Department of Illinois LEGION September 2025 AUXILIARY



JILL LAYTON

American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Illinois President
2025-2026

BELIEVE



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Directory

Scenes from Department Convention 2025









(Clockwise, starting from top left) 1) President Arlene Holtgrave with husband, Moose. 2) President Arlene Holtgrave and Membership Chairman Joyce Huelsmann presenting traveling pins to District 23 President Diana Owens and Vice President Debbie Ferguson. 3) Santa came to visit Department Convention! 4) New Charters for Staunton 362 and Manito 561!



Acel Layton



Roy Smith

Believe! That is this year's theme. I have loved Christmas my entire life. I love everything about it. Every year, the Sears, Penneys, and Montgomery Ward Christmas catalog pages were dog-eared; and I had them memorized. My sister Carol and I would sleep together on Christmas Eve in her twin bed and listen to the only radio station – WLS out of Chicago – for Santa alerts. As I became a parent, the magic and excitement only increased. Instead of my parents telling me it was too early to get up to see if Santa had been there, it was my husband telling me it was too early to wake up the children to see if Santa had been there.

The smells of Christmas are the smells of childhood. I love the sights and sounds of Christmas. I listen to Christmas music all year round. I love the atmosphere when people greet strangers with a smile and "Merry Christmas!" I love the random acts of kindness of strangers. I love the memories which are made and cherished.

I am hopeful that you will embrace and enjoy this Christmas theme. Having "Believe" as my theme was just spontaneous. To me it says it all. Christmas magic is silent. You don't hear it – you feel it. You know it. You believe it.

Believe. Believe in our great organization. We are the largest patriotic organization for a reason as we are a major force in advocating for Veterans' rights and benefits, supporting youth programs, and promoting patriotism. Believe in our programs. Believe in our missions. But most of all believe in yourself. Take on your challenges, conquer your fears, do what you love and believe in.

Some things different this year – At the forums, you can have your worn ALA membership card laminated. There will be an American Legion Auxiliary Initiation Ceremony at Patriotic Conference for those members (new members or seasoned members) who have not gone through an initiation ceremony. We are going to have the Year-End Unit Report Forms available for you also this year.

I strongly urge you to encourage all Units and members to attend a Fall Forum. It will be filled with information, laughs, and lots of Christmas spirit. My special project is the American Legion Auxiliary Illini Girls State. I was a citizen at ALA IGS in 1978. It was the most rewarding experience. After COVID, our number of citizens dropped drastically, as well as the young women

Please take a moment and donate to my special project - ALA Illini Girls State!

today are in so many other activities during (Continued on page 4) By now everyone should know that I am the Other Roy!

A little about myself, I grew up as a farm boy from Iola, Illinois. I left with dirt under my fingernails. I left after high school and joined the Navy at 18. I served from July 1977 to September 1998.

I married my high school sweetheart August 12, 1978. We have 2 children Katie Washburn and Roy W. Smith. Katie and her husband Christian have blessed us with 3 Grandchildren, Talon, Amelia, and Quinn. Our family are members of the American Legion family with the exception of our son in law. Tena has been a member for 61 years! My Father and Mother were both members of the Legion (Post Commander) and the Auxiliary (Unit President), I can't remember a time when the Legion was not a part of my life!

After my Navy Career and all of that salt water, I found I still had dirt under my fingernails and drug my wife and kids back to Clay County to a little patch of ground in Louisville, Illinois. I transferred my membership to Louisville, Illinois Post 914.

My Motto this year is Just One More. It can be used for so many things about the Legion, Recruit Just One More Member, Raise Just One More Dollar, Send Just One More person to Boys or Girls State, whatever you want to attach it to.

I believe in the Legion Family, I believe that we need each other for our organizations to survive. So as the Illinois American Legion works on retaining membership, and recruiting new members, we should be asking about spouses and children joining the Auxiliary and the Sons.

I want to thank you all for electing President Jill to serve with me this coming year, although I have trouble finding her! I know we will work well together, and I already know she likes to have fun!

I am looking forward to our year together.



Wayne Madson



Hello to the American Legion Auxiliary. It is my privilege this year as Detachment Commander to serve with President Jill. One of my goals this year is to get younger sons actively participating in the patch program. Hopefully the Auxiliary can help me with that at your local Units.

Hopefully you all have been enjoying the videos that we've been making with Commander Roy. It's been busy since convention, traveling a lot but enjoying every minute of it. First was Marty Conatser's retirement party in Bloomington with an excellent show of support. Then I had an installation at Post 435 Glen Carbon. I was honored to participate in the ceremonies for the American Legion Baseball at 5th Division in Trenton, Junior State Baseball in Alton, and Senior State Baseball in Rantoul. Thank You to the committee members, coaches, and players, that makes American Legion Baseball shine.

Just finished a weekend golfing at the American State Legion Golf Tournament in Danville. That was a blast golfing with Commander Roy, President Jill, Roy's Aide Ron, and myself. It made it a fun weekend. Also at the tournament was SAL National Commander Joseph Navarrete and SAL National Vice Commander Butch Ray. We thoroughly enjoyed their company.

Next we are off to the State Fair which will be an enjoyable time, and then it's back to Bloomington to attend the Legion's Division & District Officer Training. Following that is Tampa for National Convention and to see our own Pam Ray getting installed as National President. The Detachment is behind Pam 100%!!!

And hopefully we will see everyone at our joint homecoming in Effingham on Sep 13.

The Detachment is having a cash raffle paying out the top 6 places ranging from \$5,000 to \$500. Tickets are only \$20 a piece, see a Sons member for a ticket. Drawing will be held on March 14 at our Spring DEC. I hope to see you all in my travels this year.

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Membership year of Christmas magic – that's our membership theme this year "Believe in the Magic of the Numbers". As President Jill, also known as Mrs. Claus, has chosen a Christmas theme because she "Believes" in what ideals people exhibit during this wonderful season, and I believe in our members that they will work their magic and increase our numbers by believing in themselves, their Unit and their members.

Did you know that Santa has six (6) main elves? I am Elf Alabaster Snowball, and I am the administrator of the "Naughty or Nice List". Our Division Presidents are the five (5) remaining main elves: Division 1 is Elf Wunorse Openslae. Wunorse is the one who long ago created Santa's magic sleigh and is in charge of the reindeer (Districts 1-9) Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen. Division 2 is Elf Shinny Upatree. He's Santa's oldest and most trusted friend, and he makes sure that Santa's workshop is decorated with Christmas items (Districts 10-13) Candles, Wreath, Ornaments, and Bells. Division 3 is Elf Pepper Minstix, the protector of Santa's magic world and a strong believer in traditions (Districts 14, 15, 16, 20) Christmas Carols, Gingerbread House, Christmas Stockings, and Christmas Cards. Division 4 is Elf Sugarplum Mary, the head of the sweet treats and Mrs. Claus' assistant in the kitchen (Districts 17, 18, 19 and 21) Divinity, Candy Canes, Christmas Cookies, and Fudge. Division 5 is Elf Bushy Evergreen, a skilled engineer and the inventor of Santa's magic toy making machine (District 22, 23, 24 and 25) Rocking Horse, Red Rider BB Gun, Barbie, and Baby Doll. Together, these elves and their Assistant Elves (Division/District Vice Presidents) will be working hard to keep everyone on my "nice" list. Our District Presidents are Santa's Workshop Elves and the Vice Presidents are the Workshop Elf Apprentices. You, an Auxiliary Member, are a toy maker, and our Juniors are Santa's Toy Testers.

Our first National membership target date is 25% by

(Continued on page 4)

(President's Message Cont'd from pg. 2)

the summer. I hope having this as my special project will assist Units and Unit members to encourage more young ladies to attend this amazing program. Please inform the schools that more than one or two young ladies from the area can attend. We will accept **any and all** young ladies that want to attend. If your Unit can only afford to send one young lady, we can find a sponsor.

I look forward to traveling the State of Illinois and visiting with you and seeing what amazing things you are doing in your Units and communities.

(Membership Message Cont'd from pg. 3)

September 15, the SAL's Birthday. Our second target date is 60% by November 10th, the ALA's Birthday. Our third is 85% by March 15, 2026, TAL's birthday. Our fourth is 95% by Female Veterans Day, June 12, 2026. The 100% award deadline is July 4, 2026, as we celebrate our country's 250th Birthday!! And the 102% Award deadline is August 1, 2026, 30 days prior to the National Convention.

The membership goal for all Units for the 2026 Membership Year is 2 over the total number of members at the close of books on July 31, 2025. I hope that each Unit will embrace the "believe" theme and believe that they can reach and surpass that goal.

Mrs. Claus (President Jill) has scheduled eight (8) forums throughout the State. Mrs. Claus and I are encouraging **ALL** Unit members to attend to learn more about our Auxiliary programs, have some fun, and by all means...BRING YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH YOU!!

Membership is the backbone of our organization – we need to keep current members as well as sign up NEW MEMBERS!! Please embrace the theme this year – join in the joy, peace, and fun of the Christmas spirit by keeping your current and new members engaged in our wonderful programs serving our veterans, our military and their families, our children and our community.

"Christmas magic is silent. You don't hear it – you feel it, you know it, you believe it." - 'The Paper Bag Christmas'

2025 Poppy Poster Contest Winner

Congratulations to Bailey Owens from Windsor Unit 725! Her poppy poster entry for The American Legion Auxiliary contest received Grand Prize in the Illinois Contest and advanced to the national contest!



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Americanism Chairman Rosemary Mulligan

The Americanism essay theme for 2026 is "What are the core American values".

The Americanism program is designed to highlight and encompass all the principles and ideals of democracy.

The security of America lies within the hearts and minds of us all, ingrained within our very being is a heartfelt love and understanding of the ideas upon and principles which our great nation was founded. We must remain vigilant of our duty to uphold and foster these ideas, even at great personal peril or sacrifice, that is Americanism.

Our program is based on the education of our students and their families of what we do. There are four areas in which we can do this by working with the schools to help are youth learn the importance and ideals for patriotism so they can in turn share this information with others. Also, by getting the information out into the community at large where it can be received and spread, knowledge is power, spreading knowledge on this history and proper care and etiquette of the American flag and what it means and why it is the symbol of our great nation.

The Department Americanism essay contest information and rules will be in the fall packet. Please provide this information to your schools as soon as you can. Now is the time to talk to the schools and teachers and this contest remember there are awards that young people can receive. The national essay contest rules will be on the national website.

We also have the American legion oratorical contest, and we need to support the program.

Please remember all the contests have deadlines that must be followed and all the information on it must be correct, or the student will not be allowed so to be sent on.

You can also team with your Legion family to work all the programs under Americanism in your area.

Chaplain Carollee Junge

Theme: "Trust and Believe in God's Everlasting Love"

Believe for God's love is always with us as we carry out our daily duties. Prayer everyday for those in need of prayer. Remember all veterans, military, and their families and each other. Prayer for our country at this time of need.

All chaplains are encouraged to make a book of prayers that include prayers, devotional thoughts, and poems. Book of prayers need to be forwarded to the department chaplain to be judged and displayed at Department Convention.

Please send me prayers, devotional thoughts, and poems for President Jill's book of prayers. Chaplain, please keep me informed of your activities throughout the year so I may inform our National Chaplain a to the work Illinois is doing all year long.

Remember: Love is the bridge between hearts, spanning the vastness of souls united.

CHAPLAINS CORNER

No matter what happens in life, be good to people. Being good to people is a wonderful legacy to leave behind. Life is short so do not waste time being nasty. Let everyone you meet feel like they are someone special and you are someone special they know.

Education Scholarship Recipients 2025

Ada Mucklestone Scholarship Winners

Caden Hartsburg Sponsored by New Baden Unit #321, 5th Division, 23rd District.

Kynzi Presnell Sponsored by Pana Unit #168, 4th Division, 21st District.

Grace Carroll Sponsored by Stewardson Unit #611, 4th Division, 19th District.

Sarah Kohnen Sponsored by Aviston Unit #1239, 5th Division, 23rd District.

Avery Boyer Sponsored by Rantoul Unit #287, 4th Division, 19th District

Mayson Galyen Sponsored by Lena Unit #577, 2nd Division, 13th District

Illinois Junior Member Scholarship Winners

Jade Markey Sponsored by Aledo Unit #121, 3rd Division, 14th District

Becca Jo Layton Sponsored by Strasburg Unit #289, 4th Division, 19th District

Mildred Knowles Scholarship Winners

Mitchell Galyen Sponsored by Cissna Park Unit #527, 4th Division, 18th District

Seth Kardys Sponsored by Cisco Unit #1181, 4th Division, 19th District

Josie Mobley Sponsored by Hoopeston Unit #384, 4th Division, 18th District

Edie Suter Sponsored by Roselle Unit #614, 3rd Division, 14th District

Briar Smith Sponsored by Ervin A. Borlick Unit #1109, 1st Division, 4th District

Kyra Griesmer Sponsored by Lawrenceville Unit #28, 5th Division, 23rd District

Tiffany Rew Sponsored by Champaign Unit #24, 4th Division, 19th District

Miles Clapp Sponsored by Mattoon Unit #88, 4th Division, 19th District

Zayne Bonner Sponsored by Urbana Unit #71, 4th Division, 19th District

National Installation





Congratulations Pam!

Our very own Pam Ray was installed as the 2025-2026 National President in Tampa during National Convention!

Service to Veterans/Hospital Service Chairman Cinda Held

My theme this year is "Our Volunteers "Believe" in serving our Veteran's Needs."

Our veterans rely on our members who can volunteer to bring some stability to their lives and know that our organization cares for them. We give because they did.

We are all busy people, but if you can find some time in your schedule to give to veterans, please let me or the Department know, and we can get you set up with a facility voluntary services chief.

If your unit has not donated recently, please save a place in your budget for the VA facilities in your district.

Our Reps/Deps are volunteers just like regular volunteers and they are working hard to recruit more help for their facilities. If you can volunteer, give them a call or send a little monetary donation from you or your unit. Thanks for considering.

Districts and the facility(ies) in their district

DISTRICT 1 THRU 9: Jesse Brown VA Medical Center and Hines VA Medical Center

DISTRICT 7, 9 & 10: James A. Lovell Federal Health Care

DISTRICT 11: Illinois Veterans Home Manteno

DISTRICT 12 & 13: Illinois Veterans Home LaSalle

DISTRICT 14 & 15: Illinois Veterans Home Quincy and Bob Michel Outpatient Clinic **DISTRICT 16**: Illinois Veterans Home Quincy and LaSalle Vets Home and Bob Michel Outpatient Clinic

DISTRICT 17: Bloomington VA Outpatient Clinic, Bob Michel Outpatient Clinic, Illiana VA Medical Center, Illinois Veterans Home Manteno, Mattoon Outpatient Clinic and Springfield Outpatient Clinic

DISTRICT 18: Bloomington VA Outpatient Clinic, Illiana VA Medical Center, Illinois Veterans Home Manteno, Mattoon Outpatient Clinic and Springfield Outpatient Clinic

DISTRICT 19: Bloomington VA Outpatient Clinic, Illiana VA Medical Center, Illinois Veterans Home Manteno, Decatur, Springfield, and Mattoon Outpatient Clinic

DISTRICT 20: Illinois Veterans Home Quincy

DISTRICT 21: Illiana VA Medical Center, Illinois Veterans Home Quincy, Decatur Outpatient Clinic and Springfield Outpatient Clinic

DISTRICT 22 – 25: Illinois Veterans Home Anna, Jefferson Barracks and John Cochran, Marion VA Medical Center

Our fall Rep/Dep meeting is September 19 at Dept. Office in Bloomington. Hope to see you there. I now have my database records back to 2018. I feel like they are pretty accurate unless I have a typo somewhere. Thanks to everyone who helped me last year while I was struggling.

Reminders!

- There are still membership packets in the office. They will be sent out when the office receives the unit's 2025-2026 officer's list.
- <u>Unit Presidents:</u> watch for the fall packet coming out in October. It will include Americanism brochure, scholarship information and applications.
- Membership Renewal Notices will be sent out **September 15** from National.
- Watch for the Snip sheet in the next issues, there are so many great programs your unit can support. Our veterans and facilities are still in need.

FALL FORUM DATES:						
September 21 IL)	18th &19th District Fall Forum—Meeting 9:30 AM (Unit #287, Rantoul,					
September 27	10th District Fall Forum—Meeting 10:00 AM (Unit #964, Lake Zurich, IL)					
October 4	1st Division Fall Forum—Meeting 9:00 AM (Unit #974, Franklin Park, IL)					
October 5	2nd Division Fall Forum—Meeting 10:00 AM (Unit #337, Genoa, IL)					
October 11	16th District Fall Forum—Meeting 9:00 AM (Post #1044, Hennepin, IL)					
October 12	21st District Fall Forum—Meeting 12:00 PM (Unit #32, Springfield, IL)					
October 18	15th District Fall Forum—Meeting 9:30 AM (Unit #26, Vermont, IL)					
October 19	5th Division Fall Forum—Meeting 10:00 AM (Post #137, O'Fallon, IL)					

The Department of Illinois would like congratulate Maryann Petruska from Waukegan Unit 281 on writing such a lovely Gold Star poem for the Gold Star/Past Presidents' Parley Dinner at Convention. It was the winning poem and was printed on the back of the program.

17th District Fall Forum—Meeting 9:30 AM (Unit #122, Cullom, IL)

Junior Conference

Junior Conference will be held **April 18-19**, **2026**. Watch for details to follow in the next issues.

If you would like to receive the ALA Today, General Department Communications and/or the Membership report, via email please go to the department website: www.ilala.org, scroll down and select "Subscribe". You then can choose the information you would like to receive by clicking the box next to the item. If you do not receive the ALA Today or the Membership report via email, you can always find them on the website listed above as well. Please check your SPAM box in case you do not receive emails from us.

November 1

Needs for Our Veterans

Jefferson Barracks:

Men's Clothing Items (NEW only):

- Lightweight Jackets (all sizes)
- Polo Shirts (all sizes)
- Jeans (W 32-36/L 30-34)
- Sweatpants (S-XL)
- Sweatshirts (S-XL)
- Gym Shorts (M-XXL)
- Tennis Shoes (9, 10, 10.5, 11, 12)

• Women's Clothing Items (NEW only):

- Lightweight Jackets (all sizes)
- Sports Bras (M-XXL)
- Gym Shorts (S-XXL)

• Other Items (NEW only):

- Reading Glasses (+1.0, 1.5, 2.25, 3.0)
- Belts (one size fits all)
- Body wash
- Hair Brushes
- Men's House Slippers
- Backpacks & Duffle Bags!!!
- Small arts & crafts items
- Puzzle books, cards, small games
- Coloring books, crayons, colored pencils
- New books for the Book Cart

Barb Rose, Rep.

National Appointments

Congratulations National President Pam Ray!

Marybeth Revoir—National Treasurer

Sharon Conatser—National Finance Committee Vice Chairman, TAL Liaison Committee Member, National President's Advisory Committee Chairman

Julia Moore—National Children & Youth Committee Vice Chairman

Janet Bacon—National Central Division Membership Chairman

Teri Miller—National Central Division Education Chairman

Anna Wright—National ALA Girls Nation Committee Member

Pat Kranzow—National VA&R Committee Vice Chairman

Angie Mulligan—National President's Scrapbook Chairman

Congratulations to all appointments and we hope you have a wonderful year!

Illinois State Fair









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American Legion Auxiliary Department of Illinois PO Box 1426 Bloomington, IL 61702-1426 Telephone: (309)663-9366

2026 DUES REMITTANCE

Date:		
Unit Name	Unit #	Dist #
Person preparing membership remittance:		
Name:		_
Daytime Phone:		
Email:		
Number of Seniors:		
Total Due \$		
Credit/Debit Used\$		
Amount of Check Enclosed \$	Check #_	

Reminders:

List all members in alphabetical order
If a member is new please write "New" in member number space
All new junior members must have a birthdate
Member ID# is required for everyone, but new members
Any member transferring must have a completed transfer included with transmittal
If paying previous years dues, please fill out prior year transmittal

Unit Name: Unit

- 1) List ALL members you are paying for **ALPHABETICALLY** on this sheet.
- 2) List only the members you are paying for-DO NOT List PUFL's, Deceased or Paid up Transfers
- 3) List ALL ID#s (except new members-leave ID# blank)
- 4) Junior members that turn 18 on December 31, 2025 or before, must pay Senior dues for 2026 membership.

	Member ID#	Name as it appears on the National Roster (If there has been a recent name change please include both names.)	2026 Renewal		2026 New		Former/ rejoin	
		include both names.)		JR	SR	JR	SR	JR
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Total Sr's this page _____ Total Jr's this page _____

American Legion Sweepstakes Drawing July 12, 2025

	AMOUNT WON	WINNER	City / State	ID#	Group
1st Place	\$ 10,000.00	JANICE WACHTLER	CHICAGO	121830427	AUX
2nd Place	\$ 3,000.00	GLENN KRAEMER	ORLAND PARK	261009149	SAL
3rd Place	\$ 2,000.00	TONY SACCARO	ROCHESTER	261169773	SAL
4th Place	\$ 1,000.00	MICHAEL YEAGER	DES PLAINES	200424091	LEG
5th Place	\$ 500.00	BRETT MILLER	COLLINSVILLE	261261570	SAL
6th Place	\$ 300.00	RICHARD LANGREHR	RED BUD	200263681	LEG
7th Place	\$ 200.00	JANE WAGNER	BUCKLEY	121868419	AUX
8th Place	\$ 100.00	JAMES RICHARDS	LEESBURG, FL	202128051	LEG
9th Place	\$ 100.00	DAN WHELAN	GREEN VALLEY	260971889	SAL
10th Place	\$ 100.00	TOM LOGSDON	SAINT ELMO	203720532	LEG
11th Place	\$ 100.00	DANIEL PURDY	TRENTON	204674745	LEG
12th Place	\$ 100.00	ROBERT RADOSEVICH	COLLINSVILLE	202515010	LEG
13th Place	\$ 100.00	MARK STROUD, JR	HINSDALE	260897633	SAL
14th Place	\$ 100.00	MICHAEL KLEMPIN, JR	WEST FRANKFORT	201706555	LEG
15th Place	\$ 100.00	CHARLES FAGAN	PETERSBURG	203114517	LEG

Total \$ 17,800.00



2025-2026 DIRECTORY

Officers

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September 2025

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Dates to Remember

September 13-14 Fall Board Meeting/Joint Homecoming for Department Leadership

September 19 Rep and Dep Meeting—Department Office

September 21 Fall Forum—Rantoul, IL

September 27 Fall Forum—Lake Zurich, IL

October 4 Fall Forum—Franklin Park, IL

October 5 Fall Forum—Genoa, IL

October 11 Fall Forum—Hennepin, IL

October 12 Fall Forum—Springfield, IL

October 18 Fall Forum—Vermont, IL

October 19 Fall Forum—O'Fallon, IL

October 23-26 National President Pam Ray Homecoming, Springfield, IL

November 1 Fall Forum—Cullom, IL

November 21-23 Egyptian Past Commanders Club Jamboree - Carbondale, IL

January 15-24 American Legion Family Membership Caravan

January 30 Lincoln Pilgrimage Award Deadline

February 11-12 Abraham Lincoln Pilgrimage - Springfield, IL