

## **Introduction**

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of South Carolina provides this brochure as an introduction to American Legion Auxiliary Palmetto Girls State.

The American Legion Auxiliary (“ALA”) is the world’s largest women’s patriotic service organization serving and helping our nation’s veterans, military, and their families. For nearly a century, ALA members have dedicated themselves to meeting the needs of United States veterans by volunteering millions of hours annually. Our member volunteers across the country not only honor and support our veterans but also sponsor youth programs. Our most notable youth program is ALA Girls State. In all 50 states, ALA Units and members proudly host and implement ALA Girls State, a youth program focusing on responsible citizenship, leadership, Americanism, and love for God and country.

The ALA Girls State program in South Carolina is American Legion Auxiliary Palmetto Girls State (“ALA Palmetto Girls State”).

Attendance at ALA Palmetto Girls State is an honor and a privilege. The girls attending ALA Palmetto Girls State (referred to as “delegates”) must be selected to attend the program and sponsored by an ALA Unit in South Carolina. Through the selection process, delegates have demonstrated the qualities of leadership. ALA Palmetto Girls State provides an opportunity of “learning through doing.” Delegates have the opportunity to learn about leadership and government as they are tasked with creating the mythical state of “Palmetto.”

ALA Palmetto Girls State is filled with young women from across South Carolina who have distinguished themselves as leaders in their schools and communities. Delegates will join an organization which has existed in South Carolina for more than 70 years. The alumnae of ALA Palmetto Girls State are an elite group of women who have become business leaders, legislators and political leaders, civic leaders, and professionals (such as educators, doctors, lawyers, accountants).

We hope this information will provide a brief glimpse into the life-changing experience that is ALA Palmetto Girls State. If you have questions, please review the Frequently Asked Questions (“FAQs”) on the ALA Palmetto Girls State website (<http://www.palmettogirlsstate.net>) or contact an American Legion Auxiliary Unit in your community.

## **Program Sponsor**

The ALA Girls State program is sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary. ALA Girls State programs are held across the United States. ALA Palmetto Girls State, as the program is known in South Carolina, is sponsored by the South Carolina Department of the American Legion Auxiliary.

## **Our Purpose**

ALA Palmetto Girls State is a leadership and citizenship development program planned, organized, and implemented by members of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of South Carolina. Founded in 1947, ALA Palmetto Girls State holds a reputation as one of the preeminent youth programs for girls in South Carolina.

One of the stated purposes of American Legion Auxiliary Palmetto Girls State (“ALA Palmetto Girls State”) is to “educate our youth in the duties, privileges, rights, and responsibilities of American citizenship.” At ALA Palmetto Girls State, the members of the ALA in South Carolina provide information and instruction in the affairs of government that will foster and increase the usefulness of each ALA Palmetto Girls State delegate as a contributing citizen of this great state and country and as a future leader.

ALA Palmetto Girls State provides a unique forum for girls to learn about government and the political process. In the mythical state of “Palmetto,” the delegates (or “citizens” of the mythical state of “Palmetto”) are assigned to one of two political parties (either Federalists or Nationalists) and to a city and county. Delegates, upon becoming citizens in the state of Palmetto, will then work within their party, city, and county to organize their local governments and ultimately the state government of Palmetto. Not only will delegates of ALA Palmetto Girls State learn about government through mock exercises, but each delegate has the opportunity to learn about herself, to expand her leadership skills, and to meet other outstanding young leaders from across the State of South Carolina.

One of the obligations assumed by the American Legion Auxiliary, as set forth in the Preamble to its Constitution, is the noteworthy aspiration “To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of Justice, Freedom, and Democracy.” At ALA Palmetto Girls State, these great American principles are introduced through mock exercises and eager participation in these exercises. We actually live and practice these cardinal principles during our week at ALA Palmetto Girls State.

## **Our Approach**

At ALA Palmetto Girls State, we “learn by doing” to meet our goal of educating the delegates about local and state government and developing leadership skills. Delegates are thrust into action upon arriving at ALA Palmetto Girls State and are expected to “hit the ground running.” Attendees are randomly assigned to a city (comprised to 15-20 delegates) through which most of the program experience is organized.

This “hands-on” approach allows delegates to experience the election processes, to learn of governmental structure and functions on the local and state levels, and to sharpen their own abilities and leadership potential. Our delegates learn much of themselves and their abilities, often realizing potential they may not have realize existed.

The Constitutions of the United States and South Carolina and the statutes of the State of South Carolina are the patterns from which the fundamental structure of ALA Palmetto Girls State has been developed. As in the State of South Carolina, the state of Palmetto recognizes three branches of government (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial). During the week, instruction is provided on each of the three branches of government and on the different levels of government (municipal, county, and state). Delegates learn through participating in the mock political processes and through educational sessions with guest speakers and briefings conducted by ALA Palmetto Girls State staff members.

The development of friendships and networking with other high-achieving girls from across South Carolina is a rewarding part of the program. Delegates have an opportunity to meet and to discuss issues and exchange ideas with other outstanding, bright young leaders as well as to develop friendships with some of the most outstanding girls from across our state.

### **Who can attend ALA Palmetto Girls State?**

To be eligible to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State, a girl must have completed her third year (junior year) of high school and will be a senior in either September or January following attendance at ALA Palmetto Girls State. ALA Girls State is designed for girls between their junior and senior years of high school. Girls who have completed their junior year of high school at accredited high schools in South Carolina and who will return to their high schools for at least one semester following their ALA Palmetto Girls State experience are eligible to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State. Girls who have graduated from high school before the ALA Palmetto Girls State session or who will not return to high school in the fall following ALA Palmetto Girls State are **not** eligible to attend. Delegates to ALA Palmetto Girls State must be of good character, possess proven leadership abilities, exhibit good citizenship, and demonstrate high scholastic achievement. Finally, each girl attending ALA Palmetto Girls State must be a citizen or legal inhabitant of the United States.

### **The Selection Process**

ALA Units (the local chapter of the American Legion Auxiliary is called a “Unit”) are responsible for selecting and sponsoring the delegates for ALA Palmetto Girls State. Every girl attending ALA Palmetto Girls State must be sponsored by an ALA Unit from the Department of South Carolina. While ALA Units may seek financial assistance and monetary contributions from local civic, social or fraternal organizations, businesses, and parents or other interested persons to assist with the costs of sending a delegate to ALA Palmetto Girls State, **ONLY** ALA Units may sponsor or approve of a delegate’s attendance. The pre-registration of each girl must be approved and submitted by the President or Girls State Chair of the sponsoring ALA Unit, and the tuition fee for the session must be transmitted through the ALA Unit as well.

### **Selection Criteria**

The selection of the girls to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State rests with the ALA Units located in the communities across South Carolina. The ALA Units may seek recommendations or nominations of candidates from school personnel such as administrators, guidance counselors, or faculty. Local ALA Units may also add their own selections to any recommendations from school personnel. Final approval of delegates rests with and is the responsibility of the ALA Units. Qualifications considered in the selection process include **(1) CHARACTER, (2) LEADERSHIP ABILITY, (3) INTEREST IN GOVERNMENT, (4) MATURITY, (5) HONESTY, (6) SCHOLARSHIP, (7) COOPERATIVENESS, and (8) DESIRE TO ATTEND ALA PALMETTO GIRLS STATE.** A review of honors, awards, extra-curricular activities, employment history, and civic and church involvement will assist a Unit in determining these qualifications in each individual.

Girls selected to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State are expected to be of good moral character and to exhibit and demonstrate honesty, integrity, humanity, and thoughtfulness in all actions, behavior, and speech.

### **Medical Concerns**

ALA Palmetto Girls State does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, physical handicap, or national origin. However, all delegates should be in good health (regardless of any physical limitation or handicap). Students with documented disabilities are not disqualified from attending. Accommodations will be attempted to the best of the ability of the program's staff, the ALA, and the host institution. However, an aide, attendant, or interpreter may be required (at the participant's expense) to attend to or assist a participant. Any student with medical or dietary restrictions should disclose those restrictions in the selection process in order to ensure accommodations.

### **Other considerations**

ALA Palmetto Girls State is not a camp or vacation, nor is it an award for scholastic achievement. ALA Palmetto Girls State is a practical application of Americanism and good citizenship, and each attendee must make a serious commitment to be involved and to participate in the week. The program is a nonpartisan, nonpolitical attempt to teach and introduce government to our youth through a practical application of government.

In addition, all students seeking to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State must understand that ALA Palmetto Girls State, as a private program sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary, observes and practices the principles of God and Country, Americanism, and patriotism. All in attendance at ALA Palmetto Girls State must be willing to observe these principles and to show respect to the flags of the United States of America and South Carolina, to participate in a morning invocation and in daily vesper services of spiritual observance, and to engage in patriotic observances.

The ALA Palmetto Girls State program continually strives to reflect a cross-section of South Carolina. To further this goal, PGS embraces and encourages diversity among its staff, volunteers, and delegates. PGS aims to create an environment which promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion regardless of an individual's race, color, religion (creed), nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, location (rural, urban, or suburban) in this state, or political views and beliefs,

PGS affirmatively and emphatically states that it will not tolerate any forms of intentional discrimination and will address any bias incidents reports. A bias incident is defined as the use of any disparaging or offensive remarks, including slurs, epithets, or stereotypes about race, color, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or religion (creed) and the display or use of any offensive or intimidating imagery or symbols. Upon receiving a bias incident report, PGS will immediately take steps to reaffirm this policy and provide a resolution that may include mediation, education, and/or the removal of an individual.

## **Scholarships**

While ALA Palmetto Girls State is not a scholarship program, there are scholarship opportunities available to delegates who attend and complete ALA Palmetto Girls State.

The Samsung American Legion Scholarship was created in 1996 from an endowment by the Samsung Corporation. This endowment was made in appreciation of U.S. veterans who came to aid South Korea during the struggle against communist forces in the Korean War. The endowment resulted in a scholarship program, which is administered by The American Legion, to benefit direct descendants of U.S. veterans. Every Girls State and Boys State program selects one finalist from among its participants. State finalists move to the national level of competition for the opportunity for a \$10,000 scholarship. Additional information may be found on The American Legion's website at [www.legion.org/scholarships/samsung](http://www.legion.org/scholarships/samsung).

A number of colleges and universities within South Carolina, in recognition of the abilities of the girls who attend ALA Palmetto Girls State, provide some scholarship opportunities to girls who have attended and completed the ALA Palmetto Girls State program. The colleges and universities offering these scholarship opportunities set forth the criteria for the scholarships, and those institutions are then responsible for selecting the recipients. Girls who attended ALA Palmetto Girls State are encouraged to inquire whether the college or university which they attend offer scholarships for ALA Palmetto Girls State alumnae.

## **Time and Place**

The 74th annual session of ALA Palmetto Girls State is scheduled for June 13-18, 2021. The program will be virtually. Opening session will take place on Sunday, June 13, and run nightly from 6:00 – 9:00 pm. The program will conclude on Friday evening, June 18, 2021.

## **Cost**

The tuition fee for the session is \$150.00 per delegate. The tuition (which may be paid in full or in part by the sponsoring American Legion Auxiliary Unit) is to be paid at the time the delegate registration paperwork is submitted. Purchases of optional items such as souvenirs are the responsibility of each delegate. In the event that a delegate cannot attend the program, the tuition fee of \$150.00 will not be refunded after May 1. Therefore, if a delegate is unable to attend, she should contact her sponsoring Unit as soon as possible .

## **Attendance**

Delegates selected to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State are expected to remain in attendance for the entire session. The session runs from the afternoon and evening Sunday, June 13, 2021, until the evening of Friday, June 18, 2021. Sessions will be held nightly from 6:00 – 9:00 pm. When a girl accepts the responsibility and honor of representing her school and a local American Legion Auxiliary Unit as a delegate to ALA Palmetto Girls State, she is also acknowledging that she will remain in attendance for the entire session. Only exceptional circumstances or the gravest emergency is an acceptable reason to leave the program before the conclusion. If a delegate has other commitments that would require her to arrive for the session late or to leave the session before the conclusion, she should not accept the position of delegate. The activities at ALA Palmetto Girls State operate on a very tight and regimented schedule. For this reason, delegates are required to be in attendance for the entire session.

## **Registration**

Once an ALA Unit advises a delegate she is selected to attend ALA Palmetto Girls State, the delegate with her parent or guardian must complete a registration form and return that information to the designated contact of the sponsoring American Legion Auxiliary Unit.

When completing the registration information, it is important to

- (1) provide an email address that is CHECKED REGULARLY and that will accept an email from an unfamiliar email address.
- (2) ensure that email addresses are PRINTED, are LEGIBLE, and are correctly written on the registration paperwork.

Once the completed registration forms are returned to the contact for the sponsoring ALA Unit, the unit will input the information into the ALA Palmetto Girls State registration site. The ALA Girls State Staff will send an email to the email address provided on the delegate's registration paperwork. Thus, it is important that the email addresses be correct and legible.

Delegates will receive correspondence prior to the session in order to ensure they have all needed technology and materials for the week. Online registration will close on April 15, 2021.