

# Children and Youth Program Action Plan 2022 – 2023



## #colormethere

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## **All aboard! Next stop: Children & Youth Program Action Plan!**

The Children and Youth program emphasizes protecting, caring for and supporting children and youth, particularly those of veterans, military families and first responders.

There is a continuous need to support the children of deceased servicemembers along with the youth in our communities. President Jane's signature program is the Gary Sinise Foundation. Mr. Sinise has gone all-in to assist veterans and children of fallen soldiers and first responders Here's a little insight:

Are you ready for a sleigh ride? We are about to embark on the Snowball Express, a rewarding journey of a lifetime to enrich the lives of children and youth!

**"Snowball Express"** is a very exciting program. The mission is to provide relief, resilience and improve the wellbeing of the children of our fallen soldiers and first responders.

One of the many things that the Snowball Express program does is send Christmas boxes to these children, at a time of year that can be an especially sad time for a child missing their parent. The box includes a "scroll" on which the children write personal messages to their deceased parent. A gold bell is included that everyone rings in unison to better forward those personalized messages to their departed family member. The scrolls are sent to Gary, then forwarded to Mickey Mouse at the holiday trip for the kids to Disneyworld!

Put on your thinking caps. Brainstorm about the many ways we can raise money for this program! Sponsor a fun-run, bake sale, other seasonal party for the community. The opportunities are endless. This charity will be listed on our Department remittance sheet for submission by March 31st, 2023.

I encourage you to bring other related committee chairs into your conversations, in particular, Juniors, Community Service, Education, Americanism and of course, Public Relations! Don't forget your Chaplain, who can be a huge help in contacting service families in your community.

Visit the website at **[GarySiniseFoundation.org/snowball-express](http://GarySiniseFoundation.org/snowball-express)** for more information on volunteering and fund-raising with this very worthy organization.

Here's some additional opportunities to help Children and Youth in our communities:

### **Youth Hero Awards/Good Deed Awards**

The ALA recognizes youth in our communities who demonstrate good citizenship, through a brave physical act or a good deed.

Search through your newspapers, TV and neighborhoods for children and youth who have performed a heroic act of physical valor, such as performing CPR, helping evacuate victims of a fire, calling 911 in an emergency, etc.

Contact local schools, churches, and youth groups to make them aware of the Youth Hero/Good Deed Awards. Always provide your Unit contact information.

### **Support Children's Hospitals in Florida**

Please visit the hospital in your area and ask for a donation list of needed items to make the patients lives fun, to take their minds off of their health situations.

All Children's Hospital, St. Petersburg

Mailman Center for Child Development, Miami

Camp Boggy Creek, <https://www.boggycreek.org/>

Camp Corral, [www.campcorral.org](http://www.campcorral.org)

Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, serving Florida's West Coast

My Warriors Place, <https://www.mywarriorsplace.org>

Contact the hospital/facility in your area and ask how your Unit can volunteer. Tag-team with another Unit in your District so they too can participate in and learn about these opportunities.

### **April is The American Legion's Children and Youth month:**

Plan a special celebration of children during the month of April in honor/support of Children and Youth.

### **Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2)**

Help recognize children who experience extended separation from their military parent(s). Donate to the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).

Host a dinner, game night, community fair, etc. that will bring military and non-military families together. Host a KDH2 celebration with buttons/stickers to let military kids know how we appreciate their sacrifices.

### **Purple UP! for The American Legion's Children and Youth month:**

Wear purple on April 15 in honor of Purple Up! For Military Kids Day.

Plan a special celebration of children during the month of April in honor of Children and Youth Month.

### **Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony**

Include your Junior members in this inspiring ceremony. This year's ceremony will be held at Fall Conference.

### **Serving homeless veterans with children**

Some of our homeless veterans also have children living on the streets with them.

Contact your local churches, homeless shelters, and food pantries to identify homeless veterans' children. Ask what their specific needs are, offer them your services.

Contact local schools to assess their need for supplies and extra clothes for homeless children.

Contact your Post Service Officer to offer help with the needs of children of veterans who need financial help.

Help raise awareness for the needs of homeless children in your community by sharing unit activities on the unit website, social media pages and newsletters.

**Klinger, a Story of Honor and Hope** – Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is affiliated with the American Legion Family.

Volunteer at a TAPS camp program.

Klinger, a Story of Honor and Hope, is available for purchase from TAPS with the companion horse for children who are grieving the loss of a military parent or loved one.

## **AWARDS**

### **Ronald McDonald House**

Collect soda can tops

Goods donations collections

A certificate will be presented to each Unit that participates in this program.

### **National**

Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Children & Youth Program

Deadline: June 1, 2023

Send to National Division Chairman and Department Chairman postmarked or emailed by 5 pm. EST

Refer to National website for required cover sheet, if required: [www.legion-aux.org](http://www.legion-aux.org), or [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org)

### **Department**

#### **LOIS McFALL CHILDREN & YOUTH AWARD:**

Children & Youth Year-End Report must be submitted and includes all required statistical information i.e., money expended, number of children and families assisted, etc.

Cash contributions must be made through Department Office (list is in the Award Rules).

Narrative to be received by the Department Chairman no later than May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, thirty (30) days prior to Department Convention.

Rules and guidelines are listed in the Unit Guide.

### **Chairmans Award**

An award will be presented to the Unit that makes the most cash donations to the **Snowball Express** program. One award will be given to each membership grouping.

Please make sure your donations are made and submitted on the Department Donation recap by March 31<sup>st</sup>. For proper credit, be sure you identify “Snowball Express” as the charity, not the foundation.

## **REPORTING**

**YEAR-END:** Your Year-End Reporting form must reach your District Children & Youth Chairman by April 1, 2023. Be sure to include a narrative report. Please send pictures and/or news articles (JPEG). District Chairman must send the Year-End Reports to the Department Children & Youth Chairman by April 15, 2023.

Include a narrative so that your Unit/District shines!

Did your Unit promote the Youth Hero/Good Deed Award?

Include stories you have regarding support for military or homeless veteran’s children.

Describe other activities that your Unit participates in or hold for our children, youth and military families.

**We have serious work to do this year but please make it fun for your Unit and District and most of all, for the kids!**

***Robin Burk***

Children and Youth Dept. Chairman