

**AMERICAN
LEGION**
AUXILIARY
Arizona
Girls State

Two Hundred five, young women from one hundred-forty High Schools throughout Arizona were scheduled to attend American Legion Auxiliary Arizona Girls State at the University of Arizona in Tucson from May 31 to June 7, 2026. Forty-five Units reported some form of Girls State activity.

Fifty-one Units sponsored one or more delegates to attend the 79th session. Eight High Schools without Unit representation sent delegates.

You name a way to make money...members of the Auxiliary did it, to generate the funds needed to sponsor each delegate. Because of today's economic conditions and the rise in Girls State fees, many Units needed contributions from other organizations, people and agencies... Legion Posts, Junior Groups, Legion Riders and SAL Squadrons were there to help.

Again, major focus was placed on a standard Orientation with everyone receiving the same information through a power point presentation. Orientations were emailed to all delegates who were not attending and downloaded to phones during Orientations.

We are missing a membership opportunity by not asking delegates if they are eligible to become a member of the Auxiliary. Information on the Samsung Scholarship was sent to delegates again this year...to apply you must be a **DIRECT** descendant of a Veteran. Were girls asked? Junior members attending this year can get a special Girls State Patch if you contact me.

Only one Unit submitted an entry for the **Yvonne Granger Plaque**, Girls State publicity was from local newspapers that covered the events as daily doings, from the Girls State website and Ring Your Bell.

Units rewarded contributors with certificates, plaques and thank you cards. Several Units reported returning the money paid by the Delegate if they attended Girls State and reported back to the Unit.

Three Hundred and Seventy art items were donated from delegates for Veteran's Medical Centers and State Homes.

The Girls State Yearbook is a success, and we will be taking orders again at Convention. Adds can also be purchased. We will continue to promote enrollment for Girls State Alumni Association and "Friends of Girls State". This helps with funding the two scholarships that are awarded each year.

The Units work within established Girls State guidelines and policy. This makes it fair for all schools and Units. Allotments and schools are changed each year to accommodate enrollments and bed capacity or Unit problems. **ONLY SPONSOR** of Girls State is the American Legion Auxiliary. All **OTHERS** are **CONTRIBUTORS** to the program. We will be working on online registration again next year. Completion of forms, pictures, school signatures and notarized signatures by email becomes easier for everyone.

We thank each of you for your **dedicated service and assistance** to the Girls State program. We more than appreciated that when asked to help with extra schools or delegates or take on other responsibilities, you were willing to do so for the program. We also appreciated your thoughtful contributions over the required fees.

Now for the Girls State updates.

The 79th session of the American Legion Auxiliary Arizona Girls State was held May 31-June 7 at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Governor Ava Campbell presided over the session along with Secretary of State Aarna Dharia.

There were 205 delegates registered to attend. Prior to the session 20 girls had been replaced with alternates. This year, again, every alternate that wanted to attend was able to do

so. We had 5 girls that did not show up for registration. That left us with 200 delegates. One girl went home during the session because of family illness, 1 because she didn't like the program and she took the girl that came with her. There was no other way for her to get home. One for a family emergency.

Elected Governor for the 80th session or for the year 2027 was Lena Haywood of Salpointe Catholic sponsored by Unit 7. The Secretary of State is Samantha Gaither of Catalina Foothills High School sponsored by Unit 36.

Delegates elected to attend Girls Nation were Elizabeth Robinson of Empire High School sponsored by Unit 109 and Dorie He of Arizona College Prep. The first alternate was Dylin Utsey of Mica Mountain High School sponsored by Unit 109. Second Alternate is Belle Godwin of Xavier High School.

The winner of the Samsung Scholarship was Arianna Danae Koch of Cactus High School, sponsored by Unit 115.

The Girls State Alumni Scholarships were awarded to Ella Day of Desert Mountain High School sponsored by Unit 44 and Brielle Zeiler of Boulder Creek High School sponsored by Post 128.

The Capital City was Saguaro with Rae Hopf, Advisor, and Outstanding County was Supai with Cindy Queen as Advisor.

We encourage you to check the Girls State Web Site for a listing of all election results. Did one of your delegates get elected to a City, County or State Office? You will find the answer there.

The Girls State Staff of 30 consisted of 23 Auxiliary members, 8 former Girls State Citizens, 4 Professional Educators, 2 Registered Nurses, 3 Store persons, 8 Office and Education personnel and 3 Junior Counselors.

This year we had Nine Cities and Three Counties. Three Cities and One County were taken off the map due to inter-structure problems. This help with amount paid for U of A services and to keep Unit cost down.

The date for the 80th session of Arizona Girls State is tentatively scheduled for the first week in June which means we will start on May 30. Confirmation must be given by the University.

Due to service charges, insurance, meals and rooms that keep going up, we are looking for any way to keep the cost down to the Units.

We will adjust the numbers for schools for our program. We are hoping to add more schools to the program as more High Schools have Junior classes now. Those schools will be responsible for the fee if there is no Unit available.

We would like to get back to the 12 Cities and 4 Counties that we had before the pandemic. Cost does not allow this to happen and that is why those extra donations to Girls State are so appreciated and welcomed.

National wants us to have funding for a full year, in case of an emergency. We are no where near that but continue working on that request when we can.

The renewed Girls State web site provides needed information to delegates, parents and Auxiliary members. It helped to promote donations given on Ring Your Bell and in the Yearbook.

Please check it out at azgirlsstate.com.

Check your Unit mail slot for the "Thank You's" that were written by girls attending from your Unit or as a replacement. I think they will renew your faith in the program and the girls that you sponsor.

At Girls State Blue Star Certificates were presented to girls having immediate family serving in the military to say "Thank You". The number keeps growing. Some had a Father, Mother and sibling serving.

We had a talent show and the Community Service project, "Art Projects for Veterans" received 370 items.

We encourage each of you to join "Friends of Girls State" or renew your dues. This is part of the Girls State Alumni Association and helps to award scholarships. Anyone that attended Girls State from its start in 1947 to now can be a member of the Alumni association, all others join as "Friends". Applications are available at Convention or through the web site. The cost is \$4.00 for a year's membership. Anyone can join as a friend that means pets too. You will also be able to order the 2026 Girls State Year Book for \$12.00.

Again, I cannot stress enough, how important it is for Auxiliary Units to become involved in the selection process of delegates which we hope will happen again next year. We do not want to lose schools so we step in to make it happen. This has become an overwhelming task.

Again on behalf of Arizona Girls State we thank each of you for your constant support, donations and assistance when asked. Please know that we **appreciate** your concern and help with the education of our future leaders.

...Look to Girls State and you'll find...tomorrow's leaders of mankind. Girls State...The Best State in the Land!

Penny Maklary...Chairman/Director

Committee Members: Donna Arnoff...Alisha Matteson...Mary Jo Ficklin