



***American Legion Auxiliary  
Celebrating a Century of  
Service***

Special 100th Anniversary  
History Program Facts

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## **ALA Girls Nation**

The first ALA Girls States were recorded as starting as early as 1938 and now is held annually in every state in the nation. The first ALA Girls Nation President elected was George Ann Hicks from a little college town in Oklahoma and her dream was to have ALA Girls Nation be expanded to a Girls World, with girls from around the world attending. George Ann also recognized that would be difficult to do as ALA Girls Nation is structured after the U.S. form of government and other countries have different forms of government.

## **Americanism**

Americanism: a term which became relevant in the late 19th century standing for allegiance to traditions. When the concept of Americanism was first used, nearly half of all Americans had not attended high school and many, being immigrants, did not speak English. Education came to the forefront to teach English, Americanism and Patriotism as well as to understand what our veterans had endured during the war. As the programs of The American Legion Family grew, so did the knowledge and feeling of Americanism and the U.S. Flag became our symbol of freedom and patriotism, known all over the world.

## **Children & Youth**

The ALA's Children and Youth (C&Y) program started out as "Child Welfare" in 1931-1932 and was changed to Children and Youth in 1970-1971. The Youth Hero Award became a part of C&Y in 2002-2003 to recognize someone under 18 years of age who performs a heroic act of bravery. The Good Deed Award was added shortly after to recognize youths who contribute through community service. In 2013-2014, the "Kids of Deployed are Heroes, Too" (KDH2) initiative was started to help military kids feel special and not ignored when their family member was deployed.

## **Community Service**

The national Community Service Committee was established in 1926, during the term of Past National President Adalin Macauley of Wisconsin. In 1934, during the term of Past National President Tess Carlson of Minnesota, a campaign was launched to make "good" books available to more Americans. The Community Service Committee carried out this program.

## **Education**

The American Legion and the Auxiliary have been advocates of Education through the years. Kicking off at its inception in 1919, The American Legion met with representatives of the National Education Association to discuss the state of Education in our country and to create awareness of the problems of illiteracy. The first American Education week was introduced in December of 1921, with The American Legion and the NEA as cosponsors. The week before Thanksgiving has been designated as American Education Week and Auxiliary Members still support this important week.

## **Junior Activities**

In 1934, the following change to the American Legion Auxiliary Constitution was adopted:

To strike out Section 2, Article III, which is the article on Eligibility and substitute the following: "Section 2. There shall be two classes of membership, Senior and Junior. (a) Senior membership shall be the functioning (or active) group composed of members over the age of eighteen years. (b) Junior membership shall consist of that group under the age of eighteen years, whose activities shall be supervised by the senior membership. Upon reaching the age of eighteen years, Junior members shall automatically be admitted into active membership with full privileges. (c) Dues of both classes shall be paid annually."

In the 1936-1937 year, under National President Scar W. Hahn, the Junior Program was launched. Junior membership grew from 29,000 to 40,000 during that following year due to the great work the Juniors were doing.

## **Legislative**

It is as true today as it was when the American Legion Auxiliary was formed. The ALA Legislative program follows the direction of The American Legion Legislative priorities. In 1943, The American Legion presented an Omnibus Bill, which soon became known to history as the "G.I. Bill of Rights." It was signed into law on June 22, 1944 by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Former national commander of The American Legion, Harry W. Colmery, was credited with drawing up the first draft of the GI Bill. You can be certain that the ALA had a part in advocating for this most important document to become law. In addition, we recently had the signing of the Forever GI Bill, also called the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Education Assistant Act of 2017.

Mrs. O. L. Koger was National President in 1962 when National Commander of TAL James E. Powers invited the ALA representatives to attend The American Legion Legislative Conference. The Awareness Assembly was held concurrent with the Legion's annual Washington meetings and in 1984, ALA members conducted their first joint Legislative rally with Legionnaires. American Legion Auxiliary members join annually with The American Legion as they meet with members of Congress and advocate for veteran issues.

In 1980, with the permission of the National Legislative Commission of The American Legion, a national Legislative Council was established. Members from each department were appointed to serve on this council for a term of two years. The council made it possible to reach all the members of Congress within a 24-hour period. This Council was reestablished in 2010 and again revitalized in the 2018-2019 ALA administrative year.

## **Liaison to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation**

In 1952, Dr. Garland D. Murphy, Jr., made a huge donation to benefit children with the forethought and diligent work of The American Legion, along with Dr. Murphy, the Child Welfare Foundation was formed as a 501(c)(3) corporation after approval by the National Executive Committee in 1953.

The Child Welfare Foundation was established in 1954, formed for the betterment and wellbeing of the children in this country. Not all American children grow up inside the comfortable means of a normal childhood, as many children require specialized care to overcome obstacles they were given in life.

More than \$17 million have been awarded to various entities that contribute to the assistance and welfare of children across our nation.

The American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion work hand and hand along with the board of directors of the Child Welfare Foundation and, with the entire Legion Family, we raise and donate money for the comfort and happiness of children. Please consider asking your Units, Departments and unit members to make a donation to this worthwhile program.

### **National Security**

In 1924, Mrs. O.D. Oliphant (New Jersey) was elected National President. Under her leadership, the first Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense was held in Washington, D.C. in February 1925.

While in 1942, Mrs. Alfred J. Mathebat (California) was elected National President. Wartime rationing and travel restrictions continued to affect every American, including Auxiliary members, forcing cancellation of the Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense. National President, Mrs. Rae Ashton (Utah), chaired the first Women's Forum on National Security, in January 1953, in Washington D.C. First Lady Mamie Eisenhower and Mrs. Pat Nixon, wife of the vice president, hosted the forum at the White House.

In 1973, with the still active Vietnam War, two Resolutions were passed by the delegates to the National Convention. One to continue support of the National League of Families and one to declare Memorial Day 1974 as a day to shout to Congress to "Get Our Men Home". In 1981, the American Legion Auxiliary Awareness Assembly held in Washington, D.C., replaces the Women's Forum on National Security.

In 1988, the National Security Committee Chairman, Linda Boone, reported that units and departments efforts raised and donated a total of \$108,400 for National President Alice Galka's special project, the USO.

The National Security Committee has remained continuous with the program. In 2015, the new ALA Military Readiness Action Guide was launched and provided members with a valuable online resource to assist in locating services for active-duty, reservists, and National Guard members.

## **Poppy**

The Remembrance Red Poppy began on Saturday, Nov. 9, 1918, as a memorial to those who sacrificed their lives in WWI, after Ms. Moina Belle Michael read a poem written by Lt. Col. McCrae entitled, "We Shall Not Sleep" (later entitled "In Flanders Field") in the November issue of Ladies Home Journal while she was on duty at the 25th Conference of the Overseas YMCA. Ms. Michael's desk was located in a room called GEMOT, a get-together place where servicemen said farewell to family members. She purchased twenty-five poppies and distributed them to the businessmen in New York attending the conference.

In her autobiography, "The Miracle Flower", she described how the idea came to her after she read Lt. McCrae's poem. Ms. Michael went on to lead a campaign for the adoption of the poppy as the national symbol of sacrifice and on Sept. 27, 1920, the Red Poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family to memorialize the soldiers who served during WWI.

For almost 100 years, 100% of the funds raised through the distribution of poppies by American Legion Auxiliary members has exclusively supported active-duty military, veterans and their families. National Poppy Day is celebrated on the Friday before Memorial Day.

## **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VAR)**

Kris West, PNP 2000-2001, was contacted by John Hampton, a former staff member of The American Legion from the Washington D.C. office and who was later employed by the VA. He was looking for an organization to support The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) that was going to be held in Washington D.C.

Since the very first sponsorship of the NVCAF was a success, she then knew there would need to be money raised each year, if this was going to continue. She decided to approach and enlist the help of the upcoming members of the leadership team (Katherine Morris, Sheri McLaughlin and Elsie Bailey), to ask them to support and commit to continue with the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Kris West wrote a resolution seeking donors and business to support the program. That first year, \$2,500 was donated by Pfizer, \$5,000 by Eli Lilly and \$5,000 from a bank all located in Indianapolis.

As a gift she decided to present a scenic book of Washington D.C. with a note on the inside cover thanking the veteran for his/her service to our country and that it was sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary. Some of the previous MC's for the program were: Ernest Borgnine, Jane Powell and Michael Petersen.

## *Member Support Committees*

- Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF)
- History
- 100th Anniversary
- Constitution & Bylaws
- Leadership
- Membership
- Past Presidents Parley
- Public Relations

## **Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF)**

The Auxiliary Emergency fund was established in 1969 by the National Executive Committee, as National President Marcella Davidson, Department of New Mexico, started this as her special project. It was funded initially through a generous legacy gift from Auxiliary member Helen Colby Small of Burlington, Wisconsin. The AEF is now able to continue to grant assistance through voluntary contributions. The Auxiliary promotes awareness of the fund, disseminates information about the application process, and solicits donations from units, departments, and individual members in order to continue its availability as a resource to help members in certain dire states. A national AEF grant review committee awards AEF grants to applicants based on criteria, membership, and fund availability.

In 1981, the AEF program was expanded to include a fund to help members who needed to support themselves due to unexpected life-changing circumstances such as death or illness of a spouse, divorce, or desertion. Those women found it difficult to obtain employment, and who are without the job skills necessary to obtain adequate employment. Because of this, short-term assistance can now be provided to help our members acquire marketable job skills through schooling or job training when all other sources of financial aid have been exhausted. This was called the Displaced Homemakers Fund. With the continuous generosity of our unit members, the funds allowed a wider use of the benefits to our members and it continues today. The first AEF grant amount was \$150 and today the grant amount is for \$2,400 that our members may be eligible to receive. Since the AEF Program's existence, our members have received an estimated \$5.8 million, with over \$6 million in donations from our generous members.

## **History**

The History Committee was created by resolution at the 1972 National Convention. Originally named the Cavalcade of Memories Committee, it began as a curator committee of three to collect, display and care for artifacts of national interest of the American Legion Auxiliary, donated for the new Cavalcade of Memories Museum located at ALA National Headquarters. The committee name changed to reflect that the Auxiliary's history is contained not only in these artifacts, but also in its photos, books, and governing documents, which require care as well. While the committee is still committed to collecting items of national importance for the museum and archives, the main focus of the committee has evolved to assisting departments and units in the collection and care of their important histories.

## **100th Anniversary**

The ALA national 100th Anniversary Committee was formed to inform our members and communities of who we are, what we do, and why we matter. As we near the 100th anniversary of our organization, we want every member, every department, and every community to let our story of Service Not Self ring out. The American Legion began celebrating its 100th anniversary at the Legion's National Convention in 2018 and will conclude on Veteran's Day 2019; while the Auxiliary will be celebrating our centennial on November 10, 2019 through the National Convention 2020.

## **Constitution & Bylaws**

In 1921, at the Auxiliary's 1st National Convention, the Committee on Permanent Organization created the Constitution Committee, whose job it was to draft a National Constitution. Twenty-six women from twenty-six different departments were named to this committee. By 1927, the committee name changed to Committee on Constitution and ByLaws.

## **Leadership**

Throughout our history, there have been many outstanding leaders who helped make this great organization what it is today. In the early days, our members worked together with The American Legion to launch activities in the fields of rehabilitation, child welfare and Americanism. Over the years, leaders from units in small rural towns to those in large metropolitan cities worked diligently to establish programs that we still have today. The Poppy program, Christmas Gift Shops and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation are still some of the strongest programs we have, thanks in no small part to the great leaders of the past.

It wasn't until the mid-1960's that the Auxiliary considered having a formal leadership committee. In 1964, the Finance Committee approved funding for the first Leadership School. The Leadership Development Conference was held at national headquarters in July of the same year, conducted by three Indiana University professors from the graduate school of business. This project underwent a new phase for the 1966-67 administrative year when a Leadership Training Course Director was named. A series of courses to train Department leaders was instituted. Shortly after, Leadership became a national committee, with a chairman and vice chairman. Leadership training and classes have taken on many forms over the years, including our current Mission Trainings.

As we Celebrate our Auxiliary Centennial, we hope more members will become interested in taking leadership roles so we can continue our legacy of service into our next hundred years.

## **Membership**

Membership has been a focus since the ALA's inception. Within the first year, 1,342 units had been organized. By the first convention in 1921, forty-two states had chartered Departments (with Minnesota being the first) as well as the territory of Hawaii. The first ALA National Membership Chairman was Lillian M. Towne from the Department of Maine, in 1924. Membership saw steady growth until the great depression. However, shortly after the depression ended, membership again grew each year. By 1950, the ALA reached 975,000 members. Granddaughters did not become eligible until 1970. History shows us that each time the ALA served our active military or veterans 'hands on' our membership grew.

## **Past Presidents Parley**

Until 1943, the Past President's Parley was considered a subsidiary organization of the American Legion Auxiliary. It then became a standing committee.

## **Public Relations**

Public relations has always been an important part of the American Legion Auxiliary. From word of mouth to personal phone calls and letters to unit bulletins, public relations has been utilized many ways over these hundred years.

ALA members have been using PR at the grassroots level since its inception in 1919. One example of unit public relations is distributing poppies. As members encouraged the public to remember those who sacrificed for our freedom, it also spread awareness of the ALA. This same concept is true today for each and every program. Each unit can use public relations to increase awareness on programs and events. These PR efforts can get the units powerful positive results.

At the national level, public relations has been used to connect members across the country. In 1927, the national magazine was first printed and named the American Legion Auxiliary Bulletin. Over the decades, the national magazine has changed names and morphed into different sizes, but today Auxiliary magazine is an award-winning quarterly publication. Public Relations tools have changed over this last century and today's ALA media includes Auxiliary magazine, the website [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org), the ALA Blog [www.alaforveterans.wordpress.com](http://www.alaforveterans.wordpress.com), YouTube, and social media pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, and LinkedIn. This also includes more than a dozen Facebook groups. These same opportunities are available for the Units to utilize in today's fast-paced lifestyles. Keeping both members and the public aware of what the unit is doing will result in pride in membership and more involvement.

As we celebrate our 100 years, units should look ahead on how to strengthen their unit for the next century. Putting public relations practices to use at the local level can lead to a strong future of service, growth of both membership and program strength and assure another hundred years of service. We encourage PR teams to work with each unit program chairman as the unit hosts or participates in events.