



GIVING BACK: ALA member Lauren Godfrey with American Legion Family members after organizing a Be the One 5K to help raise awareness in ending veteran suicide.

NORTH CAROLINA UNIT MEMBER BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER FOR VETERAN CAUSE

For a student still in high school and an American Legion Auxiliary unit that's one of the smallest in its state, planning and hosting a large-scale event to raise awareness for charity in only months might seem impossible.

But Lauren Godfrey and ALA Unit 436 in Angier, N.C., are proving that passion for a cause, dedication to succeed, and support from others can make the impossible possible.

"People would tell me, 'I don't know if that's going to work. I don't know how you're going to get that done in such a short time frame,'" said Godfrey, who is now a freshman at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. "I've always been the type of person who, if you tell me I can't do something, I'm going to try even harder to do it."

Godfrey and her ALA unit conducted a 5K run/walk in Angier to support Be the One, an American Legion initiative aimed at reducing the rate of suicide among veterans. The event drew nearly 200 people — including 140 race participants — who learned about Be the One and its mission.

Finding her cause

Godfrey got the idea for supporting veterans while in high

school when she participated in North Carolina's 2024 ALA Girls State with Auxiliary Unit 436 as her sponsor. There, she learned about the prevalence of suicide among those who have served in the military.

She decided to dedicate her Girl Scout Gold Award project to organizing a 5K event that shined a spotlight on the issue.

At the urging of Unit 436 President Jo-Anne Martin, Godfrey also became a Junior member of the ALA. Auxiliary Unit 436 has only four locally active members, Martin said, so they knew managing an event that would draw hundreds of people would require help beyond Godfrey and her new ALA unit.

Godfrey's family, the Girl Scouts, and the ALA all pitched in, as did other organizations and a local school and church. As part of her efforts to garner assistance, Godfrey led presentations for local service organizations about suicide and veterans. She shared information online about Be the One and its focus.

And she learned to pivot and persevere whenever she encountered obstacles.

"Lauren remained steadfast to her goal," Martin said. "Her strength and energy were a shining light to our unit in continuing to support her mission."

The resulting 5K accomplished Godfrey's goal of drawing attention to the issue of suicide prevention for veterans. She's working to host another 5K for Be the One in spring 2026.



Coordinating an event, no matter the obstacles



For ALA members who want to plan an event in support of veterans — but are concerned they don't have the resources to do so — Lauren Godfrey and Jo-Anne Martin of Auxiliary Unit 436 in Angier, N.C., offer the following tips:

- **Have a vision.** Establish a "why" for the event that guides every action and reinforces the importance of the work.
- **Make it a group effort.** Start with a committee, even a small one, and be willing to ask for help when it's needed.
- **Be confident.** Believe that the event will be successful and make an impact.
- **Accept imperfections.** Every first-time activity is an opportunity to learn how the next one can be even better.