

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC

2014-2015 Annual Report

April 2015



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Overview

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC is one of 9,000 American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) chapters in the world's largest women's patriotic service organization. Unit 1, formally chartered in 2013, is committed to serving veterans, servicemembers their families and the DC community. While concentrated in the metro-DC area, our membership is spread across DC and five states. This report highlights the service of our members in the 2014-2015 programming year, which ran from April 2014-April 2015.

Mission Statement

In the spirit of Service Not Self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support The American Legion and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, servicemembers, and their families, both at home and abroad. For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace and security.

Message from the President

Victoria Pridemore is a charter member of ALA Unit 1 in DC, and she has served as president since we started the formation process in 2012. Eligible in her own right, Victoria joined through her service in the Army National Guard during the current conflicts.

ALA Unit 1 in DC has once again enjoyed a very successful year here in DC! Our members are dedicated to bettering the lives of veterans, servicemembers and their families through both volunteer work and their full-time employment. Several of our members work in fields where they are able to directly affect the lives of veterans and their families in positive ways.

Unit 1 is proud that their volunteer work also reflects this passion and we are able to provide such a unique perspective to the organization as a whole. From placing carnations and poppies at the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, volunteering at the dedication of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, washing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, partnering with the George Washington University's Student Veterans to build gift boxes for the USS George Washington and to raise money for office activities, our members stay busy in and around the DC community. As we move into the next year, our membership remains small, but our passion is stronger than ever!

In the Spirit of Service, Not Self,

Victoria



Figure 1. President Victoria Pridemore placing a carnation and poppy at one of the memorial benches at the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial on September 11.

Member's Collective Impact

Auxiliary members serve in the community without fanfare. Each month, we ask members to report their volunteer service, formally with Unit 1 or on their own, benefiting veterans, servicemembers and their families. The below figures include what members reported, as well, and the unit's support programs. Our in-kind donations totaled \$5,600.00. *Note:* There was not 100% reporting of members.

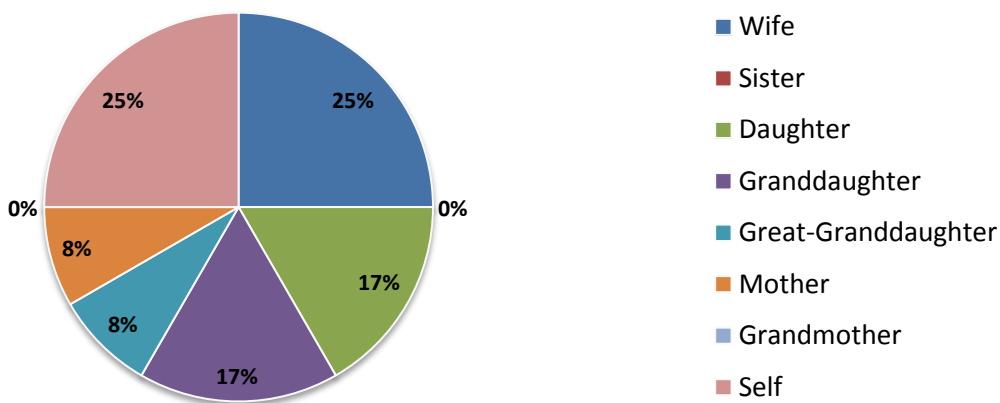
	Veterans	Servicemembers	Military Families	Total
Hours Volunteered	284	146	24	454
Dollars Spent	\$1,102.89	\$248.00	\$65.00	\$1,415.89
Number Served	1,008	252	35	1,295

Demographic Look at Our Membership

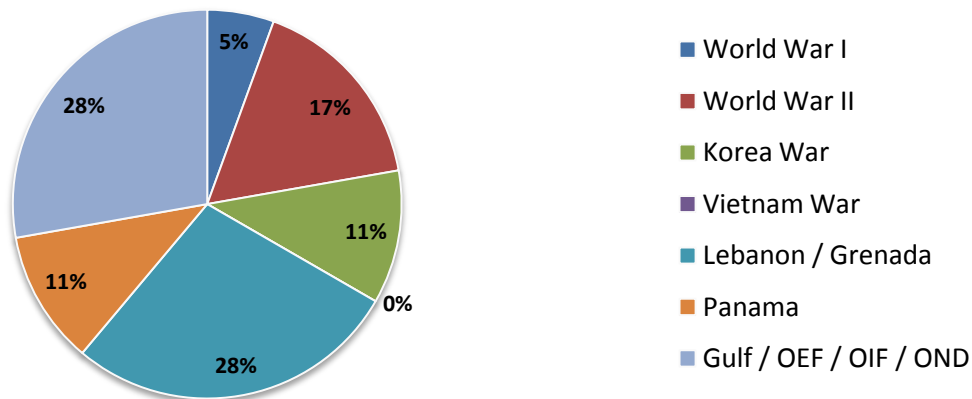
All Auxiliary members are direct female relatives of veterans/servicemembers or female veterans/servicemembers themselves. The largest proportion of our members is eligible through their husband's service or their own service (25% each). Additionally, over half our eligible veterans have served in the Gulf War / Current Conflicts and Lebanon / Grenada (28% each).

Members have belonged to Auxiliary for an average of 5.17 years. We have an average age of 45 years old.

Member's Relation to Eligible Veteran



Conflict Period(s) Eligible Veteran Served In



Committee Reports

Nationally, the Auxiliary's efforts are broken into several mission outreach, member support, and administrative committees. We have listed the committees alphabetically for convenience.

American Legion Auxiliary Emergency Fund

Provides grants to American Legion Auxiliary members who qualify for specific types of emergency assistance.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC prompted awareness and knowledge of the emergency fund to our members. We donated \$1 per member renewing/joining for the 2015 membership year to the national Auxiliary Emergency Fund. As a relatively new unit, several of our members are now reaching the number of years needed to apply as a recipient for this fund. We developed a fact sheet about the fund and information on how to apply if they find themselves in need.

Community Service

Engages our members and the community in service with and for veterans, servicemembers and their families.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC mobilized The American Legion Family and local volunteers in community service to benefit veterans, servicemembers and their families with our commitment to at least one service project a month.

Members spent seven Saturdays between April and November 2014 (including Armed Forces Day and Make a Difference Day) greeting Honor Flights as they arrived in DC at Reagan National Airport and at the World War II Memorial. We greeted between one and three flights each time. Our registration link was open to all, netting several new volunteers, and we even partnered with other organizations to help give their service projects a veteran focus. It was



Figure 3. Post 1 Legionnaire Samuel Jung placing a carnation and poppy at one of the 184 memorial benches at the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial on September 11.

undeniably moving to greet these World War II and Korean War veterans. Veterans know their friends and family members will greet them at their home airport, but they are always so astonished to see so many people who take time out of their day to greet them in DC!

For the 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance, ALA Unit 1 in DC organized a project for our members and local volunteers to remember the victims of September 11, 2001 and those who rose to service afterwards by placing a carnation and ALA memorial poppy at each of the 184 memorial benches at the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial. Several of our volunteers at this event were AmeriCorps members or AmeriCorps Alums. Members also participated in Serve DC's #thankuniform campaign to have DC residents pledge service



Figure 2. Member Lauren Lloyd preparing to greet veterans coming to DC with Honor Flight Network.

hours to honor the service of first responders, servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

In October, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial was dedicated. Our members served as volunteers for the event, assisting veterans in wheelchairs in getting on the buses to get to the event.

ALA Unit 1 in DC volunteered with several collaborators to serve veterans, servicemembers and their families. We served with Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 641 to wash the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in July, September, October and November. Additionally, members joined with Team Red, White and Blue to help wash and clean around the Korean War Memorial and Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. Members joined Code of Support Foundation for the Spirit of '45 Day event to help create a living memorial for current conflict veterans. In December, our members volunteered to help place Wreaths Across America wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery; in January, our members returned to help clean-up the wreaths.

For Veterans Day, we answered the National Chairman's Call to Action to work with our local student veterans, and some of our members joined George Washington University's Office of Military and Veteran Student Services to prepare 500 gift boxes for the USS George Washington before attending the service at the Vietnam Wall. On Pearl Harbor Day, we joined the student veterans again to volunteer at a local 5k run to raise funds for their programming.

For Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service, our members joined the DC VA Medical Center's Voluntary Services Office and American University students to help sort and stuff over 800 duffel bags for the annual Winterhaven Stand Down.

Members also attended the city's Service Member Veterans and their Families Workgroup public meeting to provide feedback on the city's Action Plan to better serve veterans, servicemembers and their families. They also joined a DC Community Collaborative of nonprofits to benefit veterans, servicemembers and their families in the metro DC area.

Finally, our members promoted the various national service opportunities available to people through AmeriCorps, such as Legacy Corps, which serves caregivers of veterans, and the ALA Call to Service Corps.



Figure 4. As part of Veterans Day, members joined George Washington (GW) University's Office of Military and Veteran Student Services to prepare gift boxes for the USS George Washington. Pictured are a NROTC Cadet, Secretary/Treasurer Sharon Riegsecker, Director of AmeriCorps Bill Basl, CNCS' Veteran and Military Family Fellow John Lira and one of GW's student veterans.

Constitution & Bylaws

Ensures governing documents are current and up-to-date.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC revised our constitution and bylaws and developed a robust set of standing rules. Following the national governing documents, we simplified our constitution and bylaws, and we are happy to now have 14 pages of operational information in our standing rules.

Education

Fosters learning for children in our own community, with a focus on the children of our servicemembers and veterans.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC supported quality education for veteran and military children and schools serving military children.

Our members were collecting Box Tops for Education, but we wondered how to best donate these Box Tops to serve our veterans' and servicemembers' families. We discovered a military family we previously supported during a deployment who collects Box Tops for their children's school. The family is very happy to receive our Box Tops donations.

In addition to promoting the National President's Scholarship in the metro-DC area through our various tabling and outreach events, contacts, social media accounts and website, we donated \$1 per member renewing/joining for the 2015 membership year to the scholarship fund.

Legislative

Fosters grassroots advocates for veterans, servicemembers and their families through supporting the legislative agenda and initiatives of The American Legion.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC is in a unique situation when it comes to working the Legislative program, as our members are scattered across several states. However, we remain committed to supporting the legislative agenda of The American Legion. To our knowledge, the Legion's Department of DC has not adopted a local legislative agenda or pursued actions like mayoral proclamations.

Several of our members were honored to be able to attend the signing of the Veterans' Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (commonly called the VA Reform Bill) at Fort Belvoir on August 7, 2014. Our president, a dual member, was selected to sit on the stage during the ceremony, and she was even visible in the web stream during the bill signing! Additionally, members attended the National



Figure 5. Post 1 Family with ALA National Community Service Vice Chairman Marcia Wheatley at the Signing of the Veterans' Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014.

Commander's Congressional Testimony to the U.S. House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees.

Our members also subscribed to both the Legion's Weekly Legislative Update and Action Alerts provided by the Legion's national Legislative Division. When Action Alerts were received, our members jumped into action to contact our senators and representatives.

National Security

Promotes a strong national defense, with a focus on supporting current servicemembers and their families.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC supported current servicemembers and their families through our own programming and volunteering with similar mission-focused organizations.

The Post 1 Family includes several members who are still serving on active-duty or in the National Guard and Reserve. Recently, a Post 1 Legionnaire was activated and deployed to Bahrain. We sent her a care package to help her settle in and another care package for her birthday with several of her favorite things. We also sent a Starbucks gift card to her mother. We understand that other Post 1 Legionnaires might be gearing up for deployment, and we stand at the ready to assist them!

We collected and sent several cards to send to troops stationed around the world. This included deployed servicemembers and a sailor we nominated for the Salute to Servicewomen award last year. Members also bought coffee and meals for several active-duty servicemembers in the area.

Our members volunteered at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes job fair to help direct employers and job seekers (transitioning servicemembers and veterans) around the fair at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling.



Figure 6. A member's porch during #PorchLights4Darren.

In September, our members heard about a Gold Star Son named Darren, who asked America to shine their porch lights towards the moon. Talking to the moon served as a way for Darren and his father to show their love during his deployment, and on the first anniversary of his father being killed in action, Darren wanted his dad to know he still loved him. Our members gladly left our porch light and apartment lights on for Darren and his dad; they also joined the conversation on social media with the hashtag #PorchLights4Darren.

Public Relations

Promotes who we are, what we do and why we matter.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC worked hard to promote awareness and a positive image of the American Legion Auxiliary through various electronic mediums. We maintain a monthly enewsletter, website, and Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Our newsletter is focused on upcoming volunteer opportunities, social events and other news to know. It is focused toward members, but anyone is invited to subscribe, and eighty-five percent of our distribution list is made up of our community supporters and partners. ([Past issues can be found here.](#))

We continue to maintain and improve our [website](#); since April 1, our site has been visited over 1,100 times. In the fall, we launched a [blog](#) with a goal to highlight one member of our unit each month, in an effort to do our part in putting a face to our members and the American Legion Auxiliary as a whole.

Both our Facebook and Twitter accounts share relevant information. In May 2014, we participated in the District of Columbia Office of Veterans Affairs' #ProudlyServingDCVeterans social media campaign to put faces on those serving veterans in our community. This year, we have participated in five Thunderclaps to raise awareness to various topics, including two on veteran suicide during Suicide Prevention Month, celebrating AmeriCorps' 20th anniversary, Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week and Veterans Day.

We continued our efforts on #GivingTuesday, a global social celebration of giving back on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, to raise awareness to why we give to support veterans, servicemembers and their families. Members and some of our friends participated in our campaign. Participation in this campaign drastically increased our social media reach for the week; we engaged 791% more people than the week before on Facebook.

Additionally, after reading the Passion-Tech series, we encouraged members to incorporate their volunteer work with the ALA into their LinkedIn profile. Most of our members on LinkedIn have incorporated work with the Auxiliary into their profiles.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Promotes programs and services that assist and enhance the lives of veterans and their families, ensuring restoration and/or transition to normally functioning lives.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC has demonstrated our gratitude to veterans and their families through various activities. Our service to veterans focused around homeless alleviation and transitional housing; student veterans; and caregivers and individual veterans.

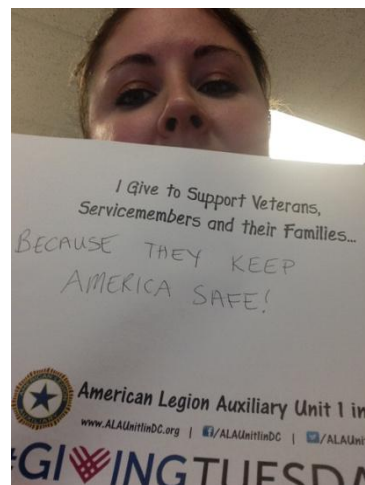


Figure 7. Member Diana Lazzell participates in our #GivingTuesday campaign.

Homelessness Alleviation and Transitional Housing

Winterhaven is a one-day, one-stop shop where homeless and at-risk veterans can get a variety of free services, ranging from health screenings to legal aid and housing assistance, organized by the local VA Medical Center and several community partners. We spent Black Friday shopping for a cause, and donated 24 pairs of new boots for veterans. For Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service, our members joined the DC VA Medical Center's Voluntary Services Office and American University students to help sort and stuff over 800 duffel bags for the Stand Down.



Figure 8. Some of the 24 pairs of new boots donated to the Winterhaven Stand Down.

Members volunteered with Friendship Place, a DC-based nonprofit providing services to people who are homeless, for their first outreach event to veterans. We joined them at a local homeless shelter to help veterans through the application process and answer questions about benefits that might be available to them. Other members volunteered to help with administrative tasks for Final Salute, a Virginia-based transitional housing program/nonprofit for homeless female veterans. Additionally one member is the volunteer director of their Ms. Veteran America competition, which showcases “the woman beyond the uniform” while raising awareness to homelessness among female veterans.

One of our members that lives in another state solicited donations from local hotels to help Forgotten Solider, a Florida-based nonprofit, to set up transitional housing for veterans. She procured donations of 80 blankets, 60 pillows and 50 bed spreads (valued at \$3,000). Additionally, this member participated in a community cleanup for an apartment complex for disadvantaged veterans. She helped fix up a garden, put in a BBQ grill pit, made sandboxes for the veterans' children and picked up trash.

Student Veterans

Our unit began a working relationship with George Washington University's Office of Military and Veteran Student Services. Their students were invited to assist with bag check/hold for two local 5k runs, and in exchange, the office would receive a check for their programming. Our members faced early mornings in the cold and snow to help these student veterans reach their committed numbers, and thus receive their full donation.

This office also hosts a Military Mile Memorial March (M4) to honor the past and celebrate the future, while bridging the gap between student veterans, current servicemembers and civilians. Our members participate in and help plan this event.

Caregivers and Individual Veterans

Members were invited to man an information table on the ALA's programs and services at two events by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation. The event focused on pairing caregivers and employers to provide caregivers with tools to get hired. Additionally, our members volunteered at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes job fair to help direct employers and job seekers (veterans and transitioning servicemembers) around the fair at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling.

Several members purchased food, helped prepare and take food sacks out to homeless and displaced veterans in DC and the communities they live in. This included preparing breakfast for homeless veterans at Miriam's Kitchen, a DC-based nonprofit working towards permanent supporting housing; cooking Christmas Eve dinner along with the veterans at a homeless shelter at Fort Belvoir; preparing food sacks to homeless and displaced veterans near Union Station and Central Mission, a faith-based DC nonprofit; and assisting veterans with their groceries.

Members organized and coordinated Final Salute's Stand Up for Female Veterans event. This event provides female veterans and transitioning female servicemembers with free professional business attire, dress shoes, accessories, makeovers and professional head shots. Specific activities included helping to secure the donated items for this event.

Additionally, two of our members wrote cards of congratulations for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival winners, helped assist a veteran to transition apartments, circulated resumes for veterans, caregivers and veteran's family members and promoted the Veterans Crisis Line. Other members added names of veterans to the Washington National Cathedral's National Roll of Honor to be kept in the Cathedral's War Memorial Chapel.

Finally one of our members entered us into a giveaway honoring 20 organizations across the country to receive donated sets of mittens, scarves and hats. The company, DollarDays, was so moved by our work in the community, they doubled their donation. We received 60 sets for women and 60 sets for men! We look forward to identifying the correct place to which we can donate these items in the near future.

Financial Information

Donor Acknowledgements

All gifts play an important role in the success of ALA Unit 1 in DC, and we are enormously grateful to all those who believe in and support ALA Unit 1 in DC through a financial donation. Every gift—regardless of size—ensures that we're able to provide service to local veterans, servicemembers and their families.

★ Lauren Lloyd
★ Sharon Riegsecker
★ Tamara Shumate

★ Mark Walker
★ Lisa Williamson

Additionally, a big thank you to Conklyn's Flowers Nationwide in Alexandria, VA for providing us with a sizable discount for the carnations used for our 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance event. The shop is owned by a Legionnaire, and it was a great show of Legion Family support.



Accounting Breakdown

Money In (graphic is left to right for items in key)



Dues Remittance: 67%
General Donations: 4%
Events: 5%
Poppy Donations: 23%

Money Out (graphic is left to right for items in key)



Membership Dues to Dept/National: 14%
Veteran/Military Support Programs: 55%
Family Support Programs: 2%
Postage: 4%
Secretary/Treasurer Expenses: 1%
Chaplain Expenses: 1%
Dept. Convention Delegates Fees: 1%
Donations to AEF: 1%
Donations to Children of Warriors Scholarship: 1%
Donations to Dept. President's Project: 2%
Web Expenses: 5%
Other: 13%

REVENUE	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Dues Remittance	\$450.00	\$525.17	\$386.55
Donations—General	\$405.00	\$1,205.00	\$25.00
Donations—Poppy¹	—	\$1,312.17	\$135.00
Fundraisers	—	\$19.33	—
Events	—	—	\$30.00
TOTAL REVENUE	\$855.00	\$3,061.67	\$576.55

¹ In 2013-2014, there was a mailing of poppies to all Post 1 Family members. In 2014-2015, donations were made to the "poppy fund" as a way to earmark money for direct-service veteran-focused programming.

EXPENSES	2012-2013 ²	2013-2014	2014-2015 ³
Membership Dues to Department/National	—	\$476.00	\$182.00
Veteran and Military Support Programs	—	\$352.02	\$697.89
Family Support Programs	—	\$226.79	\$25.00
Fundraisers	—	\$35.78	—
Supplies	—	\$1.14	—
Postage	—	\$83.98	\$49.05
Pins (for officers and new members)	—	\$40.00	—
President's Expenses	—	\$3.69	—
Secretary/Treasurer's Expenses	—	\$33.95	\$8.45
Chaplain's Expenses	—	—	\$13.71
Dept. Convention Delegate Fees	—	—	\$10.00
Donations to AEF	—	\$15.00	\$17.00
Donations to Children of Warriors Scholarship	—	\$15.00	\$17.00
Donations to Dept. President's Project	—	\$20.00	\$20.00
Web Expenses	—	\$59.39	\$60.39
Others	—	\$57.00	\$158.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	—	\$1,419.74	\$1,258.49

Looking Ahead

Looking forward to the 2015-2016 programming year, we hope to:

- ★ Engage more veterans, servicemembers and their families, as well as the community, in service.
- ★ Implement ALA-based programming and strengthen our work with similar organizations.
- ★ Increase our membership numbers.

² Expenses from the 2012-2013 programming year were paid in the 2013-2014 programming year, due to delays beyond our control.

³ Payment of some 2013-2014 programming expenses, such as donations to national funds, postage expenses and department convention delegate fees, were paid in the beginning of the 2014-2015 year.