

As we close out this year, my heart is full of pride and gratitude for the incredible work accomplished by all our Auxiliaries. Your dedication, creativity, and tireless efforts have truly embodied the spirit of Americanism—educating, honoring, and inspiring our communities.

One of the most humbling moments for me this year was the honor of participating in the **13 Folds Ceremony** at our conference. Standing alongside so many who share a deep respect for our flag and the values it represents was an experience I will carry with me always.

The reports you turned in this year were outstanding—true reflections of the heart and impact of this program. Each one showcased the passion, thoughtfulness, and commitment that make our Americanism efforts so meaningful.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to **President Brenda** for her leadership and trust, and to every single one of you who believed in me to carry out this program. Your support made it possible to reach new heights and touch countless lives.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all at **Convention**, where we can celebrate our successes together and set our sights on another year of service and patriotism.

With gratitude and respect,

**Heather Lyn**

Americanism Program Chair

## **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.

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## **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!

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### **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!

Buddy Poppy/National Home  
Peggy Welch

## BUDDY POPPY/NATIONAL HOME

April was a busy month with elections and installation of new officers. Are you wearing your Buddy Poppies to meetings and events? Make it a fashion statement. Share a little Buddy Poppy information with your members and keep the excitement alive!

This year your Auxiliaries have participated in Buddy Poppy and National Home events, both big and small. All have been important and show your commitment to the message we have to share. You were challenged to be creative and to “Flood Arizona with Poppies.” Through feedback from all of you it is evident that your efforts were impactful. From individuals who said “I had no idea how important the Buddy Poppy is” to individuals who remembered seeing the Poppies as children, and individuals who had tears in their eyes when they mentioned their veterans. MIT was a great opportunity for you to share your ideas and learn about the program from me and your peers. Our conversations energized me throughout the year.

Next on the agenda: the Buddy Poppy Display contest. Your entry needs to be ready for the VFW/Auxiliary Department of Arizona Convention on June 11-14. The rules have been shared throughout the year in the Department monthly newsletters. Your Auxiliary Presidents have received the 2026 Rules and Entry Form by email. I look forward to seeing your creative and meaningful displays this year. Remember, a minimum of 100 Buddy Poppies must be used, with one Poppy in its original form and color with label attached. Tin Pins may be used as well.

This has been a great year for the VFW National Home. You promoted Awareness and Eligibility of the Home like pros. Your financial support through Life Membership purchases, Tribute Brick purchases, and “Stock the Store” donations is wonderful. Nationally, as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 497 Centennial Bricks have been purchased and 318 Life Memberships from January 1 to March 31. Our support is included in these numbers.

Some other news from the National Home:

- \* 41 of 43 homes are full with 107 children on campus. Construction on 2 new homes is planned to begin this summer.

- The retail store equipment is being installed in readiness for the anticipated opening in June 2026.

- The 4-H program kicked off in March. 3 children are showing hogs and 6 are showing bunnies. They are busy naming their animals, and a couple of names chosen are Hamelia Earhart and Gordon Hamsey.
- The RAVE (Regenerative Agriculture and Veteran Education) Program is going strong to train veterans in regenerative farming. They have planted flowers and vegetables in the greenhouse and will have eggs, flowers, and vegetables for sale in their farmstand at harvest time.
- Guitars for Vets (G4V) is a program for vets with service-related trauma and provides a 10-week structured guitar instruction program. Many VFWs and Auxiliaries have donated guitars to this unique cause.

Our National Ambassador, Sandra Jeffries, states in her recent promotion, “We are making history with the Buddy Poppy & National Home Program with the extraordinary effort our members are putting into this cause. Together we can make this a Program Year that will be remembered for a very long time.”

It has been my honor to serve as your Buddy Poppy/National Home Chairman this past year. I have learned a lot from all of you, and I love to see all of your Poppy inspired creations and events. The Department has had a great Program Year and I cannot wait to see your Buddy Poppy Displays in June!

Paulette Marshall  
Dept of AZ Historian and Media Relations

My goodness where did this year go. I have been very blessed to be your Media relations chair and historian.

Just seeing the amazing things that you all have done makes me very proud to be a part of the Department of Arizona. Most of you have used your hashtags very well and I've been able to see what you've done. And while the year may be coming to a close, I'm still looking for pictures and I'm still looking at your hashtags. If you have any pictures of president Brenda Kinghorn please be sure to tag me and e-mail them to me for my end of the year compilation.

Again, thank you all so much for such great year and allowing me to share in your successes.

Hospital  
Amy Timbes

Here we are already in May. 250 years to celebrate because of our veterans.

Maybe if they allow me to continue in this role I will someday get it right. I do believe I have been remiss in communicating with you. I need to share thoughts with you more often and definitely use Facebook and email more effectively. I NEED to know what I can do to make you feel more comfortable in sharing your activities. I even missed the boat on using the hashtag enough. This year let's blow up Facebook with what we do. Post on your post and auxiliary website and also #. I will follow everybody who lets me. Tag me. I want to NEED massive storage for your pursuits. The reason people go to church is to be supported in their faith. The same idea can help us all remain motivated. Allow me to share your success with others. If you do something special fill out a program award entry then and there. Submit multiples. And think outside the box. A wish list has things but smiles are earned through action. Research the Veterans Legacy program.

Just for fun I am including a brief look at what was reported in 2025-2026.

9 reports from auxiliaries (3 from 1433) including erecting a gazebo, crocheting beautiful blankets, filling a Flagstaff library, Gift bags, guitars, baby items and membership events.

10 Grant applications from casket flags, necessity bags, wheelchair bags, shoes, tracphones, cookies and more. We left about \$10,000 unused. Ouch!

5 entries for National Auxiliary Awards from Auxiliaries 1433, 3632, 9399, 10254 and 11014. If I had a budget, you would all get recognition. Though I do believe you all are too humble. Your work counts and IS appreciated.

By the way, every time I visit the department website, I discover something I missed. There is a wealth of information there. Also watch for message from our National Ambassadors.

Keep up the good work and help each other enjoy this anniversary of America with all our veterans who keep us free.

So, three cheers for 2026-2027. Can someone clue me in what the new # will be? I will be making a sticker for my computer monitor.

## Legislative Newsletter

As we close out this program year, I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible work you have done as Legislative Leaders across Arizona.

This year was not about one event or one effort—it was about **consistent, intentional advocacy**. And because of that, Arizona made an impact.

### Here's what you accomplished this year:

- **Strengthened Action Corps Weekly engagement**  
You helped grow participation and ensured our members stayed informed and ready to respond to Calls to Action.
- **Amplified Voices of Service**  
You shared real stories from veterans and their families—putting faces and experiences behind the legislation we support.
- **Supported VFW Legislative Priorities**  
You stayed informed, communicated key issues, and helped keep veteran-focused legislation at the forefront.
- **Educated and protected veterans**  
Through continued awareness of **Claim Sharks and predatory practices**, you played a role in safeguarding benefits our veterans have earned.
- **Connected advocacy to everyday Auxiliary events**  
Whether at membership drives, community events, or programs, you found ways to incorporate legislative awareness and Action Corps outreach.
- **Led with consistency**  
Month after month—through newsletters, communications, and conversations—you showed up. That consistency is what turns effort into impact.

This year, Arizona didn't just participate—we **showed leadership through action**. Advocacy is not a one-time event, and you proved that by keeping the message moving forward all year long.

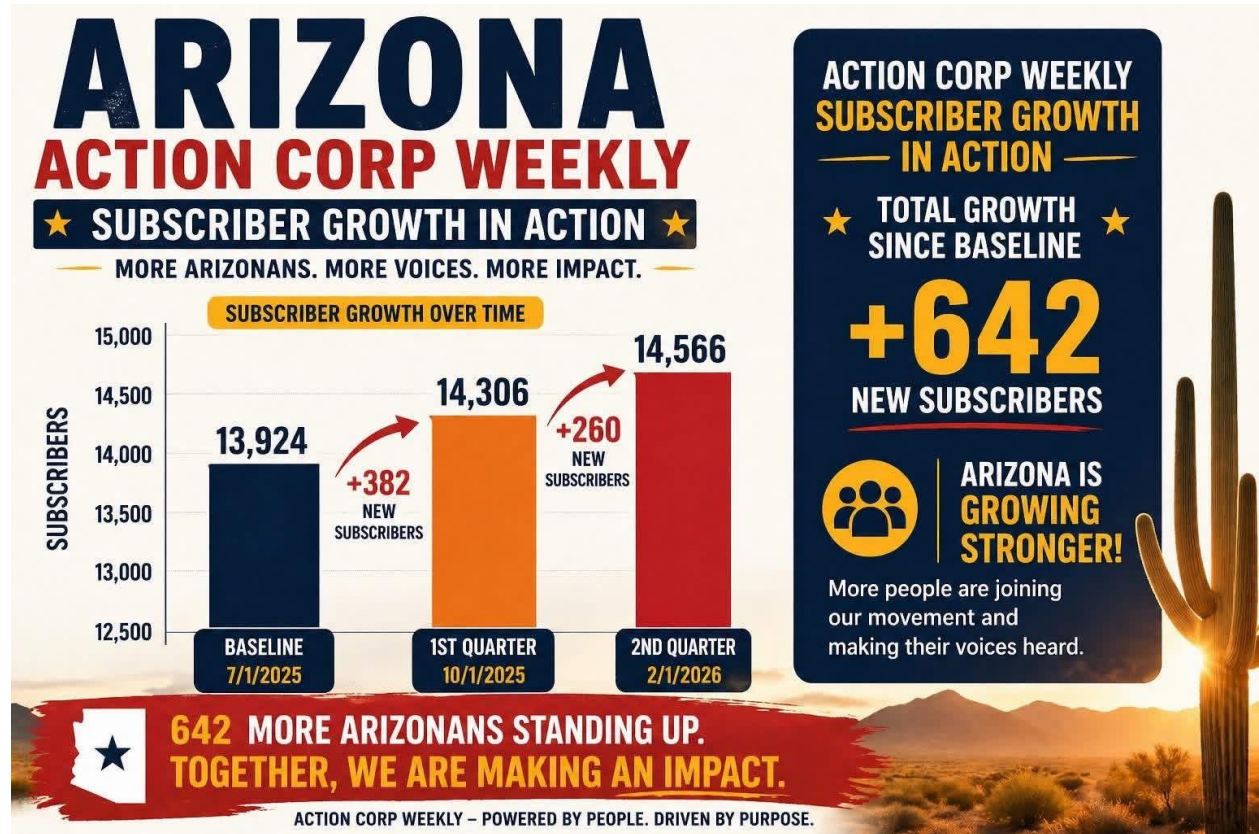
As we transition into the new program year, remember: the work does not stop here. The foundation you built sets the stage for even greater impact ahead.

Thank you for your time, your voice, and your commitment to ensuring Arizona veterans are seen, heard, and supported.

Together, we advocate. Together, we make a difference.

Respectfully,

**Becky Baldwin**



Membership  
Crystal McCarthy



## Convention Countdown

Let's Finish This Strong! 🐳 🎉

Department Convention is just around the corner—**June 11–13, 2026**—and I cannot wait to celebrate YOU.

I'll be bringing even more **100% banners** and **100%+ streamers** to recognize the hard work happening across our auxiliaries. You've earned it. 🏆

And let's talk numbers for a second...

We are currently sitting at **101.433% current** and **103.33% paid**.

**Wowie Wow!!!** 😍

That doesn't happen by accident. That's dedication. That's passion. That's YOU showing up all year long. ❤️

Now... I'm going to push you just a little more. Let's go after that **102% current** for President Brenda. We are so close—and I know without a doubt we can get there.

These final weeks matter. Take a few extra minutes to:

- Reach out to unpaid annual members: 📞 calls, 💬 texts, ✉️ quick emails—it works!
- Ask your members if they recognize names on the unpaid list
- Personally invite them back—they may just be waiting to hear from you

Sometimes it's not about a big push... it's just about a simple connection.

If you're running into roadblocks, feeling stuck, or just need to talk through ideas—**please reach out to me**. I'm here to help however I can. 💡

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### **Come Say Hello at Convention!** 🙌

When you're at Convention, please come find me and say hello. I truly want to hear from you.

Tell me:

- What was the most fun part of your year? 🎉
- What worked well for your Auxiliary? 💪
- What made a difference—recruiting, retention, recognition? ☀️

I want to hear it all—the wins, the ideas, the moments that mattered.

Let's celebrate together. 🥳

**STRONGER TOGETHER.**  
ONE HOUSE.  
DIFFERENT DOORS.  
ONE MISSION.

# I am the Ocean

**TOGETHER, WE MAKE WAVES.**  
*Arizona's Membership Success Runs Deep!*



**620**  
NEW MEMBERS  
joined our ranks!

**54**  
REJOINS  
since the start  
of the year!

**10**  
ALL  
DISTRICTS  
are now over 100%!

**41** OUT OF **48**  
AUXILIARIES  
ARE AT 100%

**29**  
AUXILIARIES  
at 102% or higher!

**1** AMAZING  
YEAR  
IN ARIZONA

**SHARK FAMILY**  
STRONGER TOGETHER.  
DEEPER TOGETHER.  
HERE TO STAY.

**OUR MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGES MADE WAVES!**



**OCEAN'S FOUR**  
Recruit or reinstate members from at least four different eligibility categories.  
They delivered in a big way!

**11**  
AWARDS  
EARNED  
**73**  
NEW MEMBERS  
joined our ranks!



**FALL CONFERENCE**

Presented alongside Department Commander Harrell and Membership Coach Decker to remind everyone:

**VFW AND AUXILIARY MEMBERS ARE TRULY ONE HOUSE—WORKING SIDE BY SIDE,**  
even if we enter through different doors.



**OCEANS OF BELONGING**  
Recruit 1 new member per month for 3 months, reactivate 1 lapsed member, and convert 1 annual member to life.  
Many former members welcomed back where they belong!

**6**  
AWARDS  
EARNED

From the Eligibility Wheel to holiday messages—and yes, even our "Baby Shark" moments—Arizona members always knew exactly what our focus was and how each piece fit into the bigger picture.

**WINTER CONFERENCE**

A time to celebrate in a BIG way!

**28**  
100%  
BANNERS

**22**  
100%+  
STREAMERS  
**100% PLUS**

**173**  
PRESIDENT  
COINS  
awarded to recruiters (some of which are comrades!)



Recognizing the dedication and hard work of our auxiliaries!



**BY EARLY MARCH, Arizona had earned EVERY NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP AWARD!**

A reflection of steady effort, teamwork, and a shared commitment across the state.

**FOCUS. PURPOSE. BELONGING.**

*That's Our Ocean.*

*The Celebration Continues!*

Looking forward to our Department Convention in June as we celebrate even more achievements together!

\*as of 4-30-26\*

Irene Nowacki  
Scholarships Chairman

What a wonderful year it has been. We had a nice turn out for the **Young American Creative Patriotic Art Scholarships both 2-D and 3-D**. I am very excited to be able to announce the winners in these contests. It was not an easy job to judge such amazing art. The entries were all very detailed and moving. Make sure that you are at Department Convention in June to find out who the first-place winners are that will have their piece showcased at National and hopefully bring home the big win!

Please make sure that you take the time to see all the art that has been entered in all the Auxiliary art contests including Illustrating America. These youth are our future. Let's celebrate their accomplishments. They truly are amazing.

I am very proud of the Department of Arizona. You have gone out into your communities and actively promoted the **Continuing Education Scholarship**, **Voice of Democracy** and **Patriot Pen**. We have had the pleasure of hearing the winning entry from the state of Arizona at our Winter Conference while hosting National President Lois Callahan. It was a great evening with the collection of donations for the Continuing Education Scholarship for \$7730.00. I wonder just how much we have raised in total. We are shooting for \$10,000.00. It will be exciting to hear the grand total at National Convention in Reno Nevada this year.

The reporting program year is over for now. However, we are always promoting our programs year-round 24/7/365. Have you thought of any new ideas to promote Scholarships for next year? Have you searched out new avenues to go down to distribute the scholarships and art contest information. Continue to reach out to everyone and anyone. We want the world to know about the good that the VFW Auxiliary does for our communities.

Don't forget to check your local areas for Scholarship opportunities that you can share.

It has been a great pleasure to serve as your Scholarships Chairman for the year. I wish you all the best of luck with awards. Let's go ARIZONA!!!

VFS  
Ray Williams

## WE ARE THE VFW AUXILIARY

Brothers and Sisters,

I believe people should join the VFW Auxiliary to continue to expand the presence of the VFW and serve this organization with dedication. If you have not taken the member obligation, I encourage you to request your Auxiliary President to have members to participate in the member obligation at your next meeting with your new candidates. The words that has always stands out to me is the Junior Vice-President: **“As a member of this Auxiliary, we shall expect you to do your share, for ours is a great work, lasting throughout life, for so long as there are veterans, so long will our work continue. To care for the members in distress and for those who depend upon them is part of the work of this organization—and when death shall lay his hand on any Post or Auxiliary member, it is our duty to see that they are buried in the proper manner and with the honor due them.”**

I need to thank each and every member who has come to the aid of a veteran, veteran family and/or a member. You are fulfilling your obligation and mission of this great organization. While many of our programs serve specific needs, Veterans & Family Support touches every life connected to our veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. It is a program rooted in compassion, awareness, and action. It is the core of our being.

Every day, someone faces challenges that often go unseen. From navigating VA benefits to coping with the lasting effects of service, many need not only resources, but also reassurance that they are not alone. This is where your support becomes essential. You are not just members, you are program coordinators, resource connectors, advocates, and, often, a lifeline.

Equally important is the support we provide to active military and their families. Spouses, children, and caregivers often carry unseen burdens, from frequent relocations to long separations and the emotional toll of deployment or injury. A simple act of checking in, offering a listening ear, or connecting them with support networks can have lasting impact. Never underestimate the power of personal outreach.

In recent years, the importance of mental health awareness has become increasingly clear. Many struggle silently with issues such as PTSD, depression, or anxiety. We are not expected to be clinicians but as Auxiliary members we are expected to care. Knowing the signs, encouraging open conversations, and guiding individuals toward professional help are critical steps we can all take. Creating an environment where veterans and families know we are a resource is one of the greatest gifts we can offer.

Another key component of Veterans & Family Support is collaboration. You are not alone in this work. Our Auxiliary family is over 12,000 strong, and 475,000 plus nationally. Now partnering with your VFW Post, and other community organizations strengthens your ability to serve effectively. Whether working alongside American Legion posts, local nonprofits, or VA facilities, these partnerships expand your reach and enhance the services you can provide.

From our National President's story about starfish, make a difference, one veteran, one family, one connection at a time.

From a young age, we are all taught that calling 911 brings immediate help. We trust that when we make that call, someone will respond, whether it be medical, fire, police, or all of the above. In that moment, we are placing our faith in people we may not know, but who are ready to serve. From personal experience I can attest, talking to that 911 operator gives you confidence that there are people coming to you when you are in a time of need, feeling helpless, and alone. Think of your Auxiliary and Post as that "911" for our Veterans and their families. You are the first line of support, helping to triage needs, provide immediate assistance, and connect Veterans and families to the resources they need while a longer-term plan is put into place.

Reviewing the reports that were sent to me and looking on social media, Arizona shows our unflinching support to our active military, veterans, and their families.

Thank you for being part of this family and I ask that you to continue serving this organization as much as you can.

This year has come to an end. I would be very grateful for the responses and reports received from the Auxiliaries. Six (6) Auxiliaries sent the National Citation Award form with just beautiful projects they have done with Youth in their area. Only one could be chosen!

Illustrating America entries, for each age group category, have been sent to the National Organization. Twenty entries, in all were received, 3 of those came from ONE Charter School in Quartzite, they had 18 entries. Auxiliary 769 has embraced this charter school and it is really paying off! A Community member, who has 3 grandchildren, loving the positivity the VFW Auxiliary Programs have to share, invited Auxiliary 769 into the school to speak about art, patriotism and embrace citizenship in their community.

From that, the BEST project this year has been Auxiliary 769 and the students of the Charter School coming up with a plan and painting a mural at the local Community Center on an Annex Wall to Celebrate America's 250<sup>th</sup> Year! To see the Youth involved in a way that is positive, celebrated in their community, and will last their lifetime is a legacy on its own merit.

Take-aways from this year's Program- not nearly enough was reported in the use of the Citations- Patriotic, Acts of Kindness or even the RAP (Random Acts of Patriotism) cards. So much is available, unused or unreported?

Patriotism through Literacy- only two (2) Auxiliaries reported donating books from the Patriotism through Literacy list to community libraries.

Hashtags- A way to share ALL WE DO- to the Community, State and Nation, used very little.

"Reading Buddies"- Veterans reading to Youth, Youth reading to Veterans, I heard of ONE- one, noted AFTER the National Citation deadline had passed.

You, as the Auxiliary and member, are on the frontline of representing this fantastic organization and the positive impact it CAN have on our Youth and future. If you see something, SAY SOMETHING! A checked box on an outline

form does not recognize all the wonderful work YOU are DOING. Please take 3 minutes to REPORT to your Department Chairmen. A simple “we did this” or “Did you see the Facebook Post” would have opened the doors to bragging rights and included your Auxiliary in a newsletter or shared idea.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve the Department of Arizona Auxiliary as the Youth Chairman. I feel so very fortunate to call you all my family.