

PROGRAMS

Patriotism and veterans advocacy are so important to the American Legion Auxiliary that for more than 100 years, we've been serving, educating, and donating to America's finest – our active-duty service members and military veterans.

We also firmly believe that we must serve, educate, and donate to everyone in our Communities, not just veterans, to protect the way of life that we call American.

We try to answer the call of "Service Not Self" by working numerous programs. Those programs are varied in emphasis and are designed to help each member find where they are passionate about using their time and talents.

Why We Matter:

Every year, the American Legion Auxiliary reports to the United States Congress the hours our members have volunteered conducting the programs and the amount of money they have raised, spent, and donated backing up their Mission, Vision, Purpose, and Values.

At the August 2026 National Convention the numbers reported for the preceding 12 months were:

6,741,745 volunteered hours

\$269,581,186 raised/spent/donated

Poppy:

Connecting the visual image of the poppy with the sacrifice of service made by our veterans has been the no. 1 goal of the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program. Typically on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, millions of red crepe paper poppies, handmade by veterans whenever possible as part of their therapeutic rehabilitation, are distributed across the country in exchange for donations that go directly to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans in our communities. The Poppy Program raises community awareness and respect for our veterans by educating Auxiliary members and the public about the symbol of the poppy, memorialized from a line in the poem "In Flanders Fields," written on the battlefield during World War I by Col. John McCrae.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields."

—Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae December 8, 1915

The financial benefit realized by our nation's veterans as a result of poppy distribution is huge; in FY 25/26 poppy donations were \$3.1 million. In addition, making poppies allows disabled and hospitalized veterans to earn ancillary spending money. Children are involved in spreading the poppy message by participating in the Poppy Poster Contest, which is held in local schools for students in grades 2 – 12. The Auxiliary promotes the poppy as a symbol of the sacrifices our military have made, a symbol to open people's hearts and inspire them to donate.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation:

Coming home may be the end of one journey for many veterans; it is also the beginning of a new journey to transition to a "new normal." Helping them get there is at the core of the purpose and service of the American Legion Auxiliary. Members are passionate about providing care and comfort to our heroic U.S. service members who are so highly deserving of everything we can possibly do for them.

At VA facilities, Auxiliary sponsored gift shops and holiday parties have become a revered tradition and valued program. Members, units, and departments also purchase essential equipment and supplies for these facilities.

The Auxiliary joins with the VA as a national co-sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Through this sponsorship, the Auxiliary supports special visual and performing arts therapies for veterans.

Whatever a veteran needs – job assistance, transportation, food, clothing, etc. – Auxiliary volunteers will do their best to provide it.

Legislative:

Every day, service members are serving across the globe. At the Auxiliary, we never stop thinking about what they face while deployed and what they will need when they return home. As advocates for our veterans, we encourage our members to contact their elected officials by phone, email, or letter to implore them to keep the needs and sacrifices of our military and their families front and center as they go about their legislative work on behalf of their constituents – that's all of us!

The American Legion Auxiliary supports the legislative priorities adopted by The American Legion. The American Legion's Legislative Division in Washington, D.C., keeps abreast of current legislation related to veterans' benefits, national security, and children and youth. Auxiliary members are encouraged to subscribe to the Legion's legislative ebuletins to keep the Legion Family aware of legislative issues and the official positions of The American Legion on these issues.

The American Legion Annual Washington Conference brings together members of The American Legion Family for critical discussions with lawmakers, informative sessions with members of Congress and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs leadership, and insights on legislative priorities from the national commander. Armed with information and enthusiasm, Auxiliary members take to the Hill to make their voices heard. The Legislative Program periodically provides members with specific reasons to contact their legislators and provides them with summaries about issues of importance to our veterans.

National Security:

The importance of the American Legion Auxiliary's National Security program is analogous to the sense of security one has from unwanted intrusion by locking the doors in our homes. By providing for the needs of our military families on the home front, we hope to ease the minds of our deployed service members so they won't worry about their loved ones back home and can focus on the monumental task of protecting our country.

Auxiliary members step up and reach out to help military families during deployments in very practical ways, such as assisting with their needs for child care and lawn work or by providing a listening ear to a spouse. Members do helpful things such as collecting coupons and sending them to overseas commissaries, hosting send-off and welcome-home events for our troops, providing them with pocket flags, and showing the gratitude of our nation by providing military families with Blue Star and Gold Star Banners. Auxiliary units are encouraged to partner with other organizations that serve the military, such as local USO affiliates and ROTC/JROTC units.

Auxiliary members also assist our communities in times of natural and man-made disasters through Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) courses. These trainings prepare members to act as an emergency response resource in times of natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and blizzards, as well as during man-made disasters. The Auxiliary's National Security program works collaboratively with the FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Division, in keeping with a standing agreement.

ALA Girls State:

Auxiliary units in all 50 states and the District of Columbia proudly host ALA Girls State, an amazing week of learning focused on responsible citizenship and love for God and Country. Students are assigned to mock cities where, divided into the Federalist Party and Nationalist Party, they are immersed in learning about the political process from dedicated volunteers, making sure the program's nonpartisan governmental, patriotic, and civic objectives are carried out, along with some fun. The program directors also stay vigilant about raising the girls' awareness of the importance of service, particularly to our veterans, the military, and their families.

ALA Girls Nation:

Two girls are selected from each ALA Girls State program to attend ALA Girls Nation, where they assume the roles of U.S. senators, who meet for a week of immersive learning in Washington, D.C. After running for office, electing a Girls Nation president, and campaigning for the passage of mock legislation, the participants meet with the national government leaders. The highlight of the week includes a visit to the White House, where, in many past years, the ALA Girls Nation senators have visited with the President of the United States. While ALA Girls State/Girls Nation may impact the career aspirations of the participants, the program also encourages these bright young women to take their places as future leaders in the world.

Junior Activities:

Engaging the next generation to become members in the American Legion Auxiliary is the important purpose of the Junior Activities Program. Junior Auxiliary membership is open to girls from infancy through age 17. The Junior Activities Committee prepares girls to become active adult members of the organization by providing positive volunteer experiences that instill the ideals of the Auxiliary. These girls develop leadership skills while having fun and will hopefully become the future leaders of our organization.

Juniors are members of the Auxiliary who are organized as a committee of a unit. Juniors are not a separate organization. Junior members conduct their own meetings and perform their own special activities. Junior members plan their own community service projects, along with support projects sponsored by the Auxiliary and The American Legion Family.

Children & Youth:

The Auxiliary provides significant cash assistance and direct service, and supports legislation that affects children at the local, state, and national levels. While all children are important, the Auxiliary particularly focuses on helping the children of our veterans and service members. To recognize and reward the positive actions of our children and youth, the American Legion Auxiliary has two special national awards bestowed to youth nominated by units. The Youth Hero Award recognizes someone less than 18 years of age who performs a heroic act of physical bravery. The Good Deed Award is for youths 18 years of age or younger who have contributed in a special way to society through community service.

Americanism:

American patriotism is a fundamental value of the American Legion Auxiliary. Americanism programs teach respect for our country and our nation's flag. Patriotism is learned by seeing it in action. Patriotism is rooted in our character by practicing it throughout our lives. The Auxiliary creates opportunities where all Americans can show our respect and set positive examples of living as grateful, patriotic citizens. The Auxiliary provides learning opportunities and instructional resources for important things every good citizen should know, such as learning about the Constitution and flying the flag on patriotic holidays. They also fold pocket flags to send to our troops overseas and present flags to local schools and businesses. The Auxiliary is a member of the Citizens Flag Alliance and advocates for a constitutional amendment to protect the flag by supporting federal legislation and encouraging other people to do so.

To help our country's most promising young citizens learn firsthand the principles of our free republic guided by the principles of democracy, the Auxiliary promotes many patriotic youth programs, including the Auxiliary sponsored Americanism Essay Contest, which is conducted in local school systems. We believe promoting a spirit of patriotism by teaching about it develops lifelong respect for what we hold dear – our country and her flag.

Community Service:

Making our communities better places in which to live is something Auxiliary members strive for each and every day across this country.

A major outreach program of the Auxiliary since 1926, Community Service seeks to build community partnerships by promoting patriotic community service activities. We encourage promotion of:

- American Legion Family Day observed annually on the **last Saturday of April**. Posts are encouraged to open their doors to members of their community for the day to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of the American Legion Family of organizations.
- The American Legion's "**Be the One**" initiative to improve access to and reduce the stigma around mental health services.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service and the 9/11 National Day of Service.

Education:

The American Legion Auxiliary believes education is vital to democracy, and that investing time and money to educate our youth is literally an investment in America's future. Our Education Program involves fostering learning for children in our communities, with a focus on the children of military and veterans.

We know veterans' sacrifices are the reason we live in freedom. Easing the burden of the cost of their children's education is one way we can express our gratitude to them. To that purpose, the Auxiliary supports a number of scholarship programs. Units and Departments are encouraged to publicize the availability of these scholarship programs in their communities and establish new scholarships at the local level.

Educating our communities about the sacrifices of our military is another goal of the Auxiliary. Units and Departments are encouraged to participate in our organization's

national education initiatives and those of the American Legion. One of these initiatives, Veterans in the Classroom, is an effort to bring history to life by having local veterans speak to students about their real-life experiences in the military. Other initiatives include collaborating with Family Readiness Groups assisting with special projects for National Guard families, military base schools and donating school supplies to children in need.