



2026-2027

Penny Kanbara

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**DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA
CHILDREN & YOUTH
PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT
PLAN**

Committee Members

TARA HARRIS & SKYLAR HEYWARD

**PRESIDENT:
LINDA KNOBLACH-HARKNESS**

2026-2027 PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT PLAN

We are on a very important MISSION to promote the importance of the Children and Youth Program in the American Legion Auxiliary for the Department of Florida. Led by our Mission Leader, President Linda Knoblach Harkness, our emphasis will be on supporting and caring for our Children and Youth and a strong focus on those of our Military and Veteran families. **#M.A.S.H. – Mentorship, Action, Service, Heart.**
“Growing Today’s Children and Youth into Tomorrow’s Leaders”

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Children and Youth Committee is to work collaboratively with The American Legion to programs that protect, care for, and support children and youth, especially those of our military and Veterans. National Standing Rules 6, Core National Standing Committee.

DUTIES:

The duties of the Department 3rd Vice President shall be to serve as the Department Children and Youth Chair and to visit all children’s facilities sponsored by the Department. The Chair must also assist the Department of Florida Legion Children and Youth Chairperson with the planning and execution of the Children and Youth Picnic. Update and maintain the Program Engagement Plan and information on the website, submit at least 3 newsletter articles regarding the C&Y activities and encourage all members to support the C&Y programs that protect and care for them. It is the duty of every Unit and Department to have a Children and Youth Chair, and if they are of sufficient size, a Children and Youth Committee.

GOALS:

- To recognize and reward the positive actions of our Children and Youth, The American Legion Auxiliary with two special National Awards bestowed to youth nominated by units: The Youth Hero Award and the Good Deed Award.
- To Purple Up for Military Kids and Participate in the Military Child Table Setting with a special focus on working with local city officials for a Proclamation for the Military Child Table Setting
- Recognize the children of Military families by promoting: Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDHD) , an initiative honoring military child who may be experiencing separation from one or more parents due to a duty assignment
- Support the John Hopkins All Children’s Hospital
- Support other Children’s focused programs in the community like Camp Boggy Creek and Special Olympics
- Promote Department Chair’s special M.A.S.H bag projects to bring awareness to Bullying in local schools.

MISSION TIPS:

- Be creative and have fun, don't be afraid to share new ideas.
- Make sure you do not double-count your hours from another program, for example, Star Spangled Kids falls under Americanism.
- Review the program Engagement Plan with your unit, if you are applying for a Department award, make note of the requirements (especially regarding donations) so your unit can be prepared with motions or budget changes.
- Start counting your hours, money spent, in kind donations, etc. now and record them at each unit meeting to make the yearend report go smoothly.
- Look at your own community for ways to support the children and youth in your area.

MISSION M.A.S.H (DEPARTMENT CHAIR INCENTIVE)

The purpose of the M.A.S.H bags is to spread awareness to bullying of our children in our schools and local communities. M.A.S.H stands for:

- Make a Promise to be Kind
- Act with Respect to Everyone
- Speak out about Bullying
- Help Others Who are Lonely or Scared

Suggested items to be placed in the sling bags are : Affirmation Notebooks like You Matter, Rubber Wristbands promoting Kindness, a resource page regarding how to handle bullying , a small emotional "stuffie" . These items are just suggestions, but your unit can make them what they want to be. District Presidents will be given a bag to take back to the district to share with the units.

MISSION PURPLE:

April is the Month of the Military Child, plan early and work with your Post family to bring the community together to support Military families with fundraisers and awareness. Work with your schools to see if you can perform the Military Child's Table at the school and honor any Military Child in attendance. If you have schools in your area that have a large number of military children, ask the school if they can plan a Spirit Month focusing on different military themes to honor those children and their heroes.

Promote Purple Day on April 15 and explain the meaning of supporting Military Kids and encourage all to wear purple too. Ask your local city officials to proclaim April as the Month of the Military Child. Make sure to take photos and use #Purple Up

MISSION YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY (GOOD DEED / YOUTH HERO AWARDS)

Good Deed Award Criteria:

- Works on a project that demonstrates leadership in community service by planning, organizing, and executing
- Project must be initiated by the member being nominated
- American Legion Family membership is not required for consideration (They might be eligible for a NEW membership)

Youth Hero Award Criteria:

- Demonstrates a physical act of valor
- Serves as an inspirational Role Model for the organization and community
- American Legion Family Membership is not required

Award Template:

https://legion-aux.formstack.com/forms/youth_hero_good_deed_award_nomination

Make sure to submit and send these to National. Please reach out to C&Y Chair for assistance.

Search your local newspapers, schools, community Facebook groups, churches, and scout groups for any youth that may be eligible for these awards.

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MISSION COMPASSION IN ACTION:

Support John Hopkins All Children's Hospital by hosting fundraisers, donating needed supplies, volunteering at an event. visit a facility and bring awareness. (See Chairman's Special Award for more information)

John Hopkins All Children's Hospital Rep: Tricia Winegar : (727) 224-0471, or you may email: Alaflforthekids@gmail.com

Other Mission in Compassion Charities (These are on the Department Remittance Form)

Special Olympics: Ways to support include volunteering, donating for special events, hosting fundraisers, become a mentor, or even a coach or athlete.

Camp Boggy Creek: A special camp created for children with serious illnesses. The camp is free of charge to the families, and it is a place where they can go to feel like a kid again. They have onsite medical care at moment's notice if needed. Ways to help: Become a camp counselor, donate art supplies, host fundraisers, etc.

MISSION AWARDS:

National Award:

- **Unit with the Most Outstanding Unit Children & Youth Program Per Division**
- **All entries must be submitted to the Department Children and Youth Chair by TBD**
- **The unit narrative that you used for your year end report can be used for this award, but please follow the National Criteria, make sure to be specific and be detailed and include pictures.**
- **All entries must be emailed since all submissions to National are electronic.**
- **Indicate that this is you submission for your National Award and submit to 2026-2027 Children and Youth Chair Penny Kanbara childrenyouth@alafl.org**

Department Award:

Lois McFall Children and Youth Award (Expires 2029)

- **Children & Youth year end report must be submitted and include all required statistical information (monies spent, number of children helped, volunteer hours, and in-kind donations.**
- **Cash Contributions must be made through the Department of Florida Office and use the donation remittance form online.**
- **Narrative and supporting photos must be received by the Department Chair 30 days prior to Department Convention, MAY 26, 2027.**
- **PLEASE MAKE SURE TO FOLLOW ALL THE CRITERIA IN THE UNIT GUIDE, INCORRECT SUBMISSIONS WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.**

MISSION CHAIRMAN AWARD: COMPASSION IN ACTION (UNIT OR INDIVIDUAL)

- **Monetary donations to the John Hopkins All Children's Hospital**
 - **Supporter Level - \$500 - Recognition Ribbon**
 - **Gold Level - \$1,250 – Challenge Coin + Ribbon**
 - **Platinum Level - \$2,500+ - Challenge Coin + Ribbon + Certificate**
 - **Legacy - \$5,000+ - Challenge Coin + Ribbon + Certificate + Special Recognition at Department Convention.**
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MISSION CHAIRMAN AWARD: M.A.S.H BAGS

A Certificate and award will be given to the Unit that best participates in the M.A.S.H Bag Incentive:

- Explain how your unit received the items (fundraiser, donations, craft night)
- What items do your unit use for the bags? Were any of those have a special meaning for anyone in the unit?
- How did you distribute them (schools, church groups, etc)
- **INCLUDE A NARRATIVE AND PHOTOS**
- Submission deadline, 30 days prior to convention- **MAY 26, 2027**

MISSION CHAIRMAN AWARD: OUTSTANDING C&Y PROGRAM

Best Children & Youth Program in a Unit per membership grouping. A certificate will be given to the Unit that has the best all-around participation in the Children & Youth Programs

- Write a narrative of how your Unit Supported the Children and Youth programs that protect and care for them.
- How did your unit work with the American Legion to promote the Children and Youth program and projects that included the emphasis on Military and Veteran Children
- Include any Proclamations regarding Purple Up
- Include any submissions for the Good Deed Awards and/or Youth Hero Awards
- Include volunteer hours spent, donations and money spent, number of children assisted and any in-kind donations.
- Include the names of any Legion family and outside organizations names and projects that you participated in.
- Please include photos with your narrative

REPORTING:

Year end reporting deadline is TBD (based on a pending change from National)

- Unit reports need to include the Unit Year End Report Form, Unit Year End Impact Report Form, a narrative, photos, and any newspaper or magazine clippings. (SENT TO DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON) **DEADLINE TO SEND TO DISTRICT CHAIR APRIL 15, 2027**
- District reports need to include the district report form, District impact report form, and a consolidated narrative of all units report on the Children and Youth Programs and events held or hosted within the district. (DISTRICT REPORTS SENT TO DEPARTMENT CHAIR VIA EMAIL – INFORMATION BELOW)- **DEADLINE TO SEND TO DEPARTMENT CHAIR MAY 1, 2027**
- Included photos and flyers and any newspaper articles and proclamations.

- **Must be sent to Department Children and Youth Chair by TBD (pending change from National)**

CONTACT INFORMATION

2026-2027

Penny Kanbara

3rd Vice President

Children and Youth Chair

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