

Americanism Plan of Work

Narrative:

The focus of the Americanism Program in the Department of Wisconsin for the 2008-2009 Auxiliary year will include recurring programs from year to year, new initiatives, continuing to support American Legion programs and activities, collaborative programs with outside organizations, and teaming with other programs of the auxiliary.

Throughout the year the department chairman will share information received from the National level. The route of dissemination of this information will include emails, unit mailings, the *Wisconsin* publication, workshops such as the Fall Informational Forum, and through direct contact with the chairman or listed resources. Evaluation of the success of the program will depend on the number of units and individuals using the supplied resources, number and quality of entries in the contests, number of annual reports received, and the final tally of volunteer hours and monies spent in the implementation of these programs.

Early in the auxiliary year the focus of the Americanism Program will be to make connections with the schools and have our projects entered as a part of their regular curriculums. Considering that this is a Presidential election year, the most pressing programs will be *Get Out the Vote* and *Kids Vote*. The goal of these programs is to encourage citizens to vote in local, state, and national elections and to promote awareness of the voting process. This includes teaching citizenship rights and responsibilities. It will also include assisting veterans to vote from wherever they are located. The goal of *Kids Vote* is to involve students (K-12) in the voting process through this program and to get them to encourage their parents to exercise

their right to vote. One way these goals will be implemented will be to send related emails to as many members and their friends as possible. These emails will be initiated by the Department Americanism chairman who will contact the Department Secretary who will in turn activate the auxiliary newsgroups.

The Wisconsin Auxiliary continues to encourage Patriotic Holiday observances, beginning with Labor Day, Remembrance Day, and Veterans Day. The goal is to restore the significance behind American patriotic observances through ALA activities around patriotic holidays. Units will be asked to involve schools and local businesses. They will be encouraged to use newspaper "voice of the people" ads and public service announcements to remind their communities that "Every Day is Veterans Day." In conjunction with Patriotic Holidays, the ALA of Wisconsin promotes the *Fly Our Flag* project. Emails will be sent through the Department Newsgroup "Information Tree" as described in the previous section. This is an ongoing project which encourages businesses, organizations, and citizens within our communities to display a flag on their properties each day. Units will be asked to award certificates of appreciation to those in their communities who regularly fly the U.S. flag. This also includes an effort to educate citizens on proper flag etiquette as a means toward promoting respect for the American flag.

The mission of the Youth Programs is to promote and recognize outstanding achievement in patriotism and citizenship. It is also our mission to mentor our youth in order to instill these values. The Americanism Essay Contest is one of these programs. The 2009 contest

will require all classes to write an essay entitled: *Soldiers, Past and Present...America, Honor Your Veterans*. Wisconsin's goal with this contest is to promote patriotism among our youth, to encourage participation at the local level and to have winning entries in each class to forward on to National competition. Another targeted youth program is the Americanism Youth Conference which is hosted by the Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, from March 5-8th, 2009. Wisconsin's goal is to have at least one student attend. Depending on the amount of donations received for this cause, Department will pay tuition for at least one participant. Brochures will be sent out in the unit mailing and disbursed at the Informational Forum. When National creates a *Facebook* page for this event, Wisconsin will see that participants past and present have an opportunity to communicate through use of this page.

Collaboration with scouting groups in our communities enables units to participate in the Youth Programs portion of the Americanism program. Units are encouraged (if facilities are available) to offer their post home for meetings, banquets, and other scouting events. Units are also encouraged to request permission from scout leaders to give certificates of achievement to all scouts who earn the Gold Award or the Eagle Scout Award as part of their official ceremonies. In addition, the Department of Wisconsin ALA chooses one recipient of the Girl Scout Achievement Award to be nominated for the National Award. If Wisconsin's applicant fails to win, she then receives a \$500 award from Department.

Americanism plays a big part in the Badger Girls State Program which has its own committee and plan of work in Wisconsin. It is the duty of the Americanism chairman to be a member of the BGS committee and to decorate the Gruenhagen residence hall with a patriotic theme. As a volunteer counselor, this chairman plans to offer an interest group in Americanism and Community Service. Activities in this curriculum will be the Pocket Flag Project, flag retirement ceremony, proper advancement and retirement of colors, and creating a community service project. Each day there is also a special Americanism segment at the general assembly.

The final recurring youth program is Junior Activities. Wisconsin will give a citation for the Best Junior Activities Americanism entry. Juniors are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the Americanism plan of work. This chairman plans to attend Department Junior Conferences and explain to them that as auxiliary members they are expected to lead by example in matters of proper flag etiquette and patriotism.

There are a couple of new initiatives that are in the National Plan of work. One is the AYC Facebook page which was mentioned previously in this plan. The other is Operation Military Kids. Department President Sue Vorwald feels that support for our military families is a big priority this year. Therefore, the Americanism program will be encouraging Districts to develop programs where their units work together with Military Support Groups in their areas. We even have a National Award winning committee chairman for our *Support Military Families* special committee. The purpose of this committee will be to help units discover who needs their help and how they can be of help. This committee can supply the needed information

without crossing privacy lines. By helping unit members learn how to utilize this new committee, this part of the Americanism Plan of Work will be a success.

Supporting all American Legion Programs is fundamental to the Americanism Plan of Work. In this phase of the plan we will promote awareness of and participation in the American Legion Youth programs including (but not limited to) the Oratorical Contest, Legion Baseball, and Junior Shooting Sports. Members will be encouraged to attend these events and offer their help and support. Junior members will be encouraged to participate if eligible.

In the Department of Wisconsin, the American Legion is very involved with support for our troops and support for military families. They continue to work with *Operation Airtime*, *Project Cares*, *Project Wounded Soldier*, and *The Reconnect Program*. *Operation Homefront-Wisconsin*, located in La Crosse, WI, is also collaborative work with our American Legion. Other collaborative projects are the Colonial Flag Foundation's Healing Fields, Pocket Flag Project, Citizens Flag Alliance, and Blue Star Banners. Supplying contact sites for these programs in our resource page, promoting increased awareness, and becoming knowledgeable for the purpose of answering unit member's questions, will be the necessary action by this Department Americanism chairman.

The final (yet ongoing) task of the Americanism Plan of Work is to blend our program with all of the other programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. We are seeing more and more overlap of programs and activities as we turn to modern technology and realize the pragmatic needs in this time of war. Junior Activities leaders can involve their members in every program

whether they are an active group or working on the Patch Program as individuals. Every time we make a contact with a school, we are entering the territory of the Education Program. Every time we work with military families we are working with National Security, Children and Youth, and Community Service programs. Working with wounded soldiers, patriotic holidays, and veteran's legislation puts us into the realm of VA&R. And the list goes on.

Therefore this chairman has decided to create an activity which she hopes will not only promote all other programs, but hopefully have a positive impact on the Membership Program. As a pilot idea, Honor a Veteran Patriotic Home Parties will be tried. There will be no expense charged to the program (initially-unless success demands expansion, in which case the chairman will take from the previously budgeted amount) and special care will be taken to follow all guidelines and conform to Constitution and Bylaws and current standing rules. Data will be kept, photos taken, and success stories shared. Due to time limitations and mileage costs, the initial test parties will take place within the chairman's immediate area of residence and close neighborhoods in Districts 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12. Facilitator training materials will be created, produced, and gathered at the expense of this chairman as part of the development and testing of the project. Success will be measured by increased memberships, educated and enthused members, and hopefully a greater percent of reporting.

In conclusion, the 2008-09 Americanism Plan of Work is a blend of the old, the tried and true, the new, and the yet uncharted ground. Wish us well as we embark on this journey to express *Oceans of Love to Our Veterans, From Sea to Shining Sea*.