

# American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC

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2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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## Overview

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC is one of 8,600 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 metro DC area. 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 2016-2017 programming year, which ran from April 2016 through March 2017.

## 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

*Through most of this year, our President Victoria Pridemore has been deployed. In her absence, Vice President Lauren Lloyd assumed both roles; she offers this year's president's message. Lauren joined through her spouse's service in the Air Force during the current conflicts.*

It is our pleasure to say that ALA Unit 1 in DC has experienced another successful year here in DC! Although our unit is small, we have a large volunteer base and are committed to bettering the lives of veterans, servicemembers and their families. Our unit is privileged to be an active part of the DC milvet community and has made it a priority to partner with other veteran and military family associations to maximize our impact. Our commitment to service has been a priority and our passion to serve is exemplified, as we proudly congratulate our secretary, Sharon Riegsecker, on being named to the DC Service Commission.

Additionally, we are so proud of our president, Victoria Pridemore, and her unending dedication to our nation, as she embodies service above self. We strive to represent our unit well as fellow members support her during her deployment.

This year we partnered with Honor Flights to welcome World War II and Korean War veterans, as they came to DC to visit the memorials and pay tribute to those that have fallen. In addition, we were able to serve with the George Washington University's Veterans Day of Service, where we organized a letter writing campaign for our deployed president and her fellow soldiers as participants prepared to serve with the National Parks Service and other veteran organizations to beautify the grounds of memorials and residences.

Our members have also provided many hours of service personally, outside of our organized events, spending their own money and requesting support through donations. These hours spent volunteering truly show the passion our membership has for the ALA's mission. As we move into the next year, our membership remains small, but is committed to growing in numbers and impact!

In the Spirit of Service, Not Self,

*Lauren*



**Figure 1.** Vice President Lauren Lloyd Poses with Two of the American Legion Auxiliary Call to Service Corps AmeriCorps VISTA Members at George Washington University's Veterans Day of Service.

## Members' Collective Impact

Auxiliary members selflessly serve in the community. Each month, we ask members to report their volunteer service, formally with Unit 1 or on their own, benefiting veterans, servicemembers, their families and the community. The below table includes what members reported and the unit's support programs. *Note:* There was not 100% reporting of members.

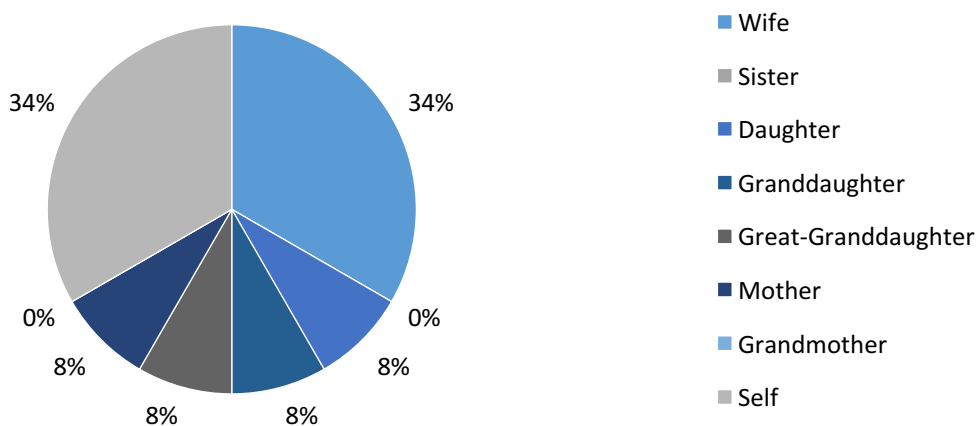
	Veterans	Veteran Families	Service-members	Military Families	Community	Total
<b>Hours Volunteered</b>	98	128	51	46	379	<b>702</b>
<b>Dollars Spent</b>	\$510.00	\$975.00	\$304.00	\$248.00	\$2,695.00	<b>\$4,732.00</b>
<b>In-Kind Donations Requested</b>	\$785.00	\$615.00	\$380.00	\$770.00	\$4,549.00	<b>\$7,099.00</b>
<b>Number Served</b>	466	108	79	71	<i>Not Reported</i>	<b>724</b>

## Demographic Look at Our Membership

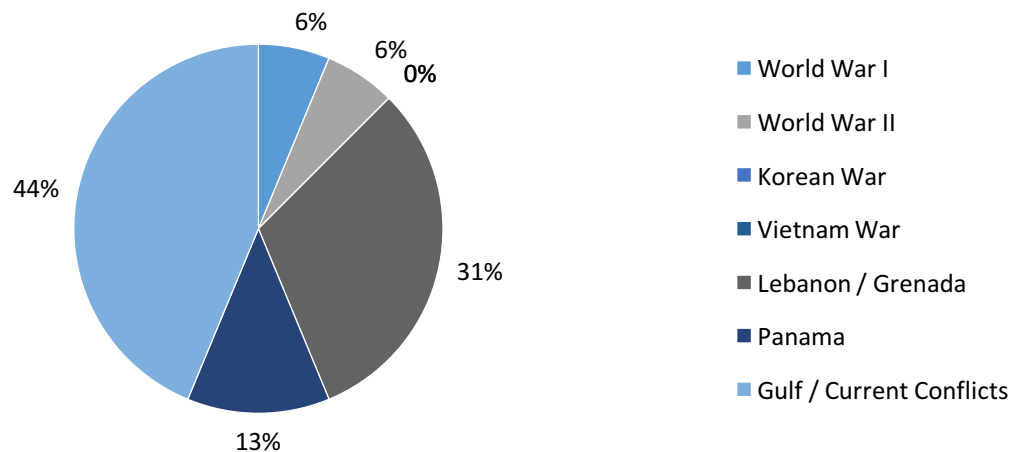
All Auxiliary members are direct female relatives of veterans/servicemembers or female veterans/servicemembers themselves. The largest proportion of our membership is eligible through their spouse's service or their own service (34% each). Additionally, almost half of our eligible veterans have served in the Gulf War / Current Conflicts.

Our members have belonged to Auxiliary for an average of 6.5 years. We have an average age of 47 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 promoted awareness and knowledge of the emergency fund to our members. We donated \$1 per member renewing or joining for the 2017 membership year to the national Auxiliary Emergency Fund. We circulated a fact sheet about the fund to our members, with information on how to apply if they find themselves in need.

### Americanism

*Promotes patriotism and responsible citizenship.*

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC asked all members to ensure they were registered to vote prior to the 2016 elections, to vote and to inspire others to vote (in a non-partisan manner). We encouraged friends and family to ensure their voter's registration was current, and we recommended that they be an informed voter by reading about the issues, at all levels of government, and the various candidates. We also utilized our social media channels to highlight the importance of voting and of being an informed voter.

## Children and Youth

*Promotes programs that protect, care for, and support children and youth, especially those of our military and veterans.*

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC volunteered in support of programs benefiting our local children and youth.



**Figure 2.** ALA Members, Volunteers and Marines Pose for a Photo Before Sorting Toys for Toys for Tots.



**Figure 3.** Vice President Lauren Lloyd Sorts Toys for Toys for Tots.

Members supported Toys for Tots, a program of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves, which provides toys to children whose parents cannot afford to buy them Christmas presents. In addition to recommending members and supporters donate to the Toys for Tots program, we joined local Marines and other volunteers to help sort and bag hundreds of toys for distribution.

## 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 and joined 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.

During the 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance weekend, members participated in various service projects on the National Mall. We served as project leaders for Points of Light's volunteer service fair, which brought local youth together to make various items for veterans, servicemembers and their families. Our members manned a volunteer station, creating flag pins, assisting volunteers in counting beads and



**Figure 4.** Flag Pins Created by Members and Volunteers at the Points of Light Volunteer Service Fair.





**Figure 5. Members along with Other Volunteers Participating in AARP Foundation's Meal Pack Challenge.**

constructing the pins. The pins went into care packages for military caregivers. We also volunteered for multiple shifts at the AARP Foundation's Meal Pack Challenge to end senior hunger in our community, by making bags of rice and bean dinners. The day we were there, more than 830,000 meals were packed.

In advance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a member served as a community reviewer for a national competitive grant competition for funds to offer a day of service.

Members spent a Saturday in October greeting Honor Flights as they arrived at the Korean War Veterans Memorial. We greeted flights from Collier County, Florida and Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was 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! Additionally, we volunteered one month to serve them dinner and drinks.



**Figure 6. Vice President Lauren Lloyd Helps Greet Honor Flights at the Korean War Veterans Memorial.**

Our unit continued our relationship with George Washington University's Office of Military and Veteran Student Services. This year, our members volunteered at their events, raising awareness of the ALA to students, comprised of veterans, current servicemembers and military dependents (recipients of the GI Bill). We also invited the students to attend our events. (See our [education report](#) below for more on how we volunteered with the Military Memorial Mile March [M4], a walk to bridge the gap between the military community and civilians; the VALOR Tailgate, a student orientation celebrations for GI Bill recipients and their families; and their Veterans Day of Service, which brings the community together to serve veterans.)

Outside of ALA activities, members also served on community advisory boards to raise awareness of issues impacting veterans, servicemembers and their families in the metro DC area. One member serves as the vice chairman of the Mayor of DC's Veteran Advisory Board on Veterans Affairs; with members appointed by the mayor, this board advises the mayor and the

District government departments, agencies and offices on all matters pertaining to veterans in DC. Another member serves on the advisory board for Veterans' Voices DC; a monthly storytelling series by and for veterans in DC focused on the intersection of military service and civilian life. She helps coordinate speakers, resources and assists veterans, servicemembers and their families in sharing their stories with the community. Another member yet serves on the Mayor of DC's Service Commission; with members appointed by the mayor, this commission ensures meaningful national service and volunteer service opportunities in our community. Additionally, we participate in a DC Community Collaborative of nonprofits to benefit veterans, servicemembers and their families in the metro DC area.

In support of our communities, members donated to their local Humane Society and surprised someone with severe disabilities with Christmas presents who had had a particularly hard year and no immediate family.

## Education

*Fosters learning for children in our own community, with a focus on the children of our servicemembers and veterans, as well as GI Bill recipients.*

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC promoted quality education for military children and supported military-connected higher education students.



**Figure 7. George Washington University Students Write Thank You Notes to Send to Deployed Servicemembers During Veterans Day of Service.**

We continued our collaboration with the George Washington University's Office of Military and Veteran Student Services by providing volunteer support for their events. In April, members participated in the Military Memorial Mile March (M4), designed to bridge the gap between student veterans, servicemembers and civilians by walking the National Mall as one, hearing stories of Medal of Honor recipients and greeting Honor Flights. In August, members volunteered to

set up, assist in registration, serve lunch and break down the student orientation celebrations for GI Bill recipients and their families at the VALOR Tailgate. In March, members tabled at the Veterans Day of Service to promote the Auxiliary and collect thank you cards to our deployed president's unit; we collected 42 cards that day.

Additionally, we donated \$1 per member renewing or joining for the 2017 membership year to the ALA National President's Scholarship fund.



Also, our members collected 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 collects Box Tops for their children's school. The family was very happy to receive our donations of Box Tops and will continue to receive our Box Tops year round.

## 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 are committed to supporting the legislative agenda of The American Legion. The Legion's Department of DC has not adopted a local legislative agenda or pursued local issues like mayoral proclamations.

Our members subscribe to both the 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 and coordinated events with similar mission-focused organizations to provide for current servicemembers and their families.

This year, we learned that our president's

National Guard unit was being activated. Since she deployed, we have been sending at least one care package a month filled with notes, baked goods and other items her way. Around her birthday, we asked ALA members from across the country, as well as friends, family and a local school co-op to send us birthday cards for her. We still wonder how we kept it a secret for three months, but we collected over 50 cards! (See our [education report](#) above for information on our thank you note drive.) One member even regularly checked in on her apartment to make sure nothing was out of the ordinary.



**Figure 8. Our Birthday Card Drive for President Victoria Pridemore Netted Over 50 Cards.**

Members also sent thinking of you cards to a spouse of a deployed servicemember and a congratulations and welcome care package to a new military family; organized a caretaker schedule for a servicemember recuperating from surgery, and brought meals for a week; created a meal schedule and child care rotation for a deployed family; organized a “Mom’s Night Out” to allow for holiday shopping for a deployed family; and organized a baby shower for an active duty Army spouse and her family, that had no family in the area. For the baby shower, she got the party space donated, and had other volunteers bring decorations, gifts and food to surprise the family.

We also promoted donating blood as often as possible to our members and supporters in order to prevent a general shortage in our communities, and to ensure our communities are prepared for a disaster.

## Public Relations

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

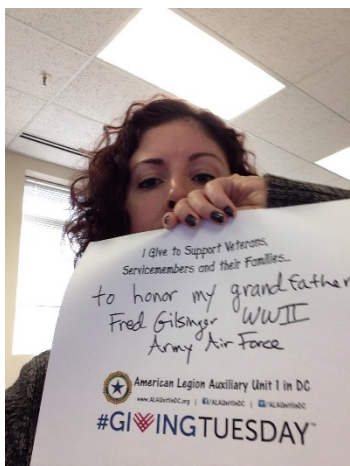
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 1 in DC worked hard to promote awareness and a positive image of the American Legion Auxiliary through various digital channels. We maintain a monthly e-newsletter, website and Facebook and Twitter social media accounts. We are happy to report that our followers and subscribers have increased across all platforms.

Our e-newsletter is focused on upcoming volunteer opportunities, social events and other news. While geared towards members, anyone is invited to subscribe. At present, just under *nine-tenths* of our distribution list is made up of our community supporters and partners. Our last issue went to 110 subscribers. ([Past issues can be found here.](#))

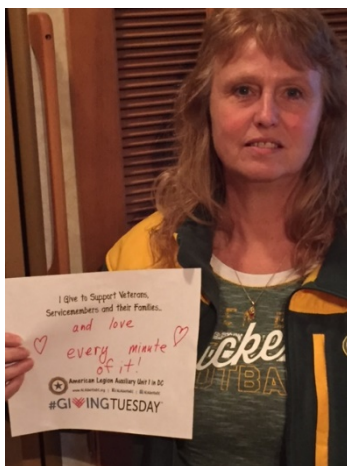
In the fall, we completely revamped our [website](#), changing the look and rewriting the content. Our website is now responsive to mobile devices and the information is provided in a more succinct way. We look forward to increase traction, offering an all-around better experience for our visitors. In the 2016-2017 year, we had 898 website visits.

Our Facebook and Twitter accounts share relevant information about our unit and the military and veteran community. We have 123 likes and 288 followers. We participated in three Thunderclaps. One was hosted by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to raise awareness on veterans’ suicide during Suicide Prevention Month, while letting veterans and servicemembers know that we are there for them (#BeThere). The other two were hosted by The American Legion to raise awareness of Hepatitis C and to promote membership strength, because #JoinTheForce makes the Legion Family stronger.

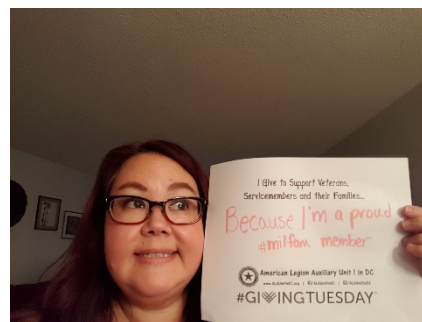
We continued our efforts on #GivingTuesday, a global social media celebration of giving back on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, to raise awareness to why we give to support veterans, servicemembers and their families. Our members and supporters participated in our campaign. Participation in this campaign drastically increased our social media reach for that week. Comparing our Facebook reach with the previous week, we increased our reach 8,900%, engaged 2,220% more people and gained two new followers.



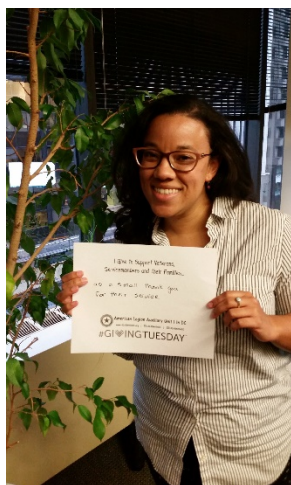
**Figure 9.** Diana Lazzell gives support to veterans, servicemembers and their families in honor of her grandfather, Fred Gilsinger.



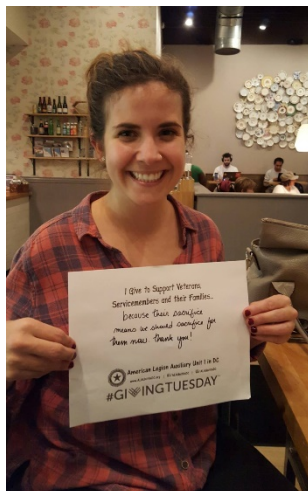
**Figure 10.** Fellow ALA member Lisa Williamson gives to support veterans, servicemembers and their families and loves every minute of it!



**Figure 11.** Vice President Lauren Lloyd gives to support veterans, servicemembers and their families because she's a proud military family member.



**Figure 12.** ALA supporter Marissa Germain gives to support veterans, servicemembers and their families as a small thank you for their service.



**Figure 13.** ALA supporter Julia gives to support veterans, servicemembers and their families because their sacrifice means we should sacrifice for them now!



**Figure 14.** Secretary/Treasurer Sharon Riegsecker gives to support veterans, servicemembers and their families because her best friend is currently deployed.

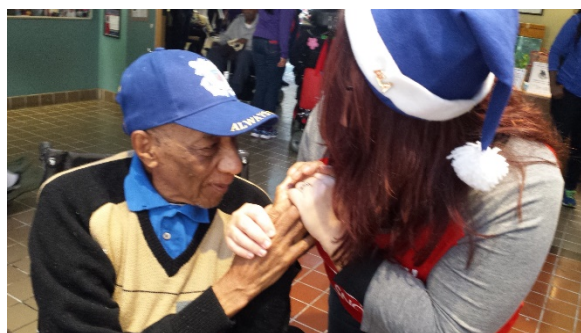
## Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

*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 demonstrated our gratitude to veterans and their families through various activities.

Our members took a special interest in providing respite and peace of mind care to the families and caregivers of veterans from various conflict periods. They sat with a Korean War veteran multiple times, so his wife could take care of her personal needs; assisted in planning a celebration of life service for a veteran's spouse, and provided the refreshments; assisted a veteran's family with moving; and planned a baby shower and organized meal delivery for a veteran's family with a newborn; and helped plan a symposium for veterans, caregivers and service providers on moral injury and forgiveness.

Members also organized a Valentine's Day surprise for veterans and their families at Fendall Heights, a transitional housing facility. We collected homemade cards from a local school co-op and made baked goods for all the residents.



**Figure 15.** Vice President Lauren Lloyd Talks with a Veteran at the Washington DC VA Medical Center during the Holiday Gift Shop.

Our Department President's special project was coordinating the Holiday Gift Shop for the long-term care hospitalized veterans at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. Our unit contributed monetarily to this project, and our members volunteered on-site to help veterans "shop" for the items that they wanted to give to their family members.

A member outside of metro DC learned that her local VA Medical Center's orthotics clinic was in need of a serger. They use this type of sewing machine to tailor cloth braces, so veterans can benefit from having the brace immediately, instead of ordering a customized size. The clinic's machine broke, and the medical center did not intend to replace this much needed machinery. She found one to be donated.

Another member came across a veteran who had traveled several hours to the DC VA Medical Center, and the amount of time he had to spend in the city was more time than expected. She helped him get a hot meal, money for the metro and a night at a hostel in the city.

Another member, who is a veteran, spoke about her experience at a monthly storytelling series by and for veterans in DC focused on the intersection of military service and civilian life.

## 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 financial donations. Every gift—regardless of size—ensures that we are able to provide services to local veterans, servicemembers and their families. This year’s donors are:

- ★ ALA Department of DC
- ★ Elise Celli
- ★ Barbara Rich

### Accounting Breakdown

Below and on the next page are our accounting breakdowns for the last five programming years, since we chartered.

REVENUE	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
<b>Dues Remittance</b>	\$450.00	\$525.17	\$386.55	\$257.17	\$275.17
<b>Donations—General</b>	\$405.00	\$1,205.00	\$25.00	—	\$50.00
<b>Donations—Poppy<sup>1</sup></b>	—	\$1,312.17	\$135.00	\$30.00	\$34.00
<b>Fundraisers</b>	—	\$19.33	—	—	—
<b>Events</b>	—	—	\$30.00	—	—
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	\$855.00	\$3,061.67	\$576.55	\$287.17	\$359.17

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013-2014, there was a mailing of poppies to all Post 1 Family members. Starting 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 <sup>2</sup>	2013-2014	2014-2015 <sup>3</sup>	2015-2016	2016-2017
Membership Dues to Department/National	—	\$476.00	\$182.00	\$98.00	\$84.00
Veteran and Military Support Programs	—	\$352.02	\$697.89	\$14.63	\$50.00
Children & Youth Programs		—	—	—	\$5.00
Family Support Programs	—	\$226.79	\$25.00	—	—
Fundraisers	—	\$35.78	—	—	—
Supplies	—	\$1.14	—	—	—
Postage	—	\$83.98	\$49.05	\$3.94	—
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	\$18.96	—
Convention Delegate Fees	—	—	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$15.00
Donations to AEF	—	\$15.00	\$17.00	\$10.00	\$12.00
Donations to Children of Warriors Scholarship	—	\$15.00	\$17.00	\$10.00	\$12.00
Donations to Dept. President's Project	—	\$20.00	\$20.00	\$12.00	\$45.00
Web Expenses	—	\$59.39	\$60.39	\$61.39	\$58.44
Others	—	\$57.00	\$158.00	\$128.00	\$134.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	—	\$1,419.74	\$1,258.49	\$366.92	\$415.44

## Looking Ahead

Looking forward to the 2017-2018 programming year, we hope to:

- ★ Engage more veterans, servicemembers and their families in service.
- ★ Implement ALA-based programming and strengthen our work with similar organizations.
- ★ Increase our membership number, including recruiting sisters of veterans or servicemembers and those with eligibility stemming from the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.