

## A Synopsis of the History of our Organization

Founded in 1919, the American Legion Auxiliary is the world's largest women's patriotic service organization. With a membership at nearly 800,000, local American Legion Auxiliary units have a strong presence in more than 9,500 communities nationwide.

A group of 20 officers who served in the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I were asked to suggest ideas on how to improve troop morale. One officer, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., proposed an organization of veterans, which we know today as The American Legion. The original purpose of the Legion was to "preserve the memories and incidence of our association in the great war," helping those who had served in foreign wars to reintegrate into their hometowns while still remaining connected to those with whom they had served abroad. The Legion served as a support group, a social club and an extended family for former servicemen. After two planning caucuses held by a committee of officers who had the confidence and respect of their military comrades, they designed a constitution to govern the group and set up headquarters in New York City to begin work on its programs of relief, employment and Americanism.

After the formation of The American Legion, a number of women's organizations wanted to become the official affiliation of the Legion. The women who had served so faithfully during the trying days of the war wanted to continue to serve. After careful consideration, the committee agreed that a new organization should be made up of the women most closely associated with the men of the Legion, and that these women would serve with the Legion, in peace as they had in war. The committee decided to build a new organization from the ground up, so the Auxiliary could then carry forward the phases of Legion activities more suitably performed by women. In less than one year, 1,342 local units of the Women's Auxiliary to The American Legion had been organized in more than 45 states. "Department" organization began in 1920 and by the summer of 1921, there were enough Departments for the National Commander to call a National Convention of the Women's Auxiliary to be held concurrently with the Legion's third National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. *It was at this convention that the name of our organization was changed to the American Legion Auxiliary.*

Today, as members of the American Legion Auxiliary, we proudly continue that supportive role in the work that we do for our veterans and our programs, becoming a part of our history.

We encourage you to visit the American Legion Auxiliary national website at [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org) to learn even more of our history, our organization and our programs.