

Department of Wisconsin Children & Youth Program Engagement Plan



Mary Petrie, Department Chairman: 808 E. Cady Street, Watertown WI 53094
mmrtpetrie@charter.net (920-285-3223 – No answer? Leave a message re: ALA)

Purpose:

To protect, care for and support children and youth, particularly those of veteran and military families.

Objectives: Believe We Can Make a Difference in the Life of a Child!

1. Develop, implement and monitor programs and activities that contribute to the physical, mental and wellness of children and youth of military and non-military children.
 - A. Numerous programs already exist. Involve others, working to identify and address children's needs.
 - a) Legion Family, Children's Miracle Network, Boys & Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Operation: Military Kids, 4-H, TAPS, Guard Reserve Family Readiness Group, Operation Give a Hug, churches, individuals, and other organizations.
 - B. Implement public awareness events to increase community support:
 - a) Host story hours, dinners, game or movie nights, fairs, walks/runs, holiday baking sessions, Easter Egg Hunts, Christmas/seasonal parties, coloring contests, art fairs, bowling parties, Constitution Day party (September 17th), help with proms (tuxes, dresses, hair, make-up, transportation, prizes, etc.). Let your imagination soar!
 - C. Encourage celebration of Children & Youth Month in April (www.legion.org) and National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day – First Thursday in May. www.samhsa.gov

2. Support the Child Well-Being Foundation and the Children & Youth programs of The American Legion:

- A. Child Well-Being Foundation (CWF): www.cwbfoundation.org or www.cwf-inc.org
 - a) Donations welcome: Given in Honor of or In Memory of
 - b) Become a CAT – a member of the Children's Action Team – Check 'Extra C&Y' Info Page
- B. Order and distribute resources:
 - a) Comic Books, coloring books, rulers, stickers, and bookmarks purchased through the Legion Flag & Emblem catalog at www.emblem.legion.org

3. Promote Operation A.L.F. (American Legion Family) WI's S.A.L. stuffed animal and Klinger the horse stuffed animal and book from the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

- A. Purchase/donate A.L.F. and/or Klinger
 - a) A.L.F. is a great way to support military children when a parent deploys, providing comfort: Contact Bob Sirovina for more information or to order: www.wisalcmdrbob@att.net
 - b) Klinger can be purchased by himself or with the book as a set: www.taps.org: Click the search icon and type Klinger.

4. Promote Youth Awards year 'round. (Youth must be under 18): Check the local newspaper, TV, and other media for children and youth eligible for these awards. Share award details and Unit contact info with schools, churches, and youth groups so they can alert you of a nominee. Juniors and non-members are eligible.

A. Youth Hero Award: National award presented for a physical act of valor

B. Good Deed Award: Presented to those who don't meet the Youth Hero Award criteria but who donate time and/or money for a worthy cause, such as troop support, raising funds for homeless veterans, etc.

The award form is accessible under the WI Children & Youth program and can only be submitted by American Legion Auxiliary members! Be sure to get all the information for submission.

5. Support military children and youth

A. Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2): This initiative honors military children who may be experiencing a separation from one or both parents: [www.legion-aux.org>kdh2](http://www.legion-aux.org/kdh2)

- a)** Recognition buttons or stickers with "I'm a Hero 2" can be distributed to these children.
- b)** KDH2 buttons can be ordered through a vendor or made yourself. Visit the website to download the instruction file or for an order form for Proud Parents/Grandparents buttons.
- c)** Host a KDH2 celebration to show military children they also serving and that their sacrifices are appreciated. *See info at the end of the program plan.*

B. Celebrate April's Month of the Military Child: Host a special event or a relaxed get together to honor military children. Plan early!

C: April is also Children & Youth Month – During the month of April, the American Legion Family emphasizes its commitment to our nation's children. Search "April Children" at www.legion.org for a list of available brochures.

D. Get involved!

- a)** The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) offers a camp program. Consider volunteering if there's one near you: www.taps.org
- b)** Get involved at a Boys & Girls Club. A club offers a safe atmosphere for children and teens during out-of-school hours. The programs and services help young people succeed in school, develop confidence and leadership skills, and maintain healthy lifestyles while having fun. Check out the website at www.bbbs.org. There's also an "Operation Bigs" program for mentoring military children.

E. Plan a Purple Up event to celebrate April's Month of the Military Child (MOMC). Consider making it a Legion Family event: www.militarychild.org/MOMC_Toolkit Plan early!

- a)** The toolkit includes templates to download yard signs, Certificates of Recognition, stickers, and a T-Shirt design.
- b)** Wear purple or hand out purple ribbons to celebrate military children. Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard shades of blue, Army green, and Marine red produce purple. **Purple Up!**

6. Support veterans' children and youth.

- a)** Identify the needs of homeless veterans' children by connecting with churches, homeless shelters, and food pantries; then lend a hand. Respect today's privacy issues: you might work through a mediator
- b)** Connect these families with the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).
- c)** Participate in The American Legion's Government Testing Scholarship Program.
- d)** Contact the Volunteer Services Rep at a VA Medical Center so see how you can help the children of homeless veterans.

- e) Contact local schools to check if there are homeless veterans' children in need of supplies of any kind: school, clothes, etc. Anonymity is key, but the principle or a teacher can be the go-between.
- f) Work with your Post's Service Officer to help with the needs of veterans' children who need financial help. (The American Legion – Temporary Financial Assistance.)
- g) Help raise awareness for the needs of homeless children in your community by sharing Unit activities on the Unit website, local newspapers, unit newsletters and social media

7. Additional Opportunities

- A. National Family Week:** The American Legion Family supports National Family Week, celebrated during Thanksgiving week, November 24-30, 2025. What can you do?
- B. Facebook:** Join the **ALA Children & Youth group:** Share activities and events, ask questions, obtain info, and promote Children & Youth: www.facebook.com/groups/ALAChildrenandYouth/
- C. Flying Flags for Heroes:** Join an SAL Squadron to get youth involved in placing flags on veterans' graves. Join the crusade to place 1.5 million flags to honor our veterans: www.flyingflagsforheroes.com
- D. Partner** with your local high school to encourage student participation in the American Legion Oratorical Contest Scholarship Program. Participants learn about the U.S. Constitution and can earn scholarship money. Visit www.legion.org for specifics.
- E. Work** with your local high school in selecting students to attend Badger Girls State and Badger Boys State and to promote The American Legion's Government Scholarship Testing Program: www.legion.org.
- F. Give an Hour** provides free access to mental health care for active duty, National Guard, Reserve and Veterans, strengthening the entire family, promoting emotional wellbeing of their children. www.giveanhour.org
- G. Create** a Unit Citizenship Award for children and youth who have learned the ideals of the U.S. Constitution, and/or host a program where they can learn.

Children and Youth Reporting Mid-Year Report:

I would appreciate receiving a brief Mid-Year Report. Please share a story via email, and if possible, a picture of two (**jpeg only**) of your events and activities as they happen. Doing so as you go, rather than waiting till the end of the year makes reporting easier and you'll be less likely to forget something.

I will accept mailed pictures for other C&Y use, but they will not be scanned in to be included in required reports for Department Convention, Central Division or National. As noted above, those must be emailed.

Re: Pictures – Be sure to get a parental ok to do so!

Annual Reports

Let's make Wisconsin a 100% reporting state by having **each** District C&Y Chairman submit a written, typed narrative report by **April 15, 2026**, to the Department C&Y Chairman listed on the front page of this Program Plan. Either a paper copy via USPS or e-mail is perfectly fine – whichever is easier for you.

As part of your narrative report, please note how your Unit, County, or District promoted the Youth Hero, Good Deed, and Youth Caregiver Awards, as well as sharing a success story regarding support for military and/or homeless veterans' children.

CAMPS FOR KIDS

Badger Youth Camp: www.wi.ng.mil

S.A.L contact: Randy Timms saldistrat@gmail.com

The camp is located at Camp Lakotah in Wautoma WI and was created by the Wisconsin Army National Guard to help alleviate deployment anxiety, offering a variety of fun activities in a safe atmosphere. Ages 8 to 17 are eligible and it is open to all branches.

Camp Hometown Heroes: www.camphometownheroes.org

P.O. Box 227, Grafton WI 53024 – Office Phone # 262-546-0421

Camp is located at N885 Youth Camp Rd., Campbellsport WI

This is a free week-long overnight Summer camp for children and siblings of fallen U.S. Service members. The camp is a safe place where children begin the healing process with other children who have experienced a similar loss while participating in activities they love. Ages 7-17

National Children & Youth Chairman: Melanie Taylor (Dept. of California) mtaylor952425@gmail.com

Central Division National Vice President: Ann Buchanan (Dept. of West Virginia) annbuch@aol.com

National Children & Youth Committee Contact Information
children&youth@ALAforVeterans.org

Children and Youth Awards

- 1. Youth Hero Award** - A national award for youth under 18 years of age who perform a heroic act of physical valor. *The Youth Hero & Good Deed Nomination Form is online on both the WI and National websites and is submitted directly to National Headquarters. Please note that nominations may only be submitted by American Legion Auxiliary members!*
- 2. Good Deed Award** - A national award for youth under 18 years of age who do not meet the Youth Hero Award criteria, but who are great examples of community service in action. *A Good Deed Thank You Card is available online to print and present to a youth.*

There is a Youth Caregiver patch for ALA Junior members and Sons of the American Legion members.

The patch is geared toward high school students. There are ten activities, and five must be completed to earn the patch.

This falls under the Junior Activity program, so check it out!



Central Division Award...

Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Children & Youth Program

Presented to: One Unit Chairman in each Division (5 overall awards)

Materials and guidelines:

- Awarded to the unit in each Division with the most outstanding Children & Youth program.
- May include pictures, news articles, news releases, etc.

Overview of Resources

4-H	www.4h.org	
A.L.F. S.A.L program: Contact Bob Sirovina	www.wisalcmdrbob@att.net	
Big Brothers Big Sister (BBBS)	www.bbbs.org	
Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA)	www.bgca.org	
Child Well-Being Foundation (CWF)	www.cwf-inc.org or www.legion.org/cwf	
Children's Miracle Network Hospitals The vision: Change Kids' Health, Change the Future	www.childrensmiraclenetworkhospitals.org	
Folds of Honor Foundation (FHF) Provides scholarships to spouses and children of America's fallen or disabled military and first responders.	www.foldsofhonor.org	
Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2)	www.alaforveterans.org	
Military Child Education Coalition Supports all military-connected children by educating, advocating, and collaborating to resolve education challenges associated with the military lifestyle.	www.militarychild.org	
Operation Give a Hug – Huggee Miss You These photo-holding 12" dolls are for active-duty families and first responders. Operation Give a Hug was closed due to federal funding issues, however the Washington State Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.) is raising funding to restart the program, now called Operation Battle Buddy.	www.huggeemissesyou.com	
Operation Military Kids (OMK) OMK was founded as a resource for teens and young adults interested in joining the military.	www.operationmilitarykids.org	
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)	www.taps.org	
The American Legion Temporary Assistance Fund	www.legion.org	
Visit www.constitutionbooklet.com to print a pocket Constitution booklet for school children.		
The "I'm a Hero 2" stickers template can be found on the Department website on the Programs page.		
		
The American Legion Wisconsin: www.wilegion.org National: www.legion.org	American Legion Auxiliary Wisconsin: www.amlegioauxwi.org National: www.legion-aux.org	Sons of the American Legion Wisconsin: www.wisal.org National: www.legion.org/sons
Wisconsin American Legion Riders https://www.alrawis.org		

HOW TO CONDUCT A “KIDS OF DEPLOYED ARE HEROES 2” PROGRAM

Submitted by:

Mary Petrie, Department Children & Youth Chairman

**Contact information for questions:**

mmrtpetrie@charter.net • 920-261-8161

Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2): Honoring military children who may experience a separation from one or both parents, whether deploying to a war zone, having a short tour or extended TDY (temporary duty assignment).

1. Prepare a supply of “recognition buttons” for distribution. Visit the Children & Youth page of the members only section at www.ALforVeterans.org for more information. Buttons may be ordered through the Auxiliary, a commercial vendor or made locally with the following content:
 - I’m a Hero 2
 - Proud Parent of a Military Child with a picture
 - Proud Grandparent of a Military Child with a picture
2. Call a planning meeting: include the Legion Family, especially Junior members. Consider the following ideas to recognize military kids:
 - Make or purchase and distribute ‘I’m a Hero 2’ buttons.
 - Make or purchase and distribute ‘Proud Parent/Grandparent of a Military Child’ with picture button.
 - Can’t afford buttons? Make or purchase and distribute stickers.
3. Decide the best location for recognition of military kids:
 - Coordinate with Family Readiness Groups for button distribution during family days.
 - Coordinate with Legion Family members for local community days/fairs etc.
 - Consider having an activity day/dinner for military families at your post home.
 - If your unit is in close vicinity to a military installation, contact Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) for a listing of activities in which you might have a concession or table.
 - Make buttons available for ALA Girls State and The American Legion Boys State programs and Junior members.
 - Consider suggestions from Junior members for school activities and locations.

No matter what you decide to do, plan a public relations campaign around your event.

Consider having Auxiliary membership applications available. Community events provide the best opportunity to sign up new members.

HOW TO REACH OUT TO MILITARY CHILDREN AND YOUTH

[www\(ALAforVeterans.org](http://www(ALAforVeterans.org) For best results, set up an account if you haven't done so. You will be able to view more information.

Some ideas for reaching out to military children and youth:

1. Sponsor a "You're My Hero" event, similar to the Hero Award, but for military children.
 - Present them with certificates and medals.
 - Be creative.
 - Ask your Junior members to participate.
 - Use your public relations tools to inform the community. Refer to the Public Relations Toolkit at [www\(ALAforVeterans.org](http://www(ALAforVeterans.org).
2. Host a movie and popcorn night or a board game night for teens.
3. Many military kids can't afford new prom dresses. Get the community involved in collecting and distributing gently used prom dresses.
 - Ask local radio stations and newspapers to donate time and space to help advertise your initiative.
 - Get local bridal shops involved.
 - Involve your high school counselors.
 - Your unit may also want to help with transportation expenses, flowers, etc.
4. Contact your local homeless shelter. Ask if there are any veterans there with children.
 - Since one in five homeless are veterans, there is a good chance they will be living in local shelters. Find out what your unit can do to help the children.
 - VA hospitals have homeless coordinators and/or directors of voluntary services. Meet with them to establish a method in which the coordinator/director will coordinate with your unit whenever a homeless veteran with children is identified. Offer to provide school supplies for the child, through the homeless coordinator or director of voluntary services.
5. Get your Legion Family together and brainstorm ideas that might work in your community. Sometimes, school-aged children are your best link to finding military children in the community. Be creative.

No matter what you decide to do, plan a public relations campaign around your event.

Consider having Auxiliary membership applications available.

Community events provide the best opportunity to sign up new members.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Support Badger Girls/Boys State
- Oratorical Scholarship Program
- Family Readiness Group Activities
- Blue Star Banner Service
- Eagle Scout Scholarships
- Poppy Contests
- Operation Military Kids
- Read & Donate a book to your school
- Shooting Sports Program
- Kids Against Hunger
- National Family Week
- Gateway Drugs Program
- Missing Children
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters Programs
- Kinship Care Program
- Camp Yellow Ribbon (Easter Seals)
- Partner with local Readiness Group
- Soldiers At-Home Movie Night for Families of Deployed
- Promote April as Children & Youth Month
- Camp Hometown Heroes
- County Youth Government Day
- Legacy Run Scholarship
- Child Safety Programs
- Veterans in the Classroom
- Legion Baseball Program
- Child Well-Being Foundation
- Flag Folding
- TAPS Camp Program
- Troop & Family Support
- Hunter Safety
- Essay Contest
- Family Support Network
- Fire Safety Programs
- Temporary Financial Assistance
- Boys/Girls Clubs of America
- Write Letters to Deployed
- Halloween Safety
- Government Scholarship Testing
- Badger Youth Camp

Opportunities such as these exist across the state. Brainstorm ideas with other members of the American Legion Family. Select one or two that your members feel they can work on and involve your Juniors if possible. They might be aware of other youth-supporting organizations; then consider partnering with the American Legion Family and other organizations. There is strength in numbers, and this will also provide visibility in your community. Wear your branded clothing with pride and be prepared to share your story of “Who we are, what we do, and why it matters.”

Be proud to be a member of the world's largest patriotic service organization!



The American Legion Family