

**Children and Youth
Program Engagement Plan
2023-2024**



**Bells in S.E.R.V.I.C.E. for our Veterans,
Military families, Community and Children and Youth**

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The Children and Youth Program emphasizes protecting, caring for and supporting children and youth, particularly those of veterans' and military families.

WHO WILL BELL THE CAT?

The need to support our veterans' and military children and youth never ends. We want to encourage our units/members to support our children and youth in new and old ways. RING IN THE NEW! This Program Engagement Plan will list a few ways, but don't be limited. Our members are talented and creative, and each unit has the right people to come together to assist the children and youth in our communities.

1. Support Children and Youth in your Community

To distinguish and honor the positive actions of our youth, the ALA has two special National Awards given to the youth nominated by the units.

- **Youth Hero Award:** The American Legion Auxiliary wants to recognize the youth in our communities who demonstrate good citizenship through and act of bravery (i.e., evacuated a burning building, performing CPR, helped stop a bullying situation at school)
- **Good Deed Award:** This is a way to recognize a youth who demonstrates good citizenship through a good deed (i.e., raised money for a family who experienced a loss, calling 911, helped at the local dog pound)

Monitor newspaper, TV, social media posts, and neighborhoods for children and youth who have performed a heroic act. Work with the schools, churches, and youth groups in your area to help "find" these heroes. (The forms are on the website at alafl.org or legion-aux.org)

2. Support Military Children and Youth

- **Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2):** This recognizes military children who are experiencing extended separation from their military parent or parents. This separation could be due to deployment to a warzone, have a short tour or on an extended temporary duty assignment. "I'm a Hero 2" buttons, stickers or certificates can be given to these children. The link for the instructions for [KIDS OF DEPLOYED ARE HEROES TOO](#), the [Instructions for printing I'm a Hero 2 Stickers](#) and [Kid Hero 2 Certificate](#) are at alafl.org, programs, children and youth. Or you can order buttons through a commercial vendor.
- Coordinate with Family Readiness (Guard/Reserves) Military Base contacts to host an event (i.e., picnic, game night, dinner, or attend a Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Event), to honor these children and give them buttons, stickers, and or/ certificates.
- **Military Child's Table:** There are two opportunities to honor our Military Children. The first is September 15th on POW/MIA Day and April 15th Military Child Day. The link to the Military Child's Table Setting Ceremony is at alafl.org, programs, children and youth.
- **Month of the Military Child:** April is the Month of the Military Child. Please take this month to honor our military children. Reach out to Family Readiness, Areas Military Installations and

Schools to find children. April 15th is the “official” day of the Military Child. **PURPLE UP!** Wear Purple throughout the month, but most definitely on April 15th. Set the Military Child’s Table at your post or at an assembly in the school.

3. Support Children’s Hospitals

- You can 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 their health situations.
- For the knitters, crocheters and sewers, you can make hats, blankets, and stuffed animals for the children in the hospital (check with the hospital)
- Donate to John Hopkins All Children’s Hospital, St. Petersburg, via the donation remittance form.
- Contact the hospital/facility in your area and ask how your Unit can volunteer or find out what their needs are.

4. Camp Boggy Creek

- Camp Boggy Creek is a place where children can reach beyond their illnesses and enjoy the simple pleasures of childhood. The programs are always provided free of charge to the campers and families.
- **Host an Event:** Do you like to bake? Have dinner with friends? Wash cars? Play golf? All these events can be fundraisers to benefit Camp Boggy Creek!
- **Support Camp with Items from the Wish List:** From paper products to bug repellent, Camp Boggy Creek has a long list of needed items on an ongoing basis. Some are medical but most are the everyday items you’d expect. Use the Camp's Amazon Wish List to purchase needed items and have them shipped directly to the Camp.
- **Make a Boggy Creek Bear:** Do you like to sew. You can make a Boggy Creek Bear for the campers. **WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BOGGY BEARS AT CAMP?** Almost all the teddy bears are given to the campers and families. In the summertime, bears go to all the campers. During the spring, winter, and fall, the bears go to the campers and their siblings, who get to attend camp, too, for our family retreat weekends. This equals approximately 2,950 bears a year. A little Boggy Bear magic can go a long way! **WHAT DO I DO WITH MY BOGGY BEAR WHEN I AM FINISHED?** Please mail or deliver your completed items to the address below: Camp Boggy Creek c/o Camp Operations 30500 Brantley Branch Road Eustis, Florida 32737 Please include a note with your name and address, so Camp Boggy Creek can send you a thank you letter! Just throw in a note, and they will find it. There is no need to pin it to a bear –please **do not include any pins** in there after you took the time to remove all your sewing pins! **QUESTIONS?** Please call (352) 483-4200 extension 215 or toll-free 866-Go-Boggy extension 215. On behalf of the campers, thank you for your time, skills, and energy in making this Boggy Bear!

5. 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.

6. Child Welfare Fund

- The Child Welfare Fund’s mission is to give grants to youth-serving nonprofit organizations. American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is “Dedicated to the betterment of all children” 100% Per Capita Banner Program Request Form 2023 – 2024. Each American Legion post, American Legion Auxiliary unit, Sons of The American Legion squadron, American Legion Riders chapter or Eight and Forty

salon donating at least one dollar for each member during the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation's award year (1 June - 31 May) may receive a beautiful banner/streamer. To qualify for the 2023-2024 year a post, unit, squadron, riders, or salon must donate one dollar per member based upon its official membership total from their national organization as of June 1, 2023. The post, unit, squadron, riders, or salon has from June 1, 2023, to May 31, 2024, to submit this form, along with the donation, to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The form can be found at [CWF Banner Order Form 2022-2023 - fillable \(legion.org\)](#).

Special Olympics

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athlete, and the community.

It takes all of us to create a world of inclusion-athletes, volunteers, families, sponsors, coaches, the general public-who are willing to open their minds and hearts to provide new opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics does not charge a fee to train the athletes or to compete.

You can donate to Special Olympics by using the donation remittance form.

AWARDS

National Award Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Children & Youth Program (per division)

- **All entries must be submitted to the Department Chairman no later than May 1,2024. Late arrivals will not be accepted.**

Your Unit Report will be used for this award. Include pictures! Indicate this report is for the National award. Please submit it to me:

Linda Knoblach-Harkness

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Submissions must be emailed, because they have to be submitted to National electronically.

Department Awards

- **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 on the Award Rules[use the donation remittance form]).
Narrative to be received by the Department Chairman no later than thirty (30) days prior to Department Convention (May 15,2024).

Rules and guidelines are listed in the Unit Guide. Please Follow the Rules Exactly!

ZOOM

We will be Zooming the second Thursday of each month. Please join us! The goal is to have a special speaker so we can learn more about our role in serving our Children and Youth. Please email me so I can put you on the distribution list and send the monthly zoom meeting link.

Join our Facebook page (ALA FL Children & Youth)

Reporting

- **YEAR-END:** Unit Year-End Reporting form must reach your District Children & Youth Chairman by **April 1, 2024**. Please 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, 2024**.

Please contact me with any questions, that's why I'm here.

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