

JANUARY 2026

ALA FLORIDA

# PUBLIC RELATIONS CURRENTS



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January brings new calendars, new plans, and new intentions. But for the American Legion Auxiliary, the start of a new year isn't about reinventing who we are, it's about **recommitting to why we serve**.

Our mission doesn't need updating. It needs steady hands, open hearts, and members who understand that consistency is just as powerful as innovation. Every meeting attended, every Veteran supported, every youth encouraged, and every quiet act of kindness strengthens the foundation **we stand on together**.

Service doesn't always make headlines. Often, it looks like showing up when it would be easier not to. It looks like mentoring someone new, lending experience without ego, and remembering that progress is built one faithful step at a time. These are the moments that don't always get applause, but they are the ones that last.

As we move through this year, let's resist the pressure to "do more" and instead choose to do **meaningfully**. Whether your role feels big or small, visible or behind the scenes, your contribution matters. The mission moves forward because you do.

For 2026, we don't need a resolution, we need resolve. A resolve to stay connected, to support one another, and to **leave the Auxiliary stronger than we found it**. When we remain grounded in purpose, the future doesn't just happen, we build it.



**#HeartsAsOne**

[ALAFL.org](http://ALAFL.org)

## STARTING STRONG: PURPOSEFUL PR PLANNING IN THE YEAR AHEAD

*By Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC*

January is the perfect time to plan ahead. A little preparation now can make the rest of the year feel far more manageable for public relations chairpersons.

Start by familiarizing yourself with key dates in the veteran community. Observances such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Military Appreciation Month and the Month of the Military Child often bring increased media attention, events, and storytelling opportunities. Knowing these dates early helps you avoid last-minute scrambling and ensures your messaging is thoughtful and caring.

Once you've identified these dates, create a **simple editorial calendar**. This doesn't need to be complicated. A basic list of one or two communication goals per month. Examples include promoting an event, highlighting a program, or sharing a volunteer story. Planning content in advance allows you to pace your efforts and work within your available time.

Finally, **prepare early for busy PR seasons**. Some months will naturally require more communication support than others. For instance, the month of May is Military Appreciation Month, Memorial Day and also when your unit might be doing a concerted poppy drive. Gathering photos, drafting template messages, and identifying potential story ideas ahead of time can save stress later. Preparation also helps maintain consistency, even when volunteer availability changes.

Planning ahead doesn't require professional expertise – just intention. By staying aware of important dates, organizing your tasks, and preparing in advance, you help ensure your Unit's message is clear, respectful, and ready when it matters most.





## FREE TOOLS AND TEMPLATES FOR PR CHAIRPERSONS

By Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC

American Legion Auxiliary Unit PR chairpersons don't need expensive software to be effective. Many free tools are available that can help you stay organized, create polished content, and communicate more confidently. Free design platforms like **Canva** assist in creating flyers, social media graphics, and simple newsletters using pre-made layouts. **Google Docs** makes it easy to draft press releases, newsletter stories, and talking points while collaborating with other unit members in real time. For planning and organization, tools like **Google Calendar** can help track deadlines, events, and content ideas throughout the year.

Alongside these tools, having a few reliable **templates** can save time and reduce stress. The American Legion Auxiliary (National) offers a PR Toolkit that includes media templates and samples to promote events and patriotic holidays. National also offers resources for many of your unit's Committee chairpersons, including a Poppy Program Guide, VA & R Guide and others. Within those guides are tools that PR can use, too. Login to [Legion-Aux.org](https://Legion-Aux.org) to access these tools.

Having the right tool for the task is key. We hope you take a moment to explore these free tools and templates that are at your fingertips. You'll find you'll work more efficiently with less stress and more enjoyment.

The screenshot shows the 'MyAuxiliary MEMBER PORTAL' website. The header includes social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, a 'DONATE' button, and a search bar. A navigation menu lists 'FORMS', 'COMMITTEES', 'GUIDES', 'RESOURCES', and 'MEETINGS/TRAININGS'. The main content area is titled 'Media Templates' with a download icon. Below this, a note states: 'Click on a link to download form. All forms are in either PDF or DOC format.' The templates are organized into three columns: 'Awards' (Unit Member of the Year Recipient News Release Template, Youth Hero Good Deed Award Media Release Template), 'Flag Day' (Letter to the Editor, News Release Template), and 'Girls Nation/State' (ALA Girls State News Release Template). At the bottom, there are three more categories: 'July 4', 'Memorial Day', and 'MLK Day'.

## ETHICAL STORYTELLING: RESPECT, DIGNITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY WITH VETERANS & THEIR STORIES

*By Erin Hoffer, APR, CAPC*

As a volunteer public relations chairperson for a veteran service organization, you are often entrusted with **powerful stories**. These stories matter – but how they are told matters just as much as what is shared.

**Respect** and **dignity** should guide every **communication decision** you make. Veterans are not defined by a single moment, deployment, or hardship. When telling their stories, focus on their service, resilience, leadership, and continued contributions to their communities. Avoid language that sensationalizes struggle or frames veterans only through trauma. Your role is to honor their experience, not to dramatize it.

Equally important is knowing what **not to share**.

**Privacy** is not optional. Never assume a story is yours to tell simply because it is compelling. Personal details, medical information, and experiences of trauma should only be shared with clear, informed consent – and often, not at all. When in doubt, **leave it out**.

**Ethical storytelling** builds trust. Remember, many veteran members joined the American Legion to find camaraderie and a safe place among other veterans – all while giving back to the community. When veterans share their stories with you, they trust that their stories will be handled with care. As a communicator and representative of the American Legion Auxiliary, protecting that **trust** is one of your **most important responsibilities**.



*Photo by RDNE, Pexels*





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## LOVE IN ACTION: SERVING VETERANS EVERY DAY



By Virna Luke

February is often associated with love, cards, flowers, and sweet words. But in the American Legion Auxiliary, love shows up a little differently. Our love is expressed through service, commitment, and unwavering support for Veterans, military members and their families, children, and our communities. **Love in action** looks like hospital visits that bring comfort to those who have given so much. It looks like advocating for Veterans' needs, mentoring youth, supporting military families, and stepping in quietly where help is needed most.

What makes this kind of love special is that it doesn't wait for recognition. It doesn't require perfect timing. Simply look in our hearts and take action. Every program we support, every hour volunteered, and every dollar raised carries the same message: **you matter, and you are not alone.**

Service also reminds us that love is sustained through community. **We serve better when we serve together**, lifting one another up, sharing the workload, and extending grace when life pulls us in many directions. Compassion isn't just something we give outwardly; it's something we practice within our own Auxiliary family.

This February, let's celebrate love not just with words, but with **purpose**. Let's honor the heart behind our mission and recognize that every act of service, has the power to change a life.

Because when love takes action, it becomes legacy.



Unit 219, Fruitland Park, donation of socks, sneakers, and facemasks to Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital.

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*Follow Us!*



ALAFL Poppies



**JANUARY 2026**



## LITTLE MISS POPPY POPPY AMABASSADOR

Just a freindly reminder that now is the time to start working on your Little Miss Poppy and Poppy Ambassador's. (age 6-12) You can find the contest rules at [alafl.org](http://alafl.org) under programs/member outreach/poppy/poppy links

Proudly Presenting Unit 138  
Little Miss Poppy,  
Paige Sherman.



## POPPY POSTER CONTEST

Students (grades 2 to 12) showcase their artistic talents on an 11"x14" poster board using the poppy. One student in each category per division will be selected as a winner.

The link on our Department page is broken but you can find the contest rules at [legion-aux.org](http://legion-aux.org) under committees/mission outreach committes/poppy

## NATIONAL POPPY DAY MAY 22, 2026

The red poppy is a nationally recognized symbol of sacrifice worn by Americans since World War I to honor those who served and died for our country in all wars. It reminds Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms. Tons of information can be found at [legion-aux.org](http://legion-aux.org) under committees/mission outreach committes/poppy

### HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS

Contact your local legislative office and request a Poppy Proclamation.

Purchase ALA Poppy coloring books from Emblem Sales.

Contact local businesses for permission to distribute poppies on their premises.



Class I  
Sienna Salter  
Dept of Louisiana  
Southern Division

**SHARE YOUR POPPY  
ACTIVITIES WITH THE  
NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR  
UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS.**

**EMAIL YOUR .jpg FORMAT  
PHOTOS TO ME**

[poppy@alafl.org](mailto:poppy@alafl.org)  
KIM OAKS  
DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

*HAPPY NEW YEAR*

Made with PosterMyWall.com

ALAFL.org