

DAV Auxiliary Headquarters News

3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076 | January 2020



Quota Achieved!

Congratulations to the following State Departments for making 2019-2020 Quota!

Indiana
Louisiana
Minnesota

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From the Desk of National Commander Diane Franz

We have a new year and new beginnings for all of us to embrace new ideas and changes. Some of the changes are for the purpose for our mission—service to ill and injured veterans and their families. They come first and foremost in our volunteer work. We joined our Auxiliary to fulfill the needs of those who have served and gave so freely to secure the freedom we cherish and their families that endured the absence of their loved ones. Some of the families need respite from the ongoing selflessness of caring for their homebound Veterans. Some spouses spend countless days and hours sitting with them in our Community Living Centers because they don't want them to be alone all day. Offer to sit with the resident and keep them company while the spouse can enjoy an hour or two doing something that they have not had the time or felt they did not want them to be alone.



We cannot grow if we do not cultivate new ideas, new members, and our juniors. Just like a garden, if it isn't tended to it will no longer produce new growth and will wither away. It is sometimes difficult to adjust to changes, but to keep our mission promises, we must adjust and welcome changes. United we can fulfill the promises.

May you all have a productive, healthy, and blessed New Year.

Community Service by Linda Gerke, National Chairman

The recent change to the Community Service Program has prompted some requests for clarification. Our organization's chartered purpose can be found on Page N-1 of the national constitution and bylaws and describes a commitment to serving disabled veterans and their families.

The change essentially discontinues the practice of sponsoring or engaging in general community service projects in the name of the organization that provide no direct benefit to veterans and their families. Our members are kind and compassionate with a natural instinct for volunteer efforts across a broad spectrum and while there are many worthy community projects, our focus must be service to veterans and their families. Volunteerism in projects outside the scope of the organization are generous and selfless acts, but are not reportable as DAV Auxiliary community service.

Some have asked whether the Community Service Program includes efforts benefiting all veterans as well as active military. The answer is Yes. We are here to serve the veteran and military community as we have always been.

U.S. military personnel are deployed in approximately 150 countries across the globe, most of whom have families that have settled into new communities without the support of local family and friends. This is an opportunity for DAV Auxiliary units to offer community service and assist with child care, errands, meal preparation, or as a resource to aid the family during their transition.

Whether collecting food, coats, hats, or gloves, there is always a substantial need to support veteran families in our communities. Strive to develop community projects that fulfill the purpose of our organization. As units continue to explore opportunities, remember to keep our mission statement at the forefront of your mind – **"Making a difference in the lives of disabled veterans and their families."**

Junior Member Spotlight

There's no doubt about it.....our Junior members are A-mazing! And, that can certainly be said for the junior members of DAV Auxiliary Unit #56, Wise, Virginia.

Mason Mellon has a deep respect for our nation's military and veterans. Among his many talents, he visits veterans in local veterans' hospitals and nursing homes. Not only does he visit with the veterans, he is genuinely interested in making their day a little better by reading to them, playing games with them, and even bringing pets along to provide for comfort and smiles.

His efforts in showing his appreciation of veterans expand beyond visits and includes lawn mowing, leaf raking, gardening, delivering meals to homeless veterans and shut-ins. He places flags on the graves of our fallen heroes. And this young man is playing an active role as a veterans advocate and has met with legislators to express his concern for bills affecting veterans and their families.

Mason's mother, Donna Mellon, is very proud of her son. "Mason maintains a deep sense of integrity, honor, respect, leadership, and patriotism with unlimited love for all veterans." As a middle school student, he also has a passion for acting and music.

This Virginia DAV Auxiliary unit also has another Junior member awarded the National Outstanding Junior Member Award in her age category at the DAV Auxiliary's 2019 national convention. Young Abigail Sturgill's mother says that before she learned to read, Abi was thanking veterans for their service. As she has grown, so has her respect and appreciation for our nation's veterans. On Veterans Day, she handed out appreciation cards, flags, and – most importantly – a big smile and lots of hugs at a local nursing home. During her visits, she can be seen holding the hand of a veteran, helping them color, playing games, watching movies with them and bringing a ray of sunshine into their lives.

She has participated in numerous programs and ceremonies, including singing at her school's Veterans Day program. Not only has she witnessed ceremonial flag retirements, she has been fortunate to participate in several and understand the solemnity and respect it deserves.

Abigail says, "Veterans are great people and everybody should thank all Veterans because they have done amazing things for the USA. It's safe to say that Abigail's favorite veterans are her grandfathers, Randy Sturgill, and Larry Rowe.

Thank you to the parents of these A-mazing children for instilling the importance of volunteerism and respect for others. Thank you to the Auxiliary leaders for supporting and mentoring these future leaders!

It is no wonder that Mason Mellon and Abigail Sturgill were awarded the National Outstanding Junior Member Awards in their respective age categories at the DAV Auxiliary's 2019 national convention.



Pictured: DAVA Unit #56 Commander Robert Wampler, Abigail Sturgill, Mason Mellon, and DAVA Virginia State Commander Michelle Goings.



Pictured: Mason Mellon, singer of the national anthem at the DAV/DAVA Fall Conference.



Share Your News! Send photos of your DAV Auxiliary juniors in action to dava@dav.org. Please include a description of the activity and the names of the individuals in the pictures.

"The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow."
-Nelson Mandela

Legislative by Julie Weissman-Steinbaugh, National Legislative Chairman

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Next month, DAV and Auxiliary members will have the opportunity to speak to legislators about issues affecting disabled veterans and their families. Face-to-face meetings with legislators allows us to use personal experiences to show why a specific piece of legislation is so important. It is best to make an appointment in advance and state the purpose of your visit.

If you are not able to visit DC, you can visit your legislators' local offices. Most officials have links you can use to make appointments online through their websites. You don't have to go alone. A group of Unit and Chapter members can join together to ask for support of disabled veterans and their families. It is a good idea to bring a written outline of the key points you want to express. This is important, since there's only a limited amount of time you get to spend. Speak sincerely and from the heart, and always make sure to thank your legislator, both in person and with follow-up written correspondence.

To paraphrase Dr. King's words, the day DAV and DAV Auxiliary members stop advocating for our needs, is the day our country reneges on its promises to the brave men and women who served. We can not let that happen!

The End of the Survivor's SBP/DIC Offset

On Tuesday, December 17, the United States Senate passed the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) with a vote of 86-8. This measure contains a provision that will completely eliminate the Survivor Benefit Plan/Dependency Indemnity Compensation (SBP/DIC) offset by January 2023. The bill now goes to the White House where the President is expected to sign it into law.

Currently, purchased SBP annuities are offset by the amount of any benefit payable under the VA DIC program. SBP is not a government gratuity benefit; rather, it is a type of insurance purchased out-of-pocket by military retirees for their survivors while DIC is a VA benefit intended to provide spouses of veterans who died from a service connected condition some semblance of financial security.

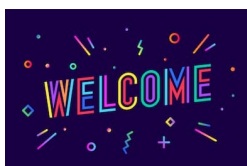
Upon the retiree's death, the SBP annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries; however, if a surviving spouse is also entitled to DIC, the SBP benefit is reduced by the amount of the DIC benefit. When DIC benefits are payable but the monthly rate is equal to, or greater than, the monthly SBP payment amount, beneficiaries lose the entire SBP payment. Thousands of survivors of military retirees are adversely affected by this unfair offset between SBP and DIC benefits.

The bill will remove the offset incrementally by one-third in January 2021, a second third in January 2022, and the final third in January 2023, thereby allowing surviving spouses to receive both the purchased SBP annuities and their earned DIC benefits. The law will not be retroactive—therefore, recoupment of offsets from previous years will not be provided.

DAV and DAV Auxiliary have worked for years to achieve this outcome, which is in accordance with a long-standing DAV Resolution (No. 010), calling for Congress to repeal the unfair offset between SBP annuities and DIC payments.

We are extremely pleased that Congress has finally passed legislation that will remove this unjust offset and we look forward to the President signing this provision into law. Thanks to your persistence and strong advocacy efforts over the years the unfair practice of SBP/DIC offsets will finally be abolished!

We greatly appreciate your continued dedication and support of America's disabled veterans, their families

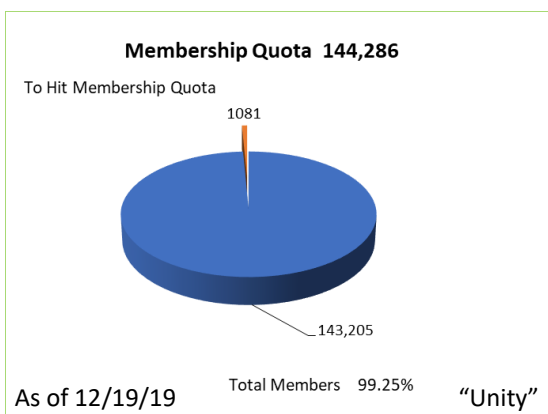


New Auxiliary Units!

Port St. Lucie #113
Port St. Lucie, Florida
Chartered Dec. 16, 2019

Westover #11
Chicopee, Massachusetts
Chartered Nov. 20, 2019

Membership by Darlene Spence, National Membership Chairman



As a part of human nature, we usually like to reflect on activities of the past year. After looking at what could have been done differently and what actions had little or no effect, we are very grateful for the opportunity "to begin again." It is so true that time has no waiting period. Benjamin Franklin said, "You may delay but time will not." Therefore, we must not waste one month, week, day, hour, or even a second before we take advantage of our opportunity "to begin again."

To begin what, you may ask. Recruiting new members, of course! We must, at all levels, set goals to recruit members who will be active participants in service to our veterans and their families.

After recruiting new members, training is key because when members are properly informed, they are more likely to feel comfortable and become actively involved in unit activities. In addition to recruiting, plans for ways to keep new and existing members involved, along with plans for ways to expand services to our veterans and their families must be top priority in all of our efforts.

Happy New Year and may 2020 bring you much happiness and good health. *"How did it get so late so soon? It's night before it's afternoon. December is here before it's June. My goodness how the time has flown. How did it get so late so soon?" -Dr. Suess*



Please join us in congratulating Aundra Lett-Jackson from Kentucky #156!! She has won \$250 for recruiting at least one new paid member between October 1 and December 31! The next winner could be **YOU!** The next drawing will be held on February 29, 2020. Please include your name and membership number on the sponsor portion to be included in this incentive.

VAVS by Melissa Pierce, National VAVS Chairman

The other day I read a story posted on a friend's Facebook page that really got me thinking.... This post had nothing to do with Veterans and nothing to do with volunteers or volunteering, but at the same time it resonated with me as to why I so enjoy being a part of the DAV Auxiliary and why I continue volunteering for our Veterans.

The story is way too long to share, but here's a brief paragraph that sums up the message...

The young woman explained, "My grandmother once told me this story, and from that time on I have always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement. In all my years of attending socials and dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork.' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!"

That's how I feel when I volunteer and help our Veterans. It may seem like I'm just lending a helpful hand, bringing a smile to tearful eyes, or maybe just being a listening ear, but something wonderful always happens. I may be making a new friend, creating a special new memory, or feeling encouraged, but always making a difference.

Just like the decadence of a dessert, volunteering adds that little something extra sweet to our lives. As we move into 2020.... Remember, "keep your fork," because something wonderful is bound to happen when we volunteer.

The newly revised DAV Auxiliary brochures are now available. The brochures include the membership rate change that became effective January 1, 2020. Please contact Auxiliary National Headquarters at 877-426-2838, option 8, or email dava@dav.org to order yours. If you are still using old applications and/or brochures, please be sure to let your new members know about the rate change!