



VOLUME X • ISSUE 2 • SEPTEMBER 2020
DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT ANN KING-SMITH

FEATURED: Department President ★ Honor Flight ★ Parliamentarian

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Mission Statement

In the spirit of Service, Not Self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad.

For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace and security.

Vision Statement

The vision of The American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion while becoming the premier service organization and foundation of every community providing support for our veterans, our military, and their families by shaping a positive future in an atmosphere of fellowship, patriotism, peace and security.



Want to submit an article and/or photos to **MAIL CALL?**

alaf1.org/submit
secretary@alaf1.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ANN KING-SMITH

I can hardly believe that September arrived. In some areas of our country, Fall marks the beginning of cooler temperatures, beautifully colored leaves and the vibrant smells of pumpkin and cinnamon. In those areas, people begin to slow down a bit, while here in Florida, we seem to escalate to "full force ahead" mode, as we prepare for more sweltering heat, afternoon thunderstorms and the peak of hurricane season. During this time, as always, we need to support the **Auxiliary Emergency Fund (AEF)**. The year 2020 has already brought us many disasters and we have more members than ever that need our help.

When we mention Fall, I am sure we all think of our annual Department Fall Conference in Orlando. As many already know, out of concern for the health and safety of our members, the American Legion has decided to cancel the November Fall Conference. I know this is sad news for many, but rest assured that we are working on implementing ideas to make something special happen for our members. Please look for upcoming news.

I am so proud of our Department officers and staff that have been working from home during this pandemic. Working together as a team, Patty, Brandi and Keny have been amazingly efficient in keeping everything on task. I am so grateful for the job they have been doing for each one of us. The next time you need to contact the office, please take an extra minute and thank them for a job well done. Oh, speaking of calling the office brings something to mind. Let's remember to be respectful of their "office hours." Although they may be working from home versus the office, their workdays and hours remain the same.

I know that many of you remember meeting USAF Lieutenant General (ret) William "Bill" Welser III, from Honor Flight at last year's Fall Conference. I

have some great news to share about Bill. The Honor Flight National Board has elected Bill as their President/Chairman for the upcoming 2021 year. I know that he will serve well in that position, continuing to put the welfare of our veterans first and foremost.

On a sad note, Bill's 95-year-old father and a proud World War II veteran, took a hard fall recently. He is hospitalized with head injuries and a broken vertebra. I know that Florida Auxiliary members love to send cards, so let's please send cards of cheer and good wishes to this veteran. Cards can be sent to:

Bill Welser
104 Starland Way
Milford, DE 19963

I hope you enjoyed the first Honor Flight article from Honor Flight Central Florida, that appeared in the August "Mail Call." Throughout the remainder of the year, we will be adding monthly articles from various hubs across Florida.

I would like to thank everyone that sent cards, letters and beautiful flowers in memory of my sweet little mother. On July 28th, she passed away at my sister's home in Tennessee. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had two wonderful women in my life that I called "Mom." One was my birth mother and the other "Mom" was the loving woman that raised me from the time I was three days old. I loved them both deeply and will never forget the love and sacrifices they both gave to make sure my life was good.

I would like to share with you a poem that our National ALA Executive Director, Kelly Circle, added

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in her recent weekly briefing. It often does us good to reflect on our personal intentions. When you look at yourself, do you see a builder or a wrecker? We should always think about how our personal words and actions may affect others, always remembering that we are being representatives of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Builder or Wrecker?

I watched them tearing a building down—
A gang of men in a busy town.
With a “Ho, heave, ho,” and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.
I asked the foreman, “Are these men skilled?
And the kind you would hire if you were to build?”
He laughed and said, “Why, no indeed
Just common laborers is all I need.
They can easily wreck in a day or two
That which has taken builders years to do.”

So, I said to myself, as I went on my way,
“What part in the game of life do I play?
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
Carefully measuring with a rule and square,
Patiently doing the very best I can,
Or am I a wrecker – who walks the town,
Content with the labor of tearing down?”

By: Franklin Benvegar.

Please continue to work our ALA programs, always striving to accomplish our mission. I am so impressed with all the creative ways you are continuing to make things happen for our veterans, active-duty military, their families, our children and our communities. You are truly **“Florida ALA Strong.”** I pray that each of you stay safe, always taking steps to not only safeguard your health but the health of others. I look forward to a soon-to-come time when I can visit personally with you.



SGT-AT-ARMS

BONNIE O'BRIEN, UNIT 5

We have all been fighting COVID-19 and staying safe. With that in mind, I have cancelled the annual golf tournament and basket auctions that support our Wreaths of Remembrance program. The program is a placement of a holiday wreath on each of the headstones in our Post 5, American Legion Cemetery. This is the only “stand alone” Veterans Cemetery in the country -- 780 patriots buried and cared for by Post 5. The Wreath laying is simply a way to let those who have served know that they haven't been forgotten.

In lieu of the above fund raisers, I have a number of Holiday Wreath Pins similar to the one shown above. When you “adopt a headstone” this pin will be sent to you to wear and know that the spirit of the individual who received your wreath on his/her headstone is with you.

We must have the funds into the Wreaths Across America Company by October. This way they will be paid for and delivered by Saturday, December 19th. On that date throughout our country and overseas wreaths will be laid on the graves of American Soldiers.

Whatever you choose to send will be appreciated and you will receive a pin. Please make your checks out to Wreaths Across America. We will put our Post 5 serial number on the check to get credit and forward the funds to the company. Checks are to be mailed to American Auxiliary Unit 5, 3810 W Kennedy Blvd, Tampa, Florida 33609. Please put Attn. B. O'Brien on the envelope.

We truly appreciate your support and look forward to hearing from you. Please stay safe and healthy.

PARLIAMENTARIAN

MARY KELLY-PERKINS

Congratulations on your appointment by the Unit President as Parliamentarian for the Unit. As parliamentarian you will be the expert on parliamentary procedure and should have the following tools:

1. Copy of Unit Constitution, By-laws and Standing Rules
2. National Unit Handbook
3. Current Department Unit Guide
4. Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised
5. Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised "IN BRIEF"

Before each meeting you should review the agenda with the Unit President to be familiar with the business and possible procedural problems that may arise. You will also review and know the bylaws and standing rules of the Unit. You also work with committee members who request assistance in preparing reports for the meeting.

Over the next few months, I will cover certain things that you should know, and today's lesson is presenting a motion. A proposal for action is made in the form of a motion. For the members to consider a motion, at least two members must be in favor of it. The first member stands and

makes the motion. The second member seconds the motion to show agreement that the motion should come before the assembly. Seconding a motion does not signify that the member is in favor of the motion; she simply wishes the subject to be discussed.

There are eight simple steps in presenting motion:

1. The member rises and addresses the chair.
2. The member is recognized by the chair.
3. The member states her proposalI move that (state the proposal)
4. Another member seconds the motion.
5. The motion is restated by the chair.
6. The chair then asks for discussion.
7. After discussion the chair puts the question to a vote: all in favor state yay, all opposed state nay.
8. The chair announces the result. The motion either passes or fails.

Next month I will give you information on frequently used motions. Until then if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me via email Parliamentarian@alafl.org or call me at 813-508-3822



I would like to thank all of the units, posts, squadrons, and friends that sent cards to myself and family of PCP Erna SCHWABE. I can not tell you how overwhelmed we have been with the outpouring of caring by everyone. She will be greatly missed by everyone. Erna was a strong woman, who never complained and when they asked her the pain level she always said a five. She is now with the lord, pain free.

Once this pandemic is over, I plan on having a celebration of life in Florida. I will give everyone plenty of time to plan ahead. Thank You again for all of your cards, prayers, and caring thoughts.

Art SCHWABE and Family

HONOR FLIGHT

STORY OF MARTIN GOUYD

Most Americans are unaware that the US Merchant Marine, those civilian crewmen and officers who sail commercial non-naval ships carrying cargo or passengers or provide maritime services, were the unsung heroes of World War II.

These daring seamen kept the Allied troops armed and fed while, essentially defenseless, were at the mercy of German U-boats.

During World War II the ships and men of the United States Merchant Marine transported across the oceans of the world the vast quantities of war materiel, supplies, equipment and troops needed to fight and win that war. The men of the US Merchant Marine were civilian volunteers who nonetheless died proportionally in numbers that rivaled or exceeded any branch of the uniformed military. Like the US Navy Armed Guard with whom they sailed, the unrecognized men of the US Merchant Marine made possible the Allied victory in World War II.

It is rare that Southeast Florida Honor Flight receives a veteran application from a WWII Merchant Marine. Martin Gouyd is that rare veteran. Mr. Gouyd, 94 years old and legally blind, has been rescheduled for his Honor Flight twice this year due to all trips being cancelled because of the Covid-19 virus. He is scheduled to fly on his Honor Flight on April 10, 2021 and is exceedingly excited about it. We caught up with this jolly, effervescent gentleman to hear what he did, and how he survived, his service in WWII.

In January of 1944, Jay Gouyd signed up at the age of 17 for the Merchant Marines out of a recruiting office in Buffalo, NY. After six months of basic training, he elected to go to radio school—all radio

operators on MM ships had to be FCC-qualified. Six months later he was on board his first ship, laden with wartime cargo to supply the troops—trucks, tanks, munitions. Luckily, they

were escorted through the churning winter seas of the North Atlantic by Canadian destroyer escorts. They unloaded their cargo in Cherbourg, France and being empty, cruised to Ghent, Belgium to load up on stones for ballast to make the journey back to the US. All the while, Mr. Gouyd experienced the nightly barrage of V2 rockets overhead as Germany actively fired at England.

After a week back in the US, their ship was loaded to the gills with 500-lb. aerial bombs to head back to the European Theater. Two days into the voyage, they were redirected to the Pacific Theater with the notification of Victory in Europe. They headed to Panama, through the canal, on to Eniwetok Atoll and Saipan, a forward bomber base. Then on to the Battle of Okinawa where Martin witnessed Japanese kamikaze pilots bombing ships all around him. By that time, their ship was outfitted with four anti-aircraft guns and he manned one of them. He said, if they had known what cargo they had on board, it would have been one helluva explosion!

Soon VJ Day came, thankfully, and their ship headed to the Philippines where all of the bombs were unloaded and sunk in the ocean. Their ship was outfitted for troop transport and was given to Japan to retrieve their POW's. Mr. Gouyd headed home. As he said, he was one of the lucky ones. He wanted to serve his country and met many wonderful people along the course of his service.

Most of the mariners who sailed against the U-boats are gone now. The few thousand who remain have often felt the American gratitude has never fully included them. But it's still not too late to remember, belatedly, how much we owe them. And Southeast Florida Honor Flight looks forward to the honor of celebrating the service of Martin Gouyd in April 2021!



SECRETARY/TREASURER

PATTY MCDONALD / BRANDI SEEBER



Greetings from Department Headquarters! We hope this finds you all well and in good health. Brandi and I have had numerous questions in reference to membership credit report and obligations, so we are going to address them in this article.

Obligations (aka Quotas)

Obligations are billed yearly to each unit around July per page 64 of the Department Unit Guide. They are for Rehabilitation, Education, Undergarments and Girls State. Rehabilitation is calculated at \$1.55 per senior member paid at close of books. Education is calculated at \$0.55 per senior member paid at close of books. Girls State is calculated at \$0.60 per senior member paid at close of books. Undergarment is calculated based on the unit membership grouping. The invoice also includes the yearly bonding fee (collected by Department and paid to National) of \$6.00.

The money collected goes toward the veterans in our VA hospitals, Education scholarships and the cost of Girls State. The money is earmarked for these programs and can not be used for anything else.

Obligation invoices are due upon receipt. Units will not be able to purchase a slot for Girls State without paying the obligations prior to receiving a Girls State slot.

Membership Credit Report (MCR)

Membership credit report is provided to the membership chairman via email each month. The MCR will provide the unit with a credit for any member who paid their dues with National. It will also include any credits or shortages from transmittals processed by Department.

The membership chairman is responsible for reviewing the MCR each month and reviewing any credits or debits. If the ending balance is a negative number in parenthesis it is a credit to be used on

future

transmittals. A positive balance (no parenthesis) is the amount owed to Department. A separate check will need to be submitted with MCR in the memo section. Please note you have 60 days to submit any corrections on the MCR to Department.

How to read the MCR

When a member pays their dues to National their membership card is mailed to them by National Headquarters. Department receives notification from National of all the members who paid in that time frame. Brandi Seeber (Department Treasurer) then adds the date to the MCR and the credit for the unit's portion of the dues. An email is sent when she receives the notification from National of who renewed online.

When a transmittal is submitted with credit being used it will show as a shortage for that transmittal on the MCR.

If a transmittal is submitted and a member could not be processed a memo will be sent to the unit explaining why and a credit will be shown on the MCR.

It is the unit membership chairman's responsibility to keep track of credits used in between MCR's being sent.

Units should have received an MCR summary titled "Important Information Regarding the MCR" with the 6.30.2020 MCR. If you did not receive or need an additional copy, please email Brandi at Treasurer@alafl.org.

We hope this is a helpful reference for your Unit. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at Secretary@alafl.org or Brandi at Treasurer@alafl.org.

CHAPLAIN

LOIS STACHELRODT

Those Angels who have left us will always be watching over our organization and our Veterans. Their legacies will continue as if they are still here with us. Let us always remember to check in on our friends and family during these trying times, they need us more than ever now.

We are American Legion Auxiliary Strong.



Recently Departed Members

DISTRICT 1

Marita Gist, Unit 240
Ida Welch, Unit 340

DISTRICT 3

Mary Gertrude Reichert, Unit 49
Barbara J. Ahola, Unit 383
Betty Anderson, Unit 383
Susan H. Anglin, Unit 383
Paulette Blish, Unit 383
Diane P. Meek, Unit 383
Sharon Peterson, Unit 383
Sue Rich, Unit 383

DISTRICT 4

Alice M. Morrow, Unit 155
Barbara Smith, Unit 230

DISTRICT 5

Hazel Barnes, Unit 250
Martha Nelson, Unit 283

DISTRICT 6

Susan Bauer, Unit 286
Louise Althen, Unit 347
Olive Brasted, Unit 347
Mary P. Brogan, Unit 347
Gayle Campbell, Unit 347
Roberta Gibson, Unit 347
Arlene P. Johnson, Unit 347
Roslie T. Mapel, Unit 347
Paula Palm, Unit 347

DISTRICT 8

Noreen Rios, Unit 113

DISTRICT 9

Lois Ellis, Unit 142

DISTRICT 11

Beverly Wagner, Unit 64

DISTRICT 12

Betty Maynard, Unit 163
Elaine Andrews, Unit 189
Joanie Rich, Unit 358

DISTRICT 13

Gail Gray, Unit 90
Catherine Stambouly, Unit 90
Pris Benson, Unit 110
Barbara Burke, Unit 110
Fanny DeMallie, Unit 110
Roxie Grissom, Unit 110
Ellen Hollsinger, Unit 110

Deanna G. Meade, Unit 110

Donna Moss, Unit 110

JoAnn Ryan, Unit 110

Hazel Smith, Unit 110

Jan Noonan, Unit 138

Janice Brough, Unit 274

Patricia Corbidge, Unit 274

Joan DeCicca, Unit 336

DISTRICT 15

Debra Wagner, Unit 186

DISTRICT 16

Erna Schwabe (PDP, Unit 120

Nicky Jaskulski, Unit 173

Joyce Juhnke, Unit 252

Lynd'l Dow, Unit 273

Shirley Peters, Unit 273

Mary E. Smith, Unit 273

••••• **The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF)** which
• had been scheduled for November 28 – December 5, 2020 in St.
• Petersburg, Florida will be changing formats from an in-person
• to a virtual, at-home event to be held the week of November
• 30. Due to concerns for public health related to COVID-19, the
• change permits Veterans to continue to be artistically engaged
• and to be recognized for their creative accomplishments.
•••••

GIRLS STATE

CHARLOTTE BASS

When we began working on our Girls State Program for the 2019-2020, we did not know what the future had in store for us. You adapted and were willing to do what it took to keep the program rolling. Districts and Units were all for holding phone conference orientations and changing dates if needed, but did not imagine at the time that Girls State would have had to be canceled. As we move forward to preparing for the 2020-2021 Girls State Session, we will hold true to the Girls State Motto: "Forward Forever, Backward Never, within ourselves our future lies."

Our 2020-2021 Girls State Session dates are June 9th-17th. The Program Action Plans, the Girls State Chairman Guide, Mid-Year, and End of the Year Reports are now online. Mid-Year Report should be easy this year, if you sent in a Mid-Year to your District Chairman or me, unless you have done something after reports were sent in, you will just need to indicate that on the report and return to your chairman. Mid-Year Reports are due to District Chairman December 1st, District Chairman are due me December 15th.

Schools are now in session, but are looking differently this year, with student being given a number of options on how they will attend school. You can begin contacting schools and giving them information about Girls State. As things progress you can determine how interviews will be held.

ALA Girls State Over-Quota Unit Registration All quotas (rehabilitation, education, Girls State, and sock) must be paid to Department of Florida by January 31st, 2021. The over-quota registration fee is \$400.00. Please note: Unit Obligations must be paid, and unit must be at charter strength (10 paid seniormembers) to register for ALA Girls State. Only units who have reached the 100% goal in membership by January 31, 2021 are entitled to apply for Over-Quota delegates. Quota amounts

and fees cannot be included with regular registration fees. If your unit chose to have Department hold your Girls State Delegate Money and you have paid your unit Obligations you need not reapply unless you want to send additional girls.

I will keep your District Chairman updated on changes and additional information as the year progresses. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email me.

In closing, I have included below an email I received this week from one of our Girl State Delegates. (Used with permission).

My name is Victoria Adams. I was one of the few lucky girls that was able to attend Girls State during the Summer of 2015. Nearly five years later, I am still in shock that I was chosen to be able attend Girls State. Considering that Girls State is as exclusive as it is, I was not initially chosen to attend. However, a friend of mine had stepped down from attending Girls State that summer because she had another opportunity out of state. This had given me the opportunity to attend. To this day, I even keep in touch with girls from Manatee City, and my two maroon Girls State polos hang in my closet still.

During the three days at the Florida Capitol, I was a member of the House of Representatives where I worked to pass bills including EpiPen Education and many others. At the end of Girls State, I was awarded Florida Girls State Outstanding Citizen for the City of Manatee in the State of Seminole. I proudly hang my plaque of recognition in my room to this day.

Without a doubt, Girls State changed my life forever. Before Girls State, I had wanted to study medicine in

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college. After Girls State, I decided to major in Legal Studies at The University of Central Florida, and never changed my mind after. Now, on August 1st, 2020 I will graduate as a First Generation college student with my Bachelor of Science majoring in Legal Studies from the University of Central Florida. After graduation, I will be studying for the LSAT and will be applying to various law schools throughout the state of Florida.

With all of my gratitude, I want to thank the American Legion Auxiliary for sponsoring my trip to Florida Girls State. Girls State is a program that will always have a special place in my heart. Now, years later, I am looking to become a part of the Girls State Program. If there is any way that I can get

involved in Girls State, please let me know the steps that I would be required to take if it is at all possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Victoria Adams

Girls State is the garden, our girls are the seeds, we plant them, nurture them, and watch them grow.



LEADERSHIP

DOROTHY WALSH

Hello fellow American Legion Auxiliary members. I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy in this crazy time. I just wanted to stop by and give you a few ideas of ways to pass the time when your life has been turned upside down and you can't follow your regular routines. Many of us have spent these times catching up with our reading. Well here's a suggestion that you can read, learn more about our great organization and once you take and pass the test you will receive recognition from your Department Leadership Chairman as well as your Department President, Ann King-Smith for a job well done. You can find this link at: <https://www.alaforveterans.org/Members/Leadership/> Once you complete the course, and take the test, send the test to me to be graded and I'll take it from there! Simple!!!!

Another great way to spend some quality time, while you're on that same web page, explore all the different programs that are available and get in-

depth knowledge of each program. This is great for all the new officers and program chairmen.

And here's a winner!!! <https://www.alaforveterans.org/Members/ALA-Department-and-Unit-Resources/>. ALA Department and Unit Resources.

Here you will find a wealth of information including the manual of ceremonies, how to start a new unit, how to revitalize a unit that's having issues and a big one that we've discussed at last year's Fall Conference "Conflict Resolution." I'll be going more in depth on that topic in future "Mail Calls".

Until we meet again face to face – or mask to mask, please stay safe and healthy and don't forget to check on your neighbors and fellow auxiliary members. It's a tough time for many and we all need to pull together and watch out for each. Be safe and stay ALAFLSTRONG!!!



VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

JANE HARDACRE



American Legion Auxiliary Hospital Representatives needed for the State of Florida!

Do you love helping veterans? Do you have time to volunteer? Are you interested but do not know much about what is required? Here are some facts regarding becoming a hospital representative.

1. How much time do I need to devote to the hospital?

The Compensation plan is based on a system of "classes" of hospital representatives, which allow more flexibility for our volunteer's busy schedules.

- A. Hospital Rep I requires a minimum time commitment of 72 hours per month, starting at \$300.00 per month.
- B. Hospital Rep II requires a minimum time commitment of 48 hours per month, starting at \$200.00 per month.
- C. Hospital Rep III requires a minimum time commitment of 24 hours per month, starting at \$100.00 per month.

2. What if there is a day that I cannot come to the hospital?

You can set your own schedule....plus...
Representatives shall receive the following PTO
after six (6) months continuous service:

- A. Hospital Rep I:
1 year service - 18 hours
2 years' service - 36 hours
3+ years' service - 54 hours
- B. Hospital Rep II:
1 year service - 12 hours

2 years' service - 24
hours
3+ years' service - 36
hours

- C. Hospital Rep III:
1 year service - 6 hours
2 years' service - 12 hours
3+ years' service - 18 hours
3. What are some of the other duties that I could be performing?

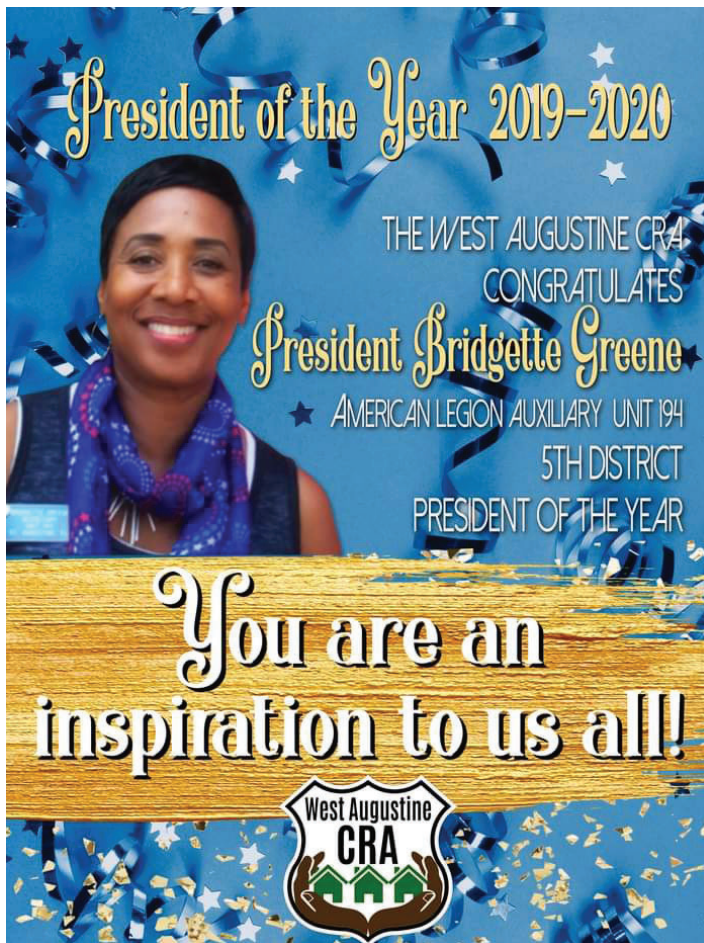
Each Hospital is a little different so the duties may vary from location to location.

- You may be asked to straighten, organize, and distribute personal hygiene and clothing from a closet or storage room.
- Accepting donations for veterans, you might help the public fill out donation form.
- Handing out snacks, beverages etc. to veterans.
- Working with the VA Head of Volunteer Services: volunteering for Events, filling in for another volunteer, or generally anything they may need.
- Work with The American Legion Auxiliary to inform them of anything that is needed for the Hospital.

Does this volunteer position sound rewarding and fulfilling? Are you interested in helping our veterans? Please reach out to me at veteransaffairs@alaf1.org for more info!

**WE NEED YOU & SO DO OUR
VETERANS!!!**

FLORIDA ALA HAPPENINGS



District 5: Bridgette Green, 5th District 2019-2020 District President of the Year was also recognized and conglulated for her many Community Services to Veterans and Children by The West Augustine CRA as St. Augustine Unit 194 President.



Unit 9: Bridgette Green, 5th District 2019-2020 District President of the Year was also recognized and conglulated for her many Community Services to Veterans and Children by The West Augustine CRA as St. Augustine Unit 194 President.

Bridgette Green, President of St. Augustine Unit 194, received President of the Year for 2019-2020 from 5th District President Annie Anderson. Bridgette was instrumental in setting up a partnership with Dunkin Donuts and the Unit delivers Donuts to the Veterans at the Clyde E Lassen VA Nursing Home in St Augustine every



Thursday. Even with the Coronavirus Crisis upon us, Bridgette and the Unit members, masked up and still delivered to Clyde E Lassen VA Nursing Home in St Augustine along with working providing a safe place for the Community Kids through their Kids Safe Zone located at the Post Home. Bridgette Green and the Unit were the first Unit in the 5th District to received a Proclamation from The St John's County Commissioners for the 100th Anniversary of The American Legion Auxiliary.



Unit 241: Unit 241 officer ballots were counted on Aug. 5th at Post 241 by Jerry Alexander, Post member (not pictured) in the present of these members. Faye Walden, Margaret Zeigler, Kaye Brown and Ann Shepard.



Unit 318: On August 18, 2020 we held a drive-by 90th birthday for a WWII veteran, he was so excited to see the Legion Riders on their bikes!



Volunteers sorting the donations



The Village Cheerleaders lined up with donations



All the volunteerst donations

Unit 347: It was a pleasure and honor to be part of a food drive at American Legion Post 347 in Lady Lake with the Legion Family. We had 34 volunteers from the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons and Riders. A huge thank you goes out to all of them.

The day started at 9:00 am. Vehicles would come through the parking lot and stop at the doors where the volunteers would take the donations and take them inside to be sorted for the three food banks that everything was going to be delivered to the next day. We had an estimated 155 cars come through the donation line. This included the 13-car parade from the Village Cheerleaders.

The food drive came about when Carol Pirone-Udell and Marcia Silva were shopping at a grocery stores and saw a young lady with a baby outside the store who needed food and diapers for the baby. Carol and Marcia went in and purchased some items and took it to the young lady. This got Carol thinking about how many people must be without work because of the Corona Virus. After speaking with other members of the Auxiliary and asking the Legion for permission to use the parking lot a date was set.

It was so heartwarming to see the outpour from all that came by and was so generous with their donations. The total amount collected was an estimated 8 ½ tons of food worth over \$42,000.00 as well as over \$4,000.00 in cash and gift cards.

It took eight vehicles to deliver to each of the three food banks. They were amazed at the amount of food that was collected and delivered.

ALA's selfless mission unites people of various backgrounds



STANDING TOGETHER: Denise Holmes (left), member of ALA Unit 199 in West Palm Beach, Fla. with Unit 199 President Elizabeth P. Robinson.

The ALA Stories blog series showcases positive American Legion Auxiliary experiences, thoughts, and ideas of ALA members. We hope these blog posts will inspire and encourage all who read them.

Differences don't have to divide people, especially when individuals unite under a shared selfless mission of helping others. Just ask American Legion Auxiliary member Denise Holmes, and her fellow Auxiliary members, of ALA Unit 199 in West Palm Beach, Fla. Holmes is the only white person who belongs to Unit 199. Her fellow ALA members there are black.

"I never worry about being racially different from everyone else in our unit. Each of us is there for the same reasons. We all want to honor and help our veterans and their families, and do positive things in our community. Unit 199 is a group of good people. I never have pressure to do something to impress everybody or try to fit in; I already fit in. And I have always felt welcomed in our group," said Holmes, who has been a member of Unit 199 since 2004.

Unit 199 President Elizabeth P. Robinson said she appreciates Holmes for her many positive attributes as a person, and as an ALA member.

"Denise is an awesome person. She is among the first in our unit to say, 'Here's what I can do to help.' Denise is here to serve, to follow the same mission and vision as the rest of us. We're united because we want to make the lives of veterans and military families better, and we want to work with our Legionnaires," Robinson added.

Holmes learned about the ALA from several ladies at the AME (African Methodist Episcopal) church she has been attending for years. They invited her to a meeting at Unit 199 so she could learn more about the American Legion Auxiliary. She liked what she saw and heard, and she became a member.

"When I joined, I felt that things just flowed. It still does. I love it. It's touching to see people doing something to honor veterans. They sacrificed a lot. And it's not just the person in the military. It's their spouse, their children, their parents, their siblings. Helping and honoring all of them is a worthy cause. I wanted to be part of that," she said.

"Unless they dissolve Unit 199, I don't see myself at another unit. I like this unit. I'm comfortable here. And when you go where you're comfortable, you get things done together," she added.

Holmes joined the ALA under the military service of her father, U.S. Army veteran George M. Thompson, who served during the mid-1940s. She has other relatives who served in our nation's military, including an uncle; a grandfather; and her husband, U.S. Air Force veteran Eddie H. Holmes, Jr., who served in the Korean War. Three of her husband's sons also served in the military.

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