

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY DEPARTMENT OF GEORGIA

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

News to Use	1
BE THE ONE (reports, awards, training) ..	2
Chaplain	2
2024-2025 Department Leadership	3
Department President	3
Key Dates	4
Secretary/Treasurer	4
Leadership Workshop Schedule	5
ALA Academy Updates	5
1 st Vice President - Leadership.....	5
Stay Connected	6
Historian.....	6
Challenges for our Latest Generation	7
CHILDREN & YOUTH	7
YOUTH PROGRAMMING	8
AMERICANISM	9
Tips to Thrive in 2025	9
VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION 10	
Wreaths Across America.....	11
BE THE ONE (Activities).....	12
Compliance Resources	13
FIDUCIARY DUTY	13
About Membership EXPIRATION.....	14
ALA Challenge Deck.....	14
LEGISLATIVE	15
Public Relations.....	16



ABOUT: Georgia On My Mind is a monthly publication presented by the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Georgia on or about the 15th of each

month. Did you find a mistake in the newsletter? Or do you want to submit information for next month (due on the 5th of each month)? If yes, send your request and information to Department@alageorgia.com or PublicRelations@ALAGeorgia.com.

DISCLAIMER: Every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy of information and links shared in this edition. Many individuals contribute to this newsletter and sometimes there may be an OOPS! Kindly send an email to one of the addresses above and let our team know of any mistake you find. If more than two months have passed since the issue date of this edition, no guarantee is provided that the links in this edition are accurate. All efforts were made at the time of publication to ensure accurate links.

NEWS TO USE

MEMBERSHIP

Wow! Membership continues to be AMPED UP! As of January 15, 2025, Georgia 6th in the Southern Division and 34th Nationally. **Please keep those renewals coming in.** As of 1/15, Georgia has 16 National 100% Goal Units – three more since the last newsletter! 110 Monticello and 172 Warner Robins on 1/7/25 and 116 Sylvania on 1/15/25. Congratulations and thank you to these units!



LEADERSHIP

In addition to Georgia workshops, the National ALA Academy has been adding more content – all of it worthwhile to review. See page 5 for more information. **And... yearbooks are due 2/15.**

AMERICANISM: February is Americanism Month!

A lot is happening! There's a "You're a Grand Old Flag" National Challenge and ESSAYS are due. See pages 8-9. Details are posted in the featured section (at the top) of the Department Facebook Group - check out the featured posts. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/alaga>

FOUR CHAPLAINS DAY

February 3 is a day to remember the four U.S. Army chaplains who made the ultimate sacrifice when the USAT Dorchester sank during World War II. Post your Four Chaplains Day event photos and share your commemoration activity and photos in your annual report to the Department Chaplain due 5/1.

SPRING CONFERENCE DATES

March 21-23, 2025: The DEC meets 3/20. Conference begins at 9am on the 22nd and 23rd; the banquet is on the 22nd and the Memorial Service and Poppy Anchor Dedication Program is on the 23rd. Join in the dedication to thank the 11th District for building the Poppy Anchor. Register at this [LINK](#).

LEGISLATIVE

The American Legion's Legislative Agenda for the 119th Congress is now available. It is time to get signed up, become aware, and advocate. See page 15.

THE LATEST GENERATION

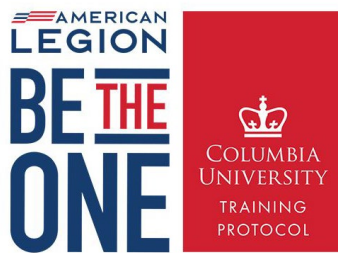
April is the Month of the Military Child. See pages 7 and 8 for more information. Is your unit ready?

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Included are tips on creating a press/media release from the National ALA PR team. Let's see units put these to use!

BE THE ONE

Get ready to share what your unit and district are doing to support this critical mission of The American Legion. Georgia has two awards for Be The One Suicide Prevention Recognition. Please see page 47 of the Department Rules and Regulations for awarding department plaques. Go to the top of [THIS PAGE](#) on the Department website. (Resources – Forms) Submit reports to VA&R Chair Miriam Stein.



<https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one>

As part of The American Legion Be the One mission to end veteran suicide, the Legion has joined forces with Columbia University to develop training for those who want to learn more about interacting and responding with veterans who may be in crisis. After the training, participants will be able to:

- Use the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale to determine at-risk individuals.
- Identify risk factors and warning signs
- Outline the types of suicidal ideation and four behaviors that indicate imminent risk.
- Communicate effectively with an individual who may be at risk of hurting themselves.
- Members of The American Legion Family are encouraged to take part in this training and share the training with their communities. Check back to this page or subscribe to **The American Legion Online Update newsletter** to receive information about new training opportunities as they become available.

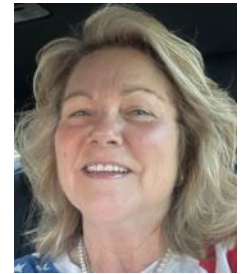
Register to attend an online session at this link: <https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/be-the-one-training>

IMPORTANT NOTE: All attendees will be asked to complete an online survey before the class and upon completion. These surveys help track the effectiveness of the training and allow us to plan for future development.

See leadership video [HERE](#)

CHAPLAIN

Gloria V. Chambers



HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Greetings everyone from your Chaplain!

It's a new year.... Fresh beginnings.... A time to examine ourselves....everybody will be thinking about fixing their bodies nobody fixing their souls....

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that the Lord himself is in you? ...unless indeed you are disqualified. 2 Corinthians 13:5

Do you ever wonder , am I in the faith? Do I have faith? It is easy to be deceived. We are challenged to know ourselves. What do we have in our minds, our thoughts, our passions? What guides us daily....???

I quote some words from our very own ALA National President, Trish Ward. *"Follow your passion, it will lead to your purposes."* She continued with these words, *"serving our nations hero's is my life's ,work, passion ,and purpose..."*

These cherished words spoke volumes to me in New Orleans at the national convention. They challenged my spirit, emotions, and my purpose. I examined myself from God's watchful eye. We all have a journey, a course to follow, a desire for direction, a passion that exemplifies our purpose.

We have a duty for the new year....not so much to change BUT a call of duty to improve. Your challenge for the new year is to reflect back to the previous year, ask yourself do I need improvement? Maybe I need a dash of empathy, a sprinkle of kindness, an improved attitude for forgiveness. Let's not change the creators image of ourselves, let us improve our relationships with ourself and others.

I close with prayers for all the loved ones we lost during the holidays. I pray for New Orleans and the precious lives lost. I ask God for healing of that community and comfort to the hearts broken. I pray for Southern California.

May God bring calmness and love.

May God teach us when we see

something beautiful in someone, tell them. It may take a second to say, but for them it could last a lifetime. Be that someone that makes the difference. Bless them and change me, Lord... Amen May blessings and prosperity abound for all in 2025.

Gloria Chambers

912-390-2488 ★ chaplain@ALAGeorgia.com



2024-2025 LEADERSHIP

President..... Cheryl Waybright
 1st Vice President Gail Ramey
 2nd Vice President..... Pam Eckler
 Historian..... Debbie Hoopingarner
 Chaplain Gloria Chambers
 Secretary/Treasurer Patty Hawkins
 NEC Susan Hall
 NEC Alternate Pat Morgan

Sergeants at Arms

Captain.....Melanie Eckler
 Cricket Agee, Melinda Gaskins
 Lindsey Coats, Melissa Patten
 Page/Parliamentary Advisor Thea Fultz

MISSION COMMITTEES

Veterans Affairs Mirima Stein
 National Security..... Laura Miller
 Americanism Kris Ann Alexander
 Children & Youth..... Gabriele Barnett
 Community Service Sharon Wilson
 Education Dr. Cindy Swartz
 Girls State..... Deedy Harrell
 Junior Activities..... Kalyng Slagle
 Legislative Vacant (Cheryl Waybright)
 Poppy Cathy Hedges

SUPPORT COMMITTEES

AEF Vacant (Cheryl Waybright)
 Awards & Recognition... Linda Brock
 Convention..... 9th District
 C&Bs..... Vacant (Cheryl Waybright)
 Credentials Phyllis Jones &
 Sabrina Brown Putney, Co-Chairs
 Finance..... Susan Hall, Chair
 Ruth Ann Shelby & Sarah Zingarelli
 Human Resources Sheila Tinsley, Chair
 Gabriele Barnett & Pam Eckler
 Leadership/Yearbook Gail Ramey
 Membership..... Pam Eckler
 Past President Parley & Member of the Year
 Cheryl Jackson-Sinkler
 Poppy Anchor..... 11th District
 Launching..... Unit 184 (1st District)
 Orders Patty Hawkins
 Public Relations..... Courtney Waybright
 Resolutions Dr. Joann Meadows
 Risk & Compliance Kathy Merritt, Chair
 Anita Owens & Lisa Marie Papp
 Scrapbook Melinda Gaskins
 Unit Development & Revitalization
 Gail Ramey & Pam Eckler, Jennie Chandler



Cheryl Waybright
 President 2024-2025

#AMPUPMISSION



Welcome to 2025!

Georgia is AMPING UP MISSION with remarkable things happening across the state. Department Committee Chairs are attending 2nd Quarter National meetings now and into February so look for updates from our Department Chairs either here in this newsletter or in our private Facebook group or in your email. Haven't heard from them? Reach out to them.

Looking Back: Wreaths Across America, December 14, 2024 was a chance for us to respect, honor and remember people that joined forces to protect and defend the freedom of our nation. If your activity is not included in Miriam Stein's report pages 10-12, share it on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/groups/alaga>

Charging Forward: In this newsletter, you should see a theme led by our Chaplain. New beginnings, faith, and kindness. Let's embody that along with National President Trish Ward's "Leading the Way" theme as we all EVOLVE to make and leave our departments/districts/units better than we found them.

Another theme throughout the newsletter – **it is full of due dates.** Some are creeping up FAST. Be on the lookout!

Reports. May 1 is the date committee reports are due to DEPARTMENT and District Chairs and UNIT IMPACT REPORTS are due to District Presidents. **Check with your district, it may have the district due date earlier.** Department committee chairs want to hear from you! If you have not already, start your reports, award nominations, Prayer Books, History Books and on and on so that your unit is ready to submit on time! Reports and books are for the period 05/01/24 – 04/30/25. Copy the Department Historian and me on your reports to be included in the Department History Book and the annual report to National.

I appreciate all your efforts to renew and recruit members so we can #AmpUpMission! THANK YOU for all you do to get us to that 85% hurdle on 3/15 – WE CAN DO IT!

Please reach out with any question – no matter position, level, or location – I am here to serve you. Just ask.

Cheryl Waybright
 404-625-6708 ★ Cheryl@ALAGeorgia.com

KEY DATES

FIRST OF EVERY MONTH
IS **BE THE ONE** DAY!

EVERY FRIDAY IS RED Shirt Friday

Remembering Everyone Deployed-Wear Red!

January 2025

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

16-18.... National Commander Visit to GA
17-20.... SAL Annual Meeting and Polar Plunge
20..... Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
20..... 2025 MKL Day of Service

February 2025

Americanism Month

Black History Month

Go Red for Women: American Heart Month

1..... National Freedom Day (1865)
2..... Groundhog Day (85% Membership Goal!)
..... Army Nurse Corps Established (1901)
3..... Four Chaplains Day (1943)
2/4..... USO Birthday (1941)
8..... Leadership Workshop Unit 160, Smyrna
9-15..... National Salute to Veterans Week
13..... Marine Corps Women's Reserve (1943)
14..... Valentine's Day
15..... Remember the Maine Day (USS Maine)
17..... President's Day
19..... Anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima
19..... Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
23..... Mt. Suribachi U.S. Flag Raising (1945)
27..... Persian Gulf Cease-Fire Day (1991)
28-30.... Ramadan

March 2025

1..... Education Scholarship Applications Due
1-7..... National Invest in Veterans Week
3..... Navy Reserve Birthday (1915)
3..... Star Spangled Banner Day
4..... Mardi Gras
4..... Hug a G.I. Day
5..... Ash Wednesday
5..... Seabees Birthday (1942)
8..... Women of Service Day on March 8.
9..... Daylight Savings Time Begins
13..... K-9 Veterans Day
15..... American Legion Birthday (1919)
17..... St. Patrick's Day
21..... Rosie the Riveter Day
25..... Medal of Honor Day
25..... Americanism Essays due to Department
29..... Vietnam War Veterans Day

April 2025

Month of the Military Child: 4/15 is Purple Up Day!

May 2025

MAY 1 – Reports are Due!

SECRETARY/ TREASURER

Patty Hawkins



As we Kick Start the New Year with many things to do, let's do it with peace and love. Let the soul searching begin. Soul searching means trying to find meaning and purpose in life. It is all about figuring out the "why" for our existence and it's about fueling our lives with purpose and intent. It's totally healthy and meaningful to do this. So let the journey begin fresh.

Has your Unit paid all their Obligations? They are due by April 1st. Annual Committee Report forms will be Due soon. (are you ready?) All the forms are on the webpage (www.aladdeptga.com). Hope to receive reports from all units showing what work you have done. This could be your WHY!

As always keep that membership coming in.

Let's Keep up the Good Work. Thank you for all you do for the American Legion Auxiliary.

Patty Hawkins

678-289-8446 ★ secamlegaux@bellsouth.net

Don't forget the Unit TO DO List...

- Membership Dues:** All Department, District and Unit Officers should have paid their 2025 membership dues by now.
- Obligations:** Please don't wait, send them now. Deadline is April 1, 2025.
- Plans** for Americanism Month (February)
- Plans** for Children & Youth Activities (April)
- Reporting Plans – confirm who is doing what!**
- Advocate!** (see page15)
- Volunteer Hours:** It doesn't hurt to start collecting hours and information for impact and year end reports now going back to May 1. We are half way through the reporting year!
- Compliance Items:** Has your unit filed your 990 form? Check your fiscal year and stay (or get into) Compliance.
- Have you updated your filing with the Georgia Secretary of State to include your new officers?
- Renewal for the Georgia Secretary of State is coming up – don't forget to get it done.

It is not one person's responsibility to take care of unit business. It takes all the officers and volunteers to get it done. We are there to help each other.

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

February 8 Unit 160, Smyrna
 Register at <https://forms.gle/XDWHSkb5PR2pB5a38>
 March 8 Unit 172, Warner Robins
 March 15 Unit 233, Loganville
 March 29 Unit 135 Savannah
 April 12 Unit 30, Albany

ALL SESSIONS: Registration begins at 9:30 am, the program starts at 10:00 am.

All the Leadership Workshop topics were woven into the agenda of the Fall Conference and may be included in the Spring Conference. Do not miss the change to network and learn!

ALA Academy

The ALA Academy provides tools to members to help grow the Auxiliary's mission, and the organization as a team.



<https://member.legion-aux.org/member/online-training>

Useful information is available at the **NATIONAL ALA ACADEMY**. Have questions? Review one of the sessions on the subject you are interested in.

Timely sessions include:

- Navigating ALA National Scholarships
- Celebrating the Month of the Military Child
- Youth Hero and Good Deed Awards
- Celebrating Women of Service
- **ALA Leadership Series: So, You're a Department Chair. Now What?** (This is good for any level of chair – it helps you know what to expect from your department chair and what they expect of you.)
- Tax-Exempt Status: Revocation and Reinstatement
- ALA Compliance Matters
- National Poppy Day

First Vice President – LEADERSHIP

Gail Ramey



Hello Everyone,

The holidays are over. I do hope everyone had a great holiday season. Now it's time to get back to work. Encouraging members who have not renewed to do so, recruiting new members, and reaching out to members who you have not heard from in a while just to be sure they are ok.

It's also time to contact counselors at your local high school to recruit girls for Girls State. The sooner this happens the better chance you will get the girls before their summer schedule is already full.

YEARBOOKS Unit and District Yearbooks are due to me by **February 15th**. This is the link for the Unit Yearbook rules: https://www.aladeptga.com/files/ugd/76bc83_2f002e30a5194807ba9c30d30ff43c8d.pdf This is the link for the District Yearbook rules: https://www.aladeptga.com/files/ugd/76bc83_2b701782e800478080f8bc1d5d700b78.pdf

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS: It's time to get back to Leadership Workshops. We cancelled the session at Loganville, Unit 233 on January 11th due to weather. It has been rescheduled for March 15th. To the left is the list of coming up workshops. Please remember, every workshop is open to anyone who wants to attend no matter where you live and even if you are not interested in becoming a leader. We offer valuable information at these workshops that will benefit every member.

The registration link for the session at Unit 160 Smyrna on February 8 is <https://forms.gle/XDWHSkb5PR2pB5a38>

Don't forget about the free ALA Academy training. Log into the National website, click on **EVENTS**, the **ALA ACADEMY**. See the link in the box to the left. There is a new live session: **ALA Academy Live: Celebrating Women of Service** on February 6, 2025 at noon eastern. Register at this [LINK](#). The goal of this webinar is to familiarize ALA members with the ALA Foundation, how it supports the ALA's programs and ALA entities nationwide, and how to get involved in the Celebrating Women of Service Day on March 8.

Please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns. If I do not answer, please leave a message and I will call you back.

Gail Ramey
 770-262-2524 ★ leadership@ALAGeorgia.com

STAY CONNECTED

DEPARTMENT WEBSITE:

<https://www.aladdeptga.com/>

- o Need a form?
<https://www.aladdeptga.com/forms-1>
- o Need to find a department leader?
https://www.aladdeptga.com/about_us
- o Or a department committee chair?
<https://www.aladdeptga.com/committee-chairpersons>
- o ...or Department Governing Documents?
<https://www.aladdeptga.com/governing-documents>

GEORGIA GIRLS STATE

www.georgiagirlsstate.org/

DEPARTMENT PUBLIC FACEBOOK PAGES

Follow both!

<https://www.facebook.com/ALADeptofGA>

<https://www.facebook.com/ALAGeorgiaPresident/>

DEPARTMENT PRIVATE FACEBOOK GROUP

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/alaga>

In this group you can ask questions and post information about your unit and districts.

DEPARTMENT EMAILS

Secretary/Treas.: secamlegaux@bellsouth.net

Membership Clerk: amlegaux@bellsouth.net

President: Cheryl@ALAGeorgia.com

Leadership: Leadership@ALAGeorgia.com

Membership: Membership@ALAGeorgia.com

Historian: Historian@ALAGeorgia.com

Chaplain: Chaplain@ALAGeorgia.com

PR: PublicRelations@ALAGeorgia.com

Newsletter: Department@ALAGeorgia.com

NATIONAL ALA TOOLS

American Legion Auxiliary National Website

<https://www.legion-aux.org/home>

ALA MEMBER Website

<https://member.legion-aux.org/>

ALA BLOG <https://www.legion-aux.org/blog>

Serving the ALA Mission through Our Programs – Program Engagement Plans:

<https://member.legion-aux.org/member/program-engagement-plans>

HISTORIAN

Debbie Hoopingarner

Happy New Year All!

I hope all of you are starting the new year happy and healthy. December was especially busy here in the 5th District, almost every Saturday included more than one event such as Wreaths Across America, visiting Veteran's Homes and Angel Tree Christmas Gifts for children, all of which should be a part of your December histories.

Sadly, the passing of President Jimmy Carter should also be included in our history. As a member of Post 2, Americus, Georgia, he was an important member of the American Legion. Did your Post Family do anything special in his memory?

If anyone is interested in purchasing the *"History of the American Legion Auxiliary the Department of Georgia,"* by Mrs. Joseph M. Toomey, it is available on Amazon. The book is titled *"Georgia's Participation in the World War,"* by Joseph M. Toomey. It is a little pricey, but it is leather bound and very nicely done. The description of the book did not include the Auxiliary portion, so I was a little apprehensive about ordering it. Although I was surprised that everything from the first printing was included in this copy.

Has everyone started their unit History Books? The due date is sooner than you think. If you have any questions, please reach out to me. You can contact me any time.

Debbie Hoopingarner

317-753-3394 Historian@alageorgia.com



PS: Be sure to send me a note if you or your unit donated and received an ALA Challenge Deck – we want to see pictures on our Facebook of units creating enthusiasm about our MISSION using the decks. Tell us how your unit used the deck!



CHALLENGES FOR OUR LATEST GENERATION

Embracing the latest generation requires our units to step up and promote our youth programs.

See more details with schedule and links on the next page

In the meantime, here are the 2024-2025 challenges from our National organization. Stretch your goal and do more than one, or one in each category!!!

- Submit one Youth Hero Award.
- Submit one Youth Good Deed Award.
Resources: <https://www.legion-aux.org/Youth-Hero-Good-Deed-Awards>
Training on ALA Academy about the awards: <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/online-training>
- Recruit at least one participant to the GA **Oratorical** competition at your unit.
- Due 3/1/25: Recruit at least one applicant for an **Education Scholarships** – maybe an applicant in each category!
- Recruit at least one **Americanism Essay** participant. Due 3/25/25.
- Recruit at least one **Poppy Poster** contestant. Due 5/1/25
- Recruit one or more girls to attend **Georgia Girls State 2025** – Funds due 4/20/25.
- Recruit one or more Junior members to attend an upcoming Department Conference or Convention.
- Send at least one Junior member to **Junior Summer Camp**.

We would love to see the summary by each unit on the annual report to the Department President and Historian so the information can be rolled up in the annual Department report to National.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

By Gabriele Barnett

I hope everyone had a great holiday season and is ready to start the New Year working our Children & Youth programs.

April may seem far away but if you think about it, it is only a couple of month before we celebrate THE MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD. April 15 is Purple Up Day!

Do you know how the Month of the Military Child started?

“When an Air Force officer was asked what he needed in Iraq, he said, **“Please don’t send cookies, care packages, or socks. Just help take care of our children”**.”

With April approaching, I would like to draw your attention to the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony. It reminds me of the POW/MIA ceremony but honoring to our military children. “When an Air Force officer was asked what he needed in Iraq, he said, ‘Please don’t send cookies, care packages, or socks. Just help take care of our children.’”

Our country has always supported its military in times of war through community efforts. We have a great capacity to care for the home front. Now is the time for a new victory garden. In this garden, we can tend to the needs of the military child - thus the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony was born. Check out this [link](#) for the ceremony, you may have to log in.

Our children have endured so many changes in their daily routine; let’s make this month a celebration of them. A good way to start is contacting the schools in your area to find out how what kind of activities can be planned to honor these children.

Please make sure you celebrate our Military Children every day but especially during the month of April.

Gabriele Barnett

706-951-3906 ★ barnettgabriele@hotmail.com

<https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Children-and-Youth/Get-Involved-Children-Youth>

The American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation (VCF) helps military and veteran families who are facing financial difficulties. The VCF provides one-time grants to help with housing, food, utilities, and other basic needs. The VCF also supports service officers who help veterans, and their families access care and benefits.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING... LET'S DO THIS!

THE CHALLENGE IS ON! Activities to gear up for 2025 are heating up! **NOW** is the time to take a moment and ask unit and district committee chairs and volunteers to **CALIBRATE CALENDARS** for what's coming up! **TIP** When a member is in the schools recruiting for one thing, they can also share information and recruit for everything on the list – it takes team work to coordinate all of this!

February is Americanism Month! See [American Legion youth programs](#) and the ALA Engagement Plan or the Americanism Challenge Cards. . <https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Americanism/Get-Involved-Americanism>

Oratorical Contest: Information can be found here: <https://www.legion.org/get-involved/youth-programs/oratorical-contest>. **Confirm with your post and district commanders for contest dates.** Youth must compete at post level to move to district and then at district to move to area before being one of the four finalists at department. The Georgia competition is **March 30, 2025** in Forsyth. Check out this site for more information <http://departmentofgeorgiaoratorical.weebly.com/> or reach out to Robert Stites Chair, Department of Georgia Oratorical Committee revrsal@aol.com or Joe Bishop scijcb@windstream.net.

Scholarships: All the American Legion Auxiliary National Scholarship application links are now open. Applicants for national scholarships submit online at <https://www.legion-aux.org/scholarships> on or before **5pm on March 1, 2025**. More information is at <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/education/scholarship-resources>. There are two Georgia Scholarships. Information about them can be found in the policy for scholarships at this [LINK](#) or at <https://www.aladepgga.com/governing-documents>. Questions? Reach out to Education Chair Cindy Schwartz at cindy.rochelle18@gmail.com Check out the National ALA Training Academy for the new course about National scholarships the first week of January. <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/online-training>

Juniors.... There is rumor there will be activities for juniors at the Spring Conference or June Convention. Check in with the Department of Georgia Juniors Member Activities Chair, Kayln Slagle at kalynslagle@yahoo.com

Americanism Essay Contest: The 2024-2025 topic is "What Does America the Beautiful Mean to Me?" This is regarding veterans and our military. Visit the National website's Americanism page for information. <https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Americanism/Get-Involved-Americanism> or <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/americanism> **Essay entries are due to the Department Americanism Chair no later than March 25, 2025.** Send to Krisann Alexander at either 1391 Sims Kidd Rd., Comer, GA 30629, or email: Krisann@windstream.net

It's never too early to start recruiting Girls for **Georgia Girls State**. Check out the latest [bulletin](#) and [Unit information](#) available on the Georgia Girls State Website. <https://www.georgiagirlsstate.org/>. **DUE DATE: APRIL 20, 2025 for Units to send the fee of \$350.00 per girl** payable to Georgia Girls State to ALA GA HQ at 3035 Mt. Zion Road, Stockbridge, GA 30281. Contact Director Deedy Harrell at georgiagirlsstate@gmail.com.

The Poppy Poster Contest: The contest rules are available at: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Poppy-Poster-Contest> **Poster entries are due to the Department Poppy Chair no later than May 1, 2025.** Each Unit should submit only the finalists **and cover sheets** (required by National) in each category for judging to the Department. Submit to Cathy Hedges at 401 Rivermist Ct. Bethlehem, GA. 30620 (email cathy4hedges@gmail.com) See the article on page 16 of the January newsletter for more information and samples of last year's winners.

THE MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD IS APRIL 2025. Wear purple April 15 in honor of Purple Up! Day for Military Kids. To plan the month of activities at local schools and with local military families, check out resources on the ALA Engagement page at <https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Children-and-Youth/Get-Involved-Children-Youth> and at <https://militarychild.org/resource/momc-toolkit/month-of-the-military-child-resources/#top-content> for great ideas. Reach out to Department Children & Youth Chair Gabriele Barnett at barnettgabriele@hotmail.com for more information.

Department of Georgia Juniors Camp hosted by the Georgia Detachment of the Sons of the American Legion is May 31 – June 5, 2025. Check in with Cliff Hall at cliff.hall@salgeorgia.org for more information and the Georgia ALA website.

AMERICANISM February is Americanism Month!

Need ideas for Americanism Month? Check out the Program Engagement page at <https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Americanism/Get-Involved-Americanism>

Don't forget, the ALA supports The American Legion with Oratorical contests – they are underway now!

Americanism Essays are due to Kris Ann Alexander by March 25, 2025. Send to krisann@windstream.net. See this link for details: <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/americanism> Also, there is a blog post coming soon from the National Chair of Americanism. It will be at this [link](#).

March 20! National Americanism Chair Christine Trahan introduced a new challenge. "You're a Grand Old Flag" – let's see how many units from GA will participate! When units submit entries to national, forward a copy to Department@ALAGeorgia.com (including video) by March 18 to be recognized as participating. The National challenge entries are due to National on the Americanism Facebook Group by 3/20. Results will be announced 3/30.

The latest Americanism national newsletter, the timeline for Essays and the challenge are all posted in the Department's private Facebook Group. Not a member, click here and then click to join and answer the questions. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/alaga>

Has your unit actively participated in **Star Spangled Kids**? This is the ALA initiative to educate our youth about United States history, Americanism, and the U.S. Constitution. ALA Units sponsor Star Spangled Kids activities in conjunction with local schools and youth groups. Read more here: <https://www.legion-aux.org/star-spangled-kids>

TIPS TO THRIVE IN 2025

AD ASTRA PER ASPERA

"Ad Astra per Aspera" is Latin and is the Kansas State motto. It means "to the stars through difficulties" or "a rough road leads to the stars." National President Trish Ward, member of the Department of Kansas, leans into this motto and chose **Leading the Way** as her motto for 2024-2025 noting that the American Legion Auxiliary can have strong membership, reporting, and governance and improve in compliance and business operational excellence as well as support our AEF and ALAF... if we lead the way and work together towards common goals rather than working against each other.



President Ward reminded us at Mission Training in November that despite our personal feelings for our elected officials at any level of government or even our elected officers and leaders in the ALA, we are expected to support and respect those we elect. She told us that if we have opposing points of view, to collaborate professionally and welcome the ignition that occurs when different points of view are explored in a friendly and professional manner. She went on to remind us that volunteer leaders at all levels have one primary motto – SERVICE NOT SELF – and living that we will lead the way through overcoming necessary, unnecessary, and unexpected challenges to achieve wonderful things - together.

The word for the day at Mission Training was "EVOLVE." Meaning, we must evolve from where we are now to where we want to be to have a growing thriving organization.

LEADING THE WAY to Business Excellence, Compliance and Governance Standards, and Mission Investment Donations can only happen when we are all **evolving together** to achieve common goals.



VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

By Miriam Stein & Susan Hall

Below: Volunteers at the Augusta VA Gift Shop.



Below: GA War Milledgeville Christmas Gift Shop



Below: GA War Nursing Home Blue Goose Augusta Georgia



Right Members of Unit 217 Chickamauga who distributed baskets to Post 217 and veterans at the Senior Center and bags to a Nursing Home



The Department of Georgia was busy during October, November, and December. The VA Reps shopped for Christmas Gift Shops held in December at the VA Facilities in Augusta, Atlanta, Dublin, and Milledgeville (GA War Veterans Home). Units held parties for our Veterans in Blairsville, Augusta, Loganville, and other facilities across the State. In Augusta, the American Legion family members donated \$10,455 serving 485 Veterans and 15 Volunteers served 246 hours wrapping 1,265 gifts and driving 1,028 miles. At the Blue Goose GA War Veterans Home in Augusta, volunteers packed gift bags for the Veterans. In Atlanta, the VA Representative and Deputies held a Gift Shop that included monetary donations of \$3,100 and 10 volunteers (no hours reported). Unit 217 Chickamauga put together 30 Gift baskets for Veterans in the local Nursing homes and church. Unit 233 Loganville put together gifts for Veterans, Military, and their families in the community.

Many Districts and Units participated in Wreaths Across America on December 14. Unit 30 in Albany was in a dedication ceremony and placed 360 wreaths at Crown Cemetery in Albany, their first time. Unit 127 Sugar Hill placed 424 wreaths at Hill Haven Memorial Cemetery in Monroe. The Department of Georgia American Legion Riders led by Gabriele Barnett placed Wreaths at the Bellevue Memorial Gardens in Grovetown. Unit 233 in Loganville joined others to help lay over 4,100 wreaths at the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville. Post and Unit 70 in Villa Ricca laid over 200 wreaths.

Unit and Post 217 Partnered with the Walker County Historic Preservation Commission to raise funds to lay 530 wreaths at TN-GA Memorial Park. Brand new Lafayette Unit 339 assisted along with members from Post 339 Pictures of Gift Shops and visits were shared in the December Newsletter. To the left are a few more and pictures from Wreaths Across America are on the next page.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA



Above: Unit 30 Albany Wreaths Across America Ceremony



Above: Augusta



Above: Unit 70 Villa Rica



Above: 121 Blairsville Legion Family



Above: Unit 127 Sugar Hill



From The Legion Magazine:

Top five resources for your Be the One event

Is your post, district or department planning a Be the One event? Downloadable tools are available at betheone.org/resources to help members support The American Legion's mission to reduce veteran suicide.

Event PDF This one-sheeter is a general guide to coordinating a Be the One event, with links to social media graphics to promote your event, community and media engagement, merchandise and more.



Local brochure This Word document can be customized for Be the One events or distributed at any community event where the Legion's mission can be shared.



The trifold's back page has instructions on how to customize it. Posts also can use the back page to add contact information, a QR code with a link to the post website or the 988 Veterans Crisis Line, a list of local mental health resources, post service officer information and more.

How-to video Department of Wisconsin Commander Jim Johnson gives best practices on how to



conduct a Be the One walk, from picking a route to advertising and promotion. Johnson has organized and led four suicide awareness walks in his department.

Sample media advisory and press release

Download the documents, update them with your Be the One event information, and distribute to local media, community partners and others.

Materials Print-ready pop-up banners, flags, posters, table covers and more are available for your event. Download the items you want and order them from a local print shop.



BE THE ONE

As the Legion's number 1 mission, Units are encouraged to help posts or to lead Be The One events. ALA GA wants to hear what your unit and district are doing to support this critical mission. Georgia has two awards for Be The One Suicide Prevention Recognition. Please see page 47 of the Department Rules and Regulations [HERE](#) for report requirements. (Resources – Forms) Submit reports to VA&R Chair Miriam Stein.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

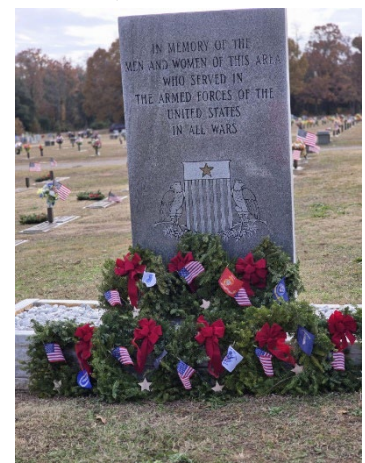
Continued

Below: Members of Chickamauga Unit 217.



Below Unit 217 Chickamauga

Below Unit 172 Warner Robins



COMPLIANCE RESOURCES

NOT SO FUN FACT: About half of Georgia's units and districts have lost IRS tax-exempt status. In 2024-2025 the National ALA asks that we to increase our level of compliance.

All Unit and District officers are encouraged to seek information and *ask questions*:

- Does the Unit/District comply with the IRS?
- Is the person designated as the **IRS RESPONSIBLE PARTY** for the Unit/District alive? ... active in the unit? ... able to continue to represent the unit?
- Does the Unit/District have an annual checklist and transition plan for compliance and all things financial?

Resources:

Revocation & Reinstatement Webinar PowerPoint

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:8ca7502c-2dcb-4cd3-b11b-2104c45c3d65>

ALA IRS "Cliff Notes"

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:b23585e1-db8f-4eca-a7b4-6996755ab2bf>

Important Compliance Information

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:f4f0b4d2-87bb-461a-867c-c4f256360d31>

Important Compliance Resources

- <https://www.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Audit/Important-Compliance-Information>
- <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:67c7e057-56fa-4ade-86cb-62ca9ac78a02>

Supplemental Instructions

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:VA6C2:f30bf595-1181-47d3-9890-49a4f35e20b1>

There are two ALA ACADEMY COURSES

available for all members to take to be able to ask more questions and help get back into compliance. FREE! Just a bit of time to review and learn.

- COMPLIANCE MATTERS
- TAX-EXEMPT STATUS: REVOCATION & REINSTATEMENT

GO TO THIS LINK: <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/online-training>



FIDUCIARY DUTIES

What in the World are Fiduciary Duties?

It sounds complex but it pretty much is everything you learned in kindergarten or in scouting. Fiduciary duties require Unit, District and Department leaders (executive committees) to act in good faith, always **in the best interest of the organization** and to never make decisions based on furthering a personal or outside business interest. Leaders must avoid, disclose, and resolve any conflicts of interest prior to voting or otherwise participating in any deliberations.

1. **Duty of Care** - requires leaders to exhibit honesty, act in good faith, and exercise ordinary and reasonable care in the discharge of their duties and they must attend, thoroughly prepare for, and actively engage in deliberations during meetings, and when necessary, seek advice from third-party experts. Individuals should come prepared for meetings and make decisions on the facts provided, not vote to go along to get along and avoid conflict.
2. **Duty of Confidentiality** – requires leaders to maintain the confidentiality of discussions and deliberations and prohibits the disclosure of confidential information. The organization's best interests are only served when healthy debate, and candid conversations take place, and this occurs only when everyone upholds their duty of confidentiality.
3. **Duty of Loyalty** - requires leaders to give undivided allegiance and duty of faithfulness to the organization. The best interests of the organization must prevail over personal interest and benefit.
4. **Duty of Obedience** - requires leaders to act in furthering the mission and in accordance with governing documents and applicable laws. It requires leaders to support, help implement and carry out the actions taken by the governing body. Leaders must avoid undermining a decision, even if an individual disagrees with the action taken by the majority. In debate, the minority speaks and in decision, the majority rules with the expectation that the minority supports all decisions of the body.
5. **Duty of Accounting** - requires leaders to safeguard, protect, and preserve assets by adopting, and following, proper accounting procedures and controls and must ensure funds are used for lawful purposes.

If you read this far your head may be spinning and you may want to read it again. As a leader your primary focus is advancing the mission and working collaboratively with your team even if you are sometimes in the minority. Be Kind!

ABOUT MEMBERSHIP EXPIRATION

In December we covered ELIGIBILITY. This month, we address **EXPIRATION**. The deadline to pay 2025 membership dues was December 31. **Members are considered delinquent and membership privileges suspended effective January 31, 2025.** *YES! There is a grace period where members retain privileges until 1/31 each year.* However, on February 1, a member who was “paid thru 12/31/24” is considered delinquent and may not have voice or vote at a meeting. (See National C&Bs - Standing Rule XII, Section 4.) Additionally, a member who was listed in ALA MIS as “paid thru 12/31/2023”, is marked as **EXPIRED**. Units should be contacting delinquent members to get them paid and current and also try to reach out to expired (former) members to reinstate them. **We WANT members to renew and reinstate.** National ALA staff will help individuals get caught up and return as a member in good standing. Use this link <https://www.legion-aux.org/renew> or call and speak to a real person who will assist you - (317) 569-4570.



UNIT PROCESSING OF DUES is extremely important. The National organization stresses that Units and Departments should not HOLD dues received from members rather, process them immediately! It also reminds us that **as soon as a Unit accepts payment of dues, the member is considered a member in good standing.** If a unit does not process membership dues promptly, members who have paid the unit and received a membership card may receive a renewal notice and will wonder what happened to their payment. This can lead to conflict in a unit. According to the ALA National Membership staff who guide units nationally, daily: *“there is no rule that a member is not a member until they are entered into ALAMIS. Once a member has paid their dues and are accepted by the unit, they are a member. We do not want to ‘punish’ members just because it can take some time to get their membership processed.”* Each unit receives membership cards at the June Convention – including blank cards. When a new member joins or a member pays dues, the unit should present the member with their card. In the spirit of building teams and treating each other with kindness, we do not wait for the data to catch up in ALAMIS! Welcome them!

Units are encouraged to make sure they follow the rules by gently and privately informing members about suspension of privileges and helping the member renew or reinstate. Some units get together as a team and call members to remind them to renew. Some units set up a separate seating section starting in February – allowing those who forgot to bring their payment to still attend the meeting yet clear boundaries are set between members in good standing who have voice and vote, and others who are welcome to observe until they return to good standing. We want to keep our members engaged by being kind and welcoming while following the governing documents. It is important to always welcome everyone to all meetings who has an interest in supporting the mission. Remember too, members may attend a unit EC meeting, just like the Department and National EC meetings are open to guests, so are unit EC meetings. There are rare cases where a confidential matter may need to be discussed at a UEC and that is the only appropriate time to ask members to leave. There are guidelines as to what constitutes a need for a private discussion. Otherwise as a not-for-profit, meetings should be open to all members, especially future leaders!

ALA CHALLENGE DECK

Discover ways to get involved in your community and make a real difference in the lives of local veterans **BY USING THE ALA CHALLENGE DECK.**

To reinvigorate units and boost community participation, National President Tristh Ward and the 2024-2025 national chairs developed the ALA Challenge Deck. This 46-card deck includes descriptions and links to additional resources for all the ALA’s programs, like Americanism and Children & Youth.

[Learn more about the ALA Challenge Deck here and get yours today!](#) When you (or your unit) donate \$35 or more to the **Veteran Projects Fund**, you will receive the 46-card deck. Learn more about the ALA Challenge Deck at <https://www.legion-aux.org/ALA-Challenge-Deck>. Donate online at <https://donate.legion-aux.org/CSiDonate/Give.aspx/S9FGOOG7#c> or text CARD to 1-844-940-3450, or mail a check to ALA National Headquarters, 3450 Founders Road, Indianapolis, IN 46268.

Please indicate in the memo line of the check that the gift is for the cards. If you have any questions, please contact Development Director Carley Schutz at cschutz@ALAforVeterans.org.

LEGISLATIVE: IT IS OUR MISSION TOO!

THE AMERICAN LEGION IS THE VOICE OF U.S. MILITARY VETERANS AND SERVICEMEMBERS. Time for you to be loud and proud and advocate for the Legion!

FYI: NEW LAW! The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act is now law. The law is wide ranging. It provides more support for home caregivers of aging and disabled veterans and bolsters services for homeless veterans. "The bill was the most comprehensive piece of veterans legislation approved by Congress in its 2023-24 session." Several smaller measures on caregiver programs, homelessness, community care, job training, education benefits and more were included. President Biden signed the act into law on January 2, 2025. <https://www.legion.org/information-center/news/legislative/2025/january/dole-act-becomes-law>

WHAT'S NEXT The Grassroots Action Center is up and running with the Legion's agenda for the 119th US Congress. The Major Richard Star Act is a new focus. Known as the Major Richard Star Act, this legislation would allow some 53,000 combat retired veterans to collect both their military retirement and VA disability concurrently, without an offset. Read more [HERE](#) and at <https://www.majorrichardstaract.org/>

ARE YOU UP FOR A CHALLENGE? *The National* Legislative Committee challenges departments and divisions to increase participation in corresponding with our legislators through the Action Alerts. **The challenge began November 10 and is quarterly.** Each department and division to have the highest percentage of correspondence numbers based on 2025 paid memberships each quarter in response to the Legion's Action Alert will be recognized. The Legion will provide the data each quarter to and that will be used to determine the quarterly winners. Soooooo.. get counted and record the hours you "SERVE" while surfing the internet and TAKING ACTION!



2025 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA The American Legion's 2025 Legislative Agenda is available at <https://www.legion.org/information-center/news/legislative/2025/january/the-legions-agenda-for-congress>. Take a moment to review the top priorities for The American Legion in 2025 and the 119th US Congress.



CONTACT WITH CONGRESS?

Have you had a recent meeting or phone call with your member of Congress? Report your contact today! Click [here](#) to register your Congressional contact and demonstrate the power of The American Legion advocacy in action. Besides being heard, your action can be counted. <https://www.votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/Surveys/7747/Respond>

Websites with Legislative Planning Information:

1. *The American Legion Auxiliary Legislative Website-* <https://member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/legislative>
2. *American Legion Legislative Action Center* <https://www.votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/home>
3. *Legislative Advocacy Guide-* https://member.legion-aux.org/cmsdesk/ALA/media/PDF/Guides/Legislative_Advocacy_Guide.pdf
4. *The American Legion Dispatch-* <https://www.legion.org/dispatch>
5. *How to Host a Meet the Candidates Night-* <https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Committees/Legislative/How-to-Host-a-Meet-the-Candidate-Night>

THE EASY BUTTON... THE WEEKLY GRASSROOTS NEWSLETTER Visit the American Legion's Action Center and sign up for legislative alerts, search for legislative initiatives or find elected officials and candidates! It's all right here: <https://www.votervoicenet.com/AmericanLegion/home>

Sign up to receive the newsletter – if you concur with the proposed legislation, you can log in and the system will give you step-by-step prompts so your voice can be heard.

Get connected and join the ALA's official Legislative Facebook group. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ALALegislative>

PUBLIC RELATIONS

From the ALA National PR Newsletter

Creating a Press/Media Release: A powerful news release can tell a story, report news, help a cause, and make an impact. By sharing vital information that will interest media, you can increase the visibility of your volunteer event within your local community. The key points included below will help you shape a strong news release.

Our National Website has the perfect template for every holiday and special event as well as a general template for use and can be downloaded at: www.legion-aux.org

When creating your press release, remember to make it simple yet dynamic to keep the reader focused and wanting more.

There are 7 main parts to every press release:

Header: Includes local information for your unit. This includes your department, your unit's website (if applicable), and your unit's public relations contact.

Timestamp: The "timestamp" consists of the day, month, and year of the release's distribution.

Headline: A powerful headline will draw readers' attention faster and better than anything else. Make this as dynamic and eye-catching as possible —be bold.
Lead Paragraph: This is a concise, condensed version of the information contained in the rest of your release. In this paragraph you will identify your organization, describe your activity briefly, and provide an overview of the information throughout the rest of the release.

Main Body of the Release: After the lead paragraph, you should take the opportunity to explain the volunteer event and elaborate on the details. The purpose of the main body of the release is to increase interest and provide information. Keep it short, simple, and concise.

Boilerplate Statement: This follows your final paragraph and typically contains standard information about your organization and its mission.

News Release Ending: The traditional mark used to indicate that a news release is finished is a series of three-pound signs, or ###

Who & Where to send the Press/Media Release to: Relationships with members of the media are the foundation of successful public relations efforts. Whether it be a local newspaper or a blogger, all contacts should be carefully cultivated. **Research the different media outlets in your community and get to know who the best contacts at each are and what the set scheduled deadlines are for each outlet.** Remember newspapers, bloggers, TV, and radio all work on different time schedules and deadlines will be different. Do not be afraid to follow up with each —communication keeps a good relationship going.

Some best practices for effective public relations:

1. Know your audience and create content that relates to them.
2. Use research and data.
3. Embrace the internet.
4. Utilize Social Media
5. Find partners.
6. Create compelling content.
7. Be inclusive.
8. Use Local Media

"Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing." – John D. Rockefeller



###