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# **AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY IN THE KNOW**

## **Patti Westpfahl, Department Chairman**

Good morning American Legion Auxiliary family members!

“Let’s Go Back to the Basics”, was the concept for the ALA in the Know program. This program was developed to increase the knowledge and understanding of the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion Family, as well as educate and mentor future leaders within the organization.



Pic 1

Sessions were held in three locations Waunakee, Tigerton and River Falls. The attendance was great! There was a total of 160 members, 34, first time attendees and 7, dual members in attendance.

The presenters covered topics such as Officer Training, where information on the duties of the President, Secretary and Treasurer were outlined. Also, membership, Junior, Annual reports and Constitution and Bylaws we discussed.

President Maggie attended all sessions, her comments and additions to the presentations were invaluable! She even helped in the kitchen!!



Pic 2



Pic 3

Breakouts for both Leadership and Badger Girls State were held, the information was well presented and well received by all in attendance.

*“Keep leadership discussion, very helpful”*, was one comment received.



Pic 4

Leadership Breakout



Pic 5

Leadership Breakout





Pic 6

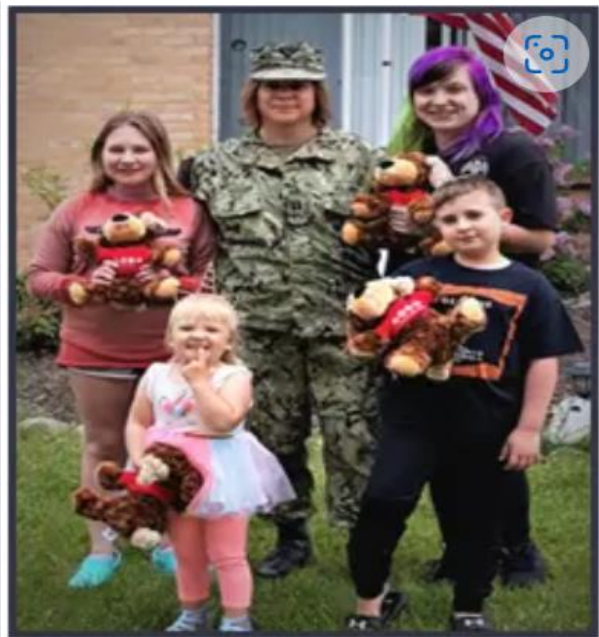
### Badger Girl State Breakout

I believe this year we helped build the “Family” relationship by including information about the SAL. Commander Watry attended all of the sessions, he gave insight to all of the SAL programs. Some of which were ALF Dog, 5 Point/10 Ideals Program he was highly informative!

“Thank you for having Alan come and speak about SAL, nice to know who is in the “family” another comment which was received.



Pic 7



Pic 8

From the comments received after the sessions I believe that those who participated took something new and exciting home with them to build the programs within their respective Units.

One comment was *“I don’t know what I don’t know,”* and how true that is! [\*\(More comments on the slide\) Slide 1\*](#)

Finally, I want to thank all of the ALA members which helped in preparation and presentation of the ALA in the Know 2023 sessions! It was amazing to work with each and every one of you!

Now, let’s look forward to ALAITK 2024. You can see the dates and locations of this year’s sessions on the screen. The registration form is available on the website or in your Unit mailings. Chairperson Diane Steinert is working hard on putting together another outstanding program!

9-14-2024

Cumberland, WI

9-28-2024

Gillett, WI

10-5-2024

Cedarburg, WI

President Maggie, this completes my report for the ALA in the Know program. Thank you for this outstanding, challenging and rewarding opportunity.

Patti Westpfahl ALAITK Chairperson

# American Legion Auxiliary Badger Girls State

Dany Thompson, Department Chairman

Just a few weeks ago we had the 79<sup>th</sup> session of American Legion Auxiliary Badger Girls State, or ALABGS. Approximately 500 delegates from across the state of Wisconsin joined 63 volunteers to create the mythical 51<sup>st</sup> State of Badger.

(Slide 1) The delegates arrived, and the first few days were frantic with activity. We held our opening convocation, they ran for office, and had many general assemblies. (Slide 2) We celebrated Poppy Day, (Slide 3) had dance parties in both the Federalist and Nationalist party rallies, and thanks to the generosity of the units who sent their delegates with change, counted LOTS of pennies. (Slide 4) In fact, we made approximately \$2000 between penny wars and collecting taxes, all which goes to the ALABGS Scholarship fund which all delegates who completed the session are eligible for.

(Slide 5) One of the missions of ALA Badger Girls State is to teach civic responsibility, and that is a goal we strive to reach every year. We focus on the history of the flag, respect for veterans through our flag disposal ceremony, and their responsibility as citizens of the United States to engage in civil dialogue and most importantly- to vote. If they leave our session with nothing else, it's the message that in order for our democracy to work they MUST be involved and engage in the process at all levels.

(Slide 6) Our week then culminated with our Inauguration. This year we were joined by State Treasurer John Lieber, State Supreme Court Justice Jill Karofsky, and Governor Tony Evers. All three expressed how much they respected the ALABGS program and that it was a day they looked forward to every single year.

One of the things we focused on this year was our online, social media presence. A new counselor joined us this year and took our social media to the next level. If you have not checked out our Instagram account, I would like to show you a few things that were posted and appreciated by all the delegates- SHOW VIDEOS FROM IG.

(Slide 7) This week could not have been as successful without the help of our 63 volunteer counselors. Counselors are made up of Auxiliary members who are gracious enough to give our program a try, and of former ALABGS delegates who enjoyed their time so much as delegates they were willing to come back. Thank you for taking the time out of your summer, your job, your time with grandkids, in order to help our program.

In conclusion, the 2024 session of ALABGS showcased the best and brightest young women from Wisconsin. I hope all of you, members and units, continue to support this program in the future.

# AMERICANISM

**Diane Burkhalter, Chairman**

Before I begin my report, I would like to recognize and thank my committee- Joanie Dickerson, Diane Weggen, and Sue Turowski. Also, Virginia Kodl who assisted us with evaluating the numerous Americanism Essays.

The Depart. of WI had 60% of the units reporting with 50% providing narratives. The variety of the activities and events are too numerous to list them all but they show the strength of our Americanism Program across our Department. All units providing narratives participated in Memorial Day activities and most of them assisted their posts with Veteran Day. Multiple units discussed the following: placing grave markers for unit members who had passed; recognition of Gold Star Mother, assisting with flag retirements; donating flags to business and Unit 288 in Cedarburg (picture) donated flags to their five local schools; participating in the Americanism Essay Contest; conducting flag folding ceremonies; and utilizing the materials in the "Star Spangled Kids" kits.

There were several units that had unique ideas that illustrate that we have infinite ways to promote Americanism across the generations. Unit 100 in Sparta has a create your own flag and constitution project. In Loomis, Unit 476 gave a presentation on the Pledge of Allegiance and distributed the Pledge magazine from Emblem sales to 300 1st graders at five area schools. Unit 382 in Menomonee Falls invited Senator Knodl to congratulate their Americanism Essay winner. (pic) A wonderful holiday idea came from Unit 469 in Marathon. They decorated a "Holly Day" tree with local military and veteran photos. (pic)

There are four units that we would like to acknowledge for their programs:

## **Unit 306- in Green Lake- District 6- Unit President, Alice Bartow**

This unit developed a Flag Etiquette Workshop for the local Girl Scout and Brownie troops. They demonstrated the proper way to fold the flag. In addition, each girl folded a pocket flag, learned about flag retirements & received the flag magazine.

The older girls learned how to carry the flag in upcoming ceremonies they were asked to participate in. They plan to not only continue this program but also expand to other groups.(pics)



**Unit 161- in King- District 8- Unit Co- Presidents, Linda Hagen & Sue Morack**

They developed a twice a year story walk comprised of seventeen stations in a beautiful setting that is enjoyed by young and old. In May, *The Poppy Lady* is utilized and in November the book, *America's White Table* is the basis of the storyboards. (pics)

**Unit 263- in New London- District 8- Unit President Lynne Herminath**

This unit has some really creative ideas for ceremonies and holidays. As part of their Memorial Day Program they throw an eco-friendly wreath into the Wolf River. For the community St. Paddy's Day Parade, Rosie the Riveter rides in a Korean era vehicle and a member created coloring book about Sargeant Danbury that is given away.

(pics)

**Unit 424- in Mercer- District 8- Unit President Betty Snyder**

Unit 424 is extremely busy Memorial Day weekend-planting 220 geraniums at Mercer Cemetery and conducting their program. (pic)  
Moving onto Flag Day where they have displays at the credit union and bank in Mercer and gave away flag lapel pins. All 3rd graders are given American flags with copies of the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem. At the 4th of July parade they distribute poppies and candy and have a float honoring veterans. (pics)

Madame President, this concludes my report.

Diane Burkhalter, Americanism Chairman

Department of Wisconsin

# WALA STATE BOWLING

Jenni Syftestad, Department Chairman/Tournament Director



Our 2024 tournament was hosted by Clark County in Medford – what a great job they did. They had many raffle baskets and 50/50 raffles – if you didn’t make it you missed a great time.

We did not have a very good turn out this year – but we moved forward with 48 ladies bowling team event, 36 bowling doubles, 30 bowling singles and 28 entered all events.

Many ladies chose to bowl just team and not doubles and singles. Come bowl with us in any event you are able to bowl in.

1st Place Team was won by Bonduel Gals 3 with a score of 2457

1st Place Doubles was won by Judy Crook and Bonnie Field of Monroe with a score of 1303

1st Place Singles was won by oh that’s me Jenni Syftestad with a score of 720 – Oh yes I beat my daughter by 14 pins and she bowls league and I hadn’t bowled in a couple of years!

1st Place All Events was won by Kay Grosskopf with a score of 1971

*Can you show a large “gold” bowling pin on screen when I get to this part?*



Okay now for the competition between the President and Secretary teams.

Maggie team bowled a series of 1984 and Bonnie’s team bowled a series of 1813.

So here’s to you Maggie you won the “Golden” bowling Pin this Year!

*(Show graphic on screen)*

Secretary Bonnie I made a graph of the President and Secretary team wins for the last 14 years and you are ahead by two more wins than the Presidents. Keep of the great job, Bonnie.

Next year our tournament is April 11th & 12<sup>th</sup> at Ten Pin Alley in Fitchburg (next to Madison) hosted by my Unit 385 in Verona.

Get your team together and join us. Talk around all the districts and gather up a foursome from around the state.

Madame, President this concludes my platform remarks.

*Show the team pictures however you would like throughout my report. – 8 team pictures*

## **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

**Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Department Chairman**

Chairing the Constitution and Bylaws committee always presents an interesting and challenging program and one that continues to be extremely necessary because it provides support for our units, counties and districts in developing their own documents suited to their needs and to enable all members to have the rights guaranteed by Roberts.

Year to Date, I've reviewed 153 Unit, 3 County, and 2 District Constitution and Bylaws. Year-end reports submitted this year from units totaled 309.

As chairman, I respond to numerous inquiries regarding questions relating to these documents, either my mail or email, and on a number of occasions by phone calls.

Please contact the Department Chairman if you have any questions regarding your document or if you need help revising. Once your unit has decided on the appropriate changes, please send them to the Chairman for review. After review, the unit will be advised that the document has been accepted or areas where changes need to be made will be detailed, and the document will be sent to Department Headquarters for filing.

For units who rarely, and in some cases never review, I would suggest that your document is very possibly hopelessly out of sync with both Department and National as required by those two entities.

I would also counsel our units to put any references to membership dues that refer to specific monetary amounts in their Standing Rules, as this document is more easily adjusted when these numbers change. If you keep it in your bylaws, just reference that dues are payable annually and if your unit collects additional dues for your own unit's treasury, you can be specific about the amount above the department and national dues that you will collect from your members.

The Constitution and Bylaws document should be reviewed at least every two years to be sure the document is in compliance with Department and National. When changes are made by either of these two entities, units, counties and districts are required to comply with the changes approved at those two levels.

Constitution and Bylaws is always an interesting and challenging chairmanship.

This chairman is proposing changes to our Department Constitution and Bylaws at Department convention as listed in your convention packets.

Before I begin the reading of the amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, Madame President, I move that the Executive Secretary/Treasurer be authorized to correct punctuation, capitalization, article and section designations and such technical change as may be necessary for accuracy and readability of our governing documents.

# **CHILDREN & YOUTH**

Margaret Larson, Department Chairman

## DEPARTMENT CONVENTION 2024 REPORT

The year began by informing all (12) Districts of the importance of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation (CWF). I challenged all Units in their District to donate \$1 per each member, and in return they could receive a CWF banner to hang in their Legion's Post. Thirty Units donated a total of \$3,401. November 15, 2023, Wisconsin had 11,500 paid members – think of the impact this could make in the life of our youth.

Many Units impacted the C&Y program this year, one being "TOOLS FOR SCHOOL". What is "TOOLS FOR SCHOOL" and how did it start? Many years ago, there was a crayon crisis in the River Falls community. Many students didn't have the ability to get all the school supplies needed. Volunteers started noticing this at a Tuesday night banquet which is a free church driven meal. Volunteers at that time thirty years ago started leaving school supplies on the tables for the kids to take. It has now morphed into this huge event that takes place the third week of August. All children in this community have the opportunity, if they're in need, to participate.

What is given at this great event are school supplies that are specifically for their classroom. They get fitted for a new pair of shoes w/socks. A brand new backpack, which is so important, as it needs to last the whole year. Local dentists furnish new toothbrushes/toothpaste. A new reading book at grade level is given to each student. After all that, each student and their family is provided with a sack lunch which contains a sandwich, a bag of chips and a granola bar. There are also salads made up if they don't like sandwiches, fresh fruit, juice and water.

This year "TOOLS FOR SCHOOL" served over 422 children and 100 volunteers made it all possible. This is just one way we can invest in our children's futures.

Madam President, this concludes my report. I have no resolutions or recommendations.

Thank you.



# COMMUNITY SERVICE

Sandy Mack, Department Chairman

- Wisconsin has approximately 368 units.
- 57% completed reports.
- 51% reported community service hours.
- 93,887 ½ hours of community service served.
- \$147,053.54 reported as money spent on Community Service activities/projects.

Looking at several FB pages that were both Unit/Districts, shown in the power point is just a touch of the exciting events/fundraisers held by units across Wisconsin. Pictures are worth a, 1,000 words. This is a great opportunity to promote this great organization along with the entire Legion Family, while providing community service.



In these pictures you see Easter Egg Hunts and the Easter Bunny delivering baskets to assisted living facilities. Chili Extravaganza, Pancake Breakfast, Brat Fry, fish fry, Spaghetti Dinners, Pork loin dinner, chicken dinners, school supply collection, collection for food pantries, suicide prevention awareness open to the community. Breakfast with Santa, Memorial Day Potluck picnic, work canteen at fish baseball game, hosted a violin recital, plant flowers, bingo, bake sales, ride in parades, school concession stands, and the list goes on. The 4th District had the honor of awarding a community member for her heroism. The child was in a car that was hijacked and when the hijackers wanted her to get out of the car she wouldn't because her baby sister was in the car as well. So, the hijackers abandoned the car. Her name is Charley Jorgenson, and she is from Greendale, WI. They provided her with an award at Unit #416- Greendale post in Milwaukee County.

I am honored to provide Cambria Unit #401 2<sup>nd</sup> District-Columbia County with a certificate for Excellence in Community Service. This unit held blood banks, sews little dresses for Africa, makes cloth diapers, quilts for foster children, church events, works at funerals, library, on the cemetery board, historical society church board, pie socials, animal shelters, read with children, collected shoes for school project and rides in the parades. This unit alone volunteered 16,015 hours and spent \$34,032 on Community Service Projects.

I would also like to present a Community Service Certificate to River Falls Unit #121-10<sup>th</sup> District Pierce County. They have volunteered 2,918 hours and spent \$2,870 on Community Service Projects. Projects include 12 Days of Xmas for Bingo Night, food pantry, holiday helpers, tree of love, trunk or treat, parades potluck picnic, concert recitals and garden maintenance.

Lastly, I would like to present Richland Center Unit #13-3<sup>rd</sup> District Richland County for serving 920 hours of Community Service and spending \$3,259 on Community Service activities/projects. They provide donkey visits, maintain flags for the courthouse, and provided trunk or treat for the community.

The number of hours and funds spent to putting back into the community, that helps to support our veterans, military, and their families, one day at a time is one of the most rewarding feelings we may have.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
GOD BLESS AMERICAN

This concludes my report. I have no resolutions

## EDUCATION

Diane Weggen, Department Chairman

Madam President, Distinguished Guests, Delegates and ALA Members,

When we think of education, most of us think of PreK-12 students. When we think about the American Legion Auxiliary Education Program, it's all about scholarships. However, there is a whole lot more to meeting the mission of the ALA Education program.

Units/members were asked to report on clearly defined components of this past year's education program.

Twenty-three of 348 units gave examples of how they and/or their members incorporated into their activities serving students and teachers **"Give 10 to Education"**. I would like to honor Spooner Unit 12 and President Roxanne Burke for working with their Post and Squadron to sponsor a community "School Supplies Drive" filling "Back to School" backpacks. And to Pewaukee Unit 71 and President Mary Ellen Crandall for paying field trip fees and lunch accounts for needy students.

**American Education Week** and **Teacher Appreciation Week** are two weeks of the year when we are reminded to honor and thank those who work to educate our young people. The two honorees for this component are Gordon Unit 499 and President Jeanne Brown and Grafton Unit 355 and President Ria Marien who made sure the educators in their communities knew they are appreciated.

Respect for the sacrifices of our military heroes among school children is enhanced by scheduling **"Veterans in Community Schools"** programs. Thirteen units reported 255 veterans interacting with students in their schools. Sparta Unit 100 and President Julianne Hyma arranged for veterans in the classroom, while Alma Unit and Post 224 and President Karla Hoksch coordinated time for students to visit with veterans. Whether one-on-one, small group or full assemblies, Veterans speaking with or to students allows veterans to share their stories and gives students opportunities to better understand sacrifices made. The interaction could possibly lead someone to **"Be the One"**.

**Be the One** is a mission to educate everyone on how they can Be the One to save a veteran's life. This year we were challenged to Be the One.

Because Gold Star Mother Rae Ann Larson of Rome Unit 65 has Been the One for some of the soldiers who served with her son, she deserves special recognition.

Awarding **Scholarships** demonstrates ALA's firm belief in the importance of youth furthering their education. Fifty-two national scholarship applications from WI were judged. Two of Wisconsin's nominees for national scholarships won a total of \$3,000. Of the thirty-six applicants who met eligibility requirements, Department of Wisconsin awarded twenty-one scholarships for a total of \$21,000. At the local level, with only 43% reporting, WI units awarded \$88,700 in scholarships to 225 students in 2023.

The final component of the Education Program is the offering **M. Louise Wilson Educational Loans** for female members of the American Legion Auxiliary who are pursuing higher education.

Thank you to all members and units participating and engaging in the components of the ALA Education and the M. Louise Wilson Educational Loan Fund programs to Enhance the lives of Veterans, Military, their Families and their communities every single day!

Madam President, this concludes my report. There are no resolutions or recommendations. Thank you for this appointment.



## **FINANCE**

Diane Duscheck, Department Chairman

### **Slide 1**

Good morning!

And welcome to Finance!

Let's look at the remarkable strides the department of Wisconsin makes through your support of and donations to the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin.

### **Slide 2**

Did finances go to the dogs this year?

Well, some of your donations did, but we'll get to that in a few minutes.

Let me tell you what you did this year.

### **Slide 3**

The poppy program is a wonderful rehab program for veterans and a great opportunity for the Auxiliary to get in front of community members.

Poppy makers earned almost \$29,000 this year making poppies. The cost of purchasing poppy kits was almost \$34,000. I'm going to sound like a broken record here, but Legion Emblem Sales is raising the cost for purchasing poppy kits again next year. That means the finance committee will once again evaluate the price of poppies for units and departments next year to make sure we can cover the costs.

Poppy sales of \$73,000 are from the sale of poppies to units and other departments.

Poppy Days profit was over \$108,000; important because these funds will find their way into the Children & Youth and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation budgets.

### **Slide 4**

Your donations to the VA facilities are wisely spent.

Each facility is unique in its needs, therefore the purchases are always specific to the facility.

Tomah is preparing their veterans to reintegrate into the community, so you'll notice that the Tomah use of funds centers around the need for rental security deposits and personal items for veterans.

### **Slide 5**

Suggestions for the gifts come from the Auxiliary's hospital representatives, who work in conjunction with the hospital directors and volunteer services to determine needs at that facility and for their clientele.

At King Veterans Home, some of the donations are put into the King Café account so residents can be treated to a free meal every now and then.

**Slide 6**

More and more on TV you'll hear commercials about white noise and green noise as calming sounds to help you sleep. Zablocki is using white-noise machines in the radiation oncology department.

And, you'll notice that Oscar Johnson VA Medical Center purchased diaper bags for new mothers.

**Slide 7**

Union Grove and Fairchild Hall are located on the same property. This year it seemed that it was a good idea to add Fairchild Hall to the donation list to help meet the needs of those veterans. The veterans enjoyed the treats, meals, and donated items that the Auxiliary furnished at both Union Grove and Fairchild Hall.

After more investigating and talking to administrators in both facilities, however, it was decided that we needed to rethink the situation.

The Union Grove facility is a VA facility and the residents are in this long-term living situation where they can get assistance in everyday activities. Fairchild Hall, on the other hand, is run by Lutheran Social Services through a grant. Veterans at Fairchild Hall are supposed to be working on reintegrating back into the community and living on their own. When the Auxiliary provided treats, meals, gift cards, and donated items, the veterans became complacent and stopped trying to care for themselves. We were interrupting the veterans' jobs of becoming self-sufficient.

Therefore, Fairchild Hall has been removed from the VA&R donation sheet. The funds already donated for Fairchild Hall were spent on items for Fairchild Hall, but we will not be supporting this facility as we move forward.

Union Grove, on the other hand, will remain on the VA&R donation sheet.

**Slide 8**

Pass-through donations are donations to Department that are earmarked for a specific purpose. Periodically through the year and always prior to the end of the fiscal year, these funds are sent to the proper institution.

Look at what you've done! Without the poppy donations, individuals, units, and districts donated over \$171,000 this year. When we add in the poppy donations, that total is over \$279,000!

Thank you for your caring and generosity. Give yourselves a pat on the back and a round of applause.

The 20% of poppy funds that are returned to Department after Poppy Days gets divided equally between the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Budget and the Children & Youth Budget to support veteran and youth programs.

The Fisher Houses are a home away from home where military and veterans' families can stay at no cost while their loved one is receiving treatment at the VA. Wisconsin's Fisher House at Zablocki VA in Milwaukee opened in 2016. In the future, a Fisher House will be constructed in Madison.

**Slide 9**

And speaking of “Going to the Dogs”...

Dogs 2 Dog Tags donations were \$34,658 for this special Department President’s project. This program trains at-risk and donated dogs and gives them to veterans who may be battling post-combat stress and anxiety. Your donations will pay for veteran housing while they are training with their dog.

**Slide 10**

Units donate to both Child Welfare Foundation and the ALA Foundation.

The Child Welfare Foundation is an American Legion Foundation that supports Legion programs like The American Legion World Series Baseball Tournament and organizations that do research into childhood diseases– like the American Kidney Fund Virtual Camp for pediatric kidney patients and the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation that is working to provide baseline concussion testing and education for youth.

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation helps units and departments support the new needs of veterans, like a \$10,000 grant to the Chippewa Falls Veterans Home for their Pavilion construction, Girls Nation, the National Auxiliary scholarships, and Veterans Creative Arts. Dragon boats for veteran rehabilitation and socialization have been purchased, wheelchairs that are made for use in sand and wheelchair bicycles, shelving for a veterans’ food pantry, and computer work stations so veterans can search for jobs have been awarded grants..

**Slide 11**

We provide assistance to Veterans and Military, their families, and women who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. These grants may include rent payments, hotel rooms, utilities, and fixing the car. The Auxiliary impacts these groups one veteran or one family at a time. The grants awarded this year totaled almost \$70,000.

**Slide 12**

Besides the Auxiliary’s charitable donations, we also need to support some other stuff in the office with the more mundane and everyday expenses.

We rent office space from The Legion. Headquarters needs phone and internet service, supplies, and a Post Office Box. The publication is beloved by many. Nothing is free.

**Slide 13**

The Camp American Legion basement refinishing project was begun over a year ago. In spring the basement project was finished.

Look at these “Before” and “After” pictures. What a difference! I think we could eat off the newly refinished floors.

**Slide 14**

Camp also has outdoor needs: some were for maintenance and some were for transportation of the camp attendees.

Their wish list included a John Deere riding lawn tractor, a trailer for transporting the lawn tractor and other items,

**Slide 15**

and also an 8 passenger UTV to transport veterans around camp and trails. Finishing the basement floor and the purchase of the lawn tractor, UTV, and trailer was just under \$39,000.

**Slide 16**

Let's take a look to the future at the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

The budgets for the 2024-2025 year were determined by department management, that being the Executive Secretary-Treasurer and staff, then perused and approved by the finance committee. Following that, this finance chairman presented the budget to the Department Executive Committee for their final approval.

Budgets with a "zero" variance in the 4<sup>th</sup> column are budgets where we project breaking even. Budgets with parentheses around the dollar amounts are budgets where we expect to have a shortfall. We expect a total shortfall of just over \$36,000.

It is important to note that our 2024-2025 revenue and expenses are each projected to be about three-quarters of a million dollars.

**Slide 17**

It is so important to understand where the funds that support each of the budgets come from. As a source of support increases or decreases, there is a parallel effect on the amount of money available to support Auxiliary programs.

For instance: the general fund is supported by member dues and department fundraisers like the annual calendar sweepstakes. As the number of dues-paying members decreases, monetary support for the general fund also decreases.

Children & Youth and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation are supported by poppy profits and donations. When poppy profits drop off, we also struggle to support the programs that enhance the lives of veterans, the VA facilities, and youth programs.

For ALA Badger Girls State: When delegate spaces are not filled or when headquarters needs to refund delegate fees, we are short on funds to pay expenses charged by the university. University expenses don't decrease just because we don't have over 700 delegates in attendance. Please visit the schools and encourage more high school juniors to participate in the Girls State program.

M Louise Wilson is funded by donations and the repayment of loans. Six young ladies paid off their loans during this past year. That generates more funds available for new loans. Scholarships awarded by Past Presidents Parley are funded by Parley dues and donations made to the parley. It is important for past presidents at all levels to support the parley by paying dues, which in turn support scholarships.

The Bowling budget is funded through entry fees to the bowling tournament. Every budget is unique in its funding.



**Slide 18**

Maneuvering finances takes the cooperative effort of many people. These are some of the people who are called on to make decisions for the good of the organization.

Madam President, May I please introduce the members of this committee?

The first 5 are members of the finance committee.

If these members would please stand and wave:

Kathy Wollmer, elected member and vice chairman

Sue Keyzers, elected member

Linda Coppock, Alternate NEC

Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Office Policy Chairman

And this chairman and elected member of the committee

Additional members of the team are

Department President Maggie Geiger

Executive Secretary-Treasurer Bonnie Dorniak

Linda Cason, Bookkeeper

Kiril Kustief, our Edward Jones Financial Advisor

And our Auditors from Miller, Brussell, Ebben & Glaeske; especially Mindy

It is a pleasure to work with this team.

This concludes the finance report, Madam President.

[PAUSE and wait for Department President to ask if we have any recommendations or resolutions.]

No, Madam President.

## **FUNDRAISING**

Crystal Shaw, Department Chairman

American Legion Auxiliary Department Fundraising Report July 2024

Special Project: Dogs 2 Dog Tags

Good afternoon to all the amazing Legion Family members. I would like to thank you all for coming in full force to support President Maggie's project. All the baskets turned out phenomenal. I would also like to thank all the members of the Legion Family that stepped in to help when needed. It was greatly appreciated.

Throughout this year many units reached out with questions for helpful tips regarding fundraising including making them easier and more fun to run. Other units reached out for assistance with obtaining their raffle license.

The raffle went fantastic along with the special side fundraising efforts of selling dog tags to honor veterans or pets. This was very special for many.

All together this weekend \$3513 was raised to go to Dogs 2 dog tags.

Thank you for letting me be a part of your team.

I would like to present to President Maggie this beautiful sign to cherish in memory of her project.

Respectfully submitted,  
Crystal Shaw

## Mary Petrie, Department Historian

It seems like our journey just began, but we've already arrived at our destination, and as they say, the rest is history!

Travels took us to exiting events, gifted long-lasting friendships, and strengthened our Legion Family bond...all while working the ALA Mission.

Memory Road took us from convention to **totally cool** Freezin' for a Reason, from sharing laughs to shedding tears at the loss of ALA family members, and from gaining knowledge to setting all those great ideas in motion; then paved a new road, bridging the Poppy Shop to the War Memorial Center.

All roads lead to Headquarters, where the door is always open, and also where our amazing staff truly enhances the lives of our members, one day at a time, day after day, year after year.

And we can't forget the focus of this year's special projects – Dogs2DogTags, A.L.F., and Be the One. Donations were plentiful, and we know the importance of **continuing** to Be the One.

I hope you've had time to enjoy a blast from the past by dusting off an old history or reviewing minutes from days gone by. Reminiscing has names pop up not heard in a while. Take pride in their accomplishments, and maybe consider revisiting an event or program. It's **your** history!

Before announcing the top histories, I'd like to share this...One of the historians had been battling cancer, and though experiencing more bad than good days, she was determined to fulfill her heartfelt obligation to finish the Unit History before passing away. While she's no longer with us, she proudly achieved her goal. What determination!

And the results are in...

District History top honors go to 7<sup>th</sup> District, Vickie Dux (Dukes), Historian.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Unit History goes to River Falls Unit 121 in 10<sup>th</sup> District, Kate Koosmann, Historian. She's volunteering at a Unit event, so Margaret Larson is accepting on her behalf.

Taking the 1<sup>st</sup> Place Unit History award is Thorp Unit 118 in 7<sup>th</sup> District, Alyssa Fraser, Historian. She's out of state, so 7<sup>th</sup> District President, Christina Petranovich is accepting on her behalf.

Certificates of Participation were tucked into the binders of Watertown Unit 189, Sue Christian, Historian, 2<sup>nd</sup> District; Chilton Unit 125, Patricia Katalinik, Historian, 6<sup>th</sup> District; Fremont Unit 391, Jennifer Schilling, Historian, 8<sup>th</sup> District.

Congratulations to all!

Thank you for sharing this journey, and as we continue ***Enhancing the Lives of our Veterans, Military and Their Families, One Day at a Time***, remember to report and record the huge difference we make in the lives of our heroes.

Madam President, this concludes my report. There are no recommendations or resolutions. It has been a privilege to serve as your historian.

***Presentation of Maggie's history and scrapbook...***

And now Madam President Margaret, my friend Maggie, it is my pleasure to present you with a copy of your year's history...and scrapbook. There's still business to tend to, so you probably won't be perusing those any time soon, but when you do, here's a little treat to accompany those quiet moments.

Happy memories and Good Luck on the next chapter of your ALA journey, wherever it may lead!



## **JUNIOR ACTIVITIES**

Laura Calteux, Department Chairman  
Char Kiesling, Vice Chairman

They say, "it takes a village" to accomplish a goal, but whether it is a room full of Jr. members or just a handful or even one, the Jr. program moves on with activities where they have fun with crafts, learn about patriotism, go on campouts, or most important of all, use their little hands and hearts to remember present and past Veterans, their families, and our service personnel.

Organized Jrs. and SAL in units, districts, and dept. meetings around the state numbered 71 this year, but that doesn't stop other Jrs. and young SAL members participating with many activities for their veterans and communities. The total number of Jrs. reporting, 498, along with their impressive activities are too numerous to mention so I made a list including their units that I will post to impress all of you. These activities resulted in 1799 hours, and donations rec'd \$1, 036.00. Congratulations all Jrs. and supporting Srs. and units.

I would like to share some very special events that Laura and I organized with some effort this past year. One of the endeavors was a Fall Fun Day Camp-Out at Camp Wounded Warriors where over a thousand youth attend over the summer who have lost a parent or both in service to their country. They opened up the cabins and facilities just for us in Oct. A big thank you goes out to Sue Turowski and her husband, our campfire expert and SAL counselor for the camp-out, as they guided us through the 2 days of inclement weather and activities. The camp is a special place providing grieving activities and recreation of all kinds and sharing with peers in coping with their losses. Sue also gifted each Jr. and SAL member an ALF dog and an extra dog they solemnly swore to pass on to a military child they knew or met. Then to share their story with a picture and words. We slept in 1st class cabins, and each Jr. was asked to do for herself as much as able, being as independent as possible, with hygiene, picking up her space, making her meals over the campfire, and partaking in all activities and crafts. Hiking and a scavenger hunt was all lots of fun!

Dept. Jrs. had our Spring conference, May 18th where we visited a famous glass museum and saw amazing paperweights and other glass masterpieces and then Jrs. and Srs. made their own sun catchers. Lunch and walking tacos were fun and patriotic crafts were also made for our Veterans at Zablocki. Jrs. always do a service project at all of their meetings and we planted flowers in the Veterans Memorial urns in Neenah's Oak Hill Cemetery. There were 4 Jrs. present and each had an urn to plant and it was a very busy day.

As I said earlier..."it takes a village" and the American Legion Auxiliary is that village and its programs for our youth, IN SERVICE NOT SELF.

## **2024 JUNIOR MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

Our Junior of the Year has been one busy girl. From attaining her black belt in Karate and teaching the little dragons, to welding a guitar for a school project, and to shooting trap with her team in Ozaukee, you wouldn't think Rylee would have time for anything else. But she is working the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary throughout the year.

She makes cookies for the Auxiliary bake sale, makes patriotic pen holders and paper flowers for the craft fair, she has marched in parades and more. She made cookies for the Fire and Police departments for Christmas, is mentoring the new Poppy Princess in her unit, entered the poppy poster contest, baked treats for the veterans in her post for Veterans Day and Easter, and to top it all off, Rylee designed the Junior t-shirt that all Juniors received when they attended a National Junior meeting this year. Way to go Rylee! I present to you, Rylee Turowski, our 2024 Junior of the Year for the Department of Wisconsin.

## **2023-2024 JUNIOR UNIT AWARD**

The Jr. Unit of the Year is from Unit 71, Dist. 1, Pewaukee, with Mary-Ellen Crandall, as their President. According to her report, there are 9 active Jrs. that have been very busy with the Patch Program, attending Unit & District meetings, bake sales, distributing poppies, making signs for their food pantry, did treat bags and cards for Veterans in their VA, helped with Legion events and bingo, marched in parades, and most original, a video was made so Veterans could have a face-to-face connection with Jrs. That was just a few ways these Jrs. volunteered 280 service hours to Veterans and their community and ALA organization. All with obvious great support from their Sr. members. CONGRATULATIONS Unit 71 Jrs. and wishing you another successful year!

## LEADERSHIP

Joyce Endres, Department Chairman

***Before you are a leader, success is about growing yourself.***

***When you become a leader, success is about growing others.*** Jack Welch

### **2023-24 Leadership Program Emphasized:**

- The ALA Mission
- Helped members understand the need to Mentor, develop and prepare knowledgeable members as future leaders at all levels.
- We encouraged you to work Together as The American Legion Family.

**Strong teams of engaged members achieve even more!**



We encouraged members to get involved and to meet other members to increase your network, gain new ideas and to jointly solve related issues.

To enhance your knowledge by attending educational opportunities provided at all levels.

To raise awareness of veteran and military suicide and embrace the need to **'Be the One to Save One'**



### **Enhanced knowledge teaches:**

- ALA History, traditions, values and mission
- ALA programs address the ever changing needs of members, the five generations of veterans and all we serve.
- The organizational structure helps us understand we are bigger than ourselves and our unit.

- We are an organization of members who make the decisions with guidance from leaders and governing documents.
- Parliamentary Procedures provide the structure needed to ensure decisions are made fairly and with full approval by members.
- WI Red Book informs us of current department leadership and policies.
- Websites and Social Media spreads knowledge and education, shares information and connects members in Wisconsin and the nation.



**Our Leadership Training Sessions included:**

- “Be Positive and Hope Filled With a Positive Attitude”  
BE KIND – SHARE a SMILE – Help others in need



- Mentorship ~ Who, What, When, How, Why:

***Maya Angelou said:  
‘Do the best you can until you know better.  
Then when you know better, do better!’***

The auxiliary provides us with an opportunity to learn more about ourselves, other members, and the joy of Service not self.

- District One’s presented an Annual Report Workshop. Thank you Crystal Shaw for providing this training to District 1 and others.



- We hope you found that completing **event reports** helped you efficiently complete your annual reports.
- Members attended ALA In the Know; Legion College, National Mission Training; Mid-Winter ALA Training; Department Convention, and county and district meetings and conferences.
- Plus you took on-line ALA Academy Courses.

**Unit/County Reports shared:**

**Working together as a team is FUN and PRODUCTIVE with POSITIVE RESULTS and provides opportunities to meet new friends**

- Overcome deaths of members by working together to recruit and engage new/younger members and to foster goodwill
- Cross Plains Unit: *Mentoring makes it less scary to take on a leadership role.* It's important to get as many members informed, involve and active.
- Caledonia Unit illustrated how to work together as fellow leaders.

***Leadership is about teamwork in Service not self.***

- Saint Nazianz Unit: Elected a new member as unit president who had never used a computer and has a fear of public speaking.
- She learned: ***Don't be afraid to try something new. Change can be a good thing. Be proud of Unit success and be humble.***



- Units worked together on 'Hike and Bike for Vets', "Fest for Vets", Jukebox Bingo, the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Sweat4Vets Walk and other projects.



- Columbia County held a mini-session for Unit officers
- Waukesha County ways to dispell bullying, rumors and gossip

- Dane County hosted county-wide events including writing Greeting Cards for Veterans & Purple Up for over 500 Military Children



**Department Leaders reminded us to ‘Serve Veterans, their families and their communities ~ For God and Country’ and ‘Recruit the Next You’.**



**My heartfelt thank you goes out to Teresa Isensee, Linda Coppock, Department officers, Membership Committee and Headquarter staff for their support and teachings this year. THANK YOU.**

**Remember Members, Units and Leaders are the foundation of the ALA’  
and HAVE FUN**



**Slide 7 UNIT MEMBER OF THE YEAR -**

**Received Seven (7) UMOTY Applications ~ Thank you units for honoring:**

JoAnn Dewart	Delavan #95	1
Mary Davitz	Caledonia #494	1
Eunice Seering	Mayville #69	2
Shirley Kubiak	Waunakee #360	3
Vickie Dux	Neillsville #73	7
Linda Maurer-Garbe	Wautoma #317	8
Terry E. Giles	Grantsburg #185	12



**We thank each of you for all you do for God and Country.**

**DRUM ROLL PLEASE:**

**The 2024 Department WI Unit Member of the Year: Terry E. Giles**

**Linda and Teresa, please escort Terry to the stage.**

Unit 185, Grantsburg nominated Terry because she is one of the members who made a huge difference in their unit. Terry has been a leader for Unit 185 since she joined in 2021. She provided input about new and creative ways for fundraising and how to support ALA members and veterans. She jumped right in and accepted the unit Poppy Chairman and Chaplain for 2021-22 and continued to hold these positions in 2023-24.

Terry loves God and Country and understands the commitment and sacrifices made by military families. In 2023, she received the Department Member of Excellence Award. When the elected unit President resigned Terry added co-president to her list of responsibilities. She reached out to District Officers for guidance. She understands the value of attending ALA In the Know.

I could go on a long time to praise Terry for all her efforts this year, but it's time for you to meet Terry. Terry please share your remarks.

**Thank you Terry for being a valued member of the American Legion Auxiliary and all you do every day in Service not Self.**

**THIS CONCLUDES THE LEADERSHIP REPORT. There are no resolutions or recommendations.**

## LEGISLATIVE

Linda Coppock, Department Chairman

President Maggie and Secretary Bonnie have encouraged us to prepare a fun, light-hearted, uplifting report. As hard as I tried to make light of Legislation, I found this is a very difficult subject to make entertaining, but I will give it a try!

I am proud to report Wisconsin has several ALA members that are pole workers and promote getting out to vote! We have several unit members that are local government officials and make their constituents aware of veteran needs when they arise. Some units have hosted a variety of events and invited their Congressional officials to attend. Events held were chili cook-offs, a pig roast, picnics in the park, events at the local post and events at the local library as well as other locations. In one community, a local alderman was set to attend an honor flight and the unit contacted the local officials and asked them all to write letters to this veteran/alderman so he'd have something to receive during the "mail-call"! What a great idea to engage your community!

National Legislative Chairman Donna Dillard asked all units to embrace the National President's focus to increase awareness about the veteran and military suicide epidemic by embracing The American Legion's (TAL) "Be the One" initiative, to share this information with our departments and encourage us to advocate for Suicide Prevention & Mental Health, and Alternative Treatments with their Representatives and their Senators.

Donna found it exciting that a WI unit reported they hosted "pig roast" and she immediately contacted me to get pictures of that particular event! Even though we were not able to produce any photos of that event, I think it is fitting that the Theresa Unit 270 in District 2 receives an "Honorable Mention Award" for gaining the attention of the National Legislative Chairman Donna Dillard for hosting a "Pig Roast"!

*(Give the citation to the Theresa Unit President if present: In appreciation of your efforts to promote the Legislative Program in your community and gaining the attention of the National Legislative Chairman Donna Dillard for hosting a "Pig Roast", the Theresa Unit 270, District 2, Department of Wisconsin is hereby given this certificate of Honorable Mention in the Legislative Program for the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin, on this day, July 12, in the year of 2024.)*

I found the Legislative Program interesting, but confusing when it came to awards, so to the best of my ability, I'd like to recognize these units for their efforts to bring legislative awareness to their communities, units, counties and/or districts in various manners:

Unit 71, Pewaukee, District 1

Unit 399, Okauchee, District 1

Unit 82, Port Washington, District 2

Unit 146, Beaver Dam, District 2

Unit 33, Neenah, District 6

The "Best Overall Legislative Report" goes to New London Unit 263, District 8.

Madam President this concludes my report. There are no recommendations or resolutions for this program.

Linda Coppock  
Legislative Chairman  
ALA Dept of WI

## MEMBERSHIP

Sue Hembrook, Department Chairman

Start off with Song --How much is that doggie in the window Link below  
Becky, Amy and Sue

### B Ride Pictures

Just a few examples of how your Department President stepped out of her comfort box to promote the Legion Family

#### Pic 1 Picture of Auxiliary Dogs

First and foremost, I would like to thank each and every one of you for all you do to promote our organization. Your dedication to what we do and why we do it is contagious. Branding yourselves and working our mission truly shows our communities what we stand for. Your support of our veterans whether they reside in one of our facilities or are a part of your communities truly is commendable.

Increasing our numbers to assist in the future of this organization is also an important task we undertake. As we all are aging it is so important to reach out to younger eligible persons to help us in our mission. It is more important once these people join to embrace them and listen to their ideas and engage with them. Their ideas may not necessarily be what we are used to however they may nicely be an addition to the way things are done. Working together is the key to success, merge the old and the new for a better end result.

Quote:

*Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable. One secret of success in life is for a man or woman to be ready for their opportunity when it comes. (Author Unknown)*

#### Pic 2

Some of your units have shared ideas they used at their events to make the community aware of all we are dedicated to. The next few slides will showcase these tables. I wish I had more to show you and we truly hope you share your membership ideas in the future. It is really wonderful to see all of you lined up so perfectly, however it is better to see the fruits of our labor or to see people in action. It may mean we do not see faces but we see the merit of their actions. We are dedicating ourselves to service, and should remind ourselves of that often. It is wonderful to be congratulated on one's accomplishments and we all need that recognition. However, we should model ourselves after the heroes we are honoring. Those men and women that went to war to fight for our freedoms. We know of many that come back and never talk or boast about what they did. They are the true patriots that served us

and ensured our lifestyle of freedom. Our true mission should be about serving others without thinking of what is in it for yourself. If you are truly serving the mission in the proper way those honors will come to us. They may be in a small way but come they will.

#### Pic 3

We have tried to make our membership goals interesting and fun with the help of our sled dogs. The Great Race incentive initiated by our National President, Lisa Williamson brought fun to this very important challenge. Our own Poppy Team headed into the race with great zeal. However, they got tired and other things stood in their way. Remember that membership is a team effort and does not end with this convention or slate of officers. A new incentive will start with the installation of the new set of officers and challenges will begin again. It is truly a team effort with everyone joining in the challenge.

#### Pic 4

It is so very understandable that many of you and your units are frustrated with the goals. During the past year the membership team has received many inquiries about the unfairness of the goals. Remember that they are an incentive, we need something to strive for or we may become complacent in reaching out to others. Like many things in life, we all experience good times and bad times. Likewise, we ebb and flow with our membership numbers. People move in and out of our communities, while others may be retiring from jobs and looking for new opportunities. It is our job to promote our mission, show others by our actions how rewarding it is to serve. More importantly, how important it is for us to serve those that have given up so much to protect and serve our very existence. We are a country of freedoms, freedoms that were and are being fought for constantly by men and women willing to step up and defend all this country of ours stands for. We must and should show them our support and pride in their efforts and sacrifices.

#### Slide 1

The units on the screen have each received a National Award for being 100% by January 31, 2024. They received the National Flag Ribbon. This award has not been highly publicized in the past, however it is a great honor to strive for. Many units do achieve this as January 31 is the deadline for members to remain in good standing with their membership

## Slide 2 (in several pages)

These units shown on the screen have maintained or increased their membership as of 30 days prior to Convention. They are working hard to maintain and grow their numbers. They are showing their communities their desire to honor those that have served or are currently serving. They are also honoring their communities by serving them. Some of these units are small and some are large, whatever their size these members are working our mission and are visible in their communities and it shows. They may not be 100% this year, but that too will come. Membership is like the ocean with ebbs and tides, with people passing away or new people entering our community. More people than we realize are eligible to join and we must approach these people and welcome them in and listen to their thought and ideas. We are all in this organization to honor someone, it is important that we put our personal differences to honor all that each of us are holding dear.

## Slide 3 (in several pages)

These units have achieved 100%, their dedication and perseverance have gotten them to attain this. Membership is not easy and it is a grueling endeavor. Reminding members to pay their dues in a timely manner. Calling those that do not attend meetings to find out if they are okay or if something is hindering them from coming to meetings or joining in activities. These all take time and resources. The membership chairman of your unit or district should not handle this alone. Remember it takes a “village”. Most likely the member that has been absent is close to some member, have that member be a buddy to them. Maybe they just do not drive at night any more or for some other reason have difficulties in attending things. Reach out and assist, we need to honor our members as well as those that served as they too belong because of someone that served.

## Slide 4

100% units by January 31, 2024 These units received a National Ribbon

Remember that while we are so very proud of these units that have attained these merits. We are also very proud of all of our units. Like was stated previously, membership takes a village and is on going. We are going to rise and fall with our membership totals. The important thing is to embrace our mission and most importantly remember that your membership on someone that has given up a lot to serve you in guaranteeing your freedoms.

Pic 1 – Repeated

## Awards

### Top 5 - % Units

District 12	Unit 379	Birchwood
District 6	Unit 479	St Nazianz
District 8	Unit 370	Wild Rose
District 1	Unit 21	Kenosha
District 12	Unit 12	Spooner

### Special Mention

District 11	Unit 454 Land O'Lakes	154.55%
District 6	Unit 165 Two Rivers	153.33%
District 8	Unit 370 Wild Rose	181.82%

These three units have been chartered for a little more than a year and have achieved so much, they are dedicated and active in their communities.

We have to be more flexible in our units, members should interact with each other and share responsibilities. Growth needs new ideas and the unit must be a team to work together to foster this. Members should serve in the different responsibilities of leadership and rotate those offices around. New ideas will foster growth. We in our units cannot become stagnant.

### Districts – Membership Chairman receive dogs

District 1	Crystal Shaw Zondra Morris
District 2	Sandy Mack
District 3	Lisa Bowen Karen Runk
District 4	Bonnie Jakubczyk Kathy Grom
District 5	Gayla Ruocco Linda Bartell
District 6	Patti Westphal Diane Steinert
District 7	Helene Stein Christina Petranovich

District 8            Fran Bender  
                              Linda Tryczak

District 9            Sue Keyzers  
                              Bonnie Blink

District 10           Teresa Steinke  
                              Mary Townsend

District 11           Theresa Schindler  
                              Claudia Osero

District 12           Barb McDaniel

I would like to congratulate 12<sup>th</sup> District as they have faced some challenges this past year and are still in 1<sup>st</sup> Place in ranking.

Personally, I would like to thank you all for your support and cooperation this past year. I know that you will be just as supportive to next year's team.

# NATIONAL SECURITY

Karen Runk, Department Chairman

The American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin continues to support our geographically dispersed service members and their families. Wisconsin does not have a large military installation, however, there are several National Guard and Reserve Units located throughout the state. Reservists and National Guards are continuously on the move, both in training and missions across the globe. Service Members and their families were supported at Sendoff and Welcome Home events, as well as Family Days at their Reserve and Guard units by preparing and serving food and coordinating activities for the children and families. Auxiliaries worked with the Sons of The American Legion in providing A.L.F (American Legion Family) dogs to military children at these sendoff/welcome home events for National Guard and reserve troops.

Auxiliary Units generously supported the USO of Wisconsin, the Fisher House and Operation Homefront with monetary and in-kind donations. Unit members reported over 1,500 hours volunteer hours and over \$20,200 in monetary and in-kind donations made in support of our troops and the National Security program; including the Fisher House, USO of Wisconsin, Operation Homefront and Troop & Family Support. Units throughout the state sent care packages to deployed service members. National Guard and Reserve families were “adopted” throughout the year and the holidays, made camo quilts, providing meals and gifts to military families. Auxiliary members supported the families of their deployed with meals, groceries, and personal visits. Wisconsin Units fully supported the Wisconsin Soldier & Family Readiness program with gift cards, meals, transportation, greeting cards, school supplies & other family needs of active duty across Wisconsin. The Readiness group knows that the Wisconsin American Legion Family, and more specifically the Auxiliary, is prepared to meet the needs of Soldiers and their families.

Units held banquets and picnics honoring the first responders in their communities. Members assembled “thank you packages” for their first responders and law enforcement personnel. The packages contained bottled water, pre-packaged snacks, convenience store or drive thru gift cards and thank you cards created by school-aged children. A simple thank you can brighten a busy day for our on-duty first responders.

Members supported the American Red Cross by hosting blood drives, donating many pints of much needed blood and provided food, refreshments, and volunteers for blood drives. The amount of donated baked goods & snacks for community blood drives blood drives was immeasurable!

Members ensured that blood donors were amply supplied with recovery snacks and drinks as they monitored their community members after donating. Auxiliary members also partnered with the Red Cross to organize and publicize the events. Members also participated in community emergency preparedness training and completed CPR/AED training for certification.



Wisconsin Auxiliary members presented graduating high seniors with Honor Cords as they enter the military, hosting events for the graduate and parents to be recognized and encouraged to reach out to the American Legion Family for support. Units held job fairs for veterans, partnering with state and local agencies to bring more employment opportunities to our veterans separating from the military. Members snipped & clipped large quantities of coupons to ship & supply overseas commissaries. Coupons for food and non-food items were sent to numerous overseas commissaries in several countries to benefit military families living abroad on a regular basis. Wisconsin Units distributed 16 Blue Star banners and 1 Gold Star banner to eligible military family members.

POW/MIA recognition was included in many Auxiliary meetings with a display, table or moment of silence in recognition of their service and sacrifice. Hundreds of soldiers, sailors, marines and coast guardsmen are still MIA today. At least two Units participated in the reception & honored burial of MIA soldiers recovered this year. The Grafton Unit 355 reported the celebratory events in their community and Legion Post Family. The recovered soldier in Grafton is one of the Legion Post's name's sake, Roy Coulson Harms. A fantastic welcome home for the WWII airmen was attended by surviving family members and other honored guests.

Wisconsin members observed the Month of the Military Child and Purple Up! Day this past April. This chairman promoted the Month of Military Children and Purple Up! on a new National Security Facebook page and developed a branded & printable Purple Up! Day card that is posted on our department website for members use. Several Units and Counties wore purple at their April meetings, while other Units sent the printable Purple Up! Day Card that is available on the Wisconsin website under the National Security Program page. Purple Up! Day Cards were signed and sent with gift cards to children of Reservists and National Guards. The cards were also part of a pencil pouch filled with purple pencils, spinners and gift cards. Units and Counties filled activity backpacks with age-appropriate books, crafts, recipes, treasure hunt games, and comic & coloring books. Purple Up! activity backpacks were gifted to active-duty children within Wisconsin and across the U.S. Participating in the Purple Up! Activities can open the doors for more involvement with active-duty families, and future events such as deployment care packages, family support during deployment, job fairs & family picnics. Of course, there is the potential for Legion Family membership opportunities by participating in the various elements of the National Security Program. Lastly, Purple Up! Day stayed in the Legion Family at Fort Huachuca, Arizona where CSM Runk gathered his team for their Military Children on base. Positioned near the school on base, soldiers lined the street with love and encouraging signage for their children. Yes, Legionnaire and Army CSM Runk is brother to Wisconsin's National Security Chairman. (Photo on next page)



(Additional Pictures are included with this report)

## OFFICE POLICY

Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Department Chairman

Madame President,

Primarily the responsibility of our office staff is to support the functions of our units throughout the Department. The main function of the Office Policy Committee is to oversee the Department Office Operation, employee policies and procedures, work rules and the implementation of the Department program's support. The committee works with the Department Executive Secretary/Treasurer to ensure these processes are successfully implemented and further determines office equipment needs, salaries and benefits management and proper distribution of program information.

The American Legion Auxiliary is extremely fortunate to have a very capable Executive Secretary/Treasurer Bonnie Dorniak, who has been with us for almost 14 years. She is ably assisted by Linda Cason, 51 years, Carrie Thrasher, 16 years and Andrea Stoltz, 16 years, a grand total of 97 years of service. These dedicated employees process membership, distribute program information from national and the department chairmen, and work with the Department President to schedule training sessions, conferences and convention, provide administrative support of the ALA Badger Girls State program and work in liaison with The American Legion editing the WISCONSIN. They respond to all inquiries and problems of unit members. They do the necessary research to enable a quick response in a friendly, professional manner. I think for our staff with the many years of service and support, they deserve a round of applause from all of us.

Thank you.

In addition to our office staff, we have two very capable and efficient members who are also employees of the Auxiliary, who run our Poppy Shop. They pay the poppy makers and just by being the warm, friendly and effective people they are, give our organization a wonderful name at the Zablocki Hospital and the community in general. Sue Hembrook is Poppy Shop Supervisor and she is assisted by Bonnie Jakubczyk. Sue Hembrook was also instrumental in opening a second poppy shop facility at the War Memorial Center.

The Office Policy Committee is composed of three members, Virgie Kodl, Diana Sirovina and this chairman who serve three-year rotating terms. We are pleased to report that our involvement has been minimal this year as usual thanks to our highly effective and efficient staff. Our thanks and appreciation are extended to all for making this a most rewarding committee assignment. I'm pleased to report that our Department Executive Committee at their spring meeting voted to ratify the continued employment of our Department Executive Secretary/Treasurer Bonnie Dorniak. Please join me to thank Bonnie for her continued diligence and exemplary service to our organization by a combined thank you.

Thank you, Madam President, that concludes my report.

## **PAST PRESIDENTS PARLEY**

Char Kiesling, Department Chairwoman

I have been honored this past year to be the chair of the Department of Wisconsin's Past Presidents Parley. After being the Past Dept. President 2018-2019, I continued to gain many more friendships and continued opportunities sharing my past experiences but also continued to learn the many facets of this organization. Having been a Registered Nurse since 1967, they say once a nurse...always a nurse. The same holds true for being a member of the ALA and a Past President!

The Dept. holds an annual meeting during our annual convention. Members are reminded to continue the goals of PPP by continuing their mentoring of all ALA members, continue education in the skills of leadership, and encouraging recruitment. Our PPP is a standing committee of the ALA. It's objective is the promotion of activities toward positive actions or outcomes for the Auxiliary.

Our knowledge of the PPP eligibility is a major concern to recruitment and the communication of this information is critical to our membership. These eligibility requirements were repeated several times per the chairman's report in the department's Unit Mailings and in the *WISCONSIN* publication. There is always confusion and clarification needs to be passed: 1) member must have served as a president of a unit, county, district, department, or at the national level for a year, 2) a member who served as a president for part of a year and who, due to illness or conditions beyond their control, had to terminate their term, or 3) any vice-president acting as president due to the resignation or death of her President. If the member succeeds herself in the position, she is eligible after her first term and is able to join the PPP.

Our PPP supports 3, \$1,000 scholarships a year, one in nursing and the other two in some other related health career. Membership was increased at the annual meeting from \$5 to \$7 annually due to concerns that donations and membership dues would be inadequate in providing the scholarships. This was passed without debate. This year's PPP Scholarships were awarded to NURSING: Lydia LaPorte, Pewaukee, and Hannah Danielson, Marshfield. HEALTH CAREER: Carson Welter, Mauston.

Our PPP also recognizes and awards a MENTOR of the YEAR AWARD at our Dept. Convention. This is our second year to award a past president who has gone above and beyond the unit level and is continuing to be a leader and mentors members of this organization on a regular and on-going basis. A letter of nomination is not to exceed 1,000 words and sent to the PPP chair by the deadline. Criteria considered:

1. Must be a member in good standing.
2. A history of being involved in multiple levels of the organization.

3. Prior leadership roles on unit, county, district, and/or department levels.
4. Leads by example.
5. Demonstrates passion in working the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.
6. Willing to work in the background not seeking recognition for their actions.
7. Takes a personal interest in the future leaders of the organization.
8. Attends district and department events when possible.
9. Open to change in our organization.
10. A Legion Family supporter.

Also helpful to this Chairman, was a list of Resources and Information, available to the PPP chair or any ALA member.

Mentor of the Year Award application.

How to Mentor a New Member.

In addition and most importantly, our Dept. recognizes and honors a Past President at each annual convention and this is the responsibility of the PPP Chairman to organize. At this year's convention Past Department President Florence Wasley will be recognized as our Honored Guest. Florence's year was 2010-2011 and is a 48-year PUFL member. Florence is a retired teacher, becoming more involved in the ALA. Her theme was "Striving For Excellence" has proven to be a part of her life after attending a one-room country school. Her special project was the helping of HOMELESS WOMEN VETERANS. This grant has become one of Wisconsin's foremost grant programs. Florence continues to share her experiences and knowledge in her kind and gentle way which makes it comfortable for others to depend on her without reservation.

The Department has a CALVACADE OF MEMORIES at Dept. Headquarters located in a large, beautiful curio in the museum. The Cavalcade is our way of sharing, preserving, and showing the history of the ALA and to honor the significant contributions and sacrifices made. It is the duty of the chairman to maintain it. Momentoes of each new Past President is added at the end of her term and items labeled with her name and year. Further history is recorded at headquarters additional description of the momento, and the President's Theme.

Whenever Past Presidents join this group of ambassadors for the good of the American Legion Auxiliary, they realize the amount of information needing to be shared at each level. The PAST PRESIDENTS PARLEY is a leader in forming a stronger and positive attitude, growing in its abilities to do good for our VETERANS, MILITARY, and THEIR FAMILIES and FOR the LOVE of OUR GOD and COUNTRY!

# POPPY PROGRAM

Kay Grosskopf, Department Chairman

It has been quite the learning year. I learned about the dedication members have to the Poppy program, new ways to distribute poppies, how to be creative, and I learned when things change, members do what needs to be done. I learned we must educate our society about the poppy. I learned we really enhance the lives of our veterans, military and their families one day at a time.

We have 170 units dedicated to the Poppy program. This represents 48% of Wisconsin's units. These units increased the number of locations and the amount of time they spent distributing poppies. They recruited more members to distribute poppies and included veterans and junior members. I would like to think we have more participating but unless it's reported we have no way of finding out our true impact.

We're learning unattended cans on counters don't attract much attention. And we no longer restrict ourselves to Memorial Day weekend. New ways to distribute poppies starts with reviewing last year's results. Determine where units had the most success. Why did those locations work? Then prioritize those locations. Expand those ideas to new locations. Here are a few examples.

Besides setting up at businesses, look into attending youth events at the rod and gun club or host a Trunk or Treat.

Unit 375 Mukwonago set up a distribution point at a garden located next to a greenhouse on Mother's Day weekend. Their Post is located at a railroad crossing. When the train has traffic stopped, they distribute poppies to stopped traffic waiting for the train to pass. Location, location. Location!

Unit 82 Port Washington distributes poppies during a local pub crawl.

Unit 391 Fremont provides poppy wrapped candy canes for Santa to hand out at Frolic.

Unit 33 Neenah is in the community all year (insert slide from Char) "planting" poppy flower beds downtown, decorating a poppy float for parades, dress in 1800 attire for the Memorial Day Wreath River Ceremony, and even decorate the Christmas tree at city hall with patriotic decorations and large handmade poppies.

Unit 185 Grantsburg teams up with a local bar. The bar donates \$2 for every pre-selected drink purchased in May. They also host a jeans day at a medical center with proceeds going to poppies.

Unit 524 White Lake works with businesses to host "Poppy Bloom" each year to assist with poppy distribution.

And there are many other ideas as well.

As things change, we change. Unit 79 Burlington, being creative, wanted to educate and capture the ever-growing cashless society. They developed a bookmark to hand out. (insert slide 1) The front has Poppies and the ALA brand. On the back is the poem *Who Will Wear a Poppy* with a QR code at the bottom. The code takes the recipient to a Go Fund Me page that has information about the poppy, poppy program and the opportunity to donate. Check it out and let's expand on this idea!

This year the Poppy Poster contest was challenging. All the posters were well done but Class IV, grades 8-9, was especially challenging. (insert winners sheet) After asking for assistance from a past Department president, Poppy Shop chair (who checked some details with National Poppy Chair Norma Tramm) and several others members, the committee couldn't make the call. It was decided it was a tie. I passed the buck and forwarded both to Division. Good luck to all the Wisconsin poster winners.

I sense from reports, there are plenty of units that host a contest but don't submit them for competition.

At this time, I would like to present the Poppy Unit of year award. This unit distributes poppies all year but focuses on Memorial Day weekend. (see Carrie for slides) There are proclamations from the mayor. Donating 169 hours, veterans and youth help unit members distribute 3000 poppies. They are in the schools presenting to students, hosting a poppy coloring contest, awarding prizes and giving teachers poppy themed thank you cards. They are out at Community events. They decorate the Post hall with a poppy themed tree at Christmas. They participated in Trunk or Treat with the Post military truck and have a Poppy Princess pumpkin. They are educating the community. I'd like to present this year's Poppy unit award to New London Unit 263 Poppy chair Audrey Stuczynski.

There were no submissions for Little Miss Poppy. Sad because reading the reports, many units have a Poppy Princess. Let's change that this year.

How can we educate? Start a conversation. Let that person know what this little red poppy means to you and to our organization. Tell them why the poppy program matters and why we matter. Tell them how we enhance the lives of our veterans through the programs we support. My challenge to each and every one of you this year is to talk to and educate one, yes just one, person this year. How many people will this impact? What a difference it will make for our program.

And I can't say enough about our 17 veterans who make over 400,000 poppies to supply eight or more states with poppies. It doesn't happen without them.

Madam President, thank you for this appointment. This concludes my report.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Bob Shappell, Department Chairman

- Wisconsin has approximately 365 units
- 134 units completed the Public Relations report (36.7% of units)
- Top 3 Districts for reporting were 2<sup>nd</sup> with 61.4%, 6<sup>th</sup> with 53.8%, 8<sup>th</sup> with 44.8%
- 95 units reported having either a Unit or Joint Facebook page
- 83 Units reported that they followed the Department Facebook page
- 76 Units reported either a Unit or Joint newsletter

Compared to last year's reports, social media use is rising, though feedback from annual unit narratives and PR reports indicates a lack of understanding on how to effectively use Facebook especially. For example, a significant number of units indicated that they have a Facebook page, but did not follow the Department Facebook page. A possible reason for this is that they either have dormant or unused Facebook pages, or did not understand how to share or repost from other pages (Department, National, community, etc.).

Several units reported they started an Instagram account in hopes of reaching younger potential members. As a result of our PR Chats, there is interest in establishing Youtube channels for their units in order to have a central presentation area for videos. Many units reported using written and newspaper articles to publicize and report on events.

One concern is members using personal Facebook pages or emails to conduct the unit's business and activities. Moving forward, the PR Committee will address this issue and help units establish unit emails as well as providing help on how to establish an organization Facebook page.

Unit reports, as well as personal observations, indicate that branding is on almost everyone's mind, especially the new brand mark. Several commented that the new clothing branding was a good complement to the ALA Emblem on some of their handouts and brochures. Several specifically commented that they were experiencing more questions because the new branding clearly identifies the ALA by a readable name.

A good number of units reported community involvement and enthusiasm, although too many of the reports failed to mention this topic.

One area of concern is that a significant number of units reported either no unit newsletter, or less than 3 issues per year. Most of these units did not report using email for newsletter distribution. Our emphasis on the importance of internal communications within a unit must be more focused, and provide the units with specific ideas on how to keep in contact with their members. Keeping those members you rarely see informed on the unit's activities may turn them into members you see many times during the year.



Our PR Chats were established to help create information sharing and discussion about Public Relations topics and issues among the Units. Seven Chat sessions on Zoom (each with 2 hours of available time) covered the topics of assessing your unit's reputation in the community, PR tools, internal PR, external PR, local media, social media, and community visibility and involvement. The chats were open discussions, and covered many other topics. A written summary of each chat (generally 3 pages) was distributed throughout the Department.

I would like to recognize several Units whose reports indicate a solid and successful PR program. Unit 263 in New London and Unit 243 in Plymouth are obviously doing great things and making sure their members and their communities are informed about them. I would like to present Mary Petrie, President of Unit 189, with a Certificate of Appreciation for her great work in public relations. From fundraising to craft fairs to children's Christmas at the theater to outstanding newsletters, she has led the way.

Thank you for your hard work in making sure your Units have effective and interesting PR programs. We do great things, and everyone needs to hear about them.

Bob Shappell  
PR Committee Chairperson

**RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE 2024**  
**DIANA SIROVINA, DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN**

Madam President,

The purpose of the Department Convention Resolutions Committee is to screen and recommend appropriate action on resolutions submitted for consideration at the Department Convention.

This committee evaluates the submitted resolutions for legality, merit, and form.

This year the committee did not receive any resolutions for review. The committee was scheduled to meet via Zoom, but since there were no resolutions, this was not necessary.

Madam President, may I introduce the members that were appointed to serve on this committee?

Committee members were: Amy Luft, Kathy Grom, Becky Mueller and Christina Petranovich.

Madam President, this concludes my report.

# STANDING RULES

Diane Duscheck, Department Chairman

## 1. Standing Rules

A Department Standing Rules handout was included with your registration materials. Standing Rules are the guide to how the unit normally functions. In other words, if you ever wanted to say, “But we’ve always done it that way,” this is the place you can do it. Standing Rules are unique to each unit, district, and department. They outline how we operate. And because standing rules address the details of the administration of our organization, they also have the flexibility to be amended with a simple motion at a meeting.

## 2. How often do you review and update unit Standing Rules?

In the year end reports, this chairman appreciated the candor of many unit presidents when they were asked how often they review the standing rules and when was the last time the standing rules were updated. Some groups said they review their standing rules every year or two, they edit the document as needed, and the Standing Rules are modern and up-to-date. Other groups stated the last time they looked at standing rules was about 1940. Those documents are out-of-date. Much has changed in the Auxiliary since 1940. Much has changed in the Auxiliary in the past five years. It’s time to take a peek at your standing rules and make sure they reflect the way your unit operates today. Are your Standing Rules up-to-date or out-of-date? Let’s look at a couple items that are normally described in Standing Rules.

## 3. Where and when is the meeting?

Standing Rules are the place to record meeting information about:

Which months do we have meetings?

Any special celebrations on Veterans Day? Or Memorial Day?

Where will we meet? The library? The church basement? The retirement home? Or the post?

## 4. Where will we donate our funds?

Perhaps the unit or district donates to the same veteran projects every year.

This is the place to list that donations will go to:

Honor Flight to send veterans to Washington, DC, to visit the memorials.

And the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation to support Veterans Creative Arts, National Scholarships, and Veteran Projects.

Or Dogs 2 Dog Tags, saving our veterans one dog at a time.

Camp American Legion, an amazing outdoor respite area in northern Wisconsin.

And all the veterans homes in Wisconsin.

## 5. What special perks do we have for members?

Standing Rules are also the place to mention the special times that we reach out to members:

Sending a card when a member is hospitalized? Or when a family member passes?

Sending a birthday card?

Or paying the dues of Junior members, or those who have been members for over 60 years?

All the items mentioned are appropriate for Standing Rules.

## 6. [Pic of Red Book Standing Rules]

Now let's consider updates and changes to the department Standing Rules.

[I'll read the printed changes to the Standing Rules at this time.]

### **Proposed Changes to Department Standing Rules for 2024 Convention Action**

#### **Page 62 - Guide for Executive Secretary-Treasurer**

##### ***Current Reading***

1.c. In the event of the death of any Past Department President or member of the Executive Board or their respective partner, a memorial gift, not to exceed \$30.00 be sent by the Department to the family.

##### ***Proposed Reading***

1.c. In the event of the death of any Past Department President or member of the Executive Board or their respective partner, a memorial gift, not to exceed \$40.00 be sent by the Department to the family.

#### **Page 65 – Disbanding a Unit**

##### ***Current Reading***

It is the suggestion of Department that the procedure for disbanding a Unit is as follows:

1. Prior to consideration of a Charter cancellation, the Unit should first involve and work with the Department and/or District Membership team.

[Letters “a” and “b” remain the same.]

2. After the Revitalization Team has exhausted all means to save the Unit, the following will apply:

a. A Unit with fewer than 10 Senior members requesting to relinquish their charter for cancellation must send an advance written notice to their membership.

b. The Unit must vote to relinquish their charter for cancellation at a regular Unit meeting, or by written response.

c. The Unit with fewer than 10 Senior members will request the District President present a motion to the Department Executive Board to disband the Unit and relinquish the charter.

### ***Proposed Reading***

The procedure for disbanding a Unit is as follows:

1. Prior to consideration of a Charter cancellation, the Unit should first involve and work with the Department and/or District Membership/Leadership teams.

[Letters “a” and “b” remain the same.]

2. After the Membership/Leadership Teams have exhausted all means to save the Unit, the following will apply:

a. A Unit requesting to relinquish their charter for cancellation must send an advance written notice to their membership.

b. The Unit must vote to relinquish their charter for cancellation at a regular Unit meeting, or by written response.

c. ***Delete item “c”.***

[Change items “d through h” to letters “c through g”.]

### **Page 66 - Past Presidents Parley**

#### ***Current Reading***

7. Names of Past Presidents who are current members of the Unit, together with dues of \$5.00 each, to be returned to Department Headquarters by February 1<sup>st</sup> annually.

#### ***Proposed Reading (passed by Past Presidents Parley in 2023)***

7. Names of Past Presidents who are current members of the Unit, together with dues of \$7.00 each, to be returned to Department Headquarters by February 1<sup>st</sup> annually.

### **Page 66 - Past Presidents Parley**

#### ***Current Reading***

12. A complimentary ticket and corsage will be offered to the “Unit Member of the Year” and “Active-Duty Service Woman of the Year” for the Recognition Reception at the Department Convention to be paid out of the Past Presidents Parley Fund.

#### ***Proposed Reading***

12. A complimentary ticket and corsage/boutonniere will be offered to the “Unit Member of the Year” for the Recognition Reception at the Department Convention to be paid out of the Past Presidents Parley Fund.

### **Guide for Incoming Department President**

#### ***New Section***

1. A candidate for Department President is encouraged to plan a theme, design president and membership pins, and formulate a plan of action and such other duties as required. This process shall begin no more than one year in advance of the election for term of office being sought.
2. It is the policy of the Department that the incoming Department President conduct a leadership orientation for the six continuing District Presidents and the six newly elected District Presidents prior to the department convention. The Incoming Department President may contact the Leadership Chair or any other qualified member for assistance. This meeting will be held at Department Headquarters with expenses as determined by the Finance Committee annually.
3. The Incoming Department President may choose a Past Department President rather than the National Executive Committee person to preside at installation.
4. There is a Department President's Special Project in Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and/or Children & Youth, the nature of which to be discussed with the Department Chair, the final decision to be made by the Department President.

On behalf of the Standing Rules pre-convention committee, I move acceptance of the Standing Rules as printed.

[Dept Pres Maggie– discussion and vote]

Madam President, may I introduce the committee?

The Pre-Convention Standing Rules committee included Sandy Mack, Mary Petrie, and this Chairman. We were joined by President Maggie, Parliamentarian Teresa Isensee, and Secretary Bonnie.

Madam President, this concludes my report.

## VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

Bonnie Jakubczyk, Department Chairman

The year started off in August with Creative Art competition (pic 2), baby shower, and a request for fidget dolls. (Pic 3)

The nine VA facilities suggest items for the Department President's gift (pic 4) (on the screen now). Some of the choices were: roasters, Bluetooth speakers, large screen tv, gas gift cards, money for free meals at King Café, Diaper bags, utility carts, and an outdoor awning which came to \$15,594.

198 out of a possible 354 Unit Narratives were received. (pic 5)

### Reported totals

Service to Veterans Hours	84,943
Creative Arts	\$6,570.00
Camp American Legion	\$51,157.90
Christmas Gift Shop	\$14,029.00
Homeless Women Veterans Grant Fund	\$15,552.64
Fisher House	\$12,157.00
VA	\$84,648.74
<b>Total donated</b>	<b>\$184,115.28</b>

These are just the reported totals, for which I know the actual hours are much higher. Total donated \$184,115.28

104 Units provided cards for Veterans. 22 Units participated with Quilts of Valor with 168 quilts.

Getting back to normal units had veterans come for meals, concerts, nursing home visits and bingos. Donations were made to Honor Flights, Quilts of Valor, and Dog to Dog Tags.

District Two Port Washington Unit 82 had the best VA & R narrative report. They donated \$8,000 for Project Bravo's service dogs. Sock it to the Soldiers a sock drive for homeless veterans with 1,000 pairs of socks along with sweatpants for over \$8,000. They support veterans with cards, gift bags and activity books yearly. They have a Caring for Caregivers group for caregivers.

**Pic 6-7** Central Division Vice President Carol Robinson and Dept President Maggie gave a helping hand at Zablocki's Diva Day. **Pic 8-9** The next day the two were busy decorating

Christmas trees, making favors and signing cards for our veterans at the Milwaukee County Fun Day

**Pic 10** During Mid-Winter members brought in toiletry items for socks of love for the veterans. Senior and Junior members made tray favors and tie blankets. Boards were there with VA hospital needs, VA ideas and contact information, along with a heart pillow and tray favor ideas. It was a fun and productive day

**Pic 11** Since or Honored Department Past President Florence Wasley started the Homeless Female Grant fund. I thought it would be nice to show how we have helped our female veterans.

**Pic 12** Our Department Veterans & Family Emergency Assistance Grant helps with any family emergent financial needs. This is a one-time deal for Wisconsin veterans and their immediate family members (spouse, and dependent children living in their household.) Some examples of assistance are overdue utilities, past due rent, medical expenses, car loans or repairs. Funds do not go to veteran they go to landlord, car repairs, insurance and utility companies. Their application goes to the committee of VA & R Chair, Finance Chair and Department President for their review of approval.

#### **Veterans & Family Emergency Assistance Grant**

**\$37,179.29** helped 17 veterans this year

67 units + one individual donated **\$11,001.33**

The difference was paid through previous years donations and is held in a restricted account

**Both of these funds are strictly run through your Service Not Self donations.**

**Pic 13** Thank you Auxiliary members for

Enhancing the Lives of our Veterans, Military and their Families, One Day at a Time with your talent, service and generous donations

**Pic 14** Just a friendly reminder: To check out the VA & R articles in the convention book. And Yes, reporting does make a difference.



# **CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP**

## **Diana Sirovina, Department Chairman**

Madam President:

What were you doing last September? Were you enjoying those last precious days of the beautiful summer weather? That's great! But some for some of us September means getting ready for Christmas...ALA Christmas Gift Shop that is! It may seem early, but creating a great experience for our veterans in long-term care facilities takes some time!

After dates for collecting orders were established, the fun began. Shopping, that is! Something Christmas Gift Shop Vice Chair Linda Bartel and I are well qualified to do! Browsing Amazon is always fun, but when we are on a mission to find the perfect gifts for family members of all ages, and stay on budget, it becomes a bit of a challenge. We try to find unique and interesting items, as well as some practical ones. And since some of the veterans have been in these facilities for some time, we try to find different items each year.

After a couple weeks of shopping, we finally had the right gifts to create our gift catalog. This year there were several jewelry items, a lovely, scented candle, bath salts, a few tools, fishing lures and flashlights. And of course, toys, games, and Lego's for the kids, among other things.

This year for the first time in several years, we got to visit the veterans residing in Boland Hall at the Wisconsin Veterans Home in Union Grove to help them select gifts for their families. President Maggie and Vice President Sue Hembrook joined Linda and I for this special day. As we visited with the veterans when we helped them select their gifts, we could tell by the smiles on their faces that this program means so much to them. Some shared stories about their loved ones, while others were just happy to have someone visit with them for a little while.

We were not able to visit the Zablocki facility this year, so staff graciously helped us by taking orders from the veterans in five different areas.

Then it was time to get organized. Orders were numbered and entered into a master spreadsheet, addresses verified, items counted, and the orders placed on Amazon.

A few days later, the fun really began. First it was a couple packages. Then stacks of boxes of all sizes. One day so many arrived the Amazon Prime driver actually helped me get the boxes into the house!

Opening the boxes and sorting all the items was more fun! Orders were checked for accuracy, sorted by veteran, fit into boxes, weighed, and measured, so they were ready for shipping.

There were a few issues now and then. We had a few items that were out of stock, so different similar items had to be found and substituted. A couple of things arrived broken and had to be replaced. But the most interesting item was the fuzzy socks. They were a new item this year, really soft and fluffy, cozy warm and soft pastel colors, 7 pairs per package. The big surprise was that they arrived in vacuum sealed packages that were about a half inch thick. Not only were they an odd shape but really not that nice looking as a gift for a special person! So, I opened one of them. Turns out that once the vacuum seal is broken, they magically poof up to their full fluffy size! We decided they needed to be contained somehow, so the fluffy socks were quickly stuffed into organza bags. Unfortunately, they also left a fair amount of fluffy fuzz all over my living room!

Then the time came to finish the project. A group of dedicated and talented volunteers gathered at Post 449 one slightly snowy Sunday morning to take on the task of wrapping those 380 gifts. Their enthusiasm was contagious, and the job was done in record time! We were fortunate to have extra help to finish packing, sealing, and labeling the boxes for shipping. Oddly enough, we did find out exactly how many Legion Family men it takes to seal one simple box!. That would be SAL members Bob Sirovina & Brian Geiger and Legionnaire Gene Hembrook.

All the boxes were delivered to the post office the next day and arrived at their destinations well before Christmas.

For us, Christmas Gift Shop is an annual event that we look forward to with great enthusiasm. We know that no matter how much time and effort goes into the program, the amount of joy that it brings to our veterans and their families is well worth it. This year our Christmas Gift Shop program, once again, was very successful.

It is important to note here that this great program would not be possible without the generous support from units all across Wisconsin. Thank you for remembering our hospitalized veterans and their families at Christmas!

Madam President, this concludes my report.

# HOMELESS WOMEN VETERANS

Pat Smith, Department Chairman

A big thank you to those units who submitted reports. Seventy-six units reported donating to the Homeless Women Veterans Grant Fund (HWVGF). Those donations amounted to \$12,213. I know much more than that was actually donated. In-kind donations reportedly amounting to \$5,214 were made to other organizations that help homeless women veterans.

I found it interesting to see how units raised money and how those funds were disbursed. A joint effort with Auxiliary and SAL working together hosted an event where members slept in tents overnight; hosted a community breakfast with raffles and, together, raised \$10,000. The Mercer unit did a "Run for a Vet" event and donated the \$8,000 raised to Northwoods Veterans Homestead. Working as an American Legion Family in conjunction with our communities is a very positive "how-to-succeed" secret. There are many community members who would like to be part of an effort sponsored by the Auxiliary or the Family. Thereby supporting any number of our organization's programs. The community is also given the opportunity to make a difference.

Who was helped? Many times, we never know who, how many, or how recipients were helped. Just the knowledge that we have helped should be the greatest of satisfactions. Units donate to: Boudicca House; Tiny Houses; Homeless Vets Initiative; Baby Showers at Zablocki or Tomah; Heat for Heroes; gift cards to a County VSO; or helped to make the Auxiliary's Midwinter Project such an amazing success.

One unit repaired and painted a ramp for a homeless Women's Shelter. Another donated a basket for the raffle to honor Florence Wasley (actually many did). The money raised by the Third District Basket Raffle was donated to the HWVGF.

I was invited to attend the Legion Riders' "Stu's Cruise 2024" which started in Superior. Part of the money raised was donated to the HWVGF. I personally want to thank the Riders for doing this even though the weather did not always agree!! The Riders truly are an excellent example of the American Legion Family working together!

The idea quite simply is that it doesn't have to be done all at once. The size of the donation does not matter - it all counts. The bottom line is that what we do really makes a difference!

## **SERVICE TO VETERANS**

Linda Kostka, Department Chairman

As a proud member of the American Legion Family, I want to Thank You for making a difference. Making a difference in the lives of Veterans and their families, you are truly amazing Auxiliary members.

Unit members across the State continue to remember and provide services to our veterans, service members, their families and their caregivers.

Volunteers provided meals and transportation, donated comfort items, supplied basic items and cleaned both new and old homes.

Units Distributed warm clothing, knitted and crocheted, blankets, scarves, skull caps, and participated in stand downs. They mailed veterans, letters and cards for birthdays and holidays. Many units participated in care-packages for our service members who are deployed.

Care-givers are often forgotten but not our Auxiliary, we remembered them with flowers, cards of encouragement, Certificates of Appreciation, and even gift cards to grab a coffee or for the salon!

Again, Thank You for being who you are, that being proud, hardworking members of the American Legion Auxiliary.