

A Note of Thanks from your Auxiliary Outreach Program Chair – Amy Bennett

As we close the 2025–2026 Auxiliary Outreach program year, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to every Auxiliary across Arizona. Your dedication, creativity, and willingness to step forward — not for recognition, but for partnership — have made this year extraordinary. Whether you were packing backpacks, supporting animal shelters, assisting at community fairs, helping seniors celebrate holidays, or simply showing up with a smile and a willingness to serve, you demonstrated what it truly means to *volunteer with* our communities.

I had the privilege of watching your work unfold month after month with a total of 39 projects highlighted — through your 12 National hashtags, your photos, your stories, and 8 National Citation submissions. Each one was a reminder of how powerful we are when we work together. You showed Arizona that the VFW Auxiliary is not just present, but engaged, compassionate, and ready to lift others up. 46 of the 48 Auxiliaries reported participation in this program on their PARs!

Thank you for embracing the mission, for thinking outside the box, for partnering boldly, and for shining your light wherever it was needed. You made this year meaningful, memorable, and full of heart.

And as always — **You've Got a Friend in Me**. Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving as your Auxiliary Outreach Program Chair.

Re-cap of Auxiliary Outreach 2025–2026: A Year of Partnership, Service, and Shining Light

The 2025–2026 program year unfolded as a vibrant tapestry of service, partnership, and heartfelt connection across Arizona. From the first days of summer through the close of spring, Auxiliaries statewide embraced the true spirit of Outreach — *volunteering with*, not *for*, their communities — and in doing so, showed Arizona what it looks like when compassion becomes action.

A Year That Began With Momentum

The year opened with a renewed call to build **partnerships**. Auxiliaries were encouraged to reach out to libraries, food banks, animal shelters, and community organizations, always remembering the core principle: *“It is not volunteering for but rather volunteering with.”*

Hash tagging took off early, and Facebook became a lively window into the work happening across the state. National days like **Book Lovers Day**, **Patriot Day**, and **National Voter Registration Day** helped spark meaningful collaborations and visibility.

Autumn: Creativity, Connection, and Community Spirit

The Fall brought cooler weather and even warmer engagement. Auxiliaries brainstormed new ideas at the Member Involvement Training in Tempe, then put them into action — from backpack drives to park partnerships. Buckeye Auxiliary kicked off the season by helping pack backpacks for the

Superhero Drive, while others explored opportunities through VolunteerMatch and HandsOn Phoenix.

October's energy was contagious and the hashtags kept rolling with Auxiliaries highlighting activities like National Night Out, car shows, and homeless shelter support. The reminders were simple but powerful: use the hashtags, name your Auxiliary, and celebrate the work that doesn't fit neatly into other programs — because that's where Outreach shines brightest.

A Season of Giving

As the holidays approached, Auxiliaries leaned into gratitude and generosity. Members volunteered at state parks, connected with community partners at the State Fair, and explored ways to support individuals with disabilities — especially as **December 3rd, International Day of Persons with Disabilities**, approached.

December brought its own magic. Auxiliaries supported the Salvation Army, delivered blankets and essentials to Crossroads Nogales Mission, and prepared for January's National Hugging Day with warmth and humor. The season's shout-outs highlighted Auxiliaries fostering animals, distributing winter items, and partnering with local churches and missions.

A New Year, Renewed Purpose

January ushered in 2026 with optimism. Auxiliaries were encouraged to explore volunteer opportunities within their own cities, especially around **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**. National Compliment Day added a fun twist — a reminder to lift each other up as they lifted their communities. Shout-outs celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas efforts, including turkey distribution and food bank support.

February continued the theme of giving, with Auxiliaries participating in events like the **SAGE Christmas House**, Lions Club dinners, and senior celebrations in Nogales. Members were reminded to plan activities thoughtfully, vote on them, and always wear their Auxiliary attire with pride.

The Final Push and a Flourish of Activity

March arrived quickly — “marching along,” as the newsletter put it — and brought the final reporting push. Auxiliaries were encouraged to submit their best work for National Citation consideration. Special days like **World Water Day**, **Doctors' Day**, and the **First Day of Spring** inspired partnerships with clinics, water services, and animal shelters. Apache Junction Auxiliary 7968 earned a shout-out for supporting the Fuel of Dreams fundraiser for Special Olympics.

A Celebration of a Year Well Lived

By April, the program year's story was clear: Auxiliaries across Arizona had shown up, stepped in, and lifted others through meaningful partnerships. The final newsletter radiated pride: *“I'm so proud of the many organizations you all assisted... showing so many people in this state that the VFW Auxiliary is truly willing and able to partner and help others!”*

As reporting closed, members were encouraged to keep serving — and to give each other a well-earned **High Five** on National High Five Day. Teacher Appreciation Day and Nurses Day offered opportunities to continue expressing gratitude to community heroes.

A Year Defined by Light

Every newsletter closed with the same reminder from National Ambassador Sara Manke: ***“As you shine your light, the world grows bright, you are a beacon of love.”*** And truly, throughout this program year, Arizona Auxiliaries embodied that message. Thank you for your heartfelt efforts!

Final Auxiliary Shout Outs

District 1: Aux 8242 highlighted 2 projects using #az2526AuxiliaryOutreach

District 2: Aux 7400 promoted their project on the above and National #AuxiliaryOutreach

District 3: Aux 1433 and 12098 used the AZ and National hashtags, and 1433 submitted a National Citation Entry for one of their projects!!

District 4: Aux 1796, 3513, and 3632 made me especially proud with a combined total of 7 projects promoted on social media. Aux 3632 highlighted 4 separate days of activities and submitted a National Citation Entry, too!

District 5: Aux 10254 submitted a National Citation Entry for their project.

District 6: Aux 2364, 8807, and 9907 had the highest combined total of 10 projects throughout the year! 8807 was the busiest of all with 5 projects all on their own! 2364 even submitted a National Citation Entry!

District 7: Aux 2066 had 4 projects and submitted a National Citation entry! And 9977 utilized the National hashtag #AuxiliaryOutreach.

District 8: Aux 6306 submitted a National Citation Entry for their project.

District 9: Aux 10386 and 11014 kept me busy watching the AZ hashtags with their combined 5 projects!

District 10: Aux 3584, 7968, and 9399 all stepped up! 3584 utilized the National #AuxiliaryOutreach and 7968 and 9399 both submitted National Citation Entries. But 7968 stepped up their game with 3 projects promoted for the program year!

