



Department of Georgia Auxiliary News

August 2026 Vol.19 Issue 1



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The new 2026-2027 Mandatory Obligation form **must** be used by **all** units. If an old form is used, the form and money will be returned to the unit. The new form can be found on the website at:

<https://www.aladeptga.com/resources/forms>

Units are **not** required to submit 25% of their poppy donations to the Department for the 2026-2027 year.

Working together to
serve our Heroes

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



Pam Eckler
President 2026-2027
Department of Georgia

It is hard to believe July is over, but it has certainly been a month of fun and amazement. I have traveled from North Georgia to Southeast Georgia, to Southwest, Georgia and back to North Georgia. Every unit and post I have visited has been welcoming and has shown why we are truly a family of people who love our veterans.

For those of you of have not heard, my special project this year is the V.A. Women's Clinic in Atlanta. I chose this as my project because we have the largest population of female veterans attending a single clinic than anyplace else in the United States. Over 28,000 veterans visit this clinic and over 30% of these veterans are suffering from PTSD. Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is a leading cause of PTSD amongst our female veterans. To raise funds for my special project, I am conducting two raffles for two of the most beautiful handmade quilts you have ever seen. In addition, if our Districts can raise \$2,000 before December 31, 2026, I have agreed to wear the ugliest mermaid outfit and participate in the Sons of the Legion Polar Bear Plunge on January 17, 2027. Of course, this event will occur during our Mid-winter Conference to be held in Tybee Island.

Another special project we are working on is the Past President's Wall of Honor. For years I have always wondered why the Legion has a room honoring all their past Commanders, while the Auxiliary had nothing. I know how hard our past Presidents worked for the Auxiliary and yet, we had nothing to memorialize their accomplishments. Thanks to Linda Brock, Kim Del Rosario, Haylee Davidson, and Deedy Harrell we have found a picture of every single past Department President. Tommy Hatton, a brother from our Legion has graciously offered his assistance in making our wall of Presidents just as beautiful and amazing as the Legion's. It is our goal to have this wall completed by the end of September 2026. I

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

am so excited about this project, and I will keep you up to date.

While traveling and talking to many family members, the Auxiliary could charter two new units, as of this writing.

Members are out there, and all we have to do is be welcoming, listen and make these people feel like they belong to something important for our veterans. Some of you feel like your membership goals are a little high, while others have readily accepted the challenge. **I believe in all of you**, and I know in my heart we can easily surpass the goal National set for us this year. Christian Larson said, *"Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle."*

I look forward to serving as your Department President, meeting as many of you as possible, and making this a year of fun and excitement for all of you. Your new District Presidents have already begun their year and are onboard with the new things we will be doing.

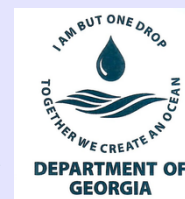
As a close I want to remind you of two **especially important** things: The only "stupid question" is one that goes unanswered. I will **never** email you, text you, or ask you to call me, because I need a favor. If you receive one of these messages you think is from me, report the message and email address to your internet service provider.

"Life is too short to spend it responding to manufactured chaos and disruption."

Pam Eckler
President
Department of Georgia
(670) 780-8622
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Department President Merchandise 2026-2027



Port Authority® Wearever
Signature Pique Polo

Unisex Polo
XS - XL \$30
2XL - 3XL \$33

Help support the Department President's
Special Project!

Order Form Available at:
ALADeptGA.com

Quilt Raffle

Drawing will be held at the June Convention

**Tickets: \$10 each
or
3 for \$25**

"Remembering Our Heroes"



Reversible Queen Size Quilt

"We Shall Never Forget"



XL lap quilt, but will also fit a twin bed



Kelli McIver
2nd Vice President
Membership Chair

Happy New Membership Year!

Georgia, we have a great opportunity to win some membership awards this year. Let's put on our boots and work toward our membership goals.

Here are some membership awards that the National offers:

Unit Award:

100% Unit Award

Deadline: January 31, 2027

This award goes to units that reach 100% of their goal by January 31, 2027.

Department Award: 50% Award

Deadline: Veterans Day, November 11, 2026

This award is based on membership entered into the ALAMIS membership database by November 11, 2026.

Department Award: Highest percentage of new members per capita

Deadline: January 1, 2027

I look forward to an awesome year!

Kelli McIver
 2nd Vice President/Membership Chair
 Department of Georgia
 (478) 396-4618
mciverkelli@gmail.com



Phyllis H. Jones
Chaplain

CHAPLAIN CORNER....

I greet you in the name of our most high FATHER, which art in HEAVEN. I'm so grateful & humble to be your newly elected Department of GA Chaplain 2026-2027.

We as an organization must remember that we are here for a PURPOSE and as long as we remember that it is NOT about **us** but about the Purpose we're organized for. Let's keep **GOD** first and we will move forward doing the work in which we are placed in position to do, continue to **PRAY** for yourself, this organization, Leadership, your family, our children/youth, our active Military, Veterans everywhere and our Country.

*REMEMBER: send all your PRAYER request to me at pjcjmj3108@gmail.com

LET US PRAY, Father God, let us be ever so mindful of the purpose we're here for and GOD lead and guide us in the way we should go, keep us focus on the work you would have us to do and GOD forgive us for our sins known and unknown. In your Name **AMEN**



Phyllis H. Jones
 Chaplain
 Department of Georgia
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Cathy Hedges **Poppy Chair**

Many of our members do not know how to access the National website or have the time. Some are confused when it is time to compile reports. Most Committee Reports are due to the Chairperson on May 1st. This allows the Chair sufficient time to get a team together to review and judge the necessary documents and other components of the Committee to be judged. The selected finalists of poppy poster need to be mailed to the National Southern Division Chair. The reports and components need to be in the "hands of the respective National Committee Chair" by June 1st. The selected finalists of poppy posters are mailed to the National Southern Division Chair. Photos are equally important. National now request the photos be submitted in a separate electronic file. It is okay to embed a photo within the report as long as a separate electronic file has also been submitted. This enables them to add the photos to their program for National Convention in a much easier manner. There is no longer need for them to reach out to the Department Chair, who then needs to contact the Unit, etc. Each Unit may also submit their report to the respective National Committee online via the "Formstack" link. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me to clarify. Have fun with the Poppy. As Georgia residents, it is our heritage, privilege, and honor to **"take up the torch"** and pass it on".

National Poppy Committee Suggestions:

Promote the Poppy Program and increase revenue.

- Wear a poppy to promote conversation and interest.
- Educate your community about how funds collected help veterans, service members, and their families.
- Contact local businesses for permission to distribute poppies on their premises. Make sure you have permission for liability purposes; in some instances, permits are required.
- Send a thank you to businesses that allow distribution. Consider using the Poppy Poster thank you cards, available for purchase through Emblem Sales, for your communication.
- Organize a department poppy drive with The American Legion Family. Encourage The American Legion, Sons of The American Legion, Legion Riders, and ALA Junior members to join poppy distributions in your community.

Educate your community on the meaning and history of the poppy.

- Using the image and story of the Flanders Field poppy to educate people about the sacrifices of our military service members helps us raise awareness of the Legion Family and connects us to our mission in the eyes of the public.
- Promote the ALA Poppy Poster Contest in your local schools and youth groups.
- Promote the Little Miss Poppy Contest to Juniors in your unit.
- Offer to speak at local civic engagements about the meaning and significance of the poppy and how Poppy Funds help veterans, service members, and their families.

Celebrate National Poppy Day

- Wear a red poppy all day and tell everyone why.
- Distribute poppies to friends, co-workers and family and tell everyone why.
- Tell the story on Facebook of who you are wearing your poppy to remember or support on National Poppy Day®. Don't forget to tag us! #PoppyDay #LegionFamily
- Accept a poppy and donate if you see a member of The American Legion Family in your neighborhood distributing poppies.
- Distribute National Poppy Day material and make it available to members.
- Organize a poppy distribution at local Memorial Day Ceremonies. Make sure to wear your Auxiliary branded apparel to help tell everyone who you are.
- Invite a local dignitary to lay a poppy wreath at a memorial in your community and invite unit members to be present. Consider singing patriotic songs or other ways to involve your unit members.
- Contact local legislative offices to announce poppy distribution days, and request proclamations declaring Poppy Days in your community.

Cathy Hedges
Poppy Chair
Department of Georgia
cathy4hedges@gmail.com
(770) 597-8667



Lavette Ray
Historian
Constitution & By-Laws Chair

Hello, my name is Lavette Ray, and I am your Constitution and By-Laws Chairperson. Working with me is also Rosa Scott, Past Department President, as well as Jamelle Prescott, past District President. Together, we will be working diligently to keep our Constitution and By-laws up to date and in compliance with the National and the Department of Georgia governing documents. We will also be your go-to people if you would like your governing documents reviewed. This is not a mandatory process it is strictly voluntary. It is recommended by National paid Parliamentarian Kris Dickey to review your governing documents when there are changes to our Department's governing documents. To further continue and ensure our Units are in alignment.

Please know we are here to help and are here to answer questions you may have. I will be attending the National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, August 28- September 3, 2026. I will also be attending any training and Zoom meetings provided by our National Constitution and By-Laws chairs. Even though we cannot vote on proposed amendments for the Department until June 2027, our Constitution and By-Laws team will do our best to keep you updated on any changes. I want to thank you again for allowing me to serve as your Constitution and By-Laws chair. Let's make this a good year and work together.

Lavette Ray
Historian/ Constitution and By-Laws Chair
Department of Georgia
(904) 507-8830
Auxvp47@gmail.com

Leigh Garrett
Children & Youth Chair

My name is **Leigh Garrett, President of Unit 264 of Mableton**, and I am honored to serve as the **Children & Youth Chairman for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Georgia** this year. Supporting our children, youth, and military families is a cause that is very close to my heart. My granddaughter proudly serves our veterans for our Operation Buddy program. My nephew is an Army Ranger with a wonderful wife and two children. Through their experiences, I have seen firsthand the sacrifices military families make. Many spouses are left to care for their children while their loved ones are deployed or serving far from home, often without having nearby families to lend a helping hand. These families deserve our encouragement, support, and appreciation.

This year, I hope we can work together to make the Department of Georgia shine. I encourage every unit to get involved by hosting fundraisers and supporting the initiatives of both our National President and our Department President. Together, we can raise funds for scholarships, support programs for our veterans and families, and make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and military families across Georgia.

Please know that I am here to help. If your unit needs ideas, assistance, or support with Children & Youth programs or fundraising, don't hesitate to reach out. I look forward to working alongside each of you and making this a successful, rewarding, and fun-filled year.

Together, let's make a lasting impact on the lives of those who have sacrificed so much for our country.

Leigh Garrett
Children & Youth Chair
Department of Georgia
(404) 610-6039
Leigh17garrett@gmail.com

Cindy Schwartz
National Security Chair



The purpose of the National Security Committee is to promote a strong national defense.

As a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, it's our mission to strengthen and support our military service members and their families.

Here are some ways we can do that:

- Collaborate with other like-minded organizations (ASYMCA, Blue Star Families, Quilts of Valor, USO, etc.) that also support service members and their families
- Raise awareness of POW/MIAs
- Provide troop Welcome-Home/Send -Off packages
- Send Troop Care Packages

For other ideas and information, visit the National ALA web page at:

<https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/national-security>

POW/MIA Recognition Day is observed on the third Friday of September. The terms POW and MIA mean prisoner of war and military personnel who went missing in action. POW/MIA



Recognition Day is observed on the third Friday of September. The terms POW and MIA mean prisoner of war and military personnel who went missing in action. This recognition day is observed to recommit to full accountability to the families of the more than 80,000 veterans captured or still missing from wars in which the United States has participated. The day was first observed in 1979 after Congress and the President passed a resolution to make it official following the demands of the families of 2,500 Vietnam war POW/MIAs who asked for accountability in finding their loved ones. According to accounts, during the first ceremony of POW/MIA Day at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., fighter airplanes from the military base in Virginia flew in the "missing man formation" to honor their missing comrades. Since then, the official observance has been held at the Pentagon, with other celebrations happening at military bases and elsewhere around the country.

Cindy Schwartz
 National Security Committee Chair
 Department of Georgia
Cindy.rochelle18@gmail.com

Stacy Cusano
Community Service Chair

Hello Members, My name is Stacy Cusano and I am delighted to serve as your 2026-2027 Department Community Service Chair. Do you enjoy the town you live in? Do you enjoy making it a better place to live? That is where the Community Service program plays a vital role in bettering the lives of those in our community. There are many ways we can serve our communities. Think of what your passion is and aim it at making a positive impact. Let's be in line with President Pam's theme this year, "I am but one drop, Together we create an ocean". Be the drop. Make the ripple. Create an ocean. Some ways to make an impact are to volunteer at a food bank or help collect goods for a local blessing box. Participate in a local cleanup at a park or organize one yourself. Help out with yard work for an elderly or ill neighbor. Participate in a blood drive. Assist with a local animal shelter, you can collect goods or volunteer to help with the animals. Help the homeless with blessing bags. Community Service doesn't have to be a large event. Many drops of small acts of kindness can create an ocean!

SAVE THE DATES The following are designated days of Service. Plan ahead now with your Units to have successful turnouts.

- 9/11 National Day of Service. Held on September 11, 2026.
- Make a Difference Day observes on the 4th Saturday in October. This year is October 24, 2026.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service which will be on January 18, 2027.
- American Legion Family Day is the last Saturday in April (April 24, 2027).

Don't forget to send photos of you and your members performing your community service. You don't need to wait until the end of the year to send the photos! I'll take them anytime this way you don't have to look for them later. You can email me at scusano13@gmail.com. Make sure to give a brief description of what you are doing and if there are 3 individuals or less in the photo, please list their names. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at (305) 505-3744. I look forward to creating an ocean for the world!

Stacy Cusano
 Community Service Committee Chair
 Department of Georgia
scusano13@gmail.com
 (305) 505-3744

Kellie Freeman
Public Relations Chair

As we gear up for a great 2026-2027 year, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Public Relations Chair again this year. Below you will find links that I hope you will find useful:

Branding Guide: <https://www.legion-aux.org/Member/Guides/Branding-Guide>

PR Toolkit: <https://www.legion-aux.org/member/resources/pr-toolkit>

Facebook Page: American Legion Auxiliary Dept. of Georgia (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/alaga>)

Department Website: ALADeptGA.com
 Resources and Forms can be found at:
<https://www.aladeptga.com/resources/forms>

I also would like to share the link to a Google Photo Album where you can upload multiple photos at one time from your unit or district that can be used on the website and slideshows:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/zwsWy4KpUhWpJSmt>

If I can be of any assistance, please feel free to email me at aladeptga.pr@gmail.com.

Kellie Freeman
 Public Relations Chair
 Department of Georgia
aladeptga.pr@gmail.com

Teriann Benzel
AEF Chair

Hello my name is Teriann (TC) Benzel and I am so honored to be your Department AEF Chair. I look forward to getting to know everyone and learning more about the AEF Program together. If you need to contact me for any reason my number is (706) 360-8941 and my email is dixieducky619@gmail.com. Here's to a great upcoming year.

Teriann Benzel
 AEF Chair
 Department of Georgia
dixieducky619@gmail.com
 (706) 360-8941



Dr. Joanne T. Meadows
Resolutions Chair
Department of Georgia

As you may know a Resolution is the act or process of breaking or changing a rule or standard by way of determination or firmness of purpose.

Dr. Joanne T. Meadows
 Resolutions Chair
 Department of Georgia
drjoannemeadows@att.net

INTRODUCTIONS

Hello. My name is Marcie Hrinko. As the incoming President of District 8, I hope to bring some ideas and enthusiasm. I am looking forward to meeting more members and working with the Units to help build on their foundations.

I am retired and enjoy my family and friends, varied handicrafts, some gardening, and my chihuahua, Teddy.

My father served in the military, as well as several of my uncles, my husband, a son, and nephews. I joined the Auxiliary to be able to give support and honor to those who have, and are, serving our country. Without our military, we would not be a free nation. I am pleased that God is forefront in our organization, for without Him, nothing can be accomplished.

Many of our Units are in small communities and struggle with membership. It is my prayer that both the American Legion and Auxiliary will experience growth and participation through this year. It will take work and effort to accomplish this but by doing so, not only will new friendships will be built, but new ideas will be presented. We can build on these to make our organizations stronger.

Marcie Hrinko
 District 8 President
mkmtntfan1@aol.com

Hey everyone Teriann (TC) Benzel here. I am the new President for the 11th District, I have big shoes to fill but with the company that I am in with all of you I know I can get there. I am very excited to see what this year brings and I look forward to seeing everyone at the conference.

Teriann Benzel
 District 11 President
dixieducky619@gmail.com

Dates to Note

August:

16th National Airborne Day
28th NATIONAL CONVENTION (28th – Sept. 3rd)
29th Marine Corps Reserve Birthday

September:

National Suicide Prevention Month:
National Service Dog Month:
7th Labor Day
11th Patriot Day
11th National Day of Service & Remembrance
15th Sons of the American Legion Birthday
18th Air Force (USAF) Birthday
18th Air National Guard Birthday
20th National POW/MIA Recognition Day
26th World Maritime Day
27th Poppy became official flower of TAL
29th Gold Star Mother's & Family Day

October:

Breast Cancer Awareness Month
12th Columbus Day
13th US Navy Birthday
26th National Day of the Deployed
27th Navy Day
31st Halloween

