

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

A Community of Volunteers Serving Veterans, Military, and their Families

February 2026

Issue # 6

FROM THE 2025-2026 NATIONAL CHAIR OF THE VA&R PROGRAM

Upcoming Events



Thursday February 19th 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Tuesday February 24th 2:30-4:00 p.m.
Eastern time

Register for FREE at

<https://www.legion.org/advocacy/be-the-one/be-the-one-training>

BE THE ONE

Submitted by Lisa Chaplin
National VA&R Chair

BE THE ONE is one of the most important missions we share with The American Legion Family. It is neither a “campaign” nor a theme; it is a mission to save lives. Here are some things we know according to the 2025 National Veterans Suicide Prevention Annual Report:

- The suicide rate has increased for both veterans and non-veterans in the past two decades.
- It has risen faster for veterans than for non-veterans.
- Rates are higher among both men and women veterans compared to their non-veteran counterparts.
- Use of firearms is the leading method used for taking one’s own life among veterans.
- Veterans with a mental health diagnosis are at higher risk of self-harm.
- Veterans with other than honorable discharges are at greater risk than those with honorable discharges.
- Veterans who are homeless are at higher risk.

No one is expected to become a mental health professional overnight, but *everyone* can learn to recognize risk factors and warning signs of intent to self-harm. Sign up for BE THE ONE training to learn more about how to connect individuals in crisis to professional resources. What you will learn can serve at risk individuals in the veteran community and the non-veteran community as well.

Sign up to get involved in the BE THE ONE mission!

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Submitted by Chris Harvey
Northwestern Division VA&R Chair

Since 2000, the American Legion Auxiliary has proudly co-presented the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Each year, many U.S. military veterans come together, not on a battlefield, but through visual arts, creative writing, dance, drama, and music. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is where their talents are showcased, often demonstrating their resilience as well. It is the national platform for those who have participated in creative arts across the country. For many veterans, the festival is far more than a showcase. It is a celebration of healing, identity, and the power of artistic expression. The Veterans Administration and the medical community overall have recognized the therapeutic value of creative expression for decades as a means through which individuals can express themselves and process their experiences. This is especially important for veterans who are able to

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Member Spotlight

We want to spotlight a member each month in our newsletter so please be on the lookout for that member in your Department that does outstanding work with the VA&R program in some way. We know they are out there! Maybe it's someone who has done something truly innovative, unique, or inspiring to serve our veterans. Or maybe it's someone who has hit a milestone in service hours. Please include an action photo!

Send your nominee for the next Member Spotlight to lisachaplin@lexacom.net

Who
will be
next?

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

Submitted by Lisa Chaplin
National VA&R Chair

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors[®], also known as TAPS, founded in 1994, is a national 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to provide "compassionate care and comprehensive resources to all those grieving a death in the military or veteran community" (<https://www.taps.org/mission>). They offer a wide range of support services, including assistance with transitioning from caregiver to survivor, suicide loss, military casualty loss, and grief counseling to list just a few. They offer seminars, peer-to-peer mentoring, youth and young adult programs, an online community for non-urgent interactions, as well as a toll-free 24 hour helpline. All services are provided at no cost to survivors and are available both nationally and internationally. The American Legion Auxiliary collaborates with several like-minded organizations, and officially recognized their alliance with TAPS by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on 26 August 2025 at the 104th National Convention, formalizing our two organizations' shared commitment to honoring and assisting military families during and after times of loss. This partnership will promote collaboration in areas such as joint outreach and survivor support initiatives, community service projects honoring veterans and their families, expanded access to grief resources, peer mentoring and educational programs, increased visibility, and advocacy for military families, and educating our youth about advocacy. To support this alliance built upon service, remembrance, and dedication to America's heroes and those they leave behind, members can donate or volunteer time and talent to the programs they offer. Equally important is to become fully aware of what TAPS can offer so that we may share these resources with individuals when the need arises.

To learn more, visit their website at www.taps.org

**On behalf of the VA&R Committee, we wish you a
Happy Valentine's Day!**
Lisa Chaplin

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

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rebuild confidence and reconnect with their veteran community through the arts. Participation in creative arts of any kind can support physical, emotional, and psychological rehabilitation and recovery. Many participants describe NVCAF as a transformative experience, sharing that participation is a confidence building experience, and that it brings joy to their lives.

The festival moves to a different host city each year, and this year it will be held in Columbia, South Carolina during the week of June 9-14. It's more than an event; it raises visibility of the participants' achievements and highlights the role of the arts in their well-being.



NATIONAL VETERANS
CREATIVE ARTS
COMPETITION

The 2025-2026 VA&R Committee

Dr. Lisa Chaplin, Chair (VA)
lisachaplin@lexacom.net

Pat Kranzow, Vice Chair (IL)
pkranzow@att.net

Darlene Allen, Committee Member (NM)
da_abq@yahoo.com

Gwenda Shroeder-Zulch
Central Division Chair (OH)
gweniesue@yahoo.com

Lauren Lloyd
Eastern Division Chair (DC)
laurenloyd@gmail.com

Chris Harvey
Northwestern Division Chair (CO)
harvett@yahoo.com

MaryAnn Paul
Southern Division Chair (TX)
mapminmol@gmail.com

Elaine Roach (WA)
Western Division Chair
livehappy73e@gmail.com

Chrystal Daulton, Director of Programs
VA&R Liaison (IN)
CDaulton@ALAforVeterans.org
VAR@ALAforVeterans.org