

American Legion Auxiliary Department of New York



**BOOK OF REPORTS
2022-2023**

**Department President
Nancy J. Babis**

MEMBERSHIP
Karen St. Hilaire – Department 1st Vice President

The Membership Committee is one of the most important committees of the American Legion Auxiliary. Our foundation is based on the number of members supporting us. No organization can survive without the support of their members. While the Department of New York started out at a slow pace the membership team has worked very hard to recruit, retain and renew. As I am preparing this report one hundred and twenty-four have reached the one hundred percent goal for paid members. Congratulations to those units, however that is only one fourth of our units in the Department of New York. The Department of New York is currently at ninety-four-point three zero percent of paid membership goal. I have reached out to all unit membership chairman encouraging them to reach out to any members who have not submitted their current dues, in hopes that by the close of books (thirty days before convention) our percentage of paid membership increases.

On our unit membership reports we ask three questions; the first question: Did working ALA programs generate new members? Units replied that while promoting program events such as Poppy distribution, Americanism, and Community Service activities they set up membership tables with applications and brochures. They tell the public what we do to support Veterans and assist their communities . They explained our programs and eligibility requirements and asked citizens who qualify if they would like to join.

Members reported implementing new ideas not only to recruit new members, but also to retain current members. These ideas include creating new member folders, units sending out personal letters or making phone calls to encourage members to renew their dues. Units sponsored social activities such as a bowling night to get members to mingle. Other units held soup and sandwich day, bingo, Memorial Day Street dance and even a Baked Potato Bar. These events were used to recruit new members.

Our unit reports asked Membership Chairman; What were the hurdles? Many units reported they are still feeling the ripple of COVID. Members still have a fear of crowds, also many members who could not fight the virus passed away. They reported the many members were still feeling the financial burden as many businesses closed, and members felt the impending dues increase added to even more financial stress. Many units stated it was becoming more difficult to find members who would attend meetings, take offices or volunteer at events.

Our Mid-Winter Leadership Conference was held in January. We held a two-part presentation. The first part was a review of eligibility requirements, along with how to fill out applications and transmittal as well as general information. Part two, explained use of ALAMIS (ALA Information Management Systems) including how to use online membership tools, the application and training procedure and the benefits of having quick membership access. Many units are now using this online tool to process new membership applications, and renewals to process membership transmittals rapidly and with immediate verification of transmission. I encourage all unit membership chairman to subscribe. For more information see the Department of NY website (www.dept.ny.orq) or call the department office.

Membership awards will be announced on the convention floor. Congratulations in advance to all membership award recipients.

VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION/SERVICE TO VETERANS
Kimberly Quick– Department 2nd Vice President

The members of our department have worked hard to serve the veterans in our communities.

At home, our veterans were visited and assisted with medical equipment and supplies, had their homes cleaned, meals prepared, laundry washed and folded, lawns mowed, wood stacked for fireplaces, and shoveled snow in the winter. Some were assisted financially with heating and medical costs. A fence for a service dog was purchased and installed. During all the different holidays, gifts, cards, and candy found their way to our veterans. Gardens were planted and shared for home grown vegetables, and apples were canned for the winter. Gas and grocery gift cards have been handed out to those in need. Our homeless veterans now have new linens for their beds and in the bathroom. Craft and other activity items have been donated to outreach programs. Female veterans were given bags for their specific needs at Stand Downs. Our caregivers were checked on to make sure they have what they need. A WWII veteran was donated a new uniform so that he could be in a parade. Baby Showers have been held for new moms. A headstone was purchased. A graveyard was maintained, and flags were placed on graves. A flag case was purchased for the family of a fallen soldier. Quilts, hats, and throws were made and donated; Quilts of Valor were given to selected veterans again this year. Vietnam Veterans were celebrated and welcomed home with parades and ceremonies. One veteran was assisted when moving to a new home.

The VAMCs are just starting to open, but there are not any volunteer opportunities to visit the patients. We were able to hold a couple of Gift Shop events with the assistance of the hospitals. Two of the VAMCs were short-staffed, so they were not able to help us at all. Our gift shops have been able to operate by sending gift cards where the veteran wants them to go. Two gift shops were able to buy items for sending actual gifts. The Saratoga Ladies is a program at the Stratton VAMC in Albany that affords us the opportunity to pay our respects at the Saratoga National Cemetery during funerals; allowing us to continue our mission with the VAVS/CDCE program, especially to those being buried without anyone present. The VAVS Representatives have been able to meet quarterly on a virtual basis; but I am told the next meetings are expected to be in person. A “Salute to Hospitalized Veterans” was held.

The New York State Veteran Nursing Homes have been more open to us. A “Hot Chocolate Social” in the winter was fun with the veterans sharing their stories of service. Mother’s Day had 58 vases of flowers; and Father’s Day was the annual Casino Day. Valentines Day was enjoyed with a tea social and gifts of new outfits for the ladies. Cards are sent to the residents on a regular basis along with Bingos and pizza parties. A few times events had to be rescheduled due to a quarantine, but always postponed – never cancelled.

Monetary donations were made to Honor Flight programs, The American Legion, Be The One, Stamps for the Wounded, Christopher House, Veterans & Community Housing Coalition, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Wounded Warriors Project, Tunnel to Towers, VFW, Guitars for Vets, America’s Vet Dogs, Stop Soldier Suicide, Soldier’s Wish, Operation Family Home, Disabled American Veterans, Home for Veterans, Operation Home Front, Armed Service YMCA, Paws for Purple Hearts, Soldier Strong Access, Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes, K9s for Warriors, Toys For Tots, Paws of Honor, USO, Adopt-A-Platoon, Care For Our Wounded Soldiers, Patriot Guard Riders of NY, ALA NY Warriors Family Assistance program, Adopt-A-Vet, Trees For Troops, Capital City Rescue Mission, Veterans Miracle Center, Syracuse Military Courtesy Room, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Wreaths Across America, Am Vets, and Clear Path For Veterans.

After all of the work and donations, the following numbers have been reported to this Chairman:

23,336 hours volunteer @ \$29.95/hr. = \$689,913.20

35,970 miles driven @ \$.14/mile = \$5,035.80

31,631 veterans served.

\$235,423.28 spent.

\$137,596.31 in-kind donations.

Thank you for all your hard work on behalf of our veterans and their families.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH
Maureen Morgan – Department 3rd Vice Preside

It has been a privilege to chair this amazing program that we have to teach our Children & Youth what this great Nation is about. We need to promote these programs in our schools and in our community so that are young understand that History cannot be erased.

Our year started off with our Department Convention being held in Binghamton. This was a great convention that we had members present and got to be back to normal. The Department then moved onto the National Convention with awards being given out to all our Programs. Children & Youth received the best Department award.

September started the school year, and many units were reporting that they were able to get into school and work with teachers promoting the Flag etiquette program, Americanism Essay Contest, and the Star-Spangled Kids. In October, many units had Trunks or Treat events with face painting, members decorating their trunks to hand out candy. Units promoted Halloween Safety by handing out coloring books and tips for having a safe Halloween.

November units started adopting families in their area and gave out Thanksgiving baskets with all the makings for a great Thanksgiving dinner. December with Christmas units had holiday gift shops for the community C&Y to help them buying gifts for their families for the holiday. They also had breakfast with Santa which was an enormous success. January was the mid-winter conference which was very different this year and it was great to be able to have a table for Children & Youth and promote the programs that the C&Y have. Members were able to get information on the coloring books available, the Good Deed Award and the Youth Hero Award.

February and March units helped schools by bringing in cards that students could color and write notes to many senior citizens for Valentine's Day. The unit members then delivered these cards to the nursing homes. By the end of March units were preparing for Breakfast with the Easter Bunny and finishing their reporting.

This year has been a very busy year for Children & Youth. As of this date the Department has had 11 Good Deed Awards that were submitted to National. Now that members can submit on the National website the chair doesn't always get notified of the information.

AMERICANISM
Lucille Mozzillo - Chairperson

Americanism reports indicate that American Legion Auxiliary members in the Department of New York are very proud to show their patriotism. Unfortunately, there are still many counties that I didn't receive a report from, but I am sure they are promoting and supporting Americanism programs. In November, I received 41 reports out of 62 counties and in April I received 44 out of 62 counties. For the year I didn't receive a report from a total of 13 counties.

Auxiliary members are very proud to wear patriotic jewelry, buy flag stamps and fly flags at their homes to promote Americanism. Units participated in Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Veterans Day parades. They also participated in Memorial Day and Veterans Day services where numerous wreaths were placed in memory of deceased Veterans. Several members joined with their American Legion Family and local Girl and Boy Scout Troops to place flags on the graves of Veterans for Memorial Day and units also joined their American Legion Family at 9/11 Remembrance Ceremonies and candlelight vigils.

Unit members recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the National Anthem and other patriotic songs at their unit, county, and district meetings. Members promoted support for the flag amendment by submitting letters to Congress and other Government agencies. Thirty-two units reported promoting Flag Etiquette. This was accomplished by visiting schools, boy and girl scout meetings as well as other local youth groups to talk about the history of the flag and how to care for, fold and properly treat our American Flag. Pamphlets and coloring pages were distributed as well as small handheld flags.

Thirteen counties reported promotion of the Americanism Essay Contest. Flyers were shared with local schools and other youth groups. I received a total of 16 entries in four different classes. Winners were selected and forwarded to the Eastern Division Americanism Chairman.

Seventy-five units participated in and/or held their own Flag Day celebrations and sixty-six Flag Disposal ceremonies were held. Over 1993 flags were donated to youth and flagpoles throughout their communities and thank you certificates were sent to neighbors and businesses for displaying their flags. One hundred forty-five units reported efforts to encourage individuals to get out and vote. Reminders were posted on post home bulletin boards and phone calls were made to members. Members worked at various voting locations on Election Day and provided rides to those who needed one. One Hundred sixty-two units reported supporting legion programs by assisting with funeral luncheons, dinners, and other fundraising events, as well as participating in local ceremonies as a Legion Family. Seventy-four units either sponsor or support the various scout programs in their community. Many units work with the scouts on Flag disposal and Flag etiquette programs.

To provide these events: Total number of miles driven: 13,403; Total number of volunteers: 3236; Total number of volunteer hours: 16,445; Total number served: 15,863; Total value of volunteer hours: \$492,527.75; Total value of goods and materials: \$35,740.57.
Grand Total (volunteer hours and value of goods): \$528,268.32

AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY COLLEGE
Deborah Herrmann, Chairman

The 2023 session was held on June 2-4-5, 2023 at SUNY Morrisville. Staff arrived on Thursday June 1st to prepare to welcome some **108** students who started to arrive on Friday just before 9:30. Unfortunately, there were 8 that had to cancel for various reasons, leaving us with FOR the FIRST time a full 100 students with 33 Auxiliary present (7 were duel members) We also had 8 new instructors, I was blessed with a dynamite co-instructor Janice Gravely a duel member with 1 year as an Auxiliary member and I can tell you she knew her stuff. Starting with this session we had 2 of the more seasoned instructors go back through the classes which will continue each year. The session started at 2:00 that afternoon with Orientation for the students, after a short break class began with the group splitting in half attending either the session on the American Legion Riders / Adjutant & Secretary Role or Americanism & Children & Youth after the first session the groups switched. The traditional steak dinner was 5:00/6:00 returning back to Crawford Hall to attend two classes before calling it a night. Each group was handed a Case Study to work on during the weekend.

Saturday morning started @ 7:00 with breakfast at Seneca Hall. The remaining 8 classes started @ 8:00, each class being 50 minutes long. The classes were as follows Membership, Leadership, Constitution & By-Laws, Legislative/Resolutions, Marketing/Public Relations, Duties of Officers, Online Membership Tools, SAL Programs, ALA Programs, Service Officers/VA&R. After the last group class, we all got together again for the last class on Protocol and Mentoring. Dinner was at 6:00 and for those who wanted to attend there was a reception for some R&R at a local Post.

Sunday we were up bright and early again with breakfast. The Legion photographer attended on Sunday to take pictures of the class, staff, and candid pictures of the final group session where we did a mock meeting (of what not to do) and to review the case studies by each of the 10 groups and I have to say they did a great job. Each year the college staff comes up with the name for each year's students and this year it was **FAMILY**. These 100 students as well as all of the staff interacted with compassion and love for each other regardless of what organization they belonged to. It was what I personally was hoping for when I started the as a staff member of the ALFC. It was truly the best ever. Graduation certificates were presented to each student our Legion Commander David Riley, our Department President Nancy, and SAL Commander Timothy VanPatten. I have to say each student was hungry to learn all that they could in just a short 2 days. Each student participated, asked lots of questions and was very attentive.

We will continue to make changes as need to improve (this year will be hard to beat) but I can say without question this is an integrated American Legion Family College. For those who are still on the fence I encourage you to come and join us next year, you won't be disappointed.

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS / RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

Sally Johnston - Chairperson

The Constitution & Bylaws committee has been very busy this year with changes as a result of the “dues increase” that was passed at the National Convention 2022. The Department of New York to be in compliance increased the “per capita” as well.

There has been much confusion this year with the various “form changes” to be used to submit with the Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules for review by me.

The latest form designed for the Standing Rules is the simplest and easiest to use, all of which is on our department website.

The most difficult thing for Units /Counties / Districts to remember is that our Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules is part of our governing documents that can be changed by certain criteria and for the most part, by Department Convention action.

This year I had to return several Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules because Units decided that they could “re-write” the Constitution & Bylaws. This caused an extreme amount of extra work for me as your chairman and several costly returns with several of the department dollars being spent on postage unnecessarily.

There is definitely a lack of understanding as to what a Standing Rule can be and what does not need to be included in the Standing Rules as its contents already exist in the Constitution & Bylaws. Therefore, duplication of same is not a “Standing Rule.”

I have heard from every county at least once during this administrative year stating they have been “working on” their Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules. However, of the 466 Units in the department, I have only received and forwarded to completion, 100 Constitutions & Bylaws / Standing Rules. As of this writing (June 1) I have over 40 that I have received all with problems that I have addressed at least 1 time, most 2 and 3 times, still with no resolve.

I cannot stress enough the importance of getting your Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules up to date. Many Units have sent in their “new dues forms” to the department, with updated “dues” to accommodate the “dues increase” but have not updated their Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules. Therefore, not in compliance with their Units governing documents.

Among the submissions I did receive, there were 2 Units both of which had not updated their Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules for many years. One was last updated in 1996 and the other 1998. Thank you for your submissions. Though I did not have the time to review all of the Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules on file that the Department office, I’m sure there are several that are not up to date. Units know who you are and need to address that situation.

Thanks to all that submitted to completion your Constitution & Bylaws / Standing Rules. As we move forward to a new administrative year, our work doesn’t stop. Reach out to those Units in your counties that need help. Remember we are all volunteers working together for the same cause.

Thank you for all your hard work. I believe that as whole, we the members of this great organization have done our very best to make our Department President Nancy Babis proud of our accomplishments and support her theme of **“Charting our Course to Serving our Veterans.”**

EDUCATION

Anne Baglio – Chairperson

The National Education Officers held four zoom meetings with the state and local chairman to join. These zoom meetings were very informative and lasted an hour long. Information about the Education program was distributed at all the district meetings in the POA's and shared at the Fall and Spring conferences. Education was shared on both National and Department Facebook pages.

One Unit in the 8th District promoted their scholarship program by holding a St. Patrick's Day dinner (and has done this for the past 21 years) and the proceeds go to their scholarship fund. Another Unit held a basket raffle and made sponge candy to be part of the raffle for their scholarship fund. The profit from this was \$1400. Great job! One member makes monthly boxes of crafts for a pre-school class. The supplies are toys, crafts, decorations, and snacks. The children love these craft boxes.

In the 5th District three Units in one County provided school supplies to their local schools to help children in need. In the same County another Unit recognized Teacher Awareness week and gave each teacher a small present. One member goes beyond and promotes the scholarship program for both Department and National. She puts in 20 hours and 30 miles to two different schools. The member also works with young men for the SAL scholarships. In the 9th District another member for the past few years has supported one student for the lunch program at a cost of \$100.00.

Many Units still collect box tops and Campbell soup labels. It is a mission for one member from Albany County in the 3rd District to collect Price Chopper register receipts at a total of \$52,246.71 and send them into Price Chopper to get a percentage of the total to be sent to a local school that she previously registered with. Another Unit donates money to a Foreign Language Award that is given at the school.

In the 4th District a Unit donated 50 back packs with supplies to the local school for children in need. In the 10th District many Units participated in the school program. A few of the Units went to the schools and spoke in the homerooms about the scholarships available to them from the ALA. They also made-up papers regarding how to get the scholarships on the web and it included the local ALA Units contact information. Another Unit had eight members collect school supplies by standing outside local stores at a table and asking for donations. They also asked for help from other organizations that they belong to in order to collect more supplies. A total of \$15,000 in supplies were collected and handed out at local schools along with McGuire AFB military school, coalition for the homeless, and children foundations. One member goes to garage sales and buys new or gently used books and donates them to the Book Fairies. Between this member and help from the Unit they donated over 2000 books.

National had the most scholarships submitted, over 840 scholarships for the National Children Warrior that had to be done on-line. New York had 64 of them. More than last year.

Year – End Totals=	Counties reporting = 85,	Units reporting = 287,
Scholarship promotion= 160,	Give 10 to Education = 54,	Box tops =38,
Cont. to Literacy = 6,	Veterans in class = 35,	Parents reading= 9,
Campbells labels= 29,	other = 23,	volunteers = 540,
volunteer hours= 2273,	# served= 3804,	miles driven= 1668,
Volunteer hours \$ = \$68,881.69	Goods/materials=\$41,451.00	
Unit Scholarships= \$50,425.00	Total = \$162,116.69	
# Unit scholarships = 102	# County scholarships= 1	
# Department Scholarships=136	# National Scholarships= 84	

National Scholarship winners:

Spirit of Youth Scholarship - Isabella Borden – 4th District, Essex County, Unit 551
Junior Member Loyalty Scholarship – Rianna Garlic – 5th District, Onondaga County, Unit 188

Dept. Scholarship winners

Department	Adam Lesch	8 th District	Chautauqua Co	Unit 62
Dept. District	Samuel Mozzillo	3 rd District	Greene Co	Unit 291
	Melanie Vandenburg	4 th District	Washington Co	Unit 83
	Isabella Borden	5 th District	Herkimer Co	Unit 1524
	MacKenzie McDaniels	7 th District	Steuben Co	Unit 440
	Gabriel Hellwig	8 th District	Chautauqua Co	Unit 59
	Mitchell Baltzer	10 th District	Nassau Co	Unit 334
Past Presidents' Parley	Samantha Palmadessa	10 th District	Nassau Co	Unit 304
MaryAnn K. Murtha	MacKenzie McDaniels	7 th District	Steuben Co	Unit 440
Helen Klimek	Sophia O'Neill	5 th District	Oneida Co	Unit 1376
Raymond T. Wellington	Katharina Pabst	5 th District	Jefferson Co	Unit 904

Congratulations to the scholarship and award winners.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY - EMPIRE GIRLS STATE
Kris Dziduch – Chairperson
1st Terri Wallace – 2nd Vice Claire Herrman

The 82nd Empire Girls State session took place July 2-8, 2023 at SUNY Brockport. 279 citizens from all 10 Districts joined together to create the 51st state.

July 2 – Arrival of citizens under slightly damp conditions. Thank you to all volunteers who helped with registration. County meetings began and Parli Pro workshops featuring ice cream sandwiches and popsicles followed.

July 3 – Political instructors spoke about bill writing and platforms. Committee meetings with election of chairman and vice chairman, Party caucus- election of Party leaders.

July 4 – RED WHITE BLUE Day - Americanism program – flag disposal service – Committee meetings, County meetings and nominees to run for Girls Nation selected. Band and Chorus rehearsals, Party Caucus, and selection of party nomination for State office.

July 5 – RALLY DAY – Blue Star Banners handed out recognizing 20 citizens who had one or more currently serving active-duty family members. County court – EGS chairman was charged with driving an unregistered vehicle. Kris was represented by Political instructor Jamie Ervin.

Despite this outstanding representation, a corrupt jury found Chairman Kris to be guilty. President Babis was present in the gallery and observed multiple corrupt practices by both judge and jury. President Babis then gave a full pardon to Chairman Kris based on her long and exemplary work over multiple years on the EGS team.

July 6 – Legislative Session Day – 12 Bills heard total. 4 passed both the Senate and Assembly. Nationalist – Environmental Conservation (Industrial Clean air), Education – (Expansive Education) – Criminal Justice (Gun reform) – and Health (Health Education certification). Service, Sweets, and Social Networking event. After an Honor flight presentation by Rochester Honor Flight, counties visited tables where they made fleece blankets, signed cards for Honor Flight – visited tables staffed by Brockport admissions team, ROTC, made pocket flags and enjoyed sweet treats.

July 7 – Appellate Court, Gubernatorial appointments announced and Bills signed into law. A Special Legislative session was called by the Governor and an additional bill was passed-Federalist Criminal Justice (Juvenile restoration). STATE of the STATE – Citizens transformed from Girls State uniforms into beautiful suits, dresses and gowns. The governor was presented with an American Flag that was used

during 2023 ALA Empire Girls State, and gave a State of the State address to citizens and guests. Families showed up in droves to see the meaningful ceremony and congratulate their daughters on a job well done.

July 8 – Packing up – Checking out – Home! Now to catch up on some sleep...and lots of paperwork! Citizen activity reports will be distributed, but we would like to announce the following positions for everyone to congratulate.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Citizen</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Citizen</u>	<u>County</u>
2023 Governor	Layla Fereroff	Westchester	Chief Justice Court of Appeals	Caroline McSwain	Onondaga
Lt. Governor	Faith DiBiase	Suffolk	Secretary of State	Elena Dickinson	Lewis
Comptroller	Victoria Duplan	Schenectady	Majority Leader	Caroline Gorence	Delaware
Attorney General	Ava Hartung	Chautauqua	Minority Leader	Nimh Pfaff	Nassau

Girls Nation Senators:

Maya Montalvo	Cortland	and	Claire Grumbacher	Queens
---------------	----------	-----	-------------------	--------

Samsung Scholarship Recipient:

Madeline Hutson	Onondaga
-----------------	----------

FINANCE/AUDIT COMMITTEE
Violet Brosart, Finance/Audit - Chairperson
Mary Anne Casadei, Patricia Hennessy - Committee members

Many thanks to Barbara Corker, Mary Ann Casadei, Patricia Hennessy, and the other members of the finance committee.

You will be happy to know the Department has been operating within their Budget thanks to the persistence of our Treasurer Tara Verderese.

I would also like to thank our president Nancy for this appointment. It's been interesting and rewarding.

HISTORIAN
Bonnie St. Hilaire - Chairperson

Thank you, madam president Nancy, for giving me historian this year.

I have had a nice year as Department Historian. I just wish we had more counties reporting. Some counties reported donations to veterans in many ways. Van services ,Military overseas , Vets dogs, donation to operation honor, veterans' ceremonies, flag projects ,Memorial Day, dinners to support veteran's programs, like fish dinners. House of history, memorial garden in memory of all veterans, several events to raise money for educational purposes, spaghetti dinners donating food, clothing shoes, an Elvis impersonator dinner. So many great reports that are too numerous to mention.

Posted events in unit websites and on face book page, newspapers. Some units reported retirement of colors during and after meetings. Thank you to all that reported on our history.

Volunteers...2,921
Hours...3,920
Donations to 16 veterans4,769.55
Mileage...466
Total...447,546.61

JUNIOR ACTIVITIES
Dianne Mosher - Chairperson

The Department of New York Junior members have been very busy this past year doing amazing activities, helping, and fundraising for our veterans, military, their families, and the local communities. Our wonderful organization is comprised of 62 counties across the state, and it really is difficult to summarize all of the creative ideas and activities our Juniors have accomplished. I am so impressed by the number of our young members that realize the importance of volunteer work and the support they have offered too so many. Thank you to all of our Juniors and everyone who supports them for your time and effort. Especially to those that properly completed the report form and included photos.

Many Units reported that Juniors assisted Senior members with projects, such as ice cream socials, fundraisers, attended Senior and Junior meetings and/or post events, promoted Americanism, and provided services to veterans. Some participated in Memorial Day, Fourth of July, 9/11 and Veteran's Day services and marched in parades, attended flag retirement ceremonies, recited the Pledge of Allegiance, played Taps, and sang patriotic songs. Others held Halloween and holiday parties, trunk or treat events, worked at their Posts assisting with Family sponsored meals, painted corks to make picture frames for vets in nursing homes, and did roadside clean ups. They have been laying wreaths, flagging veterans' graves, and honoring our veterans in so many ways. They have also been working hard for our communities.

Other activities our Juniors participated in are stuffing small teddy bears made in the colors of Ukraine for children displaced by the war and developing a project to recognize our veterans by celebrating their birthdays. This report included almost 1000 hours with a total value of hours, goods, and materials of over \$42,000—what INCREDIBLE work!!

At Mid-Winter Conference, the Juniors held their meeting and elected officers for the 2023-2024 year. They were installed into office by Department President Nancy. They sold ALA window stickers and painted nails as a fundraiser for Department President Nancy's Honor Flight project. They made no-sew pillows for airport military courtesy rooms, assisted Senior members at breakfast, made handmade Valentine cards, signed thank you cards to veterans, and discussed flag etiquette. A few Juniors have been working on earning patches in the Patch Program.

Juniors from the Department of New York have volunteered 2374.5 hours at \$29.95/hr. which totals \$71,116.28 and the value of donated goods and materials was \$21,737.15, bringing a combined total of \$92,853.43. Congratulations to the Junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of New

York for doing OUTSTANDING work for our veterans, military, their families, and our communities! Thank you for the opportunity to serve on this committee!

Honorary Junior President	Faithanne Nashton	Oneida Co., 5th District
Honorary Junior Vice President	Jay Strack	Essex Co, 4th District
Honorary Junior Secretary/Treasurer	Isabelle Shanno	Rensselaer Co, 3rd District
Honorary Junior Chaplain	Peyton Burdick	Oneida Co., 5th District
Honorary Junior Historian	Kalynn Stern	Niagara County, 8th District
Honorary Junior Sgt. At Arms	Brielle Barney	Essex Co. 4th District

LEADERSHIP
Carrie Davenport – Chairperson

The Department of New York has been extremely busy working on the leadership program throughout our great state. Leadership chairmen throughout the state have supported members by bringing in guest speakers, holding award writing workshops, hosting American Legion Family workshops, promoting the American Legion Family College and through their involvement in promoting the ALA programs. Throughout this great state, we have had Zoom training throughout the year, hosted local leadership workshops, supported members grow within the organization, using ALAMIS, and how to prepare for giving a statewide workshop.

Two major Department initiatives this year are our revised Mid-Winter Leadership Conference and our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training for our Department Executive Committee. Traditionally our Mid-Winter conference is comprised of 400 attendees in a large room with 5-6 presentations throughout the day that culminates in a banquet. This year, however, we had 4 programming tracks with 4 workshops during each session for a total of 16 workshops that covered a variety of topics. The goal of the event was to showcase the talents, skills, and knowledge of everyday members as presenters so that members could see themselves as leaders within the organization. Leading up to the conference, we had several presenter Trainings. We covered the basics of presenting, talked about the structures of easy to make the workshops interactive, and provided feedback to presenters as they prepared for the conference. Growing these skills in our members was important to ensure that the workshops contained accurate information, were engaging, and that the slides were. We also had a program and vendor fair and included a social bingo game to help members interact with each other and to meet people outside their immediate ALA circle. I encourage you to think about what topics you would like to see presented at future training by visiting the leadership page of the Department and completing a form to provide ideas for online and in person leadership workshops.

Visit the form here! <https://forms.gle/CWG4noka1nuSe2nZ9>

In addition to the Mid-Winter leadership conference, we organized our first Diversity Equity and Inclusion workshop for our Department Executive Committee members while we were together for the April DEC meeting. This workshop helped DEC members better understand their biases, lead with love, and create safe spaces for all members to feel included. We brought in a presenter from a university who facilitated the training for the group. This allowed members to participate in the conversation and to help lead the conversation in a way that helped all members feel comfortable and allowed them to ask questions in a judgement-free zone.

Overall, it has been a very busy year in the ALA Department of New York, filled with learning, love, and Leadership.

LEGISLATIVE

Karen Chan - Chairperson

Our Legislative Division has been very informative by sending weekly updates to keep everyone informed of the legislative bills that are being addressed and discussed. Our Fall conference was the first in-person meeting since the pandemic, and we had a great turnout of more than 50 attendees. I encouraged members to sign up for the legislative newsletter and action alerts. It was important to create their profile with the voter's voice so that the action alerts would be emailed directly to the members. I also encouraged members to have nonmembers sign up for the action alerts. The action alerts will populate a letter to their respective local representatives to take action and to support our veterans.

I have prepared a year-end report for your reference. Compared to last year's report, the response for officials has increased 4.5 percent. Total volunteer hours have increased 1.5 percent and the value of volunteer hours has increased 1.5 percent.

Reporting summary:

Summaries are as follows:

Local elected officials: calls = 162, emails = 242, visits = 41

State elected officials: calls = 82, emails = 242, visits = 50

National elected officials: calls = 42, emails = 85, visits = 11

Post Family events = 44

Post events = 35

Subscriptions to The Dispatch = 21, American Legion Auxiliary newsletter = 41, American Legion newsletter = 63 & Capwiz = 5

Legislative Reception = 1

Response from officials = 236 (increased from 52 in 2022)

Total volunteer hours = 839 (increased from 545 in 2022)

Value of volunteer hours = \$25,179 (increased from \$16,396 in 2022)

Members focused the following legislative bills = Pact Act, Repeal Iran War Authority, Agent Orange, Burn Pit, Child Welfare, Healthcare, Medicare, PTSD, Military and National Security, Housing plans, Suicide, Transportation for Healthcare, Buddy Check Week, Richard Star Act for retirement pay of veterans with disability.

Legislative issues during the 117th Congress:

- On August 10, Biden signed into law the PACT ACT of 2022 to set in changes for as many as 5 million of veterans exposed to toxic fumes. The legislation was spearheaded by Sens Jon Tester (D-MT) and Jerry Moran (R-KS) and supported by The American Legion. The PACT Act will expand the Department of Veteran Affairs benefits and services for more than 30 years for veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances.
- The Afghan Adjustment Act is bipartisan legislation that will expand the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for those Afghan Allies who fought with us against the Taliban. In the summer of 2021, our soldiers and Marines evacuated tens of thousands of Afghan Allies. It's time for Congress to honor this nation's promise to our Afghan allies with real and lasting safety. More than 70,000 at-risk Afghans have been relocated to the United States have entered on what is called "humanitarian parole" for them to temporarily stay and work in the U.S. for up to two years. Currently there is no direct pathway for lawful permanent residency and stability in the U.S. for the new Afghan neighbors. Without an adjustment act that creates this path, most Afghans would be forced to navigate the backlogged, complex, and paperwork-intensive asylum process. The only viable pathway to protection for Afghans is the passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act which will provide access to a more streamlined and efficient lawful permanent residency process.
- The STRONG Veterans Act of 2022 has included a bill that would direct VA to establish a "Buddy Check National Week of Calling" to connect veterans to better ensure that they receive the care they need. The American Legion supports this legislation which increases the support for veteran's

mental health care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA is required to update training for the VA workforce and Veterans Crisis Line Staff, implement pilot programs, conduct studies, and research and provide outreach to veterans.

- The Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act will address the disparity of GI benefits to our National Guard and Reserve. They served along Active Components protecting borders and Capitals to delivering pandemic aid and supporting local law enforcement. They have been challenged over the past two years denial access to GI Bill benefits due to the outdated notion that National Guard and Reservists should not qualify for “Active-Duty” benefits. The Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act will address the eligibility for the post-9/11 GI Bill to count every day that a servicemember is paid and in uniform toward benefit eligibility.

The American Legion Legislative Agenda for the 118th Congress, 1st Session:

- Support our Afghan Allies = Grant the Afghan allies’ permanent legal status and improve the special immigrant Visa process.
- Military Quality of Life = Pass legislation to increase access to childcare for military families, food security and funding for renovating military housing.
- Pay the Coast Guard = Pass legislation to guarantee Coast Guard personnel their pay without delay.
- Protect the American Flag = Urge Congress to approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. flag.
- Mental Health & Suicide Prevention = Suicide rate is nearly double that of their civilian counterparts with more than 6,000 veterans taking their lives annually. Urging Congress to enhance access to alternative therapies, fund VA’s suicide prevention outreach budget and invest in mental health research.
- VA Healthcare Modernization = Modernizing electronic health records and a transparent online scheduling system are essential to ensure veterans receive the care they deserve.
- PACT Act: Implementation & Oversight = Passage of the PACT ACT ensured millions of toxic exposed veterans to have access to healthcare and compensation. Congress needs to provide necessary oversight and funding to ensure the resources to properly implement this legislation.
- Protect Veterans from Predatory Actors = oppose legislation that elevates the standing of unaccredited claims companies or legitimizes predatory practices that target veterans.
- Concurrent Receipt = End unfair policy deduction of VA compensation from their DoD retirement pay.
- Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity = Urge Congress to recognize the service of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as eligible for the GI Bill.
- GI Bill for Honorable Service = Amend U.S. Code to allow access to VA educational assistance to veterans with general under honorable conditions discharges.

This committee has continually broadened my horizon to understand the urgency to communicate with Congress to support our veterans. Our National Commander Vincent Jim Troiola and his legislative team were instrumental in giving testimonies in Washington D.C. There are videos available to watch them in action from the American Legion website.

During the Mid-Winter Conference, I gave a workshop on legislation and provided tools to our members to research the bills on government websites. We also discussed how we can be proactive in advocating with the American Legion legislative council by signing up for action alerts and send messages to our local representatives to support the multiple legislative bills.

NATIONAL SECURITY
Suzanne Williams – Chairperson

Several Counties have participated in Adopt-a-Platoon and Adopt-a-Battalion Programs, Units have reported sending supplies to APO valued at \$125,511, by 546 volunteers for hundreds of deployed soldiers.

Many of the events that benefit and support the soldier's morale such as: 25 members regularly bake and deliver cookies for 600 active-duty mid-shipmen at a cost of \$250.00; donated toward Bottles for the Brave and to Comfort Warriors; volunteers have spent 145 hours preparing for a Welcome Home for the re-deployed; sent Pen Pal letters by school students to deployed soldiers; Units have mailed over 150 Holiday and Birthday cards to the deployed; the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program for 2536 hours to serve 4414 soldiers for a value of \$1295.00. And Units have reported clipped coupons mailed to Coupon Hubs, overseas, and directly to bases with families for 3,703 hours by 135 volunteers for a combined value of \$364,377.10.

Counties have reported support to the military families by donating school supplies for military families to the value of \$1500.00; have held Baby Showers for military families; many Units have held Christmas Parties and Easter Egg Hunts for the deployed children; participated in Blood Drives by 51 volunteers for 121 hours; recognition of First Responders; and ROTC Cadets by presenting certificates and medals at Military Balls for the over-achievers.

Of the 62 Counties in the Department, 43 sent in reports; of those 43 reporting counties, 19 have No activity or No chairman. That leaves only 24 Counties reporting activities, less than 50%. Even if those who have no Chairman for this Program would clip and report coupons!

Thank you, Madam President Nancy, for the pleasure of being your National Security Chairman. This is a program that has been dear to my heart, and I truly enjoyed promoting the activities that mean so much to so many.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEWOMAN
Marie Mock

Another year is drawing to a close, and our national leadership is working hard to promote the ideals of our organization. There have been a few concerns with other states, but I am proud that New York has been able to handle our own problems within the structure of our own state. Thank you to everyone who has worked hard to be cooperative and kind to one another. I know that it can be stressful, but you have made sincere attempts at every level. Keep up the good work.

I also thank you for giving me the opportunity to be your NEC next year. It is an honor to represent you, and I look forward to another successful year. Your cooperation makes my job easy and fun. I love hearing how great New York is when I am at National meetings.

PARLIAMENTARIAN
Marie Mock – Chairperson

Rules, Rules, Rules! All year in my newsletter articles I have said that good, up-to-date governing documents make for smooth meetings and happy members. I hope that you take this advice into the coming year as documents need to be updated every time something changes. They should be reviewed at least once a year. September is a good time to do this as everyone is excited about the opportunities for the coming year.

Being Parliamentarian is a major responsibility, and I have been proud to hold this position for President Nancy. Her knowledge and adherence to the proper procedures has made this year very enjoyable. Thank you, President Nancy for this appointment. Thank you, also, to Barbara and Caitlin in the office for all your support.

POPPY – POPPY POSTER
Sherry Wilson - Chairperson

It has been a pleasure chairing the Poppy Committee this year. To say I am in awe of all the hard work and many activities that members have put into the Poppy program this year is an understatement! I am proud of our department and the commitment that our members put into the many programs of the American Legion Auxiliary.

This year American Legion Posts, Auxiliary Units and even one other Department, ordered 210,775 poppies to be used and distributed around this great state in the coming year! This past year, members volunteered 5,068 hours, valued at \$151,787 and distributed 44,649 poppies. With their poppy funds, they spent \$69,484 on many items for our veterans.

The funds from the poppy distributions were used as donations to the many VA hospitals and nursing homes around the state. A few units used their funds to get service dogs for the veterans, which we know many more are needed to help our disabled veterans. We are very pleased that the funds can now be used for the Honor Flight. Within New York State we have 10 hubs and our members stepped up to help send our veterans to Washington D.C., which they so dearly deserve. Other organizations that helped in the distribution of funds are Wreaths Across America, Creative Arts Festival, "Be the One," just to name a few. One unit used the funds to send a soldier home for Christmas! What a special way to help out a veteran!

There were many proclamations made throughout our state for Poppy Day. One of the units went to a children's program and educated them on the history and meaning behind red poppies. They also handed out coloring books for all of them. A great article was in their newspaper on the program. Another unit put a poster in the library for kids called - Can you identify the flower and posted another one for adults with "Flanders Field." Many units handed out Poppy coloring books to schools along with promoting the history of the poppy.

This year 25 posters were received for the Poppy Poster contest. There were entries for all 7 categories. The winners were sent on to the Eastern division Poppy chairman for consideration for National Awards. The remaining posters were put on display at the convention along with pictures of the winners. All other poppy awards will be judged at the Department convention.

I received many pictures of the great work that this department has done throughout the year. Please remember to take pictures this coming year and send them on to the next chairman.

PUBLIC RELATIONS
Joelle Cartier – Chairperson

This year the Department of New York did a fantastic job getting the word out about our great organization. The totals for November and April reports are as follows: 14 County/Unit newsletters, 4 flyers, 11 Post newsletters, 4 E-Bulletins, 40+ newspaper clippings and 121 articles written, with one of those articles being about Department President Nancy's project Honor Flight. Also reported we're 116 print ads, 109+ pictures taken, 25 letters written, 37 Facebook pages, 22 websites and 7 interviews. Radio time reported was 2 hours, TV time was 1-hour and 10 minutes and 1,158 hours of social media time. There was \$967.00 donated, volunteer hours were 919 hours with a value of \$ 27,524.05. Please be aware when reporting that the report form asks for the number(#) of such things as pictures, print ads, letters, articles etc. Numbers are preferred instead of check marks. Thank you, Department President Nancy, for this committee.

WARRIORS FAMILY ASSISTANCE (WFA)
Charlene Mayville- Chairperson

Counties and Units were very busy this year getting the word out about the Warriors Family Assistance Program. Much more publicity about the program was provided and a lot of interest was generated. This year the eligibility was expanded and the requirement of having been discharged within the last ten years was removed. ALL honorably discharged veterans can now apply for the grant.

The Warriors Family Assistance program awarded only one grant this year to a veteran from the 7th District. The individual was in need of help with a car payment totaling \$1200. Total donations to the Department were \$1880. In addition, Units donated \$2950 to their local programs. Hours of service totaled 613.5 with a volunteer value of \$18,374.33. A total of 25 families were served.

Units did a lot of their own fundraising and financial assistance to veterans in need and provided \$2705 from their own funds plus \$3885 in goods and services to help them directly. Such assistance included paying utility bills, rent, transportation needs, and holiday gifts. One Unit raised \$3300 at a fundraiser to be used for needy veterans!

Auxiliary members have done a great job during the year in promoting this unique New York State program to assist our most needy veterans. Your ongoing support and dedication to our military personnel is very rewarding and much appreciated. Keep up the good work for the upcoming years!

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY FOUNDATION
Cathleen F. MacInnes, President
ALA Foundation Board of Directors

During this administrative year, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation has awarded five grants to within the Department of New York, for a total of \$15,603:

- \$2,500 to Legnard-Curtin Unit #927, Albany County, for the Veterans Creative Arts Festival at the Stratton VAMC.
- \$1,650 to West Canada Valley Unit #1524, Herkimer County, for the Veterans Creative Arts Festival at Syracuse VAMC.
- \$5,000 to Eagle Memorial Unit #1720, Wyoming County, for Hometown Heroes banners and poles.
- \$573 to Joseph Gallipeau Unit #294, Livingston County, for an ALA-branded tent to be used at multiple events; and
- \$5,880 to the Sixth District, for a Duet Plus wheelchair bicycle for the residents of the New York State Home for Veterans at Oxford.

In addition to grants awarded to Units within other Departments, the ALA Foundation has provided \$45,000 for the ALA sponsorship of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and \$20,000 for ALA Girls Nation.

If you have questions about how the Foundation can help your Unit, please ask Terri Wallace, Carrie Davenport, or me. We all serve on the Foundation Board of Directors and would be happy to help you!

During the same period, members and Units throughout the Department of New York have donated a total of \$2,767 to the ALA Foundation. On behalf of the Foundation – and the veterans, military, and their families whom we serve: THANK YOU!!
