

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
August 2025
By 2nd Vice – Lynda Griffin

HISTORY OF THE FORMAL VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Since World War I, the women of the American Legion Auxiliary have taken an active role in the care and rehabilitation of veterans. These early efforts, however, were largely uncoordinated and not integrated into a formal healthcare plan or program. It wasn't until 1930 that care and rehabilitation for veterans were integrated under a unified Veterans Affairs program similar to what we know today.

During World War II, it was determined that a need existed for a coordinated volunteer effort to direct the activity of committed individuals and hundreds of service and welfare groups such as the Auxiliary. This need developed into a formal volunteer program providing aid and assistance to members of the armed forces injured in war.

By the end of the war, the immediate focal point of interest for many volunteer groups seemed lost; however, leaders of these groups realized that the training these volunteers had received during wartime shouldn't be lost, and a new outlet for their efforts had to be identified.

Since these volunteers had focused specifically on aiding and assisting Service members, it was only natural that leadership of the groups they represented decided to focus their time, skill, and effort in peacetime, helping care for a new group of men and women now considered veterans.

On April 8, 1946, representatives of several veterans service organizations, including The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, met in Washington, D.C., with the Assistant Administrator for Special Services. This meeting resulted in the still new Veterans Administration developing regulations and procedures making a provision for the use of volunteers through the VA Special Services program for hospitalized veterans. Before this meeting concluded, their first VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Advisory Committee was formed.

In later years, as more wars ensued, the American Legion Auxiliary heeded the call for volunteers. In 1964, the Auxiliary inaugurated a new program called Field Service Volunteers. Answering a need and call to action, in 1974 the ALA introduced the Home Service program which recognized and supplemented the care given to America's veterans.

Regardless of where service takes place, American Legion Auxiliary members are known across the country as a go-to resource for this country's veterans and their families. The Auxiliary membership is proud of its legacy of volunteer service, and it is our goal to continue our valuable contribution in the years to come. Both programs continue to reflect our care, commitment, and compassion for veterans.

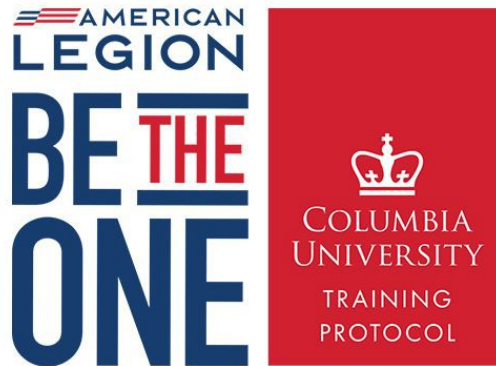
Looking for information about being a Unit VAR Chairman?

- [National Committee Resources \(All VA & R programs\)](#)
- [Betheone.org](#)
- [ALA Academy “betheone”](#)
- [Ring Your Bell Postings](#)
- [Unit Assignments to AZ VA Facilities](#)
- [Wreath Across American](#)
- [Reporting Hours: Impact Report Vet/Military Section VS Service to Veterans Volunteer Hours](#)
- Lynda Griffin – Lynda4ala@azdot.gov – (623) 349 -3979

BE THE ONE

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September is Suicide Prevention Month



As part of The American Legion Be the One mission to end veteran suicide, we have joined forces with Columbia University to develop training for those who want to learn more about interacting and responding with veterans who may be in crisis.

After the training, participants will be able to:

- Use the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale to determine at-risk individuals.
- Identify risk factors and warning signs
- Outline the types of suicidal ideation and four behaviors that indicate imminent risk.
- Communicate effectively with an individual who may be at risk of hurting themselves.

Members of The American Legion Family are encouraged to take part in this training and share the training with their communities. Check back to this page or subscribe to [The American Legion Online Update newsletter\(Opens in a new window\)](#) to receive information about new training opportunities as they become available.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *All attendees will be asked to complete an online survey before the class and upon completion. These surveys help track the effectiveness of the training and allow us to plan for future development.*

[CLICK HERE TO COMPLETE THE PRE-SESSION SURVEY.](#)**(Opens in a new window)**

UPCOMING ONLINE SESSIONS

Monday, Sept. 22: 2:30-4 p.m. EST

**Lynda Griffin
2nd Vice President
Department of AZ
(623) 349-3979**

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

October 2025

By 2nd Vice – Lynda Griffin

The VA&R program is a cornerstone of the American Legion Auxiliary and serving veterans is our purpose. We will continue our focus on the Be the One mission. What can we do? We can register for the free online Suicide Prevention Training accessible <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/be-the-one-training> to learn how to recognize those at risk, and what measures to take if you do. We are not expected to become mental health professionals, but we can connect individuals to the right resources in a timely manner. If one of the training sessions doesn't fit your schedule, check back often so you don't miss out. Participate in Buddy Checks. You never know when your call can make a difference. We also want to increase our volunteer footprint in VA Medical Centers, Clinics and beyond, including our service to veterans in the community. Also, please check out the first quarterly meeting recap on the next page that addresses our external partnerships. We'll be sharing more detail about each of those in upcoming newsletters, so stay tuned. There is a lot we can do and many ways to do it. Be sure to track your activities and hours – reporting matters.

We will continue to promote the Be the One mission. It's important for us to remember that it is a stand-alone phrase and should not be used as part of a theme or as a tagline. It should be reserved for use when it directly relates to suicide prevention. Ways we can focus on the Be the One mission are through participation in Buddy Checks and bringing greater awareness of the suicide problem and reducing the stigma associated with asking for help. We can take the Suicide Prevention Training offered online at no cost through the American Legion.

Another area of focus is to increase our footprint in our volunteer service, both within and outside of VA facilities. Our Vice Chair, Pat Kranzow, has extensive expertise in this area and shared some great information. We spent some time briefly addressing our external partnerships that include Wreaths Across America, Honor Flight, Quilts of Valor, the Military and Veteran Caregiver Network, and our most recently formalized alliance with Tragedy Assistance for Survivors, or TAPS. Suffice it to say that there are many ways to participate in the VA&R program and there is something for everyone!

ALA Academy LIVE: American Legion/Auxiliary/Wreaths Across America Sponsorship Program – September 24, 2025 7:00pm – 8:00pm ET / AZ Time: 5:00pm – 6:00pm

Wreaths Across America Day 2025 is Saturday, December 13! Now is the time to start planning! Your unit can get involved and earn money while supporting our combined mission. Learn more about this program on the American Legion Auxiliary/Wreaths Across America Sponsorship Program webinar on September 24, 2025 at 7:00 pm ET. During this webinar our guest speakers from WAA will share some of the history of Wreaths Across America, their partnership with the

American Legion Auxiliary, our sponsorship program, and the tools available to help make this a successful endeavor for units nationwide.



Use the following link to register for the ALA Academy webinar scheduled for 7:00 p.m. Eastern time September 24, 2025 <https://web.cvent.com/event/2accd1d9-04f8-4e99-bce9-f1815366256b/summary>

You must register by 5:00 p.m. Eastern time on that day.

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