

End-of-Year Report

Even though the number of units which reported on Americanism this year was down because of the difficulties of the Coronavirus quarantines and the repercussions of the disease, including many serious illnesses and deaths, the units that did submit reports, somehow, managed to do extraordinary work.

As of June 19th, almost half of our states, 21, submitted a total of 133 Americanism unit reports. These numbers **don't** include the Special Americanism reports they submitted that numbered 85 and were also replete with good works. Congratulations to those states that, despite staying in place and social distancing, submitted unit reports: *Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.*

Their work is amazing: Some of the Unit work includes putting wreaths or flags at **veterans'** graves and giving out American flags at events as well as pamphlets on flag protocol. Some were simply flying American flags at their homes, and there were flag programs. A unit gave out flags and fruit at a Veterans Caregiver Conference, another gave out fruit and snack baskets to veteran shut-ins. There were flags at Golden Corral on Veterans Day. They were also attending patriotic movies with groups, attending POW/MIA recognitions, Memorial Day services as well as parades and Veterans Day events—some held at schools. Units donated to Homeless Veterans, helped with a Pearl Harbor Memorial program—*maybe like the one my late husband put on every year at his chapter*—supported a Korean War Veterans ceremony, participated in Wreaths Across America and a fundraiser for Honor Flight. They filled out applications for veterans for the Quilts of Valor program and made quilts for veterans. They presented awards to veterans for their service, some publicly with family and friends present, some at **veterans'** meetings, and some at home. They held a breakfast for veterans and their families, one with 300 in attendance; and, with Juniors, passed out flag pins at a VA hospital and put flags on **veterans'** graves. Others dedicated new flags to replace old, worn-out flags, both American and POW/MIA, and gave out information on presenting Colors. There was a carnival for veterans, Christmas parties, Vietnam Veteran Appreciation Day, a Flag-Burning Ceremony and a free dinner for veterans on Veterans Day, with pamphlets and membership applications on display. The list goes on; *this is great work by our units*, especially doing so much in a shortened year. If anyone needs an idea for helping veterans, just look at what other units are doing. *My sincere thanks for all you accomplished!*

I enjoyed everything I was able to participate in. I apologize for repeating myself, but some if not most of these I mentioned before. My experiences started with putting on the Americanism Skit at the Fall Conference with volunteers from Massachusetts and beyond who did a great job. An event I attended, before social distancing became the norm, was a luncheon by the Massachusetts **Women's** Advisory Committee honoring women veterans which is always a highlight. This year there were a lot of men at the event, which was appreciated. I volunteered at the DAV 5K in Boston and attended the Gold Star Family Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony at the State House with my youngest daughter. At the Boston Coast Guard station, I received a Military ID in honor of my late husband because of his service-connected death 6 years ago—*I was a little slow in getting to that*. My brother and I were in Virginia to attend a ceremony for his son retiring as a Navy Commander. His other son, who retired as a gunnery sergeant from the Marines quite a few years ago, was given an honorable part in the ceremonies. My brother, a retired Marine major, serving in Vietnam 4 times, could not have been prouder of his sons.

We attended an overwhelming ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery in February where DAV Auxiliary National Commander Diane Franz and Assistant Adjutant Bunny Clos presented the DAV Auxiliary wreath. Many of us were in Washington for the **DAV's** Mid-Winter Conference and met with our local congressmen and senators about legislation benefitting veterans and their families. My topic was survivor benefits. While in Washington, the Massachusetts delegation had a tour of the White House and attended the DAV National **Commander's** presentation of our legislative goals to the Members of Congress, where I was honored to sit with the national officers of our Auxiliary.

Before social distancing started, we marched in three parades, where the DAV and Auxiliary always get a huge response from the crowd. We also attended the Veterans Day ceremonies at Bourne National Cemetery. Along with many veterans advocates responding to a Facebook notice, I traveled an hour to attend a memorial service for a WWII veteran who had no family left to mourn him. It was a unique and special good-bye for the veteran in a small church filled to capacity, with people also standing across the back and sides inside the church. A few weeks ago—on my first venture back into the world other than walking the beach and my one-day-a-week food shopping—I joined the Massachusetts DAV and Auxiliary as they continued to assist in providing food for veterans and their families. It felt wonderful to be able to help in that endeavor. It also felt wonderful just to be out again. A Gold Star mother and father there gave me *honorably retired* American flags that, being in a Gold Star family, I can cut out the stars and put each one in a small plastic bag with a copy of a note I was given about the significance of the star. I told them **I've** walked the beach a lot these last months for exercise and sometimes cut through the neighborhood on the way back home and see many homes with the American flag displayed. Soon I can leave a star at each home as a thank you.

I'd like to thank Adjutant Pat Kemper and her staff for the assistance and guidance they give me, and for keeping up with all their responsibilities during this devastating pandemic. Thank you all for the opportunity to serve the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary on a national level.

Respectfully submitted,
AnnMarie Hurley
National 3rd Jr. Vice Commander