

Children & Youth Committee Mid-Year Report

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As a first year Auxiliary Chair, I'm still learning. As hard as I fought as a Department Commander to bring the American Legion Family together, a wedge seemed to be created when new leaders were elected in June. A power struggle with the Legion Chair ensued and, as in previous years where the Auxiliary and Sons attended the Legion C&Y Committee meetings, I decided to email in reports to reduce obstacles and continue the mission of the Auxiliary C&Y programs.

This was the third year that the Auxiliary supported the Miracle Party. A 501c3 organization that supports families with children who have blood disorders or cancer. We raised over \$1,000 that supported over 10 families. Our Juniors got together on weekends in advance of the event to put masks together and, on the night of the event, helped all of the kids who came to our booth make masks. To see them patiently help a disabled child spend almost an hour making a mask and not giving up on her was pretty inspiring. Much appreciation to National President Kathy Dugan for her attendance and support.



The Auxiliary supported the Wayne Kash Memorial Toy Ride and Dance in District 1, which helped raised thousands of dollars to make sure kids in that rural part of the state had at least one Christmas present. Started by Vietnam Veteran Navy Seal Wayne Kash, who later succumbed to cancer, the tradition continues mainly due to the efforts of Legionnaires Jody Bracy and Ricky Dee (both District Commanders and Riders).

This year, myself, President Laurie Kuntz and PDP Ann Ritacco attended the event, which was held at the Elks Lodge (event space donated every year) in Rocky Ford.



The next Department effort will be the Josh Dogs project. I am working with Sons PNC Jeff Frain to learn more about the program. I will present this idea to the Sons at Mid-year and solicit their help. PNC Frain has agreed to travel to Colorado to assist.

Unit reports, follow.

Unit 13

One Unit 13 member attended the Child Welfare Foundation Fundraiser at Post 38.

One member attended Safety Town (community event to teach children about safety).

Unit 20

Operation Home Front school supply donations from the Dollar Tree store in Sterling were distributed to the following schools: Ayers Elementary (Sterling), Campbell Elementary (Sterling), Caliche Elementary (Iliff/Crook) and Merino Elementary.

Unit 32

Unit 32 held its annual children's Christmas party on December 8, 2018. There were about 16 children in attendance who made crafts, ate a fun lunch and even met Santa. Each child was also given a gift from Santa which was provided by the people who signed up to buy a gift. It was a special day for these kids. Many were Legion family relatives and some kids were from the community. Also, after the children's Christmas party, we donated a large bagful of stuffed animals to the Helping Hands organization in Longmont.



Unit 32 also has a Gold Star Family as members, Rick and Debbie Anderson. They remember their son, Christopher "Doc" Anderson, who died in Iraq in 2006, each year on the date of his passing by holding a toy drive.

Community members and Legion Family members all donate toys. Each year the program gets bigger and bigger! Police and firemen hand these out to needy local families at Christmas.



What a wonderful way to remember the sacrifice of their son each year. This year the toy drive was held on December 4, 2018 and even more toys were donated than last year! Unit 32 voted to donate \$150 worth of gift cards to give to the older children. Thanks Rick and Debbie for your annual toy drive benefitting local Longmont children. This is the ninth year for this amazing event!

Unit 32 is a great supporter of local Children and Youth programs. At our December meeting, we will donate to Mountain State's Children's Home, a local home for teenage children.

We will plan other activities for our children and youth this coming year. We support scholarships, Girls State and our Junior Auxiliary members.

Unit 75

Our unit provided information to area schools on our Girls State program and will be helping some children with our Santa Clause give away in December.

Unit 110

We have some special ladies who help babysit children of a deployed veteran.

Unit 134

Guest speaker at our Veteran's Day program was Carol Drury, a volunteer with Canine Companions for Independence, who brought two dogs to demonstrate the many skills she has taught them in preparation for possible use as service dogs. Children interacted with the dogs and Drury answered many questions about their training and how they might someday serve a disabled veteran.

Unit 209

Unit 209 did not have an Easter Egg Hunt due to lack of participation of the children. A Halloween Costume Party was held in October with games and prizes for the best costume. The annual Christmas Party will be held on December 15. It will be a potluck meal with games for the children and a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus.



Games for the children to play



Parade of costumes – Prizes given in two age groups

Unit 1879

We have only two junior members, one of whom is our “poppy princess,” and the other who continues as an active member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Because the SerVe commitment is consuming most of our time and energy right now, we’ve considered a future goal to host story hours on CSU’s campus, in family housing, to bring in children of veterans so we can interact with them. One member has also met with principals at three local schools to talk about the challenges and strengths that children of active military and veterans exemplify, as in so many cases they’ve traveled from place to place every two or three years or been significantly impacted by the absence of a parent who is deployed. One member teaches in a bilingual school locally, where she’s had significant opportunity to teach both American and international children about our country. This member also has been a Boy Scout leader for over 20 years, traveling with the Scouts and taking on every challenge right alongside them. Another member teaches at a local junior college, where she’s involved her students in creative writing about topics dealing with military veterans. She’s also witnessed personally the impact of post-traumatic stress on a student who was suspended from the college for a year due to increasingly frightening rants against the military and others. I believe her insistent concern with administrators made them address the situation more responsibly than they would have otherwise. While we strive to improve the quality of life for our veterans, we also must become knowledgeable to areas in which they need help.

It would be neglectful to not mention that our unit at Colorado State University was chartered specifically to focus on the needs of the nearly 2,500 veterans who currently are students at CSU. Of course, we reach out to veterans in the community as well, and we welcome all who want to join, whether or not they are associated with the university. Our CSU students need local mentors, folks who will help them network and get familiar with our city and surroundings, as well as provide stability for the unit when our veteran members leave the community.

Rachel Van Houten, Director of Colorado Girls State, spends countless hours all year long planning the program, then an entire week (many nights sleepless!) actually heading the program with about 200 female delegates under her tutelage! The children in a local church write and send cards to members of the church who are serving in the military, assuring them that they are remembered, cared and prayed for.

