2017-2022 American Legion Auxiliary Programs Action Plan

Public Relations

Public Relations promotes who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

Committee Contact Information
publicrelations@ALAforVeterans.org

What can you do?

1. Promote a positive image of the American Legion Auxiliary by supporting and promoting the efforts of Goal 5 of the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan (With The American Legion, Build Brand Loyalty) and the use of the variety of public relations materials and resources available online.

Ideas:
Member
• Give an Auxiliary magazine gift subscription to your local library and doctors’ offices. See the subscription form at the end of this program Plan.
• Distribute ALA brochures and posters in the community at libraries, job fairs, medical facilities, and post homes. Print brochures online from the PR/Marketing Resources section at www.ALAforVeterans.org, or order them from your department secretary.
• Wear your officially branded ALA apparel and “Honor Their Service” button when out and about. Button order forms are available at www.ALAforVeterans.org.
• Be prepared to answer when asked who the Auxiliary is, what we do in your community, and why we matter.

Unit
• Develop a list of local media contacts for your unit to use. Step-by-step instructions are included in the ALA Public Relations Guide and Tips for Volunteer Recruitment toolkit, available in PR/Marketing Resources in the Members Only section at www.ALAforVeterans.org.
• Build relationships with your local media and political figures to educate them on who we are, what we do, and why we matter.
• Write a letter to the editor and/or news release for patriotic holidays and events. Templates can be found in PR/Marketing Resources in the Members Only section at www.ALAforVeterans.org

Department
• Be familiar with Auxiliary public service announcements (PSAs), brochures, and other ALA publications. Educate units on materials available and how to obtain them. View the compilation of resources in the *ALA Marketing Resource Guide*, available in the PR/Marketing Resources in the Members Only section at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

• Monitor news coverage to share with department and national leadership, if needed.

2. **Build brand loyalty of the American Legion Auxiliary through the utilization and promotion of websites, social media, and other electronic communications.**

**Ideas:**

**Member**

• Promote Auxiliary events on your personal social media accounts.
• Subscribe to *ALA eNews* and *In the Know eBulletin* via www.ALAforVeterans.org.
• Link to www.ALAforVeterans.org in your personal email signature.

**Unit**

• Create or improve and actively maintain a unit website that adheres to brand standards (for tips, see *ALA Branding Guide*, available in the Members Only section at www.ALAforVeterans.org).
• Create and maintain an active social media presence for your unit on one or more platforms that you are comfortable with (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

**Department**

• Create or improve and actively maintain a department website that adheres to brand standards. Be familiar with “Department Website Best Practices,” which can be found in the *ALA Branding Guide* located in the Members Only section at www.ALAforVeterans.org.
• Create and maintain an active social media presence for the department on one or more platforms that you are comfortable with (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).
• Encourage members to sign up for *ALA eNews* and *In the Know eBulletin* via www.ALAforVeterans.org.
• Forward electronic publications such as *ALA eNews* and *In the Know eBulletin* to your unit PR chairmen.

**Public Relations Reporting**

*Mid-Year Reports*
Mid-Year reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and are intended as an opportunity for mid-year correction. Each department Public Relations chairman is required to submit a narrative report to the division Public Relations chairman, plus copy the national Public Relations chairman.

*Year-End Reports*
Annual reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and may result in a national award for participants if award requirements are met. Each department Public Relations chairman is required to submit a narrative report to the division Public Relations
chairman, plus copy the national Public Relations chairman. Members and units should follow their department’s protocol and deadlines.

*For deadlines and contact information, please consult the Annual Supplement to the 2017-2022 Programs Action Plan or visit the Public Relations Committee page on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org.

As part of your Narrative Report, please include the answers to the following questions:

- How has your department website and/or social media page(s) inspired units to develop social media at the local level?
- Have units in your department been mentioned in local media promotion of mission-related activities? What type of promotions have they received?
- Were PSAs distributed in your department and what type of response did you receive?
- How does your department keep an active and updated media contact list? How has this list impacted units?
- Have there been specific social media events coordinated by either a unit or department that broadly spread the ALA brand?
- What specific activities have you done to help build brand loyalty?

Public Relations Awards

Taking the time to share a favorite story about the positive impact you or someone you know has had on our mission is worth doing! It helps us tell the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Just three simple steps to add your part to our national success story:

1) Please follow instructions as you fill out the National Report and Awards Cover Sheet found in the awards section of the Programs Action Plan.
2) Provide details/examples about the activity as outlined in the award’s materials and guidelines section.
3) Submit as indicated in the Annual Supplement to the Programs Action Plan.

National Report and Awards Cover Sheet, deadlines, and Public Relations committee contact information may be found on the Public Relations committee page on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org.

A. Member Award: ALA Brand Ambassador

- Award: Lapel Pin
- Presented to: One member in each department who achieves excellence in promotion of the American Legion Auxiliary with her use of social media, her appearance in public wearing ALA-branded apparel, and other activities that showcase the Auxiliary’s unique branding through visual identity
- Materials and guidelines:
  - Document with action photographs, screen shots, and other evidence of brand promotion activities
  - Activity must occur between May 1 prior to the start of the current admin year and May 1 before the end of the current admin year
B. **Unit Award**: New Website or Social Media Account Launch  
- **Award**: Personalized mouse pad and congrats letter  
- **Presented to**: All units developing a properly branded website or social media account during the current ALA administrative year  
- **Materials and guidelines**:  
  - Web address/URL, webmaster/administer name and contact info, or name and contact info for ALA coordinator if webmaster/administrator is a third party vendor  
  - Site/Account must have been created after September 1 of the current ALA admin year  
  - Website/Facebook page must conform to “Website and Social Media Guidelines” in the *ALA Branding Guide*  

C. **Unit Award**: Most Outstanding Unit Public Relations Program  
- **Award**: Citation Plaque  
- **Presented to**: One unit in each division (5)  
- **Materials and guidelines**:  
  - Include three different media placements/coverage highlighting different ALA programs, featured in three different months (September 1 – May 1 of the current ALA administrative year)  
  - Acceptable media publications must support the Auxiliary’s mission and goals  

D. **Department Award**: Best Department Public Relations Program  
- **Award**: Citation  
- **Presented to**: One department in each division (5)  
- **Materials and guidelines**:  
  - Articles, newsletters, pictures of displays, ALA events, speeches, website address, social media activity, etc.  
  - Narrative not to exceed 500 words  

**How To Sheets**  
- How To Write a News Release  
- How to Utilize Facebook and Twitter to Promote Auxiliary Events and Activities  
- How to Set up a Department or Unit Website  

**Additional Resources You Can Use**  
4. *ALA Style Guide*: Available by emailing publicrelations@ALAforVeterans.org; and the *AP Stylebook*: www.apstylebook.com/  
5. www.ALAforVeterans.org: For submissions to national ALA media; templates for posters, flyers, news releases, and others; marketing materials; and much more  

Public Relations 4
6. The national Public Relations Committee Facebook group, search “ALA Public Relations”
7. Your national Public Relations committee members (see Public Relations program page on the national website or Annual Supplement for contact information)
HOW TO WRITE A NEWS RELEASE

Committee:
Public Relations

Contact information for questions:
publicrelations@ALAforsVeterans.org

How to write a news release:

• Gather correct and pertinent information.
• Prepare a news release with the **Who** (who is invited and who is the sponsor), **What** (what is the ALA information/event/program), **When** (day, date, time), **Where** (location, street address, city), **Why** (provides a reason the event is being held) and **How** (other special information a member or the general public would need to know in order to participate in this event). Templates are available at www.ALAforVeterans.org.

![Inverted Pyramid Diagram]

• The inverted pyramid (shown above) is a common method for writing news articles and releases. It can be thought of as a simple upside-down triangle. The widest part at the top represents the most important information, and it tapers down in order of diminishing importance. **Who, What, When, Where, Why** and **How** should all be included in the opening paragraph or two. This format is valued because readers can leave the story at any point and understand it, even if they don't have all of the details. By placing less important information at the end of the story, it can be removed so the article can fit a fixed size, or it can be “cut from the bottom.”
• Include contact information: a name, phone number and email address.
• Provide deadline information if applicable.
• Distribute public relations information via resources available in your community—to newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, blogs; post to a website; display advertising posters on community boards, in city hall, grocery stores, VA hospitals; share information with other persons who may help your unit reach the target audience such as a veteran service officer, Family Readiness Group or National Guard armory personnel.
• With today’s technology, it is imperative that your information be shared electronically. Utilize Auxiliary websites, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, and YouTube.
• Online public relations resources are available at www.ALAforVeterans.org.
HOW TO UTILIZE FACEBOOK AND TWITTER TO PROMOTE AUXILIARY EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Committee:
Public Relations

Contact information for questions:
publicrelations@ALAforVeterans.org

Facebook

Set up a personal Facebook account (if you do not have an account already)
2. Enter your name.
3. Enter your email where indicated.
4. Create a password.
5. Enter your birthdate and gender.
6. Click on the sign up button.
7. You are now on your Facebook home page.
8. Click on your name in upper right hand corner. This is where you update your profile.
9. Click on find friends in upper right hand corner. You can import contacts from your email address book, or request to be friends individually in the search bar by name or email address.

Twitter

Set up a Twitter account (if you do not have an account already)
2. Enter your full name, email and a password.
3. Click sign up for Twitter.
4. On the next screen, you will choose your username and agree to the terms of service.
5. Click create my account.
6. Go through the welcome and follow five accounts (such as @ALAforVeterans and @AmericanLegion) and click next. Then select five well-known people or agencies (consider categories like government and news) and click next.
7. You are then given the option to see if your friends are already on Twitter by searching your email address book. If you do not want to do this, click skip.
8. You can choose to upload an image for your profile picture and write a brief bio about yourself. If you do not want to do this, click skip.

Smartphones with Facebook and Twitter
If you own a smartphone, be sure to download both the Facebook and Twitter apps to post and tweet about the American Legion Auxiliary while you’re on the go! Facebook and Twitter do not charge for these services; check with your phone provider for data charges.
## Got Something to Share?

### Twitter

Using your smartphone or computer, send tweets about the accomplishments of your unit’s service in the community. Tweets can also include photos (see “Photo Tips” at right). You can even link to a news article or website.

**Sample Tweets: (140 characters or less)**

- #ALA members teaching 8th graders meaning behind 13 folds of #flag
- 13 #ALA volunteers at @DeptVetAffairs VAMC visiting hospitalized #veterans and passing out socks
- #ALA Unit 98 distributed 750 #poppies today, raising money to assist & support #veterans and their families
- #ALA #LegionRiders @AmericanLegion & SAL members building wheelchair ramp for Iraq #veteran
- #ALA Unit 1 & friends packing care packages & writing thank-you notes for #servicemembers #NationalDayService #2015MLKDay

Other suggested hashtags: #veterans, #volunteer, #military, #nationsheroes, #ALA, #AmericanLegionAuxiliary

### Facebook

Using your smartphone or computer, upload ALA program events and action photos of your unit or department members.

**Posts Might Include:**

- Meeting date and times.
- Reminders of report deadlines.
- Photos and summaries of ALA members filling backpacks for military children.
- Volunteers serving food to veterans.
- Members in Auxiliary attire distributing poppies.
- Legion Family members painting the exterior of a veteran’s house.
- Junior members participating in mission-focused projects.
- Combined functions with the entire American Legion Family.
- How and where to apply for AEF grants in times of need.

**Photo Tips:**

- Take action shots, not just portrait style.
- Aim for tight, close-up photos.
- Avoid “back-of-head” shots.
- Remember to get vertical photos as well.
- Collect photo release statements when necessary.
- Pay attention to what else appears in the photo (i.e., beer signs, etc.).

### You Will Need

A computer, smartphone, or tablet with the ability to download an application.

A smartphone with a built-in camera and data plan, or a computer and digital camera.

Share your posts and photos with @ALAforVeterans on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram! Your photos may appear in ALA media.
HOW TO SET UP A DEPARTMENT OR UNIT WEBSITE

Committee:
Public Relations

Contact Information for Questions:
publicrelations@ALAforVeterans.org

1. Determine the purpose of the site – to attract new members, communicate with current ones, or both.

2. Decide on a domain name (YourSiteName.org) and hosting (service that connects your site to the Internet). You will probably have to pay a nominal fee for the domain name. You may be able to find a host for free.


4. Include general information about the American Legion Auxiliary.

5. Use the content suggestions located in the ALA Branding Guide.

6. Include at least one link to www.ALAforVeterans.org on your website.

7. When including information on your website from www.ALAforVeterans.org, include links to the information rather than posting it directly to your site. If information changes at the national level, the link will ensure your website visitors receive the latest information.

8. Update your website regularly. People visiting your website will keep checking it if the content is current and fresh.

9. Avoid including information on your website that contains internal language and acronyms that may confuse users. Examples include NEC, PNP, PDP.

10. Care should be exercised when linking to other websites. Information included on websites linked to external sites should be supportive of the Auxiliary’s mission, message and values. Suggested links include www.ALAforVeterans.org, www.legion.org, and your department American Legion Auxiliary website.

11. Check your website regularly to ensure the links are working properly. Broken links will frustrate users, and they may stop checking your site.

12. Be sure to include contact information for your department or unit in an easy-to-find location on your site. Also include contact information for the webmaster.