

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY  
DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS HISTORY  
SEPTEMBER 2021 – AUGUST 2022  
SANDI SCHENDEL

## DEDICATION



The Department of Texas History was dedicated to Myra J. Hester, a mentor, a leader, a friend, an inspiration, an encourager, a volunteer and so much more. Every day she lived the American Legion Auxiliary motto “Service Not Self.” It was her mission to serve others, and she did so faithfully, for almost 70 years.

Born October 10, 1923, Myra joined the American Legion Auxiliary Houston Unit 77 in 1953 and immediately became involved in their programs. She was elected to many offices including President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas, in 1968, and the National Southern Division Vice President in 1981.

For almost 50 years the Department of Texas has partnered with The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UT Health Graduate School of Bio-Medical Sciences to present Fellowship grants. This Texas-unique program began with an idea to build a state-of-the-art cancer research hospital in Houston. In 1953, Myra and other amazing women like Girls State Director Frances Goff formed a group to raise money for M.D. Anderson’s “East Wing” Children’s Hospital. They raised \$50,000. Myra was a founding member.

She was proud to become a staff member of Bluebonnet Girls State in 1967 and served until 2021, never missing a year for over 50 years. Myra says her greatest job and joy at Girls State was carrying the Auxiliary banner in the Flag Ceremony at the School for the Blind in 1967.

Myra never believed in “idle hands and not being the very best you can be.” In her later years Myra enjoyed senior living and the people she lived near. She could be seen every morning walking and checking on people she heard were ill. It brought her great joy to be needed and productive. Myra passed away November 19, 202

Lord of us all, may You help us to strive to do the best job possible in our work with the American Legion Auxiliary. May we continue our work with the same love and dedication to You as borne by the members who came before us.

Help us to be mindful to pass the torch to future American Legion Auxiliary members with pride in hopes that they will carry on the tradition of our faith and loyalty to God and country. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

I pledge allegiance to the flag  
Of the United States of America  
And to the Republic for which it stands,  
One Nation under God,  
Indivisible,  
With liberty and justice for all.

## THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

THE PREAMBLE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

For God and Country,

We associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars;

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and  
democracy;

To participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes  
of The American Legion;

To consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to mutual  
helpfulness.

**ELECTED DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS OFFICERS 2021 - 2022**

President	Teresa Simmons Copeland
Vice President	Myra Cooper
Secretary	Tina Hill
Treasurer	Sherry Harper
National Executive Committee Woman	Christine Trahan
Chaplain	Mary Tatman
Historian	Sandi Schendel
Sergeant-At-Arms	Vikki Tabor
Chairman of Pages	Jean Bennett

**APPOINTED DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS OFFICERS**

Parliamentarian	Rosie Cherry
Distinguished Guest Chairman	MaryAnn Paul



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY  
DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS PRESIDENT  
TERESA SIMMONS-COPELAND  
2021 – 2022



## **DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS 2021 – 2022**

Americanism	Maria Del Gado Cazares
Auxiliary Emergency Fund	Kim Palasot
Cancer Research	Sharon Phelps
Children and Youth	Carol Fleury
Community Service	Denise Yanus
Constitution and Bylaws	Kathy McLaughlin
Convention City	Myra Cooper
Education	Dee Merrick
Finance	Christine Trahan
Girls State	Ann Doan
Goodwill Ambassadors	Lynda Sutton
	Debbie Ralson
	Betty Bartosh
	Sara Herman
Human Resources	Sandra Winchester
Junior Activities	Nicole Ebner
Leadership	Candy Zavala
Legion Family Liaisons	Division 1 Mary Wackerow
	Division 2 Gerry Hince
	Division 2 Bonnie Fraley
	Division 3 Shelli Creech
	Division 3 Janice Matthews

Division 4 Alice Coleman

Legislative

Brenda Towers

Membership

Carlene Ashworth

Music

Tiffany Troxclair

National Security

Donna Dillard

Past Presidents Parley

Marty Peters

Photographer

Debbie Ralson

Poppy

MaryAnn Paul

President's Personal Page

Rosa Vasquez

President's Visual History

Janice Winters

Public Relations

Tiffany Troxclair

Scrapbook

Janice Winters

Social Media

Jennifer Copeland

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Janie Bennett

Ways and Means

Cathy Perry

## **NATIONAL OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENTS 2021 - 2022**

National Vice Chair, Community Service, Marty Peters

National Vice Chair, Legislative, Donna Dillard

National Finance Committee Member Paula Raney

National Membership, Southern Division Christine Trahan

National Security, Southern Division Holly Heatly

National Poppy, Southern Division, MaryAnn Paul

National Distinguished Guest Chairman Carlene Ashworth

## **NATIONAL AND DEPARTMENT AWARDS 2020 - 2021**

Americanism Award Certificate

Auxiliary Emergency Fund Award Certificate

Education Award Certificate

Poppy Award Certificate

Poppy Award Certificate

Poppy Poster Award Certificate

Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services Award

## **SECTION I – DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS HISTORY**

In Service, Not Self, the Department of Texas fulfilled the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary by supporting The American Legion at all levels. The lives of those who have given so much for their country – the veterans, the active duty military and their families – were improved tremendously through the loving, caring, dedicated and faithful service of the members of the Department of Texas. Communities benefited from the labor of love of the members. Patriotism and Americanism were practiced at functions, and military food drives and troop boxes overseas promoted national security. Tremendous support through donations raised funds for cancer research. Youth were involved in Auxiliary programs and students learned about the poppy, veterans, citizenship, and what it was to be an American. Scholarships were awarded.

Members were trained as leaders and mentored Juniors; they were advocates for veterans legislation; veterans stories were recorded; and members were strengthened through kindness, respect and cooperation with one another. Goodwill Ambassadors, Human Resources, Legion Family Liaisons, and Social Media Committees were utilized to improve relations and communication. Despite the pandemic members found new and creative ways to work Auxiliary programs. God was honored above all, and the foundations of justice, freedom, democracy and loyalty were lived.

The Department of Texas was truly blessed to have 254 dedicated, unwavering, unselfish and caring units with over 14,000 members, who put others welfare before their own. Deeply embedded in all hearts, was the desire, devotion, determination, perseverance, willingness, and love to make the lives of as many veterans, activity duty and their families, and communities as better as possible. Texas units worked tirelessly without taking credit but not always taking time to record events and statistics. Texans were doers who did not want to be statisticians. Texas confidently and proudly stated that the mission was undertaken successfully. Texas also proudly reached both membership goals: the National goal of 13,805 and the Texas goal of 14,508.

The history of the Department of Texas was divided into the following sections.

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Teresa Simmons Copeland was elected Department of Texas President in Austin, Texas on July 11, 2021 at the Department of Texas, American Legion Auxiliary,

101st Convention. She was humbled and honored to be elected, and was overcome with emotion, as she stepped onto the podium for her acceptance speech. She pledged to do her absolute best, with a caring heart and sowing seeds of kindness, as she thanked family, her ALA sisters, mentors, and friends for their support, leadership and guidance.

Other Department of Texas Officers elected were Vice President Myra Cooper, National Executive Committee Woman Christine Trahan, Chaplain Mary Tatman, Historian Sandi Schendel, Sergeant-At-Arms Vikki Tabor, and Chairman of Pages Josephine “Jojo” Foret. Jojo passed away in 2022 and Jean Bennett kindly and respectfully took her place.

National Appointments for 2021 - 2022 made by National President Kathy Daudistel proudly took office. They were National Vice Chair, Community Service, Marty Peters; National Vice Chair, Legislative, Donna Dillard; National Finance Committee Member Paula Raney; National Membership, Southern Division Christine Trahan; National Security, Southern Division Holly Heatly; National Poppy, Southern Division, MaryAnn Paul; and National Distinguished Guest Chairman Carlene Ashworth

Lastly, honored were Past National President Ione Kubby (D) (1974 – 1975), Helen Holcumb (D) (1993 – 1994), Katherine Morris (D) (2003 – 2004), and Carlene Ashworth (2010 - 2011). The Department of Texas was privileged to have had

several Past Southern Division National Vice Presidents Myra Hester (D) (1981 – 1982), Mary Lahaie (D) (1995 – 1996) and Lynda Horton-Turk (2010 – 2011).

At the post-convention meeting, President Copeland appointed Parliamentarian Rosie Cherry and Distinguished Guest Chairman MaryAnn Paul. Program and standing committees were announced as well as brand new committees: Goodwill Ambassadors, Human Resources, Legion Family Liaisons, and Social Media.

In addition to the usual goals of increasing membership, implementing programs and assisting veterans, President Copeland came into the year with several very specific goals. She wanted to increase communication between the Legion Family, to work smarter not harder by taking advantage of technology, to make online access in the Department of Texas more available to members, and to raise funds for her special project, which was to sponsor at least one shelter dog to be trained as a service dog for a Texas veteran through K9s for Warriors in San Antonio.

President Copeland's theme, which was depicted on her presidential pin and membership T-shirts, was "Honoring Their Service and Spreading Seeds of Goodwill" depicted by a Southern Mason jar filled with a Poppy to honor veteran's service, a Sunflower to spread seeds of goodwill, a Bluebonnet to represent the Great State of Texas and an American flag to remind all of why the Auxiliary were here. Her membership theme was "Growing Our Membership by Cultivating Kindness" represented by the same three flowers in the center of Texas.



For her special project President Copeland chose K9s for Warriors, the nation's largest provider of trained service dogs for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries, PTSD and/or military sexual trauma. K9s was determined to end suicide among veterans. Her personal project included the sale of RED (Remember Everyone Deployed) T-shirts which she encouraged members to wear every Friday. The proceeds went to K9s for Warriors.

President Copeland also had colorful membership T-shirts printed up, depicting her flower-filled mason jar and her presidential theme "Growing Our Membership by Cultivating Kindness." Each division was unified by their individual color but all members were unified by the presidential theme depicted on the shirts. President Copeland encouraged members to wear RED (Remember Everyone Deployed) T-shirts every Friday to remember those military who were far from home. Later Department sold Purple-Up T-shirts to support the military children initiative Purple Up for Military Children during April 2022, the month of the Military Child. Department easily sold lots and lots of T-shirts this year that benefited veterans, military youth and K9s and helped provide needed monies for the Department General Fund.

Juniors held a nice meeting at the 2021 Department Convention, visited the Texas Capitol, and enjoyed a pool and pizza party sponsored by the Sons of the American Legion. Juniors collected over 300 items in their food drive for military bases and raised \$1,400 toward the purchase of diapers, milk and food for the food bank.

Their newly-elected officers produced a video introducing themselves to promote membership.

The Honorary Junior officers elected were President Brianna Widener, Vice President Karli Trahan, Secretary Brealey Nieto, Treasurer Mary Kate Troxclair, Chaplain Kayla Cleveland, Historian Erinn Bosley, Sgt-At-Arms Lauren Ballay, and Assistant Sgt-At-Arms Alexa Crawford. The Membership Committee Chaired by Mary Kate Troxclair were Division 1 Mary Kate Troxclair, Division 2 Karli Trahan, Division 3 Lauren Ballay and Division 4 Alexa Crawford.

President Copeland's first order of business was to attend the American Legion baseball finals in League City in late July. Her hometown of McAllen was in the finals against League City, and although they did not win, she was "Valley Proud" (President Teresa comes from the South Texas valley) to bring greetings at the banquet and to throw out a pitch at the first game, along with the American Legion Department Commander Bret Watson and Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Tom Arista.

August 2021 brought a tough budget planning meeting in Austin with President Copeland, Vice President Cooper and the Finance Committee. Following hours of discussion on current funds and expected income and expenditures, the Finance Committee completed a budget that would be proposed to the Department Executive Committee meeting in September. Periodic, productive budget

meetings were held throughout the year to assure Texas was on track and remaining fiscally sound.

Department had a team of talented web artists that updated the website and added special features that made it more user friendly. Throughout the year Department learned of special recognitions and programs and placed them under the newly created section “Spreading Seeds of Good Will.” Good works were featured there and throughout this history.



Unit 539 Vice President Linda Marie Doege proudly presents the Youth hero Award medal and certificate to Lane Mokry in July 2022.

In July Unit 539 St. Hedwig presented a Youth Hero Award to Cub Scout Lane Mokry, Age 9, who saved his 3-year-old cousin Claire Corona from drowning. Lane

was celebrating his birthday at an RV park in Port Aransas, Texas on June 1, 2020, while a group of parents and children were enjoying time at the swimming pool. Claire fell into the deep end of the pool and Lane realized that Claire did not know how to swim or even cry for help. He ran over and yelled for Claire's mother to alert her to the emergency. Claire was quickly retrieved from the bottom of the pool and suffered no injuries. If it were not for Lane's quick action the outcome could have been tragic. Due to Covid the unit was not able to present his medal and certificate until late July 2022.

Later Unit 539 held their 6th Annual Arts and Crafts Sale where they set up booths, prepared and served food and monitored their Silent Auction and Mystery Tree Raffle with half of the proceeds going to their scholarship program. With the funds, they were able to award two \$500 scholarships to local school students. Unit 539 also received two applications for the Spirit of Youth Scholarship and submitted Maley A. Rokas, who was one of five in the entire country to receive a \$5,000 National Scholarship.

San Antonio VA Medical Center Rep Rosa Vasquez was recognized in July for her many years of dedicated volunteer service with a plaque "In Recognition of Lifetime Achievement of Outstanding Volunteer Service to Veterans." Due to the pandemic, the reception for the awards at the Fort Sam Country Club was not held; however, Jason Gray, Chief of Voluntary Services, mailed the award to her. Rosa was an outstanding volunteer who did all she could for her veterans with a loving,

giving heart. She continued to serve at the San Antonio VA Medical Center with Rep Janette Smith. Together, with the help of unit donations, they filled many wishes for the veterans there.

The National American Legion Convention was held in August 2021 with President Copeland, Vice President Cooper, and Texas delegates and alternates in attendance. The delegation attended meetings and proudly marched in the Texas parade. It was exciting to be present when the American Legion voted Texas' own Paul Dillard National Commander for 2021 – 2022. What a thrilling day as Texas delegates marched through the hall waving Texas flags and singing “Deep in the Heart of Texas.”

In August President Copeland sent units a sobering letter regarding the 2021 – 2022 budget, using numbers everyone could understand. She calculated the dollars generated by the expected year's membership and lined out exactly where those dollars would be spent. The budget was tight. She laid out a plan to accomplish this by working on and increasing membership, soliciting sponsors for big events, and encouraging donations to the Department General Fund. Department must remain fiscally sound to continue programs. These budget strategies were followed, promoted and funneled down to the units by the Department Executive Committee, Division and District Presidents and the Standing and Program Committees. This resulted in a successful year where all

obligations were met, and veterans, active duty and their families received the care and assistance they needed. Children, youth and communities benefited as well.

The Membership Committee, headed by Former National President Carlene Ashworth and staffed by Past Department Presidents Paula Raney, Mary Lee Waddell, and Gayle Simpson, immediately went to work following their appointment. The committee held meetings and formed a strong two-pronged approach. Revitalization Teams worked in the field helping struggling units plan and implement projects that would encourage, motivate and inspire members to recruit others and to get their communities involved. Program suggestions to units included the Poppy program, community food drives, school supply drives and seeking out veterans who were impacted by the pandemic. Secondly, the committee presented monthly challenges to members, units, district and divisions to bring members back to the unit and to encourage others to join. The committee also created the catchy phrase ““Who Do You Know?”” and distributed buttons with President Copeland’s beautiful sunflowers for members to wear. The buttons encouraged conversations and increased membership.

President Copeland had full confidence in the Membership Committee and actively participated whenever and wherever she could. She made phone calls, sent emails and discussed membership at meetings and conventions. There were less than five units not in good standing due to the committee’s hard work.

The committee had a lot of ground to cover as Department of Texas was divided into four divisions, composed of 22 districts and those divided into 254 units. The National membership goal was 13,805 members and the Texas Goal was 14,508. Texas had a big challenge but success was guaranteed by committed committee members.

Membership Challenge #1 was an Early Bird Recognition where every unit with 25 members by August 31, 2021 was entered into a drawing for \$100. A lucky unit won and used the proceeds to support their veterans projects.

Membership Challenge # 5 was the Top Recruiters Award to every member signing up 10, 15 or 25 members between September 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. All membership awards were handed out throughout the year to winning units but Top Recruiter Awards were presented at the Department of Texas Convention held in Austin, Texas in July, 2022.

The Department Public Relations held Challenge #1 to units to post pictures from the 2021 Department Convention, tag Department on social media and add #PRchalleng. The unit with the most likes took home the award, with many units participating.

Unit 592 of San Antonio Sgt-At-Arms Mary Helen Enriquez knew first hand of a young high school student name Odin, who was friends with her son who was

affected in a most profound way. Both of his parents passed away from Covid-19 and he was left with his almost one year old baby brother. The young man and his baby brother lived with his grandparents who were now responsible for their futures. Unit 592 collected \$400 of school supplies to take care of him for the entire Freshman year and well into his future years of high school.

In September San Antonio VA Rep Rosa Vasquez and Dep Janette Smith distributed \$350 of donations from Unit 592 to their VA female items including bras, leggings, underwear, slippers and tops.

Also in September President Copeland presided over the Department Executive Committee who listened intently to a thorough explanation of current and predicted income and expenses from the Finance Committee. A successful and informative Presidents School was held prior to the Business Session. After much review and discussion the 2021 – 2022 annual budget was approved. Girls State Director Lori Swann laid out the proposed Girls State budget as well; it was unanimously approved with only a few questions. VA&R Chairman Jane Bennett announced the lottery ticket hat had raised \$1,500 while Finance Committee Chairman Norma Szekely reported \$4,000 had been raised this weekend for convention sponsorships, Purple Up T-shirts, Poppies, Children and Youth, AEF and hotel raffle. The Sons raised \$1,372 in their “Hair Cuts in the Pool” fundraiser. Units were encouraged to collect dimes for AEF.



Highest membership was announced; Unit 19 Midland, District 16 and Division 2 came out on top. DEC voted to remove the suspension from Units 248, 85 and 547 but resuspend Unit 198 as well as closed three Unit 460 Castorville, Unit 615 New Caney and Unit 194 in Anna.

Following a presentation by Poppy Chairman MaryAnn Paul regarding the need for food by active duty military and veteran families in Killeen at Ft. Hood, a motion easily passed to donate \$3,000 a month for 10 months from Poppy Funds to the Army Services YMCA (ASYMCA) to purchase supplemental food for veteran and military families in need.

Department committed a total of \$30,000 that purchased as of March 2022 over 20,000 pounds of food assisting more than 500 families in need. Throughout the year units also contributed by donating non-food items such as cleaning supplies and delivered them to ASYMCA. These items were included in the monthly food bags along with baby formula that was somehow secured by units during the baby food crises. Thank you cards with the Auxiliary emblem were placed in each bag. Department also reached out to local posts in the Ft. Hood area to see if they could cover the first year membership dues of any veteran interested in joining.

Discussion was also brought forth by Poppy Committee Chairman Paul, that the poppy maker was in need of a vehicle to pick up supplies and deliver them to

Department. Following discussion DEC voted to purchase a vehicle for the poppy maker.

The Juniors held two service projects this weekend. For one they collected over 50 coats for military families, and for the second socks, gloves, hats and scarves were gathered and later delivered to VA Hospitals.

Wanting to keep the meetings informative yet fun, President Copeland threw a garden party where members dressed up in gardening attire. Program and Activity Committees set up tables where attendees could answer questions for prizes. The party was well attended with all enjoyed their gardening. Following the garden party, a formal and solemn initiation of members was conducted. One "new Member," who had been a member for over 30 years, was initiated for the first time. What an honor for President Copeland to assist in this initiation ceremony.

Also at September 2021 DEC President Copeland issued a challenge to Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Tom Arista. Whoever collected the most dimes for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund by the January 2022 Mid-Winter Conference would toss the loser in the pool. Time and money would tell who won that contest. A little hint? Madam President. This challenge was also directed to units by AEF Chairman Kim Palasota encouraging units to place empty 2 liter bottles in meeting rooms, posts or businesses to collect dimes for AEF. She

reported National had already distributed \$40,000 to disaster-stricken members this year.

Sometime during the DEC Conference, Madam President's beloved stuffed dog and mascot "Blue," who really was blue, was kidnapped when no one was watching him. She put out a rescue call for all to donate to his ransom fund. She challenged units to donate \$25 by Veteran's Day for a chance to win \$100; the monies donated would support K9s for Warriors in San Antonio. During DEC \$443 was raised for Blue's ransom. Blue's kidnappers eventually returned him to President Teresa at the Department of Texas July 2022 Convention in Austin, Texas once the \$2,000 ransom was paid. All in fun, the money went to K9s for Warriors.

Department quickly recognized a need during the pandemic for units to access meetings differently, so the Public Relations Committee streamed the Department Executive Committee meetings live Facebook via Zoom so members could attend without the fear of contracting Covid. These streaming sessions continued at Mid-Winter Conference, training sessions, meetings and major events, allowing more members to attend events electronically, and therefore benefiting from the information distributed and training.

The Membership Committee kept the renewal and join new members momentum going and issued Challenge # 2 for Patriots Day Recognition with every unit with

50% of goal by September 11, 2021 winning cash. The winning unit was awarded \$100.

In September, President Copeland had the honor of overseeing the election of officers in the newly formed District 19, along with the Division 3 President, Yolanda M. Garcia. Leadership training was conducted at the convention.

A member of Unit 19 Midland was pivotal in getting "Daniel's Law" or HB119 signed into law in the State of Texas. This law, which went into effect on September 21, 2021, made it illegal in the State of Texas to deny life-saving organ transplants for those with special needs or disabilities, who were otherwise healthy enough to receive the organs needed to improve their quality of life.

Texas State Representative Brooks Landgraf from Odessa authored the bill. He stated "House Bill 119 seeks to ensure that no Texan is ever denied an organ transplant based solely on their disability. This idea was brought to me by a native West Texan who tragically lost her brother, Daniel, in 2015 after being denied a lifesaving organ transplant due to his disability. What happened to Daniel and his family was unacceptable and should never happen again in Texas," Landgraf said in a statement. Texas State Representatives John Turner, James White and Justin Holland were joint authors for the bill.

Unit 596 worked in conjunction with the Chinese American Citizens Alliance National organization to honor Chinese Americans who served during World War II. They joined in the identification and recognition of approximately 20,000 veterans who served in branches of United States Armed Forces at that time. On December 9th, 2020 Congress awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to Chinese American veterans of WWII in recognition of their service, and on September 5 2021 the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's Lodges in San Antonio, Mississippi, and Houston sponsored a ceremony . Our Southern region had veterans attend from nine Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. A big thank you to Unit President Dorothy Chow for the hours she and her unit spent on this outstanding event.

Department of Texas held two extremely successful fundraisers in connection with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department of Texas Convention held in July 2022 in Austin, Texas. A raffle was held to defray convention expenses and the winner would have their three-night hotel stay paid for, including Membership Luncheon and VA&R Breakfast tickets. One lucky winner would be chosen. (We won't let the cat out of the bag but her name was Connie.)

The second fundraiser also supported defraying costs of the Department Convention. Sponsors were solicited at platinum, gold, silver and bronze levels. Individuals received their name, unit and a message with donations from \$25 to over \$100; units, districts, and divisions received recognition plaques at levels from

\$50 to \$350; and corporate sponsors secured plaques at donation levels \$250 to over \$2,500 receiving plaques and certificates. All would be recognized during the 102<sup>nd</sup> convention with names and logos on a banner and would receive tickets to the Membership Luncheon, VA&R Breakfast and convention registration.

Because of these sponsorships convention delegates would be able to purchase affordable luncheon tickets to celebrate the membership milestones and the VA&R accomplishments. Over \$7,000 was raised.

Due to Covid-19, National canceled the in person Department Leadership National Conference and opted for a President's retreat, so in October, President Copeland attended the retreat in Kentucky for a two-day gathering of Department Presidents. Later that month, she was scheduled to attend the District 12 Fall Convention in Mansfield Unit 624 but unfortunately, had to cancel. She was, however, able to attend the District 15 Fall convention in Harlingen.

The Membership Committee issued "The Great Pumpkin Challenge" in October 2021 which gave awards to Division 4 and District 16 Presidents, with the least zero units and least units under 10 members, respectively. Another challenge awarded prizes totaling \$135 to seven units who recruited 27 new members by wearing the "Who Do You Know?" buttons.

In October Pasadena Unit 521 Member and Former National President Carlene Ashworth and National Executive Committeewoman Christine Trahan received a call for help from YES Prep North Central (K-12) Houston Charter School District. The school had students classified as homeless and low income who needed warm coverings for winter. Out of 507 students 403 were in need of a blanket. Carlene and Christine ordered the \$10 blankets online and delivered them to the school on October 20, 2021. Auxiliary members donated in force and enough blankets were purchased to fill the needs of every child at the school. President Copeland collected over 250 blankets from members of the 15<sup>th</sup> District. Over \$5,000 was donated toward this successful cause.

Throughout the year Department of Texas sponsored the Youth Hero/Good Deed Awards for units that recognized local youth heroes and do-gooders. Units were encouraged to identify youth in their communities and schools who were active in community service. One young man was recognized for collecting over \$300 in change and donating it to the Humane Society while a Junior President sold candy rolls, jams and jellies and raised almost \$2,000 which she donated to Camp Hope and Patriot Paws.

Youth Hero Awards were given to two children who saved people from a house fire. A Girls Scout was honored for rescuing a neighbor, and a two-year old boy was given an award for alerting his parents of a fire in their home during the night. He saved his parents and four brothers and sisters. Two young boys rescued their

four year old cousin who was found face down in a pool. One pulled her out of the water and the other lifted her up so the water ran out of her mouth. Another honor went to a youth who saved a child who fell in a swimming pool.

Texas had more poppies than ever in 2021, so a “BOGO” was offered to units if they purchased 100 poppies. They received 100 free poppies. Those six veterans making poppies in Texas were very productive this year as they were available to make poppies all year long. Department proudly shipped over 100,000 poppies to units who distributed them throughout the state. 32,606 poppies were distributed raising \$81,163 for the Department Poppy Fund.

Members enhanced the lives of veterans and their caregivers, survivors and family members by volunteering in VA hospitals and clinics, retirement homes and with family members throughout the year. Units assisted veterans in their rehabilitation with donations of yoga equipment, healing CD's, massage chairs, musical instruments, gardening tools, arts and crafts, hobbies, games, and bingo to include movie nights, sporting equipment and more. “Shows of Support” hunting trips and “Warriors Weekend” fishing trips were sponsored by units, as were Honor Flights for veterans and caregivers to Washington, DC.

In October a ransom note was sent to President Copeland warning that the kidnappers did indeed have beloved stuffed dog “Blue” and were upping the ransom to \$2,000. It was due no later than December 31, 2021 or it would be



“curtains” for Blue. The note further stated that Blue was in good hands, but if President Copeland wanted to see him again, she had better fork over the ransom, and quick. The ransom note was signed by “You will never know” and it ended with “Boo!” Money continued to be donated for Blue’s rescue.

Cancer Research sent out greetings in October. They challenged members, not with raising money, but by writing stories about their experiences with cancer and how it impacted their lives or the life of someone dear to them. Members were asked to send in stories that would later be compiled in a special bound journal to be presented to Madam President Copeland at the Department of Texas Convention in July 2022. The committee discovered what they already knew - that almost everyone was touched by this dreaded disease. Too many touching and heart-wrenching stories were received.. A beautiful bound journal was prepared and presented to President Copeland at the convention.

Dallas VA Medical Center Rep Teresa Hill reported volunteers helped with the National Cancer Survivors Day by providing pink ribbon cookies as well as snacks for Dialysis patients. The veterans were grateful for the goodies. Houston Rep Jo Ann Crawford reported “Thank you” luncheons were held during National Breast Cancer month with gifts for veterans.

Unit 154 in Pflugerville held a Seats and Feets Drive where they collected new socks and underwear, shorts and sweat pants for area school children in

Pflugerville. Other donations of these items were made to the Circle of Hope Community Center for those children in need as well as to school nurses in the Pflugerville elementary schools to help with accidents that happen at school. Nurses and students in need were thankful for the donations.

October 20, 2021 found Texas in 4th place in the Southern Division with 49.37% as reported Southern Division Membership Chair and Texan Christine Trahan. Tennessee remained in 1st place with 56.29%. They would be hard to beat.

Unit 554 hosted their annual “Keep the Spirit of ’45 Alive” event in October with guest speaker Robert Wehnert. Mr. Wehnert spent his career in the printing business, never telling his children about his experiences in WWII, but at 93, he decided he owed it to the soldiers who didn’t make it home, to share his own story. What an inspiring story it was. Since 2018 he has volunteered at the Lone Star Flight Museum, chatting with visitors about his experiences.

At the 12th District Fall Convention, Communities in Schools Counselors Megan Jimenez and Kimeeka Brown spoke to delegates about the programs offered to families in need. The organization supported students and families at Lucyle Collins Middle School . Along with assisting students, they also provided food and other necessary items to families as well as counseling. Attending with the representatives were Elisa and her brother Cordero who shared their story of how Communities in Schools helped their family when their father lost his job during

Covid. The family was in need of food and clothing, and Communities in Schools stepped in and assisted the family and helped members survive the horrors associated with Covid. Unit 297 assisted this organization by donating funds that went to needy students and families. Delegates saw first-hand how important this organization was in public schools.



Expectant mothers from the Fort Worth Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort worth displayed their baby shower cakes as 12 District President Cheryl Harrell looks on.

Also in October the 12th District participated in a drive-by baby shower at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth at their Fleet and Family Center. This Military and Family Support Center was part of a large network of agencies, services, and partnerships that supported family readiness with key resources for

military families. Units in the 12th District donated much needed baby items including baby food and formula, clothing, diapers and more. Cute diaper cakes were created out of disposable diapers for the expectant mothers. More than 10 “mommies to be” were present to receive the baby items and thanked Auxiliary members for their donations that will greatly assist these military families.

The Education Committee issued a “100th Days of School Challenge” to units to support children by donating \$100 to the Department Education Scholarships. The actual 100th date varied between school districts but most classes reached their 100th day between the end of January and mid-February. The day was a symbolic celebration of students’ academic and personal achievements. Those supporting education would be entered in a drawing for \$100 that would be drawn on February 14, 2022. Several units took the honors.

The VA&R Committee issued several challenges to units this year. Challenge #1 was their Christmas Assessment Challenge. Units who paid their assessment by Veterans Day would be entered in a \$100 drawing. Those units received a certificate of recognition. District and Division Presidents with 80% units by Veterans Day also received a certificate. One lucky unit won \$100.

In November, President Copeland collected blankets from members of the 15<sup>th</sup> District. accompanied by National Sons of the American Legion Vice Commander, 8<sup>th</sup> District Sons of the American Legion Chaplain, and Auxiliary members from

Units 33, 521 and 472. Over 250 blankets were distributed to students at YES North Central Elementary in Houston. Following this event, President Copeland joined National Executive Committeewoman, Christine Trahan along with members of Beaumont Unit 33, to place 1,800 flags at the Forrest Lawn Cemetery on veterans' graves on Veteran's Day.

The Membership Committee issued Challenge # 3 - Veterans Day Challenge – where they recognized five units with 75% of their goal by November 11, 2022 with gifts and certificates.

Units distributed poppies in their communities, at schools, at businesses, and post homes. They placed donation cans at posts, businesses, nail/hair salons, doctors and dentists offices, cafes and diners. One unit distributed poppies along parade routes on Memorial and Veterans Day while another handed out poppies to students and community members at a school district Veterans Day Program with 1,500 students. Units asked elected officials to wear poppies on National Poppy Day, Veterans Day and Memorial Day, while others worked with city mayors to proclaim Poppy Days. Donations were collected and supported veterans, active duty and their families.

One unit made sure their funeral home always had poppies to distribute at veterans funerals. Poppy plate projects featuring bouquets of poppies were created with the words "In Memory Of" and "In Honor Of." One unit displayed 300 plates with

veterans names at their post while others attached poppies to paper crosses, placed on Christmas trees or handed out to junior high students during history class. Units shared their poppy events on social media and the Department Poppy Facebook page.

In November San Antonio VA Rep Rosa Vasquez and Dep Janette Smith assisted with the “Home of the Brave” event for veterans held at the Fisher House with a curbside luncheon provided by Soldiers Angels, CLC and goody bags from Auxiliary. Veterans were honored for their service.

Providing continued support for veterans, their families and caregivers, members prepared food for Gold Star Families, Blue Star Mothers and veterans funerals, mailed cheer, thank you and sympathy cards, volunteered in flag lines to greet returning service members and provided families comfort at funeral services. 8,700 flags and 8,400 wreaths were placed on veterans graves by units who joined posts and communities in this remembrance. Beaumont VA Clinic Rep Mary Tatman reported veterans were given towelettes and bags on snacks on Veterans Day.

On November 19, 2021 Texas lost a wonderful mentor, leader, friend, inspiration, encourager, volunteer and so much more. Myra J. Hester faithfully served the American Legion Auxiliary for almost 70 years and was a true living legend, living the Auxiliary motto “Service Not Self” each and every day of her life. A member

since 1953, Myra held many offices including President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Texas in 1968, and the National Southern Division Vice President in 1981.

In 1953 she partnered with amazing women like Girls State Director Frances Goff to form a group to raise money for M.D. Anderson's "East Wing" Children's Hospital. \$50,000 was raised. Myra was a founding member of the Department of Texas Auxiliary Fellowship Program which for almost 50 years has partnered with The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UT Health Graduate School of Bio-Medical Sciences to award Fellowship Grants to doctoral students. To date more than \$1.6 million has been awarded.

Myra was a proud staff member of Bluebonnet Girls State and volunteered for over 50 years, never missing a year. Her greatest job and joy at Girls State was carrying the Auxiliary banner in the Flag Ceremony at the School for the Blind in 1967. Myra never believed in "idle hands and not being the very best you can be." Myra will be solely missed. President Copeland later attended the memorial for her friend and mentor, Myra.

President Copeland attended the annual Veterans Day event in Mineral Wells along with American Legion Department of Texas Commander Bret Watson and Sons of the American Legion Department of Texas Detachment Commander Tom Arista. The program included multiple elementary, middle and high schools as well

as a flyover and canon fire recognizing and honoring veterans. Madam President's last event in November was the annual free Thanksgiving Day dinner for veterans in her home Post 37 in McAllen, where veterans were treated to an "all you can eat" turkey dinner with all of the trimmings.

15 students from the National Honor Society volunteered 46 hours with a unit at the Veterans Day Poppy Event. They passed out poppies and flyers telling the story of the memorial poppy and were rewarded with stories from the veterans about their experiences. This was an awesome time for the students as they learned so much about veterans. They helped raise over \$2,000, with some later volunteering at the unit's Memorial Day Poppy Event.

Throughout the year the Goodwill Ambassadors and Legion Family Liaisons Committees worked tirelessly with members, units, posts and squadrons to foster better relations and to promote American Legion Family events and fundraisers. When problems or situations were brought to them, they interceded, successfully resolving many issues that arose.

November 2021 brought challenges from the VA&R Committee. Challenge #2 involved the National Creative Arts Festival. Members or units donating a minimum of \$25 postmarked by December 1, 2021 were entered in a drawing for \$100. Participating units received a certificate. The outpouring of donations was wonderful; again one lucky unit won the \$100.



The VA&R Committee's Challenge # 3 involved unit and member donations by December 31, 2021. Donations ranging from \$25 to \$200 were entered into drawing where winners won \$75 to \$250. The more donations made, the more chances to win. For a donation of \$200 they were entered five donation levels. Drawings were made with winners receiving \$75, \$100, \$125, \$150 and \$250. Many lucky units went home to their units with monies to spend on their programs.

In November the Southern Division Membership Committee held a "Twenty-Five Days Till Christmas Challenge with the mean old, green Mr. Grinch stealing presents from the stockings of Southern Division Departments. At this point Texas was in 1st place in membership. Gift cards ranging from \$25 to \$75 were awarded for the Department that had the most 80% and above units by Christmas Day. That Department Membership Committee received a certificate and a gift card.

In early in December, President Copeland attended the Memorial Service for Past Department President Myra Hester in Houston. Myra was an icon in the Department of Texas who never sought the limelight. On a lighter note Department said happy goodbyes and good luck to long time Secretary/Treasurer Natasha Hendricks and welcomed office manager, Claudia Bedon.

The December Membership Committee Challenge #4 focused on the Celebration Recognition for units that reached 100% by December 31, 2021. Four winners

received awards between \$25 and \$100. Department reached 77% of National goal and 70.6% of Department goal.

President Copeland laid wreaths at the Rio Grande Valley State Veterans Cemetery in Mission, Texas and took her granddaughter to the annual Unit 37 Children and Youth Christmas party where they helped fellow members wrap over 150 gifts for the Veterans Nursing home in McAllen. The veterans were overjoyed and so appreciate to receive the gifts.

On December 20, 2021 Department of Texas celebrated the 101st Anniversary which ended President Copeland's membership challenge to units. Units that reached 100% or better were put in a drawing for a \$101 gift card and a framed certificate. Many units accepted the challenge and many were successful.

The Children and Youth Committee sponsored a Texas Children and Youth Patriotism and Democracy in Action Contest in December, asking students how they viewed, what they meant and how they showed patriotism and democracy. Students wrote plays or narratives, composed songs and poems and even drew pictures and made collages. Winners received monetary awards ranging from \$25 to \$75 in several levels including elementary, middle/intermediate school and high school. This contest proved that the youth of today used creative and imaginative ways to show that they do know what the values of justice, freedom and equality mean.

The Community Service Committee sponsored a Community Service Food Drive on each of the twenty-four days before Christmas. Each day units added a non-perishable food item to their box and once filled, delivered it to their local food bank on Christmas Eve. Items included peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, boxed cereal, canned fruit, crackers, spaghetti sauce, and cans of vegetables. This extremely successful and easy to work challenge provided much needed food to food banks throughout the state of Texas.

The Membership Committee also encouraged members to play Santa or be a secret Santa for Christmas by giving the gift of membership. Many members purchased memberships for friends and family members. The committee also began Challenge # 5, the Top Recruiters Award, to be awarded members signing up 10, 15 and/or 25 members between September 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. These awards were presented at the Department of Texas Convention held in Austin, Texas in July, 2022 to many, many members.

Christmas was a special and often difficult time for veterans, but they were well taken care of by the reps and depts, volunteers and units. Unit Christmas assessment allowed 1,595 VA Hospital patients to receive \$10 gift cards during Christmas. Beaumont VA Clinic Rep Mary Tatman reported that Beaumont Unit 33 donated Christmas stockings with candy. Big Spring Medical Center Rep Shawna Dunlap stated Midland Unit 19 made monthly donations of snacks and

soft drinks, filled veterans Christmas lists and delivered games, crafts, books, movies and music-related items.

Dallas VA Medical Center Rep Teresa Hill reported volunteers supported the Poly Trauma Unit by providing juice and snacks to patients. They gave out food, sweats and T-shirts to veterans and their families at Christmas, and units donated toys and clothing to needy veterans through the social workers. Because of the help of Dep Evelyn Lopez and Rep Teresa Hill over \$4,000 worth of canteen books were given out to patients during the holidays.

Houston Medical Center Rep Jo Ann Crawford was only able to continue the annual Christmas Gift Shop because of outside funding. Volunteers relied on counselors, nurses and hospital staff to get veterans' requests and later deliver the gifts. Volunteers homes became staging grounds for receiving, selecting, gift wrapping and forwarding Christmas gifts to about 200 veteran families. What an honor this was.

Kerrville VA Medical Center Patricia Kankelfitz and volunteers gave their veterans \$10 coupon books supplied by Department for the Christmas Gift Shop. They also supplied sweatshirts to residents who had fun making "ugly Christmas sweatshirts." Due to Covid restrictions volunteers were not able to see the beautiful creations, but the veterans enjoyed creating and wearing them.

San Antonio VA Medical Center Rep Rosa Vasquez and Dep Janette Smith prepared 150 Christmas gift bags for their veterans inserting a Christmas card with \$10, a pocket calendar with labeling "Compliments of the American Legion Auxiliary," a COVID-19 vaccination card holder, comfort items, Christmas Cards and word search books. Other donations for the bags included female items from Unit 667 and 400 Christmas cards from Parramore Unit 57 in Abilene, Texas. Janette and Rosa delivered the Christmas bags to the VA parking lot where Volunteer Services Staff picked them up and delivered them to veterans. The "Adopt A Vet Program" was also held for selected families at the Fisher House. Organizations that volunteer at the VA donated baskets consisting of needed items for families to enjoy a nice Christmas. A \$25 gift card from HEB for a ham was also included.

At the Waco VA Center, Rep Mary Hueske and Deps Hilde Neumann and Ruth Beers prepared gift bags for patients with purchased items such as shampoo and crème rinse, body wash, chap stick and activity books at Christmas. Volunteer Services delivered the bags for them. The Auxiliary Gift Shop that was loved by all the veterans was changed due to Covid but Recreational Therapy had patients sign gift cards for their families, and Mary, Hilde and Ruth purchased \$10 gift cards, put them in the veterans family Christmas cards and mailed them.

As of December 15, 2021 Texas stood in 4th place in membership in the Southern Division with 71.59%, with North Carolina taking 1st place with 78.36% of

membership goal as reported by Southern Division Membership Chair Texan Christine Trahan.

Starting off the new year off with a bang in January 2022, President Copeland and the Department of Texas welcomed National President Kathy Daudistel to the Great State of Texas for her official visit. It was a nonstop whirlwind adventure starting with a meeting with the Director and Head of Volunteer Services at the Audie L. Murphy VA Hospital in San Antonio. Also on the tour were Department Vice President Myra Cooker, Department Distinguished Guest Chairman MaryAnn Paul, Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Tom Arista along with many Auxiliary members, district and division presidents.

Following Audie L Murphy VA Hospital, the Army Residents Community facility, which houses retired military officers of all branches, including 10 centenarians, was toured. Next came a quick visit to the San Antonio K9s for Warriors facility Pet Love K9 Center. National President Daudistel watched service dogs in training and presented monetary donations from the Department of Texas. The day ended with a meet and greet reception at Converse Post 593.

On the second day of President Daudistel's Texas visit, she visited with patients at the Kerrville VA Medical Center followed by a reception in her honor at the Department of Texas Headquarters. The entourage then headed back to San

Antonio, but no trip was complete without a stop at the famous Texas Buc-ee's for snacks and T-shirts, along with a photo with Buc-ee's iconic Bucky Beaver statue.

Before heading to the San Antonio Airport the group treated Madam President Daudistel to a traditional Mexican meal and a walk along the famous San Antonio River Walk. Lastly, there was time for a tour of the pride and joy of Texas, the Alamo, before President Daudistel boarded a plane for home.



Department President Teresa Simmons Copeland and Department Vice President Myra gave National President a tour of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas.

In January the Membership Committee was hard at work again by sending out flyers to units, districts and divisions explaining the difference between delinquent and expired memberships. A challenge was issued to get members to renew their

unpaid 2022 dues and to encourage expired members to pay back dues to become current. The winning District and Division both received \$200.

On January 6, 2022, DEC met via Zoom to rescind the passed motion to purchase a vehicle for the veteran poppy maker. Motion carried. The initial motion was made by the Poppy Committee at the September 2021 meetings and approved by DEC. Sadly, motions were also made at this meeting by District Presidents 4, 13, 20, and 7 to close Units 29, 53, 191, 194, 198, 444, 460, and 615; motions carried. And lastly votes were approved to elect a Secretary and Treasurer to complete the current 2021 - 2022 term of the Secretary/Treasurer who had resigned. Tina Hill was elected to serve as Department Secretary for the remainder of the term, and Sherry Harper was elected as Department Treasurer for the remainder of the term. DEC was also sent the new employee policies handbook, as a courtesy, to review and offer suggestions. Recommendations were made but no approval was needed by DEC.

Due to the December resignation of the Secretary/Treasurer, who was also the office manager, Department Headquarters was reorganized to bring more efficiency, better organization and a distinct separation of duties thus lessening the work load on employees and officers. This allowed the office manager, Secretary and Treasurer to work more efficiently and provide better and faster service to units. Department now ran smoother than ever, with all members benefiting from this change. Staff and Officers distributed the workload so no one was



overwhelmed. New employee Claudia Bedon was hired as the Office Manager and she has been a true asset to Department, jumping right in to learn Auxiliary principles and practices.

With no time to rest, the Mid-Winter Conference was right around the corner. The primary purpose was member training and the Leadership Committee did not disappoint. They began with a hilarious skit supporting Department President Copeland's theme "Spreading Seeds of Good Will" with their own theme of "Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow." This was followed by a game of ALA Family Feud where divisions battled it out on ALA trivia questions. Division 1 President Jackie Jenkins Team was presented a gold medal with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places receiving ribbons. This interactive learning opportunity was well received and fun. Attendees learned a lot and many comments such as "I didn't know that" were overheard.

Attendees were also greeted by National American Legion Commander Paul Dillard who thanked the Auxiliary for their service to veterans and military. He urged members to "thank a vet." He spoke about Buddy Checks, toxic burn exposure of our military and the loss of over 3,000 WWII veterans a day. His theme "Leave No Man Behind" focused on stopping veteran suicides, which statistics show 18 to 22 are lost each day. His greetings were followed by Sons of the American Legion National Commander Michael Fox who asked the Auxiliary

to assist him in his goal to put a million flags on veterans graves through the “Flying Flags for Heroes” organization.

Since the Department of Texas had celebrated their 101st birthday in December, President Copeland wanted to celebrate with a best Texan costume contest. Members wore their version of what they think a Texan really was, including cowgirls, rodeo queens, football fans, gunslingers and winter Texans, amongst many others. A good time was had by all with lots of laughs and cheers.

The Membership Committee reported that Texas was now at 80% of National Goal and recognized 100% Unit 265 Lake Kiowa, Unit 71 Denton, Unit 164 Katy, and Unit 283 Bonham, with the highest Lake Kowa at 160%. Districts 2, 7, 13, 15, 16, and 18 were all over 80%, and District 20 received an award for the highest membership with Division 4 in 1<sup>st</sup> place. There were 12 units at 100% by the December 31, 2021 challenge to include El Paso 598 and 36, Amarillo 54, Lockhart 41, Pilot Point 550, Wichita Falls 202, Denton 71, Bonham 283, Henderson 844, Madisonville 84, Coldspring 629 and 644 Channelview. Cash drawings for units at 100% by December 31, 2021 winners were Amarillo 54 \$100, Channelview 644 \$75, Bonham 283 \$50, and Wichita Falls 202 \$25. The National \$75 donation for units reaching 80% drawing was divided up between Georgetown 174, Denton 71 and Katy 161. Bedford Unit 179 was honored with the most members at 392. The Membership Committee Revitalization Program for units was going well and the committee were assisting struggling units get back up and running.

Southern Division Membership Chairman Christine Trahan reported Texas was in 5<sup>th</sup> place.

At the September 2021 DEC President Copeland challenged Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Tom Arista. Whoever collected the most dimes by the January Mid-Winter Conference would toss the loser in the pool. President Copeland won that challenge hands down; however, Mother Nature did not cooperate as it was too cold for a dip, so the challenge was revised for the two to exchange clothing. Detachment Commander Arista brought greetings to attendees wearing a pleated skirt, knee high socks and combat boots with attendees cheering as he stood at the podium. \$1,400 in dimes was raised in this fun challenge for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

Finance Chairman Norma Szekely happily reported that \$6,152.50 had been raised this weekend for AEF (\$2,090), PPP, pins and charms, Cancer Research (\$1,085), VA&R, Children and Youth and Membership (\$751,50). Denton Unit 71 won the \$101 drawing for President Copeland's challenge over 13 units who had reached 100% by December 20, 2021. Winning the VA&R challenge were McAllen 37 \$25, Lubbock 575 \$50, Houston 560 \$75 and \$100, and Beaumont 333 \$200.

President Copeland's special project this year was K9s for Warriors and conference attendees had a front row seat to the important work this organizations did. Guest speaker (human) – and barker (service dog) - were "Warrior" David

Palomarez and his Service Dog Billy. David gave a heart-wrenching speech on his journey through his PTSD and traumas culminating with a demonstration with Billy, who has brought David from the break of fear to a place where he can now go into stores and greet visitors without running out of the front door. If Billy notices David getting agitated, he immediately barks, turning attention to himself rather than David. Billy then leads David out of the store.

Billy has been a lifesaver and has given David his life back with his family as well. There was not a dry eye in the house following this presentation. Attendees saw first-hand the tremendous difference service dogs made in the life of this veteran and were inspired to donate. Not only was a veteran's life saved, but also a dog's life, as shelter dogs were used in the K9s for Warriors Program. K9s for Warriors, the nation's largest provider of trained service dogs for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries, PTSD and/or military sexual trauma, was determined to end suicide among veterans. Shelter dogs were trained and later paired with a veteran, where together, they completed additional training before being sent home. K9s covered all expenses for the veterans.

During the Mid-Winter Conference the Children and Youth Committee held a fundraiser for Operation Purple Camp. They raffled off a "Wagon of Fun" which was a beautiful, red Radio Flyer Wagon filled with a dozen games including Chutes and Ladders, Clue, Forest Snack, Snakes and Ladders, Jenga, Monopoly For Juniors, Pick-Up Sticks, Sorry, Twister, UNO and Yahtzee valued at \$200.

Hundreds of dollars were raised for Operation Purple Camp with one lucky winner pulling the wagon home

Department Public Relations Committee once again streamed the conference live on Facebook via Zoom for those who could not attend as well as for those with fears of contracting Covid. More members were able to attend and benefit from the meetings and training sessions.

The Juniors held a successful raffle and service project during Mid-Winter Conference. They collected coats, socks, gloves, hats, and scarves that were later donated to needy veterans at the VA Hospital. Auxiliary members helped by donating items and purchasing raffle tickets.

The Cancer Research Committee distributed information on the Cancer Research Program to attendees, sold 200 “poppers” at \$2.00 each and held a raffle for three \$100 gift cards. Poppers were filled with small gifts; over \$500 was raised for cancer research.

Division 1 President had challenged her districts to challenge their units to send in their Christmas Assessment by or before Veterans Day. The district having the greatest percentage of units meeting this deadline, or the first District to have 100% of the Units meet the challenge, would be awarded the Division One Challenge

Cup. At Mid-Winter, this beautiful golden cup trophy was awarded to District 1 President Diane Strait whose units met the challenge weeks November 11.

On January 24, 2022, DEC voted via email to approve a \$25,000 donation to K9's for Warriors from Poppy Funds. The sponsorship funds would include the cost to train and place a Service Dog with a Warrior, the dog being an at-risk rescue dog. Sponsorship would include the right to name a future Service Dog, receive a welcome kit and regular updates on the Service Dog in training including photos, notice of pairing of the veteran and K9 and an invitation to the K9-Warrior graduation. The dog would be named Tex. Following discussion that the funds stay in Texas and that the Poppy Funds were sufficient, the vote was taken and it passed.

In February 2022, President Copeland attended a memorial service for longtime friend, mentor and Chairman of Pages, Josephine Foret AKA JoJo Mama. JoJo was elected as Chairman of Pages at the 101<sup>st</sup> Department Convention held July 2021 in Austin, Texas. JoJo was a special Auxiliary member who always went the extra mile to help veterans, military, their families, her community and her fellow Auxiliary members. She served her beloved American Legion Auxiliary on many levels from unit all the way to Department. JoJo will be sorely miss.

The Membership Committee linked their February challenge with the Southern Division Challenge for recruiting new members by Valentine's Day. A \$50 gift card

and a Top Recruiter Award of \$100 were awarded. Texas ended the month at 83.3%.

Veterans were shown lots of love and caring on Valentine's Day. At the Waco VA Medical Center Rep Mary Hueske and Deps Hilde Neumann and Ruth Beers purchased and delivered 100 Valentine gift bags stuffed with boxes of chocolates. Dallas VA Medical Center Rep Teresa Hill reported hospitalized veterans were treated to snacks and candy along with party favors, while at the Big Spring Medical Center Rep Shawna Dunlap reported Midland Unit 19 made 260 "Valentine's for the veterans for patients and the 101 residents at the Laymun-Lusk-Sanchez VA Retirement home. Another unit organized a special "Valentine for Veterans" Day where they made over 128 Valentine cards attaching red crepe poppies and thank you notes for veterans. Unit 260 mailed 90 valentines to veterans in nursing homes.

February was also a busy month for President Copeland. Along with Division 3 President Yolanda M Garcia, she attended the Cancer Research Dinner hosted by Pasadena Unit 521, SAL Detachment Commander Tom Arista's homecoming in Dallas and the American Legion Oratorical contest held in San Antonio, all in one weekend. Whew!!!

President Copeland ended the month by enjoying her Homecoming Fiesta held at her Post 37 in McAllen, Texas. Her Unit 37 was assisted by District 15 in

organizing, cooking, decorating and serving a fiesta-themed meal, making this a special celebration for President Copeland. A social hour preceded a sumptuous Mexican buffet followed by live music. A good time was had by all as family, friends, and members celebrated President Copeland's successful year.

Units continued to submit names to Department for Youth Hero/Good Deed Awards to those who exhibited bravery and did good deeds for others. Units held special award ceremonies for these young people inviting family and friends. Awardees were honored at dinners and receptions where they received certificates, medals and gifts. Two young boys rescued their four year old cousin face down in a pool while another honor went to a youth who saved a child in a swimming pool.

American Legion Auxiliary West Tawakoni Unit 517 kept a big secrete in February 2022. They decided to honor Veteran and 75-year American Legion Member Marvin Dugenske on his 96th birthday by planning a surprise birthday party. They solicited Marvin's Step Son Mike McShane to help get Marvin to the post, which Mike said would prove to be a difficult task. Marvin was told he would be attending a birthday party for long-time friend and honorary lifetime member of the Auxiliary Sam Armstrong.

Unit 517 had only five days to "get it together," but they were successful. They contacted old Legion buddies Jim Fleming from Anna, Texas, Ronnie Van Zandt



from Sherman, Texas, and Mark and Nancy Thomson from Sherman, Texas. Long time Auxiliary member Dr. Stacy Stallard and her family from San Antonio were also invited.

On May 13, 2016, Lifetime Member of Post 517, Marvin was honored for his military service and presented his 70-year Legion pin and a meritorious service plaque which was placed on permanent display on the "Wall of Honor." Marvin's photo was displayed on the National American Legion website and his story was sent to the Legion Times. He was also honored at the 4<sup>th</sup> District Convention with a plaque for meritorious service.

Auxiliary members held their breath hoping Marvin had decided to come to "Sam's" birthday party, as long-time guests and family members hid in the Legion Hall ready to serenade Marvin when he walked through the door. It was 6:00 pm sharp when Marvin and his family strode through the door. The look on his face "said it all!" It was priceless!

Post 517 Commander Dave DeWolfe delivered a special "Happy Birthday" message to Marvin who could not believe the party was for him. Guests visited with Marvin, giving him lots of hugs and "Happy Birthday" wishes. Marvin was still talking later about "HIS BEST PARTY EVER!!!!" Two weeks later his family took Marvin on a vacation to his old home town where he was able to see his brother. Marvin was the most dedicated and knowledgeable Legionnaire close friend and

517 Auxiliary 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Sam Armstrong has ever known. She was proud to call him “friend.”

March kicked off with President Copeland attending the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Women Veterans luncheon at Alamo Unit 2 in San Antonio where the veterans were honored and thanked for their service with special gifts. Next came her 57<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration on March 10<sup>th</sup> but there no time to rest. She was scheduled to attend District 19, District 1 and District 22 Spring Conventions but, unfortunately, she had to cancel her trip to Paris.....Texas, due to a bad tooth but was able to attend conventions in Hallettsville Unit 230 with Division 3 President Yolanda M. Garcia and in Katy Unit 164 with NEC Christine Trahan.

On March 10, 2022, the Poppy Committee made a motion to DEC to change the previously agreed upon name of the K9s for Warriors Service Dog sponsored by the Department of Texas from TEX to Poppy. In discussion it was noted that K9s for Warriors had a dog, a beautiful merle Australian Shepard mix, ready to be placed with a veteran for training, and Department had been bumped up with the opportunity to name the dog immediately. The name Poppy was more suited to a female than TEX as it held great meaning for members and represented the sacrifices of many soldiers. The motion easily carried. The Service Dog was named Poppy.

March brought two more Membership Committee challenges for districts with the highest percentage. Gifts and certificates were awarded to several districts.

President Copeland along with Poppy Chairman MaryAnn Paul and other Auxiliary members attended the March 2022 distribution of food at the Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) located near Ft. Hood in Harker Heights, Texas, which assists many veteran and military families who are facing food insecurities. Department visitors experienced first-hand how vital Department contributions had been to assist these needy families. President Copeland and Chairman Paul handed out poppies and Copeland's presidential pin as bags of food were distributed to needy families. They thanked families for their service. Thank you cards with the Auxiliary emblem were also placed in each bag.

The smiles on families faces told the story. Because of the generosity of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Texas, service members and veterans could enjoy food on their tables. Department contributed \$3,000 monthly donations for 10 months for a total of \$30,000 that purchased over 20,000 pounds of food. More than 500 families were helped. Auxiliary units also donated and delivered non-food items such as cleaning supplies to ASYMCA with one unit able to locate difficult to find baby formula. American Legion posts in the Ft. Hood area reached out to those families and encouraged membership by covering the first years dues of any veteran interested in joining.

Many units also joined in the Department-Wide Challenge of Reverse Advent Food Drive by collecting non-perishable food items and donating them to their local food banks. Units helped to put food on the tables of many needy families.

In March VA reports came in. Beaumont VA Clinic Rep Mary Tatman stated that veterans were thrown a birthday party, showing appreciation for their service to the country. In Waco Rep Mary Hueske and Deps Hilde Neumann and Ruth Beers received a \$4,000 donation from Cleburne Unit 50 and the 6th District Sons of the American Legion. That money provided comfort for their women veterans. Mary purchased two massage chairs and two CD players with tranquil music for both floors of the Women's RISE (Recovery in a Secure Environment) Unit meditation room as well as Yoga mats, bolsters and cushions. A presentation was made to the RISE Unit and women in the program were reintroduced to touch which many were uncomfortable with.

Throughout the year units supported Senior Life and Meals on Wheels for homebound veterans, invited "Home Instead" to speak at Legion meetings to discuss their services for veterans and spouses, and worked with their American Legions hosting job fairs. Units shopped, ran errands and cleaned for their disabled veterans, giving caregivers a much needed break, as well as provided funds for gas, food, and bills.

In March the call went out to units to donate when Department learned Texas had a National winner for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Units quickly jumped on board sending in donations. VA Valley Coastal Bend Veteran, Mr. Rogelio "Roy" Cervantes, who participated in the Local 2021 VCB Veterans Creative Arts Competition, went on to win First Place in the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition in the Short Story Essay Contest. As a First Place winner, Mr. Cervantes and his wife (from McAllen, President Copeland's home town), were invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival which took place in St Petersburg, Florida, starting on April 20, 2022. He and his wife were unable to afford the trip to Florida. DEC voted via email on March 29, 2022 to donate up to \$1,200 from Poppy funds to be used for Mr. Cervantes' transportation. Along with this, Texas raised over \$5,000 to contribute to the NVCAF. Texas members were generous, caring and honored to assist the Cervantes Family.

The Cancer Research recognized units donating \$1.00 or more per member by March 10, 2022, Madam President Teresa's Birthday, with awards as well as handed out plaques to units with the highest donation by April 01, 2022. Members with donations of \$25 or more as well as units sending in a narrative by that same date were presented framed certificates of recognition. Best Overall Narrative was awarded a special framed award of appreciation certificate.

Also in March the Children and Youth Committee issued a Spring Focus Challenge for Beads of Courage, a project consisting of sewing pretty, little bags to hold the beads of courage given to children treated for birth defects of the heart. As a young patient completed a surgery, treatment, or other milestone, the child received a bead of courage. The beads were assembled into a necklace. Inspired members were provided material lists and sewing instructions. The Children's Medical Center in Dallas needed bags for the beads so the Children and Youth Committee challenged units to sew bags. Members did not disappoint. Hundreds of bags were sewn and presented to the committee at the Department Convention in July 2022. Committee members prepared labels and distributed the bags to sick children at the Children's Medical Center in Dallas.

The Children and Youth Committee are also held a Creative Arts Contest that ran right up to the July Department Convention where art, drama, music, drama and language arts teachers and students submitted their version of art to the committee. Certificates and awards were presented.

Lastly, the Children and Youth Committee reminded units there was still time to submit young people for the Youth Hero Award. Unit 220 Nocona recognized two-year old Brandon who woke up his two parents and four siblings, alerting them to their house fire. Unit 305 the Woodlands honored a nine-year old and an eleven-year-old who rescued their four-year old female cousin who was drowning in a swimming pool.

In April units held outreach events for military children and their families in support of the Purple Up for Military Children Program. Department of Texas sold Purple Up T-shirts to raise awareness and donate funds to the program. Many members held special and fun events such as breakfasts, picnics and other activities to celebrate and honor military children and families on Purple Up Day April 15. Military Brats Day April 30 was also an occasion for units to host events and celebrate with military brats of all ages.

The Americanism Committee notified units about the school Americanism Essay Contest and solicited entries with a deadline for submission of April 15. The entries rolled in and the Americanism Committee selected the winners who were presented with awards and certificates.

The Membership Committee announced that Department was 91.79% of National's goal in April. The committee assisted 12 units still below 10 members as they promoted National's Challenge to units with the most rejoins. By month's end Texas was at 95.41% of National's goal and 87.0% of Texas.

At Easter at the Kerrville VA Medical Center, Rep Patricia Kankelfitz reported, thanks to the generous support of Unit 157, Bandera, volunteers gave all veterans Easter baskets filled with candy and colored eggs. The veterans were all smiles Easter morning.

The 5th District Dallas VA Hospital Representative Teresa Hill discovered an unknown need for sweats at the VA Hospital in Dallas. This need was brought to the attention of 5th District President Sharon Shumate Elam who partnered with the 5th District Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander on a joint project "Seats for Vets." Often a veteran that enters the VA had their clothing cut off, and when discharged, the Dallas VA Hospital provided sweats to go home in, thus creating a need the 5th District and Sons knew they could fulfill. As a hard-working and cooperative team over 100 sets of sweats were delivered. The 5th District has now established a line of communication with the VA Hospital to alert them when the inventory of sweat sets is low and needs to be replenished.

The 5TH District and Unit 368 of Richardson Texas were very proud of Junior Member Krislyn Hart who has been an Auxiliary member since she her birth on November 6, 2007. She was also the current Junior President. She continually thought of ideas and ways to support veterans and their families. She raised and presented a check for \$614 to the "Patriot Paws Rockwall." Their mission was to train and provide service dogs at no cost to disabled veterans and others with mobile disabilities, to help restore their physical and emotional independence. This was a perfect example of how talented and creative the juniors could be in working the programs. She would be a future leaders of the Auxiliary.

April 2022 also found President Copeland on a 13-hour drive to El Paso where she attended the District 16 Spring Convention. She was unable to attend the District



12 Spring Convention but made the District 15 Spring Convention in Edinburg, later traveling to Brenham for the annual President's visit followed by the District 20 Spring Convention in San Antonio. Upon returning from San Antonio, President Copeland's husband, JD, became very ill and had to go into the hospital. Mr. Copeland passed away on April 28<sup>th</sup> 2022. President Copeland was unable to attend the annual American Legion Birthday Party in Lubbock, with that duty falling to Vice President, Myra Cooper.

The Copeland family was, and continues to be, embraced with prayers, plants, flowers, cards and lots of love from members, units, districts, divisions and other Departments. The family was grateful for the love and support they received. And with this encouragement, President Copeland resumed her duties as Department President and attended the Division 2 convention in Beaumont, the last day of April and first day of May.

Units generosity donated to VA Vet Centers, Homeless Programs, Camp Hope, residents at DeGeorge Hotel for former homeless veterans, and residential facilities that treat veterans with PTSD. In conjunction with these facilities units donated 9,730 boxed meals, snacks, pizza parties, "Pies for Hope" at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Units rallied to help veterans and their families who were in temporary financial crises by assisting with gas, groceries, car payments, rent, mortgage and utilities.

5th District President Sharon Shumate Elam had a creative way of recognizing her units at the end of the year. She wrote a resolution that resolved that the 5th District was an exemplary example of what an organization was and what it stood for. She said “God bless the 5th District Auxiliary, it’s membership and it’s dedication to the mission. Bless all the veterans past and present for protecting the freedoms and country; and their families for supporting their loved ones in this endeavor.” She then proceeded to dedicate her end of year report to her units and thanked them for their service to veterans, their families and their communities. Her resolution continued with the accomplishments of the units in the 5th District.

May was scholarship month and units in the Department of Texas were generous in their donations to further the education of the youth in Texas. Units generously awarded military children 128 college scholarships totaling \$77,210 and donated \$31,345 to Department of Texas scholarship funds. The Department Education Committee awarded 28 \$500 Department Scholarships totaling \$14,000, and the Past Presidents Parley Committee handed out nine \$1,000 Department Medical Scholarships. Units also organized 63 “Veterans in Community Schools” presentations.

The Department of Texas Cancer Research Program also awarded fellowship grants to doctoral students conducting cancer research at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UT Health Graduate School of Bio-Medical Sciences in Houston, Texas. This Texas-based one of a kind program began with an idea

and vision after WWII to build a state-of-the-art cancer research hospital in Houston. In 1953, Myra Hester and other amazing women like Girls State Director Frances Goff formed a group to raise money for M.D. Anderson's "East Wing" Children's Hospital. They raised \$50,000. Myra was a founding member of the Auxiliary Fellowship Program. Department of Texas has since awarded fellowship grants valued at \$1.6 million. Cancer Research raised over \$50,000 this year to find a cure to this dreaded disease.

May found President Copeland traveling again as she attended the Division 1 Convention in Fort Worth, installed officers for Unit 172 in Mercedes, attended the Division 3 Convention in Corpus Christi and attended the Division 4 Convention in Kerrville. This was followed by a walkthrough of the Department Convention hotel and a live drawing for the general fund fundraiser in Austin at the end of May. The winner Connie received her three-day stay in the convention hotel paid in full. The month ended with President Copeland attending Memorial Day programs at her home in McAllen.

May 15, 2022 Department Historian Sandi Schendel presented the Department of Texas' annual report to National Historian Carol Campbell. Sandi was asked to outline methods she used to promote the importance of keeping thorough and complete records of accomplishments and activities for the Department of Texas. She stated that she began the year by writing a detailed Program Action Plan for units, districts, and divisions to follow. Why it was important and how to protect written and oral histories was outlined as well as preserving and archiving

information and memorabilia, making record keeping more efficient, and displaying historical items for members to view. Partnering with museums and non-profits to preserve history as well as suggesting units form Records Retention and Cavalcade of Memories Committees was included.

She encouraged Senior and Junior members to write a history to preserve for future members what was accomplished during the year, and even submit it for competition at the Department Convention in July 2022.

Historian Schendel also added "From the Historian" sections to Department News Bulletins to encourage and inform members on such topics as the "Members Remember" Project, recording veterans oral histories, how to involve Juniors, and requesting information for the Department Book of Reports and History. Information was also provided on how Juniors could earn the Junior History patch as well as guidelines for writing a Senior and Junior history for competition. Units were encouraged to submit special stories on events to be included in the Department of Texas History.

Austin-Reed Unit 84 in Madisonville, Texas gave a wonderful report to Historian Schendel outlining their History Program which began with a History of Memories 12 years ago. Their display was filled with pictures and displays that caught everyone's attention when they entered the Auxiliary room. New pictures and articles were added throughout the year. Past and current Presidents' pictures

hung proudly on the walls of the meeting room along with awards received through the years. A curio cabinet featured their History Books, award certificates, Traveling Trophies and Outstanding Service Awards. Added was a display with fallen Post 84 veteran Command Sergeant Major Larry Rayburn, one of only ten with this rank. Now only nine remain. His mother provided a complete dossier. The unit planned to present her with a Gold Star Banner but she passed away before they could bestow it on her in memory of her son Larry.

Members of the West Tawakoni Unit 517 participated in the “Run For The Wall” fuel stop event held at the Brookshires Store in Terrell, Texas on Sunday, May 21, 2022. They were privileged to provide snacks, cold drinks, fresh fruit, sandwiches, and other items to include face and eyeglass wipes, chap sticks, individual packages of Kleenex, packets of dill pickle slices – and their favorite sandwiches – peanut butter and jelly. That was always the first thing they asked for. All was free of charge for the Riders as they made the “Run For The Wall” fuel stop. There were over 400 bikes and riders. Despite the fact that no information was received by any unit officer this year, members accidentally learned of the event, and with a flurry of action, phone calls, e-mails, and texts, put together not only a table “full of goodies” but also contacted the AmVets Post 36 and the VFW Post in West Tawakoni to participate.

For over an hour, Unit 517 members had the only refreshments available but finally the Terrell DAR ladies joined; there were lots of goodies given free of charge to

the Riders. Four Auxiliary members, President Kathy Champagne-Rushing, Vice President Sam Armstrong, Treasurer Lois Hudack, Member Sanae Tyndell and her daughter Junior Member Story Tyndell had a wonderful time visiting with the Riders and “manning the food table.” Story and her friend, who is also 10 years old, distributed almost 300 poppies, handing them out to the Riders on the lot refueling or who came by the table.

Over the last 20+ years, Treasurer Lois Hudack and Vice President Sam have worked the table at the annual “Run For the Wall” event and have established friendships with many of the Riders who remember them and look for the Auxiliary table. Prior to the departure of the Riders, Unit President Kathy Champagne-Rushing presented a “Certificate of Appreciation” to the Brookshire store manager for the assistance he and his employees provided. The store donated all the water for the Riders, set up tents for volunteers, provided trash containers and roped off parking areas, cleaning up after the event. Post 517 Auxiliary members, Legionnaires, and Sons of the American Legion each donated \$100 cash as did AmVets Club Commander and President. Over \$500 was raised and donated to the Riders for fuel. Despite the short notice, the unit received lots of PR with pictures and news articles in the Wills Point Chronicle and The Herald Banner in Greenville, Texas as well as the Rains County Leader in Emory, Texas.

Texas was almost at 100% of National’s goal by end of May and the Membership Committee’s challenge was to call members with unpaid 2022 dues and follow up

with expired members. Once again they were successful in gaining members and thanked them for paying their dues.

The 78<sup>th</sup> session of Texas Bluebonnet Girls State was held June 19, 2022, through June 25, 2022, at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas with more than 535 young ladies in attendance. The agenda included presentations on the American Legion Auxiliary programs as well as membership opportunities. Citizens tuition was provided by Auxiliary units, American Legion Posts, schools, civic and commercial organizations as well as groups and individuals who were interested in furthering the education about government for our young attendees. Donations topped \$227,000. Two citizens and two alternates were selected to attend Girls Nation in Washington, DC. and others were chosen to return to the 2023 session as junior counselors. The Girls State session was very successful and citizens left with an intimate knowledge of the workings of government as well as a network of new friends. Girls State opened with a brand new brighter and bolder, eye-catching website this year filled with pictures and information that kept girls informed throughout the session.

In June, President Copeland attended a banquet for Boys State at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, and later brought greetings to the delegates at Girls State at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas. She had the honor of staying over to help welcome the young women as they arrived. Later that month she installed the officers of League City Unit 554.

As luck has it things broke when Department least expected them to. June 23, 2022 Department President Copeland notified DEC via email that Department had an emergency that needed immediate attention. The computer used for remote work was not compatible with the amount of work done. IT stated a new computer could be set up asap that would handle work load. The cost was \$749. Funds were budgeted for items like this but, for the sake of transparency, President Copeland wanted approval from DEC. Therefore, the Finance Committee moved to purchase a new work laptop, not to exceed \$800.00. Following discussion the votes came in fast and heavy, approving the purchase. Department needed equipment in great working order to complete Department's business and assist our members.

In June over \$5,000 had been raised for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and unit, district and division donations rolled in to provide transportation for the Texas National Creative Arts Festival Winner Mr. Cervantes and his wife to attend workshops in Florida in July.

National President Daudistel honored the Department of Texas with a wonderful letter welcoming all to the 2022 American Legion Auxiliary Department of Texas Convention. She appreciated the commitment the Texas Auxiliary members had for their veterans, their active duty military and their families, and she was pleased the tradition of "Service Not Self" was being carried on with heart. Texas members found innovative ways during the pandemic to ensure veterans were getting the



help they needed. She thanked members for fulfilling the ALA mission through creative ideas.

In July 2022, President Copeland attended the annual Installation of officers for Unit 37 in McAllen followed immediately by the 94th 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade and celebration in McAllen, her last official duty as Department President until she presided at the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department of Texas Convention in Austin, Texas, but the 4<sup>th</sup> held a big surprise for her. Along with her special guest 3<sup>rd</sup> Division President Yolanda M. Garcia, President Copeland was totally surprised to see American Legion Commander Bret Watson and wife Rachael, Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Tom Arista and wife Janie as well as other guests show up to honor her for her year of dedicated service. They all rode their respective cars, Madam President proudly driving and waving to the crowds, from the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Texas car, and sharing the parade with her sweet mother, granddaughter Jennifer and President Garcia. Patriotism was on display everywhere.

President Copeland addressed the crowd back at the bandstand, along with Commander Watson and Commander Arista, celebrating the day as well as honoring veterans, their families and the community. Decorated WWII, Korean and Vietnam Veteran Plummer had a place of honor on the parade grandstand. And Madam President had on her membership "Who do you know?" button with the beautiful sunflowers as she sat front and center in the grandstand.

Once everyone came back to her Post 37, she was further surprised by an awesome gift basket, delicious food, support and camaraderie from her Unit 37 and Legion Post 37 along with special guests. She thanked everyone for attending and in particular her unit, District 15 Commander Jim “Jungle” Ryan, and Post 37 Commander Noe Alvarado for their support of the mission to serve veterans and thanked them for their service as well. There were Honor Guards, bands.

In total, President Copeland traveled a little over 19,800 miles, representing the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Texas.

The four-day Department of Texas Convention in Austin in July began with a pre-DEC meetings followed by the opening of the convention. It began with a dedication to Myra J. Hester, long time Auxiliary member, 50-year volunteer to Bluebonnet Girls State and founding member of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UT Health Graduate School of Bio-Medical Sciences Fellowship Grant Program for doctoral students. Her picture was proudly displayed for all to see. Members stood up in tears, in honor and respect of her many dedicated years of service to the American Legion Auxiliary. There was not a dry eye in the house.

The Unit Member of the Year and Unit with the highest percentage of membership were announced to cheers from the crowd and a standing ovation. VA Hospital Reps and Deps paraded proudly into the meeting room with cheers and a standing

ovation from all delegates, thanking them for their service to our veterans. And of course, a convention would not be complete without a rousing and hilarious skit by the Past Department Presidents.

Activity and Standing Committee Chairman and Division Presidents gave their reports, recognized committee members and the good work done by the districts and units, and presented awards to outstanding units and individuals. Reports were also given by the Eight & Forty on the thousands of dollars they raised to help children with lung and respiratory diseases, and the Ways and Means Committee updated members on the thousands raised through the sale of president pins, charms and jewelry. Everyone presented gifts to President Copeland and thanked her for her service this year.

National winner for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, VA Valley Coastal Bend Veteran, Mr. Rogelio "Roy" Cervantes, who won First Place in the Short Story Essay Contest, spoke of his experiences winning the award and attending workshops that were held in Florida. He thanked Auxiliary members for providing transportation funds so he could attend the workshop. He received a standing ovation with rousing cheers from delegates.

The Cancer Research presented President Teresa with a beautiful, bound journal filled with stories from members whose lives had been impacted by cancer. It was a touching tribute to cancer survivors and to those who had lost someone to

cancer. Following election and installation of Department officers, newly elected District and Division Officers were installed. The convention ended with a heartfelt and teary goodbye speech by Past Department President Copeland thanking members for their support, help and love, especially during the loss of her husband JD, before she handed the reins over to newly-elected 2022 – 2023 Department president Myra Cooper who thanked members for their votes and promised to work her hardest for the members in the Department of Texas.

Department President Myra Cooper held her first official meeting directly following the close of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department of Texas Convention. She welcomed newly-elected Department, District and Division Officers and made her appointments for Department Parliamentarian and Distinguished Guest Chairman. She also announced her Standing and Activity Committee appointments. She laid out her plan for the 2022 – 2023 Auxiliary year stating her goals and naming her presidential and membership themes. Membership shirts and president pins with her theme were available for purchase. Her agenda was bold and ambitious, but she knew that members could implement it. DEC headed home to their units to pass on President Cooper's plan of action for the year.

This year President Copeland lost her best friend and cheerleader husband James D. Copeland Sr. In a recent Department Bulletin she thanked everyone for their outpouring of love and support for her and her family. The cards, calls, texts, plants and flowers meant the world to her. The American Legion Family's goodwill and

kindness proved to her, once again, that they are a true family. She promised from the day she was elected in July 2021 that she would do her best and husband JD would expect no less, and so she carried on, courageously, leading the Department of Texas through the remainder of the Auxiliary year to the 102nd Department of Texas Convention in July 2022.

President Copeland dedicated her year of service in honor of husband, James Douglas Copeland Sr. He was her life partner and best friend for 35 years who encouraged her to continue to be an active advocate for active duty military, their families and veterans like his father, her father and two of their sons. President Copeland was eligible for membership through her father, Nick Simmons, who served in the U.S. Navy from 1952 - 1972; and her sons Michael Balli and James Douglas Copeland Jr, who also served in the U.S. Navy.

President Copeland was honored to serve and thanked her many mentors, friends and supporters for helping her through and lifting her up during a very difficult time. She was extremely proud of the members in the Department of Texas for their hard work and dedication to the mission to their veterans, their active duty military, their families, their communities, the programs and most importantly, to each other. She encouraged them to continue "Spreading Seeds of Goodwill and Cultivating Kindness."

## **SECTION II – DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

President Copeland began her year with a sobering letter regarding the budget. She used numbers from the Finance Committee everyone could understand. When she tallied the expected Senior and Junior memberships, there was not enough revenue to go around, so she worked with the Finance Committee to develop a budget and set goals that were indeed met. Goal #1 was to increase membership. Accomplished by reaching the National and the Texas goals due to the dedicated work, inspiration and challenges the Membership Committee set for units who responded in kind. The committee's successful plan to revitalize units and renew delinquent and expired members worked. More hands also meant more could be done to help veterans, active duty, their families and communities. Goal # 2 was to solicit sponsors and underwriters for the Department Convention to offset costs. Accomplished by members, units, districts, divisions and Department soliciting donations. Over \$7,000 was raised to defray convention costs. Goal # 3 was to encourage units to donate to the General Fund. Accomplished again through the generosity of members, units, districts and divisions realizing that Department had to remain fiscally sound. They donated to fulfill the mission. Goal # 4 meant Department must remain fiscally sound. Accomplished through generous donations, efficiency and reorganization of Department Headquarters. These budget strategies were followed by the entire Department of Texas membership and resulted in a successful year where all obligations were met. Veterans, active duty and their families received the care and assistance they needed as did youth and communities.

Madam President Copeland also set other ambitious goals this year, knowing that they would be met head on - TOGETHER. One goal was to increase communication between Department leadership and members. That was achieved with sincerity, hard work, patience and cooperation. Department reorganized Headquarters due to the resignation of the Department Secretary/Treasurer/Office Manager and three positions, through a vote of DEC, were created, allowing more contact with members by staff and officers. Bimonthly bulletins, Facebook pages, and updates on the newly-updated Department website all contributed to this goal.

During the pandemic Department recognized a need for units to access meetings differently, so the Public Relations Committee streamed Department Executive Committee and Mid-Winter Conference meetings, conventions and training programs live on Facebook via Zoom. Members could attend events without the fear of contracting Covid and these streaming sessions allowed more members to attend more events, electronically, and therefore benefit from the training and information streamed.

President Copeland's themes "Honoring Their Service and Spreading Seeds of Goodwill" and "Growing Our Membership by Cultivating Kindness" promoted positivity and caring throughout the state, and encouraged members to grow and flourish as well as increased membership. The Auxiliary value of "respect for the uniqueness of individual members" was emphasized followed by encouraging

members to build up rather than tear down one another. Positive headlines were created instead of negative. Featured on the front page of the Department website under the newly created section “Spreading Seeds of Good Will” where special recognitions, fundraisers and programs for all to see. A sincere sense of pride and oneness developed as others read the goodwill stories, picked up new ideas for fundraisers and encouraged kindness, teamwork and positivity.

Members were caring and kind to one another, shared ideas, and worked together to fulfill the mission. *“Sharing is caring,” Copeland stated, adding “don’t ever stop trying and if what you’re doing isn’t working, it’s ok, just try something else!”* She was everyone’s biggest cheerleader.

Social media outlets from Department and units allowed members to actively promote the Auxiliary, their projects, and successes via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. These platforms were also used to educate the community on “Who We Are, What We Do, and Why We Matter.” Everyone saw and recognized the good works of service done for veterans, military, families and communities and joined in. Members also understood the significance branding played, as they positively promoted the ALA by wearing logoed shirts, pins, hats, vests and more to include the “Who do you know?” buttons made by the Membership Committee. A positive, charitable, humanitarian, and philanthropic portrait of service was displayed that encouraged other organizations and individuals to join the cause of the ALA



Another goal was to improve relations with the American Legion, the Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Riders. President Copeland appointed special committees – Legion Family Liaisons and Goodwill Ambassadors – that worked to resolve issues that arose throughout the year. Although not quite as successful as President Copeland would have liked, committee members fostered better working conditions and communication relations within the American Legion Family.

President Copeland also wanted everyone “to work smarter not harder.” Department found talented members who updated the website and made online donations, purchases, membership payments and transmittals accessible to those who love to do their business online. New ways were found to effectively and efficiently maintain records, and tools were developed to assist unit, district and division leaders to be more successful. According to President Teresa, *“Based on the reports I've heard recently at all the conventions, I think we can call this one a WIN!”*

Statistics from the Department of Texas reflect just how hard members worked this year. They worked with their hearts, with care, with confidence, with determination, with perseverance and with focus to accomplish the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. They daily lived “Service Not Self,” thinking more of their veterans, the active duty military, their families, and their communities than themselves. The only drawback was that only about half of Texas units reported.

Just think where the numbers would have been if all or most had reported? Texans were doers not writer downers or keep trackers of statistics. Their hands, hearts and minds were always busy assisting others.

In service for veterans, active duty military and reserve, Texas members volunteered 257,955 hours, spending \$312,996 and assisting 24,086 veterans and military. 63 "Veterans in Community School" presentations were facilitated. In kind donations received from members totaled \$130,680 while 32,606 poppies were distributed with \$81,163 raised. 6 veterans were making poppies for distribution with a total of \$2,933 paid to these hard-working veterans.

Members in Texas served 5,817 military families for a total of 19,425 volunteer hours and spent \$48,216.

Serving children was close to the hearts of members in Texas and members served 10,930 children and youth. Girls State volunteers logged in 4,177 hours and spent \$63,429. Total hours served for other Legion Family youth activities were 7,911 hours. \$29,828 was given in direct aid to needy children while \$36,459 was spent on goods for youth activities with all other unit expenses at \$27,522. \$41,373 total dollars were donated to provide service to other children charities.

In service to communities, 774,220 hours were volunteers with a total donation amount of \$175,170.

DEC and the Poppy Committee were very busy this year approving donations. \$3,000 a month for ten months was donated to the Ft. Hood Army Services YMCA to purchase over 20,00 pounds of supplemental food for active duty military and veteran families in Killeen. Over 500 families facing food insecurities were helped. Units also contributed non-perishable food items, clean supplies, and baby items to include baby food, diapers and the difficult to find baby formula. More than \$35,000 was donated.

The Department of Texas supported 31 Auxiliary Representatives and Deputies who served 16 VA Hospitals and Clinics with locations in Amarillo, Beaumont, Big Spring, Bonham, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Kerrville, Longview, Lubbock, Lufkin, McAllen, San Anton, Temple and Waco. According to the Texas Workforce Investment Council there were over 1,500,000 veterans in Texas in their 2021 survey, with females making up 11.5%. The VA Hospitals and Clinics are generously supported by the units in the Department of Texas.

Unit Christmas assessment allowed 1,595 VA Hospital patients to receive \$10 gift cards during Christmas. Units donated 1,160 hygiene kits, "Comfort Bags," Pamper Baskets" and "Packs for a Purpose" for female veterans. Almost 800 patients received handmade wheelchair bags, lap robes, cancer caps, pillows and quilts along with reading glasses and "Sweets for Vets" during treatment. The VA&R Committee raised \$2,400 toward the VA&R General Fund that provided needed items and services for veterans.

Despite the fact that VA Hospital and Clinics were closed most of the year, Reps, Deps and volunteers found creative ways to serve and honor their veterans, often meeting hospital staff or Volunteer Services in parking lots who then delivered clothing, food and holiday gifts and baskets to veterans.

Veterans were treated with kindness, care, respect and love by volunteers, with units supporting them with generous donations. Donations were made to VA hospitals and clinics, nursing and retirement homes, Fisher Houses, private homes and wherever a veteran in need was. Members, units, districts, and divisions were generous in their donations but others also provided resources and necessary funds such as Boy Scouts, churches, Dr. Pepper, Wal-Mart, HEB, businesses, non-profits and charitable organizations. VA Reps and Deps worked hard to provide what the veterans needed, but it was difficult at times when clinics were closed to volunteers, but they still found ways to get things to their veterans needed to them.

Volunteers fulfilled the wishes of their veterans and tried to get them everything they wanted. The veterans were most appreciative of not only what the volunteers brought the but the time volunteers spent with them. The veterans were blessings in the lives of the volunteers. Volunteers provided popcorn and drinks Saturday nights, a Super Bowl Sunday Pizza Parties, fruit and thank you notes for PTSD patients, Mother and Father Day gifts, and special birthday treats. Bingo was a popular game. Holidays were made happier for veterans with parties, treats, cards

and gift baskets. Holiday gift baskets with cards were handout at Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Mother and Father's Days, and Memorial and Veterans Days. \$10 coupons books or cash were given at Christmas. \$4,000 worth of canteen books were given out during the holidays to Dallas veterans.

Unit 575 donated up to \$225 a month to the Lubbock VA for snacks and \$250 a month to the Amarillo VA Hospital. They donated \$500 to Christmas Stockings which sends stockings to active duty and reserve military overseas at Christmas. Poppies were distributed at United Super Market for Veteran's Day and \$800 was donated. Each year \$1,700 was given to Honor Flight to pay transportation for a veteran to go to Washington D.C. A \$1,000 donation was made to the Young Marines to purchase uniforms and supplies for new recruits.

Members enhanced the lives of veterans and their caregivers, survivors and family members by volunteering in VA hospitals and clinics, retirement homes and with family members throughout the year. Units assisted veterans in their rehabilitation with donations of yoga equipment, healing CD's, massage chairs, musical instruments, gardening tools, arts and crafts, hobbies, games, and bingo to include movie nights, sporting equipment and more. "Shows of Support" hunting trips and "Warriors Weekend" fishing trips were sponsored by units, as were Honor Flights for veterans and caregivers to Washington, DC. Over \$5,000 was raised for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and donations rolled in to provide

transportation for the Texas National Creative Arts Festival Winner Mr. Cervantes and his wife to attend workshops in Florida

Providing continued support for veterans, their families and caregivers, units prepared food for Gold Star Family dinners and veterans funerals, mailed cheer, thank you and sympathy cards and volunteered in flag lines to greet returning service members as well as provided families comfort at funeral services. 8,700 flags and 8,400 wreaths were placed on veterans graves by units who joined posts and communities in this remembrance.

Units also donated money and items for female veterans to include bras, leggings, underwear, slippers and tops. Dallas VA volunteers purchased massage chairs, CD players with tranquil music. Unit 2 in San Antonio held a luncheon honoring female veterans at the San Antonio VA Center.

One unit held a weekly breakfast event which catered to 95 Veterans so they could socialize while another donated \$200 a month to a Veteran's non-profit each month. Another delivered candy and puzzle books to the Dallas VA hospital. One unit decorated an annual Harvest Table and sold homemade food items, with the proceeds going to VA&R. They also collected coats and hats and donated to Veterans One Stop Shop and CareNet in Waco. Units sent troop boxes with snacks and food overseas and one unit delivered nine cases of cookies to 200 National Guards along the Texas border.

Monthly donations included snacks and soft drinks and games, crafts, books, movies and music-related items. Other donations included blankets, quilts, lap robes, wheelchair pillows, word find books, puzzles and games. Hygiene kits, eyeglasses (readers), socks, tee-shirts, non-perishable meals, wheelchair blankets, binders, baseball style caps, along with Walmart gift cards, sweats, T-shirts, comfort items, socks, underwear and much, much more were handed out to veterans. Shampoo and crème rinse, body wash, chap stick and activity books were also distributed.

The Kerrville VA Center held their annual Veterans Day Car Show with 119 entries and raised over \$8,000 for the VA&R General Fund. Volunteers weekly supplied cake and muffin mixes, pie filling, butter and slow cooker liners as the nurses baked dump cakes and muffins weekly for patients. The VA wards smelled like bakeries and enhanced the appetites of residents who enjoyed cake and muffins.

Houston VA Medical Center Rep Jo Ann Crawford said volunteers also helped other VA Hospitals in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi by delivering donated items that were not needed.

Waco Rep Mary Hueske and Deps Hilde Neumann and Ruth Beers received a \$4,000 donation in March from Cleburne Unit 50 and the 6th District Sons of the American Legion. They used that money to provide comfort for their women veterans.. Rep Mary purchased two massage chairs and two CD players with

tranquil music for both floors of the Women's RISE (Recovery in a Secure Environment) Unit meditation room as well as Yoga mats, bolsters and cushions. A presentation was made to the RISE Unit and women in the program were reintroduced to touch which many were uncomfortable with.

The Cancer Research Committee was successful in raising over \$50,000 for Fellowship Grants to doctoral students at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UT Health Graduate School of Bio-Medical Sciences to find a cure for cancer. The Department of Texas has partnered with The University of Texas for almost 50 years and, has to date, awarded 135 grants totaling more than \$1.6 million.

For her special project President Copeland chose K9s for Warriors, the nation's largest provider of trained service dogs for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries, PTSD and/or military sexual trauma. The Department Executive Committee voted unanimously to donate \$25,000 to K9s for Warriors to sponsor a service dog with Poppy Funds. Her name was Poppy. RED (Remember Everyone Deployed) T-shirts were sold with the proceeds going to K9s for Warriors. Members, units, district, and divisions also provided donations. Unit 179 donated \$1,000. Additional Poppy Funds and other donations from units allowed Department to sponsor a second K9 Service Dog Tex, making a total of \$50,000 in donations to K9s for Warriors. Poppy and TEX were trained and paired with Warriors who now have had their human and K9 lives given back to them. One



unit in District Units worked hard this year. One unit in District 16 raised almost \$9,000 dollars for K9s for Warriors.

Texas had a National winner for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival with VA Valley Coastal Bend Veteran Mr. Rogelio “Roy” Cervantes. DEC voted to donate up to \$1,200 from Poppy funds to be used for Mr. Cervantes’ transportation to workshops in Florida. Units quickly jumped on board donating. All total Texas raised over \$5,000 to contribute to the NVCAF. Texas members were generous, caring and honored to assist the Cervantes Family.

Membership Chairman Carlene Ashworth reported the committee had a productive, eventful and successful year. The committee resolved problems, helped units rebuild membership, gave units ideas for fundraises, contributed to by Department bimonthly bulletins, and used any means – visits, phone calls, or emails – to successfully communicate with units. They held at least one successful membership challenge each month where cash, awards and/or certificates were awarded. At the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department Convention in July the Top Recruiters Awards were presented to every member signing up 10, 15 and/or 25 members between September 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022, and there were many awards handed out. The National membership goal of 13,805 members was reached as was the Texas Goal of 14,508. Five districts (5, 8, 13,16, and 22) and 81 units were over 100% with only 9 zero units. Division 4 District 16 ended the year # 1 in membership with 109.53%. Unit 578 in Houston ended the year with 206.67%.

This year at least five new units were chartered with five Revitalization Workshops held in person and four via phone conferences. Over 1,300 new members were recruited. There were less than five units not in good standing due to this committee's hard work.

The Poppy Committee was quite successful this year. It distributed over 100,000 poppies to units, provided a "BOGO" to units, raised over of \$81,163 with units distributing 32,606 poppies throughout the state. Generous donors contributed to this success.

VA&R Committee reported 272,180 volunteer hours were donated with \$473,970 in donations raised by assisting 22,784 veterans/military and 6,389 families.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund raised over \$13,000, partially through their Dime Donation Challenge, and assisted eleven needy Texas families.

National Security Committee reported that 25 Units volunteered more than 1,000 hours and contributed \$41,000. Unit 575 made a \$1,000 donation to the Young Marines to purchase uniforms and supplies for new recruits.

The Department Education Committee reported 128 college scholarships totaling \$77,210 were awarded by units to children of military families and veterans with \$31,345 generously given to Department of Texas scholarship funds by units. The Department of Texas Education Committee awarded 28 \$500 Department Scholarships totaling \$14,000.

The Past Presidents Party received \$9,038 in donations allowing them to award all applications that were submitted, a scholarship. Nine \$1,000 Department Medical Scholarships were given. Units also organized 63 “Veterans in Community Schools” presentations.

Unit 539 submitted an application from Maley A. Rokas for the National Spirit of Youth Scholarship. She was one of only five in the entire country to receive a \$5,000 National Scholarship.

One student in the 10<sup>th</sup> District won the National Southern Division Americanism Essay Contest.

Throughout the year Department of Texas sponsored the Youth Hero/Good Deed Awards for units that recognized local youth heroes and do-gooders and encouraged units to identify youth in their communities and schools who were active in community service. One young man was recognized for collecting over \$300 in change and donating it to the Humane Society while a Junior President sold candy rolls, jams and jellies and raised almost \$2,000 for Camp Hope and Patriot Paws. Youth Hero Awards were given out to two children who saved people from a house fire. A Girls Scout was honored for rescuing a neighbor. A two-year old boy was given an award for alerting his parents of a fire in their home during the night, saving his parents and four brothers and sisters. Two young boys

rescued their four year old cousin who was found face down in a pool. Another honor went to a youth who saved a child who fell in a swimming pool.

In April units held numerous successful outreach events for military children and their families in support of the Purple Up for Military Children Program. Department of Texas sold Purple Up T-shirts to raise awareness and donated funds to the program. Many members held special and fun events such as breakfasts, picnics and other activities to celebrate and honor military children and families on Purple Up Day April 15. Military Brats Day April 30 was also an occasion for units to host events and celebrate with military brats of all ages.

The Community Service Committee sponsored a Community Service Food Drive on each of the twenty-four days before Christmas. Each day units added a non-perishable food item to their box and once filled, delivered it to their local food bank on Christmas Eve. Items included peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, boxed cereal, canned fruit, crackers, spaghetti sauce, and cans of vegetables. This extremely successful and easy to work challenge provided much needed food to food banks throughout the state of Texas.

The Legislative Committee was successful in spurring members to contact lawmakers when crucial votes were pending. U.S. Congressional Representatives were urged to support the Naturalization at Training Sites Act of 2022 (Citizenship for Honorable Service), Buddy Check Week Act, Honoring Our Promise to Address

Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, Guard, and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021, Unwavering Support for the Coast Guard Act, the Flag Code Modernization Act of 2021, and the Elizabeth Dole Act (Expanding the home and community-based services for elderly and disabled Veterans). While a non-Presidential year, the Legion family continued to dispense information to educate members. Fourteen units reported 159 face to face communications with Legislators and conducted 773 contacts through emails, phone calls and personal letters. The committee provided units with contact information for elected officials and legislators, sample letters and updates on Congressional activity. Social media was also used effectively.

A member of Unit 19 Midland was pivotal in getting "Daniel's Law" or HB119 signed into law in the State of Texas. This law, which went into effect on September 21, 2021, made it illegal in the State of Texas to deny life-saving organ transplants for those with special needs or disabilities, who were otherwise healthy enough to receive the organs needed to improve their quality of life.

Texas State Representative Brooks Landgraf from Odessa authored the bill. He stated "House Bill 119 seeks to ensure that no Texan is ever denied an organ transplant based solely on their disability. This idea was brought to me by a native West Texan who tragically lost her brother, Daniel, in 2015 after being denied a lifesaving organ transplant due to his disability. What happened to Daniel and his family was unacceptable and should never happen again in Texas," Landgraf said

in a statement. Texas State Representatives John Turner, James White and Justin Holland were joint authors for the bill.

Also in March the Children and Youth Committee issued a Spring Focus Challenge for Beads of Courage, a project consisting of sewing pretty, little bags to hold the beads of courage given to children treated for birth defects of the heart. As a young patient completed a surgery, treatment, or other milestone, the child received a bead of courage. The beads were assembled into a necklace. Inspired members were provided material lists and sewing instructions. The Children's Medical Center in Dallas needed bags for the beads so the Children and Youth Committee challenged units to sew them. Members did not disappoint. Hundreds of bags were sewn and presented to the committee at the Department Convention in July 2022. Committee members prepared labels and distributed the bags to sick children at the Children's Medical Center in Dallas.

Social media was used more than ever this year. Many units promoted their work actively on social media to include advocating for veterans, active duty military, their families and communities. Units promoted patriotism, national security, mentored and educated youth and supported their communities via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. They further used these platforms to successfully educate the community on "Who We Are, What We Do, and Why We Matter." Department of Texas was also active on social media focusing on the need to assist veterans, military, families and communities as well as promoting kindness and respect

among members to work together on Auxiliary programs. "Service Not Self" was emphasized. Department added a section on the website titled "Spreading Seeds of Goodwill" where members, units, districts and division could post pictures, fundraisers or events that made a difference in the lives of others. A sincere sense of pride and oneness developed as others read the goodwill stories, picked up new ideas for fundraisers and encouraged kindness, teamwork and positivity.

Units were quite successful in working the National Security Programs. They provided many services to active duty military and their families through contributions of clothing, household items and toiletries to donations of food to military food pantries. One unit was very involved with the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fleet & Family Services and donated time and money, holding food drives, organizing drive by baby showers and providing holiday meals and gifts for service member families. Another unit partnered with their local newspaper to support "Because We Care Troop Support Project" and sent 69 boxes overseas. One unit involved ROTC in their fundraisers and provided assistance for their competitions while others held functions for Gold Star Mothers and Blue Star Families. Members not near military installations gave monthly donations to military food pantries, mailed over 300 letters, cards and boxes to overseas troops, and wore red Fridays to Remember Everyone Deployed. 25 Units reported over 1,000 hours and contributed \$41,000 for National Security. Units performed POW/MIA empty chair ceremonies. Unit 54 donated \$400 to the Palo Dura Jr. ROTC, \$250 to Tascosa ROTC, and \$250 to Caprock ROTC.

Department of Texas held two extremely successful fundraisers in connection with the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department of Texas Convention held in July 2022 in Austin, Texas. Proceeds from one raffle greatly defrayed the cost of expenses for the convention and a lucky winner (Connie) received the three-day hotel stay paid for. Platinum, gold, silver and bronze sponsorships were purchased by members and individuals, units, districts and divisions, as well as corporate and business sponsors to fund the Membership Luncheon and VA&R Breakfast with awards given to top donors. Donors received plaques and recognition at the convention. Due to these sponsorships members were able to purchase affordable luncheon tickets to celebrate milestones in membership and accomplishments in VA&R Programs. Over \$7,000 was raised to defray costs.

A small accomplishment but one with big appeal was raising over \$2,000 in ransom for President Copeland's beloved stuffed dog "Blue" who was returned, unharmed to her, at the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department Convention, thanks to generous donations from members.

Department easily sold lots and lots of T-shirts this year that benefited veterans, youth, K9s for warriors and the Department General Fund. Colorful membership T-shirts were printed depicting her flower-filled mason jar and President Copeland's theme of "Honoring Their Service and Spreading Seeds of Goodwill." Each division was unified by their individual color but all members were unified by the presidential theme depicted on the shirts. Madam President also encouraged



members to purchase RED (Remember Everyone Deployed) T-shirts and wear them every Friday to remember those military who were far from home. Proceeds benefited K9s for Warriors. Lastly, the military children were supported through the sale of Purple-Up T-shirts with proceeds going to the Purple Up for Military Children initiative during April 2022, the month of the Military Child.

During the Mid-Winter Conference the Children and Youth Committee held a fundraiser for Operation Purple Camp. They raffled off a “Wagon of Fun” with a beautiful, red Flyer Wagon filled with a dozen games including Chutes and Ladders, Clue, Forest Snack and Snakes and Ladders, Jenga, Monopoly For Juniors, Pick-Up Sticks, Sorry, Twister, UNO and Yahtzee valued at \$200. The wagon was valued at more than \$200. Hundreds of dollars were raised for Operation Purple Camp with many tickets sold at \$5 each or 6 for \$20.

The 5th District Dallas VA Hospital Representative Teresa Hill discovered an unknown need for sweats at the VA Hospital in Dallas. This need was brought to the attention of 5th District President Sharon Shumate Elam who partnered with the 5th District Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander on a joint project “Seats for Vets.” Often a veteran that enters the VA had their clothing cut off, and when discharged, the VA Hospital provided sweats to go home in, thus creating a need the 5th District and Sons knew they could fulfill. As a hard-working and cooperative team over 100 sets of sweats were delivered. The 5th District has

now established a line of communication with the VA Hospital to alert them when the inventory of sweat sets is low and needs to be replenished.

Unit 596 led by President Dorothy Chow worked in conjunction with the Chinese American Citizens Alliance National organization to honor Chinese Americans who served during World War II. They joined in the identification and recognition of approximately 20,000 veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces at that time. On December 9th, 2020 Congress awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to Chinese American veterans of WWII in recognition of their service, and on September 5 2021 the Chinese American Citizens Alliance's Lodges in San Antonio, Mississippi, and Houston sponsored a ceremony . Veterans from the Southern region attended from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

One unit participated for the 26th year in the Children's Rehabilitation Center's Hippotherapy Family Fun Day. Teams were organized to cook and serve burgers to families with children fighting cerebral palsy. The unit donated hats and bandanas to the children to wear during therapy; the smiles on the children's faces were their reward. Ten trained therapy horses brought joy and confidence to the children and a \$1,000 donation was made.

Unit 592 of San Antonio Sgt-At-Arms Mary Helen Enriquez knew first hand of a young high school student name Odin, who was friends with her son who was

affected in a most profound way. Both of his parents passed away from Covid-19 and he was left with his almost one year old baby brother. The young man and his baby brother lived with his grandparents who were now responsible for their futures. Unit 592 collected \$400 of school supplies to take care of him for the entire Freshman year and well into his continued future years of high school.

Unit 96 McKinney came up with a different way to get involved with and include their community; they had a “Dog Days of Summer” in August. They invited Collin County Animal Shelter to bring their four-legged friends ready to find a “forever” home and set up puppy pools for critters & kids (and adults!) to enjoy the cool water. Not only did this help the local animal shelter, but attention was brought to the whole American Legion Family.

Throughout the year, members persevered and encouraged one another, adjusted tactics and plans when necessary, found solutions to problems, and carried on despite the many challenges and unusual circumstances that were encountered. Successes were shared and applauded; failures did not stop progress. When problems were encountered, courses were changed and other avenues were found to be successful.

And with all of those achieved, President Copeland said, “Well Good News Texas, you've done an excellent job!!” The TEAM accomplished its volunteer work together, as one unit, working to accomplish good things for veterans, active duty

military, families and communities all by “Honoring Their Service and Spreading Seeds of Goodwill” and “Growing Our Membership by Cultivating Kindness.”

### **SECTION III – DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS OFFICERS**

**Department Vice President Myra Cooper** was duly elected at the 101<sup>st</sup> Department of Texas Convention in Austin, Texas. She immediately attended the post-Convention Department Executive Committee meeting. In August 2021 she wrote letters of introduction to the District and Division Presidents and offered help and assistance. This was followed by a budget meeting in Austin. In September 2021 the Department Vice President Cooper attended a budget meeting followed by the Department Executive Committee meetings, and in January 2022 she attended the Mid-Winter Conference where she took part in leadership exercises.

Vice President Cooper attended the Legion Birthday party in Lubbock at Post and Unit 575 in March 2022 where she was presented with a certificate of appreciation. April 30-May 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Cooper attended the informative and educational National Leadership Conference. Throughout the spring she attended the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Division Conventions where she was welcomed by members and presented gifts. She asked for their support for her candidacy for Department of Texas President. At the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department of Texas Convention held in Austin ,a reception was held in Madam Vice President’s honor and she was duly elected as Department President, assuming her official duties at the post-Department Executive Committee meeting immediately following the convention.

**Department Secretary Tina Hill** recorded all proceedings of the Department organization and the Department Executive Committee meetings, conducted official correspondence and kept all records for Department. She was bonded to cover current revenues and made an annual report to the Department Executive Committee. She transmitted such other business as required.

She assisted units requesting Articles of Incorporation and notified the Secretary of State's office. When a unit was closed she notified IRS of their cancellation. She also signed and mailed the 990 when completed by the auditor at the close of the Department Convention July 2022. She worked closely with DEC, Activity Chairmen and VA Reps and Deps to distributed important information that required votes and responses. She also aided units with their needs. At the Department of Texas 102<sup>nd</sup> annual convention she campaigned for re-election as Department Secretary and won.

DEC voted this year to separate the Department Secretary/Treasurer position into two positions. Tina Hill was elected to the position of Department Secretary. This was a great move that brought better productibility, coordination, and efficiency to Department operations.

**Department Treasurer Sherry Harper** received and transmitted monies for Department and paid all obligations by check or electronic transfer. She assured that the signatures of the Department President, Vice President, Secretary,

Treasurer and Office Manager were on file with financial institutions for the operating accounts. She was bonded in a sufficient amount to cover current revenues and provided monthly statements to the Finance Committee as well as made specific dated updates available to them. She performed any other duties as needed.

DEC voted this year to separate the Department Secretary/Treasurer position into two positions. Sherry Harper, Membership and Girls State Chairmen, was elected to the position of Department Treasurer. This was a great move that brought better productibility, coordination, and efficiency to Department operations.

**National Executive Committeewoman Christine Trahan** served a four-year term, instead of three-year term, due to the pandemic. She represented Texas on the National level by attending zoom meetings and transmitting necessary information back to Department. She challenged members to give a monthly donation to the ALA Foundation and to sign up with AmazonSmile.

**Department Chaplain Mary Tatman** encouraged us all year long with her prayers, telling us God will make a way when it seems there is no way. She often quoted the 23rd Psalm as well as John 14:6 where "God, saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; No man cometh unto the father, but by me." She told us that *"Grace is when god gives us good things that we don't deserve. Mercy is when he spares us from bad things we deserve. Blessings are when he is generous with*

*both. Truly we can never run out of reasons to thank Him. God is good all the time!!!!!!*” She always included the Veterans, service men and women and the American Legion Family in her prayers and asked Him to provide guidance to us. She attending meetings and conferences where she gave the benediction and closing prayers, offered prayers for ill and department members as well as their family, and was a support to any who needed it. She also attended the National Chaplains’ Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, and shared her experiences and information with all.

“TO GOD BE THE GLORY AND TO THE MEN AND WOMEN SERVING OUR COUNTRY, WE PRAY TO GOD TO GIVE THEM PEACE AND FOR THEM TO RETURN HOME SAFE, THIS WE ASK IN THOU HOLY NAME: AMEN”

**Historian Sandi Schendel** began the year in July 2021 with a bang, immediately securing printing quotes for the Book of Reports that would be published for the July 2022 Department Convention. She also compiled and submitted a budget to the Finance Committee for approval in August. Her next job was to write a Programs Action Plan for the units. She researched past plans on Department and National websites, gleaned useful information from the National Historian’s page, and emailed the National Historian for specific instructions on how to submit a unit history for competition.

This Program Action Plan had several sections: Why is history important? How to preserve your unit written and memorabilia through the “Veterans History Project” and “Members Remember.” history? How to involve your Juniors? Capturing the oral history of veteran. Records retention. Never having a lack of words, the Historian’s Program Action Plan ended up being five pages. It was submitted to Department for distribution to the units and put on the Department website where she encouraged units, district and divisions to capture their history for their members and the new members that come after them.

The Historian was not finished yet. She added segments “From the Historian” to the Department bimonthly bulletins to keep units informed, to encourage them to involve their juniors, to help juniors earn the Junior History Patch, and to encourage them to follow suggestions in the Program Action Plan, and to assist members any way she could. She was always available by text, phone or email.

She requested and compiled information from units to complete her annual report to the National Historian by May. She added ideas or suggestions to make writing a department history more enjoyable and easier. She also began requesting and receiving the more than 70 narrative reports from Department Officers, District and Division Presidents, Activity Chairman, and VA Representatives and began compiling the “Book of Reports.” She also requested units to submit to her short stories on special events their units held for veterans, active duty, their families and communities for use in the Department of Texas History.



The Historian prepared and submitted a History of the Department of Texas July 10<sup>th</sup> deadline to the National Division Vice President. 300 copies of the 158 page of the Book of Reports were published and distributed by the Historian at the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department of Texas Convention held in Austin, Texas July 14 – 17, 2022.

New **Department Sgt-At-Arms Vikki Tabor** was duly elected at the 101<sup>st</sup> Department of Texas Convention. She immediately assumed her duties at the post-Department Convention meeting and continued to serve at the Mid-Winter Conference January 2022, the 2022 pre-Department Convention meeting as well as the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department Convention July 14-17, 2022. Vikki maintained order at Department meetings and assured the proper advancement and retirement of the Department Colors as well as maintained their proper care and safe return to Department Headquarters. She faithfully and flawlessly performed her duties with professionalism and efficiency to include organizing seating arrangements for Executive Committee meetings and the Department Convention. She assured that processions and recessions were organized properly and were performed professionally and beautifully. She also performed those duties assignment to her by the Department President.

**Josephine Foret was appointed as Chairman of Pages** at the Department of Texas Convention in 2021 and performed all duties at the DEC Convention in September, 2021 before she passed away from cancer in November 2021. At Department President Teresa Simmons Copeland's request, cancer-survivor **Jean**

**Bennett** stepped in as Chairman of Pages for 2022 to complete Jojo's term. The new Chairman of Pages secured, instructed, organized and supervised the Pages for the Mid-Winter Conference in January, 2022 and the Department of Texas Convention in July, 2022. Her duties included assisting her Sgt-at-Arms, carrying and posting the Department flag, setting up rooms for all convention meetings, handing out and collecting voting packets, and assisting delegates, alternates and attendees during meetings. She made sure her Pages properly escorted guests to and from the podium and performed other duties as required. Jean was honored to complete Jojo's term and hopes she did her memory proud.

**Department Parliamentarian Rosie Cherry** was appointed to her position following the election of Department President Teresa Simmons Copeland at the 101<sup>st</sup> Department of Texas Convention in July 2021. She performed her duties at the post-Department Convention 2022 meeting, Department Executive Committee meeting in September 2021, the Mid-Winter Conference January 2022 and the 102<sup>nd</sup> Department Convention held in Austin, Texas July 2022. She made rulings on parliamentary procedure based on the Department of Texas Constitution and Bylaws, Standing Rules and Special Rules and the National Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules. She also used the rules contained in the current edition of Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised latest edition. She served the Department President and as needed. She assured that meetings were facilitated and conducted efficiently through the principles of parliamentary procedure. She saw that the rights of members was protected.

The **Distinguished Guest Chair MaryAnn Paul** was the official hostess for distinguished guests who came into the Department on invitation. She assisted with guests proper housing, transportation, food, courtesies, and anything indicated for the comfort and pleasure of the guest. She was given funds in advance and provided gifts for the Department President Teresa Simmons Copeland as indicated and performed any other duties as assigned to her by the Department President..

She accompanied President Teresa Simmons Copeland, Department Vice President Myra Cooper and Department Secretary Tina Hill on an official visit by National American Legion Auxiliary President Kathy Daudistel to the great State of Texas January 9 to 12, 2022. She helped pick up National President Kathy Daudistel at the San Antonio Airport which was immediately followed by a visit to the Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Medical Center, followed by a visit to Army Residence Community for a tour of the facility and lunch. The afternoon included a tour of the K9s for Warriors training center, followed by dinner and a reception at William M. Randolph Post 593 Converse.

On Tuesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> after breakfast, the Distinguished Guest Chairman assisted Department President Copeland and National President Daudistel on a tour of the Kerrville VA Medical Center followed by a fun stop at Buc-ee's for snacks, T-shirts and a photo with a statue of Bucky Beaver. National President Kathy was very impressed; to be forever a Buc-ee's fan! The Distinguished Guest

Chairman assisted the group on a trip to Austin for a tour of Department of Texas Headquarters and then on to the famous San Antonio Market place for dinner. The next day following breakfast and saying goodbyes, her duties were complete.

## **SECTION IV – DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS DIVISIONS AND DISTRICTS**

### **DIVISION 1**

**Division 1 President Jackie Jenkins, Ph.D.** reported Division 1 was composed of 6 districts and 64 units totaling over 3,400 members. Division 1 had 25 units over 100% with Unit 265 Kiowa at 164%. There was one district over 100% - District 5 with 102.23% with District 13 almost there at 99.69%. There were only 4 zero units.

In service for veterans, active duty military and reserve, Division 1 members volunteered 177,825 hours, spending \$85,120 and assisting 4,424 veterans and military. 41 “Veterans in Community School” presentations were facilitated. In kind donations totaled \$101,343 while 4,418 poppies were distributed with \$46,798 raised. 3,272 military families were served for a total of 7,308 volunteer hours, spending \$19,954.

Serving children was close to the hearts of Division 1 members who served 1,625 children and youth . Girls State volunteers logged in 1,034 hours and spent \$21,620. Total hours served for other Legion Family youth activities were 3,255 hours. \$2,865 was given in direct aid to needy children while \$9,361 was spent on goods for youth activities with all other unit expenses at \$3,902. \$13,788 total

dollars were donated to provide service to other children charities. Lastly, service to communities totaled 729,925 hours with total donations at \$52,212.

Delegates to the 2021 Division 1 Convention elected Jackie Jenkins, Ph.D., from Unit 550 and District 13, as the incoming Division 1 President for the term 2021-2022. Dr. Jackie traveled to Austin to attend the Department Convention, where she was installed as the 2021-2022 Division 1 President.

Having been elected as an Alternate Delegate to the National Convention, President Jenkins and Unit 550 President Melinda Wilkins attended the National Convention in Phoenix. It was exciting to be present when the American Legion voted Texas own Paul Dillard National Commander for 2021 – 2022. It was thrilling to march through the hall waving Texas flags and singing “Deep in the Heart of Texas.” In September President Jenkins and District Presidents attended Presidents School and fall Department Executive Committee meetings, approving the annual budget.

Division President Jenkins challenged her Districts to encourage Units to send in Christmas Assessment by Veterans Day. The Division One Challenge Cup was presented to District 1 President Diane Strait at the Mid-Winter Conference where units learned, reported and celebrated with Division 1 winning a gold medal in the Leadership Committee’s Family Feud game. Division 1 units held many successful events and fundraisers to support their veterans, their military, their families and

their communities. They honored and served those less fortunate. *And that is why,*  
... *It is ALWAYS a Great Day to be in ALA!*

**District 1 President Diane Strait** reported units began the year catching up with friendships as meetings were once again in person. There were five units in District 1 with Unit 243 Mount Vernon at 109.89%. Unit 243 Mount Vernon sent Department \$2,693.00 for Cancer Research Fund and the Child Welfare Fund. They gave three \$500 local scholarships and contributed \$250 to the Past President's Medical Scholarships.

All units cooked delicious meals and decorated posts for veterans during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Unit 267 played Santa Claus and gave fruit bags and Christmas cards to veterans in nursing homes and assisted living. Unit 488 sponsored a junior member at Watersprings Ranch, a facility for children in need, and provided her with birthday and Christmas cards and clothing. Unit 267 partnered with the Marshall Police Department to distribute backpacks for the homeless and homeless veterans, filled with T-shirts, socks, soap, and hand-wipes. Patrolmen passed out backpacks when they encountered homeless on patrol.

District 1 distributed *The Poppy Lady: Moina Belle Michael and Her Tribute to Veterans* to all units who in turn donated the books to school and public libraries. All Units had a very good year and look forward to 2022 – 2023.

**District 3 President Linda Williams** reported her district is composed of eight units: Unit 12 Tyler, Unit 15 Lindale, Unit 131 Longview, Unit 296 Mineola, Unit 320 Gilmer, Unit 340 Winnsboro, Unit 353 Carthage, and Unit 844 Henderson. They worked diligently and passionately for their veterans, military, families and communities working Auxiliary Programs and making sizeable donations to AEF, Cancer Research, Children and Youth, Community Service, Education and Past Presidents Parley, VA&R and more. They had a successful year. Membership was over 80% with one Unit 844 Henderson at 100%.

**District 4 President Mary Wackerow** reported her units worked the programs and accomplished great things. There were seven units over 100% with Unit 265 Lake Kiowa at 164%. New Unit 265 Lake Kiowa quickly formed, held membership drives, distributed poppies Memorial Day, held a Veterans Day dinner and paid for 70 veterans meals, and decorated a truck for the Medal of Honor parade.

Unit 62 Denison donated goodies to the fire department, placed flags on veterans graves Veterans Day, raised funds at the Music on Main Street and participated in Wreaths Across America. Unit 310 Mabank with their post donated a truck load of food to the Veterans Resource Center to feed homeless veterans. Food was also taken to a homeless shelter. Needy families received food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The unit worked well assisting their Legionnaires, Sons and Riders at events. Unit 283 Bonham donated items to VA patients,

worked most Auxiliary programs, assisted needed members in the community and increased their membership to over 133.33%

Unit 231 Lake Texoma had a great year holding a garage sale to raise money for their programs. They held activities for children, almost reached 100% membership, and they have a train. Unit 110 McKinney, Unit 17 Greenville, Unit 100 Royce City, Unit 321 Plano, Unit 178 Frisco, Unit 376 Van Alstyne, Unit 315 Wylie and Unit 517 West Tawakoni worked their programs brilliantly including Cancer Research. They held fish fries, crawfish boils and meals at their posts to raise funds. All participated in the Poppy Program and sent Juniors to Girls State. Unit 156 Emory was near closing but came back strong with even more members.

President Wackerow thanked her units for their hard for God and Country on their programs and membership where they placed number one in District and Division.

**District 5 President Sharon Shumate Elam** dedicated her year-end report to her units. She stated without their hard work dedication and love of their veterans, the veterans families and their community there would be no 5<sup>th</sup> District. Sharon had thirteen units with nine over 100% with the highest Unit 504 Mesquite over 116.87% and no zero units.

Unit 292 holds an annual Children and Youth Talent Show to inspire juniors to become active members. Their big project was their Cancer Research Fundraiser



where they sold pink items Thursday nights in October. Unit 368 seniors and juniors sold jellies and jams and contributed more than \$1,500 to Camp Hope for veterans suffering from PTSD. They donated \$600 to Patriot Paws - Rockwall to get a service dog for a local veteran. They also established weekly food tables to help the community. Junior Krislyn Hart raised \$614 for "Patriot Paws – Rockwall." Unit 424 held their annual 9/11 Program, donated to a battered women's shelter at Christmas and held Halloween, Christmas and Easter programs for children.

Unit 453 along with their Sons organized their annual food and fun luau with proceeds supporting their programs. This event raised \$6,000 and it was divided between the unit and their Sons. Their successful Pajama Drive distributed 435 pairs of new Christmas PJ's to veteran's children and Tots to Teens. Unit 597 held their annual Christmas for Kids Program where they adopted five elementary schools. They shopped, wrapped and delivered \$75 worth of clothes, shoes, and toys for each student from their wish list. They also placed over 100 flags around the Carrollton Veteran's Memorial on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. This "Field of Flags" was a beautiful sight for all to honor veterans. The 5<sup>th</sup> District partnered with their Sons of the American Legion on a "Sweats for Vets" program. They discovered a need for sweats when patients were released and donated over 100 sets of sweats to the Dallas VA Hospital

**District 12 President Cheryl Harrell** reported units attended the 101<sup>st</sup> Department Convention and fall Department Executive Committee meeting. She

had ten units with only Unit 379 Bedford at 105.87%. Some have Department Committee appointments. Units held a drive thru baby shower for needy military families at the Naval Air Station Joint Base Reserve during their Fall Convention. They collected food, baby items, diapers and gift cards and made diaper cakes. The expectant mothers were overjoyed to receive the gift bags. The unit also donated food to the base Fleet & Family Services. For Veterans Day units attended parades and distributed poppies. Unit 379 held their annual Cancer Research Pancake Breakfast and raised \$15,000. Units in the district also collected school supplies for local schools.

Units helped the base Fleet & Family Services during the holidays by giving out 200 meals to needy military families along with \$1,000 donated by Unit 639 and coats from Unit 297. Unit 626 organized a mini stand down for homeless veterans handing out hats, socks and non-perishable food items. Unit 624 made monetary donations. At Christmas units held toy drives for Toys for Tots and helped families in their community. Unit 569 participated in Wreaths Across America. Units 626, 516, 379 and 297 donated items to a child abuse seminar including coloring books and crayons, games, books and snacks.

District President Harrell passed out appreciation certificates to military children honored at Lucycle Collins Middle School during April the Month of the Military Child. Unit 297 honored Gold Star Mothers and military children at Naval Air Station and also honored military for Armed Forces Day.

At the 12th District Fall Convention, Communities in Schools Counselors Megan Jimenez and Kimeeka Brown spoke to delegates about the programs offered to families in need. The organization supported students and families at Lucycle Collins Middle School. Along with assisting students, they also provided food and other necessary items to families as well as counseling. Attending with the counselors were Elisa and her brother Cordero who shared their story of how Communities in Schools helped their family when their father lost his job during Covid. The family was in need of food and clothing and Communities in Schools stepped in and assisted them with much needed items. They helped the family survive the horrors associated with Covid. Unit 297 assisted this organization by donating funds that went to needy students and families. Delegates saw first-hand how important this organization is in public schools.

Also in October the 12th District participated in a drive-by baby shower at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth at their Fleet and Family Center. This Military and Family Support Center was part of a large network of agencies, services, and partnerships that supported family readiness with key resources for military families. Units in the 12th District donated much needed baby items including baby food and formula, clothing, diapers and more. Cute diaper cakes were created out of disposable diapers for the expectant mothers. More than 10 “mommies to be” were present to receive the baby items and thanked Auxiliary members for their donations that greatly assisted these military families. President

Harrell thanked her units for their compassion, hard work and devotion to God and Country.

**District 13 President Lynda McClaren** reported her units worked tirelessly serving their veterans and bringing awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary assistance despite the pandemic shutdown. The District reached 100% membership with six units over 100% with Unit 71 Denton at 160%.

President McClaren visited her units, learned of their challenges and frustrations, and how they worked programs. This was a rewarding experience for her. Spring Convention 2022 was enjoyable and educational with Leadership Members Holly Heatly and Department Secretary Tina Hill answering delegates questions. It was also a blessing to be with ALA sisters again. District 13 held the highest percentage of membership across Texas at the January Mid-Winter Conference in January 2022. Archer City Unit 198 sadly closed due to the pandemic.

Burkburnett Unit 264 and Lake Dallas Unit 88 worked very hard this year and made generous donations to Auxiliary programs. Denton Unit 71 went through revitalization and ended up with membership over 160%. They also sent 16 juniors to Girls State. Nocona Unit 220 had an unexpected change in leadership but volunteered with their Legion Family and community. They rejoined delegates at the District 13 Convention for the first time in years and worked hard reorganizing their unit. They did great things.

Pilot Point Unit 550 hosted a Christmas Party for Junior members, assisted their post with a charity event for a Legionnaire battling cancer, volunteered more than 2,500 service hours in the community, awarded three scholarships and sent a letter of encouragement with a \$25 gift card to every Junior member in August for "Back to School." Sanger Unit 268 provided a Veterans Day meal, co-sponsored a baby shower with their Legionnaires and Riders, distributed poppies and poppy coloring books, participated in the Sanger non-profit community ice cream social, hosted a blanket drive and distributed blankets to veterans and their spouses. They provided food donations to the Sanger Crisis Center and Shepard Air Force Base for community members and military and veteran families, and participated in the Sanger Sellabration/Safe Spook community event with an ALA membership drive and honoring first responders.

Wichita Falls Unit 120 held a Memorial Day ceremony, hosted bi-weekly cook nights to support veterans and fundraising for the unit and post, served as an overflow post for the annual Legacy Motorcycle Run, held movie nights, trivia and bingo nights for Legion Family members, hosted chili cook-off and Super Bowl parties, and hosted a free Veteran's Day meal for veterans.

Wichita Falls Unit 169 prepared snacks for the 82nd Security Forces Squadron's for overseas troops in partnership with a fourth grade class who wrote personal notes to the troops thanking them for their service, supported the Troopon Coupon Program for overseas troops, provided a Christmas Party with presents for the

children of deployed troops; participated in the Veteran's Day parade and placed over 4,500 flags on veterans graves Memorial Day, and sent two Girls State candidates. Wichita Falls Unit 202 held three garage sales and donated leftovers to Women's Refuge, Children's Home, and Salvation. Honor Guard members performed flag presentations at eight military funerals.

## **DIVISION 2**

**Division 2 President Terri Duncan** reported Division 2 was composed of six districts and 56 units totaling over 3,300 members. Division 2 had 23 units over 100% with Unit 578 Houston at 206.67%. District 8 was over 100% with 103.02% and District 22 with 100.45%. There were 3 zero units. There were only 3 zero units. In service for veterans, active duty military and reserve, Division 2 members volunteered 24,037 hours, spending \$65,351 and assisting 9,520 veterans and military. 14 "Veterans in Community School" presentations were facilitated. In kind donations totaled \$7,691 while 9,213 poppies were distributed with \$5,782 raised. 1,416 military families were served for a total of 7,073 volunteer hours, spending \$10,959.

Serving children was close to the hearts of Division 2 members who served 4,475 children and youth . Girls State volunteers logged in 1,019 hours and spent \$14,444. Total hours served for other Legion Family youth activities were 1,663 hours. \$3,740 was given in direct aid to needy children while \$15,989 was spent on goods for youth activities with all other unit expenses at \$6,300. \$11,127 total

dollars were donated to provide service to other children charities. Lastly, service to communities totaled 12,772 hours with total donations at \$44,801.

President Duncan praised her districts for enduring trying times and never giving up. She commended them for their dedication, hard work, and service to work as a family to make good things happen for their veterans, active duty and families and communities. Division 2 remained #1 in membership due to their efforts; they worked the programs fantastically. She communicated frequently with units, assisted with issues and acknowledged successes. The units deserved all the credit for the success of Division 2 in “Service Not Self.”

**District 2 President Arie Sale** thanked her units for doing a wonderful job and fulfilling their mission by supporting their veterans, military, their families and community. District 2 had Units worked hard and with passion and persevered through Covid. They were successful in their program efforts and two units out of eight were over 100% with Beaumont 33 at 123.93%.

**District 6 President Kami Kemp** praised her units for remaining strong during the pandemic. They passionately served those who served them as the district stood strong as a family serving their veterans, military, families and communities. There were nine units in the district with four over 100%; the highest was Unit 288 Groesbeck at 108.33%.

In Americanism one unit chose a business, replaced their tattered flag and awarded them a certificate of appreciation. Units recited the Pledge of Allegiance and Preamble with many honoring the POW/MIA chair with a ceremony. At Veterans Day units placed flags on veterans graves as well as wreaths at the Wall of Honor. Many held luncheons for veterans and participated in parades and presentations at schools. At Memorial Day units participated in celebrations, Field of Flag ceremonies, flag retirements, and Spring Fests for veterans and later at July 4th and 9/11 events.

Community Service, Children and Youth, and Education were big programs for units as their efforts included a Back to School event for school supplies. They participated in 10 for Education, delivered cookie trays to educators, and awarded general and medical scholarships. One unit donated \$500 to Johnson County Child Advocacy Center. Another hosted a community garage sale while one member volunteered over 240 hours handing out 10,000 breakfast tacos summer mornings to food unstable families.

One unit displayed a Basic Needs Box, collecting essentials for needy families, while another made donations and sent cards to Blue Star Moms and Gold Star Mothers. Bibles were distributed to families who lost loved ones. One unit hosted an End of Life seminar educating units on will preparation and securing final burial wishes. Others hosted memorials for deceased Legion Family Members and held Four Chaplains Ceremonies for the public.



Most hosted Easter Egg hunts with baskets and Valentine Day celebrations. They delivered Valentine Day goody bags to a nursing facility and candy to the elderly. At Halloween fun trunk or treat events were held with donations to local schools. Units also hosted Thanksgiving meals for communities and donated meals to those in need. At Christmas units set up military trees to honor all branches of service, took part in Wreaths Across America, gave out gift cards, and made donations to children's advocacy groups and local missions. Units sponsored Christmas meals for veterans and Christmas parties for children. They donated to Toys for Tots, held silent auctions, sent Christmas cards to members and hosted an Angel Christmas Tree.

Units visited nursing homes across the 6<sup>th</sup> District as well as distributed gifts, snacks, games, arts and crafts and goodies throughout the year to veterans, military families and their communities. Units sponsored girls to Girls State and held orientations. One unit sponsored the local JROTC and presented scholarships and certificates to two students.

One member volunteered two hours a day quarterly at the local food bank while another volunteered at the Red Cross and library.

Units held informal events during the year with post family members to raise funds, build comradery and to serve one another. These events were enjoyed by all and included bingo, dinners, turkey shoots, painting parties, sport-watching events, blood drives, chili cook-offs and karaoke. Units supported local food pantries with

food drives. One unit donated \$100 monthly to Meals on Wheels. Units honored essential frontline workers, police, fire, doctors, nurses and others, who cared for those suffering through Covid, with snacks, water and other items, delivering them with a smile. Others hosted First Responders luncheons.

Homeless and food unstable veterans were taken care of by the units through donations of food, clothing and personal hygiene drives. One unit donated \$3,350 in socks and toiletries to the Dallas Veterans Resource Center, while the 6th District bagged 808 pairs of new socks to be disbursed to people in need. One unit donated essential items for the women in the Waco VA hospital to make their stay a little more enjoyable. Another made sleeping mats out of plastic bags for homeless Veterans while another donated \$1,000 to the Killeen Military Food Bank. Many Quilts of Valor were presented to Veterans from one unit. Some units disbursed poppies with one unit making a poppy wreath.

One unit held a weekly breakfast event which catered to 95 Veterans so they could socialize while another donated \$200 a month to a Veteran's non-profit each month. Another delivered candy and puzzle books to the Dallas VA hospital. One unit decorated an annual Harvest Table and sold homemade food items, with the proceeds going to VA&R. They also collected coats and hats and donated to Veterans One Stop Shop and CareNet in Waco. Units sent troop boxes with snacks and food overseas and one unit delivered nine cases of cookies to 200

National Guards along the Texas border. Units wore the ALA branded attire during events, created social media pages or joined local the Chamber of Commerce.

**District 7 President Carrie Daily** reported her units were busy this year. She had eleven units with five units over 100% with Unit 629 Coldspring at 133.85%. She made visits and kept units updated in addition to attending President's School, DEC, and Mid-Winter Conferences. Units reported more than 20,000 volunteer hours for veterans and active duty military, 3,055 to military families, 260 hours for children and youth, and 5,150 representing the ALA in their communities. She noted 17 scholarships were awarded. She was very impressed with the Units in District 7 for their endless efforts to maintain and increase membership. Her units held many functions such as bake sales, food drives, coat drives, and school supply drives, as well as benefit cook-offs to assist veteran and community entities. One of the events that touched President Daily was a post cook-off where the Junior Auxiliary held a bake sale to raise funds for the food bank in Killeen. After this was announced, several teams donated their winnings to the Juniors, allowing them to raise \$2,500 to donate to the food bank.

**District 8 President Penny Honaker** reported it was a trying year with Covid but units worked hard on their programs and she was proud of them. She had eight units with three over 100% with Unit 578 Houston at 206.67%. Many virtual and in person meetings were held to assist units, to answer questions and to work on membership. Vice President Rosa Rumph stepped in when needed. Unit 127

made breakfast tacos and raised over \$200. They assisted their Legionnaires at three home shows, sold raffle tickets and talked to attendees about the American Legion Family. They made Easter baskets for an assisted living home, helped the Legion with the Christmas float, made care bags for the homeless and sent 12 girls to Girls State..

Unit 499 reorganized this year while Unit 132 suspended meetings but assisted their Legion post. Unit 560 held a gumbo cook-off and other fundraisers and sent Valentine and Christmas cards to soldiers. Unit 578 worked very hard to get back in good standing and made 103.02% of goal. They held fundraisers and treated 200 children to an Easter party. Unit 644 held monthly community dinners and raised funds for their programs. They held a school supplies drive and teamed with the VFW on a trunk or treat event. They gave Christmas baskets to the elderly and held a Christmas party for needy families with Santa.

Unit 586 members were elderly and avoided Covid; however, they donated to Wreaths Across America, Blue Star Mothers and homeless veterans. Unit 658 reached out for help and President Honaker was there to help them bounce back. She further stated it was an honor and a pleasure to serve the units in the 8<sup>th</sup> District.

**District 11 President Tone' Mahone** reported her units were busy helping their veterans.

Units honored veterans on Veterans Day, held coat drives at Thanksgiving and Christmas, filled food pantries, and left no child behind, despite the difficult times with Covid. They held dinners, conducted training at conventions, and hosted Halloween parties for veteran and community families. District 11 had ten units with two over 100% with Unit 273 McGregor at 149.06%.

Covid sadly took many members but units continued to host pizza parties and ice cream socials for patients at VA hospitals. To raise money for programs, units held bake sales, raffles, and silent auctions. Spring brought Easter bunnies, Easter egg hunts, a car show and cook offs for children and veterans. When their communities reached out they provided needed items to battered women shelters and to nursing homes that needed lap blankets for veterans. They assisted with Project Hero in Central Texas as well as veterans with disabilities riding bicycles to bring awareness to disabled veterans. Units fed them and listened to their stories.

**District 22 President Gillian Woodstrom** stated Covid was a roller coaster ride for district units, but some normalcy finally returned. She had ten units with six units over 100% with Unit 164 Katy at 148.39%. They were all experts at Zoom now! She congratulated her units on a job well done and was proud of all of them. Unit 490 lost their post to a fire but found creative ways to assist their veterans, children and community. They met on the post patio and recently broke ground on a new post. President Woodstrom congratulated them on their perseverance,

determination and fierceness to work through difficult times. She thanked former Department Presidents Carlene Ashworth, Diana King and Ann Nicholson for their support and advice.

Unit 521 excelled in their service to their veterans and community and their outstanding tradition of support to Cancer Research. They held their annual Liminary Ceremony that was beautiful and meaningful. Unit 164 reached out to their community by stationing tables outside businesses seeking donations to Wreaths Across America and held their annual Wreaths Across America Ceremony attended by veterans, families and community organizations. Unit 52 held their traditional Soldier Rest Ceremony commemorating veterans buried in a local cemetery; this began in 1923.

Small but mighty Unit 77 made a difference by supporting their disabled veterans, underprivileged children, educational facilities, the AEF and Rice University ROTC. This Department of Texas History was dedicated to their deceased member Myra J. Hester, an extraordinary woman, who lived Auxiliary "Service Not Self" motto for 70 years.

Unit 319 was busy supporting their veterans and community and held a Four Chaplains Ceremony at a local church. Unit 472 supported their programs through a difficult year as members navigated financial crises and the loss of loved ones. They supported education, awarding four \$700 scholarship. Unit 654 struggled,

but assisted by the district through training on Auxiliary rules and procedures, maintained good standing, ending the year at 118.42% membership. Sadly President Woodstrom had to close Unit 594 as it was unable to function and support programs anymore.

### **DIVISION 3**

**Division 3 President Yolanda M. Garcia** reported Division 3 was composed of 6 districts and 88 units totaling over 4,400 members. There were 21 units over 100% with Unit 274 Beeville at 131.82% and no zero units. In service for veterans, active duty military and reserve, Division 3 members volunteered 35,716 hours, spending \$49,144 and assisting 5,595 veterans and military. 3 “Veterans in Community School” presentations were facilitated. In kind donations totaled \$15,259 while 8,577 poppies were distributed with \$15,285 raised. 844 military families were served for a total of 3,277 volunteer hours, spending \$11,891.

Serving children was close to the hearts of Division 3 members who served 3,258 children and youth . Girls State volunteers logged in 1,829 hours and spent \$15,425. Total hours served for other Legion Family youth activities were 2,386 hours. \$7,860 was given in direct aid to needy children while \$5,785 was spent on goods for youth activities with all other unit expenses at \$4,138. \$4,334 total dollars were donated to provide service to other children charities. Lastly, service to communities totaled 25,483 hours with total donations at \$40,712. Division 3

had 21 units in six districts over 100% with the highest unit over 132%. There was only one zero unit.

After being elected at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Convention in May 2021, President Yolanda M. Garcia attended the Department Convention in July in Austin, where she was officially installed as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division President. She pledged to support newly-elected Department Copeland's presential theme "Honoring Their Service Spreading Seeds of Goodwill," Membership Theme "Growing our Membership by Cultivating Kindness" and project "K9 for Warriors." She also attended the National Convention in August at Phoenix, Arizona as an alternate.

Her six districts were highly successful in implementing programs to assist veterans, military, families and communities. Her official visits included fall and spring conventions, homecomings, cancer research luncheons, and oratorical contests. She maintained contact with her districts whose presidents were excellent role models. She thanked members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division for their hard work, dedication and love and respect for their veterans, military, their families and communities.

Her first official visit as president was to assist with a unit audit in the 14<sup>th</sup> District followed by the National Convention in August. September brought three fall district conventions, Presidents School and Department Executive Committee meetings where the budget was approved. She attended Mid-Winter Conference



and several events with Department President Copeland including Cancer Research Luncheon, Sons Detachment Commander Arista's homecoming, the Oratorical Contest and President Copeland's homecoming followed by four spring conventions followed in 2022 and then her own 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Convention. She was guest speaker at conventions and spoke about Auxiliary policies, important forms units should complete, and programs. During Covid she kept in touch with her districts via phone calls, texts and emails. They ended the year successfully and ready for 2023. For God and country – For Service not Self.

**District 9 President Colene Blankinship** reported the 9th District was the largest in the State of Texas with 29 units. This year it was split between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the newly created 19<sup>th</sup> district. District 9 had 19 units with three over 100% and Unit 291 San Leon at 116.67%. She issued a membership challenge with District 19 President Irene Szwarc, conceded a lost and made a donation to the 19<sup>th</sup>. She thanked her hard-working, dedicated and caring units for their support of the veterans, military, families and communities.

Many units supported veterans at Memorial Day and Veterans Day events. Many visited veterans in nursing homes, took veterans to the polls, and delivered baskets filled with cookies, shirts, socks, hats, and gloves to veterans. One unit attended a city council and economic development meeting. Another reported they made donations to Warriors Weekend, K9s for Warriors, Fisher House, PTSD Foundation, Camp Hope and Department. Another distributed Welcome Home

baskets to returning servicemen and women. Several units sent girls to Girls State in addition to high school scholarships.

Easter Egg Hunts were held by units in their community. Unit 291 filled 10,000 eggs with candy and prizes while others prepared backpacks with school supplies and held Children's BBQ Cook-Offs, Halloween Trunk or Treat events and Breakfast with Santa. Several collected hats and gloves for area children and needy adults at Christmas. Other activities reported by District 9 Units included baskets for the needy at Thanksgiving and Christmas, adopting a family at Christmas, and participating in Wreaths Across America. District 9 truly been honored their service by spreading seed of goodwill!

**District 10 President Lois Stuart** reported there were twenty-one units in her district and all did a fabulous job. She had six units over 100% with Unit 317 Jerrell Luling at 118.75%.

.They were energetic, creative, hard-working, and caring units who took good care of their veterans, their military, their military families, their youth and their communities. They truly exemplified the Auxiliary motto of "Service Not Self." They also worked membership and did a great job.

Units truly love their veterans as evidenced by their many monetary and in-kind donations to various VA Hospitals including Temple, Audie Murphy, Kerrville, Brooke Army Medical Center and their Fisher House, and Wilford Hall at Lackland

Air Force Base and their Fisher House. One unit held drives for their VA Hospital involving local elementary schools where body lotion, soaps, socks, shaving cream and more were collected and distributed to their veterans. The unit also provided funding for comfort bed load.

These special ladies were quite active in their posts and assisted with fundraisers including serving meals, selling raffle tickets, and Memorial Day and Veterans Day Programs. They organized floats for parades, invited their veterans to proudly ride along, and passed out flags and goodies, winning the Grand Prize for Best Decorated Entry. One unit attended a luncheon at their local rest home where they visited with veterans and distributed coffee cups and socks. At Christmas veterans received T-shirts, gifts and Christmas cards thanking them for their service. Ladies quilted patriotic quilts and lap robes, and put them in bags with gift cards and "Thank You For Your Service" cards. They hand-delivered them to veterans at their VA Hospital. Gift cards were also provided to veterans in need of gas and food.

Units held successful fundraisers to include taco soup, silent auctions, spaghetti dinners and sold rummage sale items at market days to fund programs. They donated to education, cancer research, scholarships and veterans and community facilities. One unit worked to support the Women Veteran's Equine Therapy Program for victims of sexual assault where they prepared meals and handed out certificates of completion. Units sent boxes of goodies to troops overseas

including Syria. Included in the boxes were letters written by local school children. Those letters tugged at the heartstrings of those troops, and the boxes let troops know that they were appreciated and loved.

Units held Flag Day activities at their posts with the assistance of a local high schools and assisted their American Legion with Flag Retirement Ceremonies. They promoted the Americanism Essay Contest, Americanism, and patriotism by handing out flags. Many distributed poppies in November with local junior high schools donating funds to purchase more poppies. Students at a local school were given poppies and were taught the history of who a veteran was and why Veterans Day are held. Memorial Day was also recognized by units in local schools. One unit assisted their Legion in renovating their post home, by replacing the wooden floors, painting the hall and purchasing a portable stage for special occasions.

Units loved their young people in their posts and communities. They gave scholarships to high school seniors of veterans, made Valentines with students in middle school, and participated in Veterans Day Ceremonies, distributing poppies and flags. They sponsored girls to Girls State working with local non-profits to provide tuition for the program and assisted the post with Boys State. They donated to the Department Education and Past Presidents Parley Funds. Units sponsored area students to the Americanism Essay Contest. One unit's student won the National Southern Division Americanism Essay Contest. One unit had a group of "Legion Children" who met at the post with parents. They made favors

and treats for veterans in nursing homes and assisted the unit with functions. They learned about service first hand, something they would never forget.

Community service activities included making monetary and in kind donations to assisted living, high schools, first responders, churches, women's veterans groups, quilting guilds and others. Units volunteered at local courthouses, schools, churches, and chamber of commerce. They held annual Oktoberfest celebrations serving German food and wearing Dirndl dresses. There were prizes, delicious desserts and German beer. The units loved their communities and participated in community activities such as Veterans' Day parades and programs, first responder events, and other community activities.

One unit held their first of many Cooking for Cops and First Responders events partnering with a local correctional facility. They personally greeted responders and served them a delicious spaghetti dinner. They thanked them for their service to the community. To keep members active and current on unit and post activities, units created Facebook pages as well as email distribution lists to notify members of activities.

**District 14 President Patsy Harlan** reported units in the 14<sup>th</sup> were busy as bees and worked with caring, loving hearts for their veterans, military and families and communities. President Harlan visited all of her units and assisted where needed

but unfortunately had to close two, Unit 272 and Unit 185. There were twelve units in her district and three were over 100% with the Beeville Unit 274 at 131.82%

Unit 413 hosted a successful Leadership Course for area units who learned a lot. All units awarded scholarships and most sent girls to Girls State. Units donated to various entities and volunteered for their veterans, their military, their families and their communities. They drove veterans to doctor and hospital appointments, took care of elderly parents, attended Purple Heart functions, and helped hurricane victims. Units donated to Scholarship and Poppy Programs. Many served meals at their posts, held Children's Halloween Parties, assisted with Veteran's Day dinners, hosted Easter Egg Hunts for children, held "Legacy" Bike Runs and other fundraisers to raise money for programs.

Other projects included sending care packages to overseas servicemen and preparing meals and sending cards to veterans. Donations included purchasing flags to place on the graves veterans, donating to their local American Legion, making presentations to veterans, preserving the history of past veterans and helping maintain post homes. Memorial Day and Veteran's Day programs were held, some using slide shows depicting where fallen heroes were buried throughout the United States and overseas.

Units hosted Blue Santa, car shows, and bake sales to raise funds and held Sock Hops and Kentucky Derby Days for members. Donations were made to K9s for

Warriors and Cancer Research in honor of a family member who took ill or passed. Activities for children included educating them on the history of the different branches of the military, what POW's and MIA's meant, and the history of wars from WWI to Vietnam Wars. One unit helped children place flags on more than 100 graves of veterans.

One unit volunteered over 1,300 hours in their community and donated more than \$53,000 in cash and in-kind donations. Units visited nursing homes, taught fire prevention at schools, escorted fallen veterans to their gravesites, and sent quilts overseas to the homeless. Members volunteered in school districts, museums, Boys and Girls Clubs, Trail Ride Associations and countless other organizations that impacted communities and veterans. Christmas lap blankets were distributed to veterans and spouses in local care facilities.

Auxiliary members teamed up with American Legion and SAL members to host a community-side garage sale to make much needed repairs to their hall to ensure its continued role as a community center. One dedicated and caring unit member volunteered the majority of the unit's 3,174 hours. The unit donated \$8,695 to the care of their veterans. Units in the 14<sup>th</sup> truly lived the Auxiliary motto of "Service Not Self."

**District 15 President Linda Correa-Garcia** was elected 15<sup>th</sup> District President at the Spring 2021 convention along with other District officers. The district was

composed of nine units which have faithfully continued “Honoring Their Service Spreading Seeds of Goodwill” and “Cultivating Kindness” for our Veterans, their Families and the Community. There were three units over 100% with Mercedes Unit 172 at 110.42%.

Units helped the American Legion with events such as Flag Day, Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration, Veterans Day and fundraisers. Some assisted with funeral processions and attended in full attire to give veterans a final, honorable farewell. District 15 had an Auxiliary Honor Guard that attended veterans’ funerals. Units made poppies for Memorial Day and another helped with a Stand Down at their post with Veteran Agencies present to help veterans. Units attended an unveiling ceremony of the KIA Monument and an updated MIA Monument that now has the last conflicts. Units visited cemeteries placing flags and wreaths on veteran’s graves to honor their sacrifices. Several collected items and funds needed by the Louisiana Auxiliary Sisters after the hurricane left veterans and families in great need.

District 15 units supported programs donating to Cancer Research, AEF, K9s for Warriors, Girls State, Child Welfare and Creative Arts. Units also made donations to their local communities such as funds to veterans for medical and rehabilitation expenses, food banks, Halloween gifts for children, gifts to nursing home veterans, Toys for Tots, Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners for Veterans.



Veterans Day was celebrated with parades, distribution of handmade poppies, cookies, cupcake poppies for nursing home veterans and poppy pie sales. 15 students from the National Honor Society volunteered 46 hours with a unit at the Veterans Day Poppy Event passing out poppies and telling the story of the memorial poppy. They were rewarded with stories from the veterans' experiences. This was an awesome time for the students for they learned so much about veterans. They helped raise over \$2,000 and some volunteered to help at the Memorial Day Poppy Event.

The year ended with the spring convention where DAV Department of Texas Vice Commander Fred Cavazos gave valuable information on benefits to veterans' widows and caregivers. District 15 was honored this year with three members in leadership positions with Department President, Teresa Simmons Copeland, Department Sgt.-At-Arms Vikki M. Tabor, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Division President Yolanda M. Garcia. In Service Not Self.

**District 19 President Irene Szwarc** reported District 9 was divided into two districts this year; she represented the 19<sup>th</sup>. Initially, she spent several months assessing units, membership and establishing the new district. A special election was called by Department President Copeland and Irene Szwarc was elected 19<sup>th</sup> District President. 11 units comprised the 19<sup>th</sup> District ending the year at 91.09% with Unit 102 LaGrange 104.35%. Due to Covid President Szwarc was unable to visit all units but communicated through phone, text and email. Programs were

done at a slower pace by units with fewer people participating; units had difficulties conducting businesses, due to lack of quorums.

The 19<sup>th</sup> District was represented at the 59th Anniversary of Veterans Day, at Praha on Sunday November 7, 2021 and in services in Hallettsville. In March 2022 the district held its first convention, approved policies and held a Leadership Course. President Szwarc attended the 9<sup>th</sup> District Spring Convention where funds were distributed between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>.

Despite the pandemic units provided service to veterans, military families, and their community. Meetings started up again but with notably fewer members. There was still resistance to group gatherings in some places. All units paid Christmas assessment and participated in programs to help their veterans. Most awarded scholarships, participated in Memorial Day and Veterans Day observances, and donated to President Copeland's K9s for Warriors. Participation in Girls State was limited. All units provided an end of year report.

There was a lack of interest in participation and holding office, due to Covid or aging units. Members lacked training and computer experience. President Szwarc noted units should designate a member trained on Auxiliary principles and programs with computer experience to keep units informed and help them get more active. She hoped with communities opening up that units would return to more active participation in Auxiliary programs in 2023. She thanked units for

working with loving hearts and hands during the pandemic for their veterans, military, families and communities.

**District 20 President Linda Marie Doege** reported it was an honor to serve the district. Covid brought challenges and, although she had to close two units, things got done. She thanked her units for working extremely hard on their programs that assisted veterans, military, families and communities. She was proud of them. There were five units over 100% with Unit 539 St. Hedwig at 114.55%.

Her district participated in the Women Veteran's Appreciation luncheon in San Antonio and helped serve meals to women veterans. She worked to revitalize Unit 309 and they almost reached 100%. Units donated to Cancer Research, AEF, Past Presidents Parley, VA&R, Education and Children & Youth. Many sent girls to Girls State. Several units donated school supplies to needy children. One Unit donated toys to Soldiers Angels and participated in Operation Paperback, by sending books to deployed military.

Some units held drive through Christmas Parties and food events. Once things began to open up, they held evening meals and monthly breakfasts at their posts. Some donated food baskets to area families in need at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Others held Halloween parties or Trunk or Treats for community children. Unit 592 "adopted" a young freshman who lost both parents to Covid. They provided for his needs during his freshman year. Unit 2 once again held their

Female Veterans Luncheon, honoring female veterans with a meal and guest speakers.

Units participated in ceremonies honoring veterans and several attended veterans funerals without families at Fort Sam Houston. They collected caps, gloves, scarves, and socks for patients in the VA Hospital along with clothing for female patients. Some helped veterans with appointments, did their grocery shopping and cleaned their houses.

Several Units supported K9s for Warrior's by donating funds as well as blankets and towels to Petco Love K9 Center in San Antonio. One Unit set up a Facebook page "Help Bubba Find Blue" to help collect funds for K9s for Warriors since President Copeland's beloved stuffed dog Blue was "kidnapped." Some volunteered at churches by preparing and serving food for funeral receptions, and many visited nursing homes delivering snacks to residents including veterans, and others helped the homebound. Almost all units in District 20 updated their C&B. They worked hard this year with a passion and commitment to the mission of the ALA.

#### **DIVISION 4**

**Division 4 President Lee Beth Knight** reported Division 4 was composed of 4 districts and 47 units totaling over 2,400 members. Division 4 had twelve units over 100% with Unit 54 Amarillo at 142.31%. There was one district over 100%

with District 16 at 109.53%. There was only 1 zero unit. In service for veterans, active duty military and reserve, Division 4 members volunteered 20,377 hours, spending \$114,381 and assisting 4,547 veterans and military. 5 “Veterans in Community School” presentations were facilitated. In kind donations totaled \$6,387 while 10,398 poppies were distributed with \$13,298 raised. 285 military families were served for a total of 1,767 volunteer hours, spending \$5,412.

Serving children was close to the hearts of Division 4 members who served 1,572 children and youth . Girls State volunteers logged in 295 hours and spent \$12,240. Total hours served for other Legion Family youth activities were 607 hours. \$15,543 was given in direct aid to needy children while \$5,415 was spent on goods for youth activities with all other unit expenses at \$13,182. \$12,123 total dollars were donated to provide service to other children charities. Lastly, service to communities totaled 6,040 hours with total donations at \$37,445.

President Knight reported Division 4 had a challenging year but members pulled together to passionately and unselfishly work programs for their veterans, military, families and communities. Units were generous and donated to the Kerrville VA Hospital. New Members were eager and stepped up to learn about the ALA. They worked hard and they haven’t stopped yet! President Knight challenged units to pay Christmas Assessment and bond fees as well as work membership. Fees were paid on time and District 16 and Division 4 won Department President Copeland’s Membership Challenge.

**District 16 President Linda Dorsett** said her eleven units met the pandemic head on, honorably serving their veterans, military, families and communities. District 16 had six units over 100% with Unit 19 Midland at 127.09%. They volunteered 6,405 hours and raised \$39,305 for their communities. At the fall convention, members brought clothing and personal hygiene items for a local veteran's organization. These generous ladies also donated \$1,100. Also at the convention \$349 was collected for President Copeland's K9s for Warriors special project.

Units worked hard this year. One unit collected items all year long to donate to the local veteran hospitals and centers. They also raised almost \$9,000 dollars for K9s for Warriors. Another delivered 100 "Thank You Veterans" yard signs to veterans, thanking them for their service. Units donated school supplies and books on topics such as the military and poppy story. Units donated to Cancer Research by selling candy, flipping burgers, and holding fundraisers to find a cure.

**District 17 President Penny Chandler** was elected at the 17<sup>th</sup> District Spring Convention and was honored to serve with two Air Force women veterans as her Sgt-At-Arms. President Chandler and Vice President Simonton visited seven out of the eleven units in the district and tried to revitalize Unit 191 but it and Unit 227 were closed due to lack of membership and participation; however, there were hopes of starting a new unit in Dublin. Two units reached 100%. Despite Covid and deaths in the district, the faithful, loving and hardworking units made an Impact

to the lives of their veterans, military, families and communities and Legion Family. It was a great year! District 17 had two units over 100% with Unit 82 Baird at 112%.

President Chandler created a monthly newsletter "Planting with Penny" and shared information, praise, encouragement, reminders and idea. She attended Presidents School, Department Convention, Fall DEC, January Mid-Winter Conference and District 1 and 4 spring conventions. . She proudly installed unit officers at Stephenville 240, Mineral Wells 75 and her own Unit, Weatherford 163.

Unit 57 organized a Four Chaplain's ceremony, sent five girls to Girls State, put flags on Veteran's graves, participated in flag retirement ceremonies, made monthly donations to VA&R, and sent 2,032 Christmas cards to veterans in VA Hospitals in Texas. Unit 61 donated house goods to former homeless veterans, performed a Military Child's Table Setting ceremony, donated to Dyess First Sergeant Food Bank, presented training on PTSD, hosted breakfast for Abilene's ISD bus drivers, wore branded attire in the West Texas Fair and Rodeo parade, supplied over 1,200 cookies to thank service members station at Dyess ADFB, adopted 11 veterans and their spouses at nursing homes, and donated to the animal shelter.

Unit 75 organized a Veteran's Day Program with 5,000 in attendance, made regular donations to the Amarillo VA Hospital, donated school supplies, collected items for the animal shelter, provided sack lunches for children during closing of

schools due to COVID, sent four girls to Girls State, and made 105.66% membership. Unit 82 had 112% membership and worked Auxiliary programs assisting veterans, military, their families and community. Unit 109 was not active nor met but maintained their good standing with Department.

Unit 163 placed 700 wreaths on graves of veterans and others, gave to Give 10 Program for area schools, supported AEF monthly at meetings; donated to Cancer Research and other programs, participated in Safe Halloween at Weatherford College, participated in Treats for Troops, hosted a dinner for National Commander Paul Dillard, donated Christmas gifts to veterans in four nursing homes, and donated hygiene products to the Sheriff's department for women prisoners;

Unit 181 held a fundraisers for victims of the Hermleigh tornado, assisted their veterans, military, families and community, and almost reached 100% membership. Unit 227 assisted their veterans, military families and their community and reached 80%. Unit 240 honored a female ROTC cadet for military excellence, sang the National Anthem at every meeting, sent members cards of goodwill and sympathy, cooked for ill members, collected Box Tops for Education for a school, were a chamber of commerce member, awarded two scholarships, sent monies to the USO and celebrated National Poppy Day.

Unit 423 participated in a revitalization meeting with District officers and maintained their good standing with Department, reaching almost 100% membership. Unit



661 supported their veterans, military families and their community, local school book fairs and volunteer fire department. A Junior in Unit 163 and Unit 661 collected and donated coats at Mid-Winter Convention. Unit 163's Junior was an honorary junior officer.

**District 18 President Mary Barrington** enjoyed her two years as District 18 President. She was grateful for everyone's help and support from units to Department. She visited most units and maintained contact with all through email, phone and text and learned a lot. She had nine units with two over 100% with Unit 54 Amarillo at 142.31%.

Unit 575 donated up to \$225 a month to the Lubbock VA for snacks and \$250 a month to the Amarillo VA Hospital. They donated \$500 to Christmas Stockings which sends stockings to active duty and reserve military overseas at Christmas. Scholarships totaling \$3,000 were awarded and a donation of \$500 was given to Department Scholarship fund. Poppies were distributed at United Super Market for Veteran's Day and \$800 was donated. Each year \$1,700 was given to Honor Flight to pay transportation for a veteran to go to Washington D.C. A \$1,000 donation was made to the Young Marines to purchase uniforms and supplies for new recruits. Ten girls were sent to Girls' State. A donation of \$1,000 was made to Department for Cancer Research. A social for the Legacy Run helped feed over 200 people with a donation of \$500 was made. They held Christmas and

Thanksgiving socials and helped several veterans' family members throughout the year pay utility bills and other needs.

Unit 260 placed 400 flags on the graves of veterans on Memorial Day and sent a total of ten girls to Girls State and eight boys to Boys State in two years . On 9/11 they delivered dozens of donuts to their local fire department, police, sheriff and Hal Center Police Departments. On Veterans Day they served breakfast to local veterans. Donations were made of \$50 to cancer program, \$50 to education, \$50 to President's Parley, \$75 per quarter to Amarillo VA Hospital along with a donation of \$600. They mailed 90 valentines to veterans in nursing homes. They volunteered 1,200 volunteer hours for veterans 3,493 hours for community service and sent 140 cards to veterans.

Unit 635, reported they were few and sometimes feeble but they loved their veterans and supported their post. They helped with desserts and beverages for the post Memorial Day and November Veterans' Day dinners. They distributed poppies and participated in local community events. They sent sympathy and get well cards and did other deeds of kindness.

Unit 54 gave \$100 a month to the Amarillo VA Hospital and helped Belle Briseno monthly. Belle houses veterans in her home and feeds many more. They gave her \$600 in November and December and delivered food monthly. The unit donated \$934 for backpacks, spent \$400 for Thanksgiving baskets and held

Christmas parties at the Salvation Army shelter and a children's party in the amount of \$2,264.28. They gave out Christmas baskets for seven people and spent \$840. Unit 54 donated \$400 to the Palo Dura Jr. ROTC, \$250 to Tascosa ROTC, \$250 to Caprock ROTC, \$2,000 to Hope Lives Here and \$500 to Meals on Wheels. They also gave \$1,500 to the High Plains Food Bank. In addition they donated \$750 to Another Chance House. The units in the 18<sup>th</sup> District were generous, loving and giving in their support of their veterans, military, families and communities. Service Not Self.

**District 21 President Dr. Nancy Webb** reported that District 21 had a busy year and they bounced back nicely from Covid to support their veterans, military, families and communities. There were 15 units with two units at 100% with Unit 470 North Lake Brownwood at 105%. They supported the Kerrville VA Hospital in the 21<sup>st</sup>. Units honored their veterans by participating in a veteran brick wall project. Other units conducted car shows to raise money for scholarships, cancer research and veterans' needs.

Units took part in parades and flag retirement ceremonies on Veterans Day, Labor Day and 4th of July, and in conjunction with their Legionnaires, hosted Thanksgiving, Christmas, Veteran's Day, New Year's Eve and 4th of July dinners and BBQ's. Units also hosted dinners for Girl's State Citizens. Units held fundraising events like bunko and garage sales, made holiday baskets for families in need, and provided needed items for homeless veterans and general homeless

populations. They sewed quilts and lap throws for veterans in the VA hospital. One unit even made baskets for pregnant moms in the women's shelter.

They worked with Meals on Wheels, Boys and Girls Club, Little League, first responders, and senior centers. These activities included monetary donations, volunteer time delivering meals, and creating support banners. They also spent time with veterans in nursing homes, bringing them gifts and homemade goodies. They called those who were sick and sent sympathy and birthday cards monthly. They did wellness checks on members who missed meetings. The 21st District was passionate and served with loving and giving hearts.

## **SECTION V – DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS PROGRAM CHAIRMEN**

**Americanism Chairman Maria Delgado Cazares** reported the committee promoted year-long challenges to units to encourage patriotism and Americanism. Units were encouraged to recognize local businesses that fly flags, to collect and replace unserviceable flags, to host flag retirement ceremonies, and to teach flag etiquette in schools or pamphlets. Units met this challenge by Veterans Day; the winner received a new 3'X5' indoor American flag while participants received certificates of recognition.

The Americanism Committee also challenged members who took and posted pictures of "Americanism" and tagged the committee. Photos were posted to the

Americanism Facebook page. The winner received a gift card and participants a certificate.

During Fall DEC the committee shared ideas, distributed patriotic flyers and handed out stars during a Garden Party hosted by Department President Teresa Simmons Copeland. The committee chair dressed up as the Statue of Liberty. The committee posted their Program Action Plan on the Department website and posted ideas and challenges in the bimonthly Bulletin linked to their Facebook page. Units took the plan and worked it.

Units participated in the Star Spangled Kids and created Citizenship Awards for young people who demonstrated the ideals of the U.S. Constitution. Units brought veterans and servicemembers into classrooms to talk about what it means to defend the Constitution. They also distributed patriotic coloring books and pocket copies of the Constitution in schools. Units promoted patriotism and Americanism in their units, schools and communities. During the Department Convention in July 2022, the three best Americanism Narratives from each of the four Divisions received a "Thank You Veterans" backdrop for use at Veteran's Day functions. U.S. flags were also distributed to delegates to promote patriotism and remind all how proud the Auxiliary is of the country.

**Auxiliary Emergency Fund Chairman Kimberly Palasota** reported they pr encouraged members, units and divisions to contribute, individuals \$50 or more,

units \$.25 per member. Awards were given to units who met the challenge and contributed the largest amount. The Auxiliary Emergency Fund Committee provided their Program Action Plan and resources on the Department website and Facebook page including eligibility, application and contribution form.

At the Department Convention the AEF Committee began the year selling pouches of sunflower seeds to raise donations and to promote President Copeland's theme of "Honoring Their Service by Spreading Seeds of Kindness. Their first donation was \$1.00 from a Junior who used tooth fairy money to purchase the seeds. Her family later received an AEF grant when their home was destroyed by Hurricane Harvey.

At the September Department Executive Committee meetings a dime challenge was made between Department President Copeland and the Sons of the American Legion Detachment Commander Tom Arista. Whoever collected the most dimes by the Mid-Winter Conference in January 2022 would toss the loser in the pool. Mother Nature did not cooperate as it was too cold for a dip. President Teresa won and the loser, Commander Arista, brought greetings to attendees wearing a pleated skirt, knee highs and combat boots. \$1,400 in dimes was raised for the AEF Program.

The committee notified units of fires, tornadoes, and floods in Eastern Texas. Contributions rolled in. Units held "clean out your purse" challenges with collection

bowls set out at meetings. Throughout the year Units made monthly or lump sum donations to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund Challenge. Others put out 2 liter bottles and collected dimes. Division 2 raised \$350 in a 50/50 raffle with the winner donating their funds back to the AEF. \$200 was donated by Julie Scott of Unit 205 to give President Copeland the win over SAL Commander Tom Arista with \$1,400 in dimes collected. As of January 2022, the AEF helped 11 Texas families and raised \$13,000.

**Cancer Research Chairman Sharon Phelps** reported Cancer Research was a Texas-based one of a kind program that provided grants for doctoral students studying cancer research at the University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Science at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston. Since 1950 where the ALA has donated almost \$1.6 million in fellowship grants.

The Cancer Research Committee made raising funds fun and raised over \$50,000. Members, units and districts made monthly donations, memorial donations for loved ones, sold luminaries, and held raffles, meals, silent auctions, bake sales, and walkathons. Bedford Unit 379 hosted their Annual Cancer Research Benefit with a Friday fish fry, Saturday pancake breakfast, and burger baskets along with a silent auction, gift cards and gift baskets. They sent in a check for \$15,000. McKinney Unit 96 hosted an annual "Casino Night:" funds raised topped \$1,500. Pasadena Unit 521 held their annual Cancer Research dinner and luminary

ceremony. Total money raised was \$3,780.75. They also held their annual Bakeless Bake Sale raising over \$1,200.

Midland Unit 19 donated of \$1,000 to Cancer Research including \$200 in memory of member JoJo Foret. Unit President Jane Bennett donated \$500 in honor of her sister, Jean. Total donations were \$1,700. Odessa Unit 430 held a Crazy Hat Night and sold food and popcorn at events held in the Community Hall. \$1,000 and counting was raised.

Brenham Unit 48 held a monthly door prize with the winner donating \$15 to Cancer Research. It was not the amount that was donated but the fact that EVERY dollar helps fight cancer.

Abilene Unit 57, New Braunfels Unit 35, Lake Texoma Unit 231, Everman Unit 639, Baird Unit 82, Fort Worth Unit 626, Plano Unit 321, and Breckenridge Unit 191 collectively donated over \$1000. Cancer Research at Mid-Winter Conference distributed information, sold 200 “poppers” at \$2.00 each and held a raffle for three \$100 gift cards. Hundreds of dollars were raised. The Cancer Research Committee recognized units with plaques and certificates that met \$1.00 per member by March and units with the highest donation by April. Best Overall Narrative received a framed certificate as did the highest donation at the Department Convention in July 2022. The Cancer Research Team thanked all for their donations of more than \$ 50,000.



**Children and Youth Chairman Carol Fleury** reported the committee began the year with a challenge. Units implemented fun and creative activities for children by February with \$100 going to the winning unit. Unique projects included funding a senior prom venue, helping a Boy Scout Troop purchase a trailer, funding for special needs children to participate in a livestock show, and donating self-care bags to low self-esteem kids. This committee had a very successful year.

Children and Youth Christmas activities hosted by units included snowball fights, providing sleighs full of goodies, giving to Toys for Tots and the Salvation Army's Angel Tree, and donating food and toys to Deputy Santa. Juniors in one unit handed out goodies at their VA Hospital. Children wrote thank you notes (804 cards) to veterans. Units handed out blankets (300), others delivered clothes and shoes to needy students, and volunteered at food pantries. One unit provided 150 gifts for children at Christmas. To raise funds units held pancake suppers, bake sales, dinners, and took part in Cans for Kids.

Many units focused on reading programs by donating books to libraries and holding school book fairs, promoting school academic rallies, and assisting with school eye screenings. One unit donated funds to the library program that provided snacks, guest speakers, and prizes. Another was involved in the Storybook Theatre where they provided snacks and drinks. To counteract bullying, one unit taught to K – 3 graders about bullies and donated self-care bags to low self-esteem kids with suicidal tendencies. Another added the "Need to Read

Program” and enhanced learning areas with outdoor patio sets. Unit 488 cooked a succulent dinner for special needs children.

Units generated funds from Cans for Kids. One held a Community Fall Festival with 400 in attendance including 46 ROTC cadets. Rodeos were big in Texas and one unit ,along with National Honor students, gave out 1,500 flags in the Rodeo Parade. Units sponsored over 500 juniors to Girls State. One unit held a district-wide Girls State orientation with 140 girls and another purchased red, white and blue graduation cords for Girls State Citizens to wear when they graduated.

Units through Children and Youth took up new initiatives such as Purple Up and Operation Purple Camp in April, Good Deed and Youth Hero Awards, Beads of Courage, and Stuff the Sacks. Military families were supported with events at military bases and naval air stations such as donations of baby and food items to Fleet & Family Services while another held a Pow/MIA Chair Ceremony to over 1,500 students on their football field. In December units took part in Holidays for Heroes where they baked over 200 cupcakes so military children and families could have fun decorating cupcakes. They also distributed goody bags.

During Thanksgiving and Christmas military families were treated to presents, holiday meals and provided food for their pantries. One unit gave out 50 gifts to military children while another handed out 50 homemade Christmas stockings. Units adopted families and provided food, clothing and Christmas gifts. In

February and March one unit donated hygiene, laundry and household item to families at the Naval Air Station Reserve Base.

Department held a "Wagon of Fun" raffle with a dozen games in a red radio flyer wagon and donated the funds to Operation Purple Camp. Other units contributed by participating in Purple Up for Military Children events in April. They provided tuition for summer camps as well as packaged and distributed snack boxes for children of active duty. Another had children assist them in assembling pocket flags which were sent to deployed military. Purple was worn at meetings and the Military Child's Table was conducted to honor military children.

Department also sponsored the Youth Hero/Good Deed Awards. One young man was recognized for collecting \$300 and donating to the Humane Society while a Junior President sold candy, jams and jellies raising \$2,000 for Camp Hope and Patriot Paws. Youth Hero Awards were given to two children who saved people from a house fire. A Girls Scout was honored for rescuing a neighbor. A two-year old boy was given an award for alerting his parents of a fire in their home during the night. He saved his parents and four brothers and sisters. Two young boys rescued their four year old cousin who was face down in a pool. One pulled her out of the water and the other lifter her up so the water ran out of her mouth. Another honor went to a youth who saved a child who fell in a swimming pool.

The National Children and Youth Chairperson sent 28 bags with coloring books and crayons to Department to support Stuff the Sack Project. Units filled the bags and distributed to needy children. The Beads of Courage Project was embraced by units who sewed bags for children undergoing treatment in hospitals to store their beads of courage in and another sent 78 Beads of Courage bags to Dallas Children's Medical Center. The units carried out many good deeds for community and military children and their families throughout the year. They proudly accomplished much to further the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary

**Community Service Chairman Denise Yanus** reported Texas units served their communities with pride. One unit donated \$400 worth of school supplies to a high school student who lost his parents to Covid and was living with his one-year old brother with grandparents. Units fed their veterans in their communities by donating non-perishable food items to food banks or cooked meals. This was particularly helpful during Thanksgiving and Christmas when food pantries were low. One unit had a fire in their post home but that didn't stop them from serving and working the programs.

Unit 96 McKinney came up with a different way to get involved with and include their community; they had a "Dog Days of Summer" in August. They invited Collin County Animal Shelter to bring their four-legged friends ready to find a "forever" home and set up puppy pools for critters and kids (and adults!) to enjoy the cool

water. Not only did this help the local animal shelter, but attention was brought to the whole American Legion Family.

Units assisted Tennessee and Kentucky tornado victims with help from their posts by setting up collection points and gathering food and clothing for needy families. One unit participated for the 26th year in the Children's Rehabilitation Center's Hippotherapy Family Fun Day. Teams were organized to cook and serve burgers to families with children fighting cerebral palsy. The unit donated hats and bandanas to the children to wear during therapy; the smiles on the children's faces were their reward. Ten trained therapy horses brought joy and confidence to the children and a \$1,000 donation was made. Unit #61 in Abilene assisted their city's clean up by picking up trash around a local lake and highways. Unit 539 in St. Hedwig participated in the Sara Strey Memorial Trash pick-up in April and in October, in memory of Sara Strey, the daughter and granddaughter of two Unit 539 members. Another member participated in the Trash Pickup in St. Hedwig in memory of SFC David James Todd Jr. in September, 2021.

Units held annual garage sales to support their communities. Two members were CASA or Court Appointed Special Advocates for children in foster care. Juniors supported the Texas State Veterans Home in Bonham by preparing gift baskets and signing cards for women. Unit 426 Alvarado and Frisco Unit 178 and their Juniors adopted the women veterans at the Clyde W. Cospers Texas State Veterans Home in Bonham gifting them gift baskets and birthday cards. One unit,

assisted by their local school and community, collected 500 items for the Noah Project in the area including items for children like toys, diaper and books and for adults like gloves, socks and hygiene items.

The Poppy Program was important to all units. One unit assisted by their high school National Honor Society distributed poppies Memorial Day weekend 2021. The 15 student volunteers received an orientation on poppy distribution and collected \$2,000. Another unit distributed poppies at gasoline pumps at a local grocery store. Drivers smiled as they drove away with poppies on their rearview mirror. Another unit has a volunteer known as "Poppy Queen Elaine" who collects over \$500 on Friday nights while out with friends. Most units assisted with placement of flags on veteran's graves on Memorial and Veterans Days or participated in the Wreaths Across American in December by placing graves on veterans graves at military cemeteries. Auxiliary pins, shirts or hats were worn to identify them with the American Legion Auxiliary.

Auxiliary units along with their posts held Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, assisted their communities with public holiday meals, and distributed baskets of food to families and veterans in need. Still others joined in the Department Wide Challenge of Reverse Advent Food Drive by donating food to local food banks. Lueders Unit #661 hosted their annual Christmas party for veterans and local Volunteer Fire Department. They collected \$392 on a Money Tree for the Volunteer Fire Department.

Units awarded scholarships to high school seniors who were children and grandchildren of veterans or active duty. They donated to Department Scholarship Funds and gave school supplies to schools for needy children. One unit cooked breakfast for 150 school district employees while teachers, coaches, staff and administration were recognized as units delivered trays of cookies to campuses during National Teachers Appreciation Week. Units celebrated Halloween with parties for children and served adults treats. Units partnered with Legionnaires and Sons to host Trunk-or-Treat celebrations. They also hosted Chili Cook-offs and BBQ Cook-offs to raise funds for community service projects and held blood drives.

**Constitution and Bylaws Chairman Kathy McLaughlin** reported the committee worked very hard this year encouraging units to update their constitution, bylaws and standing rules and bringing them into compliance with Department and National C&B's. More than 25 updated theirs. The committee reviewed unit C&B's and passed on necessary changes before approving. Changes made reflected updates to clarify changes to membership eligibility and update their meeting dates, times and locations.

**Education Chairman Dee Merrick** reported the committee began the year writing a detailed program action plan, outlining scholarship guidelines and applications. They promoted higher education and participated in learning activities at the Mid-Winter Conference. They solicited donations from units which resulted in the

committee providing 28 \$500 scholarships to deserving students. Units held bake sales, burger nights, garage sales and contacted local businesses for donations. Units awarded 63 local high school scholarships totaling over \$50,000, and more than 25 units made donations to the Education Committee to award scholarships at the Department level.

**Finance Chairman Christine Trahan** reported the committee began the year with budget planning meetings and prepared a budget that was ratified by Department Executive Committee in September. They held regular meetings, assisted units with their 990s and answered finance questions. They also held a fundraiser to help defray the cost of the 2022 Department Convention, soliciting donations from members and businesses. They were successful in covering the costs for the Membership Breakfast and VA&R Luncheon.

**Girl State Chairman Ann Doan** reported Girls State Director Lori Swan presented the 2022 budget to the Department Executive Committee in September 2021. It was approved and included provisions for an in-person tuition set at \$425 per citizen or a virtual session at \$50 per citizen; however, she reported plans were in progress for an in-person session.

The 78<sup>th</sup> session of Texas Bluebonnet Girls State was held June 19, 2022, through June 25, 2022, in person at Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas with more than 500 young ladies in attendance. Citizens were sponsored by Auxiliary units,



schools and businesses. They were divided into cities led by experienced staff members and mandatory city meetings, workshops and legislative sessions were held daily. Citizens heard speeches from elected officials, former Girls State Citizens and American Legion Auxiliary members. Department President Copeland addressed the group. Two Citizens and two alternates were selected to attend Girls Nation in Washington, DC, while others were selected as junior counselors for 2023. Girls State was a complete success. Citizens left with an intimate knowledge of the workings of government as well as a network of new friends.

**Junior Activities Chairman Nicole Ebner** reported Texas had over 1,600 Junior members. They were active, caring and hard-working young people who worked closely with their units to their help veterans, active duty military families and their communities. Juniors held a nice meeting at the 2021 Department Convention, visited the Texas Capitol, and enjoyed a pool and pizza party. They collected over 300 items in their food drive for military bases and raised \$1,400 toward the purchase of diapers, milk and food. The newly-elected officers produced a video introducing themselves to promote membership. At the September Department Executive Committee meetings, Juniors collected over 50 coats for military families, and at Mid-Winter Conference January 2022 collected socks, gloves, hats and scarves for the VA Hospitals.

Juniors were busy this year. One unit's juniors raised funds at a cook-off by holding a raffle, dressed up at Halloween handing out candy at their post Trunk or Treat event, served meals to veterans at Thanksgiving and assisted with Henry's House, a tiny home housing veterans suffering with PTSD. Juniors assisted with Veterans Day events, decorated the post for Christmas, and assisted with Wreaths Across America.

One unit collected and properly disposed of worn flags, gathered and donated coats and jackets, and handed veterans Thank You notes in their post and school. Others assisted with Christmas activities, delivered meals to the police department, gave veterans flags with notes, decorated their hall on Veterans Day and made military children Christmas gifts. They also made VA mug sets and distributed self-care kits to at risk students. Juniors sold jams and jellies and raised \$1,500 for those with PTSD at Camp Hope, while others held a canned food drive for the Deputy Santa program, and collected and donated items for veterans. Unit 426 Alvarado and Frisco Unit 178 and their Juniors adopted the women veterans at the Clyde W. Coper Texas State Veterans Home in Bonham gifting them gift baskets and birthday cards.

**Leadership Committee Chairman Candy Zavala** reported the committee focused on the grassroots of the Auxiliary by educating members and promoting developmental opportunities from National from the "Inside Out." This training empowered members to take a more active role in their units. The Leadership

Team held many large and small training sessions for units this year, either in person or via Zoom. One lucky unit won the drawing for \$100. The committee used a participatory approach that encouraged note taking and questions, by initially distributing few documents. They brought fun to sessions with ALA trivia games and treats. Units gave positive feedback, with attendees leaving with confidence and knowledge.

During the Mid-Winter Conference January 2021, the committee began their session with a skit supporting President Copeland's theme of "Spreading Seeds of Good Will" with a theme of "Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow." This was followed by a game of ALA Family Feud where divisions battled it out on ALA trivia questions. Winners were presented gold medals. This interactive learning opportunity was well received and fun. Attendees learned a lot leaving comments such as "I didn't know that."

Unit year-end narratives showed that units were doing short topic discussions at meetings to educate members and reaching out to the leadership with questions. Units took advantage of the National on-line training program. The committee had a successful year planting the seeds of knowledge to grow future leaders, and they logged in over 3,000 miles.

**Legislative Committee Chairman Brenda Towers**, newly appointed by President Copeland at the 2021 Department of Texas Convention in July 2022,

began the year by participating in the Presidents “Garden Party” at the Fall Department Executive Committee meetings in September 2021. Throughout the year the committee facilitated educating members about the programs and how members could become more involved to advocate for veterans. Units attended local forums, hosted legislative events and invited elected officials to American Legion Family events. Members made phone calls, wrote letters and sent emails to officials at all levels of government. Despite the fact that there were no local, state or national meetings with lawmakers, members reached out regarding important issues to the American Legion Family.

A member of Unit 19 Midland was pivotal in getting “Daniel’s Law” or HB119 signed into law in the State of Texas. This law, which went into effect on September 21, 2021, made it illegal in the State of Texas to deny life-saving organ transplants for those with special needs or disabilities, who were otherwise healthy enough to receive the organs needed to improve their quality of life.

Unfortunately, the Washington Conference was again held virtually, meaning the efforts to garner support for each of the American Legion’s legislative agenda items was not done face to face in the Washington D.C. offices of the representatives. Therefore, members contacted lawmakers when crucial votes were pending. U.S. Congressional Representatives were urged to support the Naturalization at Training Sites Act of 2022 (Citizenship for Honorable Service), Buddy Check Week Act, Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, Guard,

and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021, Unwavering Support for the Coast Guard Act, the Flag Code Modernization Act of 2021, and the Elizabeth Dole Act (Expanding the home and community-based services for elderly and disabled Veterans). While a non-Presidential year, the Legion family continued to dispense information to educate members.

The Legislative Committee reached members through their Legislative Facebook page where it provided elected officials and legislators contact information, sample letters and updates on Congressional activity. Social media was used effectively. Fourteen units reported 159 face to face communications with Legislators and conducted 773 contacts through emails, phone calls and personal letters.

**Membership Chairman Carlene Ashworth, and former National President,** reported the Department of Texas was divided into four divisions, composed of 22 districts and divided into 254 units. The National membership goal of 13,805 members was reached as was the Texas Goal of 14,508. Five districts (5, 8, 13 (99.69%), 16, and 22) and 81 units were over 100% with only 9 zero units. Division 4 District 16 ended the year # 1 in membership with 109.53%. Unit 578 in Houston ended the year with 206.67%.

Following appointment the Membership Committee immediately held meetings and formed a strong two-pronged approach with Revitalization Teams in the field helping struggling units plan and implement projects that would encourage,

motivate and inspire members to recruit others and to get their community involved. The Poppy program, community food drives, school supply drives and seeking out veterans in their neighborhoods who may have been affected by the pandemic were just some of the suggestions. Secondly, the committee presented monthly challenges to members, units, district and divisions to bring members back to the unit. The committee created the catchy phrase “Who Do You Know?” and distributed buttons with President Copeland’s beautiful sunflowers for members to wear. The buttons encouraged conversations and increased membership.

Challenge #1 was an Early Bird Recognition where every unit with 25 members entered into a drawing for \$100. A lucky unit won and used the proceeds to support their veterans projects. The September Challenge, based on Patriots Day, recognized all units who reached 50% by September 11, 2021. The winning unit was awarded \$100. At Department Executive Committee meetings in September 2021, the Membership Committee participated in President Copeland’s “Garden Party” and set up a table overflowing with “Who Do You Know” buttons. Members who visited the table signed a pledge to wear the button and to bring in one new member.

October 2021 brought “The Great Pumpkin Challenge” which gave awards to Division 4 and District 16 Presidents, with the least zero units and the least units under 10 members, respectively. Another October unit challenge awarded prizes totaling \$135 to seven units who recruited 27 new members by wearing the “Who

Do You Know?" buttons. A Veterans Day Challenge recognized five units with 75% of their goal by November 11, 2022 with gifts and certificates. In December 2021, the Membership Committee focused on the Celebration #1 Challenge which recognized units that reached 100% by December 31, 2021. Four winners received awards of \$25, \$50, \$75 and \$100. Department reached 77% of National goal and 70.6% of Department goal.

In January the committee sent out a flyer explaining delinquent and expired memberships. A challenge went out and the District and Division both received \$200. February began with the Southern Division Challenge for recruiting new members by Valentine's Day. A \$50 gift card and a Top Recruiter Award of \$100 were awarded. Texas ended the month at 83.3%. March brought two district challenges with highest percentage. Gifts and certificates were awarded.

Department was 91.79% of National's goal in April. The committee assisted 12 units still below 10 members as they promoted National's Challenge to units with the most rejoins. By month's end Texas was at 95.41% of National's goal and 87.0% of Texas. Texas was almost at 100% National goal by end of May and the committee's challenge was to call members with unpaid 2022 dues and follow up with expired members. President Copeland was actively involved and assisted the Membership Committee. She made phone calls, sent emails and discussed membership at meetings and conventions. There were less than five units not in good standing due to the committee's hard work.

The committee had a productive and successful year and brought Texas up to 100% of National and Texas' goals. The committee resolved problems, helped units rebuild membership, gave units ideas for fundraises, contributed to Department bimonthly bulletins, and used any means – visits, phone calls, or emails – to successfully communicate with units. This year at least five new units were chartered with five Revitalization Workshops held in person and four via phone conferences. Weekly reports were sent and over 1,300 new members were recruited.

**National Security Chairman Donna Dillard** reported the pandemic may have stifled personal contact activities but units went to work with creative minds through Zoom activities, drive by baby showers, virtual job fairs and partnerships with others. Once Covid restrictions lifted, members wasted no time volunteering at food pantries, assembling care packages, holding fundraisers and hosting first responder events. Members provided many services to active duty and their families through contributions of clothing, household items and toiletries to donations of food to military food pantries. One unit baked 1,200 cookies to thank 1,100 military on base, celebrating the 74th birthday of the Air Force. Another assisted spouses with shopping, cleaning and babysitting while their spouse was deployed. One member donated 120 hours helping military file tax returns. Department donated \$30,000 providing over 20,000 pounds of food for veteran and active duty families at the Armed Services YMCA Food Bank in Killeen.



One unit was very involved with the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fleet & Family Services and donated time and money, holding food drives, organizing drive by baby showers and providing holiday meals and gifts for service member families. One unit partnered with their local newspaper to support "Because We Care Troop Support Project" and sent 69 boxes overseas. Another involved ROTC in their fundraisers and provided assistance for their competitions.

Units performed POW/MIA empty chair ceremonies in their communities, at a Pioneers and Old Settlers Reunion, to a Chamber of Commerce or at meetings. Members not near military installations gave monthly donations to military food pantries, mailed over 300 letters, cards and boxes to overseas troops, and wore red Fridays to Remember Everyone Deployed. Units cooked dinners and awarded plaques to first responders. One raised \$11,000 for a local fire department while another served a 24-hour Thanksgiving meal to 350 first responders. Another held a chili cook-off raising \$2,100 for fire fighters.

Several units completed Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), another partnered with service organizations to donate food and flowers to a Gold Star Family event, and two members created a beautiful Gold Star Mother wreath and placed it in the Veterans Cemetery office of all to see. In summary, 25 Units reported over 1,000 hours and contributed \$41,000 for National Security.

**Past Presidents Parley Chairman Marty Peters** reported the call for donations was sent out to units and \$9,000 was received which allowed them to award nine \$1,000 Department medical scholarships, the exact number that had been received. The committee also selected a Unit Member of the Year and recognized her at the 102nd Department of Texas Convention held in Austin, Texas in July 2022. One unit recommended a senior airman for the Salute to Service Women Award and this was forwarded to National with great hopes. The Past Department Presidents were there to inspire and mentor members who needed help or guidance and were only a phone call away.

**Poppy Chairman MaryAnn Paul** reported the committee was proud this year how units supported the Poppy Program. The Poppy Committee held a successful Poppy Window Challenge that many units used to promote Poppy awareness. Two units had “Proud Home of A Veteran” and “Proud Home of a Veteran Caregiver” window cards professionally printed with messages from units on the backs. The cards were distributed to posts and local businesses. Juniors in one unit handed out window cards and poppies to veterans on Veterans Day and post meetings. One unit distributed poppies along parade routes Memorial Day and Veterans Day while another distributed poppies to students and community members a school district Veterans Day Program. A “Valentine for Veterans” day was organized by a unit where members made over 128 Valentine cards attaching red crepe poppies and thank you notes for veterans.

Units donated books titled "H is for Honor: A Military Alphabet Book" and "The Poppy Lady" to schools and libraries. One unit made over 200 red felt poppies for new members while another left poppies with collection cans in the post all year long. Units also displayed poppies on National Poppy Day and others handed out poppies at wreath laying ceremonies Memorial Day. Local television stations and newspapers were invited to increase public awareness. Several units asked local officials to wear poppies on National Poppy Day and Memorial Day while others worked with city mayors to proclaim Poppy Days. One unit held a poppy plate project, attaching bouquets of poppies to paper plates "In Memory Of" and "In Honor Of." They were put on display in November and donations were accepted. Another had a similar project where they displayed 300 plates with veterans names at the post. Still others attached poppies to paper crosses, placed on Christmas trees or handed out to junior high students during history class.

One unit increased donations and awareness of veterans needs by holding drawings at their annual Memorial Day Party, funds raised supported veterans, active duty and their families. Poppy funds were given to veterans for gas money. One unit made sure their funeral home always had poppies to distribute at veterans funerals. Poppy donation cans were placed at post homes, businesses, nail/hair salons, doctors and dentists offices and cafes/diners. Units shared their poppy events on social media and the Department Poppy Facebook page.

Texas had more poppies than ever in 2021, so a “BOGO” was offered to units if they purchased 100 poppies. They received 100 free poppies. Those six veterans making poppies in Texas were very productive this year as they were available to make poppies all year long. Department proudly shipped over 100,000 poppies to units who distributed them throughout the state but also gave out 300 free poppies to units who requested them for special projects where donations could not be solicited such as in schools. A narrative with photos was provided by the unit to Department. 32,606 poppies were distributed raising \$81,163 for the Department Poppy Fund. The Poppy Committee set a goal to educate members on how to properly use poppy funds at their units, posts and communities. Guidelines for poppy funds were highlighted in bimonthly Department bulletins and the National Poppy E-Newsletter was distributed.

The Department of Texas teamed up this year with the Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) located near Ft. Hood in Harker Heights to assist many veteran and military families facing food insecurities. Department committed \$3,000 a month for ten months or \$30,000 to purchase food to assist needy families. Over 20,000 pounds of food helped almost 500 families. Units contributed non-food items such as cleaning supplies, and scarce baby formula was somehow found by units. Thank you cards with the Auxiliary emblem were placed in food bags. Department President Copeland along with Poppy Chairman Paul attended the March 2022 distribution of food and experienced first-hand how vital the contributions were to

needy military families. They gave everyone a poppy and President Copeland's presidential pin. The smiles on families faces told the story.

Texas was honored to have National Winner Mr. Cervantes in the National Creative Arts Festival in Short Story Essay Contest. Poppy funds and unit contributions helped pay Mr. and Mrs. Cervantes travel expenses to attend workshops in Florida. Over \$5,000 was raised.

Department President's special project this year was K9s for Warriors, the nation's largest provider of trained service dogs for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries, PTSD and/or military sexual trauma. K9s is determined to end veteran suicide. Not only was a veterans life saved, but also a dog's, as shelter dogs were used in the program. DEC voted unanimously to donate \$25,000 naming rights for a dog, along with training reports and invitation to the veteran and dog graduation. Poppy was her name. Poppy funds and unit donations rolled in to name a second dog – Tex - thus making a total donation of \$50,000. A Poppy Poster winner was chosen at the Department Convention in July.

**Public Relations Chairman Tiffany Troxclair** reported the committee set a goal to grow membership through kindness and positivity, focusing on President Copeland's theme "Growing Our Membership by Cultivating Kindness." It was successfully achieved, first by asking why members did not renew, and secondly by encouraging members to focus on kindness to one another instead of drama.

The Auxiliary value of “respect for the uniqueness of individual members” was emphasized by encouraging members to build up rather than tear down each other. Positive headlines were created instead of negative.

Units promoted projects actively on social media to include advocating for veterans, active duty military, their families and communities. Units promoted patriotism, national security, and Americanism, mentored and educated youth and supported their communities via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. They used these platforms to successfully educate the community on “Who We Are, What We Do, and Why We Matter.” Department of Texas was also active on social media focusing on the need to assist our veterans, military, families and communities as well as promoting kindness and respect.

“Service Not Self” was emphasized. Department even added a section on the website titled “Spreading Seeds of Goodwill” where members, units, districts and divisions could post pictures, fundraisers and events that made a difference in the lives of others. Many units made submissions. A sincere sense of pride and oneness developed as others read the goodwill stories, picked up new ideas for fundraisers and encouraged kindness, teamwork and positivity. Units started websites to keep members, posts and communities informed about events, fundraisers, and membership drives. The committee also assisted units in setting up websites via Zoom and answered social media-related questions. Units

published written and electronic newsletters and Public Relations provided helpful articles and issued challenges on Department bimonthly bulletins.

Units understood the significance branding played and positively promoted the theme “Who We Are, What We Do, and Why We Matter” to members, potential members, and the public where common goals of assisting veterans, service members, families and communities was recognized. Branding was also used by units on websites, flyers, social media, posters, and T-shirts and in connection with events and programs. Units asked local newspaper and television stations to cover events or sent articles and photos for publication or purchased ads to inform the community about the ALA mission.

RED (Remember Everyone Deployed) T-shirts were worn Fridays as well as President Copeland’s membership shirt, her President’s pin or poppy pin. Purple-Up for the Military Child shirts were worn to support military children in April. Department quickly recognized during the pandemic a need for units to access meetings differently, so the Public Relations Committee streamed Department Executive Committee and Mid-Winter Conference meetings, conventions and training programs so all members could attend events despite the restrictions of Covid. Partnerships were forged between units and non-profits, chamber of commerce, and community organizations to spread the word about the American Legion Auxiliary, its mission and its principles.

**Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Chairman Janie Bennett** reported the committee wove the President's themes "Honoring their Service Spreading Seeds of Good Will" and "Growing Our Membership By Cultivating Kindness" throughout programs as they assisted members, units, districts and divisions. Members enhanced the lives of veterans and their caregivers, survivors and family members by volunteering in VA hospitals and clinics, retirement homes, with family members and through implementing American Legion Auxiliary programs. This broadened the opportunities for membership.

Units assisted veterans in their rehabilitation with donations of yoga equipment, healing CD's, massage chairs, musical instruments, gardening tools, arts and crafts, hobbies, games, and bingo to include movie nights, sporting equipment and more. "Shows of Support" hunting trips and "Warriors Weekend" fishing trips were sponsored by units, as were Honor Flights for veterans and caregivers to Washington, DC. Over \$5,000 was raised for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and donations rolled in to provide transportation for the Texas National Creative Arts Festival Winner Mr. Cervantes and his wife to attend workshops in Florida. Providing continued support for veterans, their families and caregivers, members prepared food for Gold Star Family dinners and veterans funerals, mailed cheer, thank you and sympathy cards and volunteered in flag lines to greet returning service members as well as provided families comfort at funeral services. 8,700 flags and 8,400 wreaths were placed on veterans graves by units who joined posts and communities in this remembrance.



Units invited “Home Instead” to speak at Legion meetings to discuss their services within the VA Healthcare System and what in home care services they provided to disabled veterans and spouses. Senior Life and Meals on Wheels for homebound veterans were supported by units. One unit shopped, ran errands and cleaned for their disabled veterans, giving caregivers a much needed break. Donations were made to Fisher Houses and USO’s. Units generously awarded military children 128 scholarships totaling \$77,210 and donated \$31,345 to Department scholarships. 63 “Veterans in Community Schools” presentations were made.

Members worked with their American Legions hosting job fairs, many on military establishments. One Veteran Outreach Program Specialist and Auxiliary member attended all job fairs through the West Texas VA System.

17 Auxiliary Representatives and 14 Deputies serving nine VA Hospitals and seven VA Clinics were supported by Department of Texas. One new Rep and Dep were recruited and several more were in the certification process. Unit Christmas assessment allowed 1,595 VA Hospital patients to receive \$10 gift cards during Christmas. Units donated 1,160 hygiene kits, “Comfort Bags,” Pamper Baskets” and “Packs for a Purpose” for female veterans. Almost 800 patients received handmade wheelchair bags, lap robes, cancer caps, pillows and quilts along with reading glasses and “Sweets for Vets” during treatment. The Veterans Rehabilitation and Affairs Committee raised \$2,400 toward the VA&R General Fund that provided needed items and services for veterans.

Units generosity donated to VA Vet Centers and Homeless Programs, Camp Hope, residents at DeGeorge Hotel for former homeless veterans, and a residential facility that treats veterans with PTSD. In conjunction with these facilities units donated 9,730 boxed meals, snacks, pizza parties, “Pies for Hope” at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Units rallied to help veterans and their families who were in temporary financial crises by assisting with gas, groceries, car payments, rent, mortgage and utilities.

**WAYS AND MEANS Chairman Cathy Perry** reported, too many pins to count, were sold this year, raising thousands of dollars for Department of Texas’ General Fund. President Copeland’s beautiful presidential pin and membership T-shirt, “Honoring Their Service and Spreading Seeds of Goodwill,” depicted a Southern Mason jar filled with a Poppy to honor veteran’s service, a Sunflower to spread seeds of goodwill, a Bluebonnet to represent the Great State of Texas and an American flag to remind all who the Auxiliary is and why the Auxiliary was here, were big hits. Past Department Presidents pins were popular sellers as were the Cancer Research, Poppy, and historical pins. All of the above projects have been made possible through the dedication and support of the Texas American Legion Family. Thanks and appreciation goes out to all of the buyers, sellers and helpers for making this a successful year. Keep spreading those seeds of goodwill and always cultivate kindness.

## **SECTION VI – DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS VA MEDICAL CENTERS AND CLINICS**

The Department of Texas currently supports 17 Auxiliary Representatives and 14 Deputies who serve 9 VA Hospitals and 7 Clinics with locations in Amarillo, Beaumont, Big Spring, Bonham, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Kerrville, Longview, Lubbock, Lufkin, McAllen, San Anton, Temple and Waco. According to the Texas Workforce Investment Council there were over 1,500,000 veterans in Texas in their 2021 survey, with females making up 11.5%. The VA Hospitals and Clinics are generously supported by the units in the Department of Texas.

Services vary from VA Hospital to VA Clinic but services offered state wide include addiction and substance abuse care, audiology and speech, COVID-19 vaccines, cardiology, caregiver support, critical care, dental/oral surgery, dermatology, emergency care, endocrinology, gastroenterology, hematology/oncology, Homeless Veteran care, Infectious disease, Internal medicine, LGBTQ+ Veteran care, laboratory and pathology, MOVE! weight management, mental health care, Minority Veteran care, Nephrology, neurology, Nutrition, food, and dietary care, palliative and hospice care, patient advocates, pharmacy, Physical therapy, occupational therapy and kinesiotherapy, primary care, prosthetics and rehabilitation, pulmonary medicine, radiology, recreation and creative arts therapy, rehabilitation and extended care, returning service member care, transition and care management services, rheumatology, smoking and tobacco cessation, suicide prevention, telehealth, and Women Veteran care.

New Reps and Deps were recruited this year and several more were in the certification process. Unit Christmas assessment allowed 1,595 VA Hospital patients to receive \$10 gift cards during Christmas. Units donated 1,160 hygiene kits, "Comfort Bags," Pamper Baskets" and "Packs for a Purpose" for female veterans. Almost 800 patients received handmade wheelchair bags, lap robes, cancer caps, pillows and quilts along with reading glasses and "Sweets for Vets" during treatment.

**Amarillo - Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center**

**Rep Janie Hensley** reported the VA Hospital provided primary care and specialty health services to veterans, including mental health services, women's health care, prosthetics, audiology and speech, dental care, physical therapy, palliative care and hospice, foot care, and more. It also offered a wide range of health, support and facility services for veterans in northern Texas and eastern New Mexico. The Amarillo VA Center also supported the health, welfare, and dignity of women Veterans and their families by ensuring equal access to timely, sensitive, and quality care. A women Veteran care coordinator can help you get the services you need.

**Beaumont VA Outpatient Clinic Rep Mary Tatman** reported the clinic had a busy year. Veterans were called and reminded of their appointments. On Veterans Day, Veterans were given towelettes and bags of snacks. Throughout the year donations came from different organizations such as the Boy Scouts, churches and

other non-profit organizations. For Christmas Beaumont Unit 33 donated Christmas stockings with candy. In March veterans were thrown a birthday party, showing appreciation for their service to the country.

**Big Spring - George H. O'Brien, Jr., Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Rep Shawna Dunlap** reported that Rep Anna Andersen and Dep Willie Haliburton retired this year and she was recruited as the new Rep. A new Deputy was being sought. The Big Spring Hospital currently had around 10 patients and was still closed to general visitation. Unit 19 Midland donated monthly snacks and soft drinks, got veterans everything they wanted for Christmas and delivered games, crafts, books, movies and music-related items. They also made and donated 260 "Valentine's for Veterans" to the patients and the 101 residents at the Laymun-Lusk-Sanchez VA Retirement home. Unit 430 Odessa and Unit 181 Snyder also made donations to hospital patients.

**Bonham - Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center Rep Jonnie Templeton** reported that the VA provided primary care and specialty health services, including mental health services, laboratory services, social work, and more for veterans. Services offered include COVID-19 vaccines, Homeless Veteran care, laboratory and pathology, mental health care, military sexual trauma care, My HealtheVet coordinator, pharmacy, primary care, rehabilitation and extended care and Social work. The Reps and Deps are in the process of being recertified.

**Dallas VA Medical Center Rep Teresa Hill** reported volunteers helped in October 2021 with the National Cancer Survivors Day providing pink ribbon cookies as well as snacks for Dialysis patients. The veterans were grateful for the goodies. Volunteers helped Chemo patients by handing out handmade tote bags filled with blankets, snacks and word find books. Hospice patients received ICU bags filled with snacks, blankets, pillows and word find books. These put a smile on the patients.

Volunteers also supported the Poly Trauma by providing juice and snacks to patients. They gave out food, sweats and T-shirts to veterans and their families at Christmas, and units donated toys and clothing to needy veterans through the social workers. Because of the help of Dep Evelyn and Rep Teresa over \$4,000 worth of canteen books were given out to patients during the holidays. Units donated socks and underwear that were distributed to patients. In February Valentine snacks and candy along with Valentine party favors were distributed to all hospitalized veterans. Throughout the year comfort items were delivered to in-patients on a weekly basis with local churches donating blankets and handmade chemo bags for patients. Rep Theresa attended the monthly VAVS Quarterly Committee monthly meetings held virtually. She had the pleasure of picking up donations from the Dr. Pepper Company and delivering them to the local Fisher House as well as areas throughout the hospital. She stated this was a difficult year due to Covid but was honored to serve the veterans.

**El Paso VA Medical Center Rep Alice Coleman** reported it was a very active year. Volunteers provided snacks to the veterans once a month and served over 150 veterans. Goodies were given to the veterans while they gave blood. Volunteers were assisted by Units 832 El Paso, 36, 122 Anthony and 58 El Paso. The veterans were appreciative of what the volunteers did this year and the veterans were blessings in the lives of the volunteers.

**Fort Worth - Fort Worth New York VA Outpatient Clinic Rep Betty Heedley** reported the clinic had been closed due to the freeze in Spring 2021 which caused pipes to burst and destroyed medical equipment. It took about six months to reopen and limited volunteers were allowed to return. Since the coffee car was no longer allowed, Rep Heedley taught the veterans to use the new automated check-in at the pharmacy. Soon she began serving snacks and drinks in manufacturers packaging and was able to come in close contact with the veterans and bring back the coffee cart, serving one day a week. There was one Legionnaire who volunteered to pick up patients and bring them to appointments.

**Houston - Michael E. DeBakey Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Rep Jo Ann Crawford** reported donations rolled in but volunteers could not distribute items due to Covid. Hospital administrators and staff met volunteers in the parking lot and picked up donations of hygiene products, T-shirts, underwear, non-perishable meals and more to distribute to the patients. They soon realized how important the volunteers were. Later after Covid restrictions

were lifted, volunteers fulfilled the wishes of veterans by providing popcorn and drinks Saturday nights, a Super Bowl Sunday Pizza Party, snacks with fruit and thank you notes for PTSD patients, Mother and Father Day gifts, special birthday treats and more.

Because of outside funding, volunteers were able to continue with the annual Christmas Gift Shop; this was only possible due to the fact that counselors, nurses and hospital staff made daily lists from patients. Volunteers homes became staging grounds for receiving, selecting, gift wrapping and forwarding Christmas gifts to about 200 veteran families. What an honor this was. Thank you luncheons during National Breast Cancer month with gifts for veterans were held, and for the first time, non-perishable meals were delivered to the Emergency Room areas easing the patients long waits for treatment.

Hospital clinics in ophthalmology, urology dermatology and the women's clinic had long wait times for patients so volunteers provided individually wrapped snacks. El Paso volunteers also delivered donated items that were not needed in Houston to VA Hospitals and Clinics in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Lastly, Jo Ann thanked American Legion Auxiliary, American Legion and Sons of the American Legion for their words of encouragement, prayers, actions and donations to the veterans this year. They made a big difference in the lives of veterans.



**Kerrville VA Medical Center Rep Patricia Kankelfitz** reported Kerrville was not open for visits from volunteers, and activities have not resumed yet. Thanks to the generous support of Unit 157, Bandera, VA volunteers gave all veterans Easter baskets with candy filled with colored eggs. The veterans were all smiles Easter morning. The nurses on each floor made dump cakes every Friday. The baking made the floors smell like a bakery. This smell enhanced the appetite of residents and each person enjoyed a piece of cake. Volunteers supplied the cake mixes, pie filling, butter and slow cooker liners for these cakes for three month's-worth of baking. They also supplied muffin mixes which the nurses baked mornings for the early risers to tide them over before breakfast arrived.

Bingo was a big success and was played on all floors several times a week. Coupon books were given to the winners, donated by volunteers and other organizations. For Christmas, Department supplied \$10 in coupon books to residents. This year residents made "ugly Christmas sweatshirts" with volunteers supplying the sweat shirts; however, they did not get to see the creations the vets made.

Patricia attended Veteran Administration and Volunteer Service Executive Board meetings as a board member. She hoped later in 2022 they would be able to once again hold activities for the veterans in the recreation hall. The VA held the annual Veterans Day Car Show with 119 entries; the event raised over \$8,000 for the VA&R General Fund. A new program called "Compassionate Contact Corp" was

being developed where volunteers would call veterans in need and talk to them about anything that was on their mind. Volunteers could even call from their homes. Rep Patricia ended her report by noting the VAVS was changing to Center for Development of Civic Engagement (CDCE). The computer system was being overhauled and more information is to follow.

**Longview VA Outpatient Clinic Rep Marie Pickett-Lusk** reported the clinic offered primary care to help you stay healthy and well throughout your life. Other services offered include audiology and speech, gastroenterology, MOVE! weight management, mental health care, nutrition, food, and dietary care, and primary care.

**Lubbock VA Outpatient Clinic Rep Kay Turner-Parten** reported the Clinic provided primary care and specialty health services, including mental health care, women's health services, foot care, urology, vision care, laboratory services, dental care, and more.

Services offered include blind and low vision rehabilitation, COVID-19 vaccines, dental/oral surgery, dermatology, gynecology, laboratory and pathology, mental health care, ophthalmology, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and kinesiotherapy, podiatry, primary care, radiology, registry exams, social work, and urology.

**Lufkin - Charles Wilson Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic Rep**

**Theresa Sabin** reported the clinic offered primary care to help the veteran stay healthy and well throughout life reported Representative Theresa Sabin. Services offered include COVID-19 vaccines, internal medicine, laboratory and pathology, MOVE! weight management, mental health care, My HealtheVet coordinator, optometry, orthopedics, patient advocates, pharmacy, primary care, prosthetics and rehabilitation, psychology, radiology, sleep medicine, social work, suicide prevention, telehealth and Women Veteran care.

**McAllen VA Outpatient Clinic Rep Trish Howell** reported the clinic offered

primary care and specialty health services, including mental health care, rehabilitation and prosthetics, laboratory services, telehealth, vision care, women's health services, and more. Services include COVID-19 vaccines, Laboratory and pathology, mental health care, My HealtheVet coordinator, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and kinesiotherapy, primary care, prosthetics and rehabilitation, radiology, social work, telehealth and Women Veteran care.

**San Antonio - Audie L. Murphy Memorial VA Center Rep Rosa Vasquez**

reported the VA Center was closed during the high infections rate of Covid. She and Deputy Janette Smith could not perform their normal volunteer duties as all activities were canceled from April 2021 through November 2021. Monthly activity

reports were turned in. In May 2021 volunteer Barbara Abbey donated 1,261 hours.

In June Rosa received a plaque thru the mail from Mr. Jason Gray, Chief of Voluntary Services, "In Recognition of Lifetime Achievement of Outstanding Volunteer Service to Veterans." Due to the pandemic, the reception for the awards at Fort Sam Country Club was not held. Linda Meier donated 340 hrs.

In July 2021 Rosa attended the Department Convention July 9th in Austin, Texas along with Unit 2 President Rosie Mendez and members Esther Silva and Annie Lott. On July 23rd Janette and Rosa went to Walmart, bought school supplies, and donated to the VA by Unit 2 in San Antonio. August 2021, Assistant Liz Casares informed Rosa that the VA had 30 patients with the new pandemic and things were getting worst. August 26<sup>th</sup> Rosa participated in a virtual Executive meeting where she learned that through the Student Program 18 students contributed 1,727 hours to the VA and backpacks.

Still no events were held in September 2021 but September 2, Rosa participated in the VAVS Quarterly Committee Meeting. Janette and Rosa began buying Christmas items to be given to VA hospital patients. Dep Janette bought Crew shirts and Rosa ordered 2022 Pocket Planners and COVID-19 vaccination card holders. September 24 - 26, Rosa attended Department Executive Committee meetings in Austin and Presidents School. Unit 592 members donated female

items such as bras, leggings, underwear, slippers and tops totaling \$350 for the VA female patients. In October still no events were held at the VA Hospital, but donations included two \$25 gift cards for the VA Golf Tournament.

In November Dep Janette and Rep Rosa purchased word search books, Christmas bags and Christmas cards. November 10th "Home of the Brave" event for veterans was held at the Fisher House with a curbside luncheon provided by Soldiers Angels, CLC and goody bags from Auxiliary. Rosa also purchased men's and ladies socks and other items to put in Christmas bags for the veterans. She participated in a virtual Executive Committee meeting November 18 where four deceased volunteers names were added to the Memoria Wall. November 18 Rosa emailed Department Secretary requests for \$1,240 in funds from the Christmas assessment and Janette and Rosa inserted \$10 in each Christmas card for the veterans. November 24th, Rosa received a box of 400 Christmas cards from Parramore Unit 57 in Abilene, Texas. This unit has sent Christmas cards for many past years to be passed out to veterans wishing them a Merry Christmas.

December 1, 2021 Unit 828 donated clothing valued at \$250 for distribution at the VA Hospital. December 2 Janette and Rosa participated in a virtual VAVS Quarterly Committee meeting and later wrapped 150 Christmas gifts for their veterans inserting a Christmas card with \$10, a pocket calendar with labeling "Compliments of the American Legion Auxiliary," a COVID-19 vaccination card

holder, comfort items, and Christmas Cards and word search books from Unit 57. Other donations for the bags included female items from Unit 667.

The "Adopt A Vet Program" was held in December for selected families at the Fisher House. Organizations that volunteer at the VA donated baskets consisting of needed items for families to enjoy a nice Christmas. A \$25 gift card from HEB for a ham was also included. On December 20, 2021, Janette and Rosa delivered the Christmas bags to the VA parking lot where Volunteer Services Staff picked them up, later delivering them to veterans. January 4<sup>th</sup> 2022 Rosa returned \$250 to the Department of Texas that was left over from the Christmas Assessment that was not spent. Representative Rosa was there for the visit by National President Kathy Daudistel January 9 to 11, 2022. They toured the San Antonio VA Medical Center, the Army Residence Community Center and Petco Loves K9s for Warriors followed by a reception at Post 593. The next day there was a tour of the Kerrville VA Hospital and a reception at Department of Texas Headquarters. Rosa completed the month by attending the Mid-Winter Conference in Austin, Texas.

February 24, 2022, Rosa participated in a virtual VAVS Executive Committee Meeting. No events were held at the VA Hospital. March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Rosa and Janette participated in a virtual VAVS Quarterly Committee Meeting that was mandatory for all representatives and deputies that volunteer at the VA and learned volunteers were returning to the VA as new assignments were requested. Rosa made a \$100 donation from Department for the Summer Youth Program to help sponsor field

trips, new shirts, and gift cards for special events. Janette and Rosa received orientation and mandatory training packets for 2022 along with instructions that Covid vaccines and flu shots had to be up to date. Janette and Rosa assisted Unit 2 with the "Veterans Female Luncheon" that was a huge success. A "Thank You" was given to Jo Holloway for her donation of \$50 to help the VA. Rosa ended her report by thanking Janette for her help this year, all the units that made donations to the VA and to Volunteer Services for their help. The San Antonio VA finally opened up for volunteers to assist and help veterans.

**Temple - Olin E. Teague Veterans Center Rep Jo Ann Crawford** reported she was a veteran herself and had previously volunteered at the DeBakey VA Hospital in Houston. She noted that all VA Hospitals have different needs but the same two goals, assisting hospitalized veterans and needing the assistance and volunteers from American Legion Auxiliary Units, the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion. She noted that communication was extremely helpful with the Temple staff. Items donated to the veterans were hygiene kits, eyeglasses (readers), socks, tee-shirts, non-perishable meals, wheelchair blankets, binders, and baseball style caps, along with Walmart gift cards. All donations from units and Legion posts were greatly appreciated, especially during the holiday season.

**Waco - Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Rep Mary Hueske** reported volunteers had a challenging year at the Waco VA Medical Center since all activities were canceled from April 2021 to March 2022 when

volunteers could enter the facility again, following a rapid Covid test; however, they were limited to two. Mary was made the Representative and worked with two new Deputies Hilde Neumann and Ruth Beers; they did as much as possible under the Covid-19 restrictions.

The VA nutritionist made dietary changes and asked that snacks delivered for patients be healthy, to include sugar-free desserts, ice cream, fruits and snacks, and the recreational therapist could no longer distribute food items, so Volunteer Services delivered snacks for the volunteers. Rep Hueske delivered a small chest freezer to Volunteer Services to store the ice cream on site to make their deliveries easier to keep frozen but they were eventually told not to bring ice cream. They sent snack crackers instead. In October Recreational Therapy once again began holding Bingo for the veterans so volunteers began dropping off quarters for the games.

At Christmas Rep Hueske and Deps Hilde Neumann and Ruth Beer prepared gift bags for patients with purchased items such as shampoo and crème rinse, body wash, chap stick and activity books. Volunteer Services delivered the bags for them. The Auxiliary Gift Shop that was loved by all the veterans was changed due to Covid. Recreational Therapy had patients sign gift cards for their families, and Mary, Hilde and Ruth purchased \$10 gift cards, put them in the veterans family Christmas cards and mailed them. The veterans were excited to receive their \$10 from the Christmas Assessment; however, two units were not, so Rep Mary and



her Depts Hilde and Ruth were asked to purchase items valued at \$10 for those veterans. They purchased blankets and house shoes and relied on Volunteer Services to deliver the gifts to those veterans.

In February Mary, Hilde and Ruth purchased and delivered 100 Valentine gift bags stuffed with boxes of chocolates to Volunteer Services for the veterans. In May they laid memorial wreaths on the Avenue of Flags so everyone who drove by could see them and honor a veteran. Covid-19 did not allow Mary and her Deputies to do the things for their veterans that they normally did, but they found creative ways to make their veterans feel special. With the help of Volunteer Services items were delivered to the Veterans. A local business donated cases of shirts, and the ladies sorted them by size and gender. The ladies purchased and delivered 20 cases of water for homeless veterans' distribution and purchased 50 pairs of various strengths readers.

Special things were done for women veterans too. In March a \$4,000 donation came in from Cleburne Unit 50 and Rep Mary purchased two massage chairs and two CD players with tranquil music for both floors of the Women's RISE (Recovery in a Secure Environment) Unit meditation room as well as Yoga mats, bolsters and cushions. A presentation was made to the RISE unit and women in the program were reintroduced to touch which many were uncomfortable with. Mary thanked her Deputies Hilde and Ruth for their wonderful help this year.

Sandi Schendel

Department of Texas Historian