



American Legion Auxiliary



2019-2021 Department President Reports

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**A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military,
and their Families**



ALABAMA

Just like many states in this nation, Alabama has faced challenges during the COVID pandemic. Many posts and units closed their doors for a time and operated solely through a computer or telephone. Many discontinued meetings of any kind and events of all kinds because we have so many members who are elderly or at-risk.

The Department of Alabama American Legion Auxiliary continued its operations at headquarters with a handful of volunteers through the worst of the pandemic. We met in Montgomery with masks on and observed distancing protocols as best we could and still get the work done. We did conference calls and Zoom meetings and carried on with our department business. Nothing stopped.

This year, we saw drive-by parades for veterans being honored for birthdays or celebrating milestones or holidays. We made up care packages through getting information by telephone. We had meetings in smaller groups, and we provided for hospitalized and residential home veterans by getting and fulfilling lists of needs which were delivered according to their facility's protocols. When we could not DO, we made donations. When we were not challenged by COVID, we were challenged by a very active, expensive, and destructive hurricane season, but we continued on.

We missed a lot of our normal, but we carried on. Alabama has now moved to less restrictions and we are getting back to business as usual in many cases. Alabama IS beautiful and the best, as proven by our members.

ALASKA



WOW!!! What a fantastic and interesting adventure of term it has been. I would not of had this opportunity without the help of all my ALA members, which I thank you all for that!

My adventure started on April 27, 2019, when I was installed at the American Legion Department of Alaska convention, hosted by Jack Henry's Post 1. They were celebrating their 100th anniversary, which made it ever so special. Then it was onto National Convention to see Nicole Clapp installed as our national Auxiliary president. I was also installed there as department president of Alaska alongside all the other state department presidents. It was an exciting time, for that is so when we kicked off our American Legion Auxiliary celebration of 100 years of service to our veterans.



My first visitation was to Unit 15 in Palmer. They were having a chair auction fundraiser for the children's fund for their community. They had local artist paint different types of chairs, which were all beautiful. What a way to contribute back to their community.

Then 2020 came and we were all faced with changes of serving our veterans, military, and their families due to the pandemic. The American Legion Family in Alaska rose to the challenge and made sure that their needs were met.

In May, Memorial Day ceremonies were still carried out but were handled a little differently all over the state. We all wanted to make sure that no one was forgotten on this day, even during the pandemic.

Due to the pandemic, we were unable to visit the veteran nursing homes or have our gift shop for Christmas, but that did not stop us. We stuffed gift bags and dropped them off at the nursing homes so the staff members could hand them out for us. We also purchased heavy winter shirts and toiletry kits for our veterans at the domiciliary. Upon delivering the gifts to them, one of the staff members remarked that it was going to be a great Christmas for the veterans, for there was going to be at least two presents under the tree for all of them. That sure brought a joyous smile to me!

ARIZONA

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Arizona and The American Legion Department of Arizona joined



forces with a community nonprofit to co-sponsor several food box distribution events to help struggling veterans, military, and their families.



The ALA Century of Service was celebrated throughout the state of Arizona in various ways. Most units held all-day family events, including bike rides, banquets, parades, and an all-day event that featured food, games, music, and guest speakers.

The ALA programs members supported were Community Service and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation. The department's special project this year was The One Hundred Club of Arizona, whose mission is to provide immediate financial assistance to families of public safety officers and firefighters who are seriously injured or killed in the line of duty, and to provide resources to enhance their safety and welfare. Throughout the year, members held dinners, bake sales, and raffles to support the special project. First responders were honored by the Legion Family at the various events for their work in the community, and most of all, during the pandemic. In addition, to support rehabilitation and healing, a local women veterans group funded the Heal Her Art program, which provided fun, stress-releasing painting sessions for women veterans who were able to take their painting home to enjoy.

The Department of Arizona Commander, Auxiliary president and Sons of The American Legion commander worked together to assist the Legion Family with the most current information on services available to them during pandemic closures. In addition, Auxiliary members and Legionnaires assisted at COVID sites with information and registration.

ARKANSAS

Despite not being able to meet in person, members of the Department of Arkansas were able to carry on the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. The home became the base of operation for volunteering. Members used their talents and strengths to work the legacy of *Service Not Self*.

The department kept units and members informed of upcoming events, deadlines, programs, etc. Units continued to work a number of programs — Membership, Education, ALA Girls State, and Service to Veterans, to name of few.

The department held its first-ever virtual ALA Girls State. While the numbers were down from an in-person program, about 500 rising senior girls were in attendance.

A number of scholarship applications was submitted, with a \$1,000 department scholarship awarded, and a \$5,000 national scholarship winner.

The sound of whirling sewing machines could be heard around the state. Auxiliary members were busy making masks, sewing quilts for veterans, bags for the Auxiliary Christmas Shop, and teaching dolls for the local children's hospital and so much more. Those who couldn't sew bought items to donate to the VA and other community organizations that needed critical items, such as food drives.

Just before everything closed down due to COVID, the department was able to have two meetings. At each meeting, attendees were challenged to bring specific items to be donated to the Women's Program at the local VA hospital. At the Fall Conference, the theme was a baby shower. Anything a baby would need (birth to 3 years old) was donated by those in attendance, as well as items sent by those who could not attend. Value of the items was around \$1,500. At the Mid-Winter Conference, the theme was a lingerie shower, specifically bras and panties. Value of those items was around \$600.

CALIFORNIA

The Department of California, like most other departments, struggled with not being able to be hands on with our veterans, active-duty military, and our communities, yet there was a shining star for us to look at: A selfless, compassionate, energetic member was focused on our homeless veterans. This one single member in three days' time was able to get four families temporarily housed, food in the refrigerators, acquired tablets, and Wi-Fi for the children to continue school. Not only did this member



help these families, but she also helped one young man enlist in the Army after he graduated high school this past May. Getting homeless veterans into housing, securing employment, and procuring VA benefits is a passion for this member and has been so for many years. We are extremely proud of her.



Although our poppy orders were down slightly over the past year, it did not stop our units from getting creative with distribution. Many units that would normally be in the public sought other ways of getting the poppy out — they sent letters with poppies enclosed to their members, Legionnaires, and public officials. Letters of thanks and appreciation were returned with generous donations.

National Constitution & Bylaws Day was embraced by many units, districts, and members. Their resolve to act on this day was not deterred by a little pandemic (see photo).

All in all, I guess the one thing that stands out is that when faced with a “can’t do” situation as in a pandemic, we find a way to “do.” Zoom has become our best friend, and unit and district attendance has increased.

COLORADO



In September 2019, American Legion Auxiliary Department of Colorado was delighted to host American Legion Auxiliary National President Nicole Clapp and her visit to the Centennial State on our organization’s 100th birthday! President Nicole, department, and unit

leadership assisted at the Pueblo County stand down, celebrated the 100th year of partnership with a local school district, visited Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center, VA Community Living Center – Pueblo, Crawford House, and many posts throughout our beautiful state during her three-day visit. We were delighted to have her visit to the local school district covered by the local newspaper and two news crews! The visit to the Crawford House was covered by a local newspaper as she presented an ALA Foundation grant to Crawford House.

Our units continued the celebration through various dinners and special events with their American Legion Families to highlight the mission and vision of the American Legion Auxiliary. Unfortunately, six months later, the state of Colorado officially was shut down due to COVID restrictions. However, the units continued to find creative ways to work the mission. From making face coverings for first responders, employees of state veteran facilities, and other essential personnel, to assisting our VA and state veterans’ facilities to meet their ever-changing needs, to donating to food pantries and homeless shelters, to creating an electric safari for a local VA facility, and reaching out to our homebound members, caregivers, and other members in need, the members of the Department of Colorado did not let a global pandemic stop them. The ALA Department of Colorado members do not back down to a challenge — we RISE above it!

CONNECTICUT

The state of Connecticut started its two years off with an amazing 100th year gala, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and Sons of The American Legion. All came together and had a great celebration. Then it was time to get to work on PIC and Stand Down, Christmas Shops, and Mid-Winter Conference. Everything was going great, then COVID hit and we all had to learn how to do things in different ways to still help our veterans.

Members purchased gift cards so that veterans could call stores to get personal need items. Coffee pods and other items were donated to the hospitals for each floor each month. Members hosted baby showers for female veterans, took veterans to doctors’ appointments, and distributed 134 quilts to veterans. Members conducted food drives, coat drives, and delivered food and meals to veterans. They put “buddy bags” out for children to have an activity to do. They worked membership. And in the middle of all of this, they had to move their office, hire new employees, and now they have a beautiful, new office. It was a pleasure to have National President Nicole there to



cut the ribbon while on her visit to our great state.

All in all, even in the pandemic, members learned new ways to work all of our programs. They did a great job in all they did. It only goes to show that if we all pull together and work together, we can achieve anything we put our minds to. The state of Connecticut would like to thank all frontline workers for all they have done.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Here in our nation's capital, stringent COVID restrictions forced the cancellation of several of our department's signature mission-related activities in 2020, including the Poppy Drive and the D.C. VAMC Holiday Shop. However, we soldiered on!

Promoting servicemembers' and veterans' mental health was an overriding theme of the D.C. Department's most high-profile projects over the past two years. The 2019 Poppy Drive generated a record sum for Objective Zero, an initiative working to prevent veteran and servicemember suicide. In October 2019, ALA members served lunch to nearly 300 members of Irreverent Warriors, an organization that uses humor and camaraderie to foster veteran mental health.



National President Nicole Clapp joined us for D.C.'s second Veterans Creative Arts Showcase in November 2019, spotlighting local veterans' use of their talents to cope with the emotional toll of their military service. Before the country shut down in late February 2020, we hosted a fundraiser honoring two D.C. Legionnaires who wrote and recorded original songs about their combat experiences with Nashville songwriters. Proceeds benefited the music therapy program at the D.C. VAMC.

Throughout the pandemic, D.C.'s ALA members continued activities like volunteering with Toys for Tots, donating school supplies for military families in need, welcoming Honor Flights to our nation's capital, and providing meals at Fisher House, dinner baskets to

Walter Reed wounded warriors, and personal care items to residents of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Our COVID-related efforts included sending personal protective equipment to servicemembers, participating in blood drives, shopping for quarantined veterans, and volunteering at vaccination sites.



The return of Unit 8's original 1922 charter, courtesy of ALA Delaware member Trudy Parker, capped our celebration of the Auxiliary's 100 years of service. We also celebrated the award of a 2021 Non-Traditional Student Scholarship to one of our members who courageously completed her nursing degree amid the pandemic.

DELAWARE

How do I begin to capture all the accomplishments? For a small state, we are proud of our history. Unit 3 President Jeff Crouser is a spouse who revitalized Milford Post 3 with a new charter and is a member of The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders. Laura Smith, Unit 6 president and National Goodwill Ambassador, sponsored a family of four whose husband is deployed. And a veteran in need of a refrigerator received a new one from the post. Post and Unit 3 became a satellite location for mental health counseling. Many units/posts/squadrons worked together to collect school supplies for hybrid classrooms.

National President Nicole Clapp was our guest celebrating 100 years of service in November 2019, highlighted with a state proclamation presented by a legislative representative. Unit 19 President Trudy Parker was surfing the web for ideas and came across a 1924 Unit 8, Washington, D.C, Auxiliary charter that had been missing for a long time. It was presented at a re-dedication



ceremony September 2019.

Unit 28 Make A Difference Day collected canned goods, can openers, and other food staples and delivered everything to a local shelter. They were also busy distributing ready-made lunches for pickup service for several months. Unit 17 became Lewes' community ambassadors and welcomed visitors to town and the Legion Family. Unit 25 sponsored the first all-girls Cub Scouts pack not only in Delaware, but in the Delmarva Council.



This year, the ALA, Legion, SAL, and Riders came together on Zoom calls when necessary to discuss statewide changes. Resolutions were updated in order to operate. We came together as a family should. We survived, and it was one of our finest hours.

FLORIDA

Although the pandemic tried to dampen the spirits of Florida ALA members, we viewed COVID as an uninvited guest and continued with our 100th birthday celebration. Our members learned to attend events, training sessions, and meetings virtually. Members conducted Buddy Checks regularly, and our department's public relations Facebook page was our hub for information and visits. Department leaders from The American Legion, Sons, and Auxiliary met weekly via Zoom meetings to ensure our members' safety and well-being were our top priorities.

Prior to COVID's arrival, our 100th year celebration was in full swing. Many units received anniversary proclamations from their government bodies. Proud members wore red, white, and blue shirts that displayed who we are, what we do, and how long we've been doing it. We marched in parades, proudly carrying anniversary banners. We ate cake — lots of cake. I believe every unit had birthday cake at least once during the first year alone.

Florida was proud to serve our veterans, active-duty military, and their families. During the pandemic, units came together to stock food pantries and help feed hungry Americans.

Thanksgiving Day 2019 offered a special meaning of giving thanks and service, all rolled into one. Members from Unit 316 in Atlantic Beach boarded the docked U.S.S. Roosevelt to serve Thanksgiving dinner to active-duty military and their family members. The joy that comes from serving a hot meal to a servicemember away from home on a holiday cannot be described in words.



As a way of honoring "100 Years of Service," our members were steadfast and determined to reach their 100% membership goal. I'm happy to report that the Department of Florida was the first department to reach that goal in 2021.

Our members are ready to remain "Florida ALA Strong" as we enter the next 100 successful years of fulfilling our mission.

GEORGIA

The ALA Department of Georgia's year started with the installation of our 99th department president and officers held in Valdosta. Our president's theme was "9-11 Angels Serving Every Veteran." We hit the ground running! The American Legion Family held a joint leadership meeting in Warner Robins, introducing all the officers and committee chairs, then we had a breakout session to go over the Program Action Plans and working the Four Pillars of The American Legion.

Our members collected and donated comfort items for the VA hospitals and homeless shelters. We gave out Blue and Gold Star Banners, hosted female veterans' luncheons, and presented three students with department scholarships. Together, we collectively raised \$51,235 for the VA special project. Unit 178 hosted National Vice President Kathy Daudistel's visit to Georgia for the opening of the VA Gift Shop in Augusta.

We were blessed to have National President Nicole Clapp visit our state, escorted by Legion Riders, where she



had lunch and dinner hosted by a few units. She met with VA directors and staff and toured the VA facility's spinal cord units in Atlanta, and the Fisher House in Augusta. We visited the Walk of Heroes VA War Memorial Park and Moina Michael's gravesite in Monroe, where we laid a wreath at her headstone.



Right at the peak of Mid-Year, we attended Mission Training in Orlando, Fla., and an ALA Girls State retreat for the counselors. Then the pandemic hit. Our lives may never be the same, but our hearts are forever grounded, still serving our veterans, military family, and communities.

During our 2019-2021 term, we sadly lost five of our Past Department Presidents: Tillie Davis (1971-1972), Hazelle Hutcherson (2002-2003), Juanita Todd (2003-2004), Bettye D. Williams (2009-2010), and Betty Grist (2013-2014). May they forever rest in peace.

HAWAII

What a year it was for our American Legion Auxiliary due to COVID-19. Since March 2020, our world has been turned upside down, our lives drastically changed forever. The pandemic caused a great deal of disruption in our lives, our jobs, our families, and organization. We had to find new ways to do our shopping, working from home, holding Zoom meetings, and finding creative ways to serve our veterans, military, and their families. With our social distancing, wearing masks, and being limited on resources, we had to find new ways to work our programs to help our veterans and their families. More than ever, our veterans needed our love and support. We continued our efforts to work our mission of *Service Not Self* and programs.

Our state was under shutdown guidelines and limited restrictions, but we managed to get food service out to our members, do Buddy Checks weekly, and put flowers, flags, and poppies on veterans' graves on special holidays. We participated in homestead food distribution for the local Hawaiian community. Members donated monetary for birthdays and graduations.

We conducted our DEC meetings and our 2020 and 2021 annual conventions virtually on Zoom. We also held our ALA Girls State program online, setting a platform and standards for other states to follow.

We established a newsletter in 2020 to inform our members of what we were doing, what we needed, and what we were going to do. This was an informative way to get the word out. We sent it out before our DEC meetings.

I stayed in contact with The American Legion by emails, phone calls, and virtual sessions. We assisted and joined them wherever possible.

We know we made a difference in the lives of those we served.

IDAHO

The last two years were a challenge. We managed to continue our annual food convoy even with the restrictions of COVID. Our founding Legionnaire, Frank Dalton, was present at our most recent collection. Our entire Legion Family participates in this event every year. We all collect canned goods, raw potatoes, onions, rice, and dried beans for our three state veterans homes. We met at a local hotel and formed a convoy to transport our food to the Boise Veterans Home, where we dropped it off at the loading dock, and the staff put it away, as with COVID restrictions, we were unable to enter the facility.

Our Auxiliary usually supports a Christmas Gift table at the three state veterans homes, but this last year, we put a different spin on it. To keep everyone safe, and since volunteers were not allowed inside the facility, instead of gifts, we had pictures taken of our veterans by the facilities' staff. Auxiliary members put the photos in frames and mailed them to the veterans' families.

Some of our units joined with their Legion posts and celebrated our 100th anniversary in and around COVID outbreaks and restrictions.

Massive batches of Christmas cards were mailed to Auxiliary, Legion, and Sons of The American Legion members. Other cards, newsletters, and phone calls were made to keep our members in touch with each other.

Poppies were distributed in 2019 but not in 2020. We began distributing poppies again this year as things opened. While working with post members at a Memorial Day ceremony at a local park, over \$200 in donations was collected from the Auxiliary's distribution of poppies at the ceremony. I recently learned that a unit requested 500 poppies — our first request in over a year.



ILLINOIS

When the year began, our American Legion commander, our SAL detachment commander, and I committed to working our missions together as a Legion Family. Both commanders are also Legion Riders. We held our usual events like the State Fair, installations, National Convention, forums, Gift Shops at our VAs, membership caravan, Lincoln Pilgrimage, and the Oratorical Contest. As we were about to start our Patriotic Conference in March, the world came to a halt. Within the next month, our department leadership team met to plan how to keep working our programs during the pandemic. We were not willing to just sit back and do nothing.



We distributed face masks from National to our VA homes and facilities. Although we could not go inside, we met administrative staff in the parking lot, along with our Representatives and Deputies. Our Reps and Deps found creative ways to continue to serve by sending supplies, providing meals, singing Christmas carols, and sending “Thank you for your service” cards and goody bags — just to name a few.

With our Department Convention cancelled, we held award celebrations across the state. Our fall board meeting was held with the Legion and Sons’ DECs. The meetings had a limited number of members in person and through a Zoom session. We held our 2021 Membership Caravan, followed by Lincoln Pilgrimage, with a limited number of attendees, including National President Nicole.

Many units across the state held birthday parties. Our department headquarters was home to our big birthday celebration.

Junior Conference was split into three sessions across the state to provide more social distancing. ALA Illini Girls State was held virtually with 100 girls in attendance. Revitalization efforts were done together with the Legion and SAL.

Our Legion Family had a very productive two years, even with all of the challenges we faced.

INDIANA

Even with the pandemic, Indiana still managed to create some awesome accomplishments.

I am so proud to have presented our USOs of Indiana with a little over \$10,000. A plaque was presented to each of the six USOs on our behalf.

Purdue University developed a communication system just for the Indiana Veterans Home. A tablet was given to each resident at IVH. My project completely paid for them. A check for \$10,800 was presented at the April Spring Conference.

We once again raised funds for an award to Creative Arts of over \$5,000 for each year of the two-year collecting. We really missed not getting to attend last year.

Kokomo Unit 6 alone raised \$5,232 for poppy donations. Thanks for that awesome accomplishment. Indiana paid \$77,606 to poppy makers and 20,920 veterans who made poppies. We raised \$51,275 of donations.

Our Service to Veterans chairman of Unit 18 served 5,500 hours with 30 volunteers this year. They have served over 23,000 hours over the past four years.

The Americanism Committee chairman reported an amazing program contribution for 2019-2021. They reported 16,343 volunteering hours, 3,683 pocket flags folded and distributed, and \$56,045 in funds spent and donated. Five hundred and fifty of these pocket flags went to Camp Atterbury for active duty military.

Our department proceeded helping veterans even during the pandemic. Many police, EMS, and fire department personnel were honored for their service. Our veterans were supplied with many necessary items such as lift chairs, financial benefit assistance for injured members, free meals and food pantries to help the community in need, delivery meals to homebound veterans and families, Christmas donations to needy families, and care packages to active-duty members. With the help of Zoom meetings, we got our messages sent out.

IOWA

Iowa was honored to have National President Nicole Clapp represent our state and our entire Family. We are proud of Nicole and the job she did. To start off our 2019, we hosted Nicole’s homecoming in the Heartland. To celebrate our Auxiliary centennial, one of our units hosted a 1920s-themed party. It was a lot of fun putting on a flapper dress for the evening and enjoying everyone’s company. Another unit hosted a centennial tea party. They



had their history on display and fun activities.

Then the pandemic hit. But in true fashion, that didn't stop us for long. Our members heard about the need for masks, and boy did they deliver. Units started to conduct drive-by meals for pickup, collecting items for our Iowa Veterans home, and made lots of masks. Our Ames unit heard how the Iowa Veterans Home needed snacks because vendors were unable to enter the facility. They held several collection events at their post, then delivered them to Marshalltown.



In August, I was lucky to have National President Nicole join me in Omaha to present the new Fisher House with a check for \$7,000 that our members had contributed to. That same day, Iowa was hit with the worst storm in the state's history. The derecho traveled all the way across Iowa and left destruction and devastation in its path. We had many thankful members who were eligible for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. Our members pulled together to help one another, and their communities, to get through it. We were excited to have our centennial gala event at our Department Convention.

KANSAS

The Department of Kansas Auxiliary appointed a 100th Year Celebration Committee to promote the American Legion Auxiliary's centennial. Kansas chose "The Wizard of Oz" for its theme. Each unit was asked to purchase a 2x3' yellow foam board and decorate it with the unit's name, number, and interesting facts to be brought to Department Convention in May.

At our Fall Conference, district members decorated cookies and cupcakes to depict each Wizard of Oz character. In November, numerous Kansas units celebrated the 100-year date with dinners and meetings.

On Nov. 19, Department President Paula Sellens gave a speech In Newton, Kan., where the first Auxiliary convention was held in January 1921. Members dressed in 1920s fashion, and served a light meal replete with an array of teas, delicate sandwiches, and a 100-year birthday cake. Attendees viewed the original charter and memorabilia.



During the February Mid-Winter Meeting, a skit was performed on the Four Pillars, featuring the main characters from The Wizard of Oz. The May 2020 convention was not held because of COVID-19. The committee continued to promote the *Service Not Self* motto and the pillars of The American Legion Family.

Finance meetings and DEC meetings proved successful via teleconferencing and Zoom with both department members and national leaders. As the situation slowly returned to a somewhat normal state, momentum picked up. ALA units were once again planning and promoting their celebrations.

The final celebration ended May 14-16 with our Department Convention. The yellow brick road was the road to success. By following this path, Kansas became the HEART, the BRAINS, and the COURAGE of the American Legion Auxiliary.

KENTUCKY

From fall 2019 to spring 2021, Kentucky Auxiliary members supported their communities' youth with school supply giveaways, scholarships, fun and games with Santa and the Easter Bunny, and honoring youth with Good Deed Awards. Auxiliary members, along with youth volunteers, assisted The American Legion with Oratorical Contests. Youth were encouraged to participate in the ALA Americanism Essay Contest, proudly having representation in every category.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation activities included



taking food and gifts to the facilities. Post-lockdown, snacks were sent and items on veterans' needs lists were purchased and dropped off. Members donated snacks when the VA started giving vaccinations. Many members became caregivers for veterans, ensuring they made their appointments. In addition, veterans expos were held with the entire Legion Family playing a part. Our Juniors helped with the check-in process. Our legislative effort for veterans' needs continued to be a focus. We had a large delegation in 2020 in Washington, D.C., expressing our concerns as we focused on The American Legion's top priorities.



Within the communities hit hardest by weather, The American Legion Family could be seen working together to provide food and shelter to any person in need by utilizing the post homes. People were offered food, warm blankets, and water.

We celebrated our century of service on every level. Units held local events, dressing in period clothing. A focus was placed on advertising our 100 years by ensuring everything was done in lots of 100, including children performing the National Anthem, certificates for flying the flag, and pocket flags folded at Department Convention. The department membership team planned and hosted our Century of Service Celebration in fall 2019 and spring 2021, bringing us in and taking us out on a celebratory note.

LOUISIANA

Give thanks to almighty God and praise Him for his goodness and mercy. The 2019-2021 year was a year like no other for the mighty state of Louisiana and the rest of the world. The global pandemic, the hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, and winter storms were horrific, and many lives were disrupted and sadly, lost. As I pen my

report as president, many blessed memories come to mind. Thank you for the diverse collaborations of leadership and guidance perfecting our organization in the world community.

During my tenure as department president, my travel was limited because of the pandemic. However, I was able to make a few visits to some of the district conferences. We were able to meet virtually on several occasions to complete business transactions. I had the pleasure of meeting with National Commander Bill Oxford at the 3rd District Conference in Houma, La. There is nothing more beautiful than someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others. The year went by fast. We found a way to get people out by offering shots, wearing masks, and social distancing.

We cannot look forward without looking back to 2020. We forever will refer to 2020 and 2021 as a time like no other. Let us stay safe and keep focused on the mission to be the volunteer organization of choice for every member of The American Legion Family.

During the pandemic and Hurricane Laura, Commander Comeaux and I worked on cutting a large tree that damaged our house. He also brought care packages that we could distribute to the people of the community who were affected by the storm. The flood, water, and cleaning supplies were an awesome answer to our prayers. Thank you, Commander Comeaux, for shaping the future for our veterans.

MAINE

The Department of Maine president's project was the Auxiliary Emergency Fund to celebrate and honor ALA members' service for 100 years. To kick off our 100th year, we had a special speaker at our Fall Conference: National Eastern Division AEF Chair Debra Tiernan, who shared information, and the conference was a success. Gray Unit 86 started its project with a \$1,000 donation.

Members collected dimes in 16.9 oz. bottles with special AEF Labels. Many units held fundraisers to donate to the project. Individual members and Legionnaires donated to the project. One unit had custom T-shirts made and sold them, donating funds to the president's project. The president of that unit presented a second check for \$1,000 for AEF on behalf of the unit at the Department of Maine's Testimonial. The two-year total collection was \$11,461.35.

To celebrate the 100th year, unit members collected 100 of various items and donated them to Maine Foster



Children's program, Maine veterans homes, local food banks, and schools.



At our Fall Conference, we had a special assistant, Eastern Division National Vice President Carolyn Singer-Baranowski, who helped us play an Auxiliary trivia game with 100 questions, earning candles to place on a 100th birthday cake made by a member.

During closures of post homes across the state due to COVID, members pitched in and helped clean and renovate posts for grand re-openings when it was safe to. Members made masks and donated them to veterans, healthcare providers at veterans homes, and schools.

The Department of Maine adapted during a difficult time, and were able to continue serving veterans, families, and communities.

MARYLAND



Many units celebrated the American Legion Auxiliary's 100th birthday in 2019-2021. We celebrated "A Century of Service" at the Fall Conference in 2019 in Ocean City

and were honored to host Eastern Division National Vice President Carolyn Baranowski at a department birthday celebration. A Century of Service also was celebrated at a ceremony and parade at Steadman-Keenan Post 96 in Brunswick, along with National President Nicole Clapp and Past National President Linda Newsome.

Most of our medical centers, nursing homes, veterans homes, children and youth, and community service places of business were shut down, but members supported programs via Zoom and conference calls when we could not travel in person. May 2021 started opening slightly, and many units and districts held Day for God and Country programs, installations, fundraising dinners/events, Memorial Day programs, and Flag Day programs, etc.

We joined with The American Legion Family in a Christmas Party, fundraisers, Mid-Winter and Convention of the Sons of The American Legion, and the virtual National Commander's Banquet.

Members feel they made a difference in the lives of many veterans, youth, and communities by collecting non-perishable items for food pantries, church groups, and medical centers by donating monies, clothing, etc.

MASSACHUSETTS

Amid the onset of COVID-19 and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts being basically shut down for 13 months, members of the American Legion Auxiliary continued their efforts to meet the needs of veterans, enlisted, and our communities. Sadly, COVID-19 cost the lives of nearly 100 veterans housed at the Holyoke Soldiers Home. Members of The American Legion Family jumped into action to demand a new Soldiers Home, designed to meet today's needs. Leaders of the Legion Family wrote letters of support for this project to the committee appointed by Gov. Baker to review the facility's needs. A new Soldiers Home was approved by the committee, legislature, and governor.

While all VA facilities were closed to volunteers, our members invented multiple ways of meeting veterans' needs. They provided gift cards, Christmas stockings filled with goodies and other items, and gifts selected by volunteers (based on cards submitted by the veterans) and wrapped before being delivered by hospital staff. There was also a huge increase in cards for Christmas, Valentine's Day, and other holidays. Thank-you cards increased as well. We sold raffle tickets to an original painting displayed at the Veterans Creative Arts Festival, and the funds were given to the Creative Arts donation to be given by the department. Healthy items were collected and provided in



bundles for VA facilities.

Children & Youth activities were curtailed; however, volunteer hours totaled \$164,377.35. Donations totaled nearly \$40,000. Twenty-six Good Deed Awards and four Youth Hero Awards were presented. To keep kids healthy, some units donated gift certificates to families in need. Units also helped schools with hybrid learning items such as masks, sanitation supplies, and books. The Education program, aligned with Children & Youth, supported the needs of students (Pre-K to college) with scholarships, backpacks filled with nutritious foods, virtual reading activities, and classroom items for Teacher Appreciation Week.

Americanism and Community Service programs were through the roof with activities, showing pride in America. Members made and delivered masks, flew their flags, and helped with food pantries and many other events. Combining the two years, we had more than 2,200 volunteers serving 22,000 hours, donating \$39,000 in gift cards and money, and nearly \$49,000 in donated items.

MICHIGAN

We worked together and overcame many obstacles when COVID-19 decided to become a part of our daily existence. Governmental executive orders prevented some social meetings; however, our members were resilient and used social media devices to continue to provide communications achieving our purpose of *Service Not Self*. Time seemed to stand still for 2019-2021, so we didn't have too many opportunities to go "Cruising for Our Veterans." As we assessed our programs through reporting, we should be proud of our accomplishments and strive harder to promote patriotism and leadership.



I had two great events take place during my tenure as department president. The first was a visit from National President Nicole Clapp at our NVCAF held in Battle Creek. We were invited to join in a photo session with

Snap, Crackle and Pop, along with Tony the Tiger. Michigan ALA was honored to host the hospitality room at NVCAF. Our second visit with Madam President Nicole was in September 2020. Her tour started with the Wilwin Lodge at Cygnet Cove located near Custer; she was very impressed with the cabins and main house for our veterans and their families to relax and enjoy family time. Upon leaving Wilwin, we headed to the eastern side of the state. We stopped at Frankenmuth for a visit to the Military Museum. The next day, we were off to South Lyon to visit The War Dog Memorial. Our next stop was the Polar Bear Memorial in Troy. Holly National Cemetery was on our list; we stopped and toured the grounds.

Thanks to Zoom and virtual meetings, we were able to conduct DEC meetings. Most units and districts cancelled their events because of government mandates regarding group attendance numbers. May 2021 brought more freedom for holding in-person meetings. I must compliment our units and districts for being creative with ways to provide service to our veterans and their families. Thinking outside the box with a drive-thru Christmas, Santa and his elves distributed gifts and goodie bags. Juniors and SAL members participated in placing flags on veterans' gravesites at The Resurrection Cemetery.

MINNESOTA

The 2019-2021 year was a challenging time on all fronts. Department of Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary members faced the constantly changing conditions with spirit and determination to find new and creative ways to serve our veterans, military, and their families.

COVID-19 kept the doors to our five Minnesota Veterans Homes and VA medical centers closed to outside visitors and our regular Auxiliary representatives. Besides our VAMCs in Minneapolis and St. Cloud, we also serve the facilities in Sioux Falls, S.D., and Fargo, N.D., for our Minnesota veterans who cross the border for medical care.

Our annual Gift Shop/\$10 Bill Shower is one of our most popular programs. Held in December, each resident at our veterans homes, as well as in-patients at the four VA medical centers, receive a gift and can select one gift for a special person in their life. Each of these veterans also receives a holiday card and \$10 bill, which usually goes into their account at the canteen in their facility.

The nine facilities were firm in stating we couldn't bring any items into their facilities. Where there's a will, there's a way! This year, \$25 gift cards were mailed in and distributed to the veterans by volunteer staff members who



happened to be Auxiliary members. Two of the facilities requested items instead of gift cards. Our department office purchased items online and had them delivered by UPS. The items then were put into quarantine for 14 days, and once again staff members who were also Auxiliary members distributed the items at the end of their work shifts.

Our 2020 Gift Shop/\$10 Bill Shower costs totaled \$43,850. We knew it was all worthwhile after receiving a note from a Minneapolis Veterans Home resident: "I really didn't expect much for the holidays. You really came through for us. Thank you so much for the Walmart gift card and cash deposit to my MVH account. I was able to buy some secondhand paperback books. I am very grateful that you wanted to make Christmas a happier time at the Minneapolis Veterans Home."

MISSISSIPPI

We were faced with new challenges. Times definitely changed, but our obligation to the American Legion Auxiliary remained the same. The goals were to build a stronger organization through teamwork, communication, unity, grow membership, think out of the box, be respectful, put a smile on your face, and have fun and enjoy.

At Mid-Winter Conference in 2020, we celebrated our American Legion Auxiliary 100th-year celebration. A proclamation was received from the mayor of Laurel, recognizing the American Legion Auxiliary 100th anniversary.

Auxiliary members were encouraged to go an extra mile to increase membership. Members were asked to make Buddy Checks. Every effort was made to receive 100% in membership by our Membership chairman.

The ALA Magnolia Girls State Leadership Program was a success. The 2021 session was held at the University of Southern Mississippi. It was an amazing week of learning focused on becoming responsible citizens, leadership, and love for God and country.

We have volunteers at VA medical centers and nursing homes total 7,909 hours volunteered. Members participated in Wreath Across America by placing approximately 1,000 wreaths at the National Cemetery.

Volunteers collected soda pop tops and education BoxTops to help students fund a school-sponsored trip to Europe. Units donated school supplies and masks to area schools, made a financial donation to St. Jude Hospital, and members participated in fundraising for Palmer Home for

Children and House of Grace Toy Drive. Also, members contributed to Final Salute, a housing service to homeless veterans and their children on monthly basis.

Americanism ran high in Mississippi. Members honored veterans by participating in annual Veterans Day parades, hosted Veterans Day breakfasts, lined walkways with flags, set out almost 3,000 luminaries in the city park honoring our veterans, and 775 flags were planted in the Field of Flags in honor of or in memory of our veterans.

MISSOURI

The Department of Missouri was able to adapt to the unique circumstances of the past two years and continued their mission to serve our veterans, military, and their families.

Although we were limited on contact with our veterans, we still managed to find new ways to get Christmas gifts, cards, and donations to our Missouri veterans homes and VA hospitals. Food was donated for veterans food pantries and was distributed while also observing social distancing.

ALA Missouri Girls State held our 79th session, and although we had to reduce our total number, we still welcomed 476 citizens and had a successful week.

Local units and districts celebrated our 100th birthday over the past two years, and at our convention this past summer, we had a 100th birthday gala. Members dressed in costumes that reflected the different decades of our Auxiliary.

It was a different two years, but we were ready to take the new ideas we learned from this time and surge forward to our goals in the coming years.

MONTANA



Montana might be small in membership compared to many states, but we are mighty. Instead of shutting down during the COVID crisis, some of our units and members



thrived. They pulled together from afar and did lots of work in their communities.

Members drove veterans to doctor appointments, did grocery shopping for those who could not go out, and made phone calls to members who were sick or lonely. They called people who lost their friends and family members and helped at funerals. Many made masks for hospitals and veterans. When others were in need, our members donated money and food donations. We sewed, and are still sewing, 60 Quilts of Valor for the veterans in our new SW Veterans Home in Butte. We donated 60 36-inch televisions and wall mounts so every veteran would have one in their room. One of our Junior members made 40 quilted lap robes and donated them. An older member crocheted 25 lap robes for veterans.

Members were in our schools (the ones that allowed us), and still did the Poppy Poster and Americanism Essay contests. They used comic books to do the Pledge of Allegiance and conducted flag etiquette and veterans presentations. Units donated backpacks to first-graders on their first day of school. Members donated dinners on holidays to those who needed them and donated many pounds of food to the local food pantries. Two Junior members had their mom help them make a shadowbox for a World War II veteran to display all of his medals and ribbons.

Christmas gifts were sent to veterans homes in plenty of time so they could be in quarantine before our veterans could have them; we just could not be there in person. One of our Christmas stores was open, but with many restrictions, and the number of veterans who shopped there was down by almost 40 percent.

All said, I am very proud of our members who make up the Department of Montana. They are strong and driven to help others and our beloved veterans.

NEBRASKA

June 23, 2019, started Nebraska “Looking to the Future” with new officers and new resolve. The year started with parades, speeches, Quilts of Valor presentations, Leadership ABC, and a Legion Family homecoming celebration. Celebrations for The American Legion’s 100th birthday continued.

Auxiliary birthday celebrations began with a proclamation signing with the honorable governor of Nebraska, Pete Ricketts. Unit 27, Beatrice, was the first to hold a birthday party. Winners of various games received 100 pennies to mark the occasion. Units across the state

celebrated with afternoon teas and luncheons. November also found increased numbers of volunteers at the Dollar Days and Gift for Yanks presentations at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and homes. Omaha VA Medical Center and Grand Island held gift shops for patients.



The department held a 100th birthday celebration at Mid-Year Conference. The entire Legion Family joined in the celebration, complete with TV interviews, newspaper coverage, and a proclamation from the mayor of Kearney. The first Creative Arts Festival was held at the Grand Island Medical Center in February 2020. Spring meetings started with rumblings of cancellations due to COVID-19. Then news of cancellation of National Convention, a two-year term for department officers, and cancellation of Legion and ALA Cornhusker Boys and Girls State.

Zoom became a verb instead of a business. The Department Executive Committee zoomed meetings for convention, and units found innovative ways to continue their programs. Drive-thru Easter egg hunts, soup suppers, and dinner fundraisers came into existence. Twelve of 13 district president trainings were held virtually. The decision to hold ALA Cornhusker Girls State virtually was made in November. One hundred and eighty-three young women attended. Each citizen left with new friends and a large impact on their lives. So, history was made, and Nebraska continued to have Pride in the Past.

NEVADA

During the unique 2019-2021 year, members of the Department of Nevada did not engage in many outreach activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its significant health risks. In light of this, we did encourage and support virtual participation in meetings and events. Among these, the Department of Nevada conducted a



virtual ALA Nevada Girls State program, to which we welcomed both Nevada and New Mexico delegates.



We were fortunate enough to be able to conduct our 2021 Department Convention in person and celebrated the American Legion Auxiliary's 100 years of service together with cake and renewed dedication. All members were inspired to continue this spirit of service into a second century.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

As our founders of the ALA when forming our organization, they accomplished it, although they were struggling through the Spanish Flu, also known as the 1918 influenza pandemic, lasting from February 1918 to April 1920. It infected 500 million people — about a third of the world's population at the time — in four successive waves.

Sound familiar?

One hundred years later, we found ourselves in another pandemic. And just like our predecessors, we managed to step forward and carry out the ALA mission. We did not say, "Because of COVID-19, we could not..." NO, New Hampshire American Legion Auxiliary members said, "Because of COVID- 19 we can help our veterans, their families, and our communities."

I am so proud to be part of such a great organization, and I am thankful for:

Manchester Unit 2 members, who distributed 1,000 boxes of food almost every weekend to those experiencing food insecurity.

The members of Goffstown Unit 16, who made an ALA ice cream truck to deliver ice cream to veterans in the long-term care at the Manchester VA and the NH Veterans Home.

Members who donated gift cards to the women's

outpatient clinic at the Manchester VA.

Those who called and said, "What do you need?" and "We will get it for you."



Members who helped our veterans and senior members obtain appointments to be vaccinated and help them to get to their appointments.

Those who did constant Buddy Checks.

And I want to thank all of the chairmen for taking their roles seriously and getting the word out to the units about our programs and the ALA mission. They did not only do what was necessary to get by, our chairman went more than out of their way to promote American Legion Auxiliary program to make it a great success.

NEW JERSEY



The Department of New Jersey's theme for 2019-2021 was "Honoring our Roots...Growing our Future." Although New Jersey was hit early and severely by the pandemic, our members never wavered in their commitment to our veterans and communities. They Honored our Roots! Our founding members started in 1919 under stressful, uncertain times. Just as members have found strength during the past 100 years, so did members of the Department of New Jersey.

Throughout the department, units found creative ways to support veterans in their communities, as well as our health care, police, fire and EMT workers. Community service projects found new focus.



The membership team at all levels continued to secure our future by signing up new members, as well as maintaining our current members. We welcomed many spouses to our units — my unit welcomed Scott by electing him treasurer!

This past year, as our “April Showers Project,” we adopted the newly built Endeavour Elementary School on a military base. As a 100% military student school, it serves 675 young military children, over one-third of whom transfer in/out over the school year. Within two months of starting the project, over 100 children’s books, three sets of picture resource books, 134 backpacks (85 of which were fully loaded with school supplies) and various toys were delivered to the school in April. The Legion Family of Post 435 worked together to get donations from WB Mason for school supplies, bought backpacks, and assembled a team to stuff 79 of them together.

Our April Showers Project chairman, Roberta Francis, summed up our ALA department activities for 2019-2021 best: “We may get stopped by a pandemic for a moment, but once we think outside the box, we can make anything happen.”

NEW MEXICO

“Resiliency” is the word I use in describing New Mexico ALA members. Our state was one that had nearly a complete shutdown due to the pandemic. Our units had to think outside the box and come up with new ways of continuing our mission of service. Units made face masks, held drive-by parades at veterans homes throughout the state, held blood drives, sent care packages, made cards for veterans and sent them to the veterans hospital and veterans homes since visits were not allowed, and grocery shopped for veterans who were homebound.

Units worked with The American Legion Family to do Buddy Checks and provide assistance to those in need.

Units made donations when possible to continue supporting our programs and veterans. There was a great need for help since monetary donations were down due to the pandemic.

When allowed, socially distanced programs for Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and other holidays were held.

July 2019 found the Department of New Mexico holding the annual School of Instruction, and a birthday party complete with hats and ice cream. Our centennial committee made it a fun time for those who attended. Units and districts continued with their own Century of Service celebrations throughout the year. Projects during

my term were the continued support of the New Mexico Fisher House and Honor Flight. Sadly, our Honor Flights were canceled during the pandemic.

Since we were unable to hold our annual state convention in 2020, all department officers and chairmen stayed in place, along with department chairmen.

NEW YORK



The Department of NY had an amazing two years of celebrating our 100th anniversary while demonstrating the strength, commitment, and dedication of who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

We started with celebrations across the state with units preserving the past by burying time capsules filled with memorabilia in celebration of our 100 years, and open houses with celebratory cakes! Public Relations took off as our members participated in radio and TV interviews, provided photos and articles about the ALA, and even received proclamations ranging from mayors to the President of the United States! Woo-hoo!



Mid-Winter Conference brought learning more about our ALA programs but also a little fun in celebration of the ALA’s century of service. Our members wore outfits dating from the 1900s-1990s, and while they were strutting their stuff, we learned some significant events and facts about the ALA from those decades. National President Nicole



also participated in our fashion show, displaying an outfit from the Roaring '20s.

Although our celebrations were cut short in 2020 due to the pandemic, our members continued meeting, planning, training, and celebrating! Zoom was the new buzzword among our members. Priority was staying connected with our members any way possible and using the Buddy System to check in on our membership. I did monthly informational videos on Facebook to keep members updated and to stay in touch with them through the pandemic year.

The American Legion Family worked together in support of our veterans across NY State. Our members worked hand in hand assembling and donating bags to welcome home supporting formerly homeless veterans who were restarting their life in a new home. The Legion Family in one district bagged up various snacks and delivered them to essential workers at the VA during COVID, while another district made sandwiches and delivered them to the hospital's frontline workers.

Lots of things were different over the past couple years, but somehow, we were all able to get through it, and we learned how to do things differently. And for that, I applaud our members. The support across this state was truly done with camaraderie and in the spirit of *Service Not Self*.

NORTH CAROLINA

The Department of North Carolina celebrated a century of service by hosting in-person birthday parties and celebrations from September 2019 to March 2020. Many units were presented a proclamation from their city declaring Nov. 10 as the 100th anniversary of the ALA. North Carolina flooded social media with pictures of units celebrating. Department chairmen added the 100th anniversary to their Program Action Plans. The department president's homecoming was held Nov. 10, 2019, to celebrate 100 years of service.

During the pandemic, we kept celebrating. We encouraged units when they were sewing and donating masks and other needed items to health care workers that they enclose a 100th anniversary thank-you card with our mission statement included. Under the leadership of 100th Anniversary Chairman Betsey Lee Hodges, we held virtual zoom celebrations in fall 2020 with districts in the department. We asked everyone to bring their own cake and ice cream and to wear an Auxiliary shirt from the past. During the party, members were asked to celebrate their unit by introducing their youngest, oldest, and the member

with the longest membership in the unit.

In January 2021, we held more 100th anniversary "break the ice" parties and asked members to decorate with poppies. We had a virtual scavenger hunt and asked members to send National Commander Bill Oxford and Department Commander James Moore thank-you cards. National President Nicole, National Vice President Kathy, and National Chairman Linda were in attendance with us.



In April when we could meet in person, we had celebrations where we met and packed 100 goodie bags for veterans at two of the VA hospitals in North Carolina. We celebrated all the way to National Convention.

NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota units supported programs that assisted children of deployed military personnel, including the 10X10 education program. Funds were raised to support various American Legion Auxiliary programs such as ALA Girls State, Honor Flights, welcome-home events honoring deployed military returning on homebound flights, supporting veteran-specific programs both financially and donating personal care items and grocery items, and move-in baskets for homeless veterans.

Reports from units indicated that an amazing amount of work was accomplished to benefit children and youth in local communities. Individual members reported volunteering in schools as teachers' aides and in-home tutors, Easter baskets were delivered to area organizations working with children, assembly and sewing reading blankets and masks for elementary students, and donating funds to various youth-focused organizations such as Big Brothers-Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, Make-a-Wish, and the Department of North Dakota's Children & Youth Fund, Child Welfare Foundation, International Music Camp, and assembly of dozens of backpacks with supplies



and donating them to first responders and law enforcement entities to give to children in crisis situations.

Thousands of poppies were assembled by a single veteran residing at the North Dakota Veterans Home in Lisbon. Although poppy distribution was curtailed in 2020, some members reported going door to door in 2021 just to distribute the much-requested poppy.

North Dakota units actively raised funds for and awareness of scholarships, including the department's education program and the Past Presidents Parley organization to benefit children and grandchildren of veterans. In November, the department office sent scholarship applications to career counselors in every school in the state to make them aware of the programs. The response to the call for scholarship applicants was amazing.

North Dakota's two department-sponsored gift shops were revamped in 2020 because of the COVID-19 restrictions, but a small group of six members gathered to purchase gift cards and write holiday greeting cards which were distributed to patients of the VA medical center in Fargo and residents of the North Dakota Veterans Home in Lisbon. Additional holiday greeting cards were signed and sent overseas to deployed troops.

OHIO

The Department of Ohio celebrated a century of service the past two years while "R.A.C.E."ing (respect, advocate, care, and education) for our veterans and their families.



Some of the highlights included having a celebration at the 2020 Mid-Winter Conference with Central Division National Vice President Ruth Gott in attendance. We hosted a second celebration during the 2020 School of Instructions when National President Nicole Clapp visited with us. Both events were well attended by Auxiliary members.

Our department honorary Junior president, Samantha Altman, had two special projects during her extended term. First, she asked members to donate baby items and spa items to put into bags to be distributed to women veterans at the VA medical centers and outpatient clinics. Her goal was to assemble 100 of each type of bag, and the members of Ohio did not disappoint. Enough items were collected to assemble more than 100 each. Her second project was "color your world," where she asked for coloring books, pencils, and crayons to be collected, assembled, and distributed to veterans in VA hospitals. The objective was to help with depression and loneliness due to COVID, as most were unable to have visitors. Again, Ohio did not disappoint. Over 400 bags were put together and distributed.

My challenge to units these past two years was to increase their donations to the department's programs that help fund VAMC facilities, scholarships, Child Welfare, National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Fisher House, and the Americanism and Government Trip, just to name a few. An increase of over \$15,000 was donated to these programs.

OKLAHOMA

Department of Oklahoma is ALA OK!

The 2019-2020 year started with a joint Legion Family motto, "Century Done, Only Begun, Always Faithful." The Oklahoma Legion Family worked hard to include each other in programs and held parties to celebrate the 100th. Then the pandemic happened...

The "We Can Do It!" attitude was alive! The Oklahoma Legion Family was able to work the mission by making masks, providing money for necessary medical supplies and activities for VAMC hospitals, VA centers, and community nursing homes, conducting coat drives, and contacting veterans, members, and friends "Caring and Sharing."

The 2020-2021 year presented the "Together We Can!" attitude. As the state's restrictive limits lifted, programs and events were actively done. Legion Family 141 in Claremore held dinners, raising thousands of dollars for veterans and their families.

A significant program, ALA Girls State, was virtual! That included both juniors and seniors. Even though not in person, these tech-savvy girls made lifelong connections. Delegates were given a Rosie the Riveter dog tag that read, "Never underestimate the power of an ALA Girls Stater." Being virtual gave me the opportunity to attend and speak



at the in-person Legion Boys State.

The Poppy Program, with the help of the Legion Family, national Poppy chairman, and the OKC Outlet mall, was successful and a new way to accomplish our mission!



Celebrating a century of service — the seventh-month preparation for the Auxiliary banquet show at the 100th convention was a highlight! A slideshow with names and pictures of Past Department Family leadership scrolled as people enjoyed the meal. The show included each district's mini-show depicting a decade. The finale was the state song "Oklahoma!" sung in a flashmob style. Districts chimed in and ended with everybody joining in. Awesome!

OREGON

The past year was one of patience, struggle, delays, and change. Having an in-person meeting was a challenge, and we all relied on Zoom and teleconferences. With COVID-19 setting the rules, we had to adapt to restrictions, and I believe we all did well. Are we over restrictions? We hope so, but we know our members can carry on no matter what happens.

If COVID-19 were not enough, we also had wildfires in 2020. Our AEF chairman, Margie Demoss, sent an eblast to members in September, giving them information about requesting emergency funds. Each of our officers or chairmen had their own unique way of accomplishing their jobs. There were no two alike, nor how they completed their year. The same applied to being department president — each of us has our own vision and hopes for our department to be successful. Units worked with their posts to modify events done in the past to work with restrictions, and they pulled them off. We all surprised our communities and ourselves.

COVID-19 gave us confidence that some may not have had previously, so that was a positive thing to come from the pandemic. We were close to 100% of working our programs and were merely slowed down or adapted to restrictions. We celebrated our 100 years of service at our

2021 convention (one year late).

Let us all help keep each other on track to do the best job as a team. Look after one another!

PENNSYLVANIA

One of the president's projects was Pennsylvania Outdoor Veterans, which "offers veterans the opportunity to heal through nature by bringing the veteran to the outdoors through different outings such as fishing, hunting, camping and retreats. They educate families on PTSD and suicide awareness."

Another project was Pennsylvania WARHORSE Inc., which offers interaction between the retired racing thoroughbreds and veterans suffering from PTSD and TBI. The veteran and horse build a bond, and both benefit from their time together, beginning the process of healing.

Our Juniors were invited to the Pennsylvania Warhorse Farm in June 2021. They made biscuits for the horses and brought horse supplies they had collected. The Juniors had a chance to give the treats they made to the horses. April at the open house, a Junior, helped man the table.

Our Juniors collected food for veterans and made masks for the community. They made cards for our veterans and participated in Poppy Days. They re-activated and were anxious to get out there to help our veterans. Some Juniors attended ALA Keystone Girls State and were asked to do a service project. It was suggested to collect for the Military Share Program.

God bless our country, veterans, military, their families, and all of you.

PUERTO RICO

The horrific pandemic affected more lives than we know and changed lives all throughout the world. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with those who are still being impacted today.

It was an emotional year, but it was easy to see the traits of a great and long-lasting organization. American Legion Auxiliary members have worked tirelessly in support of, and in reverence to, our nation's veterans, military, and their families for more than a hundred years. Helping and honoring those we serve, in good or bad, has always been the ALA mission.

Auxiliary members took time to look out for one another, calling members to ask how each other was doing and to offer messages of hope and positivity.



Thanks to all of the volunteers from the different departments for their contributions to veterans, their families, and the community. To our Southern Division Auxiliary members, your commitment in voluntary service given to the several programs of the American Legion Auxiliary in your departments contributed significantly to the excellence of the services offered to veterans and their families. I urge you to please continue to support those programs. I commend you for such noble, excellent work!

RHODE ISLAND

In 2019-2020, Rhode Island held a virtual ALA Girls State program, being one of eight departments in the country.

In December 2019, 510 Christmas gifts were distributed to residents at the Bristol Veterans Home in Bristol.

Leadership booklets were assembled and distributed to unit and department officers, and a subject from the booklet was discussed at each monthly DEC meeting.

In 2020-2021, ALA Rhode Island Girls State joined ALA Delaware Girls State virtually.

In December 2019, we participated in Wreaths Across America with National President Nicole and held a luncheon with Gold Star Families. We also reopened Unit 25 Howard Rogers, and President Nicole signed and presented their charter to them.

Units during the COVID shutdown used their time to feed homeless veterans and conduct food drives for families, as well as cooked and delivered holiday meals to families and veterans in need. They also distributed winter coats to veterans and their families in coordination with their Legion post and community organizations.

Education: Units reported on scholarships giving out \$8,000-plus in scholarships. One unit received \$9,950 in grants from the state to educate its community about preventing COVID infections, handing out COVID prevention supplies, and encouraging people to get the vaccine when available.

Education Chairman Wendy Baker collected school supplies in 2019 for the ALA's Give Ten to Education.

Another unit raised \$11,000-plus with its entire Legion Family for the Rhode Island National Guard Children & Youth Programs. The president of Unit 85 received her national *Auxiliary* magazine and read about "Purple Up! For Military Kids" and got her Legion Family on board.

We also supported our VAMC with homemade masks for staff, gift cards for food, coats, boots, and clothing for homeless veterans.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Serving as centennial department president in 2019-2021 for South Carolina was an honor. It was a whirlwind of unknowns, forcing us to find alternate ways of continuing our mission and taking care of our veterans, their children, and our community. I truly feel our organization rose to challenges brought on by the pandemic.

We experienced a first as an organization in 2019 when we accepted a male Auxiliary member. Brandon Sinner belongs to Unit 15 in Sumter. We have accepted many more since — reflecting the organization's desire to be more inclusive while displaying our understanding of today's ever-changing family dynamic.



The president's project this year was Quilts of Valor of South Carolina. I had a longing to see that every veteran would be wrapped with a quilt. Although the notion was lofty, I was overwhelmed by the awareness and monetary donations received in support of the project. Thank you for your efforts in attempting to bring my dream to fruition. Our 2019 Fall Conference was a testament to your support when we were afforded the opportunity of seeing several veterans wrapped.

I look forward to working in other areas of our great organization to continue our mission.

SOUTH DAKOTA

In September 2019, National President Nicole Clapp visited for a whirlwind of three days. A tornado hit Sioux Falls the night before she landed, and floods were happening throughout state. The American Legion Family got together and came up with plans A, B, and C.

Fall district meetings were held, where we learned



about programs for the year and had birthday cake for our 100th. South Dakota also was a destination for Mission Training.

In November, the Legion Family joined together to celebrate Veterans Day. Also in November, we held Christmas Gift Shops in five facilities. The Legion Family worked together in all facilities by setting up, wrapping, delivering gifts, and going to the post office to mail gifts. In December, we returned to help at Christmas parties. Some even decorated Christmas cookies.

In February 2020 at our Mid-Winter Conference, a programs fair was held. We served birthday cake to celebrate 100 years. Then COVID-19 arrived, and it was time to think outside the box.

One of the president's projects was to give every member of the U.S. Army and Air National Guard deploying a patriotic decorated pillowcase. Many units came together to do this, along with church groups, schools, and community organizations. ALA South Dakota Girls State delegates kicked off the project. In June 2021, 1,300 pillowcases had been distributed. The response to this project was phenomenal.

Members came to do programs in different ways that still served our veterans, their families, and their communities. Many letters were sent to VA hospitals and nursing homes, posters were made to show support to essential workers, calls of encouragement and well-being checks were conducted, and Zoom meetings and chats were held to keep in touch.

In June 2021, we were able to gather in person for our state convention where we celebrated our 100th birthday one last time.

TENNESSEE

Our members volunteered at the four VA medical centers across Tennessee. We missed the face-to-face interactions but were still able to get our donations to them while keeping a safe distance. We put new computers in all four of our VA hospitals. We hosted Memorial Day and virtual Veterans Day memorials. We were able to get our Christmas donations dropped off to all four hospitals, where members donated money, clothing, personal items, and pre-packaged food. Through our VA Representatives, we were able to donate tablets so that the VA patients could FaceTime with family during the pandemic.

- We assisted 6,505 veterans/military.
- We volunteered 40,267 hours in service.

- We spent \$43,461 on this program.

We are very proud that our ALA Girls State Program is well-known as one of the top programs in the country. Our 2020 ALA Girls State was one of the first to host a virtual session. The dedicated staff and counselors are all unpaid individuals who use their own personal vacation time every year to come and work this important event. The 2021 virtual ALA Girls State had 360 delegates and ran for four days, even having a virtual bookstore.



We chartered one new unit this year, and we have several more in the works. Our Membership Team worked very hard. We were able to reach our 95% goal by Flag Day, being one of only four departments able to achieve this milestone. We had no problem recruiting new members; retaining current members was our challenge, as it is in a lot of departments.

We tried to spread the word by reminding all Auxiliary members to focus on the mission and not on individual personalities. It is supposed to be about what we do and why we do it. Each of us needs to occasionally stop and remember the reason we joined the American Legion Auxiliary. Even though all milestones weren't met, we didn't give up.

Several units held virtual fundraisers, and one had a virtual poppy drive. One of our units was recognized by National for its drive-thru Poppy Day event.



TEXAS



February 2020 marked a beautiful Mid-Winter Conference with National President Nicole present to see the historical parade of past presidents looking very much like our own Texas members! It was a perfect lead-in to what would become an interesting 16 months! The Texas ALA took the vim and vigor of these ladies of the past to survive COVID — and we have!

Our Texas ALA went back to basics, touching bases with our members one on one from the unit level up. We met their needs, and with each touch, we became stronger. Units were shown how to make plans for success in everything from membership drives to hosting events under COVID rules, and we did it with smiles on our faces.

No mass meetings forced us to become experts in Zoom and email. We were able to see the RISE Unit (Women Recover in Supportive Environments) at the Waco VAMC flourish via a kidnap/donation scheme of “Matilda” (MY teapot!). \$5,000 helped veterans flourish through RISE programs.

Likewise, our members provided thousands of masks for Texas medical facilities across our state. Betsy Ross would be jealous of their sewing skills and distribution talents. Members fundraised for the AEF through donations.

Donuts and coffee were still served, and while adjustments had to be made, our veterans smiled as they whipped the jelly off their lips. Poppies were still shared with distribution methods changing, but still meeting the goal of sharing their meaning and making our communities one in remembering our beloved men and women.

Finally, our 2021 ALA Girls State program was alive and well online this year again in Texas! I had the pleasure of twice addressing the citizens, and there was no greater statement of our American Legion Auxiliary as we move into our next 100 years than this group of young women.

UTAH

Q: What event or moment in my department made members feel as if they made a difference in the life of a veteran, servicemember, or their family?

A: Even with the COVID-19 pandemic that started back in 2019 to present, this has basically taught us and the world to communicate more often and differently, while becoming a little more tech-savvy (learning how to Zoom). Also, it made us think outside of the box. COVID may have slowed us down, but through this adversity, it didn't stop us from our mission and our commitment of selfless service to veterans, community, God and country.

The VA Gift Shop was shut down due to COVID, yet we still served 230 veterans during Christmas 2020. The IVINS VA hospital, William Christopherson Veterans Nursing Home, and Salt Lake VA hospital were all served. Since we could not take in-kind donations, we purchased items spending over \$7000.

ALA members made 10,000 face masks. We distributed 6,000 to active military on ships, foreign countries, assisted living, veterans homes, and individual homes. The remaining 4,000 went to local communities.

Q: In what ways did my department celebrate the ALA's century of service?

A: We welcomed new Auxiliary Unit 140 Riverton.

Q: What ALA programs did members support, and how?

A: Utah's ALA 73rd Girls State program was virtual this year, with over 220 enrolled, and 12 were returning high



school seniors. And Utah was invited by the owner of the Park City Outlet mall to have the Poppy Program there for Memorial Day weekend.



Q: How did my department's American Legion Family members (ALA, Legion, SAL, Juniors, Riders) work together?

A: The Legion Family participated in two motorcades during Veterans Day and Christmas. Together, provided holiday dinners for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

VERMONT

In the 2019-2021 ALA year, our members proved we were #VermontStrong, working our mission through the COVID-19 pandemic serving our veterans, military, and communities. Members sewed thousands of masks, distributed meals, and shopped for elderly members in quarantine, while cheering those locked down in nursing homes, shelters and our Vermont Veterans Home with drive-by parades, cards, and holiday stockings.

Members and units supported the department president's project, Honor Flight New England, raising over \$18,000 to send World War II and Korean War veterans on the flight of a lifetime to Washington, D.C., to the monuments built in their honor. Drive-by parades coordinated with Joe Byron, founder of HFNE, and were held by members to honor terminally ill veterans who would not survive until flights resumed. An endowment fund was also created at ALA Department of Vermont Headquarters for the transportation and lodging costs for those veterans with financial need from a Vermont Veterans Administration grant.

During our visit from National President Nicole Clapp, we toured Vermont Adaptive Veterans Venture, a nonprofit that works to restore the health and well-being of veterans

through holistic sporting activities. Our national president visit and the event scheduled to benefit this organization in May 2020 was canceled due COVID-19 and our governor's stay-at-home order, but we were excited to host her in May 2021 when we visited the facility and donated \$500 to their programs.

A deployment ceremony allowed our national president to present the Vermont battle flag to the deploying troops. The commander and Vermont celebrated the life of Past Department President and Past National Chaplain Isadore H. Fox with a remembrance ceremony with her family and the national president and National Constitution & Bylaws Chair Trish Ward in attendance.

VIRGINIA

2019-2020 embraced "100 Years of Honoring Service" and celebrating our 100th anniversary through events and service. Members recognized the centennial in many ways, and the General Assembly passed a Joint Resolution commending the ALA for 100 years of service in the commonwealth and the nation, presented at our Spring Conference.

It wasn't all celebrating; we continued to address our mission and purpose with renewed enthusiasm. We visibly demonstrated that the Legion Family is stronger together through a membership drive at a 9-11 Heroes Run and participated in McGuire VAMC's Salute to Veterans Week, which included vow renewals for several couples followed by a festive reception on Valentine's Day. The year's special project supported Veterans and Athletes United, a nonprofit organization founded by and for veterans, which provides retreats for ill and injured veterans and their families.



Then, the pandemic impacted what we did and how we did it, challenging us to think outside the box to do what the Legion Family does best — answer the call to service. Buddy Checks reached a new level of importance. Members collected items for hospitalized, homeless, and at-risk veterans, and made thousands of face masks. Drive-thru combination poppy distribution-food pantry



collections were successful, visibly demonstrating the Legion Family working collaboratively. Our department proved to be a place of purpose in times of crisis.

2019-2020 closed with our virtual convention, and we seamlessly transitioned to 2020-2021. We continued to conduct business and work our mission despite COVID-19 restrictions. With large gatherings prohibited, we took full advantage of technology to stay connected and carried out our mission serving veterans, the military, their families, and our communities. Highlights included many virtual firsts: Department Leadership Workshop, Membership Rally, district meetings, conferences, and conventions. We had success with these virtual events, engaging additional members now that they can attend events remotely.

WASHINGTON

During the first six months of my term as president, I traveled the state, visiting units and districts and meeting members both old and new. I found that they can put personalities aside and work side by side for veterans and their communities when willing to accept a different opinion than their own.

Our membership theme was owls: “Give a Hoot — Renew and Recruit!” It was going so well until COVID closed post homes, keeping us away from socializing and attending other gatherings.

At the beginning of the pandemic lockdowns, we were contacted by our state veterans affairs asking for help with face masks for the VA hospitals and state veterans homes. Our members started sewing and recruited their friends and neighbors. The shortfall soon was rectified when over 1,500 masks were made and sent to the facilities. I am proud of Department of Washington members’ attitude to accomplish that which appears impossible when ordered to stay home.

Our Christmas season of giving was canceled in 2019, but by 2020, some were ready to take on a new way of supplying gifts to veterans. In Spokane VA and transitional housing, our chairman Laura Bondurant made a catalogue, reminiscent of the Sears Christmas book many of us leafed through for years. The veterans chose gifts which were then wrapped and mailed by our volunteers.

Celebrations for the Auxiliary 100th anniversary were muted and limited to dinners and cakes when able to get together.

We were unable to hold an ALA Girls State program for the second year. The committee came up with a three-day “Speaker Series” via Zoom, which was well attended

and well received. From those attending and applying, a scholarship was given and two girls chosen to attend ALA Girls Nation. Those eligible to apply next year were encouraged to return for the in-person program and to invite their friends to apply.

WEST VIRGINIA

The Department of West Virginia’s several units felt they helped veterans during the last two years. They supplied meals and delivered them. They made sure they had Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. They also supplied essentials and gifts for their families. Veterans who needed anything were supplied with whatever they needed.



Most of our units did celebrate the ALA’s birthday with dinners and dressing up.

All units worked our programs by attending ceremonies and gave donations of time, money, and supplies.

Units worked with their posts, Sons of The American Legion, and American Legion Riders, conducting rides to raise money for special things. They also helped during COVID-19 funerals, cleaning of homes and preparing meals.

They sent care packages for servicemen and women and helped when they were deployed, sending them off and helping when they returned. While deployed, we made sure their families received meals and gifts for the holidays. We also made sure our veterans at the VA hospitals were taken care of.

WISCONSIN

The ALA member “ship” Wisconsin set a course for the future two years ago, committed to *Service Not Self* in



support of our veterans, military, their families, and our communities. Anchored in service, centennial celebrations were held across the state in units large and small, commemorating our legacy of service, and plans were being developed for many more.

Dedicated volunteers provided support to local veterans, as well as hospitalized veterans, in our three VA medical centers, three veterans homes, two associate VA medical centers, and multiple transitional housing facilities for homeless veterans.

Who knew that a storm was brewing on the horizon threatening to run us aground? In what seemed a blink of the eye, sails were trimmed and course corrections were made to ensure the mission would not be cancelled. The crew rallied, and through creative thinking, found different ways to complete projects near and dear to them.

Coupons continued to be clipped, sorted, and mailed, items needed by inpatient veterans were collected and sent, and no-contact fundraisers were held to provide much needed funds for programs. More than \$15,000 was raised for a local homeless veterans initiative through a motorcycle rally! Activities once done in unit meetings were shifted to individuals working on their own or in small groups in large spaces to accommodate social distancing.

Our sailor shout-outs (similar to Buddy Checks) were done to check on housebound members. Letter-writing campaigns were organized to provide veterans in both the medical centers and the veterans homes with words of encouragement and support during a time when no visitors were permitted.

Now that the storm has passed and our ship prepares to return to port, units are once again planning events to ensure their communities know who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

WYOMING

The Department of Wyoming was not alone in finding ways to continue to serving the ALA's mission. Some of the creative ways this was accomplished: making masks for cadets at West Point; continuing to provide goodies for virtual events for members at the veterans home; and thinking outside the box to meet the needs of our active-duty community.

Members of Unit 28 pooled their resources to make color-specific masks for Cadets at West Point. One Auxiliary member, the proud mom of a cadet, was concerned when she learned that only the completely

black masks with black elastic were allowed. Knowing that these young men and women had limited time to launder their items, she reached out to the unit, and they delivered. Approximately 75 regulation masks were in the mail within the week. Mission accomplished!

When it was learned that activities at the veterans retirement home were resuming in a modified way, our members again sprang into action. A request for popcorn and cookies was quickly fulfilled, allowing some semblance of normalcy into residents' lives. Mission accomplished!

Members of Glendo Unit 15 found a way to still serve our active-duty servicemembers while observing COVID-19 mandates. This included spearheading a project to assemble pocket flags for care packages. The beauty of this project — members could accomplish it in the safety of their homes, yet still feel as though they were a part of the solution. To date, over 175 of these flags have been shipped. Mission accomplished!

While the feelings of citizens of this great nation were certainly tested over the past two years, it was with great pride that the Department of Wyoming could say they did their best to adapt and overcome to fulfill the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.



Department Presidents



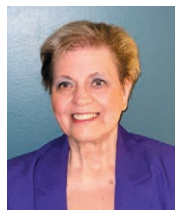
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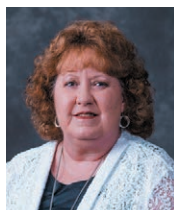
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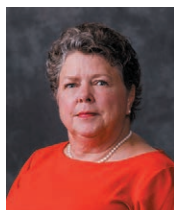
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