

Heather Lyn
Americanism Chairman

Hello Arizona and Happy New Years. It was so Great to see so many of you at Winter Conference. Did you get a chance to talk to our National President? Did you get any information you didn't know or have a question you were able to get answered? These events are for us to connect with others around state to share ideas, build friendships and help our veterans and their families all over the state.

Now that our kiddos are back in school, it is a great time to get into the schools to teach them about flag etiquette, how to properly dispose and handle the flag. It is always a good time to teach our youth and get them interested in our programs.

There are a few Holidays and some National or international days of remembrances:

01/17 Benjermin Franklin Day

01/19 Martin Luther King Jr Day

01/22 Nasa's day of Remembrance

01/27 International Holocaust Remembrance Day

01/27 Vietnam Peace Day

Keep getting those reports in and continue to work on earn a national citation.

Auxiliary Outreach 2025-2026

#AuxiliaryOutreach and **#az2526outreach** or **#az2526AuxiliaryOutreach**

Happy 2026! A new year brings new beginnings!

Consider volunteering in your own City. Each City has a link to activities and events where volunteers are needed. Most cities have a special event on **January 19th** for **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**, so check in with your local library or City Hall to learn more about where a helping hand may be needed for this special day.

January 18th is the Rock n Roll Arizona Marathon. Volunteers Needed to honor fallen military. For more information see the flyer on the Department webpage under programs/Auxiliary Outreach.

January 24th is National Compliment Day which was created in 1998. **Compliment Day**, **January 24 Holiday. Say Something Nice**. Be sure to compliment someone in your Auxiliary when they are set up for success in their auxiliary attire and ready to help at an approved Outreach activity for with your Auxiliary!

February is coming up fast and there are many holidays to focus on including my favorite on, February 14th is Valentine's Day! Check out others here: **February Holidays and Observances For Your 2026 Calendar**

The **Arizona Cardinals Foundation Launches Cardinals Climb** will be held on February 21st. Click on the link to see how you can participate.

This month's shout out goes to Auxiliaries who helped in their communities for Thanksgiving like #1433 with the Desert Mission Food Bank helping to distribute turkeys to needy families. Also, during the Christmas Holiday Apache Junction's 2 Auxiliaries #7968 and #9399 helped at the Superstition Community Food Bank.

"As you shine your *light*, the world grows *bright*, you are a beacon of *love*." Sara Manke, National Ambassador, Auxiliary Outreach, 2025-26.

Remember, You've Got a Friend in Me! Please don't hesitate to ask me if you have questions!



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Auxiliary Outreach Program

Amy Bennett
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Buddy Poppy/National Home

Peggy Welch

Happy New Year! 2026 is off and running and it's time to start thinking seriously about your Buddy Poppy Display for the Department and National VFW Contest. Displays must be submitted first at the VFW Department of AZ Convention. There are 3 categories and you may have an entry for each category. The rules are as follows:

Category 1: Public Promotion of Poppy Campaign (window, booth, parade or poster displays, sales, promotion, etc.)

- Displays must be designated for public exposure and must bear a message soliciting a donation for and wearing of the VFW "Buddy" Poppy.
- At least 1 of the Poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.
- The display must have been on display in a public place for a minimum of 3 days and the public place must fill in the official entry form for verification.

Category 2: Memorial or Inspirational Displays (wreaths, memorial tablets or plaques, patriotic or devotional themes)

- Displays must be designated to honor the dead, to inspire devotion to God and Country, or to dramatize the activities supported by "Buddy" Poppy.
- At least 1 of the Poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

Category 3: Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies (Post Home display, table centerpieces, corsages, pictures, plaques, models, scenes, hats, novelty pieces, etc.)

- Any display not meeting the qualifications for Categories 1 or 2 shall automatically be entered in Category 3.
- At least 1 of the Poppies used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

Judging of displays will be on the basis of effectiveness, purpose, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty, and number of Poppies used (minimum of 100 Poppies). If identical items are entered, full credit will be given for the total number of Poppies used. The scoring of the displays will be on Originality-25 points; Composition-25 points; Neatness-25 points; Poppy story-25 points for a total of 100 points. First, Second, and Third Place winners in each Category at the National level will receive a plaque. Get your thinking caps on and order your Buddy Poppies soon!

Buddy Poppy is strong in Arizona. Now let's focus on the VFW National Home. Did you know that the Military Order of the Cootie presented the idea for a home to care for the children and families of veterans at the 1923 VFW National Convention? This is when Corey Spencer, a Michigan cattleman and VFW member, stepped up and offered 472 acres of land as a gift to the VFW in order to build the home. Unfortunately, Amy Ross, the young woman who started the movement to help unemployed WWI veterans, passed away in 1924, just 4 months before the National Home opened. During her life she was able to help 9000 veterans find jobs and help put the idea of the Home in motion.

This year the VFW Commander-In-Chief, Carol Whitmore, and the VFW Auxiliary National President, Lois Callahan, have joined together for their Special Project to "Stock the Store" at the National Home. Last year we helped with donations to Build the Welcome Center, and this year we are challenged to help fill the store for the residents. Monies raised should be donated to the National Home, www.vfwnationalhome.org, with the designation "Stock the Store."

Stay busy educating people about eligibility to the National Home. Show your support by purchasing a Life Membership and Tribute Brick. Be sure to send me an email, sunlover1102@gmail.com, if your Auxiliary has purchased these and/or donated to "Stock the Store." This is how I am able to keep our National Ambassador, Sandra Jeffries, informed of AZ support.

Keep in mind the National Citation Awards for both Buddy Poppy and the National Home. You must send your entry form to me by March 31, 2026 of your outstanding activity with pictures for judging. The winning entries will be sent to the National Ambassador for final judging. Winners will receive \$25.00 and a Citation for their Auxiliary.

Continue to wear your Buddy Poppies everywhere! People notice.

Paulette Marshall

Dept of AZ Historian and Media Relations

January Newsletter

Forget the resolutions for 2026. Resolutions are easy to break, instead make commitments, pledges or oaths, keep them simple, nothing beyond your actual abilities. For example, my commitment for 2026 is to live the motto of “we wear Red on Friday to Remember Everyone Deployed”.

Simple, impactful and attainable, so I can challenge each of you to share with me your RED Friday gear. Tag me, email me and show me so I can share. Each of our “reason’s), was once deployed, and while we may or may not have had the opportunity to wear RED, we can for those who are currently serving away from home. I am blessed at this moment in time to have all my sons back in the US, but as they were deployed I honored them while they were in places I couldn’t go. I have a cousin who has a son currently beyond her ability to physically be together, as a blue star mother, she has found it helpful to her to not only wear the RED but to see others do the same.

So wear it proudly, share on your pages and with the members of your community to support our men and women currently serving.

Hospital

Amy Timbes

Greetings Sisters and Brothers,

Having just completed the busiest season of the year and completed 2025 we need to plan this year. Holidays are great but there are many more non-holidays to consider. Visiting people is always uppermost on my mind and we need no excuse beyond assuring our veterans they are not forgotten. Conversation is the cheapest treat we can provide.

Speaking of cheap, there are many of you who have not applied for your hospital grant this year. That's \$250 times a bunch of auxiliaries, around 12,000\$. The rules are simple and on every form. Read it carefully and apply now. Amazon Haul is another site with discounted materials, and the wish list is kept up-to-date to give you some ideas. Remember local facilities have wish lists too. Ask. You might be surprised by what items they actually need and want.

Sitting here at my tiny desk I often wonder what you are all doing. I pray you are reporting your time and donation amounts through your post. I wish everyone would put out on Facebook every time you plan an activity, how many people go and where. #AZ2526Hospital. This encourages others to follow suit and reminds everyone how great the need is. I volunteer at the Phoenix VA hospital and every day I am reminded that budget is planned considering the number of volunteer hours. "You as an Auxiliary need to make sure you are filling out your Auxiliary reports that go to the Chairmen. All your hard work deserves to be counted, and the reports show just how much you are doing in your state for our veterans", quote from Kim Copson, National Hospital chairman.

Are you a Hospital volunteer? Do you want to be? Contact me and find out how to get started. There are always ways to help at events, or to just simply say hello, as every day is Veteran's Day.

Coming up in February is National Hospital Patient Appreciation Week Feb. 9 thru 14. There will be cake cutting at the Phoenix, 32nd St., and Southeast clinic locations Monday thru Friday. We need crews to man those hours and locations. Again, give me a call. 480-560-8863.

Veterans keep us free.

January Legislative Update- Becky Baldwin

Thank you to everyone who attended the Winter **Conference**. Your time, engagement, and commitment to legislative advocacy truly matter. It was an honor to share updates alongside **Nedra and Jim**, and we appreciate the thoughtful conversations and questions that took place.

One thing to always remember: **legislative work never stops**. As we move forward and prepare for 2026, there are **four key focus areas** every member should keep in mind:

1. Action Corps

- Please continue to **sign up new Action Corps members** and encourage current members to rejoin if they've fallen off. Just as important—**engage with the Calls to Action** when they are issued. These alerts are how we collectively make our voices heard at the local, state, and national levels. Numbers matter, and participation matters even more.

2. Voices of Service

- We strongly encourage you to submit **Voices of Service**. These stories highlight how legislative laws or ongoing issues are directly affecting veterans, service members, and their families. Submissions go directly to **VFW National** and may be used to help build connections with legislators. **Your story matters**, and personal experiences often have the greatest impact.

3. Arizona Legislative Bills

- Please stay informed and aware of the two primary bills currently in the Arizona House: **HB 4777 and HB 6047**. These bills have the potential to impact our veteran community, and awareness is the first step toward effective advocacy.

4. Claim Sharks

- Unfortunately, **claim sharks are still out there**. Be cautious, stay informed, and help educate others. Do not engage with or “feed” these predatory actors who exploit veterans seeking benefits. If something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t.

Thank you again for your continued dedication to legislative advocacy. Together, through awareness, action, and participation, we can protect and advance the interests of veterans and their families.

Membership

Crystal McCarthy

New Year, Same Amazing Auxiliary

A new year is here, but our mission—and our momentum—haven't changed one bit. We're heading into the second half of the membership program year, and the energy across the Department continues to be strong.

As we kick off the new year, it's the perfect time to **renew our resolution** to our veterans, our members, and each other. Over the next few weeks, I'll be reaching out to **all auxiliaries under 100%** to check in, offer support, and help problem-solve anything that might be standing in the way. You are not in this alone—we're in it together.

Let's keep building, keep reaching out, and keep showing why our auxiliaries are truly amazing. 2026 is waiting, and we're heading there strong.

Simple Ways to Keep the Momentum Rolling

- **Celebrate progress, not just 100%** – a new member, a percentage bump, or a great conversation all count as wins.
- **Short, friendly check-ins** – a call or text beats another reminder email.
- **Convert while you're renewing** – every renewal conversation is a life-member opportunity.
- **Keep it visible** – flyers at the Post, QR codes at events, membership info on every table.
- **End meetings with a win** – one success story, one new contact, or one outreach moment.

New year. Same heart. Same dedication. Same amazing auxiliaries. Let's finish this membership year strong and carry that energy straight into 2026. 🤝✨



Fun Meeting Add-On: "Auxiliary New Year Resolutions"

Add a quick 5-minute segment to an upcoming meeting:

- Ask members to share **one resolution** for the Auxiliary (examples: "Invite one new guest," "Make one phone call a month," "Attend one extra event," "Bring a friend to a meeting")
- Write them on a poster or resolution card and display it at meetings through spring.
- Revisit it briefly each month—celebrate the

Show Me Your Sparkle!

  Over the last two newsletters, I shared lots of fun ideas for recognizing and celebrating members—now I can't wait to see how you spread the message throughout the remainder of the year!

  Let's show off your creativity, swap inspiration, and carry those good vibes straight into 2026!

 Be sure to use **#AZ2526Membership** on all membership-related social posts

 Email me your **member recognition moments** — photos, shout-outs, creative touches, all of it!

Finding Former Members in MALTA (Together!)

Several auxiliaries shared they weren't sure where to find former member reports—and that's okay, we're all learning together. A step-by-step guide is posted on the Department website under Membership, Other Resources, Finding Former Members.

Former members have a story—reach out, listen, and see if there's an opportunity to welcome them back.



Winter Conference Wrap-Up

Winter Conference was a huge success! Our National President, Lois Callahan, was truly impressed by the engagement, energy, and commitment shown across our Department—well done! Let's keep that momentum going as we focus on bringing lapsed members back for 2026 and welcoming new members so we continue to grow. 

We're THIS CLOSE!!



Irene Nowacki

Scholarships Chairman

Happy New Year to all!

A huge shout out to all the Auxiliary and Post members that attended the Winter Conference this past weekend. We did a collection for the Continuing Education Scholarship and presented National President Lois Callahan with a check from the donations made through MALTA and the cash donated on Saturday that totaled \$7730.00.

Lois was in tears over the generosity of the Department of Arizona. She informed me that this is the largest donation thus far that she has received from one single department. Way to go ARIZONA!!!!

We are shooting for \$10,000.00 or more. If you or your auxiliary plans on donating funds towards this scholarship, they can still be made through MALTA under the Make a Gift button, then under National President's Special Project until the National Convention held in Reno Nevada. Auxiliaries', please make sure that you let Kim Sloan know how much you have donated so that President Brenda can have a grand total for Convention. Let's see if we can hit or beat the \$10,000.00 goal.

If you are interested in submitting an entry for this scholarship, the deadline is February 15, 2026. Please make sure that your entry is emailed or mailed to National Headquarters. The deadline is February 15th. Any entries received after the 15th will not be accepted.

<https://vfwauxiliary.org/wp-content/uploads/Continuing-Education-Scholarship-25-26.pdf>

Now that Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy are over and the winners have been announced, we need to start focusing on the other contests that we have.

3-Dimensional Patriotic Art and Young American Patriotic Art Contests.

<https://vfwauxiliary.org/wp-content/uploads/Young-American-Creative-Patriotic-Art-Contest-Scholarship-25-26.pdf>

<https://vfwauxiliary.org/wp-content/uploads/3-Dimensional-Patriotic-Art-Contest-Scholarship-25-26.pdf>

Deadlines are coming up faster than you think. March 31st is right around the corner. Have you been engaging with your schools and local youth groups. Do you have any interested

individuals? Open to grades 9-12, these will be amazing pieces of art that we cannot wait to showcase at department convention. Encourage your family members and friends to enter. Let's make this the largest turnout of art entries ever.

The end of the year for program reports is coming up. Double check your Outstanding Auxiliary checklists to make sure that you have got them all checked off.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am inspired every day by the strength, resilience, and compassion that define our Auxiliary. We are a family that stands beside and supports our Veterans, our members, and our communities. Our service does not end when a Veteran's uniform comes off—it continues for a lifetime. This is an obligation we accept as members: to ensure that no Veteran or family member ever feels alone on their journey through life.

At some point, many of us may find ourselves facing the path of becoming a caregiver. This is one of the greatest honors we can bestow upon a spouse, child or loved one; however, it can also be one of the most challenging and stressful responsibilities we will ever undertake. Preparation is key. I encourage you to get a head start by learning what it truly means to be a caregiver. Two excellent resources—[Ten Tips for Family Caregivers](#) and [VA Caregivers](#)—can be found on [www.vfwauxaz.org](#) under **Programs → Veterans and Family Support**. I also would like to note, to say "*I am not capable of being a caregiver*" is acceptable and encouraged if you feel you could not do this. This could be detrimental to you and the person needing care.

Families are the backbone of our Veteran community and supporting them is central to our mission. Spouses, children, parents, and caregivers make sacrifices that often go unrecognized, yet their strength sustains our Veterans and members through every season of their life. By hosting family-focused events, supporting youth programs, and offering both financial and emotional assistance, we work to ensure families feel seen, supported, and valued. In doing so, we strengthen our entire VFW & Auxiliary family.

Auxiliary members, I challenge each of you to turn your compassion into action. Whether it is welcoming home deployed service members, providing comfort during times of illness or loss, connecting Veterans with critical resources, or simply listening and spending time with a member—every act matters. Each gesture, no matter how small, is a powerful reminder that gratitude is best expressed through meaningful service and will never be forgotten.

Loyalty

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Loyalty" followed by a name.

Youth
January 2026

“Tell me about your picture”

If a youth can draw a picture- they can put it into words.

Illustrating America, the VFW Auxiliary Youth Patriotic Art Contest, is in full swing. [Illustrating-America-Art-Contest-25-26.pdf](#) Open to Youth in grades K – 8, art contests between K – 2, 3 – 5, 6 – 8th grades, due to the local VFW Auxiliary by March 31st.

When Illustrating America was introduced in 2017, it was the same year the Family Freedom Festival was introduced. Our Auxiliary used Illustrating America as one of the many Youth activities and used the Patriot’s Pen theme that year “What makes America Great to You?” to invite children to color a picture. Lots of beautiful refrigerator art was shared. After a LONG Independence Day/Family Freedom Day celebration the Youth colorings were collected. One, in particular, will forever be a favorite. An Auxiliary Member’s granddaughter had colored a “Patriotic Chicken”. When “grandma” was asked to tell me about the picture, she looked and laughed wholeheartedly, “She loves her chickens. It is a Patriotic Chicken”.

Staples that year also held a back-to-school for students and Teachers. It was an opportunity to introduce Illustrating America by having a coloring booth in front of the store and asking, “What Makes America Great to You?” allowing a segway into how the VFW Programs neatly fit into community and education including Scholarship and Teacher of the Year opportunities.

At a membership table, a Buddy Poppy Drive, taking pictures from Children into a Hospital setting, working with Scouts, the School Fair opportunities exist where you make them. Looking forward to Art entries from Arizona Youth.

