



American Legion Auxiliary Public Relations – Zoom Chat #1 (9/24/25)

This presentation focused on empowering members to enhance public relations through storytelling and strategic social media use. The session covered the importance of hashtags across platforms, effective ways to share impactful stories, and how to humanize veterans and volunteers through origin, community, and behind-the-scenes narratives. Attendees were encouraged to “humble brag” about their accomplishments. There were approximately 45 in attendance, including Auxiliary, Legion, SAL, and Riders, making this truly an American Legion Family Event. This was very much in keeping with National ALA President Pam Ray's message, “we are going back to why we were organized and with a focus on the family — not just the families we serve — but The American Legion Family.” At the 2025 Department Convention, the message was highlighted again and was unmistakable. Department President Sue Hembrook, Commander Nate Bond, SAL Detachment Commander Christopher Dannenmann, and Legion Riders State Director Corey Doehrmann stood shoulder to shoulder on stage—a striking image of unity—declaring that our greatest strength lies in coming together as one Legion Family.

PR Team Introduction

Led by Natalia Genovesi King (Department Chair), with Jenna Smith and Julie Deleeuw on the Committee, and Bob Shappell as Of Counsel.

Please Send Us YOUR Contact Information (Stay Informed!):

Please send us the following:

Name

District

Unit/Post/Squadron #

**State, if other than WI*

Email Address

Interested in Requesting a Visit?

To request a visit from the Department President, Sue Hembrook, or from any Department Chair, please fill out the “Department President/Chairman Visit Request,” which may be found at: www.amlegionauxwi.org/forms

Stay Up To Date & Follow Us on Facebook

- **Web Address:** www.facebook.com/groups/aladepartmentofwipr/
- **QR Code for Facebook Page:**



- While you are there, check out our post: **“Seven Days, Seven Ways to Serve & Inspire.”**
Let's make our stories shine all week long. Each day has its own catchy theme. Pick one, snap a photo, and inspire others to support our veterans and communities.

Social Media Hashtags

(Please note a quick reference guide is included at the end of the summary)

- **Purpose of Hashtags:** Boost visibility, connect with like-minded audiences, track engagement.
- **Why Should You Use Hashtags?**
 - It helps you to reach audience members who have similar interests.
 - It helps those searching for those terms or those following a particular event, etc.
 - Increases visibility

- Helps you stay relevant and trending
- If you customize a hashtag, it allows you to track who is sharing or using your #.
- **Platform-Specific Tips:**
 - **Facebook:** Use sparingly (1-2 max) to avoid spam flags and maintain clarity.
 - **X (formerly Twitter):** Use sparingly (1-2 max), research trending hashtags
 - **Instagram:** Research trending and relevant hashtags; customize for events and campaigns. Unlimited hashtag use. More hashtags are allowable (1-30 max)
- **General Tips:**
 - **DO:** PUT YOUR HASHTAG FIRST (meaning your Unit/ Post/Squadron)
 - **DO:** **Be consistent.** Define your Brand, e.g., #alawiunit288 or #legionwipost1
 - **DO:** Use letters, numbers, underscores
 - **DO NOT:** Use special characters, leave spaces between words, or hashtag each word

Sharing Your Story with the Community

- **Why It Matters:**
 - Builds credibility and trust
 - Inspires and engages
 - Promotes transparency
 - Increases Engagement with your Group
 - Garners Support in Your Community
- **Types of Storytelling:**
 - Origin Stories**
 - Tell the story of the founding of your Unit/Post/Squadron or the ALA, Legion, SAL, or Riders.
 - Community Stories**
 - Put a face on those you serve, humanize them so they are not simply strangers.
 - Impact Stories**
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- Show a CTA (Call To Action) or event you held and the results.

Behind-the-Scenes

- Give the audience a glimpse of your group or members at work.
- **Example of Origin, Community, Impact, and Behind-the-Scenes Story:** ALA National Convention video featuring a story on the Honor Flight Network in which Department Senior Vice Amy Luft appeared. This story highlighted all storytelling types. Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDivLUE_VX0

Origin Story – 1:09 Community Story - 1:53

Impact/CTA – 2:08 Behind the Scenes – 3:04

Special Guest: Amy Luft

- ALA Dept. Senior Vice President
- Lifelong dedication to veterans inspired by her father
- Key figure in Stars and Stripes Honor Flight with 55 flights completed

While technical difficulties kept Senior Vice Amy from speaking, schedule permitting, she will make an appearance in the January 2026 PR ZOOM Chat.

Storytelling Framework

Hero: The individuals served (e.g., veterans), but for purposes of sharing your story with the community, the community that supports them is their champion.

- **The Hero**

The true hero of your Unit/Post/Squadron's story is those you help or serve, e.g., veterans, active-duty military, charitable groups, etc. However, your community and businesses) must connect with these veterans, active-duty military, or charitable groups on a human level, but without creating a sense of distance or pity. The goal is to inspire empathy, not sympathy. The community should feel motivated to support and cheer for the individuals as they overcome challenges.

While collective stories can be powerful, individual narratives tend to resonate more deeply. People relate better to the personal experiences, struggles,

and victories of a single person. These stories create stronger emotional connections, making the journey more memorable.

Focusing on one person allows you to dive deep into their emotions, motivations, and obstacles. It creates a clear, simple narrative—like following a path in the woods rather than navigating a maze. This simplicity makes it easier for your audience to connect with and remember the story. When you focus on an individual, you're crafting a more compelling, relatable tale—one that sticks.

Problem: Challenges they face (e.g., reintegration, isolation, financial burdens)

- **The Problem**

Every great story has a hero and a villain. In your Unit/Post/Squadron narrative, the "villain" isn't a person—it's the challenges that you are trying to help your Heroes face. These might include limited resources, disaster recovery funding, or unmet needs.

By framing your community as the champion for the hero and the external issues as the antagonist, you tell a story that emphasizes dignity and empowerment. It avoids the "us versus them" mindset, where one group is the victim and the other the savior. This approach fosters collaboration, showing that you and your community are working alongside those you serve to create change.

Solution: Your (Unit/Post/Squadron and the Community's) role in helping overcome these challenges

- **The Solution**

Although your Unit/Post/Squadron isn't the hero, it is the catalyst for change. Your role is to help inspire the community to act and then collectively help the hero triumph over their challenges.

The climax of your story is how, with your support, the hero overcomes adversity. Highlight your impact and the positive difference you're making in the community, along with the results that come from community involvement.

Call to Action (CTA): Invite community support through donations, volunteering, or sharing skills.

- **CTA (Call To Action)**

Your CTA is where you invite the community to become part of the solution.

Be clear about how they can contribute—whether through donations, time, or expertise. Connect this back to the story, showing how their support directly impacts individuals like the hero you've portrayed.

For example, let's take one of President Sue's projects for 2025-2026, and create a fictitious CTA that we can share with the community:

“Imagine a veteran like James, whose struggles with reintegration after deployment left him feeling isolated and distant from his loved ones. The weight of unspoken pain made it hard to connect, to heal. But everything changed when James arrived at Camp American Legion. Surrounded by fellow veterans, he found a space not just to rest, but to rebuild. Through shared stories, quiet moments of reflection, and the support of a community that understood, James began the slow, vital process of reconnecting with himself, his family, and his sense of peace.

Every veteran deserves a chance to heal, to rediscover the bonds that deployment has strained. By giving to the Camp American Legion experience, you're not just donating; you're offering hope, you're offering a future. Help veterans like James start their healing journey today.

Give now and give the gift of healing.”

The key is to show the community the real impact of their contribution. By tying their involvement to the story, you're not just asking for their time or their money, you're inspiring real change. Whether it's financial support, volunteering, or sharing skills, each contribution helps bring your story to life.

Storytelling Tips & Ideas

- Interview veterans and share their service stories
- Highlight volunteers and their impact
- Post-event storytelling: share results, photos, and next steps (dropping off donations, impact of the money donated, etc.)
- Use the National ALA Blog for inspiration

- Utilize the National ALA Academy (You can Watch it Day or Night)
 - These Webinars are highly recommended:
 - **Using Social Media to Your Unit's Advantage**
 - Celebrating Women of Service
 - Celebrating the Month of the Military Child

Humble Bragging Encouraged

- Share accomplishments and stories with the PR team, County/District Presidents
- Use social media to showcase impact and build community pride, **don't forget your hashtags!** #dontforget
- Brag about your members that volunteer for OTHER service organizations, e.g., Honor Flights, MHVI, USO, Food Pantries, etc.
 - Who do they serve? What is their CTA? Why do they serve? This is a terrific opportunity for the community to learn the depth of our LLF.
 - Do not forget to take photographs of this member in their volunteer apparel, while they are volunteering (if allowed by the organization) or a candid photograph of them.
- Don't forget to Show Your IMPACT:
 - Did you have an event? How much money did you raise? How many items were donated? If you had a goal, did you meet it? If you did not, what do you need to reach the goal, and how can the community assist?
 - Do not forget to include photographs/video of the event, the results, etc.

Homework & Engagement

- Reflect on impactful stories and why they resonated
- Use those insights to craft compelling narratives

Fun October Social Media Holidays

Engage your audience by aligning posts with these observances:

- **Oct. 1 – International Coffee Day:** Share cozy or creative coffee photos #coffeeday
- **Oct. 5 – World Teacher Day:** Celebrate teachers with stories of their impact
#worldteacherday
- **Oct. 6 – World Smile Day:** Spread joy by posting smiling faces
#worldsmileday
- **Oct. 15 – World Student Day:** Reflect on student life and share memorable moments #worldstudentday
- **Oct. 16 – Dictionary Day:** Post favorite or quirky words with fun definitions #dictionaryday
- **Oct. 28 – Make a Difference Day:** Spotlight volunteers and community heroes #makeadifferenceday

Use these themes to spark community engagement and create shareable content.

Next Zoom Chat

- **Date:** October 29, 2025 (6:30–8 PM)
- **Topics:** Branding, Zoom etiquette, PR & Membership synergy
- **Special Guest**

Have questions or feedback?

Share your thoughts on new topics, valuable takeaways, and how we can keep elevating ALA's public relations impact. Let's keep the momentum going and make every member's engagement opportunity count.

HASHTAGS TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA – A CHEAT SHEET

PUT YOUR HASHTAG FIRST & BE CONSISTENT :

Create your Brand (your hashtag, e.g., alawiunit156, legionwipost36, salwisquad53, legionriderswid1)

