



*American Legion Auxiliary
Department of Oklahoma*

*2017-2018 Children & Youth
Plan of Action*

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2017-2022 American Legion Auxiliary Programs Action Plan

Children & Youth

The Children & Youth program emphasizes protecting, caring for and supporting children and youth, particularly those of veterans' and military families.

Committee Contact Information

children&youth@ALAforVeterans.org

What can you do?

1. Support Children and Youth in your community.

- **“Star Spangled Kids”:** This is an ALA program to educate children and youth on the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism and the U.S. Constitution.
- **Youth Hero Awards/Good Deed Awards:** This is a way the ALA can recognize youth in our communities who demonstrate good citizenship, either through a brave physical act or a good deed.
- **Josh dogs:** An American Legion Family alliance, GI Josh is a plush dog and accompanying storybook used to help ease separation fears for the military children.
- **April is The American Legion’s Children and Youth Month**

Ideas:

Member

- Offer to make a “Star Spangled” presentation to your local schools. Invite post members to help students learn how their military service was meaningful in defending the U.S. Constitution.
 - Refer to the Star Spangled Kids how to sheet at the end of this program plan for more information.
- Contact local high schools to invite them to encourage their students to use their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution by participating in The American Legion Oratorical Contest.
 - Refer to www.legion.org for information on the Oratorical Contest.
- Monitor newspapers, TV and neighborhoods for children and youth who have performed a heroic act of physical valor, such as performing CPR, helping evacuate in the event of a fire, calling 911 for an emergency, etc. Work with your unit to nominate them for a Youth Hero/Good Deed Award.
- Contact local schools, churches and youth groups to make them aware of the Youth Hero/Good Deed Awards. Make sure to leave unit contact information.
- Identify children in your community who may be or are facing hospitalization for the first time and who may benefit from a Josh and friends dog and book.

Unit

- Create a Unit Citizenship Award for children and youth who have learned the ideals of the U.S. Constitution.
- Share a constitutional fact each month in the unit newsletter, the newspaper editorial and/or on social media.
- September 17 is Constitution Day (Citizenship Day). Host a party that revolves

- around the U.S. Constitution for children.
- Print and distribute pocket constitutions to schoolchildren.
 - Refer to the Star Spangled Kids how to sheet at the end of this program Plan for more information.
- Once a child has been identified as a Youth Hero/Good Deed applicant, complete the nomination form. See the Youth Hero/Good Deed nomination form at the end of this program Plan to submit the name of the child. Have the form signed by two unit members, and then submit the form to your department secretary.
- When a Youth Hero/Good Deed award has been processed by national headquarters, contact local media, community school leaders and the child's parents, and plan for a public presentation of the award.
- Plan a special celebration of children during the month of April in honor of Children and Youth Month.

Department

- Share a constitutional fact each month in the department bulletin.
- Offer incentives to units for starting a "Star Spangled Kids" activity.
 - Refer to the Star Spangled Kids how to sheet at the end of this program Plan for more information.
- Support the Children and Youth programs of The American Legion by providing information to units and distributing TAL pamphlets, coloring books, comic books and other information found on www.Legion.org and through Emblem Sales.

2. Support military children and youth

- Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2): This is a recognition program for military children who experience extended separation from their military parent or parents.
- GI Josh: An American Legion Family alliance, GI Josh is a plush dog and accompanying storybook used to help ease separation fears for the military children.
- April is the Month of the Military Child

Ideas:

Member

- Volunteer at a Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) camp program.
- Volunteer at a Family Readiness Group event where KDH2 "I'm a Hero 2" buttons/stickers can be distributed.
- Give a GI Josh to the child of a deployed servicemember.
- Wear purple on April 15 in honor of Purple Up! for Military Kids day.

Unit

- Host a dinner, game night, community fair, etc. that will bring military and non-military families together.
- Host a KDH2 celebration with recognition buttons/stickers to let military kids know we appreciate their sacrifices.
 - Refer to the how to sheet at the end of this program Plan for more information.
- Support G.I. Josh – Identify military children who may have a parent or sibling deploying.
- Plan a special celebration of military children during April in honor of the Month of the Military Child.
- Encourage members to wear purple on Purple Up! for Military Kids day (April 15).

Department

- Promote the KDH2 program
- Collaborate with ALA Girls State by recognizing citizens who are the daughters of servicemembers with “I’m a Hero 2” buttons or stickers.
- Team up with other community groups that are also concerned with the special needs of military children (i.e. Give an Hour, Military Parents, Guard/Reserve Family Readiness Group representatives, etc.).
- Plan a special celebration of military children during April in honor of the Month of the Military Child.
- Encourage members to wear purple on April 15 in honor of Purple Up! for Military Kids day.

3. Support veterans’ children and youth.

- Some of our homeless veterans also have children living on the streets with them.
- *Klinger, a Story of Honor and Hope* – Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is affiliated with the American Legion Family

Ideas:

Member

- Contact your local churches, homeless shelters and food pantries to identify homeless veterans’ children. Ask what their specific needs are, and offer them your services as an ALA member.
- Contact your local news sources (newspaper, community television, community websites and social media accounts) and town council. Offer to give a presentation about you and your unit’s work for homeless veterans and their children.
- Contact your voluntary services representatives at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Offer to work with them to help meet the needs of children of homeless veterans who come to the VAMC.
- Contact local schools to access their need for supplies and extra clothes for homeless children. Offer to supply items as needed.
- Volunteer at a TAPS camp program.

Unit

- Train members to be a resource for front-line agencies who receive requests for help.
- Contact local schools to assess their need for supplies and extra clothes for homeless children. Offer to supply items as needed.
- Contact your post service officer to offer help with the needs of children of veterans who need financial help. (The American Legion - Temporary Financial Assistance)
- Help raise awareness for the needs of homeless children in your community by sharing unit activities on the unit website, social media pages and newsletters.
- Purchase the book, *Klinger, a Story of Honor and Hope*, from TAPS with the companion plush horse for children who are grieving the loss of a military parent or loved one.

Department

- Team up with other community groups that are also concerned with the special needs of veteran’s children. (i.e. TAPS)
- Share information and ideas, including activities units are providing, on the department’s website, social media pages and newsletters to help children of veterans.

Children & Youth Reporting*

Mid-Year Reports

Mid-Year reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and are intended as an opportunity for mid-year correction. Each department Children & Youth chairman is required to submit a narrative report to the division Children & Youth chairman, plus copy the national Children & Youth chairman.

Annual Reports

Annual reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and may result in a national award for participants if award requirements are met. Each department Children & Youth chairman is required to submit a narrative report to the division Children & Youth chairman, plus copy the national Children & Youth chairman. Members and units should follow their department's protocol and deadlines.

**For deadlines and contact information, please consult the Annual Supplement to the 2017-2022 Programs Action Plan or visit the Children & Youth Committee page on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org.*

As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions:

1. How did your units and department promote "Star Spangled Kids," educating children and youth about the U.S. Constitution from the aspect of patriotism and Americanism?
2. How did your units and department promote the Youth Hero/Good Deed Award?
3. What success stories do you have regarding support for military or homeless veterans' children?

Children & Youth Awards Deadlines and Submission Requirements:

Taking the time to share a favorite story about the positive impact you or someone you know has had on our mission is worth doing! It helps us tell the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Just three simple steps to add your part to our national success story:

- 1) Please follow instructions as you fill out the National Report and Awards Cover Sheet found in the awards section of the Programs Action Plan.
- 2) Provide details/examples about the activity as outlined in the award's materials and guidelines section.
- 3) Submit as indicated in the Annual Supplement to the Programs Action Plan.

National Report and Awards Cover Sheet, deadlines, and Children & Youth committee contact information may be found on the Children & Youth committee page on the national website, www.ALAforVeterans.org.

A. Award: Youth Hero

- Award: Youth Hero Medal and Citation
- Presented to: Youth under 18 years of age who have performed heroic acts of physical valor; membership in The American Legion Family is not required

- **Materials and guidelines:**
 - Complete the Youth Hero and Good Deed Award Nomination Form and mail to your department secretary, who certifies, then mails the application to National Headquarters. (Please, **do not** mail applications directly to National Headquarters.)
 - The award certificate, signed by the national president and national Children & Youth chairman, and Youth Hero Award medal will be returned to the unit or department to be presented on behalf of the National organization.
 - The department Children & Youth chairman should be notified of the award.
- B. Award: Good Deed**
- Award: Citation
 - Presented to: Youth under 18 years of age who have performed specific good deeds and are great examples of community service in action; membership in The American Legion Family is not required
 - **Materials and guidelines:**
 - Complete the Youth Hero and Good Deed Award Nomination Form and mail to your department secretary, who certifies, then mails the application to National Headquarters. (Please, **do not** mail applications directly to National Headquarters.)
 - The award certificate, signed by the national president and national Children & Youth chairman, will be returned to the unit or department to be presented on behalf of the National organization.
 - The department Children & Youth chairman should be notified of the award.
- C. Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Children & Youth Program**
- Award: Citation Plaque
 - Presented to: One unit in each division (5)
 - **Materials and guidelines:**
 - Narrative not to exceed 1,000 words. Include specific examples of how your unit worked the Children & Youth program, including supporting military children and the Star Spangled Kids program.
 - May include pictures, news articles, news releases, etc.
- D. Department Award: Best Department Children & Youth Program**
- Award: Citation
 - Presented to: One department in each division (5)
 - **Materials and guidelines:**
 - Narrative not to exceed 1,000 words. Include specific examples of how your department worked the Children & Youth program, including supporting military children and the Star Spangled Kids program.
 - May include pictures, news articles, news releases, etc.

How To Sheets

- How to Promote “Star Spangled Kids”
- How to Conduct a “Kids of Deployed Are Heroes 2” Program
- How to Reach Out to Military Children and Youth

Additional Resources You Can Use

1. “I’m a Hero 2” stickers template and instructions can be found on the Children & Youth program page at www.ALAforVeterans.org.
2. Your national Children & Youth committee members (see Children & Youth program page on the national website or Annual Supplement for contact information.)
3. The national Children & Youth Committee Facebook group, search “ALA Children and Youth”
4. The American Legion Children & Youth programs: www.legion.org/programs
5. The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation: www.legion.org/cwf
6. Josh and Friends (American Legion Family alliance): www.joshandfriends.com
7. Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (an American Legion Child Welfare Foundation grant recipient for *Klinger*): www.taps.org



HOW TO PROMOTE "STAR SPANGLED KIDS"

Committee:
Children & Youth

Contact Information for Questions:
Children&Youth@ALAforVeterans.org

Star Spangled Kids: Educate children and youth on the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism and the U.S. Constitution.

- In conjunction with local schools, create a Unit Citizenship Award for children and youth who have demonstrated the ideals of the U.S. Constitution.
- Team with the Education chairman to bring veterans or servicemembers into the classroom to talk about what their service means to defending the ideals of the Constitution.
- Share "Fascinating Facts about the U.S. Constitution" each month in the department or unit bulletin, in tweets, or in a newspaper editorial.
- List important constitutional dates by chronological order or by month.
- Encourage students to test their knowledge of the Constitution.
- Distribute patriotic coloring book pages for children in primary grades.
- Celebrate Constitution Day (also known as Citizenship Day) on September 17, the day set aside each year to commemorate the signing of the U.S. Constitution.
 - Celebrate at September's Junior meeting with a cake or cupcakes.
 - Let Juniors report on different sections of the Bill of Rights
- Print and distribute pocket copies of the U.S. Constitution for school children and/or Juniors.
- Put on a skit or musical about the Constitution and the signers.
- Hold a scavenger hunt in the post where children find information relating to the Constitution.
- Have members dress up as signers of the Constitution and describe the role of their character in the writing and signing of the Constitution.
- Encourage high school-aged students to use their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution by participating in The American Legion Oratorical Contest.

Resources:

- www.constitutionfacts.com
- Constitution Day Resources:
<http://ca3rsproject.org/pages/ConstitutionDayResources.html>



HOW TO CONDUCT A "KIDS OF DEPLOYED ARE HEROES 2" PROGRAM

Committee:
Children & Youth

Contact Information for Questions:
Children&Youth@ALAforVeterans.org

Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2): honoring military children who may experience a separation from one or both parents, whether deploying to a war zone, having a short tour or extended TDY (temporary duty assignment).

1. Make preparations for a supply of "recognition buttons" for distribution. Visit the Children & Youth page of the Members Only section at www.ALAforVeterans.org for more information. Buttons may be ordered through a commercial vendor or made locally with the following content:
 - I'm a Hero 2.
 - Proud Parent of a Military Child with a picture.
 - Proud Grandparent of a Military Child with a picture.
2. Call a planning meeting: include the Legion Family, especially Junior members. Consider the following ideas to recognize military kids:
 - Make or purchase and distribute 'I'm a Hero 2' buttons.
 - Make or purchase and distribute 'Proud Parent/Grandparent of a Military Child' with picture button.
 - Can't afford buttons? Make or purchase and distribute stickers.
3. Decide the best location for recognition of military kids:
 - Coordinate with Family Readiness Groups for button distribution during family days.
 - Coordinate with Legion Family members for local community days/fairs etc.
 - Consider having an activity day/dinner for military families at your post home.
 - If your unit is in close vicinity to a military installation, contact Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) for a listing of activities in which you might have a concession or table.
 - Make buttons available for ALA Girls State and The American Legion Boys State programs and Junior members.
 - Consider suggestions from Junior members for school activities and locations.

No matter what you decide to do, plan a public relations campaign around your event. Consider having Auxiliary membership applications available. Community events provide the best opportunity to sign up new members.



HOW TO REACH OUT TO MILITARY CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Committee:
Children & Youth

Contact Information for Questions:
children&youth@ALAforVeterans.org

Some ideas for reaching out to military children and youth:

1. Sponsor a "You're My Hero" event, similar to the Youth Hero Award, but for military children.
 - Present them with certificates and medals.
 - Be creative.
 - Ask your Junior members to participate.
 - Use your public relations tools to inform the community. Refer to the Public Relations Toolkit at www.ALAforVeterans.org.
2. Host a movie and popcorn night for teens or a board game night.
3. Many military kids can't afford new prom dresses. Get the community involved in collecting and distributing gently used prom dresses.
 - Ask local radio stations and newspapers to donate time and space to help advertise your initiative.
 - Get local bridal shops involved.
 - Involve your high school counselors.
 - Your unit may also want to help with transportation expenses, flowers, etc.
4. Contact your local homeless shelter. Ask if there are any veterans there with children.
 - Since one in five homeless are veterans, there is a good chance they will be living in local shelters. Find out what your unit can do to help the children.
 - VA hospitals have homeless coordinators and/or directors of voluntary services. Meet with them to establish a method in which the coordinator/director will coordinate with your unit whenever a homeless veteran with children is identified. Offer to provide school supplies for the child, through the homeless coordinator or director of voluntary services.
5. Maybe the best thing you can do is get your Legion Family together and brainstorm ideas that might work in your community. Sometimes, school-aged children might be your best link to finding military children in your community. Be creative.

No matter what you decide to do, plan a public relations campaign around your event. Consider having Auxiliary membership applications available. Community events provide the best opportunity to sign up new members.



American Legion Auxiliary

Youth Hero and Good Deed Award Nomination Form

NAME OF YOUTH _____
First Middle Initial Last

Youth's date of birth ____ / ____ / ____ Age ____ Male Female

Date _____ Submitted by Unit # _____ Dept. of _____

Description of bravery and/or deed performed by youth (to be completed by unit)

- **Good Deed Award** – Youth should demonstrate leadership role in community service, specific deed should be present
- **Youth Hero Award** - Youth should demonstrate a physical act of valor

Please attach news clippings or include website to verify the deed being recognized.

UNIT CERTIFICATION (MUST BE CERTIFIED BY TWO UNIT MEMBERS)

Unit Member _____ Date _____

Unit Member _____ Date _____

Units should send completed applications to their department secretary.

DEPARTMENT SECRETARY CERTIFICATION

Name _____ Date: _____

Department secretary mails nomination to National Headquarters, 8945 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46260. Awards will be shipped at no cost to unit or department.

Please ship to:

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please use this form for all Youth Hero and Good Deed Award nominations. For more information, contact National Headquarters at children&youth@ALAforVeterans.org or (317) 569-4500.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY	
Date received _____	Date shipped _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Hero Award <input type="checkbox"/> Good Deed Award	By _____