going to school off the base, Ruzicka often felt a sense of being alone. That’s why, when she went to apply for college scholarships, she was shocked to see that many were available to her because of her father’s military service.

“The American Legion Auxiliary specifically, offering the Children of Warriors scholarship, to know that someone was thinking about me

and that someone cared about me ... was the biggest light at the end of the tunnel,” Ruzicka said.

“I was leaving my family, leaving a lot of my connection to the military, and someone was still there to support me and there were organizations vested in my interests — it really just meant the world to me.”

With the help of scholarships, Ruzicka began her college education at Brown University in fall 2015. She decided to concentrate on education studies and cognitive science in the hopes of helping students have a better education experience, while also looking at how schools provide assistance in the realm of mental health.

“Since I was a kid, one of my big goals if anyone asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up was that I wanted to implement a universal curriculum in the United States,” Ruzicka said. “I always had the sense of wanting to be not just a recipient of education, but a shaper of my own education.”

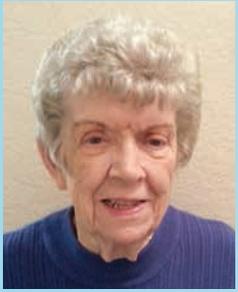
Now a graduate of Brown University, Ruzicka’s plans for the future include an internship at Columbia University, more school, and one day, becoming the dean or president of a university.



You can support talented and passionate students like Allison and Liza by donating to ALA Scholarship Funds: www.ALForVeterans.org/Donate.

Wanted! If you are a past American Legion Auxiliary national scholarship recipient, contact us at ALAMagazine@ALForVeterans.org.

A wise PERSON SAID



To say that U.S. Air Force veteran Dorothy “Dottie” Wolff-Harris has seen and done a lot in her life is an understatement. Wolff-

Harris, a dual member of the American Legion Auxiliary and The American Legion, from Grapevine, Texas, served in the Korean War.

She wrote a novel, 1951: From Khaki to Air Force Blue, based on her experiences in the Air Force, and self-published it through Amazon last year.

“My story is a part of Air Force history that would have

been lost with my passing,” said Wolff-Harris, a member of ALA Unit 379 in Bedford, Texas.

Wolff-Harris signed up for the American Legion Auxiliary in 1962 under her own military service, after being asked to join the ALA by many of the women from her church. With great pride, she recalls her participation in Legion Family activities, such as carrying the American flag in parades and visiting military gravesites on Memorial Day. Wolff-Harris continues to be a staunch supporter of the ALA’s mission of helping and honoring veterans, military, and their families. She is a longtime American Legion

Auxiliary donor.

In her life, Wolff-Harris has had many roles: servicemember, veteran, writer, Legionnaire, and ALA member. Add to that her other life titles, including daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, best friend, and American patriot. The list goes on, as Wolff-Harris has seen and done a lot — touching many lives in the process. She continues to do that.

Both of her sons served in the Air Force, and her grandson is a career Air Force veteran. She also has two daughters.

Wolff-Harris shared with Auxiliary magazine some of her insights on life, and The American Legion Family.

DOROTHY ‘DOTTIE’ WOLFF-HARRIS

What’s the best advice you’ve received in your life, and who gave it to you?

When I was a little girl and having one of those “hate, hate, hate” days, my maternal grandmother told me never to use the word hate. According to Nanny, hate is a strong word, worse than a swear word, and it only leads to more hate. It is OK not to like something or someone, but don’t use the word hate. I’ve never forgotten her words, and I try never to use “hate.”

Share a setback or failure you’ve experienced in your life, and what you learned from it.

My biggest failure in life was divorce. It was not part of my plan for life. It took me a year to figure out who I was and what I was going to do next. I learned to accept the unexpected.

As a longtime American Legion Auxiliary donor, you have said that you “give what you can.” Briefly explain this philosophy — the concept of simply giving what you can to help others.

You don’t have to be rich to donate. Giving is a gift from the heart. It can be money. It can be advice. It can

“There would be no American Legion Auxiliary without The American Legion. They are inseparable.”

be a sharing of knowledge, time, or talent. Giving can be as simple as a hug or a tear. Regardless of the type of giving, it should always be sincere.

Tell us your favorite part about being an ALA member.

My favorite part of ALA meetings is being there with other members, making plans, and setting goals.

From your perspective as a dual member of The American Legion and the Auxiliary, what value can female veterans gain by joining both organizations?

There would be no American Legion Auxiliary without The American Legion. They are inseparable. They work together as a team. I support both. If a woman served her country, she could belong to both. It is a privilege and an honor.

Other than what you see among other Legion Family members, do you think patriotism is strong in America?

Patriotism still exists, but it is not as strong as it was when I grew up. I was 10 years old when World War II started. It was a war that most people supported, and for which they were willing to make sacrifices. Patriotism was strong. We heard it in the music that was written and played on our radios. God Bless America! Stand up and salute your flag!



SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY THROUGH BILLBOARDS AND VIDEOS

During the busy holiday season, millions of people from around the world visit Times Square in New York City. This past season, those visitors saw digital billboards in Times Square featuring The American Legion Family. The advertisement was displayed on large

billboards once every hour during the season.

You may have also seen American Legion Family video messages at local events and on social media. American Legion Auxiliary National President Nicole Clapp and American Legion National Commander

Bill Oxford appeared in a series of public service announcements for The American Legion Family.

Topics for the PSAs included eligibility changes, posts without units, Buddy Checks, and holiday greetings. The holiday greetings may have played at your unit or post holiday gatherings.

Stay tuned for more PSAs!

Visit Legion.org to watch the videos.

LEGION RESOLUTION CHANGES ALA PREAMBLE

The American Legion National Executive Committee passed 19 resolutions during its Fall Meetings.

The most notable change to affect the American Legion Auxiliary is an amendment to the Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion. The phrase “the Great Wars” has changed to “all wars” under Resolution No. 1.

This new wording reflects the change in eligibility due to the LEGION Act, which acknowledges that the United States has been involved in at least 12 additional military conflicts not previously recognized.

As a result, the American Legion Auxiliary’s Constitution & Bylaws also has changed. Anytime the Legion changes its Preamble, the Auxiliary’s Preamble automatically changes.

Other resolutions to note:

- Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes by Closing 90-10 Loophole — The American Legion is encouraging legislation and federal agency action to close the 90-10 Loophole. Right

now, for-profit colleges can only receive up to 90 percent of their revenues from federal aid. However, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Department of Defense funds are counted as private dollars, which makes these funds available to the other 10 percent. This has led to aggressive recruitment of veterans and servicemembers.

- 100th Anniversary Remembrance of Our Comrades in the 1919 Centralia Tragedy – Four Legionnaires were killed, and three other Legionnaires were wounded during an Armistice Day parade on Nov. 11, 1919 in Centralia, Wash. The Legionnaires were shot by members of the International Workers of the World, an international organization linked by many with communism.

- 75th Anniversary of World War II — American Legion departments and posts will work with state and local governments as well as military units for any 75th anniversary of World War II events held in their community.

For full list of resolutions, visit Legion.org.

HAM RADIO: MORE THAN JUST A LEGION HOBBY

Technology of today has changed how we communicate with one another. However, one form of communication that first began in the late 1800s is still in existence, thanks to ham radio enthusiasts.

Ham radio refers to amateur radio stations that use radio frequencies assigned by the Federal Communications Commission.

The American Legion National Headquarters and Legion posts around the country have their own ham radio stations, which are part of The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC). The group was authorized by the Legion’s NEC in 2011 and has an agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to assist in emergency situations.

TALARC is one of the largest clubs in the world, with more than 4,000 members and more than 40 posts with radio call signs.

The call sign for The American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis is K9TAL. This and other stations are used for emergencies, entertainment, and educational purposes.



LEGION RADIO: Jeff Hammer operates a ham radio at K9TAL at American Legion Headquarters in Indianapolis (photo: The American Legion).

K9TAL and several of the TALARC stations host special-event operations on Veterans Day and on the Legion’s birthday in March. Stations also broadcast live from special events. Many posts host a Boy Scouts Jamboree, where the Scouts learn about ham radio.

To learn more about TALARC, visit Legion.org.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR UNIT'S NEWSLETTER **DON'T UNDERVALUE REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS WITH YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS**

An internal unit newsletter, whether it's a digital or print format, is a great way to inform members on what's happening in your local American Legion Auxiliary. This regular source of communication can act as a central document that includes important information, upcoming events, and access to your unit's social media platforms. Messaging all of these resources in one place can cut down a member's time spent looking for these materials. Having a strong unit newsletter connects your members to the overall mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Below are pointers in providing a successful newsletter for your unit members:



Stuck on layout/design? Use a template.

National Headquarters provides an extensive cache of marketing and public relations resources for members at www.ALAforVeterans.org. Included in that mix is an ALA-branded newsletter template available in Microsoft Word. This easy-to-use format allows you to plug in photos, event/activity details, and other miscellaneous content. The template's design is flexible, meaning you can arrange it however you'd like.

Content: What goes into our newsletter?

Think of this unique-to-your-unit publication as an opportunity to keep everyone in sync and show an example of the ALA's brand. The messaging you want your unit members to receive should be the main focus. Start by explaining the most important information and events you want members to know. Think of the newsletter as a large news medium — the big story should always be first, followed

by the secondary story, and so on. Include all upcoming volunteer opportunities and future events to give members the chance to participate in any ALA mission-oriented activities. Adding that information to a monthly community calendar in your newsletter is a great way to keep everyone informed, organized, and involved.

Be sure to include all essential details from any previously conducted meetings to ensure your members are up to date. As an added visual element, consider incorporating photos of your unit serving the mission. Think about the fun, non-business stuff too — celebrate your members by listing birthdays and ALA anniversaries.

These days, everyone is strapped for time. To retain members' engagement, keep the newsletter to two to three pages. And if you have the space, consider publishing educational pieces, such as a monthly how-to, on topics like inviting potential volunteers to unit activities that serve the ALA's mission.

Distribution: What works for your unit?

A digital — or email — newsletter is the simplest and most cost-effective method to reach unit members. Start by creating an email list of everyone in your unit for distribution, and don't forget to save the list for future mailings. If sending the newsletter via a personal email account presents limitations (e.g., spamblockers, full mailboxes, etc.) with your unit, invest in an affordable email service like MailChimp or Constant Contact. Some services even offer a nonprofit rate. If you must snail-mail a hard copy newsletter, ask your postmaster about a bulk mailing rate, which might be an option on cutting costs. But consider postage and printer fees in the long run, as well as members' news delivery preferences and the modern means of communicating — how can your unit migrate toward a fully digital version of its regular newsletter with members?



We'd love to see what's going on in your local Auxiliary! Add National Headquarters to your unit's mailing list by emailing us at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org. Content produced for national ALA media is often developed from activities published at the unit level.

American Legion Auxiliary social media

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

Auxiliary units across the country are continuing to celebrate the ALA's 100th birthday!



 **Chan Karen**
Unit 1291, Department of New York, welcomed our first male ALA member during our centennial celebration.

 **@dawngramza**
#ALA100Celebration Unit 514, Department of Michigan in a Veterans Day Parade.



ALA National President Nicole Clapp is learning more about adaptive sports during her travels.

 **ALANationalPresident**
What an incredible kayaking experience with Team River Runners at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda.



Auxiliary's word search answers from page 23.

W S Z N J O H Y R M I Q B I
R X R L L Q R S W Z O I L Z
I M R O F R E P Y H O L H B
T X F H L H Q T E Y U M G L
I W W S C O T U U S U L H K
N G N T C F C H T S N A V E
G T E C E I P R E T S A M R
I K I E B U A U E A J R E U
S Y P B C T M V G T T N T
C A R V I N G S A J A E D P
O V K O Z H B J L Y G W R L
A Q N C G Y X K L P P N V U
A R T I S T B E O G R N R C
E G A T S O R B C V B O N S

WELCOME NEW MALE ALA MEMBERS!



**Men's
Aqua-Dry
Polo**
(307.727X)



**Membership
Pin**
(315.100)



**Front/Back
Emblem
T-shirt**
(315.350X)

* Proceeds support American Legion Family programs

American Legion Emblem Sales

1-888-453-4466

Emblem.Legion.org

AUX MG 0220

Share your centennial celebrations on Facebook by using #ALA100Celebration. Your photos may appear on the @ALAforVeterans Facebook page! And be sure to catch us in February for a very special ALA unveiling!

THE LAST *word*

**“I carry your heart with me
(I carry it in my heart).”**

— E.E. Cummings, Author



(Photo: Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen, U.S. Army National Guard)

Who are the men and women behind those in uniform? How do they cope with life at home while their spouse is in another country or leaving for drill at the armory every month? *Auxiliary* takes a look at military spouses — then and now — and how they hold down the fort at home while their loved one is away. Are/were you a military spouse? Your story might be featured in an upcoming issue of the magazine! Contact us at ALAMagazine@ALAforVeterans.org, (317) 569-4500, or 3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268.

Above: U.S. Army Spc. Tyler Deibert, South Dakota Army National Guard, embraces his wife, Shasta, during a 2014 homecoming ceremony at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls, S.D.



“If You Get That Second Chance, Grab It, Run, And Don’t Look Back”

U.S. Navy veteran overcomes challenges through passion for writing

“I needed a reason to turn off the TV, get up off the couch and get out of the house, but I didn’t want one,” said Patrick Ward. “For me, I thought doors were closed.”

Patrick, a Navy veteran, was injured while on active duty, resulting in 55 surgeries and a limb amputation. With the support of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, he was able to do the things that excite him, including a new-found passion for writing.

Veterans from around the country showcase their talents during the annual National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, co-presented by the American Legion Auxiliary and VA. Patrick was among those invited.

“Being around people who are so brilliant, so talented, and so outgoing, I leave energized and I always think that I can do anything,” Patrick said.

You can help veterans like Patrick find healing through expressing their talents. Visit www.ALAFoundation.org/donate or mail a check made payable to the ALA Foundation to 3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268.



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

FOUNDATION

Ensuring Our Mission of Service Endures



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

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Serving Veterans, Military,
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Join The American Legion Family in Observing National Poppy Day[®] on May 22, 2020

The American Legion Family wears red poppies in honor of our nation's fallen servicemembers and in support of U.S. veterans, military, and their families.

Each National Poppy Day, members and volunteers of the American Legion Auxiliary, The American Legion, and Sons of The American Legion distribute red paper poppies in exchange for donations. All funds go directly to help veterans and active-duty military in need.

Learn how you can participate:
www.ALAforVeterans.org/poppy

