

**Children & Youth**  
**2015-2016 Yearend Report**  
**Michele DeGennaro Chairman**

The Department of Florida is truly "Keeping the Promise" this year to our Children & Youth as we promoted star spangled kids, cared for our military and veteran's children, and supported all children in our community. With 89 Units reporting, Florida totaled 24,808 volunteer hours, \$188,788.00 spent, and over \$75,739 in contributions with a total of 21,089 children and families assisted, truly showing that from the "Service of One, Comes the Support of Many".

Units throughout Florida volunteered 2,675 hours, on Patriotic programs for our children and youth. Auxiliary Unit 233, Palm Valley created 160 Unit Citizenship Awards and distributed them to students who wrote essays on the Constitution, Americanism, and Veterans Day. Unit 335 in Hudson made 250 pocket constitutions to give to their partnering middle school. While Unit 79, in New Port Richey, encouraged their Girl State delegate to participate in the American Legion Oratorical Contest, taking second place in the Department of Florida.

Our military & veteran children were not left behind as many Units noted how they helped and cared for them. The Sixteenth District Auxiliary participated in a 3-day stand down serving hot meals and attending to the homeless veteran children's needs. Unit 347, Lady Lake purchased Klinger books and horses, Operation Give-a-Hug Dolls, G.I. Josh dolls, and 1 Gold Star Children's Book. Unit 152, Town & Country Memorial, also supported our military kids as they purchased three Josh Dogs and for the first time one G.I. Josh, for a child whose parents are deployed. This Christmas, Unit 162 in Deerfield Beach, sponsored an Angel Tree, which

contained 29 children of local military families while Unit 107 in Live Oak, donated toys to Operation Homefront.

The Units continued to "Keep the Promise" as they nominated our future leaders with Youth Hero and Good Deed Awards. Safety Harbor, Unit 238 nominated young Gino Marino for the Youth Hero Award. Gino saved his grandfather from a house fire that destroyed their home. Unit 238 was very proud of Gino and also honored him in their 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. And let us not forget about young S.A.L. member, Alan Landers, recipient of the Good Deed Award and National President Sharon's Special Award. Alan raised over \$30,000 on his Super-Hero Fun Runs with all proceeds going to Honor Flight of Central Florida. I look forward to seeing even more great things to come from these young men.

We did not stop there as we cared for and supported all children and youth in the community through Unit involvement in community events. Participating in numerous parades, countless picnics and many school and local events Florida Units were sure to be seen. Members of District 12 were busy with Halloween parties and a special Trunk or Treat hosted by 2 Units. In the 13<sup>th</sup> District the entire Legion Family of Post 323 in Lehigh Acres joined together for Children & Youth by sponsoring the Department Golf Tournament. In April, the Legion Family members of 117 in Palm Bay hosted the Department Children & Youth Picnic, inviting the local community for a day of fun complete with a dunk tank, carnival games and bounce house. The Mayor even gave a Proclamation declaring April 2016 as The American Legion Children & Youth Month.

As we continue to promote Auxiliary participation in The American Legion programs, I am overwhelmed regarding the response to one of our newest partners "Beads of Courage". To

date Florida has donated \$5,745, along with over 3,000 Bead Bags and 24 Auxiliary members participating in the Carry a Bead program. WOW!

Units were pulling out all the stops as they tried to increase Junior membership and to date Florida has 1,599 Junior Members. Several Units organized their very first Juniors group while other Units started including Junior activities during meetings and events.

Panama City, Unit 392, had six Junior members paint and decorate pallets to look like American Flags. The flags were used as decorations for their Installation Ceremony and the Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration. After the 4<sup>th</sup>, the flags were hung along the fence and the members continued to enjoy the hard work of the children every time they drive through the gates of the American Legion, Post 392. Unit 286 Pine Castle in Orlando has one Junior member that wrote "Thank you for your Service" cards for veterans. She also participated in project suds programs and has visited veterans in nursing homes totaling, 125 hours in volunteer service.

It was great hearing about all the ways the Units are Keeping the Promise and engaging the Juniors in our Auxiliary programs. From the Patch Program to attending meetings, Juniors were active and a presence in Florida. Our Juniors helped with clipping coupons, visiting Veterans in nursing homes, and participated in little Miss Poppy contests.

Many Juniors throughout the Department attended Christmas parties, wrapping gifts and playing Santa's helpers, hiding eggs for Easter egg hunts, and distributed flags at 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Memorial Day Parades. In addition, many Juniors played a role in POW/MIA Ceremonies, and also showed their support at deployments and welcome home events. Junior members sorted cans for holiday baskets, served at Veterans dinners, collected pull tabs for various charities

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and assisted with many more fundraising events. I am very proud of the accomplishments our Units and Juniors have had this year and hope they continue to grow together in the years to come.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to the Children & Youth program and the nurturing of our ***"Palm Pups"***... **the Future of this Great Organization!**

***All kids need is a little help, a little hope and somebody who believes in them.***  
***~ Magic Johnson***

I am honored and humbled to have served as your 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President, Children & Youth Chairman for the 2015-2016 year.

For God and Country

*Michele DeGennaro*

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### **Revolving Trophy Winners:**

➤ **Addie McGuire Trophy Winner -**

➤ **Peggy Miller Award -**