Members of Arizona Unit 62 adopted a military wife, and her child, while her U.S. Air Force husband was deployed overseas. They helped distribute poppies for National Poppy Day®.
ALA Mission
Stays True During Challenging Times

As national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, it is my honor to thank each and every member, donor, and supporter of the ALA. You have touched the lives of others in ways you may not realize.

Your contributions helped the ALA continue its longstanding tradition of selfless service to America’s veterans, military, and their families — honoring and helping them any way we can.

For more than a century, Auxiliary members have enthusiastically carried out numerous programs that benefit those we serve. In doing so, we show our appreciation for the sacrifices they made, or are making, as our nation’s protectors and defenders. We strive to enhance their health and well-being. We let them know we care.

As the world grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes even more important to do what we can for our military heroes and their families. With continued support, the Auxiliary will work tirelessly to help future generations of veterans, military, and their families.

—Nicole Clapp, American Legion Auxiliary National President
In the midst of an unprecedented year, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, with the help of generous donors, continued its steadfast support of veterans, military, and their families. We are beginning our 13th year with the renewed confidence that when times get tough, the ALA Foundation will still be able to give our nation’s heroes the help they deserve.

This past year, the ALAF awarded 35 grants totaling more than $103,000 to support ALA entities — the most in a single year since the ALA Foundation’s inception. Additionally, we provided the national organization with more than $62,000 in support of mission-centric programs and grew the Mission Endowment Fund to over $1.6 million.

This year, 10 Veteran Projects Fund grants provided adaptive sports equipment, appliances, and technology to support the growth and independence of veterans across America. Veterans Creative Arts Festival grants awarded to three ALA entities provided art supplies, recognition, and award materials to assist local VCAF events and promote creative expression as therapy for our nation’s heroes. Mission in Action grants have helped 10 ALA units and departments promote their life-changing programs by funding branded storage, transport materials, and signage. Finally, the ALA Foundation used its 501(c)(3) status to assist 12 ALA entities with subgrants to support the mission.

None of these triumphs would be possible without our generous donors, members, and volunteers. We are so grateful and proud to continue serving veterans, military, and their families through hard times.

—Doris Hammeke, American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors President
### Impact of the ALA

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<tr>
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<th>Volunteer Hours Serving Veterans &amp; Military</th>
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ALA member Judy Wothke of Zionsville Unit 79 in Indiana works with Legion Family members during preparations for placement of 2,500 U.S. flags on veterans’ headstones over the 2020 Memorial Day weekend.
Randall Harrod joins fellow talented veterans from across the nation to display his black and white photography piece “Futures Past” at the 2019 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Kalamazoo, Mich. The American Legion Auxiliary is a longtime presenting sponsor of the Festival.
American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation is a weeklong event that gives participants a firsthand experience with practical insight into how the federal government works. More than 7,000 young women have participated in ALA Girls Nation since it was founded in 1947.
Members of ALA Unit 134 in Morton Grove, Ill., display a piece of fabric used in the unit’s “100 Blankets” service project. The fleece coverings were given to dialysis patients at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago.
Members of the American Legion Auxiliary help veterans explore the many ways art heals by being on hand to volunteer at various productions, ceremonies, activities, and art workshops at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

2019–2020
Annual Donor Report

Recognizing Donors Supporting Our Mission

Whether you give to honor a loved one, because you have served, or simply because you believe in the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary, we are thankful.

Your contributions lifted the financial burden from members in need by providing nearly $236,000 in Auxiliary Emergency Fund grants, gave hope and opportunity to young, deserving students through $155,500 in scholarships, and made a major impact on the lives of countless veterans, military, and their families across the country. Without your generosity, none of this would be possible. Thank you for supporting our nation’s heroes and embodying our promise of Service Not Self.
$10,000+

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Dept of Illinois
Dept of Indiana
Dept of Minnesota
Dept of Nebraska
Dept of Ohio
Dept of Texas
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Inc.

**Members**
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Dept of Colorado
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**Organization**
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$500-$999

**Organization**
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Dept of Florida
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Dept of Massachusetts
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Gary Rushing
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in honor of ALA Girls State
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in honor of Michael A. Skestone
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in honor of Aunt Rose
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in honor of Vickie Thrower

Jeannine T. Levesque
in honor of TAL’s 100th birthday
Robert Lopresto
in honor of Richard Lindemuth
Jeremy Mager
in honor of Linda Richardson
Rita Martorano
in honor of ALA Unit 136
Debra Margaret Miller
in honor of all our soldiers
Robyn Norland
in honor of Mark Norland
David Nygren
in honor of Barb Washburn
Patricia Rama
in honor of Suffolk County New York Members
Andrew Schwartz
in honor of Pauline F. Marchiori
Stella Sicina
in honor of Michael Z. Pinheiro
Debra St. John Tiernan
in honor of all the work our members do
Neva Waite
in honor of Craig Middleton
Barbara Wong
in honor of Carol Johnson
Barbara Wong
in honor of Eric N. Wong

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in memory of Flora Wittig
Texas Unit 300
in memory of Cathy Clark
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in memory of Juanita

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in memory of Sara Jernigan
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in memory of May Y. Lim
Maine Unit 81 received an American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Veteran Projects Fund grant for $4,503 to help purchase wheelchairs used by volunteers and staff to transport patients around the Togus Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Augusta.
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Unit 299 California
Unit 314 California
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Unit 755 California
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Unit 38 Colorado
Unit 5 Delaware
Unit 6 Delaware
Unit 7 Delaware
Unit 24 Delaware
Unit 50 Georgia
Unit 192 Georgia
Unit 258 Georgia
Unit 2 Hawaii
Unit 11 Hawaii
Unit 494 Iowa
Unit 47 Kansas
Unit 155 Massachusetts
Unit 10 Maryland
Unit 3 Mississippi
Unit 40 New Hampshire
Unit 146 New Jersey
Unit 69 New Mexico
Unit 77 New Mexico
Unit 99 New Mexico
Unit 118 New Mexico
Unit 44 New York
Unit 79 Rhode Island
Unit 71 South Carolina
Unit 157 Texas
Unit 293 Virginia
Unit 280 Wisconsin
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American Legion Post 118 New Mexico
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American Legion Post Riders 192
LCW Post No 1 Color Guard
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The Plymouth Rock Foundation
United Way of Central Indiana
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American Legion Post Riders 192
LCW Post No 1 Color Guard
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The Ebell Club of Irvine
The Plymouth Rock Foundation
United Way of Central Indiana
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<td>Di Ann Kolmman</td>
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<td>Mary Osborn</td>
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<td>Mary Kotel</td>
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<td>Arlene Kremer</td>
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<td>Marty Polk</td>
<td>Nancy Polk</td>
<td>Kathryn Glass</td>
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<td>Janice Kriesler</td>
<td>Candace McGregor</td>
<td>Marilyn Porter</td>
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<td>Claudia Goodin</td>
<td>Dee Gratrix</td>
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<tr>
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IN MEMORY/HONOR OF...

In Honor of

ALN National Headquarters Staff in honor of National Secretary Linda Boone
Pat Alvarez in honor of Ed Alvarez
Kristen Anderson in honor of ALA Girls National Class of 2001
Michael Butt in honor of ALA National Headquarters Staff
Michael Butt in honor of PNP Linda Boone
Gina Callicotte in honor of all soldiers
Paulette D. Caron in honor of Robert R. Caron
Judy Casados in honor of Robert L. Casados
Nicole Chernish in honor of Chrystal Daulton’s Birthday
Louise M. Cloonan in honor of all veterans
Laura (Susie) Clyde in honor of South Dakota PDPs
Carrie Davenport in honor of ALA Empire Girls State
Marie Delaney in honor of Raymond Bykowski
Julie Diefenbacher in honor of David Jeffalone
Donna M. Dillard in honor of Katherine Morris
Vincent Drouillon in honor of all veterans

Mary Jane McLoon in honor of Harold Tibbetts
Marianne Middleton in honor of Margaret M. Middleton
Joyce M. Nordman in honor of all of my family members who served in the U.S. Armed Forces
Margaret Ratterman in honor of all who serve
Eric Rockhill in honor of ALA Portland Oregon
Laura Santino in honor of Richard Wm. Anderson
Michele Schlosser in honor of Joseph Gullo
Bonnie Schuitema in honor of Gilbert D. Karsten
Brenda Shirley in honor of Howard Shirley
Frank and Dena Snyder in honor of Virginia M. Holley
Debra St. John Tierman in honor of all the work our members do
Tammy Stagman in honor of Gary Krohmer
Shirley Thornberry in honor of Donna Lubinski
Beth Toaston in honor of Jennifer Dunlap
Christine R. Trahan in honor of Dusty Trahan
Judy Twete in honor of Department of North Dakota
Judy Twete in honor of my military husband and son
Kathy A. Vasquez in honor of all veterans
Bonnie Vest in honor of Lewis A. Smith Jr.
Kristine and Don West in honor of Bob Melgard

In Memoriam

First Husbands Club in memory of John Morris
Virginia Unit 293 in memory of Dale Ann Moran
Pat Alvarez in memory of Ed Alvarez
Christine Anderson in memory of Richard Wm. Anderson
Constance Angel in memory of Donald R. Blouse Jr.
Carlene Ashworth in memory of Marian Odell, John Morris and Ken Peters Sr.
Rita M. Barylinski in memory of Andrew Barylinski Jr.
Linda Boone in memory of PNP Betty Calder
Tammy S. Brnak in memory of Howard Eicher
DeeDee Buckley in memory of Nanci Carole Brusati-Dias
Will Burgess in memory of Richard (Dick) Lindenmuth
Michael Butt in memory of Doyne D. Butt
Gina J. Callicotte in memory of all those who died during active duty
Carol Campbell in memory of James F. Gallagher Sr. and James F. Gallagher Jr.
Carolyn H. Cannon in memory of Willie Glenn Hurdle
Madeline Cassidy in memory of Henry Saer
Kelly Circle in memory of Twila Collins
Nicole Clapp in memory of Rachel A. Grout
Nicole Clapp in memory of PNP Betty Calder
Nicole Clapp in memory of Ken Peters
Nicole Clapp in memory of Judith Somers
Nicole Clapp in memory of Steven Taylor
Corinna Colson in memory of Eric N. Colson Jr.
Sharon Conatser in memory of Irene Lofton
Sharon Conatser in memory of Bob Melgard
Ann Crawford in memory of PNP Sandra Heckstein
Ann Crawford in memory of Barb Hutchinson
Daun Cziok in memory of Virginia Cziok
Kathy M. Daudistel  
in memory of Ken Peters  
Lavera Davis  
in memory of Mary Gabris  
Robin L. Dorf  
in memory of Emil and Mary Dorf  
Mary Carole Ducharme  
in memory of Rosemary E. Stoltz  
Kathy Dungan  
in memory of Rev. Bendon Ginn  
Thomas Durbin  
in memory of Ferris Robert “Rudy” Gillen  
Thomas Durbin  
in memory of Alexander Burton  
Diane E. Duscheck  
in memory of Marian Odell  
Diane E. Duscheck  
in memory of Past TAL Chaplain Clif Sorenson  
Diane E. Duscheck  
in memory of Roland and Viola Duscheck  
Diane E. Duscheck  
in memory of Erna Schwabe  
Robin Falkenberg  
in memory of Harriet Clendenin  
Angela R. Fett  
in memory of Harry A. Vittori  
Lona J. Gagnon in memory of George R. Gagnon  
Julie Ann Garcia  
in memory of John Leaf  
Mary Beth Gardikas  
in memory of Pete P. Gardikas  
Kathryn P. Glass  
in memory of Anna Irene Peterson  
Angela M. Golightly  
in memory of Angela Golightly  
Jeri Greenwell  
in memory of PNPs Pearl Behrend and Betty Calder  
Jeri Greenwell  
in memory of Ruth Conatser  
Coral May Grout  
in memory of Lyle Newton  
Debra Jeanne Haas  
in memory of Gary L. D. Haas  
Kristen Hamborg  
in memory of RoseMarie Schoessler  
Doris Hammeme  
in memory of Rachel A. Grout  
Carol Harlow  
in memory of Irene Lofton  
Dorothy L. Hazen  
in memory of PDP Jo Ann Rodgers  
Christian Hinkie  
in memory of Iris Robichaux  
Brenda W. Holland  
in memory of Catherine D. Williams  
Jack Iseley  
in memory of Richard Lindenmuth  
Amy Jens  
in memory of LaVon Schurman  
Sandra L. Josephson  
in memory of Marlene Josephson  
Miriam Junge  
in memory of John Morris  
Miriam Junge  
in memory of Betty Calder  
Kathi K. Karnowski  
in memory of John Alan Ware  
Doreen Long  
in memory of Josie Melgard  
Mary Caplin Long  
in memory of Tom Long  
Carol L. Lonsway  
in memory of LaVern Lonsway and Tom Schluchter  
Lynn Machen  
in memory of Kenneth Harting Schoenewey  
Cathleen F. MacInnes  
in memory of Rachel A Grout  
Cathleen F. MacInnes  
in memory of Barbara Perry  
Bertie Milson  
in memory of Roger Milson  
Beverly A. Neel  
in memory of John James Gallop, Sr.  
Virginia W. Nelsen  
in memory of PNC Bill Detweiler  
Virginia W. Nelsen  
in memory of Leslie Walker  
Audrey H. Nelson-Sheil  
in memory of Thomas Sheil  
Andria Nickerson  
in memory of John “Ballgame” Howell, Sr.  
Patty R. Nolan  
in memory of James H. Troglia  
Dorothea O’Shea  
in memory of Robert O’Shea  
Kim Ovcarich  
in memory of Al P. Lauderdale  
Past National Presidents  
in memory of John Morris  
Deborah Pogorzelski-Stogner  
in memory of Stanley K. Pogorzelski  
Wendy Quam  
in memory of Georgine D. Carnes  
Toni P. Reale  
in memory of Antonio Salerns  
Jerris Riordan  
in memory of John P. Riordan  
Jerris Riordan  
in memory of Johnny Riordan  
Laura E. Santino  
in memory of Richard Wm. Anderson  
Bonnie Schiutema  
in memory of Edwin and Edna Schiutema  
Ellen J. Simon  
in memory of Jeffrey Simon  
Karen Smith  
in memory of Norene R. Rauh  
Sandra C. Stattion  
in memory of Clifton Cole  
Michelle Still  
in memory of Roy Panser  
Eric Tobin  
in memory of Beverly Adreon  
Carol Van Kirk  
in memory of Betty Calder  
Ken Vaughn  
in memory of Robert “Bobby” Browner  
Bonnie Vest  
in memory of Lewis A. Smith Jr.  
Judith L. Von Buchler  
in memory of Otis Lewis  
Cynthia C. Walker  
in memory of Major Henry A. Carter and Marcia Allen Carter  
Jean M. Walker  
in memory of Mason Blumberg  
Terri Wallace  
in memory of Barbara Hockaday  
Kristine West  
in memory of Department Secretary Beverly Burns  
Kristine West  
in memory of Joyce Porter  
Kristine West  
in memory of PNP Pearl Behrend  
Stephen Yaussi  
in memory of Virginia M. Holley
LEAVING YOUR LEGACY

For 100 years, the American Legion Auxiliary has relied on generous donations to continue the support of veterans, military, and their families. These gifts have allowed the Auxiliary to provide hope in times of need, support for education and youth leadership programs, grants for veterans’ art therapy, and much more. As we begin a new century of service, we look to build an even stronger future.

We ask that you join us in this mission by becoming a part of the Legacy Society, a group of people dedicated to the promise of Service Not Self who have chosen to include a planned gift to the American Legion Auxiliary or the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation in their estate plans. Your gift—no matter the size—will provide future financial support to the Auxiliary. We are so grateful for the following donors who have already committed a planned gift:

Linda J. Boone  
Nancy Brown-Park and James Park  
Ann Crawford  
Sharon Conatser  
Patricia A. Flaagan  
Jeri Greenwell  
Dr. Coral May Grout  
Janet Jefford  
Lynda Lancaster  
Jane Montaney  
Rita Navarreté  
Linda Newsome  
Marybeth Revoir  
Sandra L. Sowers  
Desireé Stoy  
Peggy Thomas

In Memoriam:  
Jean Bender  
Aileen Chitwood  
Helen Colby Small  
Rachel A. Grout  
Lois Lemke  
Arvilla Norris  
Lydia Pickup  
Grace S. Schulz  
Inez M. Shaffer  
Barbara K. Smith  
Joyce Starr  
Lillian Vitelli  
Ethel Wolansky

You can contribute to the future of the American Legion Auxiliary by adding a planned gift to your will. Be it large or small, every gift adds up to help ensure the Auxiliary is here for generations to come. Learn more about the Legacy Society by going to www.ALAnorVeterans.org/Planned-Giving.
In a time of social distancing, veterans share their creativity virtually

As COVID-19 (coronavirus) has grappled all of our lifestyles, that hasn’t stopped some from getting creative when it comes to continuing mission outreach efforts.

In collaboration with American Legion Auxiliary Arizona Unit 62, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, Veterans First, the Arizona Arts Commission, the City of Peoria, Ariz., private charities, and individuals, the Heal Her Art Women Veterans Wellness program hosts monthly social gatherings at the Phoenix VA Medical Center. During these gatherings, 25 to 30 women veterans from all military branches and walks of life participate in free painting sessions. This program was made possible with assistance from an American Legion Auxiliary Foundation grant.

“One of the things women veterans benefit from with our program is the social aspect of being with each other and getting support from each other,” said Arizona Unit 62 member Marge Christianson.

In March, their event was cancelled as COVID-19 continued spreading rapidly and social distancing guidelines were put into place. So, they improvised and came up with a new plan to stay connected.

Since early April, members of the program have taken part in a two-hour virtual painting session. Instructed via Zoom, participants were guided step by step on how to create their own canvas painting.

“We felt compelled to figure out a way to stay connected with these women so they could stay connected with each other.” Marge said she embraces the capabilities thanks to technological advances.

“Technology has enabled us to do things we haven’t thought of,” she said.

Marge would like to see the virtual events continue once the pandemic slows down, “particularly for those who are homebound or in geographies where we can’t make physical events feasible,” she said. “The ability to connect with people without leaving your home is such a wonderful opportunity.”

Contactless drive-thru helps distribute poppies and honor veterans during National Poppy Day®

American Legion Auxiliary members had planned special events throughout the year to highlight the ALA’s 100th anniversary of serving veterans, the military, and their families. But members had to postpone all in-person celebrations and conventions, along with most mission-related projects, as a way to help ensure the safety of our Legion Family during COVID-19. With Memorial Day celebrations on pause, ALA members cultivated creative, no-contact ways to still honor National Poppy Day.

Three days before National Poppy Day, Kathi Carney, president of Unit 45 in Greenbrier, Tenn., decided to host a contactless drive-thru poppy distribution at the Greenbrier American Legion post. Kathi and Unit 45 had always said their post home was a perfect place to host drive-thru events, which led to the National Poppy Day project.

“A 10-minute conversation on the phone with my treasurer turned into one of the best events we have had as a unit,” said Kathi. “Everyone participated in the last-minute planning, and as a team, we succeeded in creating something quite wonderful.”

The whole unit dropped what they were doing and dedicated their next few days to help decorate and set up their unit’s first poppy distribution drive-thru. After careful, yet quick discussion, Unit 45 decided the safest and most efficient way to distribute poppies was to create a no-contact clothesline system. They used target stands from their annual turkey shoot event to keep the clothesline secure, and the unit saved money by utilizing signs and props used in past events to decorate the drive-thru and post home.

Providing leftover poppies from last year, Unit 45 members took necessary precautions and wore gloves and masks to place each poppy in individual sealed bags, then they dangled them on the “Poppy Fence” with clothespins. Drivers followed an easy path to the fence and were able to pull the poppy bag off the clothespin without touching anything else. Several buckets were hung along the clothesline, creating a contactless and safe way to drop in donations. They also lined the drive-thru exit with Legion Family signs and a “Thank you for your support” sign.

“In times of uncertainty, people always feel connected to our military and veterans,” said Kathi. “We were astonished at the donations we received even at a time when people’s finances may not be the best.”

Unit 45 may have inspired and led this creative project, but it was a Legion Family effort to complete it. Everyone pitched in to help by setting up signs, maneuvering a clear path for cars, decorating handmade posters, posting on social media, and not to mention the time spent setting everything up and taking it down within a few short days.

Kathi and Unit 45 members decided to host the National Poppy Day drive-thru as an annual event.

“We learned that we just need to find a way to do something to remember our veterans,” Kathi added. “We cannot let them be forgotten, even if that means coming up with a unique way of honoring Memorial Day.”

Originally published in the August 2020 issue of Auxiliary magazine.
Junior member busts open piggy bank for ALA

Ashlynne Jenkins, 16, has been an American Legion Auxiliary Junior member for the past six years, after being introduced to the organization by her grandmother. Being a member of the ALA has helped open Ashlynne's eyes to the sacrifices of our nation's heroes, as well as inspiring her to act.

“Ever since I joined, my heart has become larger, filled with so much love for these men and women, and I plan to continue to give out this love for as long as I can,” she said.

Ashlynne began volunteering at various events and programs upon joining the Auxiliary. One of her favorites is the ALA Poppy Program. Ashlynne has also volunteered during the holidays, which happens to be one of her favorite memories.

“I went with my mother and one other Auxiliary member to give Christmas care packages to the local VA. Our purpose with these packages was to hand them out to veterans who do not have families to buy them gifts or to just sit and talk to. So with these care packages, we showed that they have many people who care about them,” she shared.

Ashlynne's drive to serve would not stop there. She began fundraising for the ALA Children of Warriors National Presidents’ Scholarship, with the goal of assisting young students going to college.

She raised funds by setting up donation banks around her town, conversing with community leaders, and even utilizing a “donation pig.” One of her memorable moments is fundraising at an ALA state convention in Little Rock, Ark.

“We had the donation pig set up on its own table, and when everyone found out what it was for, there was automatically a line for donations. It was incredibly encouraging, and I am very grateful for all who donated,” she said.

Even now, Ashlynne looks to impact young students further, with plans to reach out to surrounding communities and organizations, as well as encourage her fellow ALA Junior members to fundraise.

Ashlynne continues to fundraise and change the lives of veterans, military, and their families, knowing that every donation makes an impact — no matter how big or how small.

“In the end,” she said, “receiving just a penny would be enough to help our cause.”

Receiving scholarship during pandemic a ‘vote of confidence’

Spirit of Youth Scholarship recipient Morgan Jefford has been a member of the American Legion Auxiliary since she was born in 2001. With a great-grandfather who served in World War II, and an ALA Past National President for a grandmother (Janet Jefford, 2014-2015), her membership was inevitable.

“My grandmother has been super involved and got me involved in the ALA. I traveled to a convention with her once and she has kept [the American Legion Auxiliary] a constant in my life,” Morgan said.

Attending ALA National Convention with her grandmother was an eye-opening experience for Morgan.

“I just saw all the different types of people who were involved. It was just really cool because I always heard her talk about it, but I didn’t know how big it was until I went,” she said.

Like her grandmother, Morgan has a passion for service. She has been engaged with her local community, started clubs with her friends, and participated in service trips to Guatemala. As she attends Fordham University, she plans to pursue new service opportunities in New York City.

“Fordham is in the Bronx and there are other boroughs. I really want to do something to help kids who are less fortunate or come from a difficult family life,” Morgan said.

Upon receiving the Auxiliary’s Spirit of Youth Scholarship, Morgan’s family was happy to have assistance with the exceptional price tag that comes with college, and her grandmother was extremely proud.

However, Morgan shared that in a pandemic when so many things have been negatively affected, the scholarship meant even more to her.

“It was just a piece of really good news. Someone out there thought I deserved this money and they had faith that I was going to use my college education for good and that I was going to do something. It was just a really nice vote of confidence,” Morgan said.

When asked what she would say to those who make ALA scholarships possible, Morgan pointed out how important the scholarships are to young students and to the future of the ALA.

“Receiving a scholarship reinforces that idea that you are going to somewhere academically and that you are smart and that you have a bright future ahead of you,” she said. “For the recipients of scholarships, it reminds them to stay active in the organization.”

As someone who works very hard in school and believes that a quality education is vital to one’s impact, Morgan’s favorite quote by Nelson Mandela lines up with her philosophy on education perfectly: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Patrick Ward discovers passion through Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Patrick Ward always thought of himself as an athlete. A fifth-generation U.S. Navy veteran, Patrick’s physical health was always very important to him. That’s why, when he sustained serious injuries while on active duty, Patrick struggled to be motivated in his everyday life.

After 55 surgeries and an amputation, Patrick wasn’t sure what was next for him. Most days, even after his physical recovery, he wasn’t interested in getting off the couch.

“I needed to get engaged in life again,” Patrick said. “When your options change, you need to change your life, because otherwise you can get in a bad place.”

While Patrick was healing, the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center encouraged him to get involved with the Veterans Creative Arts Festival, a program co-presented by the American Legion Auxiliary. Though arts had never been a major part of his life, he gave it a shot.

Despite never thinking of himself as a writer, Patrick quickly learned he had a knack for it. The inspiration he felt being surrounded by other veteran artists pushed Patrick to try something new — and it was a perfect fit.

Today he is a published writer, has won several awards, and writes a monthly column for a writer’s magazine.

“If you don’t think of yourself as creative, you don’t have to be around [the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival] long before you start to dream,” Patrick said.

“Being near people who are so brilliant and so talented and so outgoing, I leave energized and I always think I can do anything.”

Patrick credits the American Legion Auxiliary with enhancing the experience for him by going above and beyond to serve the artists — bringing them quilts when they were outside in the snow, providing them with a hospitality room, and always encouraging them to do their best.

This newfound talent and artistic expression truly turned things around for Patrick, who once felt lost.

“I thought those doors were closed, but it’s so personal, life-changing, and a second chance,” Patrick said, holding back tears.

“I always say if you get that second chance, grab it, run, and don’t look back.”

Originally published on www(ALAforVeterans.wordpress.com).
Sadie Chamberlain finds her voice through ALA Girls Nation

In the United States, women are underrepresented in government at all levels. In 2019, though women made up roughly 50% of the population, they held only 28.9% of state legislatures, and 23.7% of US Congress seats.

Sadie Chamberlain, a 2019 American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation senator, believes that programs like ALA Girls Nation could help more young women develop the skills and confidence they need to change that norm.

“This program encourages young women not to second guess themselves or apologize for their opinions,” Sadie said.

“It reminds us that if you have something to say, you should say it, and the more we can learn about our government, the more we can give ourselves a more equal and inclusive role in it.”

For Sadie, a recent high school graduate with mild cerebral palsy, this empowered sense of self was life changing. She was able to speak with Vermont state senators about the policies she believed in at ALA Vermont Girls State and had the opportunity to present a mock bill to her peers from around the country at ALA Girls Nation.

“The amount of respect and dignity I received, despite my physical limitations, reminded me that I should choose to pursue a path in government, that I can do so confidently because of the power that ALA Girls Nation gave me,” Sadie said.

For all of the opportunities and memories made at ALA Girls Nation, Sadie took away the philosophy that power is in the collective. Though an individual can inspire the collective, Sadie said that working together is one of the most important disciplines she learned throughout her time in the program.

She hopes to carry this notion into her studies as she pursues a degree in psychology at Saint Michael’s College in Vermont. Sadie believes psychology and the law are intertwined, and that her psychological knowledge could make a positive impact and enhance the quality of government policies.

ALA Foundation helps Jerome Ford serve fellow veterans at The Crawford House

In March 2019, a bomb cyclone hit Colorado Springs, Colo., and devastated The Crawford House, a veterans transitional housing center accommodating up to 13 veterans at a time.

“I was called by one of my managers,” said Jerome Ford, U.S. Air Force veteran and program manager at The Crawford House.

“Everybody was sheltered in place, so I had to remain in place until I could get there in the morning and see what was going on.”

When he arrived the next morning, Jerome was shocked by the extent of the damage. He was surprised that no residents were injured. The roof was hanging off the back side of the building, and water was seeping in through what little covering was left. The staff was able to set up housing for the veteran residents at a local hotel, but they knew it was a temporary solution.

Soon, they discovered that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs wouldn’t be able to send anymore veterans to the facility until it was fully repaired, and money was running low. That’s when community partners in the area stepped up to help. Among them: the American Legion Auxiliary.

“The American Legion Auxiliary is just one of those organizations that comes ready to serve veterans and help out this community,” Jerome said. “I think it’s absolutely amazing.”

A local ALA unit applied for a Veteran Projects Fund grant from the ALA Foundation and was awarded $5,000 to support The Crawford House in their effort to rebuild their refuge for homeless veterans. Jerome explained how the grant was able to cover repairs the insurance could not and sped up the process of rebuilding.

With the help of the Veteran Projects Fund grant, The Crawford House was able to reopen its door to veterans in need in April 2020, more than one year after disaster struck. Jerome and fellow staff are still in awe at the ways so many organizations rallied to help them recover.

“I would say to donors: Thank you, and continue to support these grants and your community,” Jerome said, “because your service to us makes a profound difference in veterans’ lives.”

Junior members of the ALA Department of Florida assembled hygiene kits for homeless women veterans as a way to engage the younger generation in participating and serving others.
A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families

We are the American Legion Auxiliary.
We are called to serve.
We respect our country and the service of those who defend our freedoms.
We are loyal to our United States Constitution and to those who protect it.
We are humbled by the courage of our veterans and their families.
We are alone, yet we stand together.
We are daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. We are family.
We are of every color. We are of every faith.
We are of every age.
We are anyone and everyone.
We are common and extraordinary.
We are citizens.
We live in small towns.
We live in suburbs.
We live in cities.
We work in fields, in factories, warehouses, offices, at home.
We are a community. We help one another.
We love our flag and all that it stands for.
We are many. We are one.
We are the American Legion Auxiliary. A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families.
We commit ourselves to the ideal: Service Not Self.