

# AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY PROGRAMS

## Americanism

The Auxiliary's Americanism program promotes patriotism and responsible citizenship and strives to uphold and promote American ideals and the principles of democracy.

The goal of the Auxiliary's Americanism program is to educate every citizen on the fundamentals of American government, the Bill of Rights and the value of active, informed involvement in the home, in the Auxiliary organization and in the community. Most successful Americanism programs are cooperative efforts between an Auxiliary Unit and its community. Contributions donated to the Spirit of Youth Fund by individuals, organizations and members' estates, benefit young people through such programs as the Americanism Youth Conference at Freedom's Foundation and the National President's Scholarship program.

The Citizens Flag Alliance is an apolitical, non-partisan confederation of organizations and individuals who wish to protect the United States flag from acts of physical desecration. The Citizens Flag Alliance's goal is to pass a Constitutional amendment prohibiting flag desecration. The American Legion Auxiliary joined this effort in 1994 due to its belief that the flag is unique, deserving proper respect, care and protection.

## Auxiliary Emergency Fund

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is an excellent example of the Auxiliary's dedication to "Women Helping Women." The fund, established in 1969, is supported by contributions from Auxiliary Units and members. It provides temporary emergency financial assistance to Auxiliary members who have exhausted all other personal and community resources. For members who find themselves suddenly single, deserted, divorced, or widowed, with no skills to support themselves or their families, AEF provides immediate aide to help the member acquire new job skills through schooling or job training.

## Cavalcade of Memories

Auxiliary members feel an obligation to preserve the history and traditions of their organization. The Cavalcade of Memories was established in 1972 at the Auxiliary's Indianapolis Headquarters to house valuable, historical keepsakes collected and contributed by different Departments throughout the years. Today, more than 80 year's worth of Auxiliary memorabilia is on display in the Cavalcade and throughout National Headquarters.

## Children and Youth

The Auxiliary's Children & Youth program provides care and strives to improve conditions for all children. The program works to preserve the integrity of the family unit and takes a realistic approach to the needs of children by considering the physical and spiritual, as well as the emotional and educational aspects, of each situation. The Children & Youth program cooperates with many other public and private community agencies and organizations and supports essential legislation for children at the national, state, and local levels. In some cases, the program offers direct financial assistance and services to individual children or to the families of veterans. Auxiliary members also contribute to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, which was established in 1954 to fund special programs and projects, which emphasize preventative solutions to difficult children's issues. Educating members and the general public about these issues is a primary goal of the Auxiliary's Children & Youth program.

## Community Service

The Auxiliary's Community Service program is based on the premise that no organization has a right to exist within the community without giving something to that community in return. Community service helps to make our communities better places in which to live. Auxiliary members study community needs, recommend projects, raise funds and donate their time to accomplish their specific objectives. Special attention is given to the selection of each project to ensure that the work of other organizations is not duplicated. Auxiliary Units also provide assistance on Community Service projects sponsored by American Legion Posts and work with other organizations to implement practical, worthwhile projects for the benefit of the community. Some examples include, blood drives, first aid and CPR training, child safety programs, support for women in shelters, donations to shelters for the homeless, tree plantings, recycling programs, and disaster and emergency preparedness programs.

## Constitution and Bylaws

The Auxiliary's Constitution & Bylaws program encourages Auxiliary members to study and understand the organization's formal written policies and procedures, particularly as they relate to the rights and benefits of membership. Members are encouraged to review the Auxiliary Constitution & Bylaws on an annual basis and may submit ideas for review and possible change.

## Education

Auxiliary members believe that a solid educational foundation is the cornerstone of American freedom. The Auxiliary's Education program promotes quality education for every child and supports student in their desire to continue their education beyond high school. Auxiliary members work actively with educators and local schools to develop and maintain an educational system that serves the needs of all children at every level. Auxiliary volunteers sponsor and support state and national education legislation; establish new scholarship opportunities for students; alert eligible students to existing scholarship resources; help students identify career opportunities and professional job requirements; and encourage students to plan early for college and apply for scholarship opportunities.

## Girls State/ Girls Nation

Girls State is a nonpartisan program that teaches young women responsible citizenship and love for God and Country. Since the inception of the Girls State program in 1937, nearly one million young people have had the opportunity to learn firsthand how their state and local government works. High school girls, having completed their junior year spend an intensive week of study, working together as self-governing citizens at Auxiliary sponsored Girls State programs in every state. They learn how to participate in the functioning of their state's government in preparation for their future roles as responsible adult citizens. Two girls are selected from each Girls State programs to attend Girls Nation, a national government training program. Girls Nation "senators" meet for a week in Washington, D.C., where they run for political office, campaign for the passage of legislation and meet with state Representatives and Senators. Capping off the week of Girls Nation is a meeting with the President of the United States at the White House.

## Junior Activities

Junior Auxiliary membership for girls under the age of 18 is a training ground, which prepares young women for active adult membership. Junior activities and programs reflect and support the work of the Auxiliary and instill the ideals of the organization. The Junior program is an important step in the transition from childhood to responsible adulthood. At age 18, Junior members automatically are eligible for full, active membership.

## Leadership

The success of any organization depends largely upon the skill and competence of its leaders. Auxiliary members are vitally concerned with developing present and future leadership within the organization. Comprehensive training courses and materials are offered in every Auxiliary Department and by the National organization. Courses focus on fundamental management and communication skills and outline the basic responsibilities and leadership opportunities, which are available within the many programs of the Auxiliary. Units and Departments conduct leadership workshops with motivational speakers to increase enthusiasm for all Auxiliary programs.

## Legislative

Auxiliary members are encouraged to get involved and stay informed on local and national issues of special interest to the organization. They keep in close contact with their legislative representatives about issues, which concern veterans, young people and entire communities. Auxiliary members know there is strength in numbers. Many beneficial laws have been passed because of Legion and Auxiliary support.

## Membership

The Auxiliary's Membership program conducts ongoing recruiting to ensure the future growth and prosperity of the organization. Unit members work diligently to publicize and promote the benefits, objectives and activities of the Auxiliary and seek out those eligible women who might be interested in membership and active involvement in Unit activities. Units, Departments and Divisions vie in friendly competition against one another as they work toward reaching their individual and organizational membership goals.

## National Security

The Auxiliary believes in maintaining a strong national defense and endeavors to educate its members on all vital national security issues. In cooperation with The American Legion, Auxiliary members are briefed on a wide range of topics at local and national meetings and through publications and bulletins. Topics include national and civil defense; crime prevention; emergency and disaster preparedness; and environmental protection. The member's clear understanding of the issues helps to lay the groundwork for community-wide mobilization and support of various national security activities. National activities include the annual Awareness Assembly, a legislative forum in Washington, D.C.; POW/MIA Awareness; crime prevention; and local and worldwide support of USO activities.

## Past Presidents Parley

Members who have served the Auxiliary as unit, department and/or National Presidents are a valuable resource to the organization. As members of the Past Presidents Parley committee, they put their leadership experience to good use, offering guidance and/or counsel on any activity or problem requiring special support or emphasis. Committee members also maintain a scholarship fund for nurses and contribute to the "Women in Military Service" memorial. The Past Presidents Parley is a primary source of support for hospitalized women veterans.

## Poppy

The Poppy Program is the oldest and most widely recognized Auxiliary program. Each year around Memorial Day, Auxiliary volunteers distribute millions of bright red crepe paper poppies in exchange for contributions to assist disabled and hospitalized veterans. The program provides multiple benefits to the veterans and to the community. The hospitalized veterans who make the flowers are able to earn a small wage, which helps to supplement their incomes and makes them feel more self-sufficient. The physical and mental activity provides many therapeutic benefits as well. Donations are used exclusively to assist and support veterans and their families. The poppy also reminds the community of the past sacrifices and continuing needs of our veterans. Auxiliary members endeavor to explain the true meaning of this little flower to all those who receive it. The poppy has become a nationally known and recognized symbol of sacrifice and is worn and used by Auxiliary members to honor the men and women who served and died for their country in all wars.

## Public Relations

The Public Relations program works to establish and maintain goodwill within the organization and with the general public and promotes the Auxiliary's many worthwhile programs, events, activities and accomplishments through every available medium. Public Relations performs a dual function. Doing things well and making sure that the public is aware of the efforts and the results ensures continued community support and awareness of Auxiliary programs. Good publicity augments and supports the Auxiliary's recruiting efforts by attracting interested, eligible women and motivating them to become active members. A major communications vehicle is the Auxiliary's quarterly national magazine which is a primary source of information and means of communication between the local unit members and the organization's national leadership.

## Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation

The Auxiliary's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program provides service and financial assistance to veterans and their families. Auxiliary members are interested in restoring the veteran and his family to normal function - physically, mentally, socially and vocationally. Members provide emotional support and cheerful companionship while attending to the hospitalized, handicapped and homebound veterans' physical comforts. In a single year, veterans' programs utilized the services of more than 100,000 hospital field and home service volunteers who donated millions of dollars and millions of hours to assist veterans. The Auxiliary's gift shops and holiday parties have become an essential part of the VA program. The Poppy program provides therapy and a means of earning money for handicapped and hospitalized veterans and their families. Members work with legislators and congressmen to pass legislation to increase government benefits and assistance for veterans. Essential equipment and supplies are purchased by caring members to upgrade and facilitate the level of care provided in veterans' facilities. Members furnish job assistance, transportation, food, clothing and medicine to thousands of needy, handicapped and homeless veterans. The Auxiliary plays a necessary and important role in the life of America's veterans.