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*April*



*May*



*2020*

*Department President's Message.....Linda S. Tome*

**“Preserve the Past ~ Focus on the Future”**

Dear ALA Department of NY Members:

I hope this Newsletter finds you doing well! This quarantining and social distancing has been one of the hardest things we've all had to adjust to. Staying home, keeping busy, having kids around and having to educate them as well. Essential workers are mentally and/or physically exhausted as they have to keep working, and worry about everything else. This has been a very scary and stressful time for all of us. But we are ALA strong and we will get through this – with a little help from our friends . . .

And to that . . . are you calling your members who are home alone to check in on them and spread a smile over the phone? How about calling and checking in on some of the veterans from your Post – they could use a phone call and a smiling face at the other end of the phone too. These personal phone calls mean so much!

So much has happened since our last Newsletter in February!

The traveling team of Commander Mike, Detachment Commander Dennis and I finished up on our County Visitations in the 8<sup>th</sup> District! Thank you all for your prayers as we were so lucky with the weather – bitter cold, but no snowstorms!! YAY!! The hospitality in the 8<sup>th</sup> was spectacular – thank you! I attended a BIG 100 year Celebration at the Corning Post, attended Hill Day in Albany, attended a Veterans Creative Arts Festival at the VA in Canandaigua, attended a Roaring 20's Dinner Dance and Silent Auction as a fundraiser for my project and Veterans Outreach Center held in Geneseo and attended the Washington Legislative Conference advocating for our veterans. Everything after that – CANCELLED! I was unable to attend the Oratorical Finals – and the National Commander's visits ended up being cancelled.

So here we are today:

- Department Executive Committee meeting originally scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> postponed! We will be holding a virtual Zoom meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> and will be reporting out a lot of additional information to you shortly after our meeting
- Department Homecoming Celebration in May – cancelled
- American Legion Family College in June – cancelled
- ALA Empire Girls State at SUNY Brockport in June/July – cancelled but an online version is being worked on – more information to follow
- Department Convention in Binghamton in July – cancelled
- National Convention in Louisville, KY in August – cancelled

Even with all these cancellations, I am excited to report that our membership numbers are doing great!! I'm so proud of each of our units for the great work that they've been doing! Thank you -- as of April 15<sup>th</sup>, we were at 92.31%! THAT'S AMAZING!! Keep up the good work! Continue to make those phone calls to your unpaid

members while you are home!! I'm really looking forward to that 100% number!! Make those phone calls – reach out!!! A BIG THANK YOU to Department Secretary Barbara and Caitlin for keeping the office rolling and keeping our membership numbers up to date!

Now is the time to get caught up with some of those activities that you may have forgotten to report previously!! Please complete the form in the Plan of Action to report all your great activities that happened along with volunteer hours, donations, etc. Unit Committee Chairmen still need to send in your Unit committee reports to your respective County Committee Chairman by May 1st and County Committee Chairmen still need to send in the compiled County Committee reports to the Department Committee Chairman by May 10th. The Department still needs to send in the Annual Impact Report for this administrative year to National and we need everyone to help us to show National how impactful this GREAT Department of New York really is!!

Until I see you again, I hope you take this time to reflect and rejuvenate. I wish you all good health -- stay safe - social distance -- wash your hands -- wear your masks -- STAY HOME!! We will get through this - we are one day closer to the end of all this!

In service ~ not self,  
Linda

*“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.”* This popular quote has been widely shared with slightly different variations but they all contain the same blaring truth—there are countless challenges surrounding ourselves and our communities. Even in the midst of a global pandemic like the current COVID-19 outbreak, each individual and each family has their own set of personal struggles and concerns (related to the virus, or not). But there is courage and hope to be found in every obstacle that we face. Be kind!

*Membership.....Mary E. Farley, Chairperson*

I hope all our members are safe during these difficult times.

Membership is still coming in nicely; as of April 1st, we are at 91.62%, only 3,260 short of Department Goal!! Keep going we can do this for Linda. We have over 120 Units with 100% membership, and 3 Counties have reached 100%.

Keep in touch with our members, have a weekly phone chain, or maybe you could have a Zoom meeting.

We have had some award winners. The following awards have been achieved:

**To the Unit who reaches 100%  
Milestone #4 100% by March 1, 2020 (5 -\$50 Drawings)**

Unit 1371 Bronx	Unit 0021 Schenectady	Unit 0942 Webster
Unit 1780 Buffalo	Unit 0406 Boonville	

**Milestone #5 100% by April 1, 2020 (5 -\$25 Drawings)**

Unit 0327 Westfield	Unit 0589 Rensselaerville	Unit 0183 Sidney
Unit 0432 Port Jefferson Station	Unit 0301 Queens Village	

**To the County reaching 100%  
Milestone #4 100% by March 1, 2020 (1 - \$50 Drawing)**  
Hamilton County

**Milestone #5 100% by April 1, 2020 (1 - \$25 Drawing)**  
Columbia County

Congratulations to all our winners!

We are all working toward our goal so keep up the good work. Remember we are all responsible for membership. Stay safe, stay strong, stay healthy. Reminder we have one more reporting date, our last one for the year.

*Department President's Project- "Stop Soldier Suicide".....Nancy J. Babis*

Department President's Project: Stop Soldiers Suicide continues to receive calls daily from Veterans here in NY and across the Nation. I'm pleased to announce that in response to the rising need, our wonderful Department was able to release \$65,175.00 raised so far to Stop Soldiers Suicide. I want to remind you that our work isn't done yet though. We are still taking donations for the project. One way to contribute is to support the Sons of the American Legion with their walk-a-thon. Even though the official date of the walk will have passed by the time you receive this Newsletter, you can still support the program. Remember you will be helping Soldiers Suicide along with the SAL Commander's project and the Legion Riders projects. Send donations payable to Detachment of NY Sons to Department of NY AL 1304 Park Blvd, Troy NY 12180

*VA&R / Service to Veterans.....Nancy J. Babis, Chairperson*

Thank you all for your reports. I'm honored to read all the events, donations and acts of kindness extended to our Veterans. There is one more reporting period for this year. Please remember to send all your hours volunteered to serve our Veterans. If you've made fabric masks for our healthcare workers in VA hospitals this can be reported under VA. If active duty members will receive your masks then it is reported under National Security, If general healthcare or community members will receive them then it is reported under Community Service. I will be compiling the VA&R impact numbers and reporting them to National. These are then reported to Congress. Let's show them some New York spirit!

Eastern Division Chairman Paulette Caron has sent out some informative emails. Here are a couple of tidbits from them: Veterans and family members who have VBA overpayment and are affected by Covid-19 have a VBA benefit debt and need temporary financial relief please contact the DMC at 1-800-827-0648 to request assistance.

Check out <https://join.togetherweserved.com/va>. It's a website that unites military families together during this "Pause" in our lives. One or more of your members may be in need of emotional or physical support and this may be the way they reach out for it.

*Children and Youth.....Karen St. Hilaire, Chairperson*

These are stressful times for our country. Children are being home schooled and cannot play with friends. They don't really understand what this germ spreading virus is. What they do understand is the adults in their life are worried and stressed. Children need our support now more than ever. We must also remember that some children are abused at home, or do not have enough food to eat. We as ALA members need to find ways to decrease the anxiety and help feed children in or communities, while maintaining social distancing.

So how do we do this? Many schools and restaurants Contact school board, restaurants or community services in your community, ask if they need volunteers or donations.

My community posted a face book message to organize a scavenger hunt. Neighbors displayed items in their front window, like American flag, Christmas decorations, shamrocks, butterflies and other items. A list of items was posted on face book. On the designated day, families could either walk or drive through neighborhood and see how many items they could find, while still practicing social distancing. Be creative in your community.

I have also seen stories of children (under age 18) who are using 3D printers to make ear clips to relieve pressure on the ears of healthcare workers, who have to wear facemasks all day. I have also seen children who are using sidewalk chalk to draw inspirational messages of love and hope, on the driveways of neighbors. Remember you can submit these children for Youth Hero / Good Deed Awards. Guidelines and applications can be found on ALA Department website or in the Plan of Action.

Be Safe.

*100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ALA.....Colleen McDaniels, Chairperson*

I know that I have received communications of sadness that centennial events are being postponed due to the unprecedented time we find ourselves in due to this Pandemic. Don't let this pandemic derail your celebrations, when the time comes for us to come together again, celebrate your passion for our great organization even more. Let the thoughts of those celebrations to come help get us through.

I urge you to remember that The U.S. flag has been a part of the ALA for 100 years and will continue to be for the next 100. There are so many events to promote the American flag, and all could be incorporated into an ALA 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. As we head toward warmer weather, Memorial Day, and Flag Day, let's light up America at our posts by displaying our flags. Don't forget to decorate your home, participate in parades, and distribute flags. Let's keep our American flag first and continue to do what we do: Support the American Legion Family.

Per the National ALA Organization, The 100<sup>th</sup> Year celebrations will continue through 2021. We need to continue the goals of the Centennial Strategic Plan, celebrate our programs, and the 5 major goals. Just to refresh everyone's minds those goals are to build brand loyalty, strengthen our Department, Districts, Counties, and Units, develop leadership at all levels, create an internal culture of goodwill, and enhance membership strength. If we remember to focus on service with 2020 vision as we celebrate this milestone and ring in a new century of supporting the ALA mission – supporting our veterans, military, and their families – truly living our promise of Service Not Self.

*Americanism.....Terri D. Wallace, Chairperson*

The ALA Americanism Program is one of ten Mission Outreach Programs with the goal to promote patriotic education among youth, adults and communities. In our last three newsletters, we highlighted how to support the ALA Americanism Program in your community and unit through the Americanism Essay Contest, Flag Etiquette and Star-Spangled Kids, along with supporting The American Legion Americanism programs like The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest, Junior Shooting Sports and American Legion Baseball. *Be sure to include your support and participation in your May Americanism Reports if it wasn't included in the last reporting period! Thank you for supporting Americanism within our American Legion Family!*

Our judges enjoyed reading your Unit submissions for the Americanism Essay Contest. We were pleased to forward an essay for each of the six classes to the National Division level. Overall participation was low from the Units. Start to look ahead on how your Unit can get involved in this wonderful Americanism Essay Contest in 2020-2021.

Reminder that Units report to County Chairman and the County Chairman should compile the Unit Reports into one County Report to be forwarded to the Department Chairman. I receive many Americanism Reports with check marks and blank fields. We are looking for numbers and totals that assist us in completing our year-end Impact Reports. Thank you for all your narratives of wonderful activities at your Units and Counties!

*American Legion Family College.....Debby Herrmann, Liaison*

This would have been the fourth year for the Department of NY American Legion Family College but I am sad to report that due to these crazy times it was decided to cancel this year's session. I want to take this time to personally thank our Auxiliary Instructors Terri Wallace, Kathy Cubit, Diane Craig, Nancy Babis, Debbie Kryczkowski Morris for the hard work they had done in preparation for the 2020 session. I would like to also thank President Linda for appointing me as the Auxiliary Liaison, it was a pleasure to serve.

We will get through this together and be stronger for it. There was to be several changes in the 2020 session with more to follow. We will take this time to continue to build a true Legion Family college and make the 2021 session better than ever. For any applications sent in the fee will be if not already returned.

I wish everyone good health as we go with these next couple of months. God Bless you and God Bless America.

*Auxiliary Emergency Fund.....Carol Flaherty, Chairperson*

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is a program about "Members helping members." The donations come from the generous contribution of our individual members, units and counties to help our auxiliary members who have fallen on hard times as a result of some unforeseen crisis such as the current "State of Emergency" that our Country is in right now with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We all must increase awareness of how The Auxiliary Emergency Fund can help our members in need and continue to encourage all Auxiliary members to help increase this year's donations for this worthwhile program.

*Chaplain.....Susan Britton, Chairperson*

This has certainly been a time for questions and "what if's" recently. We are facing a health crisis that has taken us all by surprise and affected our lives in ways we might never have thought possible. With a new sense of "time on our hands", WHAT A WONDERFUL TIME TO BRAINSTORM AND COME UP WITH NEW IDEAS!! Time has given us the gift of coming up with ways to move forward stronger than ever as soon as we are able. Jot down ideas that will allow us to regroup and restructure for our return to normal, whatever that might be.

There are so many things we CAN do from home right now though. Encourage your unit members to call other elderly members/friends who might be in need of supplies or just a little bit of support. So many are nervous and unsure of what to do and a calming voice can make all the difference to so many. **BE THAT VOICE** to anyone who needs it. Your strength will rub off and help to ease the weariness of our more senior members.

As Unit Chaplain, some members might be thankful for a call from you and just a simple prepared prayer with them as they continue to travel this journey. As the spiritual leader of your Unit, you can make a difference that might be the saving grace for someone. This can be a powerful tool to reach out and be "spiritually" with others right now. I recently shared the following prayer with the membership across the Department:

**"Heavenly Father, we ask thy blessings today on all those affected by this crippling virus. We ask that you support the weary and the tired as they fight to stay strong and perform their essential jobs so that others can remain safe and cared for. We feel your loving arms around us and we pray for the strength to weather this storm. Help us to reach out to others and wipe away their loneliness, and help us to remember that "beyond every cloud, there is always a rainbow". Please watch over us during these trying times. Our love and compassion for others will pull us through and we shall emerge stronger than ever. Amen"**

Please feel free to use this prayer wherever and with whomever you would like.

**Attention ALL Members:** Remember to share a prayer or devotional thought with me for Department President Linda's Prayer Book. What a special opportunity to note the occasion of our 100th Anniversary celebration or a special prayer that reflects these trying times we are all facing together.

Please know that you are all in my daily prayers as we travel this journey together.....let prayer be a daily part of your life as we pray for all those on the front lines as well as those who are dealing with this pandemic. I look forward to sharing with you the glory of the "rainbow" at the end of this.

**GOD BLESS!**

*Community Service.....Desiree Smith-McPherson, Chairperson*

I would like to thank all of our districts, counties, and units for the outstanding community services. The reports I have received were very informative with the service they're providing with veterans and throughout and the communities. Due to the COVID-19 we are all in quarantine. We are unable to have direct contact with each other; we now have to practice social distancing. Community service can still be done in many other ways besides going out and being hands on, show kindness throughout this pandemic. We are still looking forward to receiving all final reports in May 2020. Please continue to practice social distancing and COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions.

*Constitution and Bylaws/Resolutions.....Sally Johnston, Chairperson*

I have received many phone calls and emails regarding the voting process for election of Officers for the 2020-2021 administrative year. In Bulletin 4, I gave instructions and advice on the topic of voting and elections, based on what was “current” at that time.

However, since that time there have been many directives passed down from our National Organization that our Department must comply with. Therefore, Districts, Counties and Units must follow suite.

At this time, I cannot give you an affirmative answer to all of the questions being asked. I can tell you that as a result of the pandemic everyone must adjust accordingly. The Department will be holding its electronic Executive Committee meeting on April 25, 2020 and I am hopeful of reaching a solution to the many questions.

A Bulletin will be sent out immediately following the Department Executive Committee meeting with updates and how to handle the 2020-2021 elections. However, in the meantime “hold tight”. We need to make sure that the advice we are giving you is correct and legal.

It’s important now, more than ever that we be patient and kind to everyone, as we continue to “Volunteer” and support our Department President in the decisions she “must” make.

The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be remembered as a time of “change”. We deal with problems every day. It’s how we handle those problems that will keep us strong as we continue to “**Preserve the Past and Focus on the Future**”, volunteering when and where we can, abiding by the guidelines of our State Governor.

**RESOLUTIONS**

*Education.....Cynthia Babb, Chairperson*

During this COVID-19 pandemic, a group of unsung heroes are our teachers. Many are teaching remotely for the first time. Teachers are working hard to reach today’s students from remote locations. I know one special education teacher who was giving parents math lessons so that they could better help their special needs child.

Do you know that the week of May 4-8 is Teacher Appreciation Week? Here are just some of the suggestions from the bulletin on the National ALA website of how to recognize teachers in this era of virtual teaching:

- Post a thank-you video on YouTube
- Make thank-you cards and email pictures of them
- Use sidewalk chalk to draw thank-you notes, take pictures, and email
- Host a virtual spirit week — ask parents to send pictures of their kids wearing spirit wear
- Purchase gift certificates for takeout restaurants online

Thank you to all the teachers, parents, and guardians out there that are trying to help today’s children continue to learn and grow during this time

*ALA Empire Girls State.....Jennifer Farley, Chairperson*  
*.....Members Wendy Privitera, Kris Dziduch*

**ALA Empire Girls State Program Update for ALA members April 15, 2020**

On April 8, 2020, President Linda Tome announced that the ALA Empire Girls State 2020 session normally held at SUNY Brockport is being transitioned to a virtual event. We would like to share some additional details.

The decision to cancel the in person, traditional ALA Empire Girls State week was based on several factors. The health and safety of our delegates and our staff is our priority. In addition, we just received word during the

week that the SUNY Brockport campus will not be open to host our program in June-July of this year.

We have NOT cancelled the ALA EGS Program completely! The ALA EGS Board of Directors met on April 13, 2020 and approved the implementation of an online program. The ALA EGS staff is committed to offering an online experience for the delegates who have been selected and have completed the application process. This is a groundbreaking innovation for sure, and we are excited to move forward with this plan!

We have compiled many of your questions and concerns. Please read the following information carefully. If you still have questions, please reach out to the three of us.

### **What will it look like?**

We will be offering a wide variety of resources and on-line experiences that delegates can access AS THEY CHOOSE. We will include topics such as:

- Information about the American Legion Auxiliary
- The President's service Program
- Americanism
- The Political Process
- Leadership
- The Empire Girls State Program and History
- ALA membership and the ALA EGS Alumni Program
- Guest speaker series

### **Who will participate?**

The registration process is well underway, and continues until **APRIL 30, 2020** with deadline extension due to the COVID 19 situation. We plan to fill the program roster following the regular registration process, and will be contacting units to inform them of any alternates who will be moved into delegate slots.

IF YOU HAVE NOT MAILED YOUR COUNTY TRANSMITTAL FORMS YET, PLEASE DO SO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THERE IS NO NEED TO SEND PAYMENT FROM NOW ON (see below). If you are missing some of the forms from delegates, that is ok. Do NOT hold your paperwork-send what you have. The key piece is that they have filled out the online application, we can cross check it with your transmittal lists, and we have their contact information.

### **What will it cost?**

**\*\*THERE WILL BE NO CHARGE FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE ONLINE PROGRAM\*\***

ALL checks that have been received for tuition and application fees will be returned. Please allow us time to void and return checks while following the recommendations of the executive and finance committees (to be in compliance with audit requirements).

### **When will the Virtual Session take place?**

The exact dates will be announced. It is our vision that the virtual materials will be ready for the week of June 28-July 4, 2020. We may also extend access to the online materials longer than the originally scheduled week to allow more flexibility to our delegates. Please note: there are multiple factors that may affect these dates.

### **How will delegates participate?**

- ★ We are working on the exact model, but anticipate that there will be a great deal of flexibility in how delegates will interact with the online platform. We can assure you it will not be intense or stressful to delegates. We understand the toll remote education has had on them as students and will be proactive in making this an enjoyable, relaxed experience.
- ★ There will NOT be required time frames. Instead, delegates will work through materials and resources **at their own pace and in the order in which they choose**
- ★ There are NO REQUIRED hours or assignments, we are just offering an opportunity to join the online platform and view some or all of the resources, materials and events.
- ★ Safety and privacy are paramount and the ALA EGS program already has Cyber Security Insurance in place.

**Will delegates receive a Certificate of Completion?**

Being selected for ALA Empire Girls State is a prestigious honor and allows delegates to cite participation on college and scholarship applications, applications to military academies, and on resumes. This is why completing registration and having a roster is so important. **Delegates on the official roster will be issued a certificate of completion.**

**What do I need to do next?**

The ALA EGS Staff will contact the delegates directly. You do not need to. We will share with them the information we have shared with you, excluding items that do not pertain to them. This will ensure that ALL delegates receive the SAME information at the SAME time and help avoid confusion or misinformation.

If delegates contact you with questions:

- ★ Please have them check [empiregirlsstate.org](http://empiregirlsstate.org) often for the latest updates
- ★ Check the email account they provided on their application for correspondence from the ALA EGS Staff
- ★ Let them know you are proud of them, that the 2020 session has been transitioned to an online format for their safety, and that they will receive information directly from the ALA EGS program soon, if they have not already.

We understand the disappointment of delegates who will not attend the program in person, but we are confident that the online program option will fill the gap! We are excited by some of the things we already have in the works! 2020 might not look like the other years in our ALA EGS history...but it will be unique and wonderful! We are anxious to “meet” the 2020 delegates and make memories!

Information on accessing the virtual session will be emailed directly to the delegates once the roster is finalized and the online platform is ready. Hang in there! Stay safe!

*Finance Committee/Audit.....Cathleen MacInnes, Chairperson  
.....Linda Moseman and Violet Brosart Members*

This month, our focus is on audits. Books for both Units and Counties should be audited no less often than once a year. Some Unit Bylaws specify more frequent audits – if yours is one of those Units, follow the timeline set by your Bylaws.

How to begin? What do you need?

- The Audit Committee – typically appointed by the President, unless your Bylaws specify a different method, and generally an odd number of individuals (usually 3)
- A copy of your Unit/County budget
- A copy of your Unit/County minutes for all meetings since the previous audit date
- The Treasurer’s books
- The checkbook(s)
- Bank statements for all accounts – checking, savings, CDs, or other investments

The Audit Committee should meet with the Treasurer to confirm the following:

- At least two funds are recorded - Poppy funds and General funds – and the income and expenses for each fund are properly accounted for
- Income has been received from all budgeted sources – you want to note significant discrepancies in income, both over and under budgeted amounts
- All mandatory fees and budgeted expenses have been paid as budgeted – or, if not, an explanation as to why
- Funds have been spent as specified in any motions for expenditure of funds other than those budgeted – any funds not yet expended
- Bank statements have been reconciled and accurately reflect the activity and balance(s) in the checkbook(s) and other bank/investment statements



The Audit Committee should report to the Unit. If there are no issues, your report may simply state that the books have been audited and found to be in order.

The current pandemic guidelines for personal safety may make an in-person Audit Committee not practical until sometime past the “usual” time. The audit of your books for the 2019-2020 year should be completed on or before 12/31/2020 – hopefully, we will all be back to the new “normal” well before then!

If you have questions about the audit or the processes, please don’t hesitate to contact any one of us on the Finance/Audit Committee – we are here to help!

*Historian.....LouCinda LaFountain, Chairperson*

Hello everyone, I hope this reaches you all in good health.

Our history has sort of been put on hold because of this, but I still hear of people getting out and checking on our Veterans in homes and facilities. That is great news. I know being restricted is making it hard to get into the hospitals to visit our men and women, but you do what you can. I did not receive any pictures of President Linda and her visitations; I would really love to receive them so I can fix her album of her year.

GREAT WORK!!!

*Junior Activities.....Diane Butler, Chairperson*



Juniors are tech savvy, which means they are able to and have the knowledge of how to hold virtual meetings. Even though Juniors are at home with limited activities, they are able to continue to make a difference! They can write little “thank you” or “thinking of you” notes to Essential workers who are potentially exposed to Coronavirus every day such as the one shown in the picture.

This is also a good time for Juniors to make cards to cheer up our Veterans who are residing in nursing homes and live in our communities.

Juniors may also spend time making cards for deployed military or troops who are returning home. Be creative with ideas and projects!

Junior Activities Quarterly report is due May 1<sup>st</sup> to your County Chairman. Take a few minutes to highlight all the great work YOUR Juniors are doing, especially during this Pandemic! Stay Healthy and Stay Safe!

*Leadership.....Amy McEathron, Chairperson*

Welcome spring and welcome sunshine. I know we are all under quarantine either working from home or just stuck to be home. Take this time to make special memories during a time of life that we will never forget.

I want to thank EVERYONE for supporting Mid-Winter. We had the best turn out in years. However, with having over 400 members in attendance we received less than 80 evaluations returned. This information is very important for me to share with the next administration based on your suggestions and opinions. If you didn’t submit the evaluation at mid-winter, I would greatly appreciate you looking at your midwinter program book, last page and please either email or mail it to me. This will be a big help for the future mid-winter conferences.

What a great time to take the leadership courses that National offer. There is a lot of information that is being updated. Take the time to review and pass this on to all members so they may utilize those tools. <https://www.alaforveterans.org/Members/Leadership/> If you go to this link, you will see the courses and

information to click on. Feel free to contact me anytime via email or phone. My information is on the department website.

Have you joined the ALA Leadership Facebook Group? Information is always posted on that page.

Quotes from Kelly Merbler (speaker at Mid-Winter)

If you are falling short, here are three tips to share that she has adopted:

1. Give yourself grace
2. You don't have to do it alone
3. Be Nimble

Getting things done versus perfect should be a strategy

***When was the last time you tried something for the first time?***

With this epidemic I know we are all doing things differently and for the first time. We are Americans; we will ALL get through this together and be stronger in the end.

*Legislative.....Maureen Morgan, Chairperson*

As this article is being written we are told to stay home due to the COVID-19. Everyone is glued to the TV and listening to the reports from the Governor and when this is all going to end.

Schools have been closed and students are learning from home. Parents are working from home. Everyone is keeping 6 feet apart from each other. We are in a new way of life. With that being said, the only thing that we can do is keep busy and try to stay safe and strong for those around us.

As for Legislative report goes. I was in DC in March and went to the National Security meeting and listened to a discussion on what Homeland Security is doing to help protect our Country from threats. It was an interesting discussion, but as I was sitting listening to the discussion I started thinking about what was being said about the COVID-19 in the media and how it was starting to spread in our Country and there was no answers on how it came to be in our country or how to deal with it.

The next meeting was the National Cemetery. There is a VA Grant to help clean up and take care of the Cemeteries in the Country and the VA will be adding 10 new Cemeteries in 2020.

The ALA Legislative members got to hear the National Commander speak before Congress on Wednesday morning regarding what bills the American Legion would like the representatives and congress to support.

Please stay safe and healthy hopefully we get to see each other soon.

*National Executive Committeeperson.....Deborah Morris*

*National Security.....Peggy M. Martin, Chairperson*

As the 2019-2020 year winds down, we are faced with many firsts for the American Legion Auxiliary as is our State and Country. As a whole the ALA had been busy supporting our military and their families before the COVID-19 hit us full force. Welcome home ceremonies can still be held with distancing, making signs for fences and windows to let our military know we appreciate them and thank them for their service to our great Country. We can still send packages to our troops if we have a drop off point for Items to be mailed and designate one person to prepare and mail these packages. As well as using the same method for making hero packs for the kids. In this time of need, family to family support can be very helpful and sometimes a welcome to a new family in the area. Phone call, email or snail mails a card, letting others know we are thinking about them and checking on them.

Many new ways to hold meetings are being tried by our Auxiliary. Thank goodness for the computers and internet so we can Skype, Zoom, FaceTime and many others I'm not aware of to still be face to face with our members and family, while still being quarantined.

With all this in mind, a huge "thank you" to our Military and their families, and remember that April is National Military Appreciation Month. Stay safe and healthy, and thank you for all you do for our military and their families.

*Parliamentarian.....Patricia Hennessy, Chairperson*

We are definitely in unfamiliar circumstances at this time being unable to hold our Unit, County, District, State and National meetings/Conventions. As sad as we are not being able to be together in the same room, we are all staying safe.

I certainly am not doing any Spring Cleaning! If you too have your laptops, iPads phones keeping in touch with family, friends and the world, why not take this time to review parliamentary procedures. You can Google the information.

Whatever you are doing, please be safe til we can meet together!

*Past Presidents' Parley.....Kimberly Quick, Chairperson*

The main responsibility of the Parley was for Past Presidents to promote and mentor leaders at all levels. Several changes to the National Standing Rules at the 2019 National Convention in Indianapolis were approved on the convention floor.

Next year, please continue to work within your Units and Counties supporting our female veterans, raising money for Medical Scholarships, and mentoring of new members and new leaders.

Thank you to all the Past Presidents for your hard work and support this year.

*Poppy.....Sophie Liberatore, Chairperson*

I'm hoping this newsletter finds you all healthy! It's hard to be excited about spring with the state our County has been in the last few months. Let's all pray that it will recover and be stronger than ever!

The Poppy Supervisors have been so busy getting the orders filled as fast as they can! Many Counties have had "Poppy making days" and this has helped tremendously! I personally have not met each Supervisor; however, I have met and worked several times with Pat Konopka. What a wonderful person she is and so very helpful. (As I'm sure the rest of the team has been!)

After I received the many reports from the Units and Counties, I am still finding many are using the monies raised for ways that are not covered under the five listed below.

**Poppy Funds CAN be used for:**

- For the rehabilitation of Veterans honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces after April 6, 1917.
- For the welfare of the families of Veterans of the above name period.
- For the rehabilitation of hospitalized military service personnel returning home and awaiting discharge who require treatment in service hospitals.
- For the welfare of veterans, active military personnel, and the families of Veterans and active military personnel of the above-name period where financial and medical need is evident.
- For the purchase of poppy kits and supplies used to make symbolic poppies and poppy items that will be distributed for donations to the Poppy fund.

**Please be sure to let your Units know that these are the only ways they should be using the funds for.**

Remember, Poppy Posters are to be received by May 1<sup>st</sup>, to be considered for judging. Do to the Covid-19, we request the Posters sent to me via email. Be sure to take a picture of the front AND back of each one. Also, please place a ruler by the poster so that we can see it is the correct size.

National Poppy Day is May 24<sup>th</sup> many have requested to have a Proclamation Day from their local officials.

What a wonderful way to get the Poppy story out for all to see!

PLEASE have your reports for May 1<sup>st</sup> to the County chairman so they can have all the many hours collected to send to the Department chairmen.  
Be safe, be happy and God Bless!

*Public Relations.....Carrie Davenport, Chairperson*

COVID-19, otherwise known as Coronavirus, has been wreaking havoc across the globe, with countless people practicing “social distancing” and staying home as much as possible. How does this affect your ALA Public Relations? Let’s take a look at what you need to know and do during this difficult time.

Perhaps you’ve personally seen the effects of COVID-19 in your day-to-day business. Maybe you’ve had to cancel or postpone important events, started working from home, or implemented daily cleaning routines.

But what about when it comes to your Public Relations?

There’s more that you need to know beyond how to stop the spread of the actual disease. As an organization, we need to know how to properly address this issue within our individual strategies. We have to recognize that our PR and marketing strategies *can’t* continue, business as usual, during this time. Why?

Because people are panicking. Their attention is not on the community events or membership benefits. And if you try to interrupt their thought process with such messages, it will no doubt fall on deaf ears or even be met with a level of disdain. So what can you do?

There are some things that you should avoid during this time, as well as some things that you can focus on until this pandemic comes to an end. These ideas are designed to help you weather the storm of this pandemic and come out the other side stronger than ever. Let’s consider a few of these key ways to adapt your public relations approach.

### **1. Work the ALA Programs from Home Whenever Possible**

Be sensible and work from home if you can during this time. Not only does this keep you safe, but it also keeps the ALA out of the headlines as a possible cause of virus spread. There are many components of the ALA that you can work from the confines of your home through phone calls, emails, and social media use.

### **2. Stay Relevant to Your Audience**

People are panicking right now. It’s no time to focus on your organization’s needs, but instead the needs of the members. Look for ways to put your members in first place and address their needs and concerns. For example, promote the **Auxiliary Emergency Fund** to your members who might be struggling. You might produce content that addresses ways that your audience can save money during this time. Think ALA benefits or resources. Remind members if using Amazon to use the Amazon Smile option to provide funds to the ALA Foundation.

### **3. Cease All Non-Essential Press Releases and Launches**

Press releases and launches are a key part of any PR strategy. But the fact is that now is not the time for your latest announcement —unless it simply can’t wait. The reality is that nobody cares right now. Everybody is in a state of panic and has time only to focus on the current situation, not your organization’s news. So put off that press release until things calm down.

### **4. Work on Back Burner Projects**

We all have those projects that we put on the back burner, waiting for when things slow down. Well, now is your time to dig out those projects and give them your full attention. This could include updating your brand messaging, creating and publishing a new unit website, updating your history books, developing a video or podcast that highlights the work of the ALA, designing a new shirt, banner or other branded item, or even

developing a strategy that highlights the goals and initiatives for when the chaos of the world slows down.

### 5. Focus on Online Services

In-person events and conferences are off-limits in many areas at the moment. So look for ways to do things

online to support your members and utilize these platforms for Public Relations. Promote the ALA Academy or many develop a course that could serve as a new member training that is specific to your unit. Create webinars that people can log into from the comfort of their home that highlight the work you do in your community. Do a live video on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram that will engage your audience. Take time to produce regular videos that will benefit your strategy even after the panic dissipates.

### 6. Build Up Your Social Media

Social media is going to be a mainstay for everybody staying at home during this time. And it's something that you can work on and improve in the background. Make sure all of your information is up to date. Look for ways to spice up your social profiles and feeds. Upload pertinent content that keeps you and your brand top of mind, but also speaks to the needs of your audience.

### 7. Look for Ways to Help

It's not all about your organization. Look outward for ways to help your community, including your employees and members who have been affected by this virus. **Have I mentioned the Auxiliary Emergency Fund?** Whether it's with resources, technology, or skill-set, ask yourself what you can do to help during this stressful time. This will without the need of an article or publicity will instantly resonate with your members and the community when they begin to get involved in the community following this pandemic.

### 8. Never let a Crisis Go Unused.

There is a saying in public relations that rings true especially right now- never let a crisis go unused. It may initially sound and feel awful to think this way, however take a minute and really think about it. If our organization doesn't utilize the crisis to support our members, then they won't see the value in rejoining. If the community doesn't see the way you are helping to fill needs as they come up, then they won't think of investing in you or your American Legion Family when our communities open back up. So while it might not feel completely normal to think this way, remember if you don't capitalize on this crisis another organization in your community will.

*Warrior Family Assistance.....Ann Greaney, Chairperson*

The final reporting period for counties to report their activities on behalf of the Warriors Family Assistance Program is May 10<sup>th</sup>. Many counties have indicated "no activity" on previous reports. Activities such as distributing WFA brochures or information to your Post, VA facilities and community events are reportable along with your volunteer hours. Think back to September, review the WFA report form, and now is the time to report the work you have not previously reported on this committee. If you have had contact with a veteran or active service member to explain WFA criteria or supplied an application, indicate this information on the report form and your hours interacting with them. If you have discussed the WFA program with your Unit or county members at a meeting, report it.

As a reminder, WFA grants are available to currently deployed military and their families and those honorably discharged within the last ten years. National Guard and Reservists who have been federally deployed within the past ten years are also eligible. A non-payable grant of up to \$1200 is available for Maintenance, Medical or Employment requests. A review panel of three members at the County or District level is required to interview the applicant.

As we are winding down this 2019-2020 administrative year, discuss making a donation with your Unit so that a fund balance will be carried forward and used for future grants. It is not too late to donate and send a check to the Department Office earmarked "WFA". The American Legion Auxiliary members are always there to

support our soldiers, veterans and their families when they need us most. Thank you all for your support of the WFA Program. You are the key to its success.

*Message from the Department Office.....Barbara and Caitlin*

- **White cards will be sent to units by early May to the current Unit President. It is imperative that this white card is returned to the Department Office no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 so that we have the correct person(s) on record for the Unit President, Membership Chairman and Unit Treasurer. If we do not receive this card, we will not be able to mail the 2021 membership cards, and this will also affect checks that need to be sent to the Unit Treasurer.**
- **Due to the Annual Department Convention being cancelled this year, the 2021 Membership cards will be mailed to the unit President of record in July after we receive them from National Headquarters. Units can start collecting 2021 dues in June of 2020. Please do not hold onto dues.**
- **Membership updates** - As a reminder, membership totals are updated each week by the Department Office on Wednesday. If you need up-to-date membership totals, you can call the Department office for up to date numbers for your unit and/or county meeting.
- **Members** – if you move, change any contact information, phone numbers, emails, etc., please send the change to the Department office so your information is updated in a timely manner. This also pertains to unit President, Membership Chair and Unit Treasurer

**Please DO NOT hold membership**, send it in promptly so it can be processed in a timely manner.

- **Newsletters** – E-mail copies of the Newsletter are available to any member wanting a free copy. Please e-mail anyone of us at the office with a valid email and we will get you on the list. The Newsletter is emailed to all Unit/County Presidents, Unit/County Membership Chairmen and Unit/County Treasurers if we have your email address. If you do not have email and someone in the unit/county would like to receive it on your behalf, please let us know so we can add them to the list. Also, County Committee Chairmen receive the newsletter via email. If you do not have anyone in the unit and/or county with an email to receive the email newsletter for you please contact the Department Secretary for a copy.
- Mailed copies of the Newsletters are available at the cost of \$15.00 per year.
- **The Department office is here to help you and we are only a phone call or email away!**

**American Legion Auxiliary, Department of New York, Inc.  
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Castleton-On-Hudson, NY 12033  
Important dates to remember!!!**



**American Legion Auxiliary  
100 Years of Service Not Self**

