

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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What is the first thing that you think of when you think about the VFW Auxiliary? My first thought when I heard of it was the spouses of the military alumni. But we are so much more, and one of our biggest roles is to mentor the youth to become patriotic adults.

Our children are the future of the VFW Auxiliary organization, and it is up to us to keep our children involved and grow our membership for the future. Our children are the future of this organization and **“Together Helping Veterans”** is what we shall do! Here is how we can get them involved with our great organization **“From Our Roots to Our Branches Extending Service to Our Veterans.”**

Patriotism through Literacy

I have always known that reading is a huge part in the learning process, and it helps our brain to remember things. This is such a huge thing for our youth and elderly. You can learn so much through reading. If we could read to our youth about America and all the important things this country has accomplished, we could just make them become a tad bit more patriotic and knowledgeable about our great country and military.

Now you ask, how do we do this? If you go to MALTA Member Resources, under Youth Activities we have the Patriotism through Literacy list. It is even divided up by grade levels. Pick a few books from there. Visit your local library and see if they have those books in stock; if not, why not donate them to that library yourself!

These books aren't just to take you on an adventure of some sort, they are to educate our youth about patriotism, the flag, and our great country. You can find these books in bookstores, online and even some are E-Books!!

Books are a great learning key for children to learn about our country and patriotism but also to teach them to love reading, understanding history, and learning how to read and write.

- Host a day of reading. Veterans can come in and read to the children or the children can read to them. Choose a few books from the Patriotism through Literacy list.

- ↳ Take a visit to a VA or nursing home to see if the staff can set up a reading area for the children to read to the veterans or vice versa.
- ↳ Create a read-a-thon, use R.A.P. Cards as a point system.

September 6, 2024, is National Read a Book Day. If possible, host a reading day at your post by hosting Veterans and children. Another big day is Dr. Suess Day which is March 2, 2025. Check with your schools to see if Veterans could go into the classroom to read to the children or have the children read to the Veterans.

SPONSORING AND WORKING WITH YOUTH GROUPS

As part of the Auxiliary Youth Activities program, an Auxiliary can sponsor a youth group and engage them in any of our Programs, including activities to honor our veterans or assist our service members and their families. Get together with youth groups on Veterans holidays and make the Veterans feel special. Try a holiday that isn't often celebrated. These could include:

- ↳ Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts
- ↳ Church Youth Groups
- ↳ 4-H/FFA clubs
- ↳ School sponsored groups
- ↳ JROTC

Some high school students can use volunteer hours for college applications, some colleges require letters of recommendation. Here's some examples of how we can get these groups involved:

- ↳ Place flags on graves
- ↳ Helping serve meals at an event
- ↳ Invite them to participate in a "Buddy" poppy drive
- ↳ Create birthday cards for the 100th Anniversary of the National Home

PATRIOTIC YOUTH AWARD

If children are willing and able to help with an event, let them help and engage them while doing so. Always remember to act and be responsible around our youth. Always remember to recognize them after they have helped with a job well done. Youth will always come back if they are recognized and made to feel special after helping with something. There are fillable Patriotic Youth Awards in member resources in MALTA.

R.A.P. Cards (Random Act of Patriotism)

Children love to be rewarded and told when they are doing something impressive, even more when it's Patriotic. When a child shows simple Random Acts of Patriotism, recognize them by giving them a card and explain to them why they are getting the card.

Create some sort of rewards points system to encourage them to continue to do Random Acts of Patriotism, or even just random acts of kindness as well. Each card can be worth so many points and the points add up to earn something cool. The more points the better the prize! Prizes can include books, candy, electronics or even money are just a few examples. Get creative with it!

You can find the card templates in MALTA member resources, Youth Activities.

ILLUSTRATING AMERICA ART CONTEST

Open to any student in grades K-8 by March 31 deadline 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 who have applied for permanent residence and intend to become a U.S. citizen. Foreign exchange students and students aged 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 of which they are a previous National Winner.

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

There are National awards for 1st, 2nd & 3rd place in each grade division. The 1st, 2nd & 3rd place entry in each grade division will be displayed at the National Convention. Please see the student brochure and entry form in MALTA Member Resources or on the VFW Auxiliary website for more details on requirements and contest rules.

Deadlines for entries:

Participating Auxiliary send to District President - March 31, 2025

District President send to Department Chairman - April 15, 2025

Department Chairman send to National Headquarters - May 5, 2025

Contest Rules:

- Art must be two-dimensional
- Art must be on canvas or paper
- Watercolor, pencil, pastel, charcoal, tempera, crayon, acrylic, pen, ink, oil, marker, or other media may be used.
- Submit canvas entries on a stretcher frame or canvas board. Other entries, if matted, must be matted in white or reinforced with heavy paper.
- The art should be no smaller than 8" x 10" but no larger than 18" x 24", not including mat

Coloring sheets, digital art and photography are not accepted.

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY AWARDS, Grades K - 2

First Place - \$50.00

Second Place - \$30.00

Third Place - \$20.00

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY AWARDS, Grades 3 - 5

First Place - \$50.00

Second Place - \$30.00

Third Place - \$20.00

DEPARTMENT AUXILIARY AWARDS, Grades 6 - 8

First Place - \$50.00

Second Place - \$30.00

Third Place - \$20.00

DEPARTMENT OF PA YOUTH ACTIVITIES CITATIONS

1. Citation to the VFW Auxiliary working with the highest number of Youth
2. Citation to the Auxiliary presenting the most Youth Group Supporting Our Veterans Citations
3. Citation to the Auxiliary with the Best Promotion of Patriotism through Literacy Initiative
4. Citation to the Auxiliary that donated the most books for Patriotism through Literacy Initiative
5. Citation to the Auxiliary with the Best Promotion of the “Illustrating America” Initiative
6. Citations to the Auxiliaries sponsoring the first-place winners in each division of the “Illustrating America” Initiative
7. Citation to the VFW Auxiliaries that hosted an awards ceremony for “Illustrating America” Initiative
8. Citation to the Auxiliaries with the most creative “Patriotism thru Literacy” event
9. Special “**Star**” Award to the Auxiliary with the most Youth Activities initiatives

NATIONAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES AWARDS & CITATIONS

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event educating their community about Patriotism Through Literacy and using the RANDOM ACTS OF PATRIOTISM card (R.A.P.)
Citation to every Auxiliary that hosts an activity and/or event that educates their community about Patriotism Through Literacy and uses the Random Acts of Patriotism card (R.A.P.) Entry form required and available in MALTA Member Resources. Auxiliaries must send the entry form to their Department Youth Activities Chairman by March 31, 2025 for judging.
The Department Youth Activities Chairman must email National Headquarters by April 30, 2025 at info@vfwauxiliary.org a total of combined list of every Auxiliary in their Department that completed and submitted an entry form.
Citations will be mailed directly to participating Auxiliaries from National Headquarters.
2. Citations and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the four Conferences that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event that educates their community about Patriotism through Literacy and utilizes the Random Act of Patriotism card (R.A.P.)
The Department Youth Activities Chairman must sign and send a copy of the Department winning entry form to the National Youth Activities Ambassador by April 30, 2025 for judging.
Citations will be mailed directly to winning Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into Auxiliary account after National Convention.