

American Legion Auxiliary San Anselmo Unit 179

*Proudly Supporting
Those Who Serve*

NEWSLETTER

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2011-2012 Board

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The year is off to a great start! In the first three months of 2012 we've set out our goals for the year and have made some serious strides toward achieving them. One of the most exciting developments is that we've more than doubled our original membership! With twice as many dedicated women, bringing in new talents, fresh enthusiasm, and strong passions, we can make this a year where we not just continue our mission, but surpass last year's accomplishments. We're looking forward to working together to make this another fun and successful year.

First Packing Party of the Year

In December, the third grade students at San Domenico school collected items to send to the troops. Then the Girl Scouts of Northern California gave us about 40 cases of nuts and candy, which had been purchased by people who designated them to be donated to the troops under the Care to Share program. Supplemented by some additional items purchased by our Unit, we had enough to fill 65 care packages. And on January 29th, that's exactly what we did. Thanks to the participation of some additional family members and friends, it took just a little over an hour to have everything packed and ready to ship off to Afghanistan. The packages were extra special, because each one contained a personal letter from a student at San Domenico, plus a few valentine cards made by San Rafael Girl Scout Troop 30681. The students were very excited when, several weeks later, some thank you notes arrived at the school from deployed soldiers who were very grateful for the packages they had received. The kids were really thrilled to get a reply to their letters, and it was heartwarming to know that these troops had taken time out of their very busy days to correspond with these young people, so far away.

Four Chaplains Day

Every February, there is a service to commemorate the four Army chaplains who were killed on February 23, 1943, when the troop transport USAT Dorchester was torpedoed and sunk off the coast of Greenland. These four men took off their life jackets and gave them to others, and went down with the ship. This year, the service was held in the beautiful St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco, where our members joined the many other people who came to honor these men and remember their selfless sacrifice.



Open House at The Log Cabin

On February 11th, an Open House was held at The Log Cabin in San Anselmo. A combined effort between Post 179 and our Unit, the purpose was to give members of the general public an opportunity to tour the historic cabin and also to tell them about the activities and programs of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. Thanks to the hard work and artistic talents of a few Unit members, we had wonderful display boards that showcased the various events and activities that we participate in. Guests arriving in the main room were greeted by ALA members who welcomed them and offered to provide any information they might want. The Commander of Post 179 was on hand with a very interesting display of historic and valuable military memorabilia. Refreshments were available in the smaller meeting room, where many attendees enjoyed a showing of a film documenting the construction of The Log Cabin in 1934. At the end of the day, the Open House was deemed to be a great success, allowing us to meet and talk with many new people and to spread the word of our achievements and our ongoing mission.

Valentine's Day Baked Goods

Imagine spending Valentine's Day away from your loved ones. Many of our active duty troops have to, and so do the residents at The Pathway Home in Yountville. Pathway is a residential treatment facility for troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering from PTSD or other combat-related disorders. We are always looking for ways to support this program (see related story on Page 4), and what better way than by showing up on Valentine's Day with boxes and boxes of delectable treats, home baked by our members! Every young man appreciates home cooking, and these guys are no different. Thank you to everyone who donated her time and culinary talents to make the day a little brighter for these deserving patriots.

California Gold Star Parents Memorial Service

On February 17th, members of our Unit attended the California Gold Star Parents Memorial Service at the Marines' Memorial Theatre in San Francisco. The service honored 100 Californians who have been killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the name of each fallen warrior was read, their family members stood to be recognized and a candle was lit. It was simple, emotional, and made a huge impact. But it was the slide show at the end of the service that truly touched the heart. Three or four photos of each hero made every loss so personal. It brought home, very painfully, the great sacrifices made by our troops, and the continued need for support of them and their families.

Contact Us

If you would like more information about the American Legion Auxiliary and Unit 179, please visit our web site at www.ALAunit179.org

You can also email us at info@ALAunit179.org or call Jan Darmody at (415) 482-8241

Girls' State

Girls' State has been a major program of the American Legion Auxiliary since the late 1930's. This program gives girls who have just finished their junior year in high school a unique and exciting government-in-action learning experience. For the first time, our Unit will be sponsoring a candidate. Working through the guidance counselors at Drake High School, we were given the names of the top five junior girls who were interested. Each girl was required to write an essay, and to meet in person with the interview committee. We were very impressed with the caliber of the applicants, and it was extremely difficult to select a finalist, first alternate and second alternate. The winner is Jahya Burke, who will attend Girls' State for one week this summer, along with approximately 500 other girls from all over California. We're happy for Jahya and look forward to hearing about her experience.

VASH

In our mission to support our nation's veterans, we don't have to look any further than right here in Marin County. There is a transitional housing center in Novato, called New Beginnings, which is operated by Homeward Bound of Marin. New Beginnings is an 80-bed shelter for single homeless adults, combining shelter, job training and work experience opportunities. Opened in 2000, it is the first homeless shelter in the country to be built on a decommissioned military base. So it is fitting that 16 of the beds are set aside for homeless veterans in a partnership with VASH, or Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing. Residents may stay up to six months, but veterans have the option of extending their stay for up to two years. Michelle Funez Arteaga, the Marin County VASH representative, was delighted to hear that our ALA unit wants to help. Her first request was for a bus pass for one of her clients, who was having trouble paying for transportation to his job each day. That was immediately approved by the membership. Donated bed linens, toiletries, art work and other items were delivered to Michelle, who will distribute them to vets who have no budget for such luxuries. We're currently in discussions with Michelle regarding other opportunities to show our gratitude to these veterans, so stay tuned for more news!

Monte Carlo Night

The Rotary Club of Ignacio held their annual Monte Carlo Night fundraiser on Saturday, March 10th. This year's theme was Carnival, and quite a few of our members turned out with their spouses to enjoy the evening. Once again, the Club offered non-profit organizations an opportunity to earn a donation by selling a certain number of tickets to the event. Thanks to the great response from our members, we were able to exceed our quota and earned a donation of \$1,265 from the Rotary Club...a win-win situation for all!





Sewing Parties

It might still be cool in Marin County, but the temperatures in Afghanistan will soon be uncomfortably high. Now's the time to stock up on cooling scarves so that we have plenty to send in summer care packages. On Saturday March 3rd we gathered at the clubhouse at Quail Hill and managed to complete 105 scarves. Everyone had so much fun, we decided to do it again, sooner rather than later. So on Saturday March 31st we met at The Log Cabin with sewing machines and ironing boards in tow. Thanks to a great turn out of willing workers, we set a new record for a single sewing party, completing **166** scarves in just 3 hours! The Super Sewing Sisters of Unit 179 are the best!!

The Pathway Home Graduation

As mentioned in an earlier article, The Pathway Home in Yountville is a residential treatment facility specifically addressing the needs of warfighters who are dealing with PTSD or similar issues. On Friday March 30th we were honored to be in attendance as 11 young men graduated from the program. As each person was introduced, he told the audience what The Pathway Home had done for him. Again and again, these warriors had tears in their eyes and lumps in their throats as they recounted how Pathway had saved their lives, given them new hope, reunited them with their families, and put them on the path to a whole new life. As one Marine put it, this place really is "the pathway home".

and Donation

In a meeting with Fred Gusman, Founder and Executive Director of The Pathway Home, we asked him what he needed that our unit might be able to provide for the Home. His answer was that they were in desperate need of a new server for their computer system. The old one was sadly inadequate for their needs, but there was no money in the budget for replacement. At our next general meeting, the members were 100% in favor of giving Pathway as much financial support as possible. After the graduation ceremony, it was our pleasure to present Mr. Gusman with a check in the amount of \$2,032 to be put toward the cost of that new server. The Pathway Home is operated by a 501(c)(3) non-profit and receives NO FUNDING from the VA or any other government agency. There is no group more deserving of financial support, and our members have pledged to do everything within our power to help raise funds so that they can continue their good work. To learn more or to make a donation, please visit their website at www.thepathwayhome.org.



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