

AMVETS National Ladies Auxiliary NEC Meeting
March 9 – 11, 2023 Washington DC
Karin Simmons, National President “Honor. Remember. Teach”

Although I enjoyed representing Michigan at this year’s Spring NEC meetings, I missed participating in the Legislative Action Week (LAW) meetings (formerly “Storming the Hill”) activities as I had done in previous years. Seeing and hearing the impact the AMVETS organization has through its meetings with legislators and National Commander’s testimony to Congress is very inspiring. This year nearly 100 AMVETS family members from across the USA participated in 224 face to face meetings with our Congressional members and their staffs. I hope more Michigan AMVETS family members will choose to participate in future LAW meetings. Our influence makes a difference on legislation affecting active-duty military, veterans and their families.

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This year I did attend the fundraiser and three (3) Auxiliary meetings: National Finance Committee, Council of NEC Women, and the National Executive Committeewomen’s business meeting

Auxiliary & SOA Fundraiser, March 9, 2023: “Night at the Races” (silent auction of very nice items & people on pretend horses. “Horses” auctioned to obtain “owner.” Audience buys tickets to guess the winner)

Finance Committee, March 10, 2023: Led by PNP and current Treasurer Barbara Guth

- Membership and donation deadlines are being missed by several auxiliaries creating accounting nightmares for the treasurer as well as national office staff
 - Differing deadlines for financial data and membership data also creates confusion
 - A finance committee member requested 3–5-year trend data for both be available at Convention for those interested in understanding better what is growing vs declining
- A change by the National Service Foundation in the payroll provider (without prior notice) created some recent chaos for office staff and treasurer
- Announced **National Convention registration will be \$40.00 honored through 7/10/2023 postmark date. Any registrations received and not postmarked 7/10/2023 or earlier will be charged \$60.00 including on-site.** This is being done to better understand what quantity of registration material and books need to be ordered and on-hand for distribution.

Council of NEC Women, March 10, 2023: Led by Council Chairwoman, Linda Bonin (North Carolina)

- 19 Ladies attended. Except for a brief visit by President Karin Simmons and Exec Dir Carol King, no national officers were present. This meeting is to allow NEC women to speak freely to each other
- Lots of interesting questions resulting in five (5) recommendations referred to national committees:
 - Clarification on the treatment of Freedom Foundation National Auxiliary weekend miles, hours and cost referred to the Americanism committee
 - Clarification on how store cash register receipts are to be handled for crediting to schools referred to the Child Welfare committee

- Advising on whether platelet donations can be double regular blood donations referred to Community Service committee
- Providing a flat rate to adequately value the 20-30 hours mats made from plastic bag referred to the Community Service committee
- Creating a standard flat rate for lap robes referred to the Hospital committee

NEC Meeting, March 11, 2023: Led by President Karin Simmons

- Theme: “Honor. Remember. Teach.”
- Charter draped for recently deceased PNP Linda Johnston and PNP Doris Shrake
- All national officers present except for excused National Parliamentarian Heidi Dineen-Serpis. She was replaced for the day by PNP Leslie Wunderle. Nine (9) PNPs were present. Twenty (20) of twenty-six (26) women from chartered states present. Zero (0) of twenty-one (21) unchartered states attended. Several (at least 8) Department Presidents also attended.

Madame President welcomed the attendees and spoke about her travels. One of her shoutouts was to the state of Michigan for our hospitality during our Fall Conference. Madame President is looking forward to visiting a few more states before the National Convention as well as an upcoming trip to Hawaii with the National Commander.

First VP Amy Stopyra highlighted and welcomed three newly chartered Auxiliaries this year: #227 Williamston NC, #911 Benton TN and #114 Kyle TX. She also emphasized anyone needing membership applications should EMAIL (not call) Carol King at Headquarters. There are 32,368 auxiliary members nationwide for 2022-23. This is an increase of 849 members over the prior 2021-22 year.

Second VP Cindy Rice spoke about April as John Tracy Clinic month and the quilt made and donated to John Tracy Clinic to be raffle off. She also made all aware of the “Wigs for Kids” organization. They accept hair 12” to 14” in length. They can be contacted at www.wigsforkids.org or hair donations sent to Wigs For Kids, 24231 Center Ridge Rd., Westlake OH 44145. VP Rice also provided a list of potential fundraisers as part of her report.

Third VP Mary Lanphere reminded attendees March is PAWS month and suggested members advertise fundraisers beyond their post locations through news and social media. She also thanked Michigan for our hospitality during her visit and tour of PAWS. She further mentioned the PAWS website has a wealth of information and all should check it out. Lastly, she reminded all of the national awards available for applications.

National Treasurer Barbara Guth repeated most of what was discussed at the finance committee meeting. She highlighted that no extraordinary expenses are standing out. She also encouraged attendees to contribute to the Patrons page of the convention book.

Americanism Officer Laura Bugaj (pronounced “boo-guy”) talked about her attendance at the AMVETS youth “Spirit of America” Leadership Conference in October. She was enthusiastically

inspired by what she witnessed from the young people attending. She encourages every Department to send a student to the conference this year. She felt so strongly about it, she has proposed the National Auxiliary create a lottery drawing for up to four (4) students from all eligible high school Americanism contest winners be selected to attend the conference. Her motion was approved during this meeting.

Americanism Officer Bugaj also reported on the status of the windows, lamp posts and generator projects at Freedoms Foundation. She also suggested that due to an impending merger with another organization, all donations for Freedoms Foundation have a specific purpose.

Scholarship Officer Debra Gass made sure all knew of the three (3) scholarships available: College Support, National and Career Start. Applications are available on the National Auxiliary website www.amvetsaux.org. She emphasized the importance of making sure every application line is filled in. She also clarified a question regarding 18-year-old seniors can apply without parent information under certain conditions. Please contact Deb for more information.

National Snappiest Evelyn Davis, Chaplain Alice Delzer, Sergeant-At-Arms Theresa Adkins, Hospital Officer Laurie Shea, VAVS Rep Marie Rorrio and acting Parliamentarian & Honors and Awards Chair Leslie Wunderle referred attendees to their written reports in the NEC book. Items to keep in mind include:

- Timely completion of deceased member notification forms
- All VA donations should be through the VAVS (aka CDCE office) at area VA hospitals
- Award winners receiving checks need to cash them right away. Some folks are holding them for 3-4 months adding to national's accounting challenges
- Honors & Awards theme is "Road Trip." National attendees are encouraged to dress in their favorite sports team attire on H&A Thursday.
- Proper flag etiquette and meeting protocols
- If attending National Convention, Pages & Color Guards will be needed. *See National Convention Digest.*
- NEC women need to remind Department officers, Local officers and members to always follow chain of command!

Junior AMVETS Coordinator Denise Speigle sees the youth volunteer reports and believes opportunity exists for new Jr AMVETS units. Currently there are 166 Juniors nationwide. She strongly encourages those Departments with youth volunteers to find ways to create Junior AMVETS groups. Only eight (8) kids needed to obtain a charter. In her experience, many Juniors grow up to join the military and/or become Auxiliary and SOA members.

History and Scrapbook Chairwoman Paulette Joy mentioned letters describing the qualification process for judging books and covers have been sent to Department Presidents, PROs and NEC women.

Executive Director Carol King talked about the National Convention Digest being mailed and available on line the first week of April. She too emphasized the change in Convention pre-registration date, 7/10/2023. She also reminded attendees of making sure their revalidations are in on time. National does not require a copy of the IRS 990, but the EIN number is critical for both Local and Department revalidations. If missing on the revalidation form, the revalidation is NOT complete. She also emphasized deadline dates for membership, NEC reports and donations. Missing deadlines creates chaos and headaches for national staff!

Immediate Past National President (IPNP) Joan Sirek is the Convention "Raffle Queen." Raffle books of five (5) tickets each selling for \$5 per book are now available. Each NEC and national officer were given a supply to be sold in their state. Additional books are available from IPNP Sirek. As an incentive, the Department selling the most tickets will be awarded \$100.00 to use as they choose.

Training Chairwoman PNP Linda McGriff explained the training session at the March NEC meeting and at the National Convention in August are themed "Going Back to Basics." The training at the March meeting was on the NEC Woman's role and Council of NEC guidelines.

Convention Chairwoman Dee Kreiling-Riley advised the location and room price for the convention: Wyndham Downtown Pittsburgh, 600 Commonwealth Place, Pittsburgh PA 15222, phone #412-391-4600, <http://book.passkey.com/event/50475109/owner/2945954/landing>, parking is valet at \$38 per day with in and out privileges. Room rate is \$129 per night for one king or two queens. Larger rooms and suites are available. Call hotel directly for more info. Chairwoman Kreiling-Riley also emphasized membership cards will be checked at registration. Please remember to bring yours if attending national convention.

Board of Trustees (Past National Presidents) Chairwoman Marvell Ruppel announced the Trustees are looking for recommendations for recipients of the Auxiliary Humanitarian award. Names and info can be submitted to national headquarters or brought to Chairwoman Ruppel at convention for consideration. Person selected would be awarded at the March Silver Helmet ceremonies.

NEC Women Reports were all submitted in writing and included in the NEC book. Many highlight key projects. Officers running for National offices were also announced:

- President – Amy Stopyra from Pennsylvania
- 1st VP – Cindy Rice from Ohio
- 2nd VP – Mary Lanphere from New York
- 3rd VP – Laura Bugaj from New York and Laurie Shea from Illinois
- Treasurer – Barbara Guth from Kentucky
- Americanism – Deb Gass from Indiana
- Scholarship – Theresa Adkins from Kentucky
- Hospital – Donna Tolland from Maryland
- Chaplain – Shirley Sochia from New York

Submitted 3/17/2023 by Faye D. Richardson-Green, Acting NEC, Department of Michigan