**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY**

**Department of North Carolina**

**Children and Youth Program Action Plan**

Chairman: Joan Masters Member: Tina Glover

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I am excited to be your Children & Youth Chairman. The core principles of the Children & Youth Program emphasize protecting, caring for and supporting children and youth, particularly those of veterans and military families. The mission of the Children and Youth Committee is to work in collaboration with the American Legion to maintain the integrity of the American family, to ensure that each child has the necessities of life to make a good citizen. This mission is accomplished by sponsoring and providing programs and services for the care and protection of all our nation’s children.

**Department Awards:**

* Certificate to each unit who has participated in educating children and youth on separation issues within families (deployment, work, illness, etc.), by Fall Conference. The unit will also be entered into a drawing for $25. To be eligible the unit must submit a report prior to Fall Conference.
* Certificate to each unit who participated in Youth Hero Awards/Good Deeds Awards program by recognizing youth in our communities who demonstrate good citizenship, either through a brave physical act or a good deed, by Mid-Winter Conference. The unit will also be entered to win $25. To be eligible the unit must submit a report by the deadline prior to Mid-Winter Conference.
* Certificate to all units who participated in educating children and youth to recognize (anger, detachment, lack of motivation, etc.) how symptoms of PTSD affect them and their families.
* Units submitting End of the Year Reports by the deadline will be entered into a drawing for $25 at Department Convention.

**How can your unit achieve these core principles?**

**Support Children and Youth in your community.**

* 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.
* Youth Hero Awards/Good Deeds 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.
* Develop a plan to assist children and youth whose family struggle with and/or copes with a family member with PTSD.
* April is the American Legion’s Children and Youth Month.

**Ideas:**

* Offer to make a “Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 presentation to your local schools.
* Donate books to your school or public library to help military children with separation issues or injured/sick veterans returning home (When Mom Deploys, When Dad Deploys, Hero at Home, When Daddy Comes Home, Why Are You So Scared, etc.)
* Monitor newspapers, TV and neighbors for children and Youth who have performed a heroic act of physical valor, such as performing CPR, helping evacuate in 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 Deeds Awards. Make sure to leave unit contact information.
* Plan a special celebration of children during the month of April in honor of Children and Youth Month.

**Support military children and youth**

* Kids of Deployed are Heroes 2 (KDH2): This recognition program for military children who experience extended separation from their military parent or parents.
* Develop a plan to assist children and youth whose family struggles with issues related to PTSD.
* April is the Month of the Military Child.

**Ideas:**

**Member**

* Volunteer at a school or public library to share a story, Why Are You So Scared or When Daddy Comes Home, to assist in understanding the issue of PTSD in the home.
* Volunteer at a Family Readiness Group event where KDH2 “I am Hero2” buttons/stickers can be distributed.
* Wear purple on April 15th in honor of Purple Up! for Military Kids Day.

**Unit:**

* Host a dinner, game night, community fair, etc. that will bring military and nonmilitary families together.
* Host a KDH2 celebration with recognition buttons/stickers to let military kids know we appreciate their sacrifices. (Refer to how to sheet at the end of this program Plan for more information).
* Plan a special celebration for 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 15th).
* 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.).
* Raise funds for a therapy dog for a veteran who suffers from PTSD.
* Contact ROTC recruiter at the high school to set up volunteer hours to assist a veteran with PTSD.

**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:**

* Contact your local churches, homeless shelters, and food pantries to identify homeless veterans’ children. Ask what their specific needs are, and offer services as an ALA member.
* Contact your local news sources (newspaper, community television, community web sites, and local 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.

**Unit:**

* Train members to be a resource for front-line agencies who receive requests for help.
* Contact local schools to access 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.

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

**Support the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation**

The American Legion CWF was established to provide funds received from individuals who wished to contribute to improving the lives of children in this country.