

Dear ALA Leaders,

May was another productive month as we continued preparing for National Convention, supporting leadership development, and building momentum around National Poppy Day activities. The team at NHQ remained focused on member engagement, operational improvements, and preparing incoming leaders for the year ahead.

One of the biggest highlights this month was the tremendous response to National Poppy Day activities across the country. From the inaugural National Poppy Day Virtual 5K to strong engagement across social media and local events, members found meaningful and creative ways to honor veterans while increasing awareness of the Poppy program in their communities. The strong participation surrounding National Poppy Day reflects both the continued importance of the Poppy program and the passion our members continue to bring to it every year.

May also allowed us to continue investing in leadership development through the Department Leadership National Conference. Incoming department leaders gathered in Indianapolis to build connections, strengthen leadership skills, and prepare for the year ahead. Feedback from attendees was very positive and reinforced the value of bringing leaders together to collaborate, learn, and share ideas.

At the same time, staff continued advancing communications initiatives, preparing FY27 budgets and operational priorities, supporting member benefit partnerships, and coordinating preparations for National Convention and summer programs.

Below are May's highlights and updates across the divisions.

Highlights

- National Poppy Day engagement reaches new levels: The inaugural National Poppy Day Virtual 5K drew 748 participants nationwide, while National Poppy Day content generated some of the organization's strongest digital engagement of the year.
- Leadership development remains a priority: Evaluations from the Department Leadership National Conference reflected strong overall satisfaction, with attendees highlighting governance, parliamentary procedure, membership, and role-specific training as especially valuable.
- Scholarship impact continues: A total of 53 scholarships totaling \$153,000 were awarded during the 2025–2026 administrative year in support of students and youth leaders connected to the Auxiliary mission.

- Communications growth continues across platforms: Social media engagement, website traffic, and video watch time all continued to increase, including significant growth in engagement surrounding National Poppy Day and ALA Girls Nation content.
 - Operational modernization efforts advance: Finance and operations staff continued work on automation and paperless approval systems designed to improve efficiency, streamline workflows, and strengthen long-term operational effectiveness.
 - Staff leadership updates: Director of Finance Gary Ward will retire following National Convention. To help ensure a smooth transition, Susan Mattox has been hired as the next Director of Finance and will work closely with Gary in the months ahead as he prepares for retirement.
 - Reminder: Convention authorizations have gone out. Contact Meetings@ALAforVeterans.org for questions. You can find general convention information [here](#).
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Programs

National Poppy Day Engagement

The inaugural National Poppy Day Virtual 5K was a tremendous success, bringing together participants from across the nation in a shared show of remembrance and support. With 748 registrants, the event expanded awareness of National Poppy Day, engaged communities coast to coast, and demonstrated the ability of virtual participation opportunities to unite individuals in honoring veterans and their sacrifices.

Military Family Support & Partnerships

ALA staff attended the 10th Annual Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Career Summit alongside staff from The American Legion's Washington, D.C., office. The summit provided opportunities to engage with leaders and advocates focused on military spouse employment and career development, while also identifying partnership opportunities that support the Auxiliary's ongoing commitment to military families.

Programs Division staff also met with representatives from The American Legion Boys Nation program to coordinate planning for the upcoming July session and strengthen collaboration between the organizations.

Scholarship Statistics (2025–2026)

- 53 scholarships awarded totaling \$153,000
- 28 scholarships not awarded totaling \$28,000

Breakdown:

- 15 Children of Warriors National President scholarships awarded
- 10 Member Loyalty scholarships awarded
- 5 Non-Traditional scholarships awarded
- 23 Spirit of Youth scholarships awarded

Program Activity

- 9 Good Deed Awards and 13 Youth Hero Awards distributed
- 242 Junior Patch Program patches awarded
- 4 Spirit of Youth patches awarded totaling \$205 in donations
- 12 Children of Warriors National President patches awarded totaling \$590 in donations
- 1 VAVS certification form processed
- 14 hour bars awarded representing 3,350 hours of service

Q3 Committee Meetings Final Statistics

- 17 meetings held
 - 761 registered
 - 656 attended
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Membership

Leadership development remained a key focus for the Membership Division throughout May.

A total of 28 department membership chairs attended the Department Leadership National Conference, where the 2027 membership year was introduced, including department membership goals, awards, and updated roles and responsibilities.

The 2026 National Membership Committee also held its third quarterly meeting with 45 attendees participating.

A final renewal reminder email campaign was distributed May 19 to members who had not yet renewed for 2026.

Renewal Email Metrics

- 28,989 emails sent
- 28,622 delivered (98.7%)
- 6,365 opens (22.2%)
- 367 bounces (1.3%)

Additional Metrics

- Phone renewals: 320 processed
 - Unit growth: 4 units chartered or rechartered in May (47 YTD)
 - Paid Up For Life: 12 applications processed
 - ALAMIS: 84 users set up
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Department Leadership National Conference

Evaluations from the 2026 Department Leadership National Conference reflected strong overall satisfaction and engagement from attendees.

Participants highlighted governance, parliamentary procedure, membership, and role-specific breakout sessions among the most valuable aspects of the conference, along with the opportunity to connect with fellow leaders from across the organization. The conference received an overall recommendation score of 85 out of 100.

Feedback gathered from attendees will help guide future conference planning and continued improvements in leadership development programming.

Development

Member Benefits & Partnerships

Development staff continued managing active member benefit partnerships and related contract discussions involving Consumer Cellular, AMBA, Wellcare, and Wyndham Hotels.

These efforts included contract reviews, revenue reporting, compliance coordination, and member communications support designed to strengthen benefit offerings and support long-term sustainability.

Closing Note

May's progress reflects the continued commitment of our staff, volunteers, and department leaders as we prepare for the upcoming National Convention and the transition into the next administrative year.

From strong engagement surrounding National Poppy Day to continued leadership development efforts and growing communications reach, the organization continues building momentum while we strengthen the long-term future of the Auxiliary.

Thank you for your continued leadership, guidance, and partnership. The work highlighted throughout this report reflects the combined efforts of members, departments, and National Headquarters staff working together to advance the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions, comments, or feedback.

Ben Hendricks

Executive Director

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