

DEPARTMENT VA&R YEAR-END REPORT 2024-2025

Arizona embraced the opportunity to support rehabilitation of veterans through arts, crafts and hobbies:

- 236 Veterans participated in 3 Arizona VCAF events. 11 awards were recognized at the National level with 2 First Place winners.
 - The Tucson ALA VAMC team replicated a fancy art show by serving non-alcoholic sparkling wine and charcuterie plates **(photo 1)**. Local winners' submissions were then shown at the local Mall.
 - To engage the public, the Prescott VAMC event was held during a popular event at the County Fairgrounds.
 - With Unit donations, the Department of Arizona purchased banners and flags to promote the Phoenix event **(photo 2)**. A dual Legion member and professional artist, assisted with setup and judging for the competition **(photo 3)**.
- Ray Fourr Unit 24 provides supplies and volunteers with the Tucson VAMC Blind Rehab group making cards, decoupage glass jars, paracord keychains, luggage tags and more. **(photo 3.5)**
- 7 Units supported "HEAL HER Art", an Arizona art wellness program specifically for women veterans **(photo 4)**. Fourteen year-old Honorary Junior President is leading an effort to engage these veterans in poppy-making by instructing and distributing poppy supplies **(photo 5)!**
- Multiple units support "Guitars 4 Vets"--providing guitars and lessons for veterans. The ALR at Wayne V. McMartin Post 91 initiated a ride to raise funds to establish a scholarship honoring their Post Commander's artist son who was murdered. Raising over \$9,000, the event is now an annual Legion Family event **(photo 6)**.

Families and caregivers were not forgotten by the Arizona ALA:

- Arizona Officers attend remembrance services honoring veterans and families on Memorial Day and Pearl Harbor Day each year.
- Wreaths Across America is promoted through the Department website and social media—17 Arizona Units reported supporting the program.
 - Yuma's Sunset Vista Cemetery was featured in the WAA calendar **(photo 7)**. Legion Family members, as local coordinators, ensure that all 724 graves are honored.
 - Oro Valley Unit 132, with fewer than 100 members, worked within their community to have 2000 wreaths sponsored through their Unit!
- Many organizations of the Yuma community, including the American Legion Family, came together to honor Gold Star Families with a By-way marker **(photo 8)**.
- Thirty-member Conrado Francisco Bilducia Unit 124 has four dual members in the Post's Honor Guard. They brought peace to families by conducting 11 funerals/ceremonies including honoring the remains of a WWII veteran found in France **(Photo 9)**.
- McCulloch-Wagner Unit 109's Memorial Blanket committee provides hand-made blankets to veterans who have passed so family members can rest assured that their loved one's last journey is made in comfort and dignity.
- Providing *Be The One* support at a local home show, Daniel Guajardo Fernandez Unit 115 and Post members provided resources to a mom whose veteran son was considering suicide **(photo 10)**

Arizona ALA avidly supports their 3 VAMC's (and CBOCs) and 4 State Veterans Homes.

- Four Arizona State Veterans Homes:
 - \$6050 was donated by Units; two State Homes each received Wheelchair accessible Billiard tables (**photo 11**).
 - Birthday, Valentine's, Holiday cards and events, by local Units, are coordinated monthly with individual State Home Chairmen.
 - HH Donkersly Unit 19 purchased neck fans for the Yuma State Home veterans and participated in a birthday party for a 102-year old WWII veteran (**photo 12**). They also purchased a granite bench.
 - Car Show, Art classes, Motown Live entertainment, Bingo, Carnivals are some of the activities that Units supported (**photo 13**).
 - Ray Fourr Unit 24 annually hand-makes 300 Christmas stockings for Tucson State Home and hospitalized veterans stuffed with goodies donated by various organizations (**photo 14**).
 - All veterans at two State Homes received holiday gifts from their personal wish list from William Bloys, Unit 2 and HH Donkersley Unit 19 (**photos 15**).
 - November 11, 2024, a Purple Heart Wall was dedicated in Yuma for 6 Purple Heart recipients (**photo 16**).
 - To help keep ongoing costs down, Swaskegame Unit 14 donated a \$500 engraving machine to the Flagstaff State Home.
- 3 VAMCs:
 - Nearly \$13,000 was donated by Units to support the 3 VAMC annual Gift Shops (**photo 17**). 510 Veterans and approximately 150 family members were served, including 50 robotic "Joy for All" pets provided to the veterans in the Phoenix memory care program (**photo 18**).
 - Sipe Peterson Unit 44 donated \$1,420 and 30 wigs and 210 hand knitted scarves and hats valued at \$6,500 to the Phoenix VAMC women's oncology department. (**photo 19**)
 - Tony F. Soza-Ray Martinez Unit 41 donated \$1,000 in daily bus passes so veterans without transportation could get to health care appointments.
 - Tucson VAMC received a new \$10,000 bingo board from the Units in Arizona! The Auxiliary also regularly supports the food pantry at the main facility and one CBOC.

The Units in Arizona reported supporting 17 Standdowns across Arizona:

- Luke Greenway Unit 1 hosted a women-veteran only standdown by providing the location, provider set-up, food and clothing distribution.
- Apache Unit 27 provided volunteers at two standdowns that served over 1000 veterans.
- Overgaard-Heber Unit 86 volunteers traveled hundreds of miles to cover 3 standdowns in northeast Arizona small towns.
- Conrado Francisco Bilducia Unit 124 members attended 6 standdowns across southern Arizona.
- A member of Sipe Peterson Unit 44 administered flu and COVID vaccines at a standdown.
- Ernest A Love Unit 6 members supported 3 standdowns across Northern Arizona.

Units supported many other like-minded organizations:

- Merrell Mitchell Unit 39 participated in an Honor Flight Homecoming

- To date, Units have donated over \$50,000 to Department President Stacey Mayberry's Special Project "Pups and Warriors Side by Side" (P.A.W.S.S.)—an Arizona organization that provides service dog training, for free, to veterans with PTSD.
- Other organizations supported included U.S. Vets, Grounded No More (an AZ organization that takes veterans for demo flights in historic aircraft), Leashes of Valor, Tunnels to Towers, Imprints of Honor (connecting students with veterans to document their story), USO, among others.

Other

- Sipe Peterson Unit 44 held a women veteran's luncheon where they provided gifts and a flower bar **(photo 20)**!

Submitted by Marge Christianson, Second Vice President