



MEMBERSHIP

Betty Stone
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Our plane is at the gate ready to board! Your boarding pass is your 2027 membership card saying you have paid your 2027 American Legion Auxiliary dues. This is a special flight – the only one this year. Are you going to be on it or be left behind? We will leave the gate at midnight December 31, 2026. Now is the best time to get your boarding pass and be ready to go.

NEW ELIGIBILITY RESOLUTION EXPANDS ALA MEMBERSHIP

At the 2026 American Legion National Convention delegates adopted new membership eligibility language for the American Legion Auxiliary – expanding eligibility and allowing more family members to join the ALA. This chart shows the updated gender-neutral language to help simplify the language.

MEMBERS

Pay your dues and then talk to your Legionaries as to who is eligible and invite them to join our great American Legion Auxiliary.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DR. CORAL MAY GROUT

Dr. Coral May Grout was elected national president of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) during the organization's 105th National Convention in Louisville.

"As we take these department and national offices, we accept not only a title, but a trust — to lead with honor, serve with humility, and strengthen the legacy placed in our hands, in support of our veterans, military, children, and our communities," Grout said from the convention stage.

Before being elected to the ALA's highest volunteer office, Grout held numerous leadership positions in the organization at the unit, district, department, and national levels. At the national level, she served as chair of several programs: Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Education (twice), Americanism, Constitution & Bylaws, Public Relations, Legislative, Leadership, Community Service, and Junior Activities committees. She also served on the National Executive Committee, and as national secretary, national historian, and national vice president.

Grout is a member of Eugene M. Connor Unit 193 in Massachusetts. She is eligible for membership through her late father, Charles E. Grout, who served in the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines and Australia during World War II.

In her professional life, Grout was in education for over 50 years in positions ranging from an English teacher to a superintendent.



NEW ALA MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

At the 2026 American Legion National Convention, delegates adopted new membership eligibility language for the American Legion Auxiliary, expanding eligibility and allowing more family members to join the ALA. The American Legion has authority over the ALA's membership eligibility and this language change allows more people into our organization — strengthening our ability to better serve our veterans, military, and their families.

Following is the text from The American Legion that reflects the updated eligibility provisions for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary:

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE:

Section 2. Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to:

- (1) grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, and direct or adopted descendants within two degrees of consanguinity of members of The American Legion; and
- (2) grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, and direct or adopted descendants within two degrees of consanguinity of all servicemembers who served in either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918, and any time after December 7, 1941, who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of their entry therein served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments

associated with the United States during either eligibility period and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge;

- (3) grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, and direct or adopted descendants within two degrees of consanguinity of all servicemembers who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during either of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; and any time after December 7, 1941, who served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States during either eligibility period and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge; and
- (4) to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion.

The revisions to the ALA's eligibility mentioned above allow individuals the potential to be members of both the Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. The Legion's national judge advocate has confirmed that this dual membership does not constitute a conflict of interest with The American Legion.

The eligibility changes are effective immediately and allow grandfathers, fathers, brothers, sons and grandsons of a veteran to join the ALA. Updated membership applications, brochures, and additional membership resources are available on the department website.



OPT OUT OF NEWSPAPER

**Do you receive too many papers in your mail?
Would you like to help Department save money?**

If so, opt out of receiving the hard copy of the *Badger Legionnaire/Wisconsin* at <https://wilegion.org/badger-legionnaire>. The electronic version of the newspaper is posted on the department website before hard copies are mailed.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Donna Jensen
Department Chaplain
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Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for your blessings for all the military, veterans, their families and communities. Please impart your wisdom and grace on all as we strive to serve you and each other.

1 Chronicles 17:16-17

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And this was a small thing in your eyes, O God. You have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come, and have shown me future generations, O Lord God!"

The fall season is here, and it is a time for reaping and thanksgiving for everything that has blossomed and grown during the past season. It is also a time for reflection on what is yet to come.

Hope and optimism are not always easy as we face life's many challenges and the unknowns in the future. With God's help we can gain the strength and patience to conquer much more than we even know. Working together, along with our God, whoever that is, can inspire us to new heights as we soar into the future together.

Request

I am asking **ALL** Legion Family members to send prayers, poems and inspirational pieces for Auxiliary President Amy Luft's Prayer Book. They can be original or from another source and anything that moves you. Please give the name of the author and the Unit/Post/Squadron and District number and send to me by email (**djensen20@gmail.com**) or mail to: Donna Jensen, 6936 N 86th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53224.

Music:

Amazing Grace by John Newton
(Written 1772 – published 1779)
Lyrics inspired by the New Testament

Amazing grace how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

Bonnie Dorniak
Executive Secretary/Treasurer
608-745-0124
Email: **deptsec@amlegionauxwi.org**
Website: **www.amlegionauxwi.org**

The 2026 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention was held in Louisville, Kentucky. Wisconsin members received several national awards as listed on Page A4. Congratulations to the award winners and thank you for making Wisconsin proud!

Coral May Grout of Massachusetts was installed as National President. Her emphasis is on education and celebrating the 20th anniversary of Give 10 to Education by introducing Give 20 to Education this year.

The Spirit of Youth (SOY) scholarship is her fundraising focus, highlighting two new \$10,000 scholarships for military spouses. These two

scholarships are in addition to the scholarships that are already part of SOY. There are three separate scholarship opportunities for participants in ALA programs including ALA Junior members, Junior Members of the Year, and participants in the ALA Girls Nation program.

Jay Bowen of Colorado was elected national commander of The American Legion and Thom Skelley of Texas was elected national commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

Several changes were recently approved that affect ALA membership. Unit officers may now sign new member applications after confirming the veteran status of the person through whom the applicant is eligible to join. Additionally, at The American Legion's national convention, eligibility for ALA membership was expanded to include grandfathers, fathers, brothers, sons and grandsons of a veteran. The official language regarding this eligibility change is listed on page A1.

National Headquarters mailed membership renewal notices in mid-September. You may have received a renewal notice even though you recently paid your dues. National Headquarters pulled the mailing list in early August so some notices may have crossed in the mail. If you believe you received a renewal notice in error, please contact your unit membership chairman to confirm your dues were forwarded to department headquarters for processing.

Members may pay their dues through their unit, online at www.ALAforVeterans.org, or by phone. When paying by phone, you can easily pay for multiple family members at one time or pay for lapsed membership years. Please call national headquarters at 317-569-4570, Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm (Central Time) to pay by phone. Thank you to everyone who already renewed their 2027 membership!

LEGISLATIVE

Sue Hembrook
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Congratulations, Wisconsin! Wisconsin ranked third in the nation in VoterVoice actions. It is important that everyone is supporting veteran issues. If you have not already done so, please sign up for the Grass Roots notifications by going to wilegion.org, pick the resources tab and choose the legislation drop down. You will find the Grass Roots section and be able to sign up for alerts. It is so very easy, you can write your own message or the preprinted messages that are already prepared. Our Mission Statement states that we make a meaningful impact for veterans, military and their families and this is an easy way to do so. Please sign up today.

As stated above, Wisconsin was third in the nation for on line actions. The more voices that are heard by your Senators and Representatives will let them know that the American Legion Family supports our veterans and military. They will realize how devoted we are to enhancing their lives. The grassroots communicate alerts us to the issues at hand, so you will not miss an important agenda on their dockets. So, I urge you to sign up, open up those alerts, and make your voice count. Our veterans and military are counting on our support.

Let us make Wisconsin number one in the Nation!

HISTORY

Sandy Mack
Department Historian
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Thank you for the opportunity to serve 2026-2027 as your Department Historian. If you attended the past department convention, I held up an empty frame and stated that as a department, we all need to share part of your unit/county/district events. "Let's fill the frame." Someone must be providing a report on your fundraisers/community events. Share those events with pictures for the 2026-2027 ALA History Book. Submit a request to have President Amy visit your unit or event and send me a brief description of the event and photos. Let me share history from a past county meeting. I hope it shows how important your history is to future generations:

Date April 26, 1950
*The fifth regular meeting of the ***** County Council American Legion Auxiliary at 8:00 pm.*
*Located in *****.*
The minutes were read and approved.
Treasurer gave the following report:
Disbursements:
*\$2.00 gift for Mrs. Wm. *****
\$10.00 Child Welfare
\$10.00 Christmas Cheer Fund
Leaving a balance of \$26.18
The president thanked the hosting unit and meeting was adjourned.
The following program presented was "Piano Accordion Selections."
*Talk Demonstration, "This is our Problem," presented by Carl ***. This topic dealt with the problem of communism.*
Vocal Duet...
These are only bits and pieces of their minutes.
Have you started your history book yet?
Visit www.amlegionauxwi.org, under programs you will find helpful tips.



POPPY REMINDER!

Poppies can be distributed
all year long.
Veterans Day is a great time
to do a distribution.

2027 Poppy Orders are due
by December 15, 2026.

Orders received after December 15 will
be charged an additional processing fee
and only accepted if poppies are available.

ORDER TODAY – DON'T DELAY!



Teri Miller
Central Division National Vice President

CENTRAL DIVISION NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT TERI MILLER

Teri Miller of Peoria Unit 2 in Illinois was elected Central Division National VP at the 2026 national convention. She is eligible for membership in the ALA through the service of her father, Leonard R. Krapp, Sr., U.S. Army Air Corps WWII.

Teri has held several positions at all levels of the organization, including 2004-2005 Department President, Central Division VA&R Chair, Central Division Education Committee Chair, National Education Committee Vice Chair for three years, and National Poppy Committee Vice Chair.

Teri is married to George Miller for 25 years. She retired in October 2025 after working 40+ years for Peoria Public Library, 35 of those years as the manager of Outreach Services. She attended Western Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in library science with a K-12 teaching degree. She has two sisters and one brother, along with many nieces and nephews.

Patti Westpfahl
Department Chairman
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The red poppies are not just flowers; they are so much more to our American Legion Family and those we serve, support and remember. They symbolize the sacrifice of U.S. service-members killed while protecting our nation and we wear these little red flowers to honor those fallen heroes and in support of our military, veterans and their families.

During WWI, the poppy flourished on the battlefields of Flanders Fields. Like the blood which was shed, its brilliant red bloom became a sign of hope and renewal. It is a perpetual memorial to their bravery.

*Such sacrifice through valor made,
A debt too deep to be repaid,
From their courage Freedom born,
To remember them the poppy worn.*

I hope you have already placed your poppy order and are working hard on your poppy program. Here are a few reminders as you prepare for a successful poppy program.

- Select a committee – remember they are only the leaders and are not expected to do all of the work – it takes a team effort!
- Arrange for distributions of poppies
- Contact distribution locations to receive permission to distribute on their properties
- Contact City Hall for a proclamation
- Arrange for Poppy Proclamation to be published in local papers
- Create a display for the library or city hall
- Write articles announcing distribution days
- Get photos into the local paper

Develop an elevator pitch to help open people's hearts and minds of the reason why it is important to support the Poppy distribution and who the monies support, noting that all of our poppies are veteran-made with pride.

Contact your local schools, youth centers or any other youth group with information about the Poppy Poster contest. This will

POPPY PROGRAM



not only stimulate poppy donations, but it can also help build patriotism in our next generation. All entries must be received by May 1, 2027. Remember we all win when our youth become involved and are as excited about our programs as we are! Two Wisconsin students, Hadley Richards and Lady First, recently won national awards for their Poppy Posters.

Poppy Program Engagement Plan and poppy information and worksheets are available on the department website (www.amlegionauxwi.org/poppyprogram) or you can contact me for any information you may need to make your poppy program a success. Review the deadlines dates.

Reporting is essential to achieve our mission of quality support for our veterans. Let me know the creative ways you promote the Poppy Program. Photos and newspaper articles are greatly appreciated. I look forward to hearing from all of you.



PUBLIC RELATIONS

Kristy Wakeman
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Public Relations plays an important role in helping our organization establish and maintain a positive public image. Through consistent branding, meaningful communication, and active community visibility, ALA members can help inform the public about the mission of the organization and the value of the work we do.

At its heart, Public Relations is about communication. Strong communication helps build awareness, strengthen relationships, and prepare organizations to respond clearly and effectively in a variety of situations. The following are seven key areas of Public Relations:

- **Media Relations:** Forming relationships with media outlets, broadcasters, journalists, and bloggers to share accurate and timely information.
- **Community Relations:** Building strong

connections between the organization and the local community.

- **Crisis Communication:** Preparing for and responding to crisis situations with clear, responsible messaging.

- **Public Affairs:** Helping ensure the organization's views and actions align with the public interest.

- **Social Media:** Using social media platforms to engage audiences and share the organization's message.

- **Internal Communications:** Communicating with members and employees in a timely and effective manner.

- **Strategic Public Relations Communications:** Developing and carrying out communication plans that support the organization's goals and objectives.

By understanding and using these areas of Public Relations, members can help strengthen the organization's visibility, credibility, and connection with the communities we serve.

2027 ALA DAILY SWEEPSTAKES

2027 sweepstakes forms were mailed
to current ALA members in August.

Please contact Department Headquarters at 608-745-0124
if you would like additional entry forms.

Entries must be returned by December 31st
to be eligible for the drawings.

Although a donation is not required,
the money raised allows the ALA to maintain programs
that benefit our veterans, the military, their families,
and our communities so donations are greatly appreciated.

**THANK YOU
TO THOSE WHO
HAVE ALREADY DONATED.
WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!**

VETERAN AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION (VA&R)

PJ Stephens
Department Chairman
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WHAT IS VA&R? This is a question I ask myself all the time.

Per last year’s reporting, units aided in fund-raising and donations to Camp American Legion, Christmas Gift Shop, Homeless Women Veterans Grant Fund, Fisher House, VA medical facilities and Wisconsin Veterans Homes. They also donated to Quilts of Valor. The amount of donations reported exceeded \$154,330 from across the department. Service to Veterans reported across all districts was in excess of 51,252 hours.

Then there are the veteran grants that the department distributes based on the eligibility criteria outlined on the applications. Everyday some veteran gets into a financial bind. They turn to family, friends, loans and, as a last resort, they turn to the County Veteran Service Office who contacts department headquarters. ALA-Wisconsin offers one-time grants that are paid directly to the veteran’s creditor, never to the veteran. During the last fiscal year, five veterans received \$6,296 in grants through

the Veterans & Family Emergency Grant and nine veterans were awarded grants totaling \$12,575.70 through the Homeless Women Veterans Grant.

One of the grants became a bit complicated since the Veteran’s home was in an unincorporated area that relied on electricity only. While they were on the electric company’s payment plan during the wintertime, a substantially much needed car repair was paid and they had to take custody of two grandchildren. The veteran decided to make a partial payment instead of the full payment on the electric bill plan that was due without letting the power company know ahead of time. This process was playing out during the end of spring and the start of the heat of the summer. The 100% disabled veteran was terrified when a shut-off notice and a bill that exceeded \$3,000 more than usual was received. The short story is that it took several months of negotiation with the electric company and a grant from ALA-Wisconsin. This veteran stayed in their home, received federally funded perks from the electric company, and now has a more manageable electric bill.

The gratitude from that veteran was priceless. I could picture a happy dance. This is how

VA&R – CHRISTMAS GIFT SHOP

Diana Sirovina
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It’s October! The weather is warm and Christmas is probably the last thing on most people’s mind. For those of us who are involved in the Christmas Gift Shop program, Christmas season has already begun!

For anyone not familiar with Christmas Gift Shop, this program allows veterans in long-term care facilities at Zablocki VAMC and the Wisconsin Veteran’s Homes at King and Union Grove to select gifts to send to their loved ones at Christmas time at no cost to them. The program has changed a lot over the years, but there is one thing that will never change, and that is our commitment to caring for our veterans and their families.

Bringing Christmas Gift Shop to our veterans does take some time and preparation. Many hours are spent browsing Amazon.com for the perfect gifts that can be selected for family members of all ages. Once our selection of available gifts is

complete, a catalog is created for the veteran to view and select their gifts. Veterans make their selections and items are ordered, sorted, and readied for our annual wrapping day. A group of dedicated Legion Family members gathers to wrap and pack the gifts, ensuring they reach veterans’ family members in time for Christmas.

Many times, we receive cards and notes from family members telling us how excited they were to receive a gift chosen by their loved one. Family members are pleasantly surprised to receive their beautifully wrapped gifts, knowing their veteran was able to select it especially for them. These personal notes are a wonderful reminder of how important this program is to so many.

The cost of gifts, wrapping and shipping are all totally covered by your generous donations. Our Christmas Gift Shop program may only last a couple of months each year, but your unit can make it a year-round project by sending in your financial donations, earmarked for Christmas Gift Shop, whenever you have funds available. Thank you for supporting this great program!

VA&R – HOMELESS WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

Maggie Geiger
Department Chair
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The Homeless Women Veterans (HWV) Grant Program provides financial assistance to women veterans and military members facing unexpected hardships. Since its launch in 2010, this program has awarded grants totaling \$380,776.59 to 345 women veterans in need.

- Here are the key program details:
- Grants are designed to address immediate financial emergencies, not accumulated debt.
 - Grant money can only be used for assistance paid directly to the landlord, utility company, or other approved creditor, not to the applicant or applicant’s family.
 - Veterans submit applications through a spon-

sor – County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO), VA Benefit Representative, Case Worker, or similar advocate.

- All applications must include documentation detailing the specific request and circumstances.
- DD214 showing honorable discharge or proof of current service is required.
- Applications can be found on the Programs tab on the department website under Homeless Women Veterans.

This program makes a real difference in the lives of our most vulnerable veterans and is sustained entirely through generous donations from members and units. To contribute, please use the Poppy Fund Suggested Donation form and select option #4456-Homeless Women Veterans Grant Fund.

For more information about this program and others, visit the department website and click Programs.

2025-2026 NATIONAL AWARDS

American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin received the following awards or acknowledgements for the 2025-2026 administrative year during the 2026 National Convention:

MERIT MEDALLION AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Department of Wisconsin
Sue Hembrook, Department President

NATIONAL PRESIDENT’S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Harvey K. Funk Unit 494, District 1
Crystal Shaw, Unit President

ALA FOUNDATION

Veteran Grant Champion Award
for Receiving the Most Veteran
Project Grants in a Department (3 grants)
Department of Wisconsin

AMERICANISM

Americanism Essay Contest,
Class I (Grades 3 & 4)
Best Americanism Essay in the Central Division
Lucas Mercer
Sponsored by Port Washington Unit 82, District 2

Americanism Essay Contest, Class VI
Best Americanism Essay in the Central Division
Traigh Bowlin
Sponsored by Menomonee Falls Unit 382, District 1

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Best Department Children & Youth Program
in the Central Division
Department of Wisconsin
Mary Petrie, Department Chairman

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES

Best Department Junior Activities Program
in the Central Division
Department of Wisconsin
Christine Johnsen, Department Chairman

LEADERSHIP

Unit Member of the Year
for Significant Contributions to the Unit
Christine Van Ryzin
Appleton Unit 38, District 9

MEMBERSHIP

Department Goal Award for Achieving:
• 25% of the 2026 Goal by 9/15/2025
• 60% of the 2026 Goal by 11/10/2025
• 85% of the 2026 Goal by 3/15/2026
Department of Wisconsin
Christina Petranovich, Department Chairman

New Unit Award for New or Re-Chartered
Units for 2026 by July 31, 2026:
• Henry G Mallin Unit 221, Osceola, District 12
• Temperly-Duncan, Inc. Unit 526, Hazel Green,
District 3

Recruit/Rejoin 10 Award for Recruiting/
Rejoining 10 Members by 6/6/2026:
• Diane Burkhalter
• Christina Petranovich

Family 3 Award for Recruiting 3 New Legion
+ 3 New Auxiliary + 3 New SAL Members by
6/6/2026:
• Diane Burkhalter
• Christina Petranovich

68 Wisconsin units received awards
for reaching 100% of their 2026 membership
goal by 1/31/2026.

POPPY

Poppy Poster Contest, Class I (Grades 2 & 3)
Best Poppy Poster in Central Division
Hadley Richards
Sponsored by Mazomanie Unit 437 ~ District 3

Poppy Poster Contest, Class II (Grades 4 & 5)
Best Poppy Poster in Central Division
Lady First
Sponsored by Milwaukee Unit 537 ~ District 4

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Best Department Public Relations
Program in the Central Division
Department of Wisconsin
Natalia Genovesi-King, Department Chairman

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION/VAVS

2025-2026 VAVS Meetings
– Perfect Attendance Award
Department of Wisconsin
• Sheila Frye, Hospital Representative
Middleton Memorial VAMC
• Helene Stein, Hospital Representative
Tomah VAMC

Volunteer Recruitment & Service Award
• Ann Wender, Associate Hospital
Representative
Oscar G. Johnson VAMC

2026-2027 National Appointments

Joanie Dickerson	Girls Nation Committee Central Division Chairman
Diane Duscheck	American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Elected Director
Maggie Geiger	National Executive Committeeperson
Sue Hembrook	Alternate National Executive Committeeperson
Christine Johnsen	Education Committee Central Division Chairman
April Kollmorgen	Poppy Committee Central Division Chairman
Diana Sirovina	AEF Committee Chairman

2026 NATIONAL CONVENTION AWARD RECIPIENTS

LEADERSHIP

Bob Shappell
Department Chairman
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The purpose of the ALA Leadership program is to develop and prepare knowledgeable and capable leaders to carry on the growth and success of the Auxiliary by promoting activities and resources that educate, motivate and mentor members of all ages and at all levels of the organization. Lofty words, but I prefer to look at what we really need for successful and collaborative units.

First, focus on our most important stakeholders – our own members – by making sure the unit is an inviting, friendly, and well-focused group with a solid reputation in the community. Second, understand why people join organizations such as ours. There are three basic reasons: a *self-serving drive*, such as networking, learning more about the community, and seeking potential social activities; a *relational drive*, where they already know someone in the unit and finally “give in” and join; and a *belief drive*, where they know some of the great things we do, believe in our causes and want to be part of them.

We as leaders must find out WHY people join and then follow up regularly to find out WHY they stayed. Once we know that, we can focus on perhaps the most important aspect of our leadership challenge – turning “members” into “volunteers.” Volunteers stay in an organization because they see meaningful goals and they feel appreciated and respected. This is best achieved through relationship building. That is, understanding why members joined, what their expectations are, and building trust among all members. Servant leadership provides the values and skills to make these things happen, focusing on listening actively, empowering our members, and building strong relationships.

A recent survey shows that 65% of Americans would prefer a better boss to a pay raise. In our organization, where there are no pay raises (or pay), it is critical that leadership is trusted, respected, and part of the large team known as the unit. Your Leadership Committee is available to present workshops tailored to your specific needs and time requirements, not just to talk leadership, but to share ideas from other units as well.



Wisconsin was one of twelve ALA departments recognized as a Department Merit Medallion Award winner at the 2026 National Convention in Louisville. Requirements for the award include membership, department impact reporting, governance excellence, financial fiduciary responsibilities, mission investment donations, and must have received a Veteran Projects Fund grant from the ALA Foundation.

“These departments are examples of excellence,” said 2025-2026 ALA National President Pam Ray. “They are truly our mission in action.” 2025-2026 Department President Sue Hembrook is pictured on the far left receiving the award.



Crystal Shaw accepted a National President’s Award for Excellence on behalf of Harvey K. Funk Unit 494 in Caledonia, District 1. Central Division National Vice President Ann Buchanan announced, “This unit exemplifies the traditions of the American Legion Auxiliary through compassionate service, meaningful partnerships, and unwavering commitment to making a difference in the lives of veterans, military families, and children.” Past Department President Sue Hembrook met with unit members to thank them for their accomplishment.



“The American Legion Auxiliary’s Unit Members of the Year are nominated by their peers as the perfect example of a passionate, dedicated grassroots member who significantly impacts unit programs and embodies the organization’s values,” said 2025-2026 National Leadership Committee Chair Donna Dillard. Wisconsin was proudly represented by our Unit Member of the Year, Christine Van Ryzin of Unit 38 in Appleton (pictured far left).

For a complete list of Wisconsin’s national awards, please see page A4.



Sweepstakes winners
are posted at
amlegionauxwi.org
under the "More" tab.



Steven Kohnke
Department
Commander

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

LET'S ALL 'BE PART OF THE SOLUTION!'

"Be Part of the Solution!" Those words from National Commander John W. "Jay" Bowen are more than a motto. They are a challenge to every member of The American Legion Family. The question is not, **"What can someone else do?"** The question is, **"What can I do?"**

Our American Legion Family is strongest when we stop working as individuals and start working as one. Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, and Sons of The American Legion members—Posts, Units, and Squadrons—working together can accomplish far more than any of us can accomplish alone.

If you want to see what being part of the solution looks like, look no further than our American Legion Riders.

Across Wisconsin and throughout the nation, our Riders continue to answer the call. They ride for our veterans. They support our military families. They remember our fallen. They raise money for important programs. And, most importantly, they bring members of the entire Legion Family together for a common purpose.

Once again this year, American Legion Riders from across the country came together for the National Legacy Run and raised more than \$1 million for the Veterans & Children Foundation.

Think about that for a moment.

More than one million dollars—because people came together and decided to make a difference.

That is what being part of the solution looks like. But the responsibility doesn't stop with our Riders. It belongs to every one of us. As we begin this Legion year, it is time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Start working on your **Consolidated Post Report**. Don't wait until the end of the year to try to remember everything your Post accomplished. Every veteran helped, every program conducted, every dollar donated, every volunteer hour given, and every community project completed tells the story of The American Legion's impact.

If we don't report it, the story may never be told.

Conduct at least **four Buddy Checks** this year. Not four phone calls just to check a box. Four opportunities to reach out to a fellow veteran or Legion Family member and simply ask, **"How are you doing?"** Sometimes a Buddy Check brings a member back to the Post. Sometimes it strengthens a friendship. And sometimes that simple phone call can make a difference in someone's life when they need it most.

Support the **250 Club**.

Help sell **Cash Paradise raffle tickets**.

These aren't simply fundraising activities. They help provide the resources our Department needs to continue delivering programs and services that make a difference in the lives of veterans,

their families, and our communities.

And let's remember something important: **The money doesn't raise itself. The programs don't run themselves. The membership doesn't grow by itself.**

We make it happen.

Every Legionnaire who makes a Buddy Check matters. Every Auxiliary member who volunteers matters. Every SAL member who supports a project matters. Every Rider who participates matters. Every Post that records its accomplishments matters. Every person who sells a raffle ticket matters.

You matter. We don't need everyone to do everything. **But we do need everyone to do something.** That is how we become stronger. That is how we grow. That is how we continue the legacy of those who came before us. And that is how we fulfill the mission entrusted to The American Legion Family.

As your Department Commander, I don't expect one person, one Post, or one organization to solve every challenge we face. But I do believe that if each of us accepts responsibility for doing our part, we can accomplish things we never thought possible. My challenge to you this year is simple:

Don't wait for someone else to be part of the solution. Be part of the solution yourself.

If you see something that needs to be done, step forward. If a fellow member needs help, make the call. If your Post needs volunteers, raise your hand. If there is a veteran who needs assistance, find a way to help. If there is a program that needs support, get involved.

Leadership isn't always about having the title. Sometimes leadership is simply being the person who says, **"I'll help."** That is the kind of Legion Family I want us to be in Wisconsin. One that doesn't ask, **"Why isn't someone doing something?"** Instead, we ask, **"What can I do?"** And then we get to work.

So, as we move forward this year, I ask each of you to look in the mirror and ask yourself one simple question: **"What am I going to do to be part of the solution?"** Don't wait for someone else. Don't assume someone else will take care of it. **Step up. Get involved. Make the call. Volunteer. Report your accomplishments. Support our programs. Bring someone back. Bring someone new in.**

Because when we all do our part, something incredible happens. We become more than Posts, Units, Squadrons, and Departments.

We become one Legion Family. And together, there is no doubt what we can accomplish.

Let's Be Part of the Solution!

Let's Get to Work!

Let's Make a Difference!



President
Amy Luft
2026-2027

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our wheels are up! Members are working hard to carry out our programs and mission. The national membership slogan this year is **BPOTS—Be Part of the Solution**. Renewing your membership and recruiting new members is a great start.

Mission Accomplished... July brought us together in Appleton for our Department Convention. It was exciting to reconnect with old friends, make new ones, and share our many accomplishments. A heartfelt thank you and congratulations to Past Department President Sue Hembrook for an outstanding year of leadership and service.

In August, Wisconsin was well represented at the National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. We celebrated when National President Pam Ray recognized Wisconsin as one of twelve departments to receive the Merit Medallion Award.

Within Central Division, the following programs were awarded:

- Best Department Junior Activities Program
– Christine Johnsen, Chair.
- Best Department Children & Youth Program
– Mary Petrie, Chair.
- Best Overall Department Public Relations Program
– Natalia Genovesi-King, Chair.

Wisconsin had a very special moment when Harvey Funk Unit 494 received the National President's Award for Excellence! Congratulations everyone!

We welcomed our new National President, Coral May Grout of Massachusetts and the ALA Public Spirit Award was presented to Earl Morse, founder of Honor Flight—a particularly meaningful recognition as we begin our own journey of supporting Honor Flight this year.

Flying Toward Our Goal... Our goal this year—supporting Honor Flight—is twofold. First, raise funds for Wisconsin Honor Flight hubs allowing more of our veterans the opportunity for a flight. Your donations should be sent to Headquarters using the Poppy Fund Suggested Donation Form. Or, simply send your check payable to ALA—Dept. of WI with "Honor Flight" noted in the memo line. All donations will be split equally among the Wisconsin Honor Flight hubs.

Secondly, find the veterans who have not yet taken a flight and assist them with applying. Veterans who served honorably, beyond basic training, in any branch of the military, and in any capacity, between December 1941 and June 1975, including active duty, National Guard, and Reserve service, are eligible.

The journey has begun, Wisconsin... **Let's Fly!**



Jeremy Mason
SAL Detachment
Commander

SAL DETACHMENT COMMANDER

As we approach Veterans Day, I find myself reflecting on what this day truly means not just as your Detachment Commander, but as a grandson of two men who gave their service to this nation.

My grandfathers, two men, different branches, different theaters, one shared commitment as to why I wear this emblem. Every Veterans Day, I think of them. I think of the millions of Americans like them who answered the call, asked for nothing in return, and simply came home and got to work. Veterans Day is not just a holiday. For the Sons of The American Legion, it is a reminder of our mission and a call to action. The 109,949 volunteer hours our members contributed last year and the \$4,408,920 in total impact delivered to veterans and communities across Wisconsin that is what Veterans Day looks like in practice for this organization. This is the heart of **Tradition and Traction**. Our tradition is honoring those who served through ceremonies, Color Guards, the flags we present, and the hospitals we visit. Our traction is making sure that honor is backed by real, sustained action. I challenge every squadron this season to find a young man in your community a student, an Eagle Scout, a veteran's grandson and begin the conversation about joining the Sons of the American Legion. That investment is how we ensure the next generation understands what this day means and our mission going forward. To every veteran reading this: thank you. You are the reason why we serve.

For God and Country,

Jeremy L. Mason
Detachment Commander
Sons of The American Legion
Detachment of Wisconsin



Corey Doebrmann
State Director
American Legion
Riders Association

LEGION RIDERS DIRECTOR

It's September already, where did this summer go? I know for many Legion Riders like me it went by on a two-lane road somewhere throughout this great country of ours. Wisconsin Legion Riders participated in the Sojourn250 to escort a flag from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. over the 4th of July weekend as well as the 2026 National Legacy Run that just finished a few weeks ago. This was my first year on the National Legacy Run and it was an experience. Good, bad and otherwise, when you put 240ish motorcycles in one group and travel across 6 or so states. Donations from the run and during the National Convention totaled over \$1M toward the Veterans & Children Foundation.

As I write this article we are one week out from our annual Fall Rider Week at Camp American Legion. Camp will be busting at the seams with Legion Riders who are able to stay at Camp. The week culminates on Saturday morning when Legion Riders from across the state will gather at Bronsted-Searl-Ingman

American Legion Post 93 in Tomahawk. Our purpose is to attract attention as we leave town with a police escort. Our hope is people might ask what we were up to. Our project this year was to refinish the concrete lodge floor. This is co-sponsored with the Wisconsin Legion Auxiliary. Donation amount not known at publish of this article, stay tuned.

Other activities in September were District 7's annual Legacy Ride and District 2's annual support of the West Bend Armory Family Day. These both occur on the second weekend of the month. That weekend also is the 25th anniversary of the events of 9/11. My hope is that many of you will be able to attend ceremonies and remembrances to keep these events in our history & memory

The State Executive Committee will convene on October 11 to discuss business to be brought before the November 7 State Quarterly Membership meeting in Fremont, WI.

If you have any questions about the Wisconsin Legion Riders don't hesitate to contact me: Corey Doebrmann/State Director, cell 262-305-0305 or email at alrawi.director@gmail.com.