



From the desk of the President, Renee Kohl...



What a whirlwind the last few months have been! Spring is blossoming, rain fills the air, flowers are bursting with color, and the daylight is finally beginning to stretch a little longer for us all. We could all use that extra dash of Vitamin D.

February was buzzing with activity—several Four Chaplains programs, Girls State Board meetings, a trip to the Ohio Statehouse to celebrate America 250 with 1st Vice Mindi and 2nd Vice Rebecca, and of course, a full belly after visiting Wendell L. Wilkie Unit 19 in Akron for their annual soup sale.

March brought even more celebrations. We gathered for the 13th District Legion Birthday Party, toured OVH and made a quick but meaningful visit to Valor Home in Akron. I had the honor of installing newly elected Junior Officers in the 14th District and celebrating our future young leaders at the Oratorical Contest at Legion Headquarters. Yet, the most unforgettable experience was participating in Honor Flight Mission 149.

12th District President Kim Mann and Junior member Aheva White were also on that flight. What an incredible journey—it was truly packed with memories that will last a lifetime. Tony, my veteran for the trip, is an 81-year-old Vietnam-era Navy veteran. I affectionately called him my “little rascal” throughout the day. His energy and zest for life are absolutely contagious—I only wish I had half of it!

Though we started the day tired at the airport, the energy shifted the moment we boarded. As we approached Washington, D.C., you could feel the excitement building. The first emotional moment came during the Water Cannon Salute—it brought tears to both Tony’s eyes and mine. He couldn’t believe all that fanfare was for him.

Seeing the monuments through the eyes of a veteran was deeply moving—the quiet moments, the joy, and above all, the pride. One of the most touching moments of the day was when I presented Tony with a Vietnam Challenge Coin. His reaction said it all—laughter, surprise, then tears, followed by a heartfelt hug and even a kiss on the cheek. He was truly overwhelmed. I could not have been more honored to be part of that moment.

When we returned to Columbus, Tony—my “rascal”—quickly became my “scoundrel,” stealing

Hugs from nearly every person who came to welcome the Veterans home, and yes, plenty of Kisses too! He was delightful.

A huge shoutout and an even bigger THANK YOU to Kim Mann for making this dream come true. Her hospitality is unmatched, she and her husband welcomed me with incredible food and a beautiful place to stay. “Thank you” hardly feels like enough. Kim, you are truly a blessing. Now that report deadlines have passed and awards remain under wraps, we look ahead to Summer conventions is just around the corner. Time has flown by faster than I can shake a stick!

I look forward to seeing you all soon at an upcoming event or summer convention.



A Membership minute with Mindi ...

Mindi Rue, First Vice President, Membership Chairman - mindil036@gmail.com

Striving for 100%: Strengthening Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Ohio

Membership is the heart of the American Legion Auxiliary, and nowhere is that more evident than in the dedicated efforts of the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Ohio. Each year, units across Ohio work tirelessly to grow their membership, retain current members, and continue their mission of service to veterans, military families, and communities.

Reaching 100% membership goal while maintaining 95% retention is an ambitious—but absolutely attainable—benchmark. It requires intentional outreach, meaningful engagement, and a strong sense of connection among members.

Membership is more than a number—it represents:

- Continued support for veterans and active-duty military
- Stronger community impact through programs and volunteerism
- Sustainability of local units and the organization as a whole

Retention reflects the health of an auxiliary unit. When members renew year after year, it signals that they feel valued, connected, and inspired.

Retention isn't accidental—it's intentional. Units that consistently achieve high retention:

- Maintain regular communication
- Show appreciation often
- Foster a welcoming, inclusive environment

A simple “we missed you” message can make all the difference.

The most effective recruitment tool is still a personal invitation. Encourage members to:

- Invite friends, family, and eligible individuals to join
- Share why they are passionate about the Auxiliary
- Follow up with potential members personally

A simple conversation can turn into a lifelong commitment.

Reaching 100% of your membership goal with 95% retention is more than a statistic—it’s a reflection of a thriving, engaged Auxiliary. By focusing on relationships, recognition, and relevance, Ohio units can continue to grow stronger each year.

Together, we honor service, support our veterans, and ensure the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary continues for generations to come.

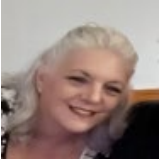


Rebecca Long, Chairman Second Vice President, Public Relations...

It looks like for the next couple of weeks I will be busy reading. Thank you to all the chairmen who sent in their Public Relations year end reports and press books. My mailman has been busy.

It is a joy to see the efforts that our Units have put into their communication with the members and their communities through flyers, newsletters and Facebook posts. Continue with this as we get started on the next year. Remember everything that you do from April 2026 – March 2027 will be included for next year.

Lots of opportunities are coming up in the next few months to showcase the American Legion Auxiliary. Are you distributing poppies? What are you doing for Memorial Day? This year is the semiquincentennial of the United States. Of course, that’s just the fancy way of saying America is celebrating its 250th anniversary. What are you doing to celebrate at your Unit? Take lots of pictures and get the word out on how the Auxiliary is honoring this milestone year. Think about having an open house to showcase our history as an organization.



Editor's Corner...

Well even though this is the 2nd edition of the Buckeye Messenger for the 2026 calendar year, we are coming to the end of the term for the existing officers. Each of them is doing an amazing job. This edition we will publish those candidates for Department office. Please read over their letters and consider attending Department Convention in Toledo on July 10th and 11th to vote for the new officers.

I am still receiving photos to place into the Buckeye Messenger, but without them being labeled, listing the persons in the photos and what the activity is representing, they mean nothing to all of the members across Ohio. We want to include all of the photos and the stories behind them. Please take a moment before hitting the send button and review. Please make sure to send all contributions to the Buckeye Messenger to buckeyemessenger@alaoh.org and louisesmerk@gmail.com.

Please make note of the Buckeye Messenger dates:

2026-2027 Schedule

August, September, October (due July 15) This issue will contain all year-end reports, I would appreciate all entries at the close of convention.

November, December, January (due October 15)

February, March, April (due January 15) Endorsements for District President issue

May, June, July (due April 15) Endorsements for Department Officers issue

I would now like to take personal privilege moment. We are an organization of amazing individuals. I know that we all have friendly competition between units within your district along with districts against districts when it comes time for submitting reports. We should be celebrating each other's accomplishments instead of instilling anything negative. Encourage each other to be successful. If you see someone doing something incorrectly, give them guidance to correct them. We all strive to make our organization the best that it can be

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

Desi Stoy,
Interim Department Secretary

Your Interim Department Secretary would like to thank all the chairmen and officers who have helped in any way to assist us in learning, repairing and improving our office communication and processes. As we continue to search for the perfect candidate to hire as a permanent Department Secretary, we appreciate your patience and assistance.

As you know, the Department Office is in the process of developing a new process to get the "Online Dues Credits" to Units effectively and timely. We are about to move into Phase II of our plan and will do a test of issuing AHC credits to 10 Units. Thank you to all Units who responded with their account information. Our plan is to issue ACH automatically every Quarter. From this date (4/21/26) on, each membership transmittal will need to have the correct dollar payment for dues processed. **NO CREDITS** will be charged against a

transmittal. The transmittal will not be processed if our office cannot reconcile your check amount to the number of members processed.

Per recent DEC action, Units who have opted out of the ACH direct deposit, checks can be written to Units but will be accessed a \$10 processing fee and no checks will be drafted for under \$10. Your credit will accumulate until the minimum is reached.

We anticipate this new process to be of benefit to both Units and our office as we strive to improve customer service, increase efficiency and accuracy.

Units may opt-in to ACH direct deposits at any time to avoid the processing fees.

Department Officer Candidates



Mindi M. Rue
Department of Ohio
First Vice President
P.O. Box 10
405 Seneca St.
Dupont, OH 45837
419-439-2950
mindi1036@gmail.com

Mindi Rue is official announcing her intent to run for the high office of Department of Ohio American Legion Auxiliary President for the 2026-2027 membership year.

Mindi is a 14-year member of Winnow-Arn Unit 541 in Continental, OH in Putnam Co. OH. She joined the American Legion Auxiliary under her late maternal grandfather, Legionnaire Paul Frederick Rau. She also honors the service of her paternal grandfather, Legionnaire Robert Diller, late step-grandfather Legionnaire, Kenneth Otto, and husband Legionnaire Jason Rue.

Mindi has served in multiple leadership roles in both the unit and district levels, including many chairmanships. At the Department level, Mindi has served as Department of Ohio Auxiliary Emergency Fund Chairman in 2020-2021, Department Education Chairman for 2022-2023, Department Leadership Chairman for 2023-2024, 2nd Vice President 2024-2025 and is currently serving as 1st Vice President for 2025-2026. Mindi also served on the National level as Office Manager for ALA Girls Nation 2021, Central Division Membership Chairman for 2022-2023, and National Vice Chairman Children & Youth 2023-2024.

Mindi is proudly endorsed by her unit, Winnow-Arn Unit 541 and is seeking endorsement from the Great First District at the summer convention May 30, 2026.



Rebecca Long – Candidate for 1st Vice President

This is to inform you of the intention of Rebecca Long to run for the Department of Ohio First Vice President for the 2026-2027 year.

Rebecca has received the endorsement of Clyde C Keltner Unit #518 and the Sixth District to run for this prestigious position.

Rebecca is a 40-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. She gains her eligibility through her father, Elmer C Long, who served in the Army during the Korean War.

Rebecca comes from a strong Legion family as her parents were Post Commander and Unit President in the early 1990s at Milon Edward Rardon Legion # 107 in Kirkersville, Ohio. Rebecca has served this past year as Department 2nd Vice President and is a charter member of Clyde C Keltner Unit #518 Ashley where she serves as Vice President. Rebecca has also held all leadership positions on the Unit level, District Community Service Chairman and four years as Sixth District President.

We ask for your consideration in electing Rebecca Long to the office on Department 1st Vice President for 2026-2027.

Respectfully Submitted,
Janet Piper, 6th District President
Ashely Unit #518 Unit Officers

Nancy Longbrake – Candidate for 2nd Vice President



Nancy is a 30-year member of the American Legion Auxiliary. She gains her eligibility through her husband, John R. Longbrake, who served in the Air during the Vietnam era. Nancy comes from a longtime member at her Post and Unit. My husband John was Commander and now is the First Commander at the

American Legion Post. Nancy served as President, Membership Chairman, and Treasurer for the past 13 years.

Nancy is a member in good standing of Broome-wood Unit 292 and is District President of the 5th District. Nancy has held several positions on the unit level, District President, Department Poppy Shop Director, and Department Chief Rep at Ohio Veteran's Home in Sandusky.

Nancy has received endorsement from the members of Broom-Wood Unit 292 To run for the prestigious position of 2nd Vice President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Ohio.

Roseanne Piquette – Candidate for 2nd Vice President

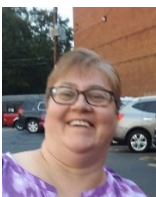


To Whom It May Concern:

At our monthly meeting held in November of 2025, it was unanimously voted that our unit Adams Township Unit 553 to endorse Roseanne Paquette as a candidate for Department Second Vice President for the 2026-2027 year.

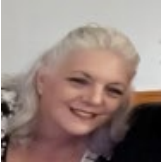
Sincerely,
Peggy Sherwood Hayes
Past President/President

Brenda Stottsberry – Candidate for 2nd Vice President



Brenda Stottsberry has been endorsed by her unit to run for the high office of 2nd Vice President for the Department of Ohio. Brenda is from unit 221 located in Massillon, OH from the 10th District. She looks forward to receiving her endorsement from her district at their summer convention which will be held shortly after this publication. Brenda has served many positions on the unit level and is currently serving as the 10th District President.

Brenda has full support from her unit and her husband Larry to achieve her goal of becoming the next 2nd Vice President.



Louise Smerk – Candidate for National Executive Chairman – 2-year term

Louise Smerk has been endorsed by her unit, Brook Park Unit 610 to run for the 2-year term as NEC for the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Ohio. Louise has just completed a 1-year term of the same position that she was automatically placed in as the outgoing Department President.

Louise is very passionate for the American Legion Auxiliary and all its programs. Louise will serve the organization to her fullest capacity.



Cindy Masowick – Candidate for National Executive Alternate Chairman – 2-year term

It's with great pleasure and honor, that we, members of the Streetsboro American Legion Auxiliary Unit 685 endorse Mrs. Steve (Cindy) Masowick for the office Alternate NEC.

Cindy has proven herself over the last 30 years in her Unit, District, Department and on the National level. Her eligibility is through her father, Lyle Wallace, United States Marine. Cindy has the endorsement of her husband Steve Masowick and her family.

Kathleen “Kat” Richardson
Streetsboro American Legion Unit 685 1st Vice

News from our Department Chairman

Buckeye Girls State – Gwen Schroeder-Zulch, Director

CLARIFICATION ITEMS FOR BUCKEYE GIRLS STATE

We have had several questions in regard to deadlines and other information for Buckeye Girls State. Here is a breakdown of the application process.

February 15, 2026 Request Applications “2026 Application Request Form”

April 1, 2026 Return Completed Applications with PAYMENT

“2026 BGS Application”

May 20, 2026 Reminder call to Delegates Ensure Delegate attendance

June 1, 2026 Make Replacements “2026 Replacement

Notification”

June 1, 2026 Unused Application Refund “2026 Application Refund Request”

June 3-6, 2026 Confirmation calls to Delegates Make sure they are going to attend

June 7-13, 2026 Buckeye Girls State Session Registration at McDonalds

Hall June 7th.

We ask that you do not send payment with the Application Request Form. All fees which also include the \$50.00 non-refundable fee are due with the Delegate and Alternate applications in which the deadline is April 1, 2026.

The Delegate and Alternate packets will be mailed out around the first of April to all Delegates and Alternates. These packets will include information for Buckeye Girls State and also forms (which includes medical and social media form) that need to be filled out and sent to Department Headquarters either by email (buckeyegirlsstate@alaohio.org) or by mail Department Of Ohio American Legion Auxiliary Buckeye Girls State—1100 Brandywine Blvd Bldg. D—Zanesville, Ohio 43701.

We are still in need of a few City Counselors and City Government Advisors (these positions require that you spend the week with us). If you are interested drop us an email and we will send you an application. We are also in need of registration volunteers for Sunday June 7, 2026, at 9:30am to help register the delegates.

Zoom orientations information for the delegates and alternates will be posted as soon as the schedule is set. The Delegates and Alternates registered will receive an email

with the instructions. This information will also be included in the Buckeye Messenger and Department Bulletins.

Leadership – Deb Meyer

I want to thank all those units who sent their leadership reports. There are always interesting ideas that are shared in the reports. Once I have put them all together, I will share those ideas at the Department Summer Convention.

As our auxiliary year winds down, we still have a few important events that need attending to. Very important is the unit’s election of officers and appointing chairmen for the coming year. It is even more important to have mentors in place to help the new officers and chairmen so there is a smooth transition into the next year. Working together as a team makes everything run more like a well-oiled machine. We all need to work at increasing our membership. Planning a special event and inviting eligible members would be one way to boost your membership. Make sure you have an inviting atmosphere for any new members. We need to also have mentors for those new members. One unit reported that the officers and chairmen of their unit meet with the new members to explain programs and give them a chance to ask questions. Make sure if acronyms are used, everyone knows what they represent.

One thing I saw in the reports, not a lot of units and/or members are using the ALA Academy. That is one place to direct new members. Better yet, do the courses together or as a group. We can all learn something from the programs.

Enjoy the spring, almost summer-like, weather. I hope to see many of you at the Department Summer Convention. Inviting new members or those who have never been to your District and the Department Summer Convention is one way for those members to see the whole picture of the Auxiliary. Introduce them to other members from across the Department and start the networking process. Let them see there is more to the Auxiliary than unit meetings.

Poppy – Vicki Monroe

We had a wonderful turnout for the Mid Winter Poppy Corsage and Poppy Usage contests. I am showing some of the amazing entries, but not all. Thanks to your donations and your purchases of the Poppy Pins, we were able to raise over \$1,500.00 for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. [Congratulations](#) to the top vote getters. For the Senior Corsage Contest, in First Place was Erin Finrock of Unit 178, In Second Place was Joyce Cheney Of Unit 85, and in Third Place was Darlene Hanneman of Unit 63. The Junior Poppy Corsage winner was Marie Heirmiller of Unit 63. For the Poppy Usage contest, in First Place was Serena Baker of Unit 587, in Second Place was Jane Brenneman of Unit 468, in Third Place was Darlene Hanneman of Unit 63, in Fourth Place was Patti Wilson of Unit 553 and in Fifth Place was Robyn Cooper of Unit 184. The Junior winner for the Poppy Usage contest was Marie Heirmiller of Unit 63. All of the participants did a wonderful job. I hope they inspired you to use your poppies in some very creative ways to help spread the Poppy Story.



V A & R – Deb Sutterlin, Chairman

Happy Spring, Everyone!

What a great time it is. I hope you have checked out the American Legion USA 250 Challenge. It is a great way to help our veterans. Sign up, donate \$30 to buy a T-Shirt with that donation going to the American Legion Veterans and Children Foundation. (Report it.) You get to pick any or all three area of the challenge, which is community service, mental wellness, and fitness. How about asking a veteran to walk with you (fitness), take a veteran to a meditation class (mental wellness), or community service hours can be assisting veterans.(Report it.) While in Washington, D.C. for legislative week, I saw the National Commander Dan Wiley sign an agreement with the America 250 Representative to be a National Resource Partner. The American Legion 250 Challenge ends July 4th. There is still time to sign up and participate. You can participate as a group or an individual.

Thank you everyone for all you have done during the 2025-2026 year. You are very important to our Veterans! Even though the reporting year has ended, we are starting another reporting year and need your continuing support.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said **"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."** And his other quote, **"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'** There are many articles that have been published about how healthy it is to volunteer. Won't you feel better and have a happier life by helping others?

I also want to share that I am most grateful and appreciative that I had the honor to represent Ohio ALA by being a representative at the Washington, D.C. legislative conference. I am not one to be a political person but I do support our Veterans. On Monday, I attended the Veterans Employment and Education meeting. Did you know that the Cleveland Playhouse sponsors a program to help Veterans through acting? On Tuesday, I met with Jim Jordan's assistant and David Joyce's assistant because the Representatives were in meetings. I will give more details at a later time.

May is National Military Appreciation Month and also the Month of the Military Caregiver. May 1 is Silver Star Banner Day - The Silver Star Flag and Banner signifies the symbol of honor for those who have been wounded or incur illness (mental and/or physical) during combat. May 8th is Military Spouse Day. May 16 is Armed Forces Day and May 25th is Memorial Day.

Time to sign off. Thank you, all of you, for reporting what you do for Veterans, Veterans' families, and their Caregivers! Have a great summer and see you at the Department /summer Convention.

News from our Districts

District 2



Minster Unit 387 hosted the District Two Spring Roundtable on March 1st. The members of the unit made red, white and blue gnomes as favors for the Roundtable. Pictured are Mary Stueve and Ruth Broohart hold the gnome. To the right are Diana Timmerman and Karen Timmerman working on their gnomes.



Minster Unit 387 made purple bows to put in the town flower pots along Fourth Street in honor of Military Children's Month. The picture was put on Facebook to encouraged community members to wear purple on April 15th on the community Facebook page. Betty Heitkamp put the purple bows in the flower pots

UNIT 178

Unit 178 Unit 178 in Van Wert, Oh has remained active in supporting both our veterans and our community over the past few months. In January, we focused on meeting community needs during the winter season by collecting hats, gloves, socks, jackets, and scarves. These items were donated to our local CERT team to help support families in need during the colder months. We collected 1 mens jacket, 10 blankets, 3 pr of adult socks, 6 kids hats, 24 kids hat & glove combos, pr of adult gloves, scarves, and 3 ear warmers. In February, our members made and collected Valentine's cards that were delivered to local nursing homes for our veterans. This small act of kindness brought smiles and reminded our veterans that they are not forgotten. Our Unit continues to host Bingo every Thursday evening at the Post (excluding the first Thursday of the month). This remains a great way for us to bring the community

together while supporting our programs. We are proud of the continued dedication of our members and look forward to many more opportunities to serve.

District 4

Marsha Giehls

4th District President

From the Fabulous 4th District. I hope everyone had a great holiday now that they are over the 2nd half of our year is in full swing. Congratulations to the 4th District Units that our goal so far and to those that are close keep sending that membership in. Unit Chairmen, remember, year-end reports are due on April 15, read your plans and make sure you send them to the correct place. There will be a round table on March 7th at Unit 194 in Mason to learn more about reporting. However, you can start working on them now, you do not have to wait until the reports are due. There is also an impact report due to your District President, me, in April. I know many Units did a lot during the 1st half of our year for our Veterans, and for those families that needed help during the holidays. Units do not forget to send in your donations to Department on the Donation form these donations go to support our programs. You do not have to wait until April to send this to Department. I want to thank all the Units and members who have donated items for our Veterans.

You should also have interviewed and selected your girls for Buckeye Girls State by now. All Buckeye Girls State Orientations will be online and are mandatory for your delegates, so remember to remind your delegates they should attend.

If your Unit has not paid your Bonding fees, please get this done, they were due on December 31. Also look for the Unit Data Form, which needs to be filled out and sent back so that your next year's membership renewal notices will have the correct information on them.

Remember to send in your pictures for the Buckeye Messenger so that everyone can see what is going on in the 4th District. The email to send your pictures to is buckeyemessenger@alaohio.org.

District 13

Cindy Boehnlein – President

At the time of this message our units were wrapping up their reports, making their last minute poppy fund donations and preparing for elections. We are happy to announce that we too have a candidate for the office of district president, Allison Nye of Unit 421.

Brecksville Unit 196's hard work with the Americanism and Government test paid off. They had a 12th grade winner, Madelyn Manley of Brecksville-Broadview Heights HS. She also was selected to participate in the America 250 History test in Columbus! And let it be known that as of this report they are also our most over goal in membership.

The District had the annual dinner for the 107th American Legion Birthday on March 7, 2026. It was held at Post 421 in Fairview Park. 105 Legionnaires and Auxiliary members from around the district were registered. Our guests of honor were Dept. Cmdr. Stan Oren and Ruth, Dept. President Renee Kohl and guest Dept. Chaplain Michele Sandridge, Dept. Squadron Cmdr. Jeff Vrabel Jr., Distr. Cmdr. James Lockyer, and Dept. SAL 2nd Vice Adam Budner (also Distr. 13 SAL Cmdr.). The Guest Speaker was Kimberly Ocampo, a paraplegic that participates in the Advanced Platform Technology Center estim trials at the Cleveland Louis Stokes VAMC.

The therapists apply electrical stim pads over the major muscle groups to elicit a functional reaction of Kimberly's lower extremities. She has been able to do exercises on an ERG machine (rowing), and the data has enabled the researchers to pinpoint where a surgical implant goes for our veterans with spinal cord injuries. This fantastic lady also did 2 wheelchair dances with her able bodied partner, Abraham Klein. A waltz and a salsa were performed with gusto. They wowed the crowd.

And what is a birthday party without presents. We had 7 great prizes that were raffled off to veterans only. Every Legionnaire also received a military duck for their branch of service, and all guests received chocolate covered strawberries handmade by Unit 196 member Rhonda Janowski.

The next event planned was Unit 610 as the host site for the May 16th VA Women's Baby Shower. Since they have 2 halls it is more conducive to a family theme. The Parma CBOC did not have room for partners or children to attend. The VA still organizes the shower, and this is the first time they have outsourced the event.

May 16th is also the commissioning of the USS Cleveland. This is the first time in 250 years that a Navy warship has ever been commissioned here in our lakefront city! Go to usscleveland.org for details of the public events from May 9th through the 18th.

Good luck to all of our units with the reporting process. District 13 is indeed "Thrilling". See everyone at Department Convention.



Members of the 13th District attending their April, 2026 district meeting at Brecksville Unit 196.



District 14

American Legion Auxiliary Clare Eggleston Unit 803

Here are photos of several Unit members attended: President Becky Sharp, Jane Spencer, Pat Katrine. Sargent of Arms MaryAnn Podboy, Karyn Brown, Chaplain Sue Kray, Secretary Alice Dockus, Kent State Airforce ROTC



Photos from March 9, 2026, Post 803 flag raising ceremony for Bill Haley former Treasurer

