

DAV Auxiliary Newsletter



860 Dolwick Dr., Erlanger, KY 41018

September 2025

Quota Achieved!

Congratulations to the following State Departments for reaching 2025-2026 Quota!

Illinois
Michigan

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Melissa Pierce Elected National Commander



Melissa Pierce was elected National Commander for DAV Auxiliary at the 2025 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Melissa joined DAV Auxiliary as a life member in 1989. She began her membership as a junior member through her father, who was a Marine during the Vietnam War. During his three tours of duty in Vietnam, he received three Purple Hearts and was rated at 100% VA disability. He was also a lifetime DAV member. Her mother also served in the military and was a Navy nurse stationed at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard at the base hospital. She is a lifetime DAV Auxiliary member. Both her parents were active in DAV and DAV Auxiliary.

Melissa is currently a member of Unit 20 in Des Moines, Iowa, and serves as senior vice commander. She also volunteers for many chapter and unit functions including bingo at the Des Moines VA Community Living Center, the back-to-school backpack events and Vietnam Veteran Recognition Day. Melissa is a past member of Unit 10 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. At the unit level, Melissa has served as adjutant, junior vice commander and senior vice commander. At the state level, she has served as junior vice commander, senior vice commander and commander. Melissa is currently the Department of Iowa adjutant and has served in this position for the past 6 years. At the national level, Melissa has served as national VA Voluntary Services representative (2017-2021), 15th district alternate National Executive Committee (NEC) (2017-2019) and 15th district NEC (2019-2021). Melissa has been the National Caregiver Initiative chair since 2018.

Melissa was born and raised in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is the second oldest of five children. She married her husband Dan in 1991. Melissa and her husband have two children, Danielle and Justin. Dan, Danielle and Justin are also DAV Auxiliary members. Melissa has been the DAV hospital service coordinator at the Iowa City VA since March 2020. Prior to that, she was the director of data management and field services at Jefferson Davis Associates, where she worked for 27 years. In her spare time, she also works at Riverside Casino and Golf Resort.

2025—2026 National Officers

Announcing the newly elected national officers:

National Commander—Melissa Pierce, Iowa
Senior Vice Commander—Kathleen Wenthe, Louisiana
1st Junior Vice Commander—Terry Grabowski, New York
2nd Junior Vice Commander—Carolyn Harris, Alabama
3rd Junior Vice Commander—Kim Stake, Arkansas
4th Junior Vice Commander—Ann Wilner, South Carolina
National Judge Advocate—Paula Raymond, Illinois

National Chairmen and Appointees

National Commander Melissa Pierce made the following appointments with the approval of the National Executive Committee:

National Chaplain—Austin Blanton, Arkansas
History Book Coordinator—Shelia Stephens, Louisiana
Interim Constitution and Bylaws Committee—Judy Steinhouse, Chairman, North Dakota
Pat Kemper, Kentucky; Jacque DuBose, Maryland
Junior Activities—Kimberly Knowlton, North Carolina
Sgt. At Arms—Sharon Thornton, Texas
VAVS Representative—Patty Davis, Wisconsin
VAVS Deputy—Ann Glende, Kentucky
Education Scholarship Fund Chm.—Christopher Easley, Oklahoma
National Adjutant—Bunny Clos, Kentucky
National Assistant Adjutant—Ann Glende, Kentucky

Membership by Terry Grabowski, National Membership Chairman

Membership in a professional or civic organization means belonging to a group of people with shared interests or community involvement goals, allowing members to network, learn, develop skills, and advance their professional or personal lives. These organizations provide resources, offer opportunities for volunteerism and leadership and demonstrate a member's proactive commitment to their community as described at AI online.

This perfectly describes what Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary is about with helping our Veterans and their families. Increasing our membership is so important. If each member could recruit one new member, imagine how much we can accomplish. I would love to see each state make quota and better yet every unit. If anyone needs help signing up a new member please reach out to me. Hope to see everyone at fall conference.

2025 National Fall Conference

The annual National Fall Conference will be held September 25-27, 2025, in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. This year we are excited to offer the following:

- Educational Seminars on Thursday, September 25, starting at 9:00 a.m.
- Patriotic Night – To kick-off the conference, on Thursday, September 25, show your patriotism by wearing your red, white, and blue! The more creative, the better.
- Hospitality Night – We will once again be hosting a hospitality night on Friday, September 26. Join us for a pizza and ice cream bar, followed by a DJ, Karaoke, and dancing!
- Fun Night – What better way to bring the conference to close then by enjoying a buffet dinner followed by entertainment! Tickets for this event are **not** included in the conference registration, and **must be purchased by September 12, 2025**. The dinner cost is \$65.00 per person.

We encourage pre-registration for those attending conference! Those who pre-register will be able to bypass the registration line and pick up their conference bag and badge.

The registration cost for conference this year will be \$50.00, and will include the conference bag, fall conference booklet, revised 2025-2026 Bylaw Book, and Friday evening hospitality night. The Saturday evening dinner will be \$65 per person. Members wishing to attend the dinner must call our office at 833.368.1220 by September 12, 2025, to purchase a ticket with a credit or debit card. **No dinner tickets will be available on site! Absolutely no refunds!**

Please note: if your guest plans to attend the Friday evening reception, he or she **must** pay the registration fee. There are no exceptions!

We look forward to seeing you all for a fun and educational national fall conference!

From the Desk of National Commander Melissa Pierce

Thank you for electing me to serve as your DAV Auxiliary National Commander at our National Convention in Las Vegas. It is a great honor and if there is anything I can do for you, please don't hesitate to reach out. I will do my best to serve you and this organization and promote our mission of serving veterans and their families.

In 1947 President Harry S Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947 which established the Air Force (Happy 78th Birthday). The Air Force was created in response to the crucial role airpower played in WW II. The Air Force's mission is to "fly, fight, win." I believe we as DAV Auxiliary can relate to this.

We fly. Or rise that is. We rise when it comes to our veterans and their families. When a veteran or family needs help with a household task – we rise. When a veteran or family needs food or shelter - we rise. When our local VA needs volunteers – we rise. When our VAs need clothing – we rise. When our homeless veterans need assistance – we rise. When our local stand downs need assistance – we rise. We rise to the occasion. We rally our members no matter how great or small the need – we rise.

We fight. We are our veterans' greatest advocates. When our veterans need housing assistance – we fight. When our veterans need quality and timely VA care – we fight. When our veterans need an increase in their cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) – we fight. When our veterans need mental health services – we fight. When our women veterans need resources specifically for their needs – we fight. When our caregivers need assistance – we fight. We actively participate in DAV CAN. We call, email, and visit our legislators. We fight to protect the rights and benefits that our veterans have earned. We fight to protect the benefits of their families. We fight.

We win. When our veterans have food – we win. When our veterans have housing – we win. When our veterans receive their benefits – we win. When our veterans have quality and timely care – we win. When our veterans' mental health is taken care of – we win. When a veteran's family is taken care of – we win. When our female veterans are taken care of – we win. When our homeless veterans are no longer homeless – we win. When our VAs are full of volunteers – we win. Sometimes our wins are small. Sometimes our wins are big. No matter their size – we win.

We must always be ready to "fly, fight, win." Taking care of our veterans and their families is a never-ending task. We, as DAV Auxiliary members, must continue to work together to serve our veterans and their families.

If you attended National Convention, you may have heard me mention #DAVAImpact 250. This year I'd like to challenge everyone to make 250 positive impacts on the veterans and their families in their community. I know this is something we all do, most of the time without thinking about it, because it's just what we do. But this coming year I want you to be intentional. Intentional meaning living and acting with purpose, awareness, and a clear understanding of our DAV Auxiliary goals and values. It's about making deliberate choices that align with what matters most to our organization, rather than passively reacting. However you volunteer, whatever you do, all I ask is that you think about WHY you are volunteering. WHY are you promoting patriotism. WHY are you supporting veteran families. **Serve with intention.** Serve with purpose. Serve with awareness. There are approximately 326 days between now and July 4th so there is plenty of time to get out there and make a #DAVAImpact250! And don't forget to send National your pictures!

To kick off our #DAVAImpact250 I'd like everyone to assist with a service project for our 2025 National Fall Conference. I would like everyone to bring (or send with attending members) (if you're able) underwear – men's and women's sizes large to 4xl and/or men's and women's deodorant for this year's Stand Down at DAV Headquarters. They are expecting around 250 veterans, and we would like to collect close to, if not over that number, in underwear and deodorant donations. Share with your members, share with your family and friends, and bring those donations to our Fall Conference in Lawrenceburg! Can't wait to see you all there and I can't wait to see all those donations for our veterans!

Thank you for your generous donations at National Convention!

Service Program - \$1,800
Education Program - \$1,500
Disaster Relief Program - \$3,850
DAVA 4 Kids - \$4,650

Caregiver Support Program - \$5,389
Winter Sports Clinic - \$600
General Fund - \$1,600



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on the DAV Auxiliary.



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Making a difference in the lives of disabled veterans and their families.

DAV AUXILIARY

Melissa Pierce
National Commander

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Americanism by Kim Stake, National Americanism Chairman

WHAT IS AMERICANISM?

What do you think of when you hear the word Americanism? According to the dictionary, Americanism is defined as “an attachment or allegiance to the traditions, interests, or ideals of the United States.”

When I think of Americanism, I think of baseball, hot dogs, apple pie and Chevrolet (the jingle from the 1970's). I also think of all of the Veterans who have served in the military to ensure that we have freedom.

I also think of “Old Glory,” our American Flag, and how it hangs and waves to show Americanism. Included, are many of the special days that the flag should be flown during times of honor, patriotism, military holidays and remembrance.

Take a special picture of yourself with the American Flag and send pictures to: ladytazdevil64@gmail.com.

January 1 st	New Year's Day	July 4	Independence
February 12	Inauguration Day	First Monday in September	Labor Day
Third Monday in February	Washington's Birthday	September 17	Constitution
Varies	Easter Sunday	Second Monday in October	Columbus Day
Second Sunday in May	Mother's Day	October 27	Navy Day
Third Saturday in May	Armed Forces Day	November 11	Veteran's Day
Last Monday in May	Memorial Day (half-staff until noon)	Fourth Thursday in November	Thanksgiving
June 14	Flag Day	December 25	Christmas Day

There are many other important military holidays and observations. Please check your local calendar for a list of those dates or contact me!

Americanism can also be shown in songs like “God Bless the USA,” “God Bless America,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “This Land is Your Land.”

We are going to do an essay on “What is Americanism” for our Junior members. The essay is due December 1, 2025. Each winner will receive a \$25 gift card. Below are the age brackets.

Elementary School Ages: 7-10

Middle School Ages: 11-13

High School Ages: 14-18