

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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The youth of our great nation are the future of the VFW Auxiliary. It is up to us to ensure that youth are taught the skills and respect to honor the great heroes, our veterans, who have so selflessly fought to protect our freedoms. We need to keep our youth involved to help grow our membership for the future of our great organization. Now is the time for us as the VFW Auxiliary to teach our youth that **"Every day is Veterans Day."** There is no better way for us to do this than making sure that we reach out **"From Sea To Shining Sea Honoring Veterans,"** who keep us free.

SPONSORING AND WORKING WITH YOUTH GROUPS

As part of the Auxiliary Youth Activities Program, an Auxiliary can sponsor a youth group and engage youth in any one of our Programs, including activities to honor our Veterans or assist our service members and their families.

Many youth groups and youth organizations require various types of community service or activities to maintain their status, be their reason.

High school seniors are always looking to earn school credit with the same activities.

Remember that involving our youth with our Auxiliary will help us to bring new members to our organization. Sponsorship of a youth group can create a bright future for your Auxiliary, our Veterans, and the community as a whole.

Some examples of youth groups include Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, youth centers, boys & girls clubs, 4H clubs, and religious youth groups.

VFW SCOUT OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

Some of the earliest ties to the community involve youth groups, and perhaps none are stronger or more lasting than the relationship between the VFA and America's scouting organizations.

The VFW Scout of the Year program recognizes members of the Boy Scouts of America and the Girl Scouts of America for their standout citizenship, patriotism, and love of the country.

Official form, details, and rules are located at vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/scout-of-the-year.

YOUTH GROUPS SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS' CITATIONS

The purpose of this citation is one way for the Auxiliaries to recognize youth groups for their efforts and service projects honoring our Veterans. The youth groups supporting our Veterans citations are available in MALTA's Member Resources under Youth Activities.

R.A.P CARDS AND YOUTH ACTS OF KINDNESS CERTIFICATES

Encouraging today's youth by letting them know that they have been seen performing acts of kindness through patriotism. You're encouraged to continue to use the Random Acts of Patriotism cards and certificates for children that you see showing respect to the Flag, say the Pledge of Allegiance, or honor our country and heroes. Both versions – cards and certificates – are available in MALTA's Member Resources. They would be given to youth caught in the act of kindness, and it's another way to celebrate our youth by letting them know that we see their acts of kindness through patriotism.

ILLUSTRATING AMERICA

Open to any student in grades K-8 who is enrolled in a public, private, or parochial school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence and intend to become a U.S. citizen. Foreign exchange students and students age 15 or older are ineligible. National grade division winners of previous Illustrating America contests may enter the subsequent grade division, but are ineligible for the same grade division in which they are a previous National winner.

Entries will be judged on a patriotic theme and technique. The contest consists of three grade divisions: K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. The Department's first-place winner in each grade division will be forwarded to Auxiliary National Headquarters.

There are National awards for first, second, and third place in each grade division. The first, second, and third place entries in each grade division will be displayed at the National Convention.

DEADLINES:

Entries must be received by:

VFW Auxiliary by March 31, 2026

Department Chairman by April 15, 2026

National Headquarters by May 5, 2026

Official form, details on requirements, and contest rules can be found in MALTA's Member Resources or on the VFW Auxiliary website.

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY AWARDS, GRADES K-2

1st place-\$50; 2nd place-\$30; 3rd place-\$20

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY AWARDS, GRADES 3-5

1st place-\$50; 2nd place-\$30; 3rd place-\$20

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY AWARDS, GRADES 6-8

1st place-\$50; 2nd place-\$30; 3rd place-\$20

Contest Rules:

- Entry must be completed during the current school year.
- Entry must be two-dimensional.
- Entry must be on canvas or paper.
- Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board.
- Reinforce the back with heavy paper.
- Do not frame art with wood, metal, plastic, or glass.
- Mats, including mounted and floating mats, may be used.
- Entries may not be smaller than 8"x10" and not larger than 18"x24," **INCLUDING** mat.
- Watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempera, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, glitter, marker, or other media may be used.
- If the American Flag is used, it **DOES NOT** need to conform to the Federal Flag Code in relation to colors or numbers of stars and stripes.
- Complete the contest entry form and submit it with the art entry.
- Parent or guardian signature required on contest entry form.
- **Coloring sheets, digital art, and photography are NOT accepted.**

PATRIOTIC YOUTH AWARD

The Patriotic Youth Award is designed to recognize individual youth for their patriotism and/or support of our Veterans, service members, and their families. A fillable, printable version of the Patriotic Youth Award is available in MALTA's Member Resources under Youth Activities.

PATRIOTISM THROUGH LITERACY

Promote and support reading among youth with this simple, fun, and potentially free initiative. Introduce youth to historical figures and teach them about events in our nation's history while fostering a love of reading that can lead to a lifetime of learning.

Benefits of Patriotism through Literacy:

- Teach kids about various times in American history. Promote empathy and expose students to experiences unlike their own.
- Foster a love of books that leads to a lifetime of learning.
- Spend time with kids in the community in new, creative ways.
- Help youth gain a better understanding of American history through nonfiction.

How can I participate in Patriotism through Literacy?

- Volunteer to read a historical or creative nonfiction picture book to kids at your local library.
- Donate historical fiction or creative nonfiction books to local schools, shelters, or libraries.
- Host a read-a-thon and award small prizes (stickers, pins) for the number of books or hours read.
- Run a writer's workshop for aspiring teen and tween authors at your Post home.
- Invite an author of historical fiction or creative nonfiction to do a book talk/signing in your area.

Reading has many benefits, including improved grammar and writing skills, improved focus and concentration, and it helps children to understand and share the feelings of others; reading stretches our imagination. As Dr Seuss said, "Reading can take you places you have never been before."

READING BUDDIES

Be a "Reading Buddy." We sometimes forget that we have many children who are being left behind in schools due to issues concerning reading and comprehension, but if just one person in each Auxiliary could reach out and help a child become a better reader through reading one-on-one or electronically, imagine what an impact we could make in their daily lives and self-confidence. You can use the Patriotism through Literacy reading list in MALTA or talk with the child's parent, teacher, or guardian that you have buddied up with to help find out what their interests are, and what reading level books to look for.

NATIONAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM AWARDS

1. Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event of the VFW Auxiliary working with a youth group.
- Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most creative and/or unique activity and/or event of the VFW Auxiliary working with a youth group.

From July 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. Entry form (required) available at vfwauxpa.org website under *Program – Youth Activities – National Awards Forms*.

DEPARTMENT YOUTH ACTIVITIES PROGRAM AWARDS

1. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary working with the highest number of Youth.
2. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary presenting the most Youth Group Supporting Our Veterans Citations.
3. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the most creative Youth Group activity or event.
4. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the best promotion of Patriotism through Literacy Initiative.
5. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary that donated the most books for Patriotism through Literacy Initiative.
6. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary with the best promotion of the Illustrating America Initiative.
7. Citations to the VFW Auxiliaries sponsoring the first-place winners in each division of the Illustrating America initiative.
8. Citation to the VFW Auxiliaries that hosted an awards ceremony for the Illustrating America initiative.

ALL OBLIGATIONS, INCLUDING AUDITS, BONDS, DELEGATE FEES, PLEDGES, SUPPLIES, ETC. TO NATIONAL AND DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS MUST BE MET FOR YOUR AUXILIARY TO QUALIFY FOR AWARDS.