



Herbert J. Petit Jr. (LA), Chairman
National Children & Youth

In 1938, the American Legion dedicated the month of April to honoring and uplifting our nation’s young people—a tradition first known as Child Welfare Month and now celebrated as Child & Youth Month. For generations, this commitment has stood as a solemn promise: the strength of America’s future depends on the strength we invest in its children today.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “America is the land of opportunity.” That spirit endures in every child who dreams boldly and in every adult who chooses to champion those dreams. Through the American Legion’s “Whole Child” philosophy, we affirm that opportunity alone is not enough.

Every young person deserves the education, health, safety, and stability required to grow into a confident, capable, and compassionate citizen.

As veterans, we understand the true meaning of service—and we know that service does not end when the uniform is folded and set aside. It continues in classrooms, on ballfields, in community halls, and in the lives of more than 65,000 young people who participate each year in American Legion youth programs. Whether through the Oratorical Contest, Boys Nation and Girls Nation, the Junior Shooting Program, or American Legion Baseball, these experiences do more than teach skills. They shape character. They spark leadership. They ignite purpose.

Every young life touched by these programs represents hope—hope for stronger communities, principled leadership, and a future guided by those who understand the power of teamwork, responsibility, and opportunity.

You are encouraged to share the [American Legion Youth Programs video](#) and lend your voice to the next generation. By spreading awareness, you help open doors for young people to discover their potential and pursue their path forward.

In the spirit of unity that defines the American Legion Family, the American Legion Auxiliary invites everyone to wear purple on April 15 in honor of Purple Up Day. Purple symbolizes the combined strength of all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces—a reminder that when we stand together, we stand stronger.

The Auxiliary also proudly hosts the [National Poppy Poster Contest](#) for students in grades 2 through 12, inspiring creativity while honoring the sacrifices that safeguard our freedoms.

With seven grade-level categories, this contest offers young artists a meaningful way to express gratitude, patriotism, and remembrance.

Together—through mentorship, encouragement, and unwavering support—we are not only shaping the next generation. We are building a brighter, stronger future for us all.