

American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Michigan 2021-2022
PLAN OF ACTION

Community Service

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What is this program, and why do we have it?

The Community Service program demonstrates who we are, what we do, and why we matter. While building community awareness of the ALA and its mission, ALA members serve as brand advocates through involvement in community activities.

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

Please keep in mind there are many, many, many, activities, and programs that qualify for community service hours. The list is far too long to include with this guide.

The community service hour reporting is an important part of the Community Service report. Included is only an example of what your unit can use to track hours. Whichever form works for you. Be sure to report monthly or after the event as it will make for an easier reporting of Annual reports.

Our National website has many links and support tools for Community Service. Log into the members only section

Remember it is not only what we do as a unit, as a member we should also report our community service hours for what we do in our communities as an individual.

If your unit submits a report for an award, please remember you must include the hours and number of participants for each activity. The hoursheet will make this an easy task when reporting time arrives.

DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

1. **The Wilber M. Brucker Cup:** to the Unit with the best all round report. Remember to report number of hours and participants.
2. **The Lida Murphy Cup:** for the greatest number of hours reported on community service programs. Include number of hours and participants for each event.
Named for Past Department President Lida Murphy, Northville Unit 14 1937-1938
3. **The Earl L. Stewart Cup:** to the Unit with less than 50 members for the most outstanding Community Service report. Remember to report hours and participants.
4. **The Betty Cline Community Service Citation:** to a Unit with over 200 members for a **single program** that has benefited or assisted their community during the year. Remember to report total number of hours and participants.
Named for Past Department President Betty Cline, Port Huron Unit 8 -1980-1981
5. **The Patricia Jewell Award:** For the Units under 200 members. For the Most Outstanding **single Program** that has benefitted the Community. *Named for Past Department President Patricia Jewell*

UNIT CHAIRMAN SEND YOUR ENTRY AND REPORT TO THE DISTRICT CHAIRMAN BY MARCH 15, 2022

DISTRICT CHAIRMAN SEND THE WINNING ENTRY WITH GREEN SLIP TO THE DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN BY March 30, 2022

Without number of hours reported a report is disqualified for awards.

Key Program Statements

- Making our communities better places in which to live is something Auxiliary members strive for each day across this country.
- A major outreach program of the Auxiliary since 1926, Community Service also demonstrates our longstanding commitment to supporting the work of American Legion posts and other organizations in aiding with blood drives, first aid and CPR training, child safety programs, support for women in shelters, and disaster and emergency preparedness programs.

How to Mobilize Community Support for Those Who Serve

The American Legion Auxiliary is well-positioned, due to our history and reputation, to mobilize our communities in support of veterans, servicemembers and their families. Units and departments should closely examine the needs of their communities and organize programs either of their own initiative or in cooperation with The American Legion or other organizations to cultivate a patriotic community. Cultivating patriotism in the community involves acknowledging our country's military history, saying "thank you" to veterans and servicemembers and supporting with practical and tangible services and supports the servicemembers, veterans and their families who have sacrificed for our freedom.

Community Blueprint Network:

The Community Blueprint Network is an initiative to assist communities in gathering veterans, servicemembers and their families; community leaders; community volunteers; government agencies; and nonprofit organizations to foster collaborative and integrated solutions to the most common challenges facing veterans, servicemembers and military families in their communities. The Community Blueprint provides a guide for anyone who wants to organize community-wide support for the veterans, service members and their families. The Community Blueprint also provides recommendations for service action in the areas of behavioral health, education, employment, family strength, financial and legal services, housing and homelessness, reintegration, and volunteerism. The Community Blueprint Network is inspired and supported by a coalition of over 55 veteran and military serving organizations (including the American Legion Auxiliary) and administered by Points of Light. The Community Blueprint Network is the only national, scalable approach currently available for building robust community-wide public-private support for veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

How to Coordinate with the Community Blueprint Network:

There are two main ways a unit or department can get involved: Firstly, Auxiliary members can take an active role in participating in a Community Blueprint coalition and implementing the service actions identified by the coalition. Secondly, members can serve as a driving force behind starting a Community Blueprint coalition in their community. Members can choose either or both paths. Please note that additional resources for all the following steps can be found on the Community Blueprint Network website.

Join a Community Blueprint coalition in your community: Locate the organization(s) in your community leading the initiative. This may be done by word of mouth or by visiting the Community Blueprint Network website. Join the coalition and participate actively and regularly. The Community Blueprint coalition should be implementing various service actions recommended in the Blueprint. Auxiliary units and departments can assist by: Contributing knowledge on veterans, servicemembers and their families in the community to ensure the right service actions are selected. Actively encouraging participation in the service actions amongst the local military community. Donating space for an action event or program, i.e., if the community is hosting a job fair, perhaps a Legion Family post home could serve as the venue. Volunteer to ensure the service action is a success.

Start a Community Blueprint coalition in your community Identify the need for an initiative like the Community Blueprint Network and register on the Community Blueprint Network Website Convene

community leaders and partners to gather support for the initiative. Perform a detailed analysis of your community to evaluate all services currently offered to the military community and any unfulfilled needs. Form teams to evaluate specific community needs and the capabilities to provide these services for these needs to the military community. These teams should also identify potential service actions for the community to implement. Using the step-by-step practice(s) selected, begin implementing the service action. Be sure to mobilize the community for additional volunteers before, during and after the event. Assist in evaluating the impact in the community to ensure that the program achieved its goals.

Community Forces:

Community Forces seek to ensure that veterans, servicemembers and their families receive the support and services they need —right where they live. Formerly referred to as “Inter-Service Family Assistance Committees (ISFACs),” Community Forces are typically initiated by the National Guard in each state. Community Forces come in many forms, may have different names at the state and local levels (including some that continue to use “ISFAC”) and are spearheaded by a united partnership of area leaders who combine local talents and services to help their military neighbors thrive, prosper, and maintain their resiliency.

How to Collaborate with a Community Force:

Determine whether your state or area has an established Community Force by visiting the Joining Community Forces website. In the upper-right corner, ensure that your state is selected from the drop-down menu, and click “Connect”. A pop-up message will appear, providing you with the state’s contact information, as well as allowing you to contact the Community Force. If your state or area has a Community Force, express interest in joining it. Begin by attending and actively participating in meetings and discussions, depending on the needs of the Community Force. Once you understand the Community Force’s focus areas, begin to contribute additional information relating to the needs of veterans, servicemembers and military families, as needed, and assistance in planning solutions with service action opportunities. This could include educating the other entities in the Community Force on specific programs the Auxiliary offers locally, assistance in planning

Community Covenant:

Originally a program to honor members of the Army, Community Covenants now demonstrates community support for members of the five branches of the United States Armed Forces. Designed to foster and sustain effective state and community partnerships with the military, the Covenant aims to improve the quality of life for servicemembers and their families. Covenants can be tailored to a specific community’s needs. More than 450 Covenants have been signed in 48 states, three territories and Washington, D.C. To see if a Community Covenant has been signed in your community and learn more about their activities (and how the Auxiliary might be able to support the Covenant), contact Community Covenant staff by visiting their website and filling out the “Contact Us” form by clicking “Contact” in the top right.

Blue Star Salute:

With history traced back to the World Wars, a Blue Star Service Banner signifies that a loved one is serving in the Armed Forces. Each blue star represents one family member serving. Banners are available with up to five stars. If the servicemember is killed or dies while deployed, a smaller golden star is placed over the blue star. Blue Star Banners can be purchased through Emblem Sales. Blue Star Banners can be presented to family members with deployed loved ones year-round without ceremony, or you can hold a Blue Star Salute. The American Legion offers a comprehensive guide to planning a Blue Star Salute event as an Armed Forces Day Celebration (the third Saturday in May) on their website. This guide includes a sample timeline and schedule, talking points and remarks, as well as public relations samples. Certificates for servicemembers and family members also can be downloaded from the event planning page of The American Legion’s website. Many of these certificate templates recognize the efforts of the entire Legion Family.

September 11th Commemoration:

The American Legion Family is dedicated to honoring the victims of the September 11 attacks. Members are encouraged to plan annual patriotic or memorial events in the community on that date so that the memories of the victims do not fade. For your ease, The American Legion offers a comprehensive guide to planning an “A Day to Remember” event to commemorate September 11, 2001, on its website. This guide includes a sample timeline and schedule, talking points and remarks, ways to get students and groups involved, and public relations samples.

How to Participate in the 9/11 National Day of Service:

9/11 Day, known formally as “Patriot Day,” has been designated by Congress as a National Day of Service and remembrance to pay tribute to the victims of 9/11 through charitable service and good deeds. The American Legion Auxiliary urges its members to participate in 9/11 Day. We encourage members to make an official pledge of service on the 9/11 Day of Service website. We then invite members to “pass It on!” and share their pledge with other through Twitter, Facebook, or other means. By sharing your pledges of service with others, ALA members serve as role models who motivate and challenge others to serve. Participating in national days of service, such as 9/11, is a suggested activity within the ALA community service plan of action.

Make a 9/11 Day of Service Pledge

To get involved in the 9/11 Day of Service, make a pledge to serve others on or around 9/11. You can participate in a volunteer activity or project of which are already a part and encourage others to join you. Or you can organize a service activity specifically for 9/11 Day. Your service pledge can be as broad or as specific as you’d like, so long as it is in the spirit of service and remembrance. If you are looking for a lead to a specific service opportunity, consider pledging to sign up as Military Spouse eMentor, a new online program sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation where volunteers can share advice with military spouses seeking employment. Additional information about the mentor program is available at <http://ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/about>.

Share Your 9/11 Day of Service Pledge with Others

ALA encourages its members to share their 9/11 day of service pledge on social media sites. We recommend Twitter and Facebook.

A. Share your pledge on Twitter:

1. Visit 911day.org and make your pledge.
2. On the same screen as the pledge, scroll down to the header, “Help Us Grow the 9/11 Day Movement.” Select the share option.
3. “Pass It On!” by sharing your pledge on Twitter. Be sure to include the #911day and #ALA tags in your message to make sure your pledge is seen by others.
4. Search #ALA throughout the day on 9/11 to see how other ALA members are pledging to serve.
5. Be sure to follow @ALAforVeterans to keep up with ALA via Twitter on 9/11 Day and every day.

Example Tweet: “I will sign up as an eMentor to help military spouses gain meaningful employment. What good deed will you pledge? 911day.org #911day #ALA”

Example Tweet: “I will read to kids on my military base next week. What good deed will you pledge? 911day.org#911day #ALA”

B. Share your pledge on Facebook:

1. Visit 911day.org and make your pledge.
2. On the same screen as the pledge sign up, scroll down to the header, “Help Us Grow the 9/11 Day Movement.” Select the share option.
3. “Pass It On!” by sharing your pledge on Facebook. Be sure to tags by including ‘@American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters’ and ‘#ALA’ in your post to make sure your pledge is seen by others.

4. 'Like' the ALA National Headquarters Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ALAforVeterans.
5. Example: "I will sign up as a mentor to help military spouses gain meaningful employment. What will you do today? 911day.org @American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters #ALA"

Example: "I will read to military kids on base next week. What will you do today? 911day.org @American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters #ALA"

Other Ways to Get Involved in 9/11 Day

Not everyone can or wants to pledge their service online. Please participate in 9/11 Day somehow. Visit 911day.org to explore service project opportunities in your community and State. If there are no projects listed in your area, consider working with your Unit to organize your own 9/11 Day project, or do some volunteering individually.

Report Your Impact! Be sure to report your 9/11 Day activities and hours to your unit's Community Service Chairman.

How to Partner with Organizations for Community Outreach

Many times, programs and projects held by the American Legion Auxiliary are held at the post with primarily members attending and volunteering. To promote patriotic community service activities and build community partnerships, units are encouraged to host events to raise community awareness of what we do while focusing on our national heroes. (It is encouraged not to use these events for membership recruitment purposes.)

Community Outreach Examples:

- Plan a Send Off and/or Welcome Home event.
- Plan a stand down.
- Coordinate a Veterans Creative Arts Festival with your local VA facility.
- Facilitate theme-related events such as a Back-to-School Bash, Easter Egg Hunt, or a holiday-themed party (with gifts) for military and underprivileged children at the post or local community center.
- Hold 5K Freedom Walk with proceeds going to a veterans-related cause.
- Hold a Community Covenant event, 9/11 Remembrance event or Blue Star Banner Salute (see our guide: How to Invite Community Support for those Serving).
- Hold other mission-focused events that are open to the community.

How to Partner:

- Gather up to five active Auxiliary members (not necessarily officers) and develop a list of community influences—both individuals and organizations. Host a planning event to bring this focus group together to discuss your project. See Possible Local Partners/Volunteers for possible partnering organizations. Contact organizations/groups that would make good collaborators on this project.
- Working with your partnering organizations/groups, design an event that will benefit veterans and their families in your community. See Community Outreach Examples for some event possibilities.
- Secure an honorary chairman for your planning committee. This person could be a local TV or radio personality or local celebrity, but it should be someone that the community trusts and will listen to.
- Run your event like a business. Create a budget. Secure media partners for promotion of the event and any sponsorships needed to fund it (i.e., sponsorships for free food, giveaways, prizes).
- As you solicit donors and the media, have a prepared "elevator speech" that covers the aims and goals of the project, including information about the key organizations with which you are collaborating.
- Know your objective and target audience.
- Focus on the shared purpose/passion behind the project.
- Identify a media outlet that best fits the needs of your project; the one you like best may not be the best to promote the project. You might select one key media source for any special promotions or

access, but you should send information to several television and radio stations.

- If you are seeking donation of television time, be cautious of February, May, and November, as these are “sweeps” months. During these months, a television station may be less likely to donate airtime.
- Notify the media of your event in advance with a media advisory and phone call, inviting specific contacts at the outlet to attend four to six weeks in advance. Remind the general media of the event two weeks before the event date with the media advisory
- Be sure to ask you media sponsors for time, not money. Remember: Their donated time is money you save and be aware the size of the media market in your town.
- A large media market may mean you are able to get the radio or TV station to develop the promotional spot and donate airtime, but please do not expect this as it is rare. A smaller market means you may be able to get more coverage of your event.
- Regardless of the size of the media market, be sure to announce where to get additional information.
- Ask for a specific schedule of when your advertisements will appear.
- Be firm on project deadlines.
- Scope out possible locations for your event. Community events are often too large to host at a post home. Consider a central community location so as not to give the impression of a recruiting event. If the event has sponsors, they could donate space to hold it. Obtain and have the necessary permits on hand. Plan for extras that will be needed such as food and audio/visual equipment.
- Fulfill all promises to sponsors, such as booths or signage at the event.
- Recruit volunteers for additional help at the event, as it becomes necessary.
- Submit new releases to be published within 10 days before the event, inviting the community to attend. While the weekend paper gets the most exposure, it is the most difficult to get into. If the wording is changed, it can be resubmitted for the day of the event, but it is most likely the release will be published only once.
- Add the event to community calendars for newspapers and media outlets.
- Provide information on main partners’ websites and social media accounts.

Possible Local Partners/Volunteers:

- Local high school National Honor Societies and JROTC
- Local college students [Community Engagement/Service office and/or Student Veterans of America (SVA) group]
- Local churches
- Family Readiness Groups
- U.S. Navy Seabees
- Girls State alumnae
- American Legion Baseball teams
- Boy and Girl Scouts; Cub Scouts and Brownies
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America affiliated Military Youth Centers on military installations
- Any partnering organizations already with a connection to your unit
- Individuals interested in volunteering with the Auxiliary (“Auxiliary Advocates”)

Follow-Up: Evaluate the Success of the Event

- Did your event accomplish the stated objectives? If not, was there another meaningful outcome?
- Did those in attendance express interest in getting more information about or joining the Auxiliary? This event should not be an overt membership tool, but some of your community volunteers and attendees may have asked about membership or expressed interest in the Auxiliary. This should be considered a success since you were a positive representation of the Auxiliary.

After the Event:

- Be sure to thank any sponsors or donors with a personal note saying why their donation mattered. If you have any media clippings or participation number to cite, include them.
- Send a personal note of thanks to any community volunteers expressing your appreciation. Say how much you enjoyed working with them (if you did) and invite them to participate again with the Auxiliary at a specific volunteer event, if available.
- Thank any organizations or individuals who helped your event run smoothly (i.e., getting a permit or promoting the event) with a token of appreciation such as a greeting card signed by the committee. Be sure to include "American Legion Auxiliary" and other partnering organizations on the card.
- Send photos and detailed information about your event for consideration in the Auxiliary magazine to alamagazine@ALAforVeterans.org. Doing so may gain more exposure for your unit and sponsors!

How to Participate in a Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service

History:

In 1994, Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act, designating Martin Luther King, Jr., Day (observed on the third Monday of January) as a National Day of Volunteer service. Instead of a day off from work or school, Congress asked Americans of all backgrounds and ages to celebrate Dr. King's legacy by turning community concern into citizen action.

Participating on This Day:

The intention of the American Legion Auxiliary is to promote patriotic community service activities and to build community partnerships. Our service on this day elevates our presence in the community while focusing on the needs of our national heroes. It is encouraged not to use this day for membership recruitment purposes, but to approach this holiday as an opportunity to serve veterans in accordance with our mission.

Ways to Serve:

Here are six ideas to serve veterans on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day:

1. Help veterans in their home. Examples of these projects include building wheelchair ramps, basic home repairs and yard work. See [5 Ways to Help Veterans Around Their Home](#)
2. Organize or participate in a stand down. See [How you can help local veterans by planning a stand down](#)
3. Host a job fair for veterans at a post, community center or library.
4. Organize a mid-year school supply drive for military children. To maximize effectiveness, collaboration with other units in your district and/or area is recommended.
5. Encourage Juniors to create Hero Packs, in conjunction with Operation: Military Kids, to be given to military kids who have a deployed family member.
6. Bring at least one new person (this can be a member that doesn't normally volunteer or a non-member) along as you visit with veterans at VA Medical Centers or state veterans' homes

