



**American Legion Auxiliary
Department of California
National Security Bulletin
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I learned some new information at the National National Security Zoom meeting this month. The Salute to Service Member Award applications are due to National by June 1st and can be submitted online. I'll obtain any applicants from National.

Submit any candidates here: <https://www.legion-aux.org/Salute-to-Servicemembers-Award-Form>

Units are able to submit as many candidates as they like from each branch of service.

Homeless Veterans

The VA believes there are over 33,000 homeless vets experiencing homelessness in the US. 10% of them are female homeless veterans. California has the highest concentration of homeless veterans with 10,395 homeless veterans. A homeless veteran is a person who has served in the armed forces who is also experiencing homelessness or living without access to secure accommodations. Though homelessness is on the rise in the US, homelessness among veterans has dramatically reduced over the last decade. The VA attributes this success to the Supportive Services for Veteran Families programs rolled out in 2011.

There are several projects we can work on to help our veterans

- Buddy Basket- Determine who could benefit from the Buddy Baskets by contacting your local VA Medical Center's homeless coordinator. Once you know who needs the gift basket, collect items to be distributed. Ask for donations from local schools, business, American Legion Family members, or family and friends. Assemble the gift basket. Suggested items include: laundry basket, paper towels, toilet paper, trash can, broom and dust pan, household cleaners, dishes, bedding, and a welcome home note signed by everyone who participated in the gift. Deliver the basket to the veteran or military family.
- Plastic Sleeping mats
 - **Be a collector**– Collect clean plastic bags from the grocery store and other places. The bags should be in good shape and not full of holes
 - **Be a folder**– Return the bags to their original shape.
 - **Be a cutter** - Cut off the bags' handles, as well as an inch from the bottom of the bags. Then cut the bags into 2½-inch loops.
 - **Be a “plarn” maker** – Link the loops to form plarn (plastic yarn) and roll them into balls like you would with a ball of yarn.
 - **Crochet OR knit the rows:**
 - **Crochet** the mat into a 6-foot-by-3-foot mat. It is a single crochet with a size P or Q hook.
 - Make a chain 36 inches long, which is about 66 chains. Make the loops loose with a little space between each one.

- Make an extra loop at the end to use as your turning point.
 - Start at the third loop to make your second row.
 - Continue until the mat is 6 feet long.
 - Crochet from front to back so that it does not pucker up.
 - Crochet two rows of a single crochet to form a tie that is 80 inches long.
 - Connect the tie to the mat so the mat can be rolled up and carried like a sleeping bag.
- **Knit** the mat using size 19 knitting needles. Knit approximately 50 stitches until it reaches about 2½ feet wide. Keep knitting until it reaches 6 feet long. Cast off, and you're done!
- **Raise Awareness-** You can utilize social media and newsletters to share information about facilities that provide support for homeless veterans, such as homeless shelters and local food banks. Many of these facilities as well as U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers (VAMCs) offer programs for homeless veterans and are regularly in need of supplies and monetary donations. Organizing a community fundraiser that focuses on a common cause not only helps the veterans, but also raises awareness of the daily needs of the homeless.
 - **Pantry at the post home**
 - **Tree of Warmth-** Collect scarves, mittens, gloves, hats, and socks. Attach them to a tree in a location homeless may frequent. Include a sign that reads "Please take if needed", If you have an old purse you don't use, pack it full of sanitary and hygiene products for homeless women.
 - **Blessing Bags-** Keep bags in your car to distribute when needed. Use gallon-sized food storage bags to keep everything together. Items to include are hand warmers, bandages, baby wipes, tissues, hand sanitizers, granola bars, and travel sized hygiene items. Bags can also be donated to the local police department or other organizations that help the homeless veteran population.

For God and Country
The Golden State – United as One

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